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Full Length Research Paper

A critical evaluation of thirty years of state-civil society relations in Zambia, 1991 - 2021

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This paper aimed to assess the relations between the state and civil society in Zambia in the last thirty years of the country's plural political dispensation. The study sought to establish the extent to which the state and civil society regard each other as genuine associates to the cause of national development. The areas of study focused on human rights protection, adherence to the rule of law, economic accountability, and transparency. In the wake of greater importance being attached to good governance practices globally, these relations are critical to the realization of human development of citizens. Data for this study were collected from secondary research sources through academic journals, scholarly books, reports, and online publications. The study showed that the relations between the state and civil society are not conducive to advance development. The study revealed that on one hand, cheerleaders of government see civil society as being dog-eared with a belligerent anti-establishment prejudice, while on the other hand, civil society argue that the state's abuse of power and lack of respect for human rights is retarding Zambia's quest for transformation into a modern state. The study concluded that the absence of strong political institutions has encouraged a continuation of bad governance practices by the state. Therefore, civil society needs to strengthen its agency by forging new and otherwise unconventional collaborations with other stake holders. It is only by expanding the network of synergies that civil society will be able to successfully champion the cause of the citizens.

Key words: Advocacy, constitutionalism, donor support, human rights, trade unions.

INTRODUCTION

This study aimed at evaluating the relations between the state and civil society in Zambia in the last thirty years. The key research question was to gauge the extent to which the state and civil society regard each other as worthy partners in national development. The focus areas of enquiry were on human rights protection, adherence

to the rule of law, economic accountability, and transparency. The thirty years period under study from 1991 to 2021 was chosen because before then, there was no civil society activism worth profiling due to the socialist authoritarian type of governance. Previous studies on this subject matter by scholars such as

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Mushingeh (1994), Bartlett (2000), Kaliba (2014) and Munalula et al. (2018) appear to have been framed within the context of Zambia as a relatively democratic state. However, this study - while building upon previous scholarship - took an extended line of argument in two ways: first, it covered a longer study period from 1991 to 2021, unearthing additional political and economic events, and second, the study is different in the sense that much of the happenings in Zambia today were captured from a prism of Zambia as a dictatorship rather than as a democracy (Institute for Security Studies, 2020). The country has witnessed a considerable erosion of democracy mainly from 2015 to date - events which previous studies could not have possibly captured. Political analysts such as Mpundu (2019) argue that Zambia at present is, except in designation, a dictatorship, an authoritarian state.

During the period leading to 1990, the political winds of change began to blow across Africa like a desert storm. Advocates of plural politics comprising of academics, businesspersons, independent thinkers, and influential citizens teamed up to form a pressure group that emerged with the force of a thunderclap and demanded multi-party-political reforms. The pressure that this group exerted took a considerable toll on the political fortunes of the sitting one-party regime (Mushingeh, 1994). In 1990, a bill was presented to parliament with provisions that sought to strengthen existing structures of the one-party state but was resoundingly defeated. In rejecting the bill, the Members of Parliament (MPs) contributed to the opening of political space in Zambia (Bartlett, 2000). This monumental development further weakened the government's attempts to resist demands for other reforms. During the rounds of multi-party talks with the government, several civil society actors were excluded from the transition negotiations (in preference for elitists). Mushingeh (1994) points out that this exclusion from the negotiating table meant that civil society suffered setbacks in two agonizing ways: (1) during the reign of the one-party state, their voice was severely curtailed - only elitist voices seemed to prevail; (2) when the 'golden opportunity' to engage in multi-party talks showed up in 1990, again they were not included in the talks. So, despite the civil society representing majority of ordinary voices, nevertheless they suffered a great deal from the way the negotiations were conducted, that is, from the top and from outside mainstream ordinary voices. Consequently, the internal grassroots societal grievances remained latent and excluded. This exclusion confirmed the frailty of civil society and laid the foundation for an authoritarian reawakening under the new multi-party state that would later emerge in 1991.

The one-party government fell in November 1991 and a new multi-party-political dispensation was ushered in. During this period, Zambia was celebrated as one of Africa's leading democracies, being one of the first African countries to have undergone a peaceful transition

from one-party rule to multi-party politics. Cheeseman and Fisher (2019) point out that despite the flaws that may have prevailed under a one-party socialist system, the socialist government deserves salutation because it respected the will of the people (pluralism) and gave up power in a continent where many regimes still refuse to leave office, preferring to hang on at all costs.

Unfortunately for Zambia, successive governments have not performed to the expectations of the population on good governance matters. So far, Zambia has had six different administrations since independence, yet the country has not seen a complete 'death' of the old socialist authoritarian habits. Once in power, Zambian politicians seem to change like chameleons and try to dig in (Munalula et al., 2018). Over the years, the state has seemed to be preoccupied with employing tactics of silencing civil society organizations for purposes of regime survival. This power struggle between the state and civil society has been the hallmark of the past 30 years of Zambia's plural politics (Open Zambia, 2017). In a country where political institutions are still feeble, the civil society has played a pivotal role as a barometer of social consciousness on governance issues. The vacuum created by weak institutions need to be harnessed by a well-ordered and collaborative civil society (*AFP News, 2017*). Despite Zambia's transformational challenges, the country has set some democratic precedencies for Africa: in 2001, members of the then ruling party, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) joined forces with civil society to deny a sitting president (Fredrick Chiluba) an unconstitutional bid for a third term in office. In 2011, Zambia passed another milestone in democratic consolidation in one of the continent's few examples of post-transition election turnover where voters chose to remove a dominant ruling party, the MMD and put another party, the Patriotic Front (PF) in power (Cheeseman, 2017).

It can be argued that Zambia has neither been a clear democracy like Botswana or Mauritius, nor has it been a case of extreme authoritarianism such as Uganda and Cameroon. Instead, the country seems to have occupied a middle ground - but in the last few years (from 2015 to date), governance systems began to fall apart. Until recently, the country's progress on good governance practices has generally been steadfast and although corruption remains a challenge with several controversial elections in between, the people in collaboration with civil society have always pulled back from the brink when authoritarian tendencies showed up (Cheeseman, 2017). For instance, in 1995, Zambia's second President Fredrick Chiluba manipulated the constitution to prevent his predecessor Kenneth Kaunda from running against him in the 1996 presidential polls on flimsy grounds that alleged that Kaunda was not a 'real' Zambian citizen. This accusation made little sense considering that Kaunda had previously ruled the country for 27 years (*ibid*).

BRIEF HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN ZAMBIA

The post-colonial one-party socialist state of Zambia (from 1973 to 1991) had not been able to convincingly demonstrate that it could improve the economic welfare of citizens. In addition to the poor economic performance, the government had also failed to guarantee individual freedoms and protection of human rights. This failure to deliver real economic benefits and civil liberties began to create room for civil society activism for purposes of improving service delivery to the people (Mushingeh, 1994). Until 1991, the only viable civil society organization was the Zambia Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU), a powerful umbrella of all unions in the country. The salient feature of the ZCTU was its urban pro-political membership that was drawn largely from the copper mines. Due to its influence, the ZCTU was arguably the de facto opposition movement in the country (Bartlett, 2000). Therefore, civil society stemmed primarily from internal forces due to the economic failures of the government. However, civil society activism still could not fully blossom due to authoritarian tendencies of the one-party state; but the tipping point was getting closer. When communism fell in 1989, the stage seemed set for political change on a global scale towards democratization and opened the door for more civil society activism. The eventual democratization of the eastern European states seemed to have triggered an inevitable wind of change to start blowing towards Africa (Kaliba, 2014). While these international events were unfolding, the governing one-party state in Zambia faced internal rebellions. Several high-profile politicians within the government began to demand for reforms that could promote media freedoms, individual freedoms, and the rule of law. Ironically, the state-run newspapers such as the *Times of Zambia* also followed suit in questioning the viability of the one-party state (Bartlett, 2000).

So, a combination of local and international events opened the space for civil society organizations to spring up and democracy emerged as the new trend in town. It can be argued though that the birth of civil society in Zambia was largely influenced by local grievances that had been brewing for a long time until they were triggered by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. However, due to limitations in their financial capacity, most civil society organizations were only able to operate effectively with the backing of Western donor agencies (Mushingeh, 1994).

THEORY AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The 21st Century global politics are grounded on the firm belief that civil society organizations are indispensable partners in national development and democratic consolidation. This study examined the extent to which

the state and civil society see each other as true partners in enhancing good governance practices. The focus areas were on human rights protection, respect for the rule of law, economic accountability, and transparency because these aspects are fundamental to growth. Somers (2008) and Alexander (2006) contend that civil society is a critical organizing concept in contemporary social, political, and economic theory. Adam Smith (1723-1790) argued from a growth perspective that the organized state is a potential impediment to the social symmetry and equitable economic growth of a polity. As such, the utility of civil society can only be viable in environments where a free-market flourishes as it possesses a greater ability to ward off the potential arm-twisting power of the state (Hills, 2010). Scholars such as Huber and Stephen (2001), and Korpi (2006) also opine that the success of civil society largely depends on the broader structure of alliances with other actors within the political economy such as the labor unions. In most hybrid - otherwise authoritarian regimes - such as Zambia today, scholarship on civil society from scholars such as Fernandez (2014) and Lewis (2013) shows how the structure of NGOs could easily be influenced by political elites through coercive ploys; whereby the expected strong relations between the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and democratic consolidation remain foible (Klein and Cheol-Sung, 2019).

This study identified the expansion of synergies by civil society as an imperative component of bridging the potential constrictions that may arise from powerful political elites. In enunciating the relations between civil society and the state in Zambia, this study built on secondary research sources through academic journals, scholarly books, and online publications. Additional information to strengthen the arguments of this study was obtained from reports linked to good governance practices in Zambia from the following reputable sources: the World Bank, the Financial Intelligence Centre of Zambia, Transparency International Zambia and the Zambia Statistics Agency. Data were analyzed by gauging the performances and attitudes of successive Zambian governments in relation to their collaborations with the civil society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the popularity of the 'Africa rising' narrative that has spread over the past ten years regarding Africa's pace for economic development, the continent continues to face significant challenges in unlocking the benefits of a human rights-based governance system. Successive Zambian governments seem to have failed to address the national question on inequalities and class struggle. The question arising from this is: how possible is it that after thirty years of plural politics, Zambia has found itself in a governance system where almost every institution seems

to be fundamentally broken? As Mills et al. (2019) has argued, one cannot break up systems overnight - but one can slowly chip away at the fundamentals, and if no organized groups of concerned citizens intervene to stop this, then very quickly all the traits of a democratic society begin to fall apart. Civil society organizations opine that politics must be built around values of human rights protection, constitutionalism, the rule of law and a sound social contract with the population. Currently, the government seems to be at sea on how to resolve the country's challenges due to the absence of issue-based politics.

Lack of cohesion and the problem of illiteracy

For Zambia's challenges to be overcome, citizens will need an aggressive civil society that would ensure that political leaders set the right development priorities for the country. Munalula et al. (2018) observes that civil society can also be uncivil in the sense that they may be organized by a narrow base of elites or mere brief case organizations allied to surrogate state institutions. In general, the civil societies in Zambia appear to be disjointed and as such, their mobilization influence to champion the cause of the citizens is weak. Sishuwa (2019) points out that in addition to the fragmentation within the civil society, Zambian academics who are supposed to be in the vanguard of championing human rights issues have remained mute. At the centre of Zambia's institutional decline are gutless professionals in state institutions and disunited civil society organizations. In a country that is in frantic need of role models - a country full of corrupt state officials and cowardly technocrats in public institutions - many may have previously looked up to academics as inspiring examples in public life. Sishuwa (2019) adds that what academics have done by remaining tongue-tied on government misrule is the ultimate betrayal of public trust. Silence is violence. To remain silent in the face of abuse, injustice, inequality, and rampant corruption is to actively participate in sustaining the status quo. However, educational achievement is still the best predictor of popular commitment to democracy in Zambia. Today, the key opinion leaders are those with post-secondary education. Urban dwellers, a group that has been at the forefront of political change, usually takes the lead. Also, the use of social media nowadays has increased levels of awareness and socialization. Unlike in previous regimes, today, fewer people can access quality education because the current regime does not seem to have prioritized this sector (Afro Barometer Report, 2019). The less educated citizens are prone to underestimate the threats inherent in government takeover of independent bodies of restraint such as the legislature, judiciary, and the media. This suggests that the defense of human rights in Zambia depends critically on the active political

engagement by educated citizens (Afro Barometer Report, 2019). Politicians seem to profit from people's illiteracy and ignorance for them to continue abusing power.

Fallacy of democracy and elections

To change the world, citizens need to change their illusions; the greatest risk to the development of human rights and democratization in Zambia is not the threat of a military coup d'état but from the gradual erosion of the hard-won political gains at the hands of an elected civilian regime bent on expanding its power. Due to lack of independence, most Electoral Commissions in African states have arguably become channels of the 'new coup d'états' by manipulating electoral votes in favor of the sitting authoritarian regimes (Mpundu, 2019). This underscores the need for citizens to re-evaluate their understanding of what citizenship is all about. Advocacy is an inescapable duty and responsibility of every citizen. The vibrancy of civil society depends on the active participation of the general citizenry. The rope after all, is only as strong as its weakest link (Fanon, 1952). Bizarrely, the increase in the number of elections taking place in Africa since 1990 has often been read as a positive indicator for the continent's prospects. However, elections in themselves are not enough to bring about good governance. While under previous regimes Zambia held elections that were generally peaceful, today the general elections (including bye-elections) have become increasingly bloody. In Zambia, electoral credibility has been eroded because elections are always disputed. For instance, apart from being petitioned in the Constitutional Court, the 2016 general elections were also the most violent in Zambia's history (Resnick, 2016). The major obstacle in the electoral mine field is state-sponsored violence and electoral skulduggery. These machinations occur because the country has not been able to move from the 'big man' syndrome to the big idea. Zambian politics have been dominated by 'strong men' instead of strong institutions. For this reason, civil society organizations have been encouraging citizens to move to the politics of big ideas so that the country follows ideas and not individuals because the demise and betrayal of individuals is always going to haunt the nation (Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020). Also, Zambian politics have tended to focus on personalities instead of focusing on political party ideas and national policies that would move the country forward in advancing transparency and accountability. It is, for instance, suspicious that ballot papers for the general elections are always printed from outside the country; fifty-six years after independence, Zambia is still unable to print its own ballots? It is no wonder then that the economy is in a wayward situation since the government cannot even fix basic requirements such as ballot papers. The ballot

paper printing issue has generated mistrust among stakeholders. Civil society have expressed fears that ballot papers coming from outside may be manipulated because it appears that representatives of the civil society are not genuinely invited to monitor the printing processes (Young, 2012). Citizens often adopt the convenient fallacy that by going through the motion of holding elections, a country will have gotten matters all right. This laissez-faire analysis of political events tends to overlook the extent to which elections themselves can become a smokescreen (Schaffer, 2007). The nullification of presidential poll results by the courts of law in September 2017 in Kenya, and in February 2020 in Malawi, testify to this election fallacy. The Malawi court decision is significant as it reinforces the precedent set in Kenya – it draws a line in the sand – and says elections must be credible (*The Guardian Newspaper, 3 February 2020*). The first few African cases that followed Kenya may have indicated that this would be a one-off, but now we have a trend. The next African court can cite Malawi and Kenya. The frequency of elections is much easier to observe and tick the box than adherence to the rule of law. It is in fact the rule of law that determines a country's ability to function properly (*ibid*).

