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prepare for possible  
Ebola outbreak

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# Identity politics

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### FOCUS

## Identity politics

Identities are complex. Nobody has just one identity that always remains the same. Right-wing populists exploit feelings of belonging in order to pit different communities against each other. Nevertheless, the diversity of identities also harbours the potential for solidarity across differences, which is crucial to achieving sustainable change and promoting social justice. Ultimately, policies should promote inclusion and equal rights for all.

**Title:** The Wiphala is the flag of the native people of the Andes.  
**Photo:** picture-alliance/ASSOCIATED PRESS/Juan Karita





Our focus section on identity politics starts on page 14. It pertains to the UN's 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): Reduced inequalities and Peace, justice and strong institutions.

## Battles over selves

“Identity” is one of those terms that is used in an inflationary way without really understanding what it means. That is due to the nature of the idea: few concepts are so difficult to grasp, yet at the same time so foundational to one’s own sense of self.

The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson wrote that identity unites two – often contradictory – things: how others see me and how I see myself. Identity distinguishes me from others while also making us the same.

In relation to society, this means that identity implies both integration into it and differentiation from it. Thus, it is easy to see why politics makes use of identities.

Identity politics are justified when they help fight the oppression of various

“Sustainable change can only be achieved if everyone participates – in the conviction that all will benefit equally, despite their differences.”

groups around the world. But they are misdirected when they hinder inclusion and pit disadvantaged groups against each other. Social justice recedes when, for example, low-income white people are played off against Black people in the USA, or when

social-welfare recipients are pitted against migrants in Europe.

Right-wing populist parties are masters at this. At the same time, they manage to win over groups who would suffer significant disadvantages under right-wing populist governments. Multi-billionaire Donald Trump presents himself as the voice of the underprivileged in the USA and is gaining increasing support from Blacks and Hispanics. In Germany, women make up 44% of potential Alternative for Germany (AfD) voters – even though the party’s programmes promote a return to traditional gender roles and deny the gender pay gap, for example.

Part of the identity-politics success of right-wing populists also lies in the fact that they offer simple answers to difficult questions. Left-wing politics, on the other hand, tend to differentiate to the point of fragmentation, which is leading to their undoing in many places at the moment.

Components of an identity must be thought of together, because no person has only one identity, and identities change over time. Gender is bound up with skin colour, ethnicity and class, along with sexual orientation, language, religion and physical and mental health. This multiplicity of identities offers an opportunity for overarching solidarity: people with different skin colours join trade unions, African women of various ethnic communities advocate for their rights together, and language communities in India act independently of caste.

At the same time, in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, identity politics are often directed at individual markers. In India, President Narendra Modi campaigns against religious minorities, while in many African countries, tribalism continues to shape everyday life, and ethnic background can determine elections.

In order to achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), equality has to be placed at the centre of political activity. Sustainable change can only be achieved if everyone participates – in the conviction that all will benefit equally, despite their differences.



**KATHARINA WILHELM OTIENO** belongs to D+C/E+Z’s editorial team. [euz.editor@dandc.eu](mailto:euz.editor@dandc.eu)



Health workers provide Ebola training in the town of Yei, South Sudan, in 2019.

## HEALTH

## Preparing for Ebola

Concerns about the Ebola virus are growing in South Sudan after neighbouring countries had to deal with outbreaks. The government has taken preventative measures, but there are still considerable deficits. A survey reveals knowledge gaps among health personnel.

By Simaya Ladu James

No cases of Ebola have been detected in South Sudan since the country gained independence from Sudan in 2011. However, the country borders Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – two countries where the disease broke out in 2022. Ebola can be transmitted from animals to humans. The likelihood of infection therefore grows with increased contact between humans and wild animals in risk areas, which is favoured by deforestation, hunting and mining, among other things.

The virus could enter South Sudan in various ways, for example via international airports or across the green border. Open borders, the country's close trade contacts with its neighbours and certain cultural traditions could facilitate the spread of the virus. At the same time, South Sudan's health infrastructure has deficits. For example, there is a lack of monitoring and laboratory capacity to analyse samples.

In order to better arm South Sudan against Ebola, the country's Ministry of Health is cooperating with the UN and humanitarian organisations. Among other things, it has

- strengthened the Ebola surveillance system,
- prepared health facilities for quarantine,
- trained health workers,
- organised public awareness programmes and

- developed guidelines for dealing with Ebola.

Medical staff play a key role. They are particularly at risk during Ebola outbreaks due to their contact with infected people and could inadvertently spread the disease. Among other things, staff should be able to recognise the symptoms of sick people so that they can quickly refer patients to the right places.

### SURVEY AMONG HEALTH STAFF

However, there is a lack of information on the extent to which healthcare professionals in South Sudan are prepared for a possible Ebola outbreak. As a PhD student at Yesbud University India, I therefore conducted a survey among medical staff in Yei River County, at the border triangle of South Sudan, DRC and Uganda, from August to October 2023. The aim was to evaluate what staff know about Ebola, what their attitudes are and what preventive practises are already in place.

The 195 participants completed a questionnaire for this purpose. The results showed that, on the one hand, they were quite knowledgeable about the symptoms of Ebola. On the other hand, their knowledge of transmission and prevention was incomplete – for example with regard to the fact that the virus can also be transmitted via breast milk. Their handling of patients suspected of having Ebola also needs to be improved. In the survey, participants with a high level of education demonstrated more knowledge about Ebola, how to deal with infected people and how the disease can be contained than those with a lower level of education.

### CONTINUOUS TRAINING

Therefore, existing training courses for healthcare professionals must only be the beginning. The government should urgently create a continuous training programme. The different levels of education and experience of those involved must be taken into account. In particular, healthcare staff should be better informed about potential sources of infection.

In addition to the study in Yei River County, similar research should be carried out with healthcare workers across various regions of South Sudan to establish a more robust database. Knowledge and attitudes

towards Ebola among the general population should be surveyed too. Other measures in the fight against Ebola include:

- better equipping the healthcare system, for example with diagnostic tools to enable comprehensive monitoring,
- utilising digital systems to ensure optimal medical care, for example as part of vaccination campaigns,

- involving local communities, for example through local authorities, and
- cooperating and sharing information across national borders.

“Good health and well-being” is the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). In order to achieve this goal for South Sudan and protect its population, the government, the UN and other organisations must enhance

their efforts. A deadly disease like Ebola must not be given a chance in South Sudan.



**SIMAYA LADU JAMES**  
is a project manager at the humanitarian aid organisation Malteser International in South Sudan.

[simayaladu@gmail.com](mailto:simayaladu@gmail.com)

## A deadly virus

Ebola is a highly contagious viral disease that is fatal to humans. It occurs primarily in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the WHO, case fatality rates have varied between 25-90% in past outbreaks, depending on the circumstances and countermeasures. Symptoms include

fever, fatigue, muscle pain, sore throat and headache. These can be followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rashes and internal and external bleeding. Even after recovery, symptoms can persist for years.

Early treatment increases a person's chances of sur-

ving Ebola. In general, the intake of fluids and body salts, orally or by infusion, is recommended. Authorised vaccines against the Zaire type of Ebola are available. However, the outbreak in Uganda in 2022 was caused by the Sudan virus, for which no special vaccines or medication are available yet.

Prevention plays a crucial role in the fight against Ebola.

This includes, in particular, avoiding contact with body fluids of people who have, or may have, Ebola, but also with objects that could be infected, such as the clothing of sick people or medical equipment. As the disease is transmitted from animals to humans, particular care must be taken when handling wildlife animals such as bats, forest antelopes and chimpanzees. SLJ

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Climate finance can lower the costs of alternatives to fossil fuels: solar farm in Zimbabwe.

## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

## Phasing out fossil fuels with climate finance

**Fossil-fuel subsidies can help to keep everyday goods affordable. However, they also undermine climate protection and burden tight national budgets. Climate finance, if applied well, helps to reform subsidy systems in a socially just way.**

**By Karol Kempa, Michael König-Sykorova, Ulf Moslener and Oliver Schenker**

Russia's war against Ukraine spurred a global energy crisis with skyrocketing prices of oil, natural gas and electricity. Governments – particularly in advanced, but also in emerging and developing economies – responded with a massive increase in energy subsidies. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that governments collectively afforded more than an additional \$500 billion in 2022 to reduce consumer's energy spending. Natural gas and electricity subsidies more than doubled compared

with 2021, while oil subsidies increased by around 85%.

All this happened only a few months after the Glasgow climate summit, one of the results of which was an appeal to all countries to accelerate efforts towards the “phase-out of inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies, while providing targeted support to the poorest and more vulnerable”. Subsidies that reduce fossil-fuel prices diminish incentives to switch to renewable sources, which would contribute to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. They are therefore a substantial barrier on the road to low or net-zero carbon economies.

While the current spike of subsidies is driven by advanced economies, similar subsidies consume a particularly large share of government budgets in many developing countries and emerging economies. That share is expected to rise because energy consumption is set to increase. Many oil-ex-

porting countries subsidise the use of fossil fuels substantially, constraining the scope they have to invest in low-carbon development.

It is hard to reduce subsidies because there is no strong demand for doing so. Typically, a rather small number of producers benefits significantly from the subsidies, and their lobby groups put pressure on governments. By contrast, reform benefits could be spread widely, but only amount to rather small sums per consumer or taxpayer. Though many people would fare better without the subsidies, the difference is too small for them to mobilise public pressure.

Though poorer households only consume a disproportionately small share of energy, price increases hurt them most. When trying to reform subsidies, several governments around the world have faced poor people's protests and backtracked. That was the case in Jordan, for example, during the 2018 anti-austerity protests.

Benjamin K. Sovacool, a US American expert, has assessed different cases. His lessons include (Sovacool 2017):

- It is important to collect detailed data on the subsidy use – for example by fuel type, industry, consumers and producers. The policy impacts must be anticipated. Understanding probable results in regard

to costs and benefits may lead to redesigning measures in ways that maximise distributional justice and environmental health, for example. Perhaps outright elimination is not the best approach, but subsidies should be better targeted to especially needy households.

- It makes sense to focus on energy subsidies that promote “dirty” practices or, even worse, hurt both the environment and the economy. Subsidising maize cultivation in arid areas to produce ethanol is an example.
- It is essential to identify likely winners and losers. Moreover, if governments ensure that the poor are not further marginalised, acceptance will probably increase.
- Lessons from previous reform experiences should be learned. It is also helpful to learn from successful cases in other countries – even though not every strategy can be copied directly.

### CLIMATE FINANCE CAN PLAY A ROLE

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, countries regularly communicate Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). They serve as roadmaps for climate action. Some developing and emerging countries announced in their NDCs to reform fossil-fuel subsidies. Argentina, for example, focuses on implementing segmented tariff schemes to make subsidies less regressive. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a critical element of the Paris Agreement. It aims to support developing countries to realise their roadmaps for climate action. Accordingly, one should assess how climate finance can support subsidy reforms. It is worth noting that other institutions also support the energy transition in emerging and developing economies. For example, the G7 established the so-called Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs), which foster the transition away from coal. First pilot countries under JETP are Indonesia, Senegal, South Africa and Vietnam.

According to the GCF, 31 countries had pledged their support for the fund by December 2023 and committed a total of \$ 13.9 billion over the next four years (\$ 11.7 billion implemented). The contributions qualify for official development assistance (ODA).

It is a highly disputed question in development research to what extent ODA can or should influence national policy. Scholarly literature suggests that the impact of ODA

**“If a government signals its commitment to reforming fossil-fuel subsidies, donor countries should be prepared to offer extra climate ODA.”**

is very limited, in some cases even negative, unless reforms are in line with the policy priorities of the recipient country.

Acknowledging the key elements for a successful fossil-fuel subsidy reform outlined above, it can be argued that whether climate finance and ODA can enable such a reform depends on:

- the recipient countries’ capacities and
- the reform’s consistency with country priorities.

Country ownership in the form of, for example, a national policy framework or strategy is crucial to leverage climate finance and ODA flows.

### IMPACTS OF CLIMATE ODA ON FOSSIL-FUEL SUBSIDIES

In general, climate ODA can affect national policy reforms in recipient countries in two major ways:

First, it can increase a country’s capacity to introduce alternative policy measures to fossil-fuel subsidies. Alternative instruments like cash transfers are typically more complex than subsidies, and development aid can provide technical assistance and offer policy advice.

Second, climate finance can fund low-carbon energy projects, lowering the costs of alternatives to fossil fuels. This could help to mitigate the negative effects of reforming fossil-fuel subsidies and thus remove a major obstacle to such reforms.

Efforts to address fossil-fuel subsidies through climate ODA are likely to be more effective if they accept the policy ownership of recipient countries, providing funding in ways that suit their administrative structures and policymaking. If a government signals its commitment to reforming fossil-fuel subsidies, donor countries should be prepared to offer extra climate ODA.

