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Western Interference or Genuine Activism: A Critical Analysis of African Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique in the Post- Independence Era

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Abstract

The landscape of African opposition politics has become increasingly complex, with many questioning the motivations behind opposition movements. Against the backdrop of a long history of Western interference in African affairs, this qualitative desktop and critical discourse analysis research seeks to explore the intersection of Western influence and African opposition politics in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. This research critically examines existing literature to identify the key features of Western influence in African opposition politics, including the role of foreign funding, geopolitics, and media coverage. Underpinned by postcolonial social movement theories and critical discourse analysis, the study explores how African opposition leaders navigate these complex power dynamics, often walking a fine line between genuine activism and perceived Western interference. This research's findings suggest that Western influence plays a significant role in shaping African opposition politics, often perpetuating a narrative of Western-backed regime change. However, the study argues that African opposition leaders are increasingly asserting their agency and autonomy, pushing back against Western interference and asserting their agendas.

Keywords: *African Opposition Politics, Western Influence, Regime Change, Democratic Development, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique.*

Introduction

The landscape of African politics has undergone significant transformations since the mid-20th century, marking the dawn of independence. One of the most notable trends in recent years has been the rise of opposition politics, with various movements and parties emerging to challenge the dominance of incumbent regimes (Cheeseman, 2018; Farole, 2021). However, the role of Western powers in shaping African opposition politics has become a topic of intense debate, with some arguing that Western interference undermines the legitimacy and autonomy of African opposition movements (Mkandawire, 2015; Hayward, 2019).

Understanding Western interference in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South African opposition politics requires acknowledging their history of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The British colonised Zimbabwe through the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and Cecil John Rhodes in the late 1800s. The BSAC, established in 1889, was granted a royal charter to colonise and exploit the region's natural resources (Mlambo, 2013). Cecil John Rhodes, a British businessman and politician, played a significant role in the colonisation of Zimbabwe, and his legacy continues to shape the country's politics and economy. The Portuguese colonised Mozambique in the 16th century. The Portuguese established trade posts and settlements along the coast, and by the 19th century, they had established a colonial administration (Newitt, 1995).

The Portuguese colonisation of Mozambique had a profound impact on the country's language, culture, and economy. South Africa was colonised by the Netherlands from 1652 to 1795 and then by the British from 1803 to 1806. The Dutch established the Dutch East India Company, which played a significant role in the colonisation of South Africa (Worden, 2012). Germany also colonised parts of South Africa and Namibia from 1884 to 1899. The historical context of colonialism and neo-colonialism in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa has significant implications for Western interference in opposition politics in these countries. The legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism continues to shape the politics and economies of these countries, and

Western powers often use their economic and political influence to shape the course of events.

The broader landscape of African politics and international relations provides a critical context for understanding the complex dynamics at play. Africa's history of colonialism and imperialism has created a legacy of unequal power relationships between African countries and Western powers (Rodney, 2018). This legacy continues to shape the continent's political and economic landscape, with many African countries struggling to assert their sovereignty and independence in the face of Western dominance (Ake, 2000). The end of the Cold War marked a significant turning point in African politics, as Western powers began to promote democratisation and liberalisation across the continent (Chabal, 2017). However, this promotion of democracy has often been criticised for being selective and self-serving, with Western powers supporting opposition movements that serve their interests while ignoring or undermining those that do not (Bond, 2018).

In recent years, the rise of China and other emerging powers has created new opportunities for African countries to diversify their economic and political relationships (Taylor, 2017). However, this presents new challenges as African nations navigate complex and competing external influences (Carmody, 2016). The cases of Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique provide critical insights into the complex dynamics of African opposition politics and Western interference in the post-independence era of most African countries. Zimbabwe's opposition movement, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and its offshoot, the Citizens for Coalition Change (CCC), for example, have been heavily influenced by Western powers, with many opposition leaders receiving funding and support from Western governments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Mkandawire, 2015). Notwithstanding that the liberation struggle political parties, such as ZANU-PF, the ANC, and FRELIMO, in these countries in question received much support from Western governments during their pre-independence era, this support has been criticised for undermining the autonomy and legitimacy of the opposition movement (Raftopoulos, 2013).