Accountability challenges

Rule of law and endemic political corruption

When the rule of law is undermined, a country can follow a downward spiral that may lead to state collapse. Political observers opine that currently, the rule of law in Zambia is almost non-existent (Mills et al., 2019). Unlike previous governments that generally exercised self-constraint, the current regime seems intent on destroying the thirty years of hard-won democracy by replicating actions that have been witnessed in failed states such as Zimbabwe - notably, the systematic harassment and intimidation of civil society and other strategic political institutions (Mills et al., 2019). While in the past Zambians have looked to the rule of law to protect their rights when under threat, today they find that there is little prospect for protection or redress. The people are not treated as citizens, but as subjects who have no constitutional rights and therefore, owe their allegiance to the regime in power. For instance, civil liberties have been severely curtailed and this trend shows a continuous downward spiral (Freedom House, 2020).

In Zambia, corruption, nepotism, and cronyism have found a haven. To give an example, a cabinet minister who served under the government of President Fredrick Chiluba (1991-2001), defended the practice of nepotism by arguing that 'if I do not appoint people from my region, who will' (Bartlett, 2000). In the judiciary, the courts are generally held in low esteem by most citizens due to apparent political interference in their operations. Consequently, the court's judgments are perceived to be

promoting impunity and immunity among political elites thereby perpetuating the domination of the society by a few privileged individuals. An average Zambian today believes that the process of justice is being intentionally obstructed by the authorities to achieve their own personal political ends - it is justice behind closed doors (Ndulo, 2017). The government's pronouncements that it is committed to fighting corruption are widely seen by the population as empty rhetoric. Civil society organizations have accused the Zambian Anti-Corruption Commission of deliberately keeping a blind eye on crimes perpetrated by political elites while only focusing on crimes of poor people. Arguably, justice is only available to the highest bidder. Justice has been turned into injustice and civil society organizations that are critical of these machinations are labeled as unpatriotic citizens (Financial Intelligence Centre Report, 2018).

Government is always quick to water-down condemnations from civil society when they expose abuses related to mismanagement of state resources by arguing that such abuses do not only happen in Zambia. A senior government minister was recently reported to have said, 'every country has got thieves', in an apparent attempt to divert people's attention from a string of unending corruption incidences (Lifuka, 2020). While in previous administrations corruption was also a challenge, graft today has become much more prevalent due to weak accountability and transparency mechanisms. Misappropriation of funds and a general lack of financial prudence have led to frequent donor freezes on aid (*BBC News, 18 September 2018*). For instance, the annual GDP growth has shrunk from 7.6% in 2010 to minus 2.7% in 2021, a result that shows poor fiscal management. Inflation rate has shot up from 7.9% in 2010 to over 22.7% in 2021 (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2021). These economic indicators demonstrate the absence of transparency and accountability in government operations particularly on monetary policies. This way of running a government translates into poor distribution of national resources. This further suggest diversion and misappropriation of funds which consequently prioritizes political leaders' personal survival at the expense of state survival (Clapham, 1996). Governments' explanations on how they utilize state resources are hardly convincing to the population. As a result of public mistrust, the regime(s) often 'sponsor' little lumpen political parties and individuals to operate as government mouth pieces in a bid to justify corrupt and illegal decisions. This ploy ensures that critical voices are diluted and eventually silenced (Schaffer, 2007).

Non-adherence to human rights protocols

Unlike in previous governments, the current regime has been found wanting for failing to respect the norms and values embedded in regional and international agreements such as the Harare Commonwealth

Declaration (1991). Under the auspices of the Commonwealth, the Harare Declaration (1991) reaffirmed the commitment of member states to the promotion and protection of human rights. Other agreements with similar commitments that the Zambian government has not fully honored include the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ACHPR (1981), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations UDHR, 1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966). While in previous regimes human rights were more respected, today the regime is more repressive, and police brutality is now commonplace. To shift attention from the regimes' atrocities, the authorities resort to exploiting religious and cultural dogmas. For instance, government's grand standing on homosexuality issues is a convenient tactic to divert attention from its perennial corruption scandals which donor agencies have exposed. In 2019, the US ambassador to Zambia, Daniel Foote denounced the regime's growing authoritarianism and lack of respect for the human rights of gay people. Ambassador Foote was swiftly expelled from the country (*The New York Times*, 24 December 2019). It is a documented historical fact that homosexuality has always existed in Zambia (and in Africa). Oral history of the middle 1800s about African lifestyles testify to this (Tendi, 2010). It is, therefore, hypocritical for the government to pretend that the gay issue is 'foreign' and was brought by Europeans. Tendi (2010) argues that what Europeans brought to Africa was not homosexuality, but homophobia clothed in religious doctrines. Homophobia, therefore, is more alien to Africa than homosexuality. Gays are not responsible for Zambia's economic malaise, neither are they responsible for the country's endemic corruption. So, why sacrifice them for the regimes' poor governance performances? In view of this, it is crucial that education for all is given priority to help debunk some long-held myths and conspiracy theories that are not supported by empirical evidence.

The need to expand synergies

Given the extent to which democracy has deteriorated under the current regime, the civil society collaborations have never been more crucial. Synergies with various associations at grassroots level need to be vigorously forged to ensure that these links actively highlight the lapses in governance to ensure transparency, accountability, and economic justice. The Diasporas must also be engaged. The Diasporas of today can be powerful actors who can influence political events such as wars, conflicts, peace, or the dissolution of states. Diasporas in other jurisdictions have played pivotal roles, for instance, in terms of funding to boost the agency of political programs back in their homelands – the case of

Eritrea and Ireland is testimony to the critical role that the Diasporas can play in shaping the political discourse of their homelands. In the case of Eritrea, the state was able to mitigate the negative effects of the United Nations (UN) sanctions through diaspora tax remittances (Hirt, 2015). In Northern Ireland, the past grievances, the repression, and other unresolved political issues occasioned by the British government's role in that territory served to radicalize the diasporas' approach to the Northern Ireland troubles: diaspora funds were channeled to Sinn Fein political party and to the republican paramilitary, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to support their families and sustain the war (Delaney, 2006).

Zambia can learn from other countries' strides. For instance, the former Ethiopian Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn has argued that active youth involvement and strong activism from civil society groups is essential to change any political discourse. Further, Desalegn posit that aggressive intellectual discourse, which is generally lacking in Africa, is an important ingredient that would positively alter the political path. By shying away from politics, African intellectuals have contributed to the perpetuation of mediocrity of service delivery by their governments. Majority of government officials lack superior logic and intellectual depth of understanding the basics of the national development agendas. Desalegn emphasizes the need for the youth to get involved, arguing that it was youth activism that brought political change to his country Ethiopia (*SABC News*, 24 May 2019). Youth participation in civic duties is critical for maintaining a strong civil society -for instance - Zambia's independence was fought mainly by the youth. The African Union (AU) through its periodicals, encourages African youths to rise to the occasion and influence decision making. The history of Africa itself shows that the youth are key to political change; from the days of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana in the 1950s to the Arab Spring of 2011, the power of youth activism cannot be underestimated. Good governance can only be sustained by a politically active society - this is the only way that the agency of civil society will be infused into political institutions (Institute for Security Studies, 2020).

SIGNIFICANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND CHALLENGES THEY FACE IN ZAMBIA

Zambia is one of the poorest countries in the world with nearly 68% of the total population living below the UN poverty threshold. Predictably, the rural population makes up most of the poor (Munalula et al., 2018). Political analysts forecast that poverty levels are expected to increase due to poor fiscal management by the current government, making the vision of attaining the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) futile (Afro Barometer Report, 2019).

Civil society organizations' main objective is to provide avenues of promoting and influencing social change in the process of national development and sensitizing citizens so that people can link the services they access from government such as health, education, water, and sanitation to the way resources are being managed, that is, linking expectations with capacity. This is one of the ways of educating the masses so that they begin to see development as a framework of achieving other freedoms (Sen, 1999).

In Zambia's thirty years of multi-party trajectory, civil society organizations can mainly be categorized as Western donor-dominated who have played a seminal role in ensuring that excesses of the state such as abuse of power and poor fiscal discipline are exposed. Civil society has demonstrated their commitment to continue promoting quality education for all as well as being voices of the voiceless masses. This unwavering stance coupled with the fact that most civil society organizations are donor-funded has often led to clashes with government who usually accuse them of leaning on the ideological orientations of their donors, and hence operating as front organizations for the so-called 'imperialist forces' (Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020). Civil society organizations have been encouraging dialogue as an avenue of informing policy, that is, through engagements such as workshops, briefings, public meetings, and open debates. Media platforms that have a wider coverage such as community radio stations are particularly useful due to their availability in all districts of Zambia. Other platforms that have recently gained traction among citizens include social media such as Face Book, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. Civil society has consistently preached non-violence as a tool to engage and democratize. As vital drivers of change, the civil society's work has enabled citizens to assess their governments' performance and hold those in power to account (Munalula et al., 2018).

This way, civil society has brought a rich epistemology to Zambian politics: a dynamic epistemology embedded in justification of political activities which help in countering false propositions that are often peddled by the state. Civil society have also invested in science diplomacy which seeks to bridge the world through science, that is, the use of scientific collaborations among organizations to address global commons. Key among these initiatives is to develop policies for sustainable development, mitigation mechanisms on climate change and an appreciation of the universality of science. Therefore, what unites civil society is a political inquiry with an explicit emancipatory purpose. The idea of this unity is to uncover the potential for a fairer system of class relations resulting from already existing practices that would expand the human rights discourse (Hinsch and Stenonians, 2006). Linklater (2007) explains that emancipation demands national as well as international interactions guided by open, inclusive, and non-coercive

dialogue about the ties that bind communities. Like post-colonialism, the critical theory agenda provides an instrument for the powerless masses to advance more equitable types of state relations. Most crucially for contemporary politics, critical theory combats the classical international relations theories, (realism and liberalism) and shines a light on how they feed the imbalances of an unjust global order by failing to question their foundational claims. Like science, critical theory is marked by the awareness that modernity is an unfinished project in its potential for accomplishing human freedoms. The dynamic nature of human development is like science which has no endpoint to its research; evolution of ideas and practices is an on-going project (Medawar, 1979).

Key facet areas of the civil society in Zambia

The significance of civil society in Zambia can be summed up in five of the following ways. First, they are local and Zambian, that is, they are invested in and committed to the country. Since they are local, they are sensitive to the Zambian context and responsive to local people's needs and complexities. This way, they supplement government efforts in the provision of education, health, and social services though in a small way due to their limited capacity. However, standing up for the poor is not always viewed in good light by the state. While educating people is a good initiative on the part of the civil society, it may not always be so for the regime(s). Authoritarian regimes prefer to keep their population illiterate so that they could perpetuate their brutal rule over a docile population. Tyrants are usually not comfortable with an educated population because from their point of view, an educated and enlightened citizenry is difficult to govern (Sishuwa, 2019).

Second, civil society has developed collaborative approaches in terms of partnering with the government and other stake holders to improve policy and practice. By providing support, these partnerships make it possible for the civil society to bring about tangible change. For instance, civil society organizations contributed to the advocacy to demand for an expanded Bill of Rights in the Zambian constitution. Through their advocacy with partners, civil society organizations also contributed to Zambia's qualification for debt cancellation in 2005 under the category of Highly Indebted Poor Countries program, HIPC (NCA Strategy Paper, 2016). In 2020, civil society organizations led a fierce campaign against governments' maneuvers to pass an ill-fated constitution amendment *Bill number 10* through parliament. The 'evils' of the infamous *Bill 10* among others, included the vague but otherwise dubious clauses which sought to increase executive powers and subsequently reduce the powers of oversight institutions such as parliament and the judiciary. Civil society and other stake holders such as the Catholic Church of Zambia warned that if passed, *Bill*

10 would destroy the very fabric of democratic governance. Their campaigns were able to bear fruits as *Bill 10* was defeated in parliament. However, this influence that civil society yield, does not always sit well with the government who perceive their actions to be subversive (Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020).

Third, civil society have endeavored to build trust with the public by being credible, independent, and committed to the best interests of the population. Because of trust, they can successfully mobilize citizens to support or reject government programs. For instance, an NGO called, Alliance for Community Action (ACA) advocates for government accountability and is active in organizing and leading protests demanding for good governance. Another NGO called, Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia (FAWEZA) advocates for the protection of the rights of minorities and an improved quota system for women to enhance their participation in democratic discourse and governance. Affirmative action is also encouraged as an alternative method to redress the inequalities and injustices suffered by minorities. However, the trust that civil society enjoy from citizens is not usually a welcome development to the state who see this as a threat to their legitimacy (FAWEZA, 2020).

Fourth, civil society harness networks within the country as well as internationally to build connections and influence debates and decisions in a constructive manner. For instance, they get support from international donors to fund community-based projects with aid from Norwegian organizations and from British charities such as OXFAM. This way, they help the government to meet its obligations to provide services at grassroots level. However, these international connections do not usually sit well with governments due to paranoia about the real intentions of civil society networks overseas, that is, possible conspiracy with opposition political parties and 'imperialists' to undermine the regime (FAWEZA, 2020).

Fifth, civil society research responds to Zambia's priorities and therefore, relevant in informing policy and practice. It is argued that the best solutions for the country can only be defined when accurate information and critical analysis has been conducted. For instance, an NGO called, Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) provides periodic reports of the Rural Basket (household food research) to encourage structural change as part of the efforts to alleviate poverty. Another NGO, Transparency International Zambia (TIZ), provides annual updates to the population on corruption related matters. By highlighting these shortcomings, the civil society helps the government to see where developmental gaps lie so that necessary remedies could be provided. On the flip side of the coin, this same effort by civil society may be construed suspiciously by government as an attempt to discredit it to the international community in a bid to influence regime change (CPI Report, 2018).