This may impact large climate-finance institutions such as the GCF, the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) or the JETPs. In funding decisions, the credible commitment of

the recipient government should be decisive – and any lack of commitment should be a warning signal.

The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that, to reach global climate goals, investment flows from the global north to the global south must increase by a factor of three to six. Well-designed climate-finance programmes that help to reform fossil-fuel subsidies can lead to a “double-dividend”: they do not only serve environmental purposes (mitigating climate change, reducing air pollution), but also provide recipient countries with additional fiscal space and ease price distortions on energy markets.

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**KAROL KEMPA**

is a researcher and director at the FS-UNEP Collaborating Centre for Climate and Sustainable Energy Finance of the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management.  
[k.kempa@fs.de](mailto:k.kempa@fs.de)



**MICHAEL KÖNIG-SYKOROVA**

is Senior Project Manager at the FS-UNEP Collaborating Centre for Climate and Sustainable Energy Finance, Frankfurt School of Finance & Management.  
[m.koenig@fs.de](mailto:m.koenig@fs.de)



**ULF MOSLENER**

is Professor at the Finance Department of Frankfurt School and Head of Research at the FS-UNEP Collaborating Centre for Climate and Sustainable Energy Finance.  
[u.moslener@fs.de](mailto:u.moslener@fs.de)



**OLIVER SCHENKER**

is Deputy Head of the Research Unit “Environmental and Climate Economics” at the ZEW – Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research in Mannheim.  
[oliver.schenker@zew.de](mailto:oliver.schenker@zew.de)



Pesticide application on a wheat field in Punjab, India.

#### SUSTAINABILITY

## Rethinking productivity

**The conventional method of measuring agricultural productivity overlooks long-term effects such as soil degradation. An alternative approach is needed to incentivise and reward sustainable farming practices.**

By Hannah Schragmann

Humanity is facing the challenge of feeding a growing world population with limited resources. This calls for increasing agricultural productivity which is traditionally defined as producing more output (harvest) with the same input (area, soil, capital, labour) or the same output with less input. Economists refer to this as “total factor productivity” (TFP), a widely employed metric for comparing agricultural efficiency among nations and measuring progress.

However, TFP fails to consider the long-term effects of current agricultural practices on soil, biodiversity, health and people. This is a massive flaw, as increasing short-term productivity may jeopardise conditions for future productivity in many ways. For example, the current use of in-

tensive tilling methods can harm the soil; fertilisers may cause health issues; and the humus layer may deteriorate due to insufficient regeneration periods. By neglecting these concerns, TFP presents an incomplete picture.

For example, in the 1960s, India initiated the “green revolution” in response to two famines. Geneticist M. S. Swaminathan spearheaded this effort, introducing high-yielding wheat and rice varieties in the western region of Punjab. This aimed to boost productivity, resulting in record-high output. India’s “green revolution” is praised for successfully feeding the growing population and reducing rural poverty.

Decades later, however, the adverse effects are increasingly evident. Punjab, once known as the “land of five rivers” is under high risk of desertification within the next 25 years due to the water-intensive cultivation of rice. Continued soil degradation, declining health and reduced seed variety pose persistent challenges. Moreover, the climate crisis is making wet and dry seasons less predictable.

Severe social consequences ensued too. Farmers are forced to buy expensive genetically modified seeds and fertilisers from major corporations to grow crops on depleted soil. As a result, many of them have incurred substantial debts, leading to tens of thousands of suicides every year. Additionally, Punjab has gained notoriety as India’s “cancer capital” due to the widespread use of hazardous agrochemicals.

Despite all this, metrics such as TFP suggest that India’s productivity increased following the green revolution. They focus on short-term economic output rather than long-term net gain for the planet and people and fail to take into account potential long-term destruction. However, if agricultural practices undermine the sustained productivity of nature or people, hindering people’s ability to lead fulfilled and healthy lives, they should not be labelled as productive.

### PRODUCTIVITY VERSUS REPRODUCTIVITY

There is a growing consensus that a shift in perspective on agricultural productivity is necessary. Instead of focusing solely on short-term surpluses, we should assess how agricultural practices can be reproduced in the future. Therefore, it is more appropriate to consider the term “reproductivity” rather than “productivity”.



“There is a growing consensus that a shift in perspective on agricultural productivity is necessary. Instead of focusing solely on short-term surpluses, we should assess how agricultural practices can be reproduced in the future.”

The conversation around agricultural productivity is shifting towards more sustainability. There is a growing interest in re-designing agricultural systems in the name of agroecology, permaculture, agroforestry and regenerative agriculture. Moreover, there is a strong emphasis on involving local communities in decision-making processes.

The challenging question is how to measure agricultural (re)productivity, regenerativity or sustainability. Obviously, it requires a much broader time frame, but quantifying long-term consequences is difficult due to the inaccuracy of current climate models. The complexity increases

when considering long-term ecological and socio-economic effects.

However, farmers adopting more sustainable methods need to monitor progress. Data providers use modern technology to quantify soil functional biodiversity and the potential to store water and carbon. While quantifying soil biodiversity is rather complex, measuring above-ground biodiversity effects is even more difficult. It requires various data points, such as satellite data and samples from environmental DNA (eDNA). Making assumptions about future developments is also necessary.

### FINANCING IS CRUCIAL

Quantifying sustainable agriculture is essential for attracting financial rewards from political schemes, customers and investors. This is crucial because agricultural (re)productivity needs to be sustainable regarding finance too. Simply telling a farmer that a change in practices will start paying out in ten years, but will decrease yields for the next five years, is not a compelling argument without schemes guaranteeing compensation in the meantime.

Recent developments in the debate on payments for ecosystem services provide hope for innovative rewards for farmers adopting reproductive practices. However, we are still at the very beginning of a new productivity regime, and there is much work ahead. We can start by redefining India’s green revolution not merely as a period of productivity gain but as a lesson on how not to measure agricultural productivity in the future.

### LITERATURE

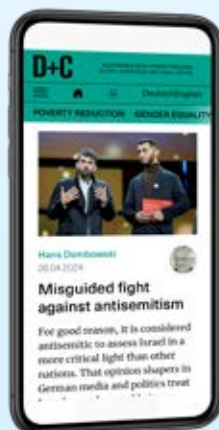
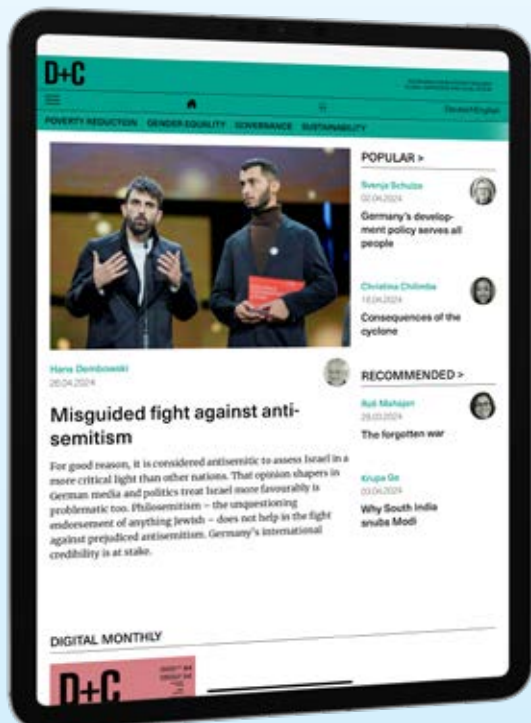
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**HANNAH SCHRAGMANN** holds a PhD in Economics, focusing on new productivity metrics. She is Chief Transparency Officer of Impact Hero, an impact start-up, and Head of Biodiversity at Soilytix, a business for soil biodiversity quantification. [hannah.schragmann@ethicsinbusiness.eu](mailto:hannah.schragmann@ethicsinbusiness.eu)

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# Political decision causing human suffering

The crisis between Burundi and neighbouring Rwanda continues to escalate. Following a rebel attack, Burundi once again closed its border with Rwanda for an indefinite period. People living along that border are suffering as a result.

The border between Burundi and Rwanda was only reopened in October 2022 after being shut for around seven years. In 2015, Burundi had accused Rwanda of supporting protests and an attempted coup. The renewed border closure shocked both Burundians and Rwandans.

Burundian Generose Nshimirimana lives in Rugombo, Cibitoke Province, which is separated from Rwanda by the Ruhwa River. Until recently, she regularly travelled back and forth between the two countries to sell tomatoes at a market in Rwanda. She is furious about the border being closed: "It's impossible! Where am I supposed to sell my harvest and how will I pay for my children's schooling?" She urges the two governments to settle their differences and reopen the land border.

Dévote feels the same. She lives in Busiga, a commune in Ngozi Province in the north of Burundi. The mother of three children is married to a gold prospector. She lives from selling red onions in

Rwanda. Dévote can sell three times as much produce there as in her hometown. She fears that the border closure will make life harder.

On the day the land border was sealed, 11 January 2024, Rwandans with appointments in Burundi and Burundians who had travelled to Kigali for healthcare found themselves stuck. In the afternoon, those affected were given special permits to return across the border.

The tensions between Burundi and Rwanda go back decades. In 1994, when Rwanda was shaken by the atrocious civil war between Hutu and Tutsi, a Burundian president died in a plane crash on Rwandan soil. In the years that followed, various towns and villages in Burundi were attacked by rebel groups, which Gitega always linked to Kigali. Rwanda denied the allegations.

The East African Community – which counts both Burundi and Rwanda among its members – as well as politicians and international-relations experts are calling on the two governments to engage in dialogue in both countries' interests. "The consequences of the border closure are dramatic. It spreads fear among the people living in border areas and reduces trade. It also has impacts on social ties between the two nations that cannot be ignored," explains Pascal Niyonzigiye, Professor of International Relations at the University of Burundi.



**MIREILLE KANYANGE**  
is a journalist with Radio  
Isanganiro in Burundi.  
[mika.kanyange@gmail.com](mailto:mika.kanyange@gmail.com)



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ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL gGmbH  
Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen  
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 40  
53113 Bonn  
Phone: +49 (0) 2 28 2 07 17-0  
Fax: +49 (0) 2 28 2 07 17-150  
[www.engagement-global.de](http://www.engagement-global.de)

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Phone: +49 (0) 69 75 91-31 10  
[euz.editor@dandc.eu](mailto:euz.editor@dandc.eu)

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c/o Cover Service GmbH & Co. KG  
PO Box 1363  
D-82034 Deisenhofen, Germany  
Phone: +49 (0) 89 8 58 53-8 32  
Fax: +49 (0) 89 8 58 53-6 28 32  
[fazit-com@cover-services.de](mailto:fazit-com@cover-services.de)

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## NATURAL DISASTERS

# Cyclone aftermath

**Malawi is on the frontline of the climate crisis. One year after cyclone Freddy, the devastation is still catastrophic, depriving especially girls and women of their future.**

By Christina Chilimba

More than one year has passed since cyclone Freddy struck Malawi, killing more than 1000 people and displacing hundreds of thousands. Yet the sound of the relentless rain that devastated the country and the scenes of desperate people fleeing for their lives still haunt us.

Social structures remain fractured. Many people are homeless and living in poverty. And while Malawi is still struggling with the effects of the cyclone, droughts are bringing new challenges. Cyclone Freddy was a stark warning of what is to come – more frequent and ferocious disasters driven by climate change.

The food supply is already inadequate: for many people, going to bed hungry has become the norm. Malawi cannot cope with this burden.

Women and girls have suffered the most from the cyclone's impact. Existing inequalities were exacerbated. Women in Malawi face heightened risks of violence, exploitation and a lack of access to essential healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health services.

While boys returned to school, many girls remain stranded in emergency shelters and are less likely to resume their education in the future. The catastrophe has destabilised entire communities and fuelled a rise in harmful practices like child marriage. Those who have lost their families have little choice than to resort to transactional sex for basic necessities.

The emergency has also made basic health services inaccessible for many. Roads and bridges have been washed away. While healthcare workers did come to the camps, overcrowding and lack of privacy and individualised care make the situation more difficult. This applies in particular to gynaecological treatments, but also con-

cerns the supply of contraceptives, for example.

One woman I met, a 25-year-old mother of two, was struggling to afford life-saving medication for her baby who was injured by a collapsing wall during the cyclone. I also spoke to a young HIV-infected girl who was moved back and forth between two camps, losing access to the medication she desperately needed.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENDER

The crisis emphasises an important fact: in the face of climate change, resilience and the strengthening of healthcare are crucial. In terms of feminist development policy, this must include sexual and reproductive health. Governments around the world must ensure that they can provide protection for women and girls when the next disaster strikes.

The disaster furthermore highlights why we need to accelerate the climate-justice agenda and ensure that the countries with the lowest carbon emissions do not bear the highest costs and consequences for people. This is why we need continuous and coordinated support from strong partners such as Germany and other industrialised nations.

Children and young people make up more than half of Malawi's population. Their active participation in the search for long-term solutions is therefore essential. The same applies to the involvement of women.