In South Africa, the opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and the Democratic Alliance (DA) have been accused of receiving funding from Western sources, which has raised questions about the parties' autonomy and legitimacy (Bond, 2018; Dendere, 2021). Similarly, in Mozambique, the opposition party, the Mozambican

National Resistance (RENAMO), and the most recent movement led by Valencio Mondlane have received support from Western powers, which has been criticised for undermining the peace process and perpetuating conflict (Carmody, 2016). The contextual background of African opposition politics and Western interference is complex and viewed differently. The legacy of colonialism and imperialism continues to shape the continent's political and economic landscape. At the same time, the rise of new global powers has created new opportunities and challenges for African countries. The cases of Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique provide critical insights into the complex dynamics at play, highlighting the need for a nuanced and critical understanding of African opposition politics and Western interference.

Based on the preceding contextual background, this study employs qualitative desktop and critical discourse analysis methods to explore the intersection of Western influence and African opposition politics in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. Structurally, the study comprises several sections, including, firstly, the contextual background, which presents the background to the landscape of opposition politics in Africa. Secondly, the study articulates the research problem coupled with the study gap, research questions and the rationale of the study. Thirdly, the study provides a comprehensive and extensive literature review and theoretical framework that covers the overview of African opposition politics, Western influence in African politics, critical perspectives on Western influence, and gaps in the existing literature. Fourthly, the study presents the research methodology and the experiences of opposition politics in case studies from Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. Lastly, the study presents a discussion of the key findings from the literature, as well as the conclusion, implications, and recommendations for future research, policy, and practice.

Research Problem, Study Gap, Research Questions and Rationale of the Study

The role of Western powers in African opposition politics has become a contentious issue, with many questioning the motivations behind Western support for opposition movements (Mkandawire, 2015). While some argue that Western support is necessary to promote democracy and human rights, others contend that it undermines the autonomy and legitimacy of African opposition movements (Bond, 2018; Mutua, 2017). This research problem is particularly pertinent in the context of

Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, where Western powers have been accused of interfering in domestic politics (Carmody, 2017).

Despite the growing body of literature on African opposition politics, there is a lack of critical analysis of the role of Western powers in shaping opposition movements (Cheeseman, 2018). Much of the existing literature focuses on the domestic factors that shape opposition politics, with little attention paid to the external influences that can impact opposition movements (Chabal, 2017). This research gap is particularly notable in the context of Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, where Western powers have played a significant role in shaping opposition politics (Raftopoulos, 2013). Premised on the foregoing research problem and gap, this study seeks to respond to the following research questions:

- To what extent do Western powers and liberation movements influence African opposition politics in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique?
- How do African opposition leaders navigate the complex power dynamics of Western interference in domestic politics?
- What are the implications of Western interference in African opposition politics for democracy and human rights in the region?

This study is motivated by the need to critically examine the role of Western powers in African opposition politics. The study analyses the external influences shaping opposition movements in Africa, contributing to the growing literature on the subject. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on African opposition politics in several ways. Firstly, the study provides a critical analysis of the role of Western powers in shaping opposition movements in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. Secondly, the study highlights the complex power dynamics at play in African opposition politics and the ways in which African opposition leaders navigate these dynamics. Finally, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the implications of Western interference in African opposition politics for democracy and human rights in the region.

Literature Review

A Critical Overview of the Historical and Contemporary Opposition Politics in Africa

Africa's political landscape has been shaped by a complex interplay of historical, colonial, and contemporary factors. This literature review provides an overview of the key themes and debates that have influenced African politics, with a focus on Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. Colonialism profoundly shaped Africa's borders, institutions, and economies. Borders, institutions, and economies (Mamdani, 2018; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2020). The Scramble for Africa, which began in the late 19th century, saw European powers carve up the continent, imposing their systems of governance and exploiting Africa's natural resources (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mudimbe, 2020). This legacy of colonialism continues to influence African politics today, with many countries struggling to overcome the economic, social, and political challenges imposed by colonial rule. In response to colonialism, African nationalism emerged as a powerful force, driving liberation movements across the continent (Cheeseman, 2018). In Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, nationalist movements played a pivotal role in the struggle for independence, frequently employing armed resistance to challenge colonial rule (Morrow & Torres, 2022). These movements drew on a range of ideologies, including socialism, Marxism, and Pan-Africanism, to mobilise support and challenge colonial power. According to Mbembe (2021), the impact of opposition politics in the above-mentioned countries during the post-independence era has been to hold the incumbent government accountable and enhance democracy.