RESULTS

Munalula et al. (2018), explains that in terms of donor funding, it has been observed that much of the international aid goes through the government because donors prefer to channel their funds through the state. The main reason for this is that the state has a higher capacity and more mechanisms to reach out to areas of the country where NGOs may not access. Donors opine that it is much easier to hold government to account than the individual NGOs. The capacity issue is the biggest weakness of NGOs. Therefore, collaboration between the state and civil society is necessary because on one hand, the government does not have enough resources for the implementation of all its projects, while on the other hand, civil society organizations are usually too small and confined only to selected parts of the country.

As Munalula et al. (2018) has pointed out, an insufficient resource base from government means that the state needs support from NGOs to fill up that gap. It is this limitation from both sides that underscore the need for cooperation, after all, they all claim to be championing the cause of the Zambian population. These collaborations have become more relevant following the New Policy Agenda (NPA) that came into effect at the beginning of the new millennium. The NPA requires active stake holder participation if donor funding is to be sustained. For the donors, this is a critical evaluation threshold for further aid to continue flowing to Zambia (Kaliba, 2014).

This requirement by donors means that the state is left with no option but to use all necessary means to cooperate with civil society. In this vein, the government has set up platforms at district and provincial levels where state officials periodically meet with civil society and other stake holders such as the business community to provide appraisals on the donor-funded developmental projects. Analysts, however, argue that government's invitations of civil society for participation is purely cosmetic and meant only to fulfill the donor's criteria for continued funding. Political observers point out that government invitations of civil society are often done when major decisions have already been made, thereby rendering the contributions from NGOs merely as window dressing (Kaliba, 2014). From these deliberations, it can be argued that a major criticism of the government's higher-capacity mechanisms lies in its purported advantage: that it has greater capacity to reach out to the remotest areas of the country where civil society cannot reach - which also means that it has a higher capacity to engage in propaganda politics that would potentially ruin the reputation of civil society and thereby jeopardize their developmental agenda.

DISCUSSION

Zambians recognize that unlike under previous

governments, political space under the current regime is rapidly closing. This poses an existential risk to the hard-won independence freedoms mainly due to a general lack of political will. Most people, however, are not prepared to sacrifice their rights of freedom of speech, but they are also wary of openly confronting the powers that be. Statistics by the Afro Barometer Report (2019) shows that at least 70% of the population believe that the current government is not forthright in handling the fight against corruption, while a similar proportion say that they fear retaliation or other negative consequences if they report incidences of corruption. The World Bank Report (2018) indicates that Zambia's fiscal management practices do not favor an upward economic growth (World Bank Report, 2018). For instance, the annual economic performance indicators conducted by the Zambia Statistical Agency revealed an alarming increase in the national inflation rate from 15.7% in April 2020 to 22.7% in April 2021 (Zambia Statistical Agency, 2021). This means that fewer people are getting access to basic social services needed to sustain their daily lives. The gap between the rich and the poor is therefore, getting wider. The civil society argues that this 'manufactured poverty' by the regime is for purposes of exploiting economic problems to achieve political ends. In a climate of high inflation, acute poverty, and deprivation, it becomes much more convenient for the regime to engage in voting buying and bribery of citizens. This pattern of events makes the election triumph of the ruling party officials a foregone conclusion (Schaffer, 2007).

The Afro-Barometer Report (2019) shows that in democratization, ordinary people's satisfaction with the way democracy is working in the country has sunk from 68% in 2012 to a staggering 49% in 2017. Analysts have expressed fears that the country is fast sliding into a dictatorship. Statistics also indicate that there is a considerable decline in the freedom of speech and association. The Afro-Barometer Report (2019) indicates that a percentage of people expressing a need to be 'careful what you say about the government' has increased from 62% in 2012 to 72% in 2017. Only 36% of the population of Zambia feel free to criticize the government (*ibid*). In general, citizens seem inclined to judge the extent of the growth of democracy according to the quality of elections. Data also shows that incompetent regimes generally dissent the work of the civil society compared to regimes that are more accountable and transparent (Mills, 2019).

Part of the other challenge in Zambia seems to be that most of the population is trapped into cultural dogmas and orthodoxy. The population is consumed with state-backed Christian theologizing, religious obsessions and intoxication leading to religious fanaticism - all at the expense of economic development. A strong belief in superstitions, witchcraft and magic has taken a new twist: politicians promise miracles to an impoverished population and so do the false priests, false evangelists,

and prophets. Religious indoctrinations and illusions have implicitly encouraged laziness among the citizens due to the naïve belief that their poverty will cease with divine intervention (Mills, 2010). Due to high levels of illiteracy and poverty, some bogus prophets and crooked church leaders have been riding on a culture of Christian fanfare to exploit vulnerable souls. These self-styled prophets have found a fertile ground among the passive population whom they use as easy prey to swindle their money in the name of the church and prayers, under the guise of providing so-called 'anointing holy oil'. In Zambia, the church which was traditionally considered as the pylon of civil society organizations has apparently sold out. The reputation of the church nowadays seems to be in tatters: the church is highly perceived to be full of religious morons - conmen and women purporting to be priests, bishops, and prophets. The Zambian church today, or the religious fraternity, has lost much respect from ordinary citizens due to the perception that religion is now a conduit of 'get-rich-quick' scammers. It can be argued that the church appears to be learning the craft of crookedness from the current regime in power, a regime that is notoriously known by a cross section of citizens to be an uncharitable entity of elites - a den of thieves masquerading as a government (News diggers Newspaper, 25 January 2020).

Could it just be a coincidence that most polities that are deeply embedded in cultural dogmas are also the least in achieving world literacy levels? Could it also just be a coincidence that most communities that believe in superstitions, witchcraft, magic, and who claim to be highly religious are also the poorest in the world? These are fundamental questions that need to be explored if the narrative on Zambia's growth is to gain traction. Education is a necessary tool that would bring in the freshness of ideas to reform outmoded and otherwise primitive cultural and religious dogmas. Political theorist, Frantz Fanon offers a challenge when he points out that each generation must, out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it (Fanon, 1952).

In Zambia, everything seems to rise and fall with leadership. When citizens get their leadership right, they get everything right. The shortage in Zambia is not a shortage of resources but a shortage of sound leadership which is manifesting itself in a shortage of other things as well. When one sees disease (such as cholera) in Zambia, one is not seeing a disease, but seeing a death of leadership and that is the first thing that needs to be cured. How do we cure this? It is by ensuring that Zambia is put on a path to free and fair elections, through electoral reforms, so that a trajectory to new elections produces poll results that are beyond contestation. That is why civil society counts on international observers - for instance, in Africa through the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and in the wider world, the European Union (EU), and the UN. The civil society counts on these bodies to put a case for

good governance and for free and fair elections (Mills, 2019).

Conclusion

Zambia is at a crossroads in terms of its measure on good governance. The country faces a choice of futures between democratic deepening and authoritarian backsliding. The study revealed the roller coaster relationship that has existed between the state and the civil society in the last thirty years but also showed some areas of their collaboration. Successive governments do not seem to have realized that the historical links that exist between the state and civil society need to be harnessed and harvested. This can only be possible by restoring good relations so that they can mutually build the state. The acrimony has continued largely because the governments have failed to live up to their billing. In particular, the current regime which took office in 2015 has performed worse than any previous regime across all governance thresholds. Unlike previous governments, the current regime has failed to demonstrate that it is genuinely committed to respecting human rights, honoring the rule of law and being accountable. More concerning is the fact that the regime threatens to undo the democratic progress that previous regimes steadfastly built upon. A convergence of troubling trends seems evident. For instance, the quality of elections has deteriorated since 2015, while institutions such as the police service, the electoral commission and the judiciary have seemingly lost their independence. Political space for free expression has shrunk considerably. The hesitance by the population to challenge the authorities has been taken as a blank cheque by the regime to step by step, deconstruct the rule of law. Government often labels critical voices from civil society as people with ulterior motives bent on destabilizing the state. The study showed that incompetent regimes generally dissent the work of the civil society compared to regimes that are more accountable and transparent. The study also found that consolidation of democracy goes beyond the civil society – it requires the active participation of the general citizenry. Critically, education for all is a vital component of the development agenda, and yet currently, the country has very low literacy levels compared to world literacy averages. Also noted in the study, was the fact that civil society needs to forge more collaborations with other stakeholders if they are to successfully champion the cause of the population.

The international community also has a responsibility to come to Zambia's aid when democratic tenets are being trampled upon by the regime, particularly in the case of the current authoritarian regime. While national sovereignty must be respected, it must be borne in mind that if the government itself is undermining the rule of law and the rights and safety of its own citizens, then it will

already have undermined the grounds for sovereignty in a democratic dispensation. The more we have states that can continue down this path unchallenged, the fewer voices there will be left to speak out against such infractions, and the more leaders elsewhere will be motivated to preserve their stay in office through illicit means. The study also revealed that the active participation by civil society in highlighting bad governance traits has worked as a deterrence for further entrenchment of regime authoritarianism. For instance, civil society organizations have noted with concern that the 2016 presidential polls were the most violent in Zambia's history and forecast rising political instability if this trend is not reversed. Rather than heed this warning, the government appears determined to put this prophecy to the test.

Furthermore, the study found that in the absence of genuine and honest political leadership, people will find refuge in conmen of all hues purporting to be religious clergymen and women given that political elites are too obsessed with personal aggrandizement. Regime survival interests have been placed above the interests of state survival. The attitude and disposition of the political ruling class in Zambia today resembles what Noam Chomsky would refer to as, 'a band of mafias' disguised as saviors of the population. The study further noted that the point of protest by civil society is to raise public awareness to put a spotlight on injustices, and to make the powers that be uncomfortable so that they are prompted to act. In fact, throughout the history of Zambia, it has often only been in response to protests and civil disobedience that the political system has even paid attention to marginalized communities. In this context, social media today is a powerful tool that has proved to be useful in information dissemination to challenge the political status quo. This way of creating awareness ensures that gradually, the aspirations of citizens translate into specific laws and institutional practices, and in a democracy, that only happens when citizens elect a government that is responsive to their demands. The challenge for Zambian citizens is to rise to the occasion by joining hands with civil society if the country is to achieve its lofty human rights and economic growth ambitions.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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Full Length Research Paper

Politics by other means: Protests in Ethiopia (2015 -2018)

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Protest has been employed by those who lack access to the resources of organized pressure groups and/or by those whose values conflict sharply with those of the dominant elite. It has been a means of politics by other means. The use of protest as other means of politics in Ethiopia was more pronounced and recurring between the years 2015 and 2018. However, the problem still is little is known about the root causes of the protests. Despite the vast news reporting on the protests, there is little or no comprehensive analysis on the fundamental causes of the protests. Much of the news reporting on the protests focus on immediate causes and overlooked or failed to present a systematized analysis of the fundamental causes. This paper, therefore, aimed at explaining the fundamental causes of the protests in a systematized manner. Thus, the research methodology is explanatory approach. The study employed case study, protest event analysis (PEA), content analysis and historical research methods to formulate inductive reasoning from separate events and incidents in the effort to unearth the underlying causes of the political protests between 2015 and 2018. Theories of social revolution and empiricism are used to put in perspective separate incidents and events in the effort to build up the case. The content analysis and protest event analysis (PEA) revealed that the underlying empirical causes for political protests in Ethiopia during the period under consideration emerged from structural, institutional, ideological contradictions and weakness resulting in marginalization, economic dogmatism, parochial political culture, strategic exclusion, ideological hegemony and weak institutional set ups. These resulted in politicized discontent and eventually political violence.

Key words: Political protest, theories of revolution, protest in Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

Political protest as a political activity has been expressed in the form of demonstrations (peaceful and violent), civil resistance/civil disobedience, social movement, strikes and even violence in the modern political history of human kind. It is usually undertaken by those who lack access to the resources of organized pressure groups and /or by those whose values conflict sharply with those

of the dominant elite (Whitaker, 2015).

Political protest has been used for years as an instrument to bring about among other things decolonization, democratization, and racial equality (Gurr, 1971; Betts, 1998; Foran, 2005; Adom, 2019). It has been a means of politics by other means (Clausewitz, 1976). Almost all countries of the world have gone

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through political protest/social movements to take their current shapes. The American Revolution (1765-1783) in the USA, the famous French Revolution (1789-1799), the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) in Russia, Gandhi's Salt March in India (1930), the civil right movements in USA, South Africa's antiapartheid protest, the Arab Spring in 2011 in the Middle East are only few of the illustration of political protests that shaped the world.

Ethiopia is not exception to this political phenomenon. Only recently, it had been under political protests between 2015 and 2018. Most of the news reports and commentaries on the political protest fall short of comprehensive analysis. There is no available academic work on the fundamental causes of the protests. This paper, therefore, cognizant of that academic lacuna, aimed at explaining the fundamental causes of the protests.

Relative Deprivation, Resource mobilization, mass-society, structural-strain and political process theories are employed to put in perspective separate incidents and their causes in Ethiopia during the period under consideration. The theories are also employed to help improve content validity and construct validity of the paper through theoretical and empirical convergent validity. The paper consists of an introduction, methodology of the research, a brief background about the protests under consideration; it looks into the theoretical frame works to understand perspectives of political protests, and the paper also recollects the pedigree of political violence in Ethiopia's history; empirical conditions in Ethiopia within the purview of theories of protest are explained. The Results and discussion section revealed the fundamental causes of the protests and the last section is recommendations and conclusions.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis and explanatory methodology. Qualitative design was selected because it is important to understand the difference between stated policies and implemented policies, theories and realities. It better helps understand process which is the unit of analysis in this study and helps to formulate inductive reasoning from separate events. "Qualitative methods are useful here, since they help to identify plausible explanatory mechanisms and refine them; allow less plausible mechanisms to be eliminated as well" (Franck, 2002: 11).

The study employed case study, content analysis, protest event analysis (PEA) and historical research designs in combination. The case study method helped to understand the characteristics of the causes of the protests (2015-2018) of the two largest ethnic groups (Oromo and Amhara) in Ethiopia. And the utilization of historical research methods benefited the paper with past available data to study, interpret and understand past events. Content analysis, as 'a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use', was also employed. Through content analysis the theories of protest, policy papers, interviews of leaders and the vast news reporting are analysed in their proper contexts (Krippendorff, 2004: 18).

The research employed inductive analysis whereby conclusions are only be made from data that would be collected in due course of the research process through text, document and content analysis. Document review and analysis are important techniques employed in this study. This study only covers the political protest in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018. Based on explanatory approach to research, it explained the underlying causes for the political protest in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018 using social movement theories and empirical realities. "Very often, the introduction of explanatory frameworks that take a broad spectrum of causal factors into account goes hand in hand with the use of case studies in their empirical application" (Blatter and Haverland, 2012: 8).