My organisation "ALL for Youth" is supported by the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents (GFF) and is working in Malawi to close gaps here, among other things. The GFF, a country-led partnership hosted at the World Bank, supports 36 low- and middle-income countries in strengthening their health systems and promoting the health and rights of women and young people through more targeted measures and financing as well as political reforms.

Together with Côte d'Ivoire, the Netherlands and the World Bank, Germany is hosting the current GFF replenishment campaign. The aim of this campaign is to mobilise funds to provide 250 million women, children and young people with access to health services.

We now have the opportunity to learn the lessons of cyclone Freddy and build a more resilient and inclusive future. Only by working together can we create a world where no woman or girl is left behind. Ultimately, our future depends on this.



**CHRISTINA CHILIMBA**  
is the Founder and Executive  
Director of ALL for Youth,  
a youth-led organisation in  
Malawi.

[christinachilimba15@gmail.com](mailto:christinachilimba15@gmail.com)



**Immediately after the storm: laundry is hung up to dry on destroyed power lines in southern Malawi.**

## ORGANISED CRIME

# Tackling cross-border crime

**Latin American countries increasingly appear to be at the mercy of organised crime. Ecuador, for example, declared a state of emergency in early January. The problem can only be resolved through cooperation.**

By Javier A. Cisterna Figueroa

Organised crime exists all over the world. But it is particularly prevalent in Latin America and has long been one of the region's biggest problems. This is clearly indicated by the widespread violence: although Latin America is home to only nine percent of the world population, it accounts for a third of the world's murders.

Organised crime involves criminal organisations or networks that generally deal in drugs and arms or engage in human trafficking. They have sophisticated hierarchical structures and generate large amounts of money. These criminal networks are not new in Latin America. What is particularly worrying at present, however, is that they are evidently able to destabilise governments – for example, in an otherwise stable

country like Ecuador. The violence there escalated to such a degree in early January this year that President Daniel Noboa described it as an “internal armed conflict” and declared a state of emergency.

Criminal networks are also expanding across national borders and becoming genuine transnational organisations. One example is the Tren de Aragua, the largest and most powerful criminal gang in Venezuela, which evolved from a group of prison inmates. It is also active in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile and is involved in drug trafficking, kidnapping, contract killing, human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The countries of Latin America are unfortunately all too present in the “Global Organized Crime Index 2023” published by the civil-society organisation Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. Colombia ranks second in the world, followed by Mexico (3<sup>rd</sup>), Paraguay (4<sup>th</sup>), Ecuador (11<sup>th</sup>), Honduras (13<sup>th</sup>), Panama (17<sup>th</sup>) and Brazil (22<sup>nd</sup>). One of the main reasons for this is drug trafficking. Colombia, Bolivia

and Peru are still the world's largest cocaine producers and, according to the UN, the Chilean port of San Antonio is a major transshipment point for cocaine in the southern hemisphere. Ecuador is the fourth most unsafe country in the Americas, primarily because it has developed from a drug-transit country to a transshipment centre in just a few years. The Catholic University of Chile currently rates “insecurity, organised crime and drug trafficking” as the greatest political risks for Latin America, greater even than the increase in corruption and dissatisfaction with democracy.

The grievances that provide fertile ground for crime and violence have been present for a long time. According to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), they include poverty, inequality and lack of prospects; high levels of impunity and weak rule of law as well as firearms possession and alcohol consumption. The weakness of public institutions is also one of the biggest obstacles in the fight against organised crime.

## A TASK FOR THE ENTIRE CONTINENT

To put a stop to transnational crime, countries need to work together across borders, and not just in Latin America. In January, an encouraging signal was sent out by the Andean Community nations – Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. In response to the events in Ecuador, they committed, among other things, to conducting coordinated police and military operations along their shared borders. The message is that supranational problems require coordinated solutions that transcend national boundaries.

However, the fight against organised crime calls for far more than just a systematic crackdown by authorities. It is equally important to strengthen democratic institutions and carry out prevention work, for example through civil-society social programmes. This is a fight that the countries and citizens of Latin America can only win together.



Colombian military protect the border after violence escalated in neighbouring Ecuador in January.



**JAVIER A. CISTERNA FIGUEROA**

is a journalist based in Concepción, Chile.

[cisternafigueroa@gmail.com](mailto:cisternafigueroa@gmail.com)



Books contain non-material treasures. Library of the University of Zululand in South Africa.

## RESTITUTION

# Giving back stories

African oral tradition dates back to ancient times. Some of its stories were committed to paper, mainly by missionaries. But if they were published, then this happened in Europe – hardly ever in their countries of origin.

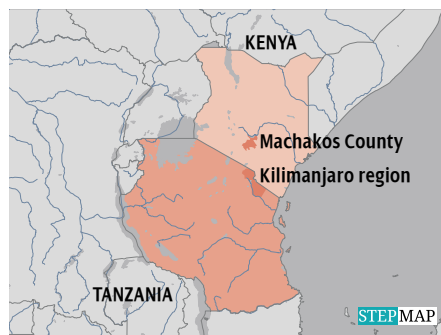
By Karsten Legère

The return of the Benin bronzes to Nigeria has intensified the discussion about material restitution. It is widely known that African countries have long demanded the return of unlawfully acquired cultural property. Its retention in Europe robs them of parts of their identity and history and legitimises the colonial past. Restitution is an opportunity for Europe and the countries of origin to overcome the colonial legacy in this respect.

In this context, greater attention should also be paid to immaterial restitution – the return of historical documents and oral history transcripts and their publication, especially in their countries of origin. In 1998 and 2001, books with texts in the Namibian languages Ndonga and Kwan-

gali were published with the support of the German Embassy in Windhoek. Those texts had been published in Germany in 1957 and 1975, but not in what was then South West Africa.

From 1902 to 1906, the German missionary Julius Augustiny collected folktales of the Kamba in Kenya. In the 1920s, they were edited in Kikamba in the German journal “Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen”. In 2012, they were published in Tanzania in Kikamba with a parallel Kiswahili translation in the book “VAU TENE...” (“Once upon a time...”).



Kikamba is a widely spoken language in Kenya, where most of the approximately 4.5 million Kamba live in the heart of the country, in Machakos County. Kikamba is also spoken in Tanzania by around 12,000 people in the west of the Morogoro region. Thanks to the accompanying Kiswahili translation, the texts are accessible to people throughout East Africa.

## RESTITUTION AFTER MORE THAN 100 YEARS

The former vice chancellor of Hubert Kairuki Memorial University in Dar es Salaam, Keto Mshigeni, now calls for the return of a book from the German colonial era about the Pare ethnic community. Entitled “Im Banne der Furcht”, it was published in 1922 by the German missionary Ernst Kotz. The book documents a little-known period of regional history. Mshigeni describes Kotz’s book – written between 1905 and 1917 in the Pare region of what was then German East Africa – as a valuable historical testimony. It connects to the documents and publications of the prominent Tanzanian historian Isaria Kimambo, who interviewed Pare in the 1960s and reconstructed their history up to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But he did not cover the German colonial period. Today, around 530,000 Pare (also known as Asu) live in the Kilimanjaro region, mainly in the Same and Mwanga districts, and in the Man-yara and Tanga regions.

## COSTLY DIGITISATION

As part of the restitution of intangible cultural heritage, the digitisation of the book’s 223 pages of Gothic script as well as its translation into English and Kiswahili should be made possible by German funding. German sponsors have not yet been found.

The translation of “Im Banne der Furcht” and the publication of English and Kiswahili versions would be an important contribution to immaterial restitution, helping the Pare community and other Tanzanians learn more about a previously inaccessible period of their history.



**KARSTEN LEGÈRE**  
is Professor Emeritus of African Languages at the University of Gothenburg.  
[karsten.legere@sprak.gu.se](mailto:karsten.legere@sprak.gu.se)



FOCUS

## Identity politics

**Indigenous assertiveness in Latin America**

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March of the Hindu-chauvinist cadre organisation RSS in Ajmer, Rajasthan.



Indigenous Bolivians take part in a rally for President Evo Morales in 2019.

LATIN AMERICA

# Indigenous politics

**Under the left-wing governments of Rafael Correa and Evo Morales, Ecuador and Bolivia adopted new constitutions in 2008 and 2009. In both countries, the presidents' identity politics placed a strong focus on indigenous culture and led to changes that are still having an impact.**

**By Franz Flores Castro**

At the beginning of the century, Latin American politics shifted to the left: after decades of neoliberalism, a wave of protest swept over the continent. Left-leaning candidates took over the presidency in one country after another. It started in 1998 with Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and continued in

Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador – though candidates' political platforms ranged widely from moderate social democracy to populist nationalism.

The election of the indigenous Evo Morales in Bolivia made international headlines. Both Morales in Bolivia and President Rafael Correa in Ecuador practised a form of identity politics that harked strongly back to indigenous culture. Their policies have brought about far-reaching positive change in both countries.

The left turn in Latin America was a reaction to the unfulfilled promise of neoliberalism, which had been rigorously applied in almost all the countries of the region up to

that point. At the end of the twentieth century, neoliberal policies had managed to balance the finances of the region through hugely unpopular shock strategies, yet they did not deliver jobs or social justice. Instead, social inequality sharply increased: in 1999, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimated that 35% of Latin American households lived in poverty and 14% in extreme poverty. In absolute numbers, that means that there were 211 million poor and 89 million destitute people.

Most people also felt that the political parties no longer represented them. They only seemed to be competing for power in order to secure advantages for their increasingly closed circle of oligarchic elites. In short, the party system was no longer functioning. The gap between politics and civil society was neoliberalism's weakest point.

As social protests broke out, most governments initially responded with repression. But the movement was strong:

in 18 Latin American countries, there were 64% more protests in 2001 than there had been in the year before. In some countries, presidents were unable to finish their terms in office. For example, Bolivian President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada left office in October 2003 following massive protests. This event was preceded by 67 dead and 417 injured. In Ecuador, the retired colonel Lucio Gutiérrez was forced out of office in April 2005 by a civilian coup d'état, the so-called “rebellion of the outlaws”.

### THE PROMISES OF NATIONALISM

Many citizens hoped that the new governments would bring about a change in the political elite. The state should regulate the economy again. Neoliberalism had relied on the private sector, but now the government was expected to take a leading role.

Natural resources would also no longer be in private hands but would go back to the government. In Ecuador, Correa expropriated the oil and mining sector. In Bolivia, Morales nationalised gas extraction, telecommunications, the railroad, and mineral-processing companies.

In doing so, both presidents used strong patriotic rhetoric. In Latin America, left-wing parties in particular tend to use nationalism as an argument to nationalise natural resources. They also use anti-imperialism to justify their rejection of private entrepreneurship. Ideas and arguments from the decolonialism discourse were employed too: colonialism supposedly imposed western forms of knowledge on Latin American cultures, even though they had their own ways of generating and sharing knowledge.

Identity politics could be deployed especially effectively in Bolivia and Ecuador because of their large indigenous populations. Morales and Correa came to power by promising a return to indigenous values, though they emphasised the topic to differing degrees and its influence varied.

Correa was a caudillo – a charismatic leader – without a party structure, an outsider without a political past. He comes from the prosperous middle class of Guayaquil, one of the largest cities in Ecuador. He achieved remarkable academic success and earned a PhD in economics from the University of Illinois. His views on sexual identity and drug legalisation were rather conservative.

Evo Morales, on the other hand, comes from a poor, indigenous family. As a young man, he had to earn money as a trumpet player to get by. Like many people, he left western Bolivia and moved to the Chapare region to cultivate coca. He has no formal education other than six years of primary school. In Chapare, he became a politician and was elected to parliament as a direct candidate.



### CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Both presidents initiated a constitutional reform process in their respective countries. In Bolivia, the new constitution was approved in a referendum in January 2009 and subsequently promulgated by Morales. The preamble states: “We have left the colonial, republican and neo-liberal State in the past. We take on the historic challenge of collectively constructing a Unified Social State of Pluri-National Communitarian law”. This heralded a new era – no longer based on a republic, but on indigenous principles and community law.

Correa had promulgated Ecuador’s new constitution one year earlier. It states that the people of Ecuador recognise “our age-old roots, wrought by women and men from various peoples” and celebrate “nature, the Pacha Mama (Mother Earth), of which we are a part and which is vital to our existence”. Later, it claims that the people have decided to “build a new form of public coexistence [...] to achieve the good way of living, the *sumak kawsay*”. Although the connection to indigenous roots is also evident, it does not go as deep as in Bolivia: Ecuador’s constitution preserves a republican form of government and does not place an indigenous worldview at the centre of the new state.

In both countries, the composition of the political elite also changed with the new governments. Correa attracted orthodox Maoists and former members of the right-wing Christian Social Party, as well as liberation theologians, environmentalists, human-rights activists, indigenists and leftist academics.