In the post-colonial era, African politics has been shaped by a range of factors, including globalisation, democratisation, and the influence of external actors Li (Chabal, 2017). In Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, contemporary politics has been marked by ongoing struggles over power, resources, and identity. In Zimbabwe, the ruling ZANU-PF party has maintained power through a combination of repression and patronage (Mkandawire, 2015). In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) has dominated politics since the end of apartheid but faces growing challenges from opposition parties and civil society (Bond, 2018). In Mozambique, the ruling FRELIMO party has struggled to maintain power in the face of growing opposition and insurgency (Carmody, 2017).

Western interference has been a significant factor in African politics, with external actors often seeking to shape the continent's politics and economies to serve their interests (Tandon, 2015). In Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, Western powers have used a range of mechanisms, including aid, diplomacy, and military intervention, to influence domestic politics (Mkandawire, 2015). This interference has often been justified in promoting democracy, human rights, and economic development, but has also been criticised for undermining African sovereignty and autonomy (Bond, 2018).

Despite the challenges posed by Western interference, African opposition politics has also been marked by genuine activism and mobilisation (Cheeseman, 2018). In Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, civil society organisations, trade unions, and opposition parties have played a key role in challenging ruling parties and promoting democratic change (Morrow & Torres, 2022). This activism has often been driven by a desire to promote social justice, equality, and human rights, drawing on a range of ideologies, including socialism, feminism, and environmentalism.

Opposition leadership in Africa is often criticised for being puppets of the West, conflict entrepreneurs, and not genuine activists. Some argue that these leaders prioritise Western interests over African needs, using their positions to fuel conflict and instability for personal gain (Mayekiso, 2023). For instance, Julius Malema, the leader of South Africa's EFF, and Nelson Chamisa, the former leader of Zimbabwe's MDC-Alliance and CCC, have been accused of being populists who use divisive rhetoric to further their interests. Others have criticised him for his involvement in state contracts and allegations of hate speech. Nevertheless, African opposition politics is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, colonial, and contemporary factors. Western interference has been a significant factor in African politics, both during and after the liberation struggles. While some Western countries genuinely supported most African countries in their quest for independence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) argues that the critical question is whether their support of opposition politics in the post-independence era remains genuine or is based on a neo-colonial agenda.

Western Influence in African Politics: Unofficial Support Systems and Military Intervention

This literature review examines the ways in which Western influence has been exercised in African politics, with a focus on Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. Unofficial support channels are a significant mechanism through which Western powers exert influence in African politics. These support systems come in the form of aid and have been used to promote economic development, reduce poverty, and support democratisation (Moyo, 2017; Hariri, 2015). However, critics argue that aid has also been used to further Western interests, undermine African sovereignty, and perpetuate dependency (Mkandawire, 2015). In Zimbabwe, for example, Western powers have used aid to support opposition parties and civil society organisations while also imposing economic sanctions on the ruling ZANU-PF party (Bond, 2018).

Western powers have utilised unofficial support channels, often concealed through diplomatic means, to support opposition parties, promote democratisation, and advocate for human rights (Cheeseman, 2018). However, critics argue that support systems have also been used to further Western interests, undermine African sovereignty, and perpetuate neocolonialism (Tandon, 2015). In South Africa, for example, Western powers have used diplomatic channels to support the opposition Democratic Alliance party while also criticising the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party for its economic policies (Morrow& Torres, 2022).

Military intervention is a more coercive mechanism through which Western powers exert influence in African politics. Western powers have used military intervention to protect their interests, promote regime change, and support opposition parties (Carmody, 2017). However, critics argue that military intervention has also been used to further Western interests, undermine African sovereignty, and perpetuate instability (Mamdani, 2018). In Mozambique, for example, Western powers have employed military intervention to support the government's fight against the opposition RENAMO party, while also promoting their economic interests in the country's natural gas sector (Carmody, 2016).