Prior researches on the subject at hand are hardly available. Those available are highly limited to newspaper commentaries, interviews, positions, press releases. This may possibly compromise the quality of the paper. It limited any possibility of triangulation there by reducing the problem of construct validity. In the effort to improve construct validity; this paper used theories, policy documents as reference of reliability and validity. This ensures content convergence and divergence. "Explanatory approach also allows for taking broader sets of theoretical approaches into account and collecting more finely grained empirical evidence" (Blatter and Haverland, 2012: 8). This also helps to legitimately infer the operationalizations in the paper to the theoretical constructs on which those operationalizations were based. This paper is assumed to be a droplet in the ocean of knowledge of conflict, social movement and political protests. The piece may be important to a range of stockholders like policy makers, researchers, educationalists who are concerned with the Ethiopian politics in particular and by extension third world politics. This tinny study would serve as a spring board for further research on the subject.

Theories of political protest

Empirical data will be interpreted and analysed through the prism of deprivation and relative deprivation, mass society, structural-strain, resource mobilization and political process theories to explain and understand the underlying and immediate causes of the current unrest in Ethiopia. This writing goes through theories of political protest to dissect why and how social discontent turned out to be violent in Ethiopia. Theoretical prisms are important to analyse the situation in perspective as "nothing is as practical as a good theory" (Olson, 1991: 17). Relative Deprivation, Resource mobilization, mass-society, structural-strain and political process theories are indeed as good theories as are empirical realities providing theoretical foundation to the issue under consideration. Thus, in what follows, this paper will be looking into these theories about violence.

Deprivation theory

Deprivation theory argues that political protests have their foundations among people who feel deprived of some good(s), services and/or resource(s) (Morrison, 1978). According to this approach, individuals who are lacking some goods, services, or comfort are more likely to take to the street to improve (or defend) their conditions (Morrison, 1978).

The feeling of deprivation cannot be explained in absolute terms. Because lack of some goods, services and/ or resources create deprivation to some groups and more so than to others. It will not be good enough reason to cause political protest in its own right (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977). This means one needs an additional theoretical explanation to understand the cause of political protests. That brings to the concept of relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1971; Morrison, 1978).

Relative deprivation theory

The theory of relative deprivation underlines that relative deprivation causes political protest when groups feel that there is inconsistency between their values, desires and their environment's manifest value potentialities (Gurr, 1971). Value prospects/desires are the goods and conditions of life to which people suppose they are fairly entitled. The determinants of value potentialities are to be appeared extensively in the social, political and physical surroundings; they are the stipulations that decide people's known possibilities of obtaining or retaining the norms they justifiably desire to achieve. So, any discrepancy between value prospects and value potentialities or discrepancy between expectation and actuality results in frustration which again leads to aggression to secure expectation (Gurr, 1971).

Relative deprivation is a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations which is defined as the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled and their value capabilities which are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining, given the social means available to them (Gurr, 1971:13). Societal conditions that increase the average level or intensity of expectations without increasing capabilities increase the intensity of discontent. Among the general conditions that have such effects are the value gains of other groups and the promise of new opportunities (Gurr, 1971:13).

The frustration resulted from deprivation in relative reference to other groups and dissonance between actual experience and the principles of equity, anomie in estimating potential opportunities resulting in political protest and ultimately conflict. Groups protest or revolt against those who they perceive has more. They do not immediately take concrete measures to resolve the problem related to the sources of deprivation. It is primarily psychological. It is not escorted with a clear ideology for the social system; a sufficient level of understanding and reflection on the contrast between the social and cultural conditions of the privileged and those of the deprived, and as a result does not have a clearly articulated solution to the problem (Gurr, 1971).

Mass-society theory

Mass-Society theory argues that social movements are made up of individuals in large societies who feel insignificant or socially detached/marginalized. "Mass society is a system in which there is high availability of a population for mobilization by elites" (Kornhauser, 1959: 33). As detailed in the 'results and discussion' section of the paper, if we take what was happening in Ethiopia where there is a large chunk of unemployed young individuals who were feeling insignificant and socially detached, the political protest provides sense of empowerment and belonging. Social movements, according to this theory, provide a sense of empowerment and belonging that the movement members would otherwise not have (Kornhauser, 1959). In fact, the key to joining the movement was having a friend or associate who was a member of the movement. The *bandwagon* effect is paramount that friends jump in political protest because they have friends who have been already participating in the protest and because the protest provides a sense of empowerment and belonging (Kornhauser, 1959).

Structural-strain theory

Structural-Strain theory figures out six factors that encourage development of social movement /Political protest. Smelser (1962) opines that structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of solution, precipitating factors, lack of social control and mobilization are factors that facilitate political protest. Conducive structure with in the existing structure that gives space for people to

discuss societal problems and challenges enables the society to develop inception for political protest. Then, the failure of the existing structure to solve discontents leads people to experience deprivation. When the existing structure fails to address those concerns, it leads to the growth and spread of an alternative solution. One of the alternative solutions is called protest (Smelser, 1962) and/or rebellion (Andersen and Taylor, 2009). But discontent usually requires a catalyst (often a specific event) - precipitating factor to turn it into protest and will only be successful if there is lack of social control to make mobilization. By lack of social control Smelser (1962) means that the entity that is to be changed must be at least somewhat open to the change and allow, knowingly/unknowingly, mobilization which is the actual organizing and active component of the movement; people do what needs to be done but if the social movement is quickly and powerfully repressed, it may never materialize.

Resource-mobilization theory

Resource-Mobilization theory emphasizes the importance of resources in social movement development and its success. Resources are understood here to include: knowledge, money, media, labour, solidarity, legitimacy, and internal and external support from power elite. The theory argues that social movements develop when individuals with grievances are able to mobilize sufficient resources to take action. The emphasis on resources offers an explanation why some discontented/deprived individuals are able to organize while others are not. The basic underlying assumptions of this theory are rational actors (actors calculate cost and benefit of joining a protest), the availability of network, the importance of the aggregated resource and continuity of leadership, the availability of social movement entrepreneurs and protest organizations. (Cragun et al., 2014, 375).

Political process theory

Cragun et al. (2014, 375, 376) argue that Political process theory is similar to resource mobilization theory in many regards, but tends to emphasize on political opportunities. Political process theory argues that there are three vital components for movement formation: insurgent consciousness, organizational strength, and political opportunities. Insurgent consciousness refers to the ideas of deprivation and grievances development. The idea is that certain members of society feel like they are being mistreated or that somehow the system is unjust. The insurgent consciousness is the collective sense of injustice that movement members (or potential movement members) feel and serves as the motivation for movement organization. Organizational strength goes in line with resource-mobilization theory where in order for asocial movement to organize it must have strong leadership and sufficient resources. Political opportunity refers to the receptivity or vulnerability of the existing political system to challenge. Political opportunities include growth of political pluralism, decline in effectiveness of repression, elite disunity; internally fragmented leading factions, a broadening of access to institutional participation in political processes, and support of organized opposition by elites. The three elements of political process theory are equally important to ignite protest and for its success (Cragun et al., 2014).

Historical pedigree of political violence in Ethiopia: The 1974 Ethiopian revolution

Political protests in the run up to the 1974 Ethiopian revolution are important historical incidents to explain the pedigree of 'protest as another means of politics in Ethiopia'. 'Protest as another means of

politics' (Clausewitz, 1976) got expression through the Ethiopian student movement, the Eritrean armed struggle, peasant rebellion in Gojam and Bale ultimately culminating into the 1974 Ethiopian revolution resulting in the down fall of Emperor Haile Selassie I and the coming into power of the Derg Regime. Opposition to the imperial regime reached its peak in February 1974, when the Ethiopian masses from almost all circles made a serious strikes, protests and demonstrations and demanded for radical changes. Opposition against the regime included those from the army, the Ethiopian teachers' association, and the taxi-drivers. The popular revolt ultimately brought to an end to the rule of the monarchy in Ethiopia on September 12, 1974 (Geberu, 2009; Andargachew, 1993; Young, 1997; Prunier and Ficquet 2015).

Prunier et al. (2015: 211) in explaining the cause of the 1974 Ethiopian revolution that brought the down fall of the last Emperor of the country, Haile Selassie I, opined "that it (the revolution) came from the incapacity of a post feudal socio-political system to modernize itself when faced with the challenges of the transformations of the second half of the twentieth century". It is true that the monarchy failed to entertain socio-economic and political transformation demands and expectations. There was a yawning gap between what Gurr (1971) referred to as 'value capabilities and value expectation' resulting in frustration aggression. The structure became inherently nonresponsive to such frustration-aggressions.

Messay (2011), in explaining the causes for the collapse of the imperial regime and the political assent of the military, posits that the structural causes stem from the lack of reforms of social systems based on chronic inequality and exploitation; and the rigid and outdated socio-political structures, both highly propitious to the build-up of popular discontent and elite conflicts. In addition to the structural causes, the inflationary trends such as the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict and the increase in the price of oil, severe famine in provinces of Wollo and Tigray (1972-1973), the education sector review (1971) that suggested reduction in enrolment and advocated universal education up to only fourth grade were immediate causes of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution.

Senility and conflicts within the ruling elite created the condition of 'the structural -strain' and political opportunities for political protest. "Haile Selassie's autocracy had not only been buffeted and discredited by internal and external opposition but also its head, the monarch, had become too old and senile to employ even his old skills effectively" (Andargachew, 1993: 58).

The structural and immediate causes illuminated above were instrumental for the total collapse of the *ancien regime* but failed to address the absence of any obvious successor to it. That gave way to a group of around 106 military officers to fill in the power vacuum. These military officers established the Provisional Military Administrative Council and the Provisional Military Government, also called Derg (the Amharic word for committee).

The Derg ruled Ethiopia for 17 years. Despite a short-lived euphoria resulted from land reform, the regime deteriorated to crisis. In addition to a fast-declining human right records and economic collapse, politico-military crisis was said to be at the centre of the causes for the collapse of the regime (Andargachew, 1993).

The politico-military crisis of the state, which is, arguably, the most central cause for the decline and collapse of the regime, flowed from the excessively centralized and autocratic nature of the regime and from the attendant lack of the rule of law (Andargachew, 1993). That in addition to internally destabilize the regime gave rise to politicized discontent accompanied by institutional support.

According to Gurr (1971: 14) politicized discontent is a necessary condition for the resort to violence in politics. But however intense and focused the impetus to violence is, its actualization is strongly influenced by the patterns of coercive control and institutional support in the political community. Political discontent is only a

necessary but not sufficient condition for political violence of different magnitude (civil war, revolutionary movement). Dissident organizations' capacity to use political violence to realize their political aims depends both on political discontent and organizational support and degree of coercive capacity in relative to the ruling regime (Gurr, 1971).

In that light, dissident political organizations were able to effectively exploit popular discontent against the Derg regime. Furthermore, in the wake of the politico-military crisis of 1987 and after the dissident organizations like Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF) in Eritrea, the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF) in Tigray had widespread organizational support and high degree of coercive capacity compared with the regime in power. The regime in power was losing the military aid it was getting from Russia due to political reform and the end of the cold war.

The political violence in Ethiopia culminated in the collapse of the Derg regime. In 1991, the TPLF dominated Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took power. EPRDF was a coalition of four regional political parties; namely the dominant TPLF representing the Tigray region, Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) that represents the Amhara region, Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO) in Oromia region and Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) representing the Southern part of Ethiopia. EPRDF ruled Ethiopia from 1991 to 2018 under fist and iron for much of its existence (Mokaddem, 2019; Addis, 2019; Tefera, 2019). As a result, between 2015 and 2018 EPRDF faced intensified protests from the two largest ethnic groups: the Oromo and the Amhara. The next section provides preliminary background information about the protest.

Protests in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018: Background information

Protests by students began in Ginchi, a small town 80 kilometres southwest of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, when authorities sought to clear a forest for an investment project. Protests quickly spread throughout the Oromia region, home of Ethiopia's estimated 35 million Oromo, the country's largest ethnic group (Human Rights Watch, 2015). They evolved into larger demonstrations against the proposed expansion of the Addis Ababa municipal boundary, known as the "Addis Ababa Integrated Development Master Plan." (Human Rights Watch: 2015; Endalkachew: 2015). The protests expanded to Amhara region which is the second populous region in August 2016. The protest was sparked by the Wolkait Committee leaders' detention. The committee was advocating for the self-determination of those living within the Wolkait district. Wolqait is an administrative district that was part of Amhara Region before the ruling party-Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) annexed it to the Tigray Region; hence, a disputed area between the Tigray and Amhara ethnic groups. Security forces have used live ammunition to disperse largely peaceful protests, killing hundreds, and arresting tens of thousands (Human Rights Watch, 2015; Amnesty International, 2017).

While the trigger behind the protests in the Oromo and Amhara communities was not the same, Fisseha (Qtd. in Kestler-D'Amours, 2018) explained the protesters' demands had been consistent since the start of the protests and continued in the same vein: accountability for human rights abuses, the release of political prisoners, political reforms and greater freedoms. Data collected and analysed by ACLED (2017, June 17) since November 2015 points to more than 1,200 people killed in the context of the protests. This includes around 660 fatalities from state violence against protesters, 250 fatalities from riots, and more than 380 people killed following the declaration of the state of emergency in October 2016. More or less continued street protests between 2015 and 2018 eventually toppled the old leadership. That cleared the

path for Mr Abiy to become party head and prime minister (Pilling, 2019). The Fundamental causes of the protests have not yet well articulated and therefore, it is the aim of this paper to use mainly text and document analysis to explain the fundamental causes of the protests.

Ethiopia's situation between 2015 and 2018 in the prism of the theories of political protest

Using one or the other theory single-handedly would not be comprehensive enough to understand the whole situation in the country. It is important, therefore, to use the theories, illustrated above, in combination to comprehend the protests. During the period under consideration; Ethiopia with a large chunk of unemployed youth (Walta.com, 2019), over 30 million people in the education system (MOE, 2016), over 24 million people below poverty line (World Bank, 2020:9) prepared a fertile ground for the fulfilment of the three conditions of political process theory namely insurgent consciousness, organizational strength and political opportunities (Cragun et al., 2014).