In Bolivia, the new political leadership completely replaced the traditional elites, including those on the left. The “Pacto de Unidad” (Pact of Unity), an alliance of highland and lowland indigenous organisations and rural labour unions, now wielded significant influence. Morales’ party, the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS), is a coalition of social movements in which highland indigenous farmers’ organisations hold the political decision-making power. Therefore, although Morales had a considerable amount of authority, he was accountable to various organisations, especially indigenous organisations and social movements.

The political transformation in Bolivia cannot simply be explained as a change from right-wing to left-wing policies. Instead, it was much more complex and was first and foremost a transition to indigenous identity politics. The MAS Party under Morales has not only taken typical leftist measures like nationalising companies. It also placed the political, economic and cultural worldview of indigenous peoples at the centre of its policies. This change did not happen to the same extent in Ecuador. Although multiple companies were also nationalised, indigenous organisations distanced themselves from Correa’s government and have taken a critical view of it.

Both governments have had a long-term impact on their countries. Ecuador recently held an election. The left-wing candidate from Correa’s party narrowly lost to her conservative opponent in the run-off election. In Bolivia, the MAS once again won the 2020 presidential elections, which enabled Morales to return from exile, where he had fled in response to the unrest – triggered by allegations of electoral fraud against him – after the 2019 elections.



**FRANZ FLORES CASTRO** is a political scientist, professor and researcher at the San Francisco Xavier University in Sucre, Bolivia.

[flores.franz@usfx.bo](mailto:flores.franz@usfx.bo)





More than just performance: the opening ceremony of the Africa Cup of Nations in Côte d'Ivoire in 2023.

ETHNICITY

## A fundamental part of African societies

**In Africa, the question of who a person is includes which ethnic group they belong to. These affiliations have led to bloody conflicts on the continent and still shape politics and daily life in many places today.**

By Katharina Wilhelm Otieno

According to estimates, there are over 3000 ethnic groups in Africa. Hardly any of the continent's 55 countries are ethnically homogenous. The majority of Africans feel that they belong to one of these groups. Ethnicity, the constitution of shared ancestry and culture, is one of the most important identity markers in all of Africa.

This situation harbours enormous cultural diversity as well as the potential for conflict. Many of the most severe conflicts on the continent were ethnically motivated.

The Biafra War broke out at the end of the 1960s because the Igbo felt disadvantaged compared to other Nigerian ethnic groups, were increasingly exposed to attacks and declared their independence from Nigeria (see Adaze Okeaya-inneh in this issue). At least one million people died.

In Zimbabwe, the Shona-speaking ruling party ZANU-PF, which is still in power, committed genocide against the Ndebele in the 1980s. Around 20,000 people were killed. Since then, the government has systematically neglected Matabeleland, the region where the Ndebele people live (see the contribution by Zenzele Ndebele and Bheki-zulu Tshuma in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2023/01). The long-standing civil wars in Liberia and between South Sudan and Sudan were also shaped by ethnic conflicts.

There has been violence between ethnic groups in South Africa too. During the

transition from the apartheid government to democracy between 1990 and 1994, Johannesburg's townships descended into civil war-like conditions. The conflict played out primarily between the Zulu and the Xhosa.

South Africa is an example for how the incursion of Europeans into Africa as missionaries or colonists exacerbated such ethnic tensions or even triggered them in the first place. People have only identified primarily as Zulu or Xhosa since the Christian mission came to South Africa at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Previously, the clan and chiefdom that one belonged to played a much more important role.

The mission's problem was that it needed to translate the Bible in order to make it accessible to the local people. There was no written language, however, so one had to be defined. The question was whether the various speech forms used by the Zulu, Xhosa and their chiefdoms were similar enough to be considered a single language into which the Bible could be translated. It was ultimately decided that there were two languages: isiZulu and isiXhosa. The result was that the children of the Mpondo chiefdom were taught in isiXhosa and the children of the Hlubi chiefdom in isiZulu, even if this categorisation was by no means this clear beforehand. Over time, these children

began to adopt Zulu or Xhosa as their language-based identities.

## GENOCIDE IN RWANDA

The genocide on the African continent that claimed the most lives in the shortest time was also favoured by the colonists' ignorance of local conditions. Thirty years ago, the Hutu in Rwanda killed around 75% of the Tutsi minority and moderate Hutu in just under 100 days. According to some estimates, a total of one million people were killed.

It is a very controversial question in cultural anthropology whether Hutu and Tutsi are distinct ethnic groups. While they have different cultural practices, they share a belief system, traditions and a language, Kinyarwanda. In precolonial times, the Tutsi were members of the reigning class in the kingdom of Rwabugiri and ruled over the Hutu. The system was based on repression, but class mobility was possible: a Hutu could become a Tutsi and vice versa.

During the ten years of their colonial rule at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Germans interpreted Rwandan society based on racist theories: they believed that the Tutsi were Nilotic, originally related to "Caucasian" and therefore European peoples. They considered the Hutu, on the other hand, to be one of the "Negrid" ethnic groups of Central Africa. Thus, it seemed logical to the German colonial power that the Tutsi had higher status, and they integrated them into their colonial system as local authorities.

Belgium succeeded Germany and codified the group membership of its colonial subjects in passports in the 1930s. Only those who had ten or more cattle on the appointed day were considered Tutsi. From that moment on, group membership was inherited patrilineally. Class mobility was thereby abolished – whoever was a Hutu, stayed a Hutu. These definitions cemented ethnic boundaries that had been more fluid in the past and determined the course of history in Rwanda – and in its ethnically very similar neighbour, Burundi, which also experienced years-long bloody conflicts between the Hutu and the Tutsi.

Colonialism and World War II were followed by development aid. Foreigners in the country – particularly missionaries – saw it as their job to help the underprivileged Hutu instead of promoting the Tutsi elite. Hutu

**"Africa's ethnic diversity is a wealth that ought to be preserved under all circumstances. That means, however, that governments and civil society are called on to protect it from being usurped by identity politics and their consequences."**

now received more schooling and demanded political representation.

After Belgium withdrew, conflicts between the two groups intensified in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in the genocide of the Tutsi.

## COLONIAL BORDER DEMARCATIONS

It is common knowledge that European colonists divided Africa relatively arbitrarily. They drew borders and created countries that were home to ethnic groups that had been indifferent to each other at best and enemies at worst. There is now evidence that colonial powers did not always act entirely at will. In some cases, they relied on cultural anthropologists and local elites to take into account existing ethnic territories as a way to avoid conflicts within colonies from the start.

However, in many newly created countries, this approach did not apply or was based on faulty assumptions. The consequences are still leading to bloody conflicts even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Kenya, for example, is home to ethnicities from two groups of peoples who have little in common linguistically or culturally. The Bantu peoples of the Kikuyu, Kamba or Kisii, together with Nilotic ethnic groups such as the Luo, Maasai or Kalenjin, were now to identify collectively as Kenyans.

After the 2007 elections, Kenya stood at the brink of a civil war between its three largest ethnic groups, with the Kikuyu on one side and the Luo and Kalenjin on the other. Over a thousand people died and around 620,000 were displaced, mostly internally.

Even today, ethnic tensions run high during every election in Kenya, because the majority of the country votes for candidates that belong to their own ethnic group. Corruption and cronyism on behalf of one's own community determine to some extent

how quickly documents can be accessed or whether a person finds a job. Even in supposed melting pots like Nairobi, there are neighbourhoods that are mostly home to just one ethnic group. Classifications into larger ethnolinguistic groups also continue to play a role for some: Bantu peoples can count on more support from one another than from Nilotes. Like in many places in Africa, a person's ethnicity is revealed by their last name.

Elsewhere, too, ethnic identity still impacts daily life. In Nigeria, it can make a considerable difference which ethnic group someone belongs to, not only when looking for housing or a job, and there are also tendencies in the Nigerian diaspora to remain within one's own group. Igbo in particular continue to suffer from discrimination.

In Zimbabwe, the government still practices identity politics to stay in power, and Shona and Ndebele speakers greet each other with mistrust. In South Africa, Xhosa and Zulu identities are being cemented by school language policies to this day. In South Sudan, the Dinka, the largest ethnic group, now dominate the government and authorities, often at the disadvantage of smaller groups (see the contribution by Alba Nakuwa in this issue).

## PAN-AFRICANISM

However, there have also been opposing trends since African countries gained independence. Prominent figures on the continent like Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, and Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's first president, propagated Pan-Africanism, the unity of all African people worldwide regardless of ethnicity and nationality.

The idea still has a certain power. Above all, young people on the continent are increasingly identifying as African and also with their nationality.

At the same time, Africa's ethnic diversity is a wealth that ought to be preserved under all circumstances. That means, however, that governments and civil society are called on to protect it from being usurped by identity politics and their consequences.



**KATHARINA WILHELM OTIENO**

belongs to the editorial team of D+C/E+Z.  
euz.editor@dandc.eu



The South Sudanese President Salva Kiir Mayardit, a Dinka, relies on Christian faith as an identity marker to unite his country.

NATION BUILDING

# A challenge for a young country

**Thirteen years after gaining independence, South Sudan is still struggling with the inclusion of its various ethnic communities. Tribalism remains a challenge that undermines a functioning nation state.**

By Alba Nakuwa

The population of South Sudan is estimated at around 11 million. The world’s youngest nation is home to 64 ethnic groups who speak their own languages and maintain their own cultural practices. Thirty-six percent of the South Sudanese are Dinka. The Nuer are the second largest group with 16%. The remaining percentage is distributed among smaller communities.

Many South Sudanese tend to strongly identify with their own ethnic group, which makes it difficult for the country to develop a national identity. It seems that when it comes to the question of what it means to be South Sudanese, we have not gone beyond superficial things like appearance. To be considered a true South Sudanese, you have to look a certain way: tall, dark-skinned and slim. I am short and not as dark as most of my compatriots, which has made some of

them question whether I am really South Sudanese.

South Sudan seceded from Sudan in 2011 after more than 20 years of civil war. The war led to massive loss of life, the destruction of property and the displacement of millions of people. It left many traumatised.

Many people attribute the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan to ethnoreligious identities. The deep-rooted tensions between the Arab Muslims in the north and the predominantly Christian Nilotic ethnic groups in the south escalated into an endless war, as each side saw its culture and religion as superior.

## POWER, LAND AND LIVESTOCK

After the separation of the two countries, there has been no real peace in either of them – on the contrary, a devastating war is raging in Sudan. In South Sudan, too, ethnic tensions have not ceased with independence. Which ethnic group you belong to influences the political party you vote for, what opportunities you have on the job market and the social structure of entire cities. In addition, the ethno-political disputes and

the competition between the elites of some ethnic groups for power and resources have put the country in an economic tailspin.

The two largest groups in particular, the Dinka and the Nuer, two pastoralist communities originating from the Nile, have historically been rivals. Today, this primarily means competition for political power and repeatedly leads to violence and conflict.

Conflicts over grazing land and livestock are rampant among other ethnic groups as well. The result is a seemingly endless repetition of violence and retaliation. For example, the state of Eastern Equatoria, a region that is home to more than 12 ethnic groups and subgroups, is notorious for cattle rustling and road raids between groups living close to each other. Although peace talks and negotiations have taken place, the conflicts prevent the region from developing due to the absence of security.

## DIVIDED DIASPORA

Tribalism moreover has a major influence on the labour market. It is a great advantage to be a Dinka to be employed by the government. So-called “Equatorian” groups from the east, centre and west have better opportunities in the private sector or with civil-society organisations.

Ethnic identity also plays a major role in the South Sudanese diaspora. The ethnic groups literally stay together – the refugee and migrant settlements in cities and the refugee camps are organised according to ethnic communities. In Kenya, where many South Sudanese fled to and stayed after the war, Didinga are living in one particular town, while Kakwa live in the next and Nuer in the third. This cements tensions between the groups and further divides the South Sudanese instead of bringing the diaspora communities together.

Ethnic identity is central to preserving the country’s rich cultural heritage, but it is also important to address the challenges it has created in moving the nation forward. South Sudan needs a truly inclusive public discourse in order to implement policies that serve the interests of all citizens.



**ALBA NAKUWA**  
is a freelance journalist from South Sudan based in Nairobi.  
[albanakwa@gmail.com](mailto:albanakwa@gmail.com)

WORKING WORLD

# When qualifications don't matter

**In Uganda, as in many other parts of the world, a person's identity and social relationships are influenced by ethnicity, faith and language. These factors can also have a significant impact on career prospects.**

By Ronald Ssegujja Ssekandi

Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world with an average age of about 16 years. This also means that many people are looking for employment. Since there are fewer jobs than people willing to work, getting a job, let alone progressing in it or keeping it, depends on several factors – and not all of them have to do with skills.

Uganda is ethnically diverse. There are 56 indigenous communities, which are officially recognised in the national constitution. Many Ugandans are strongly connected to their ethnic groups. Even after many years of colonialism and the establishment of the Ugandan nation state, ethnic ties have not been broken.