This section examines the specific ways in which Western influence has been exercised in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. In Zimbabwe, Western powers have used foreign aid, diplomatic support, and military intervention to exert influence in the country's politics. The

United States, for example, has provided significant funding to opposition parties and civil society organisations while also imposing economic sanctions on the ruling ZANU-PF party (Bond, 2018). The European Union has also provided support to opposition parties while criticising the government's human rights record (Cheeseman, 2018). In South Africa, Western powers have used unofficial support to exert influence in the country's politics. The United States, for example, has provided significant funding to opposition parties, including the Democratic Alliance party, while also criticising the ruling ANC party's economic policies (Morrow & Torres, 2022). The European Union has also provided support to opposition parties while promoting its economic interests in the country's mining sector (Carmody, 2017).

In Mozambique, Western powers have used military intervention and foreign aid to exert influence in the country's politics. The United States, for example, has provided significant funding to the government's military efforts against the opposition RENAMO party while also promoting its economic interests in the country's natural gas sector (Carmody, 2017). The European Union has also provided support to the government while criticising the opposition party's human rights record (Cheeseman, 2018). Recent US elections and the Trump administration are expected to be a topic of political discussion. A second Trump administration would likely focus on enhancing trade with Africa, potentially forming bilateral trade agreements, and supporting partnerships based on shared interests. According to Weber (2024), this approach might lead to increased economic interaction, countering China's massive presence on the continent. This renewed focus on Africa could shape Western influence, particularly in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, as the US seeks to tap into Africa's youthful energy and innovation.

Theoretical Perspectives Postcolonial Theory, Social Movement Theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis

This literature review examines the theoretical perspectives that inform the analysis of African opposition politics, Western interference, and genuine activism. Specifically, this review explores postcolonial theory, social movement theory, and critical discourse analysis as frameworks for understanding the complex dynamics of African opposition politics. Postcolonial theory offers a critical framework for analysing the legacy

and ongoing impact of colonialism on African politics (Berrebbah, 2020).

Postcolonial theorists argue that colonialism created a system of dominance and subordination that continues to shape the relationships between Western powers and African countries (Fanon, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mudimbe, 2020). In the context of African opposition politics, postcolonial theory emphasises how Western powers utilise their economic, military, and cultural influence to shape African politics and maintain their dominance (Mamdani, 2018). Postcolonial theory offers a critical framework for understanding the complex power dynamics and historical legacies that shape African opposition politics. By examining the ongoing impacts of colonialism, postcolonial theory reveals how African opposition politics are often entangled in a web of postcolonialism, where external influences and internal power struggles intersect (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mudimbe, 2020).

Social movement theory provides a framework for analysing the role of social movements in shaping African opposition politics (Tilly & Wood, 2015). Social movement theorists argue that social movements are key actors in promoting social change and challenging dominant power structures (McAdam, 2017). In the context of African opposition politics, social movement theory highlights the ways in which social movements, such as trade unions, student movements, and civil society organisations, mobilise to challenge ruling parties and promote democratic change (Morrow & Torres, 2022). Critical discourse analysis provides a framework for analysing the language and discourse of powerful actors, including Western powers and African ruling parties (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). Critical discourse analysts argue that language and discourse are key mechanisms for exercising power and maintaining dominance (Van Dijk, 2015). In the context of African opposition politics, critical discourse analysis reveals how Western powers and African ruling parties utilise language and discourse to shape public opinion, manipulate political narratives, and consolidate their power and influence (Bond, 2018).

This section examines the application of postcolonial theory, social movement theory, and critical discourse analysis to the case studies of Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. In Zimbabwe, postcolonial theory helps explain the ongoing legacy of colonialism and how Western powers continue to exert influence over the country's politics (Mamdani, 2018). Social movement theory highlights the role of social movements, such as the MDC and CCC, in mobilising against the ruling ZANU-PF

party and promoting democratic change (Morrow & Torres, 2022). Critical discourse analysis reveals how Western powers and the ZANU-PF party utilise language and discourse to shape public opinion and maintain their power and influence (Bond, 2018).