Maladministration, lack of good governance, misuse of power, rent seeking behaviour of officials in all echelons of power created collective sense of injustice among the society. The resented group formed a potential for mass protest. The potential mass with available resources like, over 30 million people by 2016 in the education system, Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) and Oromo Media Network (OMN) (US based TVs- strong opponents of the government until 2018), big money from the Diaspora and foreign powers, social media activism, internal and external elite support provided the conditions for the organizational strength (resource mobilization) which is the second element to be fulfilled to cause political protest. Elite disunity in the government on the one hand, the broadening of access to institutional participation of the young though modern technological communication (TV, social media, mobile) and support of organized opposition by elites on the other provided political opportunity for political protest in Ethiopia. Therefore, one can see the conditions in Ethiopia resonated well with conditions of Political Process Theory (PPT) and Mass society Theory.

Theoretically, Ethiopia's liberal constitution allows people to discuss discontents. This is one of what is called in the phraseology of structural-stain theorist a conducive structure for political protest. The structure provided space for potential protestors to discuss among other issues about identity/border which was the immediate cause in both the Oromo and Amhara protests. Lack of good governance, maladministration, corruption, unemployment continued to be a headache to the society. A system under such condition, on the one hand, enabled insurgent consciousness; on the other hand it failed to respond to demands using the already available institutional means.

The failure of the structure, which is at the core of the 'structural stain' theory, to solve the problem causes people experience deprivation that then led to the growth and spread of an alternative solution to the problems people are experiencing -protest. Identity and border issues which were the precipitating factors turned to be successful due to lack of social control from the government providing space for protestors to mobilize. People used social media which are not under the control of the government to mobilize potential members of the protest and familiarize their cause and convince the youth to jump into the political protest. That gave the context for the *bandwagon* effect of mass-society theory. The causes of the protests resonated well with the theoretical assumptions confirming convergent and construct validities. The fundamental causes of the protests as detailed in the results and discussion section includes marginalization, ideological rigidity and contradiction, political favour-sim, parochialism, institutional weakness, and strategic exclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Empirically speaking, conditions leading up to the unrest in Ethiopia were resulted from immediate and fundamental causes. Lack of good governance, inefficient but large government, dominant party system and ideological hegemony, weak and non-responsive institutions, lack of national consensus on the federal arrangement, elite disunity, growing demand of the society and the government's failure to structurally respond to that demand were the fundamental causes resulting in the break out of the political protests. The immediate causes are related to identity questions/border issues fuelled with ethnic politics as explained above. The fundamental causes boiled down to seven major causes; marginalization (Burke, 2017; Dahir, 2016), the neither strong man nor strong institutions situation (Lefort, 2014, 2016), the ethnic politics ploy (Lefort, 2014; Leulseged, 2018; Addissu, 2019), strategic exclusion (Dewaal, 2018; Ethiopia Faces Era of One-Party Rule, 2010), ideological and structural contradictions in the system, ideological rigidity and political favouritism (Abbink, 2006; Teferi et al., 2019; Tefera, 2019).

Marginalization

Marginalization is only one form of oppression in a political and economic system. The other forms of oppression are violence, exploitation, and powerlessness. The people of Ethiopia were feeling that they were marginalized, exploited and powerless and to some extent exposed to police violence (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Burke, 2017; Dahir, 2016; BBC, 2017). Relative marginalization, exploitation and powerlessness were prevalent and were more so among the majority 30 million youth in the education system (MOE, 2016), the 24 million below poverty line (World Bank, 2020), the 10 million unemployed by the government account (Walta.com 2019). That provided the Mass society condition-a system in which there would be high availability of a population for mobilization by elites (Kornhauser, 1959).

Relative marginalization of the two biggest ethnic groups from important political posts like the office of the Prime Minister, the National Intelligence and security service, the high brass of the military ranks and files, the ministry of foreign affairs which had been headed and dominated by TPLF had been a political hot-spot and subjected to heated political debate among the opposition political parties and the educated youth equally. TPLF disproportionately held influential positions in the fields of government, economics and security, among others" (Kestler-D'Amours, 2018). The Military seemed to be totally dominated by one ethnic group where by some 95% of the top brass of the military emanate from the Tigrayan ethnic group representing about 6% of the

population (Ginbot 7, 2010). The nature of ethnic dominance that was observed during the EPRDF period (1991-2018) seemed to be more purposeful, calculated and certainly more excessive than any of the regimes in the past (Teferi et al., 2019; Tefera, 2019).

The total control of the parliament (2015-2020) by a single political party- EPRDF and its affiliates, the dismantling of opposition political parties by their weakness and the alleged insidious hand and conspiracy of the ruling party, the absence of independent and autonomous private and public media left the country and people with no alternative ways to express opinions, thoughts, and seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds and made people feel powerless and resorted to violence and protest. Horne (Qtd. in Kestler-D'Amours, 2018) explained that all of the underlying grievances about a lack of political space, a lack of ability to express dissent, came to the forefront of the protest. That certainly created a sense of marginalization among the Oromo and Amhara elites creating internal conflict in the ruling party-EPRDF. The internal struggle culminated in the ascendance of Abiy Ahmed (Prime Minister since 2018) and his team to the forefront. Abiy Ahmed's ascendance to the highest echelon of power and the measures that followed created nation-wide euphoria.

'All are equal but some are more equal than others': Selective development and underdevelopment!

According to observers of Ethiopian politics, in Ethiopia all administrative regions have equal right to develop but some regions have more rights to develop than others rendering Orwellian analogy. Regional disparities in development is said to be resulted from difference in physical resources endowment, human resources, capital accumulation, population size and infrastructural facilities. These are the objective criteria in determining the location of manufacturing firms. The regional distribution of manufacturing industries in Ethiopia, however, was attributed to "a selective hold on politics and economics" (Abbink, 2006: 174; Teferi et al., 2019) resulting in more acute skewed regional distribution particularly after 1991 (Wodajo and Senbet, 2013: 164; Kindeye, 2014: 339; Amare and Suryanaryanaraya, 2015: 48). The distribution of manufacturing firms does not seem to correspond to the regional distribution of the country's population, resource endowment, human capital and infrastructure which are the important determinants of a location of an industry. Tigray, the region where the former dominant political elite-TPLF-came from, has experienced unjustifiably better achievement than others given its distance from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia and the relatively small consumers, labour force, small population (Kindeye, 2014:339; Wodajo and Senbet, 2013: 164).

The increase in the number of L&M scale manufacturing

firms after 1991 ranges from 61 to 113% in the three populous regions of the country, Oromia, Amhara and SNNP that constitute nearly 81% of the country's population. In contrast, in Tigray, a region with only nearly 6% of the country's population, the total number of manufacturing firms has dramatically increased from just 4 before 1991 by a sheer 26 after 1991, registering a staggering 550% rise within 15 years (or approximately a 37% rise per year). Given, the pre-1991 government policies which stifled private investment in the country in general and the 17-year war waged in Tigray region in particular, one may wonder as to what were the sources of private finances in this region to result in such unprecedented percentage change in the number of private manufacturing firms, which surpasses the net percentage increases in other regions of the country combined, except the government's favouritism for the region. It should also be noted that the growth rate of private manufacturing firms in Tigray is higher than the combined growth rates in Oromia, Amhara and SNNP. (Wodajo and Senbet, 2013:164,165).

The unfairly skewed distribution of manufacturing firms resulted in unfairly skewed development, unemployment, infrastructure development confirming the Orwellian analogy of all regions have equal right to develop but some regions have more rights to develop than others. As is asserted by mass society theorists "Uneven rate of development creates highly visible differentials in economic gains, strong feelings of alienation from the existing order" Kornhauser (1959: 151). Ethiopia's unrest was sparked by unequal development record (Abbink, 2016) as unequal development resulted in a sense of marginalization that led to social turmoil and instability in the country.

The neither strong man nor strong institutions situation

Politics as an authoritative allocation of resources need a powerful man and/or strong institutions. The 'who gets what, when, how and why' (Lasswell, 1936) of a policy and a decision can only be implemented through an authoritative power and this power should be vested in a strong man and /or institutions. Ethiopia between 2012 and 2018 seemed to have neither. The gravity of power was dispersed among the military brasses, the intelligence office, regional states and the office of the prime minister with no or less powerful command post rendering the neither strong man nor strong institutions situation.

Public participation and democratizing as important strategy on one hand, building speedy, expedient, institutionally driven and centralized mechanism of decision making and its implementation on the other could only happen under a strong man and/or strong institution. Yun Sun corroborates (2013: 17) "Sound

national security decision-making requires a centralized authority able to make speedy decisions based on consistent, effective and efficient information processing and agency coordination". These conflicts with not just the collective leadership tradition of the EPRDF led government but also the neither strong man nor strong institutions situation of the state. The state was like a ship that had lost its captain, with no one in the crew able to take his place, this multipolarity at the top leads to contradictory behaviours. Furthermore, the Prime Minister Hailemariam (2012-2018) was 'a *frontman without teeth*' (Lefort, 2014). That is why the state was seeing promises made unimplemented. The government had promised at the top of its voice to do away with rent seeking behaviour in the government and lack of good governance in the soonest possible time since 2015. But these continue to be problems until Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took power from Hailemariam Desalegn (His Predecessor).

The problem in the run up to the TPLF split in 2001 and the problem happening in EPRDF between 2015 and 2018 were partly the results of the presence of neither a strong man nor strong institutions; the absence of an authoritative allocation of resources and policies and strong man and/or institutions to implement them. The existing institutions were weak and/or lack popular confidence. That is called in the phraseology of political process theorist a political opportunity-vulnerability of the existing political system to challenge.

The ploy of ethnic politics: Parochialism

Ethnic politics in Ethiopia all starts with TPLF's official agitation of struggling against what it calls 'the Amhara domination/the Shoan domination' and its divided loyalty of Tigray first, and then Ethiopia approach to politics (Henze, 1990: Interview with Melese). Ethnic politics got currency in Ethiopia for several reasons. Firstly, the Haileselassie's and Derg's regime lacked tolerance to ethnic allegiances and their suppression resulted in more loyalty to ethnicity than to the state led by autocratic regimes. Secondly, feeling of discrimination by the authority and the alleged domination by what they called 'Amhara domination' but the 'Amhara domination' was more of orchestrated by self-styled and self-interested politicians to agitate ordinary men and women by creating 'you are deprived of your privilege by the dominant Amhara' story. The TPLF ethnic politics culminated into overthrowing the Derg regime and establishing a government led by EPRDF in response to what it calls 'national oppression'. It established the right of nations, nationalities and peoples at the heart of its principle expressed in the law of the land, the constitution. It organized the majority of member states of the federation in terms of language creating a sense of ethnic politics and divided loyalty to the multinational state. "More than

two thirds of the population, those below the age of 25, have grown up in a federal system which identifies them as Oromo, Amhara... first" (Lefort, 2014). Ethnic politics continues to play an important role in politics. The 'who gets what, when, how and why' of Lasswell (1936) in politics, economics, military and other activities get to be evaluated in terms of ethnicity. Ethnic loyalty first, and then the state, has become mantra of the political game. Ethnic politics, though all started against what was called 'Amhara domination', turned out to being used to agitate Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups against what they called 'Tigray domination', creating parochial tendency among members of all ethnic groups, threatening the harmony and friendship among many ethnic groups, weakening stability in the politics of the country, threatening the integrity and unity of the multi-nation state. This game continues even under the Abiy Ahmed premiership some claiming that if there is any change at all it is the change of 'politics of domination from Tigray to an impending Oromo domination' (ICG, 2019; Yohannes, 2019). Under politicized ethnic political contexts like the Ethiopian one, the actual or perceived value gains of one or more ethnic group and the promise of new opportunities increase the intensity of discontent (Gurr, 1971) by providing Societal conditions that increase the average level or intensity of expectations without increasing capabilities. The ploy of ethnic politics was, therefore, in the calculation of the causes of the protests in Ethiopia.

Building hegemony and the tendency of suppressing diversity of opinion: Strategic exclusion

The government claimed to be building what it calls developmental state at crux of which building ideological hegemony. Hegemony by definition prevents competing ideas and power sharing. Ideological hegemony is when an ideology or way of thinking is so powerful that it dominates all other ideas in the system (Mearsheimer, 2001). That means in the effort to build hegemony the government was suppressing competitive ideas and powers which could have been alternative opinions in policy making and implementation. The government claimed to build hegemony of developmental discourse, in the Gramscian sense that it is an internalized set of assumptions, not an imposed order (De Waal, 2012). However, policy and party indoctrination documents revealed otherwise. "Politically speaking, hegemonic rule in the classical Gramscian sense was aimed at but many have 'internalized' this ideology or accept it because of intimidation or seeing no alternative" (Abbink, 2017:4). Furthermore, the strategy of building developmental ideological hegemony officially excludes the intellectual as 'wishy-washy' to developmental causes (EPRDF, 2011). Intellectuals were considered as adherent of neo-liberalism and a challenge to developmental state. "The

intellectual class is often hostile to the regime and against the developmental state paradigm. Meles, head of Ethiopian government (1991-2012), used to believe that the neoliberal paradigm was ‘the only game in town’ for intellectuals; hence a challenge” (Merkeb, 2013: n.p.). This strategic exclusion may stifle intellectual debates which prevent the venting out of popular discontent through such debates.

The government was also intolerant of ideas and positions other than its own. Those who may challenge the government are considered anti-development, anti-peace and errand boys of neo-liberalism. Crystallizing this is Mogus (2014:23, unpublished manuscript) who posits “The EPRDF government has at times demonstrated undue nervousness when criticized by external observers. The reactions are often loaded with emotive language blaming in tedious frequency advocates of neo-liberalism”. This is a clear stifling of alternative ideas and opinions. “The Ethiopian federal structure appears to be that of one-party state governance, which is characterised by highly concentrated and centralised powers maintained by totalitarian institutions such as the military, other security organs and state-controlled mass media”(Bekalu, 2017, n.p). The government’s project of building ideological hegemony of developmental democracy has been inherently alternative opinion phobic. That not only created, in the terminology of political process theorist, insurgent consciousness (collective sense of injustice within/out the party) but also drained political resources of the ruling party creating political opportunities for popular discontent and its violent expression.

In recent statements (2016), the then ruling party indicated that in its attempt to fundamentally solve problems on the ground it resolved to rejuvenate itself. But this piece recommends that the rejuvenation should be made in such a way that it would solve the socio-economic and political, institutional or lack of it and bases of the problems outlined above. The state is in a primarily a political and economic crisis. It can only be solved politically by political economic measures; such as consultation with the people and addressing their legitimate grievances, allowing political associations to be formed that can represent peoples’ interest. De Waal (2016) warns if the crisis were addressed in a security way, it would be a disaster.