Ethnic groups in Uganda often have strong social networks that can be helpful in career development. Members of the same community support each other in finding job opportunities, accessing resources and through mentoring. Uganda furthermore still has traditional and powerful kingdoms such as Buganda, Busoga and Tooro within its territory. These kingdoms often influence the appointment of key positions in political and public offices.

Moreover, certain occupations are attributed to specific ethnic groups. Groups from the central part of Uganda have always been associated with farming, while groups from the western and northern parts have traditionally practised pastoralism or animal husbandry. These perceptions still influence the choice of occupation.

The obvious downside of ethnicity as a career factor is stereotyping. There are various prejudices against certain groups of people that can have a negative impact on their chances of being hired or staying in a job. People are discriminated against or restricted in their opportunities because of

their ethnic background. For example, some groups are considered to be “lazy” while others are seen as “hardworking”. Perceptions about physique also play a role: northern Ugandans often qualify for jobs in the security sector because they are tall, physically fit and considered very “tough” people.

## LANGUAGE MATTERS

As there are several ethnic groups in Uganda, several different languages are spoken. English is the country's official language, but only those who have had the opportunity of formal education normally speak it. As English is widely used in business and education, they have an advantage in certain professional fields.

In the informal sector, however, local languages are often more influential. The ability to speak Luganda, which is considered a commercial language and spoken in the capital and a large part of central Uganda, determines success in business.

The predominant religion in Uganda is Christianity, followed by Islam. Both can be traced back to colonialism. Just like ethnicity, religious affiliations are strong in the country and can act as networks that influence career prospects.

Religious communities often provide a strong support system that offers networking opportunities, career mentorship and even financial support for education or entrepreneurship. The Uganda Muslim

Supreme Council (UMSC) and the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) are examples of such religious organisations.

## CORRUPTION AND NEPOTISM

While faith and language play a role, ethnicity undoubtedly influences appointments and promotions in the Ugandan public sector. When an institution or office is occupied by a person from a particular ethnic community, it is not unusual that many positions are soon filled by people from that community.

There are many complaints about corruption and nepotism in Uganda. They are fuelled even by the highest offices. President Yoweri Museveni's wife is also the Minister of Education and Sports, while his son was appointed commander of the armed forces. Rumours that Museveni is preparing his son to succeed him as president are widespread too.

In the private sector, achievements and qualifications often carry more weight. Nevertheless, even here, networks and connections formed through ethnicity can be of great importance for securing jobs and career advancement.

While efforts have been made to promote performance-based systems, the influence of these factors is still very strong in determining career prospects. Diversity, inclusion and proficiency orientation need to be promoted to create a more equitable professional landscape in the country.



**RONALD SSEGUJJA SSEKANDI** is a Ugandan author and edits D+C/E+Z's *Nowadays* column.

[sekandiron@gmail.com](mailto:sekandiron@gmail.com)



**In Uganda, it's not just the CV that counts: workers at a hydropower plant in Kiryandongo.**



Biafrans take part in Catalonia's national day in Barcelona and support those in favour of Catalonia's independence as they demand the same for their own region.

SEPARATISM

# Open wounds

Nigeria's ethnic diversity has often been a bane rather than an opportunity to promote plural strength and development for the country. This was never more evident than during the devastating Biafra war.

By Adaze Okeaya-inneh

There are 371 ethnic groups in Nigeria. Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo are the three largest. Long before colonialism, these communities lived side by side as separate entities, governed themselves, rarely intermarried, but often traded and sometimes waged war. After independence from the British colonial regime in 1960, they found themselves together in a state that did not exist before the arrival of the colonisers.

While many countries had to fight for the right to self-government, Nigeria's transition to independence was largely peaceful. After independence, however, the cultural and political differences between the three largest ethnic groups became glaringly obvious.

Nevertheless, they managed to form a coalition government. However, this was

broken up by a rigged election, the coup d'état of 15 January 1966 and the counter-coup of 28 July 1966, with each group responsible for killings among the others.

In 1966, the military was split along ethnic lines and a systematic massacre in the Muslim-dominated northern region of the country followed. The victims were Christian Igbos from the east and southern Nigerians. Thousands fled to save their lives.

The killing of defenceless civilians caused an outcry and the federal government promised that such killings would not be repeated. The Igbos were encouraged to return to the north. However, shortly after some of them did so, a second, even more devastating massacre took place, in which more than 3000 Igbos were killed. In retaliation, northerners were murdered in the Igbo-dominated eastern states.

An attempt to restore peace led to the "Aburi Accord", which was concluded in Ghana. However, the agreement was cancelled shortly afterwards by Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, the representative of the Nigerian military government. Gowon announced the federal division of Nige-

ria into twelve states. This decree divided the eastern region into three parts: South-Eastern State, Rivers State and East Central State. Now the Igbos, who were concentrated in East Central State, would lose control of most of the oil in the other two areas. They felt betrayed by the Muslim Hausa and Fulani of the northern region, who dominated the ruling government.

## STARVATION AS A WEAPON

On 30 May 1967, Igbo Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu declared Eastern Nigeria a sovereign state, which the federal government considered illegal. Shortly after, on 6 July, federal troops invaded the Eastern Region, initiating the Biafra War. The war, also known as the Nigerian Civil War, lasted almost three years, ending on 15 January 1970.

The dimensions of the Biafra War captured the world's attention. As the first African war to be covered on television, it received widespread attention in the global media. The rise of prominent international aid organisations such as Doctors Without Borders can be seen as a consequence of the Biafra War. These organisations tried to provide humanitarian aid, but their efforts were hampered by the food blockade imposed by the federal government.

The Biafra war was bloody, and both the Nigerian and Biafran armies carried out numerous massacres. However, the food

blockade proved to be the deadliest weapon. Famine was a major reason for the surrender of the Biafran army. Some claim that the Biafra War was the first black-on-black genocide, in which over three million civilians – including thousands of children – fell victim to starvation and massacres.

**LASTING EFFECTS**

The Biafra War has left deep scars in Nigeria. The federal government’s promise of reconciliation, reconstruction and reintegration was and remains wishful thinking at best. The political marginalisation of the Igbos persisted.

Today, almost sixty years after the Biafra War, Igbos continue to be excluded from government positions and resource access. Most recently, the Nigerian Presidential elections in 2023 clearly showed that the Igbos are still marginalised. In many states, Igbos were prevented from voting, especially in Lagos, which has a huge population of Igbos. Anti-Igbo aggression and voter suppression were not persecuted and even en-

couraged. This was frequently the case in past elections as well.

A reaction to this is the rise of Igbo nationalism, which is centred on the preservation of Igbo culture and the development of Igboland. Over the years, new secessionist groups have emerged, including the “Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra” and the “Indigenous People of Biafra”. These groups have angered various Nigerian governments by leading protests in favour of the rights of the Igbo people. These protests have led to countless clashes with security agencies, which in turn have hampered the economy in Igboland.

However, the Igbo are divided on this issue. While some express hope for greater political, social and economic inclusion in Nigeria, others still prefer complete separation from the nation that continues to treat them with contempt and hostility.

Before the British colonised Nigeria, the Igbos were self-governing. During the colonial period, missionary work not only brought the Christian faith, but also a rap-

id development of the education system. Generally, Igbos are known for their business prowess. Long before the war, there was resentment about the business dominance of the Igbos, especially in the north. To this day, the Igbos are among the largest domestic investors and the wealthiest and most educated Nigerians. The resilience of the Igbo people in this regard is remarkable.

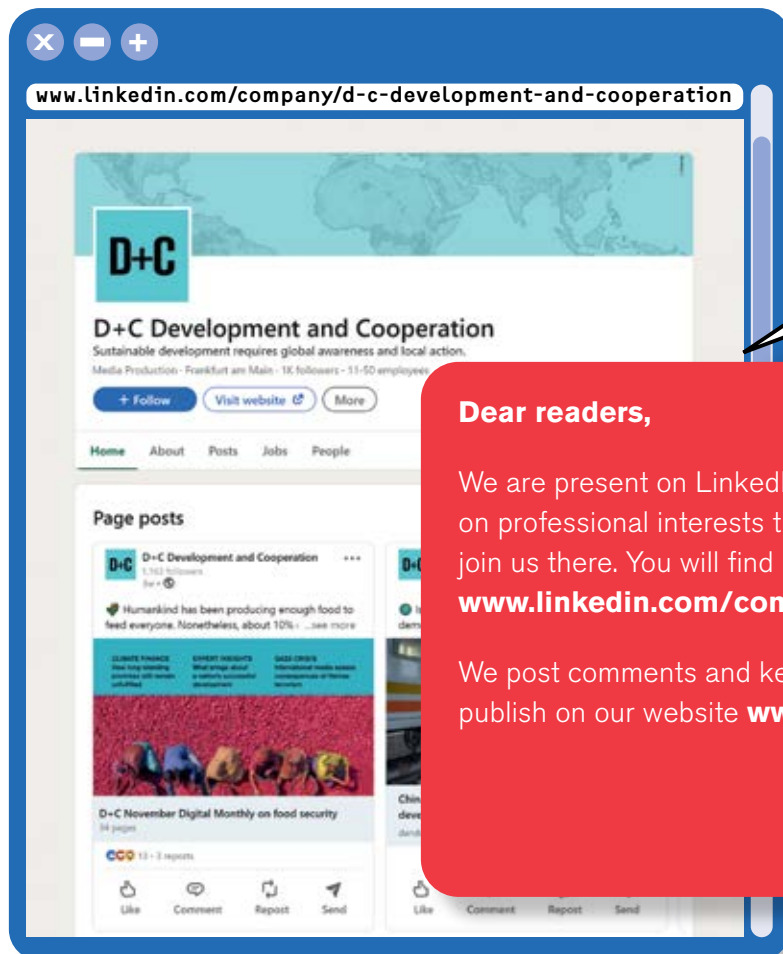
Despite the frequent ethnic and also religious clashes, the Nigerian government is far from authorising a division. The reasons for this are obvious: certain regions would be deprived of considerable resources, especially oil reserves.

The Igbos keep the memory of Biafra alive by passing on knowledge and culture. Many years after its end, the war still casts a shadow on the unity of Nigeria.



**ADAZE OKEAYA-INNEH**  
is a journalist and  
screenwriter in Lagos.

[adazeirefunmi@gmail.com](mailto:adazeirefunmi@gmail.com)



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Dravidian languages are not related to Hindi and have totally different scripts: Malayalam, Hindi and English on a no smoking sign in a railway station.

HINDU-SUPREMACISM

# Why the South snubs Modi

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi hopes to be returned to power in the general elections being held in April and May. While he is believed likely to succeed, his authoritarian Hindu-supremacism has so far not found broad approval in the country's south.

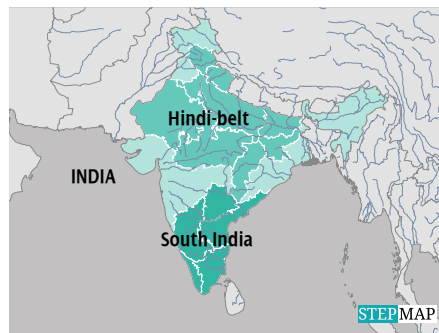
By Krupa Ge

In February, leaders from three south Indian states – Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu – staged a protest in New Delhi. They stated that their states only get an unfair share of the taxes raised by the central government. For every rupee collected in Karnataka, only 0.15 rupees return to that state. The respective figures are 0.29 for Tamil Nadu 0.57 for Kerala.

By contrast, the states where Hindi is the main language benefit heavily from central-government spending. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh receive between two to seven rupees for every rupee collected there.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP tends to be strong in these north and central Indian states, which are also marked by more poverty and poorer development indicators. Their populations are large and still growing comparatively fast, so elections tend to be decided there.

On the other hand, fertility rates have dropped slightly below the replacement level for India as a whole. The south's rep-



resentatives argue that their states are being penalised for achieving population control targets and progressing towards human-development indicators more efficiently than those in the Hindi-belt in central and north India.

The image of a chief minister protesting for his state's share of funds was new and so unusual that it found space in the national TV programmes. This happened in spite of most media companies largely having surrendered their independence to the central government. In exchange, they get advertising revenues from public institutions and are safe from harassment by investigative agencies, including the tax authorities.

However, Modi's democratic mandate is weaker than it seems. In the general elections of 2019, Modi's party was only supported by 38% of Indian voters. Thanks to the first-past-the-post system, that was enough to win a comfortable majority of seats: 303 of 543. Whether a candidate convinces a majority of voters in a constituency, or only more than any other competitor does, is not relevant. Results had been similar five years earlier.

Modi has used this mandate to change the country. According to the constitution, India is a secular state. The BJP supremacist ideology called Hindutva nonetheless wants it to be a Hindu nation. Islamophobic mobs strategically launch bloody riots. The BJP – and institutions it runs – treat Muslims, who make up not quite 15% of the population, as second-class citizens. To some extent, Christians are ostracised too.

Modi is currently running for a third term as prime minister in this years' general election, which is taking place in stages in April and May. He is proudly displaying anti-Muslim credentials (see box).