In South Africa, social movement theory helps to explain the role of social movements, such as the EFF, in mobilising against the ruling ANC party and promoting economic and social change (Morrow & Torres, 2022). Critical discourse analysis reveals how Western powers and the ANC party utilise language and discourse to shape public opinion and maintain their power and influence (Bond, 2018). Postcolonial theory highlights the ongoing legacy of colonialism and apartheid in shaping South Africa's politics and economy (Mamdani, 2018). In Mozambique, postcolonial theory helps explain the ongoing legacy of colonialism and how Western powers continue to exert influence over the country's politics (Mamdani, 2018). Social movement theory highlights the role of social movements, such as the RENAMO, in mobilising against the ruling FRELIMO party and promoting democratic change (Morrow & Torres, 2022). Critical discourse analysis reveals how Western powers and the FRELIMO party use language and discourse to shape public opinion and maintain their power and influence (Bond, 2018).

Gaps in Existing Literature on the African Opposition Politics and Western Interference and Influence

Despite the growing body of literature on African opposition politics and Western interference, significant gaps remain in existing research. This literature review identifies several key gaps in the existing literature, including the need for more nuanced and contextualised analyses of Western interference, the lack of attention to the agency and autonomy of African opposition movements, and the failure to critically examine the role of Western powers in shaping African opposition politics. Existing literature on Western interference in African opposition politics often relies on simplistic and binary frameworks, which fail to capture the complexity and nuance of Western involvement in African politics (Cheeseman, 2018). For example, some studies portray Western powers as either benevolent supporters of democracy or nefarious agents of neocolonialism without considering the multiple and contradictory ways in which Western powers engage with African opposition movements (Bond, 2018).

Research Methodology and Design

This study employs a qualitative desktop research design combined with critical discourse analysis to explore the complex dynamics of African opposition politics and Western interference. The design is particularly well-suited for this study, as it enables an in-depth examination of existing literature and data without requiring primary data collection (Silverman, 2016). Critical discourse analysis is a methodological approach well-suited for analysing the language and discourse of powerful actors, such as Western governments and institutions (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). This approach offers a nuanced understanding of how language shapes public opinion and policy, and reflects power dynamics (Van Dijk, 2015).

This study relies on secondary sources of data, including academic literature, policy documents, and media reports. These sources offer a wealth of information on African opposition politics and Western interference, providing a range of perspectives and insights (Bryman, 2016). The academic literature provides a solid foundation for understanding the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin African opposition politics and Western interference. Policy documents from Western governments and institutions provide insights into their agendas and strategies. Media reports, including news articles and editorials, provide a window into public opinion and debate on African opposition politics and Western interference.

This study employs a combination of discourse analysis and thematic analysis to examine the language and discourse of Western governments and institutions, as well as the perspectives and experiences of African opposition leaders and activists (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Discourse analysis involves examining the language and discourse of powerful actors, such as Western governments and institutions, to understand how they shape public opinion and policy agendas (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). The thematic analysis involves identifying and coding themes and patterns in the data to develop a nuanced understanding of the perspectives and experiences of African opposition leaders and activists (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This study utilises secondary, rather than primary, data for several reasons. Firstly, secondary sources provide a wealth of information on African opposition politics and Western interference, offering a range of perspectives and insights (Bryman, 2016). Secondly, secondary sources are often more cost-effective and

time-efficient than primary sources, which can involve lengthy and expensive data collection procedures (Silverman, 2016).

Western Opposition Political Influence: Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique

Zimbabwe provides a paradigmatic example of Western influence on opposition politics in Africa. The country's opposition movement, notably the MDC, has been heavily influenced by Western powers. This case study examines the Western influence on the MDC, MDC-A, and the CCC and assesses the genuineness of their activism. The MDC, formed in 1999, received heavy support from Western powers, particularly the United States and the European Union (EU) (Bond, 2018). The party's leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, was a darling of the West, and the MDC received significant funding and logistical support from Western donors (Cheeseman, 2018). However, critics argue that this support came with strings attached and that the MDC's policies and actions were often shaped by Western interests rather than the needs and aspirations of the Zimbabwean people (Mkandawire, 2015). The MDC-A, formed in 2017, was also heavily influenced by Western powers. The party's leader, Nelson Chamisa, was a key recipient of Western support, and the party received substantial funding and logistical assistance from Western donors (Morrow & Torres, 2022). However, critics argue that the MDC-A's reliance on Western support undermined its credibility and legitimacy among the Zimbabwean people (Tandon, 2015).