In response to the political crisis, Hailemariam Desalegn EPRDF chairman and prime minister of Ethiopia (2012-2018) resigned and Abiy Ahmed got elected as EPRDF chairman and Ethiopian PM on March 27 and April 2, 2018 respectively. Following his premiership, Abiy Ahmed released political prisoners, unblocked websites and other media, suspended and reformed restrictive legislations and introduced various political reforms. On December 2019, the Prime Minister

reformed the ethnic lined coalition EPRDF into a single national Prosperity Party (PP). The prime minister’s approach towards competing nationalism seems to be pluralistic nationalism which borrows ethno-cultural group as structural device and the principle of equality and equal rights from civic nationalism. The fruits of his reform are however yet to be seen.

Economic dogmatism over political mastery

The mechanical approach of development/economics first, politics second is the beginning of the political mess up facilitating the beginning of the end. The politics of engineering is not a mechanical thing where the parts make up the whole. In fact, in politics the whole is greater than the combination of the parts unlike in mechanical engineering where the whole is exactly the sum-total of the parts. For example, the state, the *raison d’être* for modern politics, can be established as a political whole with a minimum requirement of government, population, territory and recognition (Montevideo Convention, 1933) but the state is greater than the combination of parts, it is more than the minimum four requirements. The whole is always greater than the parts. Statesmen should have that into account in their ever going and continuing state formation and nation building activities. A policy is a whole thing. It is a process of building up. In policy paradigm, it is difficult to sequence democracy and development where each seems to depend on others. Statesmen in Ethiopia deemed to deviate from that political reality. De Waal (2012: 155) quoted the late Meles as arguing that “what meaning did liberal civil and political rights have in a context of abject poverty or political chaos? Development and a strong state were prerequisites for human rights, and Ethiopia needed to establish these first”. The whole gamut of state institutions was oriented in this context that they overlooked implementing the cherished principles enshrined in the constitution the country adopted.

Economic development first and human rights second. This orientation is disastrous simply because it deprives peoples their very right that they are entitled simply because they are human beings. Human and democratic rights for the most part do need no prerequisites save the prerequisite of non-interference of the government. They are negative rights that do not need the intervention and interference of the government in any way. The only explanation for government’s failure to observe human rights is excessive economic dogmatism over political mastery. “The ‘developmental state’ model advocated by the ruling party and Zenawi marginalised any political democracy, freedoms and human rights discourse” (Abbink, 2017: 142). Economic dogmatism would not be a resolution for hundreds of thousands asking for liberty and freedom from the excessive intrusion and intervention of local governments, economic dogmatism

may not observe peoples' request for their voice be heard, economic dogmatism may not allow any opinion and thought perceived to hinder the national agenda (economic), economic dogmatism may not allow the expression of rights for economic development itself resulting in disparity in development among regions. Economic dogmatism does not even allow some ethnic groups, classes, or interest groups to ask for equitable development. Every voice that deviates from the new normal as defined by the government was rejected to be handicap and hindrance for development. This orientation is dangerous in the 21st century in which politics is instrument of an interconnected society. It is dangerous to a society as diverse as the Ethiopian one where ethnic play play inflaming role of agitation and incitement. It is dangerous to a society like Ethiopia that have for millennia kept its long-standing pride and identity of expressing itself in its way, a society where *Kurate* prevails over *Erate* (which literally means Pride prevails over food/good).

Eventually, the orientation created structural constrain by creating tension between available means to achieve democracy and human rights, in EPRDF's view it should wait for economic prerequisites on the one hand and the grassroots demand for democracy, freedom and human rights on the other hand. The means are out of balance with the goals, creating societal deviance from the available structure. This imbalance, or disjunction, between goals and structurally available means can actually compel the individual and communities into one of possible form of deviance- rebellion (Andersen and Taylor, 2009). That goes well in line with the Ethiopian situation between 2015 and 2018.

Ideological and institutional contradictions

Ideologically, the government used to believe that economic development is the panacea for all ills. Economic development used to be a question of death and life in government orientation. Anything else including issues related to democracy, human rights, the right to economic development were perceived to be hindrance to 'economic growth' by the ruling political elites and decision makers. Ideologically, the ruling party was against any political parties when it declared that its vision was installing 'a dominant party system', where it planned to eliminate oppositions and replace them with either satellite parties or a break up from EPRDF itself. The late Meles Zenawi (1991-2012) articulated this in his conversation with De waal (2018:5). He was quoted as saying "*we could have a dominant party system, as we have today, with different views expressed within the party. Or we could have competition between two parties, each of them subscribing to a hegemonic developmentalism, so that when they rotate in and out of office, the fundamentals of the national project aren't in dispute*" (Emphasis added).

Rhetorically, Ethiopia declares democracy but practically the government overlooks building democracy and democratic system; there is only democracy as a form of state and there is no democracy in the form of the government. "Democracy-while a popular slogan on state television and in policy speeches – stayed in the wings" (Abbink, 2017: 159). This resulted from the ideological and institutional contradictions; contradictions between theory and praxis, ideology and institution, *de jure* and *de facto* situations. There was contradiction and yawning gap between theories and practices of development and democracy, human rights and development, individual rights and group rights. This contradiction in ideology and institution took away both democracy and development from the people. In Gurr (1971) articulation the contradiction created discrepancy between value prospects (expectation) and actuality resulting in frustration which again leads to aggression to secure expectation. That aggression is expressed in terms of protest.

What has to be done?

Theoretically speaking, governance reform can only be effectively achieved through the combined energies and commitment of three key entities within a public sector governance system. These are the State (politicians and policymakers), the citizens (Public), and service providers (management teams in bureaucracies). Effective communication approaches diagnose the power relationships among these three groups and enable them to find ways to collaborate, coalesce, and work together to achieve governance reforms. (World Bank, 2008)

When it comes to the Ethiopian state, these entities on the one hand need to be used in careful combination, and on the other hand they are needed to be built. Particularly, the bureaucracy is needed to be built with an embedded autonomy. Implementing effective communication to create consensus among political elites, to disperse mistrust among political actors and to build civility within the political community is also recommended to realize reforms in Ethiopia. Levine (2013) observed what he called the missed opportunities in Ethiopia in 1960, 1974, 1991, 1998, 2005 and according to him the factors for the suboptimal outcomes of those initiated changes and transformation might be related to a deep-seated habit of suspiciousness and distrust, the spirit of warrior hood (the tough guy), foreign ideology emulation/fixities.

Ethiopians, Levine (2013) recommended, need to encourage public discourse with more straightforward, transparent communication to move forward without repeating the costly mistakes of the last half-century. Furthermore, he advised keeping the warrior ethos out of politics and cultivating civic courage, moving from ideological fixities to pragmatic solutions through self-understanding and self-appreciation would help move in

that direction. As indicated above, a number of things factored in the downward spiral of building democracy and democratic system resulting in political violence in Ethiopia. Marginalization, economic dogmatism, parochial political culture, ideological hegemony, strategic exclusions and weak institutional set ups among other things stood out. This means that the government should work out to strengthen institutions that are already established, establish new institutions if need be, work on democracy and development as an integral whole of the state, should work on building and developing rational patriotism through the education system, be democratic to entertain diversity in opinion. These are the means to the end: democracy and development!

Conclusion

Theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence revealed that the political protests in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018 was attributable to marginalization, parochialism, ideological and institutional contradictions, leadership and institutional failure, ideological hegemonic desire, structural rigidity and strategic exclusions. The commitment and energies of the state, the public and the bureaucracy in the building up institutions, cultivating civic culture and in collaborating, coalescing, and working together to achieve governance reforms is important as a way out to the problem.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Perspectives on state funding of political parties and the consolidation of constitutional democracy in Ghana, Africa

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Across Africa, as in Ghana, state funding of political parties continues to generate debates across academic and policy circles. Against this background, three constituencies in the Upper West Region of Ghana were selected purposely to interrogate views of the public on this development. A combined 78 participants were selected in a mixed study design through purposive and quota sampling techniques. Primary data were gathered through focus group discussions and interviews revealed that 72.2% of the respondents favoured direct state funding of political parties indicating this will make multi-party democracy vibrant and competitive. 44.2% favoured full-state funding, whilst 32.7% proposed state-private partnership funding. 27.8% however, disapproved with state funding of political parties arguing that Ghana is already burdened with poor health systems, lack of quality education and unemployment. The study further revealed that the political parties' programmes and activities proposed to be financed by the state principally include training of party agents, candidates and leaders (42.3%).

Key words: Political parties, democracy, state funding, constitution, consolidation.

INTRODUCTION

Debates on funding of political parties continue to attract attention both within academic and policy circles, especially in Africa and other developing countries where democratic systems are being consolidated. Political parties finance essentially involves legal and illegal, as well as public and private financing of electoral campaigns and other political parties' activities (Falguera et al., 2014; Magolowondo et al., 2012). According to Fernando and Biezen (2017), political parties' funding could be a direct- situation where parties are granted

access to state subsidies, or indirect financing – which includes; free access to the media (television and radio in most cases), training of party officials, tax exemption and access to state owned public spaces. Fernando and Biezen (2017) noted that in some countries in Europe and Latin America, political parties and or candidates are given financial assistance. Magolowondo et al. (2012) wrote that money lubricates the activities of political parties. They also expressed that availability and accessibility to state premises, media or vehicles by

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political parties enhances their internal structures. In their view, in some instances, the availability or lack of financial resource can decide whether a party may win or lose elections even well before they are conducted. Earlier, Kuenzi and Lambright (2005) wrote that, lack of funding weakens democratic institutions and the electoral process of a country.

Apparently, in Africa, most political parties are poorly organised and unable to make any meaningful contribution to the democratic growth of the continent (Falguera et al., 2014) due to poor funding (Rakner et al., 2007). According to Ohman (2013) and Falguera et al. (2014), in some African countries, political parties in government seemingly, abuse their access to state resources including money, personnel, publicly owned media and other communication tools to ensure they stay in power. The emerging idea is that only few countries in Africa have introduced some innovative means of public funding of political parties. Such development facilitates the disruptive phenomenon of winner-takes-all politics. Political parties thus, predominantly rely on private funding sources, and electoral campaigns are largely funded through candidates other than political parties which often results in kickbacks (Falguera et al., 2014).

Oyi et al. (2014) indicated that, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria for instance, has provision for political parties funding and in some instances, parties have been assisted financially by the state. They however, expressed that in practice not so much has been done by the state. Oyi et al. (2014) hinted that parties have been relying on private and other sources of funding including; subscriptions, fees and levies from party membership, proceeds from parties' investments, subventions and donations, among others, for the purpose of survival. This according to them, and in the absence of any effective regulation of the amount of private funding, has given rise to a situation where an individual or group finances parties and influences their course of operation. They concluded that most parties in Nigeria have become means for few political financiers to dictate the mode of awarding public works and procurement contracts.

Falguera et al. (2014) has stated that about 69% of African countries (through various modes of disbursement), provide public funding to political parties. They cited South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe among others as some of the countries where political parties benefit from public funding. Interestingly, these authorities wrote that some of the more stable African democracies including Ghana and Botswana have not implemented the call for public funding of political parties. Salih and Nordlund (2007) noted that the mode of disbursement of public funds to political parties and candidates differ from one country to another as manifested in Tanzania, South Africa and Mozambique among others.

They noted that in Tanzania for instance, each presidential candidate receives \$9600 US Dollars.

Additionally, \$1900 US Dollars is provided per constituency as a subsidy for campaign costs, together with another \$1,900 US Dollars for each constituency won by party towards administrative costs. They wrote that in South Africa, one-third of total amount is given to presidential and parliamentary candidates. Salih and Nordlund (2007) indicated that in Europe as in the case of Germany, state subsidies to political parties are the main sources of political parties funding. These authorities expressed that in Netherlands, United Kingdom and America however, private sources remain the predominant income for political parties. It could be said that the disbursement model of some of the Europeans countries has been used as a blueprint for public funding of political parties by some African countries.

As in the case of Ghana, since independence in 1957, political parties have been relying on private funding including members' contributions and donations from businesses (Magolowondo et al., 2012; Omari, 1970). However, these funds have been quite insignificant due to the level of poverty in the country. According to Centre for Democratic Development (CDD)-Ghana (2005a, b), this situation makes political parties inactive during inter-election periods and is unable to establish and maintain offices in many parts of the country. Although the Electoral Commission of Ghana supports political parties by granting them equal access to the state-owned media and limited number of vehicles during election seasons (1992 Constitution, Article 55, Clause 11-12), these forms of assistance are by no means inadequate. Lack of transparency and accountability frameworks and weak internal organisation have been cited as among the major challenges which restrain political parties from mobilising the needed financial resources to support their activities in in the country (Sakyi et al., 2015). Given this development, CDD-Ghana (2005) hinted that political parties are funded by few financiers who nonetheless control their decision-making processes which consequently undermines the principle of democracy. The general understanding is that the traditional role of political parties as "watch-dogs" of the state has been eroded. This probably could explain Gyampo's (2015) assertion that parties are the most neglected and least funded institutions as in Ghana, with the worse affected been the parties in opposition (CDD-Ghana, 2005). This has further fuelled the debates on state funding of political parties in the country.

The debates on party financing for the development of a vibrant multiparty (constitutional) democracy in Ghana, a type of democratic arrangement where rules and regulations are institutionally set to check the behaviours of legislative, judiciary, executive and governmental powers (Oquaye, 2004), predates Ghana's independence. According to Omari (1970), these debates date back to 1954 where the Cocoa Purchasing Company (CPC), a subsidiary of the Cocoa Marketing

Board (CMB) established in 1952, allegedly was said to have secretly financed the CPP in the 1954 elections. The emerging theme is that there are some political experts, who make a strong case either for or against state funding (Sakyi et al., 2015).

CDD - Ghana (2005) noted that there are competing ideas on state funding of parties. It reported that some Ghanaians oppose the funding of political parties on the grounds that the country is not financially sound and struggles to meet the financial needs of some critical sectors such as the health, education and energy. Critics also contend that state funding of political parties may breed mushroom parties some of which actually cannot contribute to the nation's democratic development but will only be targeting state funds. Gyampo (2015) wrote that governments are not willingly to fund political parties. His view was that politicians have to strive to reduce the perception of corruption against them and encourage their members to support them financially through the payment of monthly dues and special levies. He concluded that anything short of this will make political parties to continue function as weak election machines in Ghana. Others equally argue that if the state funds political parties, they will no longer feel a need in canvassing for funds from the public which forms part of their core activities (Baidoo, 2008). Similarly, there are those who think that the increasing dependence of parties on state funding makes them 'lose their societal roots' (Poguntke, 2002; van Biezen and Kopecky, 2014).