If Modi-friendly media is to be believed he is likely to succeed. If he indeed does, he would then certainly entrench his authoritarian policies more deeply. Hindutva propaganda, however, would seem more convincing if it was not rejected in some states, especially in the south.

After all, south India does have a deeply entrenched Hindu heritage. It is home to hundreds of ancient, grand and glorious temples. Many of them attract masses of believers. Some also serve as destinations for tourists from all over the world. Legends and actual history are full of powerful Hindu monarchs.

**SOUTH INDIA IS DIFFERENT**

There are several reasons why southern states have snubbed Modi so far. The BJP promotes the idea of India being a monolithic nation with a single culture and Hindi as its official language. In southern eyes, that is simply wrong.

South India's regional languages belong to the Dravidian group and are not related to Hindi, an Indo-European tongue. Anti-Hindi agitations date back to the 1930s, when the Indian National Congress government in the Madras province (erstwhile South Indian states) led by Chakravarti Rajagopalachari promoted Hindi at the cost of Dravidian languages.

The BJP is now seen as a Hindi party from North India. It struggles to convince southerners of its "vision". It does not understand that the Hinduism of the south is different from the north's. The south was deeply influenced by Buddhism and Jainism, two south Asian religions that reject the caste system, according to which Brahmins are superior by birth.

Moreover, the south has also had many Hindu religious reformers, singers and poets who have left a lasting imprint on its spiritual landscape.

In Tamil Nadu, the regional party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam found immense electoral success by focusing on the region's Dravidian roots. They include a powerful anti-Brahminical tradition, which goes back to EVR Periyar's Dravidian Movement almost a century ago.

Caste has not magically died in south India, but this movement helped to establish a non-Brahmin ruling class across south India. Its initial demand was to create a separate nation that would have been called Dravida Nadu. That did not happen. However, Dravidian assertiveness did contribute to independent India not getting an all-powerful central government in Delhi. The constitution gives the states important roles.

Regional parties have driven home the message that south Indian Hindus have more in common with south Indian Muslims than they do with north Indian Hindus.

Every Indian state has its own political scenario. That is no different in the south. In coastal Karnataka, the BJP has made inroads, and it has even managed the state government. However, its Islamophobia did not play well. A ban on girls wearing hijab in school was particularly unpopular. Hindu-supremacists decisively lost last year's state election.

When all else fails, the BJP in the north ups the ante on anti-Pakistan rhetoric, including threats to start war with Pakistan and annex all of Kashmir. It also mobilises anti-Bangladeshi sentiments. This kind of propaganda, however, has less traction in the south because this part of the country was not directly traumatised by the bloody partition violence of 1947. When colonial India was split into India and Pakistan, Hindu-Muslim violence killed hundreds of thousands of people, but southern regions were not affected much.

Shared languages and regional traditions create strong bonds. Political parties can use them to bridge communal divides and fight back against Hindu supremacism. Obviously, fact-based narratives like "the north prospers by plundering the south" are helpful too, especially because they already made sense decades ago, even before the BJP became a nationally relevant political force. We have reason to hope it will not become strong in South India.



**KRUPA GE**  
is a journalist and novelist based in Tamil Nadu.

[krupa.ge@gmail.com](mailto:krupa.ge@gmail.com)

# Messages of hate and dominance

Early this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a new Ram temple in the north Indian town of Ayodhya. It was built on the site where fanatic Hindu-supremacists tore down the centuries-old Babri Mosque in 1992. The event triggered deadly riots across South Asia, claiming some 3000 lives in India alone.

Back then, Modi's party, the BJP, had led the agitation. Today, it is doing its best to turn the new temple into a symbol of national pride.

No one doubts that the inauguration was timed to support

Modi in the ongoing election campaign. Indeed, his government is doing more to convey its anti-secular credentials. It has recently put in force the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which was passed before the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the time, this policy had sparked a nation-wide protest movement. The CAA grants refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan or Bangladesh a fast track to Indian citizenship if they fled for religious reasons, but explicitly excludes Muslims, even though Ahmadi or Shias often suffer religious dis-

crimination in those countries. Critics also warn the law can be used to deprive Indian Muslims of their citizenship if their fam-



Riot damage in Delhi in 2020.

ilies lack documents to prove that they lived in the country before partition in 1947.

The BJP belongs to a network of Hindu-supremacist organisations which is dominated by the RSS, a right-wing cadre organisation that wants India to be a Hindu nation. It did not support the independence struggle, the leaders of which wanted India to be secular nation that accepts all religious faiths. The murderer of Mahatma Gandhi was an RSS follower. In spite of this unpatriotic history, the RSS and the BJP are now claiming to be India's true nationalists. Should Modi win another term as Prime Minister, India's secular democracy will be further eroded. D+C/E+Z



NATIONHOOD

# Islamic identity is insufficient

**Pakistan is a fragmented nation with a shaky political system. The focus on Sunni Islam did not forge the desired unity.**

By Maryam S. Khan

The ideal of a unified national identity has been at the forefront of Pakistan’s political imagination since its creation in 1947. As a multicultural state that was originally composed of two geographically separated ‘wings’, one on either side of India, Pakistan has grappled with the question of what makes it a ‘nation-state’. Islamic identity became the glue for holding together this predominantly Muslim but otherwise hugely diverse country.

Islam was a powerful mobilising force in the story of Pakistan’s independence and was instrumental as a source of political legitimacy. However, it was used more often than not to suppress political dissent and, along with it, religious minorities. It also served to downplay ethno-linguistic identities.

At independence, Pakistan had a sizeable Hindu minority that made up roughly 15% of the total population. Most of them lived in what is now Bangladesh, the former East Wing.

After the partition of British India had triggered brutal violence between Muslims and Hindus, Pakistan’s ruling clique did its best to undercut the political influence of the latter community in the 1950s. For example, they created “separate electorates” for all religious minority groups, so Hindus could only vote for Hindus, Christians for Christians, and so on.

In 1971, Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan in a bloody liberation war. Pakistan’s military spoke of “the Hindu menace” to legitimise its genocidal use of force. Today, the number of non-Muslim people in Pakistan amounts to only about three percent according to the latest census.

What is called Islamic nationalism, however, is basically Sunni nationalism. Shia, Ismaeli and other Muslim minorities exist. They too suffer discrimination and

sometimes even persecution, as I elaborated on this platform several years ago.

## FUNDAMENTALIST MILITIAS

Pakistan’s experiment with religious nationalism has gone truly awry. The worst aspect was probably that the military, over four decades, created and sponsored violent fundamentalist militia groups, initially for fighting the USA’s proxy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The

is so much religious polarisation that mob lynchings over ‘blasphemy’ – an increasingly common occurrence – make no differentiation between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Faith affiliation has thus overshadowed the ethno-linguistic diversity that lies at the heart of Pakistan’s federal structure. To some extent, this diversity has helped to resist the overarching power of the country’s military. Minority sub-nationalism ebbs and flows in relation to Punjabi dominance and has sometimes challenged both Islamism and the centralising policies of the state. The most important case, of course, was Bengali nationalism and the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

Reeling from this loss, the enduring 1973 Constitution of Pakistan recreated the new state as a multinational federation of



Coffin of the victim of a militant attack in Baluchistan in April 2024.

militant groups often fight amongst themselves for both sectarian and other reasons. They have waged terror attacks in Pakistan itself many times.

The context of these conflicts is extremely confusing to anyone unfamiliar with their recent history. They have, however, deepened hostility of many average Pakistanis towards religious minorities. This is evident in the frequent arson of places of worship belonging to non-Muslims and the desecration of their graves. Indeed, there

four provinces that reflect the main ethno-linguistic identities in the country: Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. However, every province is home to ethno-linguistic minorities belonging to the other ethnic groups and languages spoken in Pakistan.

In 2010, after some decades of political instability and multiple military coups, a constitutional amendment reinforced this ethno-federal structure. Wide legislative powers were devolved to the provinces, po-

litically and economically constraining the power of the military at the centre.

It is striking that Islamist parties have rarely made more than a tiny dent in elections. Ethno-linguistic competition, however, matters quite a bit. Nowhere is this ethnic competition more apparent than in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city of 15 million, where economic migrants from all over the country reside in distinct, ethnically defined areas. Ethnic competition is also apparent in quotas for higher education and government jobs. The quotas are meant to ensure fair representation of all communities but give rise to constant contestations.

Pakistan has thus not made much progress in terms of inclusiveness, and the federation today is anything but stable.

A multi-party coalition is currently running the country, having come into power through the military's electoral engineering earlier this year. It includes two big parties with a history of vicious rivalry. This coalition is challenged by a right-leaning populist movement that won far more seats in the recent elections than the establishment had expected.

The military is keen on protecting its economic interests. Its manoeuvring, combined with the continuing preponderance of Punjab, do not bode well for ethno-lingual minorities. Baluchistan is an extreme example. Indeed, the province in Pakistan's resource-rich and sparsely populated southwest is suffering military repression for decades. The conflict has culminated in an on-

going insurgency in this province, and there have been many enforced disappearances.

The military wants to roll back the power of sub-national units and is trying to take advantage of conflict scenarios. It is obvious that its decades long emphasis of order based on Muslim unity did not work, but only led to the current frictions.



**MARYAM S. KHAN**  
is a research fellow at the  
**Institute of Development and  
Economic Alternatives  
(IDEAS) in Lahore, Pakistan.**

**She recently completed her PhD degree in law on Pakistan's constitution-making history from the University of Wisconsin, USA.**

***maryam.khan@ideaspak.org***

## Politically assertive women

Against the backdrop of the global #MeToo movement, a new wave of feminist politics swelled up in Pakistan. It asserts the right of women and queer people to inhabit public spaces without fear of harassment and violence.

The Aurat March ('Women's March') now takes place in many cities every year on 8 March, the international women's day. The rallies spotlight women's struggle against patriarchy in their personal lives within the home, family and the broader community.

Young feminists demand that what they see as a false binary between the public and private spheres must be dismantled. They have pushed previously taboo themes of sexuality and bodily autonomy into the public imagination. A central slogan of the Aurat March is "mera jism meri marzi" ("my body, my choice"). It relates to the pervasive physical abuse and sexual violence against women, but also asserts

women's and other gender minorities' autonomy over their bodies and sexual agency.

For earlier generations, such an uninhibited assertion of feminist consciousness was unthinkable. To many people, other Aurat March slogans sound scandalous. They include "khana khud garam kar lo" ("heat up your meal yourself"), "mein tumhari izzat nahi hoon" ("I am not your honour"), "tou karay tou stud, mein karoon tau slut" ("when you do it you're a stud, when I do it I'm a slut") and "meri shadi ki nahi,

pehlay meri taaleem ki fikar karo" ("worry about my education, not marriage").

In parallel to the start of the Aurat March, Pakistan's indigenous and deeply stigmatised transgender people, known as hijras, won a key demand to self-identify as the 'third gender' in 2018. They are gender-diverse and include trans and intersex persons as well as eunuchs. They have had a long history of oppression that can be traced back in South Asia to discriminatory colonial laws that were introduced in late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Homo- and transphobic violence remain all too common, but the reforms of 2018 have at least granted hijras

legal protection and socio-economic rights.

As in many parts of the globe, struggles for gender rights face resistance from both state and society. In Pakistan, the backlash emanates not only from right-wing groups but, more disturbingly, from state institutions. Only last year, for instance, the Islamic Shariat Court struck down a number of provisions of the new law in favour of hijras arguing that it violated Islamic injunctions. This has put the marginalised community at even greater risk of persecution. The irony is that a progressive ruling by the Supreme Court had paved the way to the reform of 2018.

The Aurat March movement also navigates a maelstrom of criticism, threats and online harassment every year, but so far does not get any serious provision of state protection. What is encouraging is the tremendous resilience and perseverance with which Pakistan's women and gender minorities carry forward their struggles. This kind of insistence on fundamental rights is exactly what the country needs. **MK**



**Participant in Aurat March in Islamabad in 2019.**



Radical groups are recruiting worldwide: Palestinian members of the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the terrorist organisation Islamic Jihad, in Beirut, Lebanon.

RADICALISATION

# Extremist temptation

**Many Muslims in Germany feel let down by the government. That dissatisfaction is exploited by radical groups. They are instrumentalising the Gaza war for their own purposes and recruiting young people via social media, as extremism expert Ahmad Mansour explains.**

By Kim Berg

On 7 October, Hamas attacked Israel and slaughtered around 1200 people. The attack was followed by an Israeli counter-offensive in the Gaza Strip aimed at destroying Hamas’ organisational structures. International protests against the massive military operation soon followed. Millions around the world demonstrated against the war in Gaza. This played into Hamas’ hands.

“With an increased social-media presence, Hamas is mobilising people to take to the streets against the war,” explains Israeli-German psychologist Ahmad Mansour. This puts pressure on governments to stop the war. In 2017, Mansour founded “Mind Prevention” in Berlin, an initiative to promote democracy and prevent extremism.