The CCC, formed in 2022, has also been influenced by Western powers. The party's leader, Nelson Chamisa, has been a key beneficiary of Western support, and the party has received significant funding and logistical support from Western donors (NewsDay, 2022). However, critics argue that the CCC's reliance on Western support undermines its credibility and legitimacy among the Zimbabwean people. Thus, the case study of Zimbabwe highlights the significant influence of Western powers on opposition politics in Africa. While Western powers have influenced the MDC, MDC-A, and CCC, their reliance on such support has compromised their effectiveness as activists. The genuineness of their activism is, therefore, questionable, and their policies and actions have often been shaped by Western interests rather than the needs and aspirations of the Zimbabwean people.

South Africa's opposition politics have been influenced by Western powers, mainly through the DA and the EFF. The DA, being the main opposition party, has been accused of promoting a neoliberal agenda that benefits Western corporations at the expense of South Africa's poor and working-class citizens (Democracy Works Foundation (DWF), 2023). The DA's historical roots are broadly liberal-democratic, and the party has been a member of Liberal International and the African Liberal Network. This affiliation has led some to accuse the DA of being a Western proxy, with its policies and actions shaped by Western interests rather than the needs and aspirations of the South African people (van der Westhuizen, 2019). On the other hand, the EFF has been critical of Western influence in South African politics and has positioned itself as a radical alternative to the DA's neoliberalism. The EFF's leader, Julius Malema, has been a vocal critic of Western powers, particularly the United States, and has accused them of meddling in South Africa's internal affairs.

Western powers have influenced both the DA and EFF. Western powers have influenced both the DA and EFF in various ways, despite their ideological differences. The DA has received funding and logistical support from Western donors, while the EFF has been accused of receiving support from Western-backed NGOs and foundations (DWF, 2023; van der Westhuizen, 2019). In terms of genuine activism, it is difficult to say whether the DA and EFF have been driven by a genuine desire to promote the interests of the South African people or whether Western powers have influenced them. However, both parties have been influenced to some extent by Western ideologies and interests. The DA's neoliberalism and the EFF's anti-Western rhetoric reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of Western influence in South African opposition politics.

While the DA's policies may benefit Western corporations, the EFF's anti-Western stance may be seen as a genuine attempt to promote African interests and sovereignty. Ultimately, the question of whether the DA and EFF are genuine opposition movements or Western proxies is a complex one that requires further research and analysis. However, Western influence has played a significant role in shaping South African opposition politics, and this influence must be carefully considered in any analysis of the country's political landscape.

Mozambique's opposition politics have been shaped by Western influence, mainly through the RENAMO and Valencio Mandlane's political outfit. RENAMO, initially backed by the Rhodesian and later

the South African apartheid regimes, received significant funding and logistical support from Western powers during the Cold War era (Zeman, 2023). RENAMO's activism, while initially driven by anti-communist sentiments, has been criticised for being heavily influenced by Western interests. The party's policies and actions have been shaped by Western powers rather than the needs and aspirations of the Mozambican people. Valencia Mandlane's political outfit, on the other hand, has been seen as a more genuine opposition movement. However, the party has also received funding and support from Western donors, which has raised questions about its independence and autonomy.

The Mozambican government has been critical of Western influence in the country's opposition politics, accusing Western powers of meddling in the country's internal affairs (Macuane, Buur & Monjane, 2018). In 2019, the Mozambican government accused the United States of interfering in the country's elections. In terms of genuine activism, it is difficult to say whether RENAMO and Valencio Mandlane's political outfits have been driven by a genuine desire to promote the interests of the Mozambican people or whether Western powers have influenced them. However, Western ideologies and interests have shaped both parties to some extent. The Mozambique case study highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of Western influence in African opposition politics. While RENAMO and ValencioMandlane's political outfits have both been influenced by Western powers, their activism has been shaped by a complex interplay of domestic and international factors.

Discussions of the Key Findings from the Literature

Based on the comprehensive literature review, five major recurring themes have emerged as findings of this study. These themes offer valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of African opposition politics and the impact of Western influence on the trajectories of opposition movements in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique.