Contrarily, those who support state funding of parties express that political parties are integral part of the democratic process and governance (Van Biezen, 2004), and should be funded by the state. These advocates believe that since there is funding for various constitutional bodies in the country such as the EC, Judicial Service, Executive and the Legislature which promote democratic development and consolidation, political parties being the major stakeholders, especially in elections, should equally be funded. As noted by Gyampo (2015), the development and maintenance of extensive party structures by political parties for continuity and survival, as well as the increased use of consultants and public relation agencies in elections, have made the activities of political parties increasingly expensive in contemporary times. Westminster Foundation for Democracy WFD/CDD-Ghana (undated) noted that (multi-party) elections are costly for parliamentary contestants in Ghana. It indicated that the cost of running for political office increased by 59% between 2012 and 2016. It noted that on average, parliamentary candidates had to raise GH¢389,803 or approximately US\$85,000 in order to compete elections in their constituencies. Westminster Foundation for Democracy/CDD-Ghana (undated) concluded that given the high cost of politics in Ghana, the danger is that it may become the preserve of the elite and wealthy. Consequently, Parliamentarians will be pre-occupied with

recovering their own investment rather than serving the populace. To this effect, there are those who opine that political parties should be supported financially to ensure equality of political competitiveness as a wheel to consolidate the democratic gains in the country. Others are of the view that, Ghana with its image as a strong emerging democratic giant in Africa should be able to fund its political parties as done by countries including Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia among others (Yeboah, 2009). Saffu (2003) concluded by saying that money promotes political competitiveness, multi-party democracy, and governance. It is in this regard that Stanbury (1986:795) earlier conceived money as 'the mother's milk of politics'.

Carothers (2006) opined that democracy cannot function without political parties. The question then is, 'if constitutional democracy has been embraced as the basic philosophy for organizing the government and promoting peace and development in Ghana, why has the issue of state funding of parties not given a definitive response? The democratic growth of Ghana is evident by the growth of parliamentary seats from 192 in 1992 to 275 in 2016 (EC Ghana, 2017).

According to Boafo-Arthur (2003), Saffu (2003) and Ayee et al. (2007) among others, given the limited financial support from party supporters, public funding remains the possible option for political parties in the country. Apparently, scholarly works on the mode of party financing and its consequences, the activities that needs to be financed and the preferred body envisaged in managing funds earmarked for political parties are still quite limited in the Ghanaian context. This study would give much insight into the on- going debate on the subject and will help stakeholders to fashion out policies that will consolidate the democratic gains in the country. Probing into the problem at stake, this paper is guided by the following overriding questions:

- (1) What political parties funding sources are known to the people?
- (2) How would financing of political parties by the state impact the Ghanaian society?
- (3) What political parties' activities and programmes should be funded by the state and by what mode?
- (4) What benchmark should be satisfied before a given political party could benefit from state funding?
- (5) Which overseeing body is preferred to manage state funds envisaged for political parties?

Political parties and democratic consolidation

Political parties are free associations of persons that strive for power through the electoral process. By this means, they seek to control or influence the actions of government (Section 33 of the Political Parties Law, Act 2000 (Act 574). They participate in electoral campaigns,

educational outreach and protest actions. Political parties often espouse an express ideology or vision bolstered by a written constitution with specific goals, forming a coalition among disparate interests (Bagah, 2011). It is in this regard that Randall and Svasand (2002) describe political parties as teachers of civic education. Political parties in this sense are different from pressure groups in that, whilst pressure groups seek for the interest of their members, political parties seek political office or power.

Like any other associations, political parties have a constitution, membership rules and, usually agreed policy for their members. Those who disagree may be expelled or may resign. In countries practising multi-party democracy where there is no legal restrictions as to the number of parties that are permitted to exist, the role of political parties in consolidating democracy is immense. They nominate some of their members for elections and campaign for them. In other words, political parties principally are instruments for contesting elections to exercise political power. Thus, they organize and encourage people to participate in elections and in other political activities such as political education, political campaigns or rallies and political socialization.

Generally, as political parties recruit widely, they often serve as agents of national integration. Their membership often cut across ethnic, class and religious groups. In some countries such as Ghana, ethnic or religious parties are not allowed to operate. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana for instance, demands that, a political party in the country needed to have a national character before it could be allowed to register and operate. This means that political parties should have branches in most parts of the country with membership from all ethnic groups and regions. A party's motto or emblem cannot have ethnic, religious or tribal connotations (Article 55 (4), 1992 Constitution of Ghana). The rationale for all these is to make political parties a tool to unite people of diverse backgrounds to forge national unity. Nonetheless, all their activities require substantial funding.

The preceding discussions highlight the impetus for funding political parties. Falguera et al. (2014) however, have cautioned that whilst money is required for the growth and development of multi-party democracy, it can also negatively influence the political process and decision through the buying of votes. Whitehead (2002) earlier expressed that due to the expensive nature of political campaigns, elections themselves could be a source of corruption. He contends that politicians often seek to raise funds or win votes in various illicit ways such as the control of the procurement process by the government. The implication is that funding of political parties has to be well managed and monitored to avoid abuse. As voiced by Ohman (2013), the nature of politics varies significantly between different regions and countries. He however, admits that in all parts of the world, money matters in a political decision making process. He contends that credible and genuine elections

and electoral campaigns demand management of political finance. He noted that defective management of political finance has the potential to skew competition between contestants.

The foregoing debates underscore the relevance of Ferguson's (1983) Investment Theory of Political Parties which underpinned the study. The Theory recognizes the critical role money (investment) play in party politics. It posits that business elites play instrumental role in political systems. The thrust of the Theory is that money influences politics and this is due to the cost of acquisition of information. The Theory was in reaction to the Voter Realignment Theory which envisaged voters to play a leading role in political discourses. The Theory maintains that where few wealthy individuals invest in political parties, they dominate the political system and influence the state and the course of governance. Ferguson (1995) therefore suggests innovative ways of funding political parties to avoid manipulation of the political system by the well-off investors. He proposes that the costs of financing political parties should be subsidised by the state either by providing staff to politicians or franking mail among others.

The relevance and implication of Ferguson's (1983) Investment Theory of Political Parties to the recent study is that political parties cannot exclusively be funded by the state; neither could the responsibility of financing be borne solely by individual voters or citizens. What this suggests is that funding of political parties should be seen as a shared responsibility involving the state, cooperate bodies and voters or individuals. Constitutional democracy, championing by political parties as in Ghana and promoting broad-based human development demands a critical analysis of their growth in terms of financing of their activities and programmes as espoused by Falguera et al. (2014). In the view of Bohman (2004), democracy demands much of its citizens and thereby raises the standard of political legitimacy. Democracy thus, facilitates collective public decision-making for the mutual benefit of the populace.

METHODOLOGY

Study locality

The study locality is the Upper West Region of Ghana. The Region covers a geographical landmass of approximately 18,476 square km. This is about 12.7% of the total landmass of Ghana. It shares political boundary with the Republic of Burkina Faso to the East, Upper East Region to the east and Northern Region to the south. The Region has 11 administrative Districts namely; Wa Municipal, Wa East, Wa West, Nadowli-Kaleo, Dafiama-Busie-Issa, Jirapa Municipal, Lambussie, Lawra Municipal, Nandom, Sissala East and Sissala West District Assemblies. The Region currently has the same 11 political parliamentary constituencies namely; Wa Central, Wa East, Wa West, Nadowli-Nadowli, Jirapa, Lambussie-Karni, Lawra, Nandom, Sissala East and Sissala West (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The Upper West Region was chosen because it fits into the two main variables of the study. These are vibrant activities

of registered political parties and poverty level of the electorate of the Region. This poverty phenomenon has an impact on party members/sympathizers in contributing towards the financing of their respective political parties.

This study limits itself specifically to three Constituencies namely Wa Central, Nadowli-Kaleo and Sissala East. The three Constituencies were purposely selected based on their peculiarity in terms of having both party office (functional party office) and party executives (functional executives) (Upper West Regional Electoral Commission, 2018). They therefore have party structures for easy access to information. Besides, their locations in the Region represent the three major ethnic groups, that is, Dagabas, Waalas and Sissalas. Such selection ensured diversity in the views of respondents.

Wa Central Constituency

The Wa Central Constituency was chosen as one of the study area because of its vibrant political activities in the Region. Wa Central with Wa as the Regional Capital is strategic, in that it has more infrastructure, large population and seasoned politicians including the Regional Minister. The various political parties within the constituency with both party office and party executives are; the New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Democratic Congress, CPP, People's National Convention (PNC) and Progressive People's Party (PPP). The other political parties in the constituency without party office but with party executives are Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP) and National Democratic Party (NDP) (Upper West Regional Electoral Commission 2018).

Nadowli-Kaleo Constituency

Nadowli-Kaleo Constituency is known for its political party programmes and activities. This constituency was purposely selected because the settlements in the constituency are basically the rural type. Whilst the rural settlements are basically agrarian, the urban settlements are commercially oriented with emphasis on income-generating activities. The views of different classes of society related to the topic were considered important. Apart from its political programmes, it is one of the three constituencies in the Region that has both party office and party executives (Upper West Regional Electoral Commission 2018). The political parties within the constituency that have both party office and party executives are the NPP, NDC and PNC. CPP is the other political party in the constituency without party office but with party executives.

Sissala East Constituency

Sissal East Constituency has Tumu as its Capital. It was chosen as a study area because of two main reasons. Firstly, apart from being one of the oldest Constituencies in the Region, it is also considered as the smallest constituency in the region, but has four active registered political parties whose programmes and activities could be relied on for some information. More so, it is a typical rural area with majority of the people engaged in subsistence farming and petty trading. Issues surrounding funding of political parties are considered critical in such Constituency. The political parties within the constituency that have both party office and party executives are the NPP, NDC and PNC. CPP is the other political party in the constituency without party office but with party executives.

Research design and selection of research participants

The research design adopted in this study was the mixed method

design but inclined to qualitative as opposed to quantitative research. This enabled the researchers to have a wider perspective of the specific issues at stake as espoused by Bacho (2001). In all, 78 participants, comprising 72 respondents and six key informants were selected using quota sampling and purposive sampling techniques. In choosing the total respondents, the study areas were grouped into strata based on a single factor of proximity to electoral information. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 27 Political Parties' Executives. In each of the three selected constituencies, the political party chairperson, one other male executive and the constituencies' women organizer from each of the three selected vibrant political parties namely; NDC, NPP and PNC were selected. These categories of people were purposively selected because the researchers had the firm believe that they were in better position to provide vital information relating to the study. Besides, six key informants (three media personnel and three electoral commission staff) were also selected purposely.

Quota sampling technique was employed to select 27 electorates (nine each from the three study Constituencies). The researchers selected this category of respondents on the basis of two major principles namely; (1) being a registered voter (male or female) and (2) ordinary resident in the constituency for at least six months which is in line with the electoral commission's requirement. Those who rightly fit into the requirements of the criteria and willing were selected for the study. This method was adopted due to the fact that it was difficult to randomly select the respondents. In the view of Sarantakos (2005), quota sampling is used when it is difficult to approach the respondents in any other systematic way. Quota sampling technique was equally used to select 18 Assembly Members (six each from the three study Constituencies). The quota sampling technique adopted was therefore considered appropriate for the selection of the 27 electorates and the 18 Assembly Members. The similar information given during the data collection process was an indication that the views of any other respondents would have been insignificant. The study thus made use of a combined sample size of 78 as depicted by Table 1.

Methods of data collection and analysis

Primary data were gathered through face-to-face interview and focus group discussions. Each of these methods has its own strength and weakness. They were therefore carefully selected to complement one another. Besides, these methods were utilized with the view to minimize cost, reduce problems relating to retrieval, and to ensure a high level of participation and response rate.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with the Political Parties' Executives. Political Parties' Executives play instrumental role in terms of building strong party structures at the grass root. Their views on state funding of political parties were laudable. One focus group discussion each was held in the three Constituencies with each focus group having nine discussants. Three participants came from each of the three selected political parties. In this way, information was obtained from people with different political orientations. A discussion guide was designed based on the objectives of the study. Twumasi (2001) is of the view that FGD technique affords respondents the power to express themselves in a discussion group. This method enabled the researchers to access the discussants viewpoints, perceptions and differences. The technique allowed the researchers to gather validated data from the standpoints of the various political parties. The arguments and counter arguments from the respondents also helped in weeding out any irrelevant and unsubstantiated information.

In this study, a-face-to-face interview with the aid of questionnaires was used to obtain information from the Assembly members and Electorates from the three selected Constituencies. Three field assistants were employed, trained and supervised to assist in the administration of the questionnaires. This technique

Table 1. Summary of selected respondents from the Constituencies.

Status	Wa Central		Nadowli-Kaleo		Sissala East		Total
	Male	Female	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Party executives	6	3	6	3	6	3	27
Electorates	5	4	5	4	5	4	27
Assembly members	5	1	5	1	5	1	18
EC staff	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
Media personnel	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
Total	18	8	18	8	18	8	78

Source: Researchers' field study January, 2019.

was also employed in gathering relevant information from the key informants. In all situations, the researchers notified the respondents a day or two prior to the interviews. In order to avoid disappointments, different dates and times were arranged to meet the respondents in each community. The field study was conducted between November, 2017 and January, 2018. A follow up study was however, conducted in August, 2019 in the selected constituencies. Information gathered was that the parties' structures remain unchanged except the executive portfolios of some of the parties.

Quantitative data were analyzed using basic statistical tools and techniques. Frequency tables, percentages, graphs and charts were used in presenting the information. Qualitative data on the other hand, were analysed descriptively by playing out the voices of the respondents. Data from interviews and focus group discussions conducted with all the respondents were transcribed, carefully edited and analysed manually by making summaries of their views and categorized into themes. On ethical grounds, the names of the respondents and their characteristics were not disclosed in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussions were done around five thematic areas namely; socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, sources of political parties funding, perspectives on party financing, the nature of parties programmes and activities that should be funded by the state, and how state funding should be managed.

Biographic information

Age and educational statuses of respondents

With the focus of the study being on election issues, it was prudent to choose respondents who were of the legal age of qualified voters. Thus 18 years and above. This was to ensure that respondents had at least a fair idea of the political system in the country. Hence, those within the legal voting age were reliable source of data gathering for the study. Out of the 72 respondents, 29.2% fell within the age range of 25 and 31 years with only 9.7% falling within the age bracket of 18 and 24 years. About 20.8% fell within the ages of 39 and 45, those

between the ages of 32 and 38 years were 22.2% with the remaining 18.1% being 46 years and over. None of the key informants was below thirty years. Whilst two fell within 32-38 years, the remaining four fell within that of 39-45 years. Thus, the views of all respondents from the various age brackets were considered.