The Arab Israeli also works with radicalised young people in prisons and offers workshops in schools, asylum centres and welcome classes.

In Germany, the Hamas strategy targets Muslims, many of whom feel abandoned by the country’s politics. “German politicians have clearly sided with Israel. That is good and right but we must not lose sight of the justified concerns of the Palestinians,” says Mansour.

According to the German Islam Conference, around 5.5 million Muslims live in Germany. Many of them now feel they are under general suspicion because of their religion. “The German government’s messaging since 7 October has fuelled Islamist sentiment,” says Mansour. He sees a sharp rise in radical movements since the start of the war. Many Muslims have lost confidence in the German government, he says, and some end up joining radical groups in their search for understanding.

Ideologues capitalise on this rupture. They claim that Germany has never been interested in the Muslim community and that Muslims’ feelings are neither seen nor

respected. Radical groups focus primarily on contacting teenagers and young adults, who can be reached easily on social media wherever they may be.

## EMOTIONAL SOCIAL-MEDIA PROPAGANDA

German government agencies process complaints regarding child-welfare violations on social media. In 2022, 13% of the cases were related to political extremism. Mansour says extremist messages online have increased since 7 October. “People who used to watch cat videos in their feed are now getting propaganda videos from Islamist groups,” he says.

The problem lies primarily in algorithms. If people search for certain topics, Instagram, TikTok and co. will shuffle those topics into their feed. Videos and posts are short. They are also often taken out of context. Extremist propaganda exploits emotions. It works.

Even terror militia ISIS had a sophisticated media strategy which it used to lure thousands of fighters to Syria and Iraq. The organisation used multimedia and multilingual channels to spread its propaganda via Telegram and X, formerly Twitter. It developed its own magazine and made propaganda films that were comparable to the recruitment videos of the US army. In addition to revenge and retribution, ISIS promised potential followers the chance to help estab-

lish a caliphate and thus make history. That was a message that particularly appealed to young people, who had experienced marginalisation and discrimination in daily life.

### SEARCH FOR BELONGING AND MEANING

In 2015, 680 people travelled from Germany to Syria to join ISIS, most of them aged between 16 and 25. Although the reasons for their radicalisation differed, political scientist Marwan Abou Taam identified a number of similarities after studying their biographies: many of the young people struggled with identity problems and were searching for belonging and meaning in life. They wanted a role in society that they felt had rejected them so far. Most were children of immigrants and belonged to the third generation living in Germany. They were re-provingly referred to as “Germans” by their families and problematised as “Muslims” by society.

Mansour notes that many young people see radicalisation as an enrichment, as they find a new social environment that gives them a sense of being superior to others. “They feel they belong to an elite, and that is a completely new experience for most of them.” Young people are particularly open to propaganda when they find themselves in unstable situations. They may be experiencing bullying, struggling with the transition from school to working life or coming to terms with the death of someone close to them.

“Both Islamists and right-wing extremists create an emotional bond with young people,” explains Mansour. Extremists express interest, open up new perspectives and offer guidance, support and a purpose in life. According to Mansour, that is everything that helps people in crisis situations rebuild self-confidence. “The more complex the world becomes and the bigger the crises, the greater the desire for

simple answers. And radical ideologues provide those answers,” the psychologist says.

Mansour and his team seek dialogue with radicalised individuals and provide one-to-one psychological support, sometimes for years. “Nevertheless, there is never a guarantee that we will be successful,” he says. He believes that there is a need for more fact-based discussion – even on issues that can be frightening: “Democracy is debate, democracy is exchanging arguments, democracy is having to tolerate people who do not share your opinions. We need to bring people with different opinions together and engage in tough discussions.”



**KIM BERG**  
is an editor at the communications agency Fazit and specialises in political communication.

[kim.berg@fazit.de](mailto:kim.berg@fazit.de)

### HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY

## Misguided fight against antisemitism

**For good reason, it is considered antisemitic to assess Israel in a more critical light than other nations. That opinion shapers in German media and politics treat Israel more favourably is problematic too. Philosemitism – the unquestioning endorsement of anything Jewish – does not help in the fight against prejudiced antisemitism. Germany's international credibility is at stake.**

By Hans Dembowski

In Germany, we generally expect Muslims to disown extremism and to make a commitment to Israel's right to exist. Otherwise, they will not be listened to.

That is not how we treat Israelis. Zionist extremists who build settlements on the West Bank are considered a fringe com-

munity that deserves so little attention that we do not expect anyone to disown them. We tend to ignore that these extremists are present in Israel's cabinet. Just like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself, they reject the right of any Palestinian state to exist. The settlements, by the way, are protected by Israel's official security forces and enjoy government subsidies.

Not only Palestinian terrorism has been obstructing peace for decades; Israeli extremists bear responsibility too. Let's not forget that Yitzhak Rabin, the peace-oriented prime minister, was murdered by a right-wing Israeli hardliner. German media, moreover, often mistakenly call radical Zionists “orthodox”. That shows how little many Germans know about Judaism. Some strains of orthodox Judaism do not only

reject military service, but indeed Zionism itself.

The settler movement started decades ago and has recently been gaining momentum. Some 500,000 Israelis currently live in the West Bank. They rely on strong infrastructure, which includes highways that they alone may use. Their security walls require additional space in the densely populated occupied territory. They also severely restrict the mobility of 3 million Palestinians. Netanyahu makes no secret of wanting to annex land where, according to the Oslo agreements, a Palestinian state is supposed to be established. At a conference earlier this year, some members of his cabinet even discussed setting up new settlements in Gaza after the war.

Almost six decades of occupation and expanding settlements do not conform with human rights or international law. Defenceless people are being expropriated and even killed. Human-rights organisations report that Israelis normally enjoy impunity even after the perpetration of deadly violence. By contrast, military courts send Palestinian teenagers to prison for throwing stones during protests even when no one gets hurt. If we are serious about equality, rule of law

and human rights, none of this is acceptable.

### CONTROVERSIAL LANGUAGE

Whether one should accuse Israel of genocide or apartheid is a matter of serious debate. Some express outrage at the mere use of the terms, but that does very little in terms of fighting antisemitism, while it does end discussions. We must take into account that – unlike Germany’s Federal Government – the International Court of Justice (ICJ) did not consider South Africa’s genocide case against Israel to be meritless in January. Even its Israeli judge endorsed two of the preliminary obligations the ICJ imposed on Israel. He too wanted Israel to prohibit genocidal language and increase humanitarian aid to Gaza substantially.

Nonetheless, the humanitarian disaster in Gaza is now escalating into a famine. Civil-society organisations have been warning since January that this was about to happen. Germans would not have found excuses for such a scenario had it occurred during the Iraq war – and especially not, if a high-ranking US official had earlier announced that “human animals” would be cut off from food. Yoav Gallant, Israel’s defence minister, made such a statement however. There is precious little doubt that war crimes are occurring in Gaza.

We must similarly take seriously that B’tselem, an Israeli human-rights organisation, has been speaking of apartheid for years. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International later followed suit. We normally appreciate their diligent legal analysis. In Germany, their reports on Israel and Palestine have nonetheless been neglected after being accused of antisemitism.

It is often reiterated that one is permitted to criticise Israel, and that only antisemitic rhetoric is unacceptable. Those who express grievances in diplomatic terms, however, generally remain unheard, while anyone who uses stronger language tends to be silenced with antisemitism accusations. This approach resembles Netanyahu’s right-wing populism. He will justify anything with security needs in view of rampant antisemitism around the world – as though his aggressive policies didn’t contribute to tensions and resentment.

If we want to reach the populous Muslim youth in Germany, we need a different

approach. They are fully aware of Germany accepting action by the Jewish state that our government would vehemently oppose if done by any Islamic republic. They also know that we normally reject defining a nation in narrow religious or ethnic terms. Accordingly, we think India must not become a Hindu state, and we find appalling the white Christian nationalists who support Donald Trump in the USA. Israel, however, clearly prioritises Jews. A controversial legal reform of 2018 declared the right to exercise

Palestine. Implementation would not be easy, of course. Those who make such proposals, however, are clearly trying to pave a road to peace. Nonetheless, any backing off from the existence of a Jewish state is deemed to be unacceptably antisemitic in Germany, where the debate on “Jewish or democratic” is not getting much attention.

For decades, German leaders have been telling Arab counterparts that they need democracy and human rights. Arabs are fully aware, however, of Germany not



Yuval Abraham (left), an Israeli film director, was accused of antisemitic rhetoric after speaking out against his government’s policies at Berlinale, the Berlin film festival.

national self-determination in the state of Israel to be unique to the Jewish people.

An important ongoing debate is about whether Israel will be a Jewish or a democratic state in the long run. The problem is that Israel cannot be both without a separate Palestinian state because the size of the Palestinian population between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river roughly equals the Jewish one. Netanyahu, nonetheless, claims military dominance over the entire area. His so far unsuccessful attempts to strip Israel’s supreme court of important powers, moreover, indicate what his choice between “Jewish and democratic” is. The judges have ruled in favour of minority rights several times.

There are serious proposals to drop the two-state concept in favour of a single, secular state for all faith communities in Israel/

putting effective pressure on Israel regarding these matters in the occupied territories. Lip service the two-state solution does not protect our credibility, as long as it does not take into account the obvious truth that Israel’s government has been doing what it can to prevent such a solution for many years. German demands that Israel do more to protect Palestinians from settler violence remain similarly unconvincing, given that the entire settlement programme must stop, and Palestinians deserve full human rights (including, of course, property rights). And does it matter at all that the Netanyahu government is obviously ready to risk the escalation of the Gaza war into a regional conflagration? Our Federal Government does not want that to happen.

Not only Muslim Germans notice the double standards which are increasingly

evident, for example, when Israel’s “right to self-defence” is invoked to justify what looks more and more like a revenge campaign. More than 34,000 Gazans have died in recent months, and the majority were women and children.

Unlawful Israeli action obviously does not justify horrific Hamas terrorism. Islamist atrocities, however, do not make the grizzly current Gaza scenario acceptable either. We must take seriously suffering on both sides but avoid weighing one side’s brutality against the other’s. Every innocent victim counts. Anyone who is serious about a rules-based world order should insist on the International Criminal Court trying perpetrators on both sides.

It is true that criticism of Israel often has antisemitic undertones, but it is equally true that philosemitism is often marked by Islamophobia. Neither phenomenon makes legitimate grievances invalid.

By the way, the current polarisation, according to which everyone is either pro or anti-Israel, serves both sides in the Gaza war. Both always cast themselves as victims. This kind of identity politics also helps Hamas to pretend it is the only force still opposing Israeli violence. The more we discount unlawful Israeli state action, the more Hamas rhetoric resonates around the world. Too many disregard that this criminal outfit does not deserve to be called a liberation movement. After all, freedom fighters do not intentionally kickstart a war that is likely to kill tens of thousands of their own people in the course of only a few months.

In Germany, charges of antisemitism currently even serve to silence Jewish intellectuals who disagree with Israel’s government. Recent action by the mayor of Berlin and the president of Cologne University were extremely awkward. The former told an Israeli film director what kind of statement he may not make in Germany because we find it unacceptably antisemitic. The latter cancelled the guest professorship of a Jewish scholar from the USA because she signed an open letter calling for boycotting Israel in support of Palestinians.

### DUTY AMONG FRIENDS

“Criticising Israel is a duty among friends,” former German President Johannes Rau used to say, as one of his former staff members has told me. Heidemarie Wiczorek-



The funeral of Yitzhak Rabin, the peace-willing prime minister, in 1995.

Zeul and Joschka Fischer took a similar approach. She served as minister for economic cooperation and development in the coalition government of Social Democrats and Greens around the turn of the Millennium, and he was the foreign minister. Things were easier then because the Oslo agreements seemed to usher in a better two state future.

Philosemitism, however, is still not an antidote to antisemitism. Indeed, scholars from the Center for Research on Antisemitism at Technische Universität Berlin include the former in their long list of varieties of antisemitism (Ullrich et al. 2024). They also warn against politicising such a multilayered academic term. For intellectual purposes, undiscerning philosemitism is nothing more than the flipside of prejudiced antisemitism. Used in political sloganeering, the term “antisemitism” polarises, thus entrenching both anti-Jewish and pro-Jewish attitudes more deeply. When philosemitism morphs into unconditional support of Israel, things become particularly dangerous. The point is that it fuels anger and resentment when people disregard legitimate criticism of Israel as mere symptoms of antisemitism.

Germany certainly bears responsibility for Israel’s security after the Nazi genocide. Since the Jewish state, however, was not established on empty land, Germany has a responsibility for Palestinians’ security too. We can neither ignore the rights of

displaced persons and their descendants nor those of long-established local communities in the occupied territories. We must also avoid any kind of identity politics that pits Jews against Muslims. Just as it is unacceptable to hold every individual Jew accountable for Israeli state action, we cannot blame Hamas terrorism on each and every Palestinian.