A study involving financial issues, economic and political analysis requires respondents of some high level of education. The study thus sought to find out the educational status of the respondents. It was established that majority (34.7%) of the respondents had University Education, 20.8% had Diploma/Polytechnic Education whilst 8.3% had Advance Level (A/Level) background. Another 18.1% had Senior High Education/Ordinary Level and 13.9% had Junior High School/Basic Education. Respondents with other forms of education, that is, Arabic studies and traditional studies among others that are not classified under formal education were 4.2%. Table 2 presents, the results on the respondents' age and education.

All the key informants had University Education. The results showed that selected respondents at least had some form of education which could reflect in their understanding and response to the research questions.

Objective one: Respondents' awareness of sources of funding of political parties

People's knowledge about the level of political parties' financial muscles has an implication on how they would respond to their call for financial and logistics assistance. In this regard the study sought to examine the respondents' awareness of the sources of political parties' funding. Various sources of funding were cited by the respondents with the key sources being; leaders' personal fund (58/72), membership dues/subscription (53/72) and foreign sources (53/72). These findings support Saffu's (2003) assertion that the main sources of income to political parties are seed money from founding members, membership dues, donations as well as local fund-raising activities.

Table 3 shows that the respondents have a fair

Table 2. Age and educational statuses of respondents.

Variable	Frequency	(%)	
Age bracket	18-24	7	9.7
	25-31	21	29.2
	32-38	16	22.2
	39-45	15	20.8
	46+	13	18.1
	Total	72	100
Education	University	25	34.7
	Diploma/polytechnic	15	20.8
	Advanced level	6	8.3
	SSS/O'Level	13	18.1
	JSS	10	13.9
	Others	3	4.2
	Total	72	100

*SSS: Senior Secondary School, *JSS: Junior Secondary School
Source: Field Study, 2019.

Table 3. Respondents' knowledge on political parties' sources of funding in Ghana (Multiple responses).

Sources	Respondent
Leaders personal fund	58
Interest groups	41
Party business	40
Public fund	41
Corporate bodies	44
Private individuals	41
Ghanaians living abroad	38
Foreign sources	53
Loans	40
Membership dues dues/subscription	53

Source: Field Study, January, 2019.

knowledge of the several funding sources available to political parties in Ghana. If this is the situation all over the study region, then it could be said that the political communication/education on sources of political parties funding has been quite encouraging. Probing further as to the sources of their level of awareness and knowledge on the sources of funding for political parties, 73.6% (53) of the entire respondents attributed their sources of information to internal party meetings/fora, 25.0% linked their awareness to public debates on the mass media especially on radio, whilst 1.4% attributed their source of information to informal interaction/rumour. The informants from the media fraternity supported the points made by the respondents. One of them remarked:

'The media contributes to the improvement of the

democracy in Ghana by way of offering their medium as a platform for public debates and source of timely and relevant information to the citizens. This shows how the media can be instrumental in the democratic development of Ghana through the dissemination of information' (A key Informant Interview, 2019).

The role played by the media in creating awareness of the masses of the sources of funding of political parties as gathered, buttresses Norris' (2004) view that, political communication involves the transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public. In all the three focus group discussions held in the three constituencies, regardless of the political backgrounds of the discussants, the picture that emerged was that financing constituted a major hindrance to the running of

political parties' activities and programs. It also emerged that in response to financial challenges, some party executives in some situations have to use their own resources in organising meetings due to inadequate funding. This is what Loyal (pseudonym) said in a FGD held in Nadowli-Kaleo in November, 2018:

'Inadequate sources of funding tend to compel political parties to adopt various strategies of sourcing funds for their activities and programmes, which they will have to pay back in cash or kind when they gain political power leading to corruption and kickbacks and appointment of incompetent people to hold public positions'.

This issue of inadequate funding was echoed by the key informants. This is what one official stated:

'Multi-party democracy can best develop when there is stiff competition in the political climate and this can only be achieved if political parties, especially the smaller parties can be empowered financially by the state to play the role expected of them' (Key Informant Interview, January, 2019).

The opinion of the key informants supports the view of Bekoe, when in a Consultative forum organized by the Electoral Commission Consultative Report (2003), he stressed that, political parties needed financial support to grow as organized institutions to enrich the practice of good governance in Ghana. He however, cautioned that the burden of financing should not be seen as a government prerogative, and entreated Ghanaians to assist in this regard.

Objective two: Argument for and against funding of political parties

The study sought the views of the respondents on the funding of political parties. Fifty-two respondents (72.2%) indicated that political parties should be funded by the state by providing them with cash, logistics and tax exemption. On the contrary, 20/72 respondents representing 27.8% however, disagreed with the suggestion of state funding of political parties. Their main argument was that political parties are like any other business organizations and should be funded by members as such. More so, they argued that Ghana is already burdened with a number of problems including poor health facilities (16/20), poor quality of education (15/20) and unemployment (20/20). These respondents were of the view that such a move will worsen the already economic misfortunes of the country. This is what a respondent remarked in an interview:

'If Ghana were to be America or UK, I will not be troubled with the issue of state funding of political parties. Look! The country is having a serious unemployment situation.'

As a University graduate, I have struggled in vain for the past four years to get a job. Why should the state use public limited funds to support political parties that have shown very limited commitments to the electorates once they assume political power? I completely disagree with such a proposal'.

The opposing views on state funding, as gathered, confirm Sakyi et al. (2015) work which showed that Ghanaians have conflicting ideas about the funding of political parties by the state. Their conclusion however that was the elite political class and party executives have much preference for public funding as opposed to the ordinary party members. In this study, an aggregate of 48 respondents constituting about 66.7% who could loosely be described as elites had University, Diploma or Advanced Level (A 'Level) education. This probably could explain why 52/72 respondents favoured state funding of parties.

Those who favoured state funding of political parties (52/72) were of the view that the country stands to gain by such political arrangement. Twenty-one out of the 52 respondents said that state funding of political parties activities and programmes will help prevent political corruption especially among the ruling party. According to these respondents, when political parties are funded by individuals and collective groups, they tend to influence political decision in their favour. Such persons win contracts and political appointments even if they lack the necessary qualification and competence. This opinion of the respondents confirms Saffu's (2003) assertion that, when political parties are relied on membership dues, seed money and donations among others, what he termed as traditional funding methods, it mostly breeds corruption with the results being that the richest survives or wins not the qualified candidate. As espoused by Ferguson (1983) Investment Theory of Political Parties, when the well-to-do individuals predominantly invest in the political system, the tendency for them to manipulate the state and the course of governance is very high. His proposition to the problem was that the costs of financing political parties should be subsidized by the state through varying forms including provision of staff to politicians.

Forty-four (44/52) respondents asserted that funding of political parties by the state will help strengthening parties' structures and promote keen and fair electoral competition in the political climate and the over-all peace of Ghana. The respondents were of the view that inputs made by the various political parties will help challenge the political system in terms of policies and delivery. The respondents further argued that, when political parties are funded by the state, smaller political parties may have the opportunity to develop to prevent the growth of either one-party state or two-party system of government. The masses will then have the opportunity to select qualified and competent candidates from the lot to fill public offices. This view buttresses Windsor's (2007) assertion when he indicated that democracy is about electoral

processes and all that is necessary for elections to be fair and meaningful; free association, free speech, and an independent and professional news media. This competition could be considered productive for the growth of the country's democracy.

Prevention of the establishment of mushroom political parties was recorded as the least influence of state funding on political parties activities and programmes accounting for 7.7% (4/52). According to the respondents, if the state funds political parties, it will help prevent the establishment of mushroom political parties. The respondents were of the view that given the fact that political parties have to satisfy certain conditions before they can benefit from the state funding, such conditions will help prevent the establishment of political parties which cannot make any impact on the country's multi-party democracy in the first instance.

In furtherance, Twenty-three (23/52) respondents representing 44.2% were in support of fully state funding, 32.7% were of the view that there should be state-private partnership, whilst further 23.1% had no idea as to the form the state funding should take. The emerging idea is that the state alone cannot fund political parties. The findings are theoretically consistent with Ferguson (1983) Investment Theory of Political Parties which sought to promote and regulate the political system through mutual cost sharing by the state, voters/citizens, political parties and other cooperate bodies. The prevailing information indicates that whilst the state has a role to play towards the growth and survival of political parties and multi-party democracy, other actors similarly cannot be neglected in matters of political parties financing.

Objective three: Political parties' activities and programmes that need to be funded

Asked as to which political parties' activities and programmes should be funded by the state, the respondents answers were in agreement with the study of Salih and Nordlund (2007), as majority (22/52) were of the view that state funds for political parties should prioritize the training of party personnel such as pooling agents, candidates and party leaders. Four (7.7%) supported the idea of using the fund to sponsor political party candidates in general elections; 17.3% were of the view that state funding should support election campaigns of political parties whilst 11.5% suggested support for political party organisation in terms of administration and management. Further 11.5% were in support of using state fund for infrastructural development of political parties. Another 9.6% of respondents were of the view that the fund should be used to organize constituency primaries for political parties.

These findings are theoretically consistent with the Investment Theory of Political Parties which construes

democracy as an institution which demands much of its citizens and thereby raises the standard of political legitimacy. The findings also suggest that there are a number of political parties' activities that could be supported by state funds. However, the dominant area that needs much state funding as identified in the results of this study is the training of party personnel including pooling agents, candidates and party leaders. Any policy intervention into state funding of political parties should primarily target the development of manpower as human capital, is essentially the beginning of every meaningful development.

Objective four: Benchmark for accessing state funds

One major objective of the study was to ascertain from the respondents the conditions that political parties have to satisfy before they could benefit from state funds. This objective was influenced by the EC of Ghana's benchmark which sought to include and exclude political parties from funding support. Majority of the respondents (24/52) representing 46.2% were of the opinion that state funding should be available to political parties that obtained of and above 5% of total votes cast during previous presidential and parliamentary elections (Table 4). The respondents who supported this prerequisite argue that only political parties that make an impact on general elections (presidential and parliamentary) should be acknowledged by way of supporting their activities and programs. The analysis of the prerequisites implies that not every political party will equally benefit from the political parties' fund. This understanding however, may defeat the idea of supporting political parties to ensure equality of political competitiveness.

In response to the question whether independent presidential and parliamentary candidates should have access to the state funding, majority of the respondents (32/52) representing (61.5%) were against the idea. The main concern of the respondents who opposed independent candidates benefiting from the fund was that it may lead to distortions and corruption in our multi-party democracy. In a FGD at Wa Central in January, 2019, this is what Mr K expressed:

'Corrupt personalities may set up political parties to just benefit from the fund, even though they know they do not stand any chance of winning or making an impact on elections'

Only 38.5% supported the idea. Those who supported the idea indicated that once a party is fully registered, it should be benefited from any funding from the state. In finding out as to when the state should make available funds for political parties, 30/52 (57.7%) of the respondents were of the view that disbursement of the fund should be made only during electioneering year, 25.0% supports disbursement made immediately after

Table 4. Prerequisites for benefiting from political parties funding (multiple response).

Prerequisite	%
Number of seats won in previous elections	25.0
Obtain at least 5% of total presidential votes cast in previous elections	30.8
Obtain at least 5%+ of votes cast during previous presidential and parliamentary elections	46.2
Obtain at least 2% of total presidential votes cast during previous elections	17.3

Source: Researcher's field survey January, 2019.

general elections, 1.9, 7.7 and 7.7% of respondents were of the view that disbursement of the fund should be made annually, half-yearly and quarterly (3 months) respectively.

Objective five: Management/supervision of state funds earmarked for parties in Ghana

As part of the objectives, the researchers sought the opinion of the respondents as to the body deemed necessary to manage or supervise funds earmarked by the state. This is necessary to ensure efficiency, timely and fair disbursement, among others so as to ensure sustainability of such important national policy. According to the respondents, an independent body or special political party fund secretariat is considered to be the right supervisory body to manage the fund to be established, receiving 36.5% approval (19 out of the 52 respondents). This could mean that political parties and the electorates may have their reservation about the integrity of Ghana's Electoral Commission notwithstanding its constitutional mandate. The EC in this regard should prove to be a true neutral arbiter in Ghana's electoral system. The finding contradicts CDD-Ghana's (2005) earlier study which showed that the Electoral Commission was the most preferred agency envisaged to manage state funds intended for political parties. The findings however, was in line with the work of Ayee et al. (2007) which showed that most people preferred the establishment of an independent body (35.1%) as opposed to the Electoral Commission (EC) (25.4%).

Twenty-five (25.0 %) approves the setting up of an independent parliamentary committee, 19.2% supports the EC of Ghana to supervise and manage the fund, and 11.5% approves National Commission for Civic Education to manage the fund whilst the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) received 7.7% approval. Further 1.9% of respondents have no idea as to which institution should manage the fund.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that Ghana stands to gain

enormously if political parties are resourced. The development of strong opposing political parties is necessary for a healthy competition in the Ghanaian political system. The changing nature of politics in present times which requires elaborate party structures and arrangements, means that parties cannot run away from state support. Financing political parties' programmes and activities by the state is conceived as a critical phenomenon as it may prevent incumbency advantage and its attendant corruption due to pressure of party financiers. However, given the socio-economic challenges such as; poor health facilities, poor quality education and unemployment which already confront the country as identified in the study, it is not clear whether the state could indeed commit itself fully to finance political parties.

The policy implication of the findings is that more awareness creation and broad-based consultations with the citizenry, political parties, the state and civil society organisations is required on the issue of party financing, growth, survival, and the democratic consolidation of the country. Besides, ground breaking ways of funding political parties including training of party officials, accountable private and cooperate donations from both domestic and foreign, as well as creation of political parties' 'fund' should be exploited as espoused by Ferguson's (1983) Investment Theory of Political Parties. This in effect will promote mutual and healthy cost sharing among various actors and the same time, boost the activities of political parties to enable them perform their traditional watchdog role of the state.

A workable regulatory framework implemented by an independent regulatory body is equally necessary as a country to check donor abuse (corruption), and also help promote fair political competition. This stemmed from the fact that lack of transparency, accountability and commitment to the populace has been a common problem leveled against political parties.

Policy implication

The implication is that political parties have to redeem their sinking image and attract the support of the masses by supporting anti-corrupt institutions such as the Auditor General and also demonstrate actual commitment to the

public through formulation of visible, beneficial policies and programmes once they assume political power. Indirect funding through tax exemption on importation of all logistics meant for political parties' activities should be broadly implemented. Such taxes can be retained and re-route to train political party agents, leaders and candidates to make them more functional. This however, calls for a strict monitoring or financial discipline to avoid the abuse of such tax retention by the individuals for their private gains.

CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interests

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