Aggressive rhetoric is not helpful when it comes to protecting Germany’s Jewish minority from antisemitic aggression. It does not enhance Israel’s security either. We need diligent and discerning analysis. Our country intends to promote peace, democracy and human rights internationally. Making exceptions for Israel undermines our credibility. Our diplomats become less convincing – not only in predominantly Muslim partner countries.

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**HANS DEMBOWSKI**  
is the editor-in-chief of D+C/  
E+Z.

[euz.editor@dandc.eu](mailto:euz.editor@dandc.eu)



Christopher Street Day in Mainz in July 2023.

QUEER PEOPLE

## Defending the progress made

**A great deal has changed for the better for queer people in Germany in recent decades. At the same time, they continue to be victims of targeted physical and psychological violence. The figures for hate crime directed against them are rising. All democrats should defend their human rights.**

By Kerstin Thost

Queer political progress in recent decades has been a success story in Germany. The rights and recognition of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans\*, intersex and other queer people (LGBTIQ\*) have been significantly promoted, not least by civil society and the civil-rights movement. Consensual same-sex acts have not been criminalised in Germany since 1994. In 2001, registered civil partnerships were introduced for same-sex couples – a significant step towards the introduction of same-sex marriage in 2017.

Last year, on Remembrance Day for the Victims of National Socialism, the German Bundestag commemorated the queer victims of that criminal regime for the first time with a memorial service.

The Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany (LSVD) is the country's largest queer political advocacy group and has been active for almost 35 years. Today, in the media and at our information stands, we often hear people ask why we are still needed. "Surely at some point," they say, "enough is enough".

That seems a harmless attitude, but it is not without its problems. First of all, it can reinforce social indifference towards ongoing and currently worsening problems: people in Germany are verbally and physically attacked on a daily basis by strangers giving violent expression to their hatred of LGBTIQ\* people. Second, it can promote a social backlash, which we are currently

observing: acceptance of sexual and gender diversity is decreasing in the country for the first time in decades. Also significant are the recent electoral successes of the AfD, a political party that has repeatedly positioned itself with anti-queer and far-right language.

The progress made towards equality for queer life must not be taken for granted; malevolent political forces could reverse it. Recently, for example, the right-wing government in Italy retroactively revoked the parental rights of lesbian mothers. Developments like that frighten queer people and their allies. There are queer people in all parts of society in every country, whatever the political repression that prevails there.

The social backlash goes hand in hand with a massive increase in hate in the digital world. People who have experienced discrimination are particularly often a target. In a recent study, 28% of respondents with a homosexual orientation stated that they had been exposed to hate online. Among those with a bisexual orientation, the figure was even higher at 36%. That hatred leads to a withdrawal from democratic discourse. More than half of those interviewed said they were less likely to express their own political opinion online due to fear. And 82%

feared that online hate jeopardises diversity on the internet (Kompetenznetzwerk gegen Hass im Netz 2023).

Where hate spreads unhindered in the digital world, it also encourages violence on the street: words become deeds. The official figures for anti-queer hate crime in Germany have been rising for years. In 2022, the Federal Ministry of the Interior recorded more than 1000 cases of hate crime relating to sexual orientation and more than 400 cases relating to gender diversity. In public places especially, on the street or on local public transport, queer people experience violence in the form of insults, spitting, punches or kicks. A considerable number of cases – an estimated 80 to 90% – go unreported.

Many queer people do not press charges because they fear further discrimination by the police or have already been subjected to it in the past. Other reasons, such as shame or an insecure residence status, may also play a role. There are still major gaps in research in Germany on the extent, manifestations and background of LGBTIQ\* hate crime.

## MISANTHROPIC ATTITUDES

The violence is not only directed at queer people themselves but also at people who are perceived by the perpetrators to be LGBTIQ\*. In many cases the acts that are committed appear to be spontaneous – which means that hostility to queer people is still deeply rooted in society. LGBTIQ\*-hostile violence stems from hatred. Many perpetrators see themselves as executors of what they imagine to be the national will. They regard LGBTIQ\* people as inferior. They want to drive queer life out of the public realm into obscurity. Furthermore, queerphobia is almost always interwoven with other misanthropic attitudes.

Manifest queerphobia leads to a society in which people are wary of being or looking “different”. According to the LGBTI Survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 61% of respondents said they always or often avoid even simple displays of affection in public – holding hands with their partner, for example (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2020).

Queer young people in particular find themselves in a vulnerable situation. They

**“It is crucially important that we, as civil society, should not rest on our laurels. We need to mobilise all democrats to defend the human rights of queer people.”**

are struggling to grow up and discover their identity in a society that still assumes heterosexuality and binary models of gender to be the norm. As a result, there are generally a number of years between a person’s inner coming out, i.e., the admission of queerness to themselves, and external coming out – coming out to other people.

For many queer young people, uncertainty about a sexual or gender orientation that is initially perceived as inappropriate gives rise to stress, deprivation and fear – for example, the fear of never being able to have a happy relationship or a family of their own. It can be assumed that they are also more frequently victims of domestic violence. Many feel under pressure to conceal or suppress their identity. This can have psychological or psychosomatic consequences. A supportive environment is therefore important (Deutsches Jugendinstitut 2015).

## PROTECTION FROM CONVERSION PRACTICES

Conversion practices also contribute to this psychological pressure, although they are prohibited – with exceptions – in Germany. Such treatments are carried out under the false assumption that a person’s gender identity or sexual orientation can be changed or suppressed from the outside. This contradicts scientific findings and WHO guidelines.

A recent nationwide online survey revealed some alarming figures. Fifty-two percent of queer respondents stated that they had been frequently or repeatedly advised to date someone of the opposite sex in order to suppress or change their sexual orientation. Fifty percent were frequently or repeatedly advised to take part in “typically male” activities such as football or “typically female” activities such as shopping. So, protection from conversion practices remains a major challenge and there is still a considerable need to raise public awareness.

It is crucially important that we, as civil society, should not rest on our laurels. We need to mobilise all democrats to defend the human rights of queer people. In particular, this means supporting democratic parties in elections.

Equal rights for so-called minorities – including queer people – are at the heart of democracy. Ultimately, everyone benefits from that. To paraphrase the German author and journalist Carolin Emcke: Plurality in a society does not mean the loss of personal (or collective) freedom; on the contrary, it guarantees it.

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**KERSTIN THOST** is press spokesperson for the Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany (LSVD).  
[presse@lsvd.de](mailto:presse@lsvd.de)





Sixty years ago, racial segregation was abolished in the USA. However, who belongs to which race still plays a role in the country.

RACE AND IDENTITY

# A social definition

The way the US government collects data on race and ethnicity fails to capture the diversity of a multiracial nation. However, even though the concept of race has become outdated, it may be necessary to invoke it in order to repair the damage it has caused.

By Claire Davis

The United States is commonly thought of as a nation of immigrants, a term popularised by former president John F. Kennedy in 1958. The idea refers to the fact that, with the exception of indigenous peoples, almost all contemporary US-Americans either arrived as immigrants themselves or have ancestors who were immigrants, settlers or slaves. US-Americans become citizens through naturalisation or by being born in the country.

“American” has never been considered an ethnicity.

The Federal Government attempts to account for this diversity in the census it conducts every ten years. Residents’ supposed race has always been recorded, though categories have shifted over time. The earliest census from 1790 only contained the categories “slaves”, “free white males and females” and “all other free persons”. The most recent census from 2020 allowed respondents to choose from five racial categories and also indicate whether they identified with more than one race. Nevertheless, these categories still fail to capture the variation within US-American society. They create confusion among citizens and government officials alike. Worse, continuing to classify people by race perpetuates an understanding of

human diversity that has been used for centuries to justify oppression.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE UNITED STATES?

According to the 2020 census, 61.6% of US-Americans identify as White. Those identifying as Black or African American make up 12.4% of the populace. Asians comprise six percent and American Indian or Alaska Natives 1.1%. The last official race category in the US census, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, constitutes 0.2% of the population.

In the census or for other official purposes, ethnicity and race are asked in two different questions. First, Americans indicate whether they identify as Hispanic/Latino, and then they can choose one of the five categories described above. Hispanics can choose any race. The US Federal Government considers Hispanic or Latino origin an ethnicity, not a race. In American English “race” means a group of people who share physical characteristics as well as a common history. Ethnicity refers to similarities in, for example, language and tradition that are ac-

quired from a community. The definitions of these terms are as vague as they are controversial. On a census or for other official purposes, Hispanics can choose any race.

However, many people in this community see their Hispanic background as a distinct race. For the US census, the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” refer to anyone with origins in Spain or the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America. About 18.7% of US residents identify as Hispanic or Latino.

Census respondents may also select multiple racial categories or identify as “some other race”. The number of people reporting multiple races (such as White and Black or African American) increased from nine million in 2010 to 33.8 million in 2020. The number who chose “some other race” also increased by almost nine percent during the same period. These results are likely due both to real demographic change as well as to changes in survey design and data processing.

The U.S. Census Bureau acknowledges that its questionnaire reflects “a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically”. The wealth of human variation cannot be reduced to the categories a society favours at any given moment in time. Indeed, the notion of race stems from centuries-old efforts to categorise humans in ways that also justified European hegemony. It has nothing to do with a modern understanding of the human genome.

Given that race is a social construct, the question of who belongs to what category is slippery. The US Federal Government currently considers White people to be those who are descended from “any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa”.

The situation of people of Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) descent illustrates many of the paradoxes surrounding race in the US. Until the mid-twentieth century, Whiteness was a condition for naturalisation. New arrivals, including people from the MENA region, sometimes went to court to prove that they were White. Nowadays, people from these regions are encouraged to identify as White on the census. Particularly since the 11 September attacks, however, many people of MENA descent have been subject to harassment and discrimination. Yet because they are officially considered White, there is little reliable data about

“However, critics contend that the government could continue to gather data to fight racism without asking people to identify with artificial categories.”

them, making it hard for the Federal Government to ensure equity in housing, education, healthcare and many other areas.

Probably the most infamous US perspective on race is the so-called “one drop” rule. Black people were enslaved in the United States until 1865. After abolition, they suffered decades of persecution and discriminatory laws that restricted where they could live, go to school or even use the toilet. Racial segregation was made illegal in 1965, but anti-Black racism still persists. Thus, the question of who is Black and who is White has had a serious impact on everyday life for a very long time. For centuries, the legal and social definition of what it meant to be Black was whether an individual had any amount of African ancestry. In other words, a single drop of “Black blood” was all it took to be considered Black in the US. Despite its origins in slavery and segregationist laws, the idea still shapes the way Americans think about race. Barack Obama was considered the nation’s first Black president, despite the fact that his mother was White. Tiger Woods is considered a prominent Black golfer, despite the fact that he is also of Thai, Chinese and Dutch descent.

Obama’s father was from Kenya; the former president is not a descendant of enslaved people. About 21% of the US’s Black population are either immigrants or the children of immigrants, primarily from Africa or Central and South America. On average, Black Americans with a recent immigrant background are older, better educated, earn more and are more likely to be married than US-born Blacks. Though all Black people in the US undoubtedly experience racism, the histories of recent immigrants and the descendants of slaves differ significantly.

There is no shortage of inconsistencies and shortcomings in any of the census categories. The Federal Government considers “Asian” anyone from the “Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent”, an area that comprises over 20 countries

that are enormously diverse as well. Furthermore, Brazilians are not considered Hispanic. Yet in 2020, at least 416,000 Brazilians identified as Hispanic on the American Community Survey, which the Census Bureau conducts annually.

### PROPOSED CHANGES

Nevertheless, ideas about who belongs to which group still have a huge impact. People who are considered Black in the US continue to be subject to grave discrimination. People who are considered White are not. Paradoxically, as long as this kind of discrimination and targeted racism are still rampant, it makes sense to hold on to certain categories. Because if the Federal Government wants to promote equality, it needs quotas – and for the quotas it needs data, which can only be collected if there are categories. The Federal Government currently collects data on race for a variety of reasons, many of which aim at promoting civil rights. They include:

- ensuring equal employment opportunities,
- assessing racial disparities in healthcare,
- planning and funding government programmes that benefit specific groups and
- monitoring compliance with anti-discrimination laws.

However, critics contend that the government could continue to gather data to fight racism without asking people to identify with artificial categories. For instance, the census could ask how a person is seen by the rest of society. Such a question would capture how factors such as skin colour – as opposed to one’s self-identified race or ethnicity – affect discrimination in areas like housing or hiring.

Proposed changes to the 2030 census include doing away with the distinction between race and ethnicity and adding “Hispanic or Latino” and “Middle Eastern or North African” as two of seven options. But much of the aforementioned confusion will likely be preserved.



**CLAIRE DAVIS**

is a freelance translator who has worked for D+C/E+Z since 2013. Currently she is also an instructor of German

at Truman State University in Missouri, USA.  
[clairemdavis1983@gmail.com](mailto:clairemdavis1983@gmail.com)



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