Theme 1: Western Influence as a Double-Edged Sword

This theme is a pervasive finding in the literature on African opposition politics. This theme suggests that Western influence can have positive and negative effects on African opposition movements. On the one hand, Western powers can provide significant funding and logistical support to opposition movements, thereby strengthening their capacity

to challenge authoritarian regimes (Bond, 2018). On the other hand, Western influence can also undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements, as they become perceived as puppets of Western powers (Mkandawire, 2015).

Postcolonial Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of Western influence in African opposition politics. According to Postcolonial Theory, Western powers have a long history of interfering in the internal affairs of African countries, often under the guise of promoting democracy and human rights (Berrebbah, 2020). This interference can take many forms, including the provision of funding and logistical support to opposition movements. However, Postcolonial Theory also suggests that this interference can be deeply problematic, as it can undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of African opposition movements (Fanon, 2018).

Social Movement Theory also provides insights into the theme of Western influence as a double-edged sword. Social Movement Theory posits that ideology, resources, and opportunities are key drivers of opposition movements (Tilly & Wood, 2015). Western influence can provide opposition movements with significant resources and opportunities, thereby strengthening their capacity to challenge authoritarian regimes. However, Social Movement Theory also suggests that Western influence can be a double-edged sword, as it can also undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements (McAdam, 2017).

Critical Discourse Analysis provides a valuable framework for analysing the language and discourse of Western powers and African opposition movements. According to Critical Discourse Analysis, language and discourse are key mechanisms for exercising power and maintaining dominance (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). Western powers frequently employ language and discourse to advance their interests and values, whereas African opposition movements often utilise language and discourse to resist and challenge Western dominance (Van Dijk, 2015). Regarding the prospects and challenges of Western interference in opposition politics, the literature suggests that Western influence can have both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, Western influence can provide opposition movements with significant resources and opportunities, thereby strengthening their capacity to challenge authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, Western influence

can also undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements, as they become perceived as puppets of Western powers.

The question of whether opposition politics constitutes genuine activism or entrepreneurial activism is a complex one. On the one hand, many opposition movements in Africa are driven by a genuine desire to promote democracy and human rights. On the other hand, some opposition movements may be driven by more self-interested motivations, such as a desire for power and resources. Western influence may shape the motivations and actions of opposition movements. A nuanced and contextualised understanding of the complex dynamics of African opposition politics is necessary to comprehend the prospects and challenges of Western interference fully.

Theme 2: The Complexity of African Agency

The complexity of African agency is a significant finding in the literature on African opposition politics. This theme highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of African agency in opposition politics, challenging the simplistic notion that African opposition movements are mere puppets of Western powers. Postcolonial Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complexity of African agency in opposition politics. According to Postcolonial Theory, African agency is shaped by the legacy of colonialism and the ongoing dynamics of global power relations (Berrebbah, 2020). African opposition movements must navigate these complex power dynamics, which can enable and constrain their agency.

Social Movement Theory also resonates with the theme of the complexity of African agency. Social Movement Theory suggests that ideology, resources, and opportunities are key drivers of opposition movements (Tilly & Wood, 2015). African opposition movements must navigate these complex factors, which can both facilitate and hinder their ability to act. Critical Discourse Analysis provides a valuable framework for analysing the language and discourse of African opposition movements. According to Critical Discourse Analysis, language and discourse are key mechanisms for exercising power and maintaining dominance (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). African opposition movements must use language and discourse to challenge dominant power relations and assert their agency.

The synthesis of these theoretical frameworks highlights the complexity of African agency in opposition politics. African opposition movements are not merely passive recipients of Western influence but

rather active agents that navigate and resist Western power in complex ways. The prospects and challenges of Western interference in opposition politics are multifaceted. On the one hand, Western influence can provide opposition movements with significant resources and opportunities, thereby strengthening their ability to act. On the other hand, Western influence can also undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements, as they become perceived as puppets of Western powers.

Theme 3: The Role of Ideology in Shaping Opposition Politics

This theme is a significant finding in the literature on African opposition politics. Ideology critically shapes the trajectories of African opposition movements. Postcolonial Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the role of ideology in shaping opposition politics. According to Postcolonial Theory, ideology is a key mechanism for exercising power and maintaining dominance (Berrebbah, 2020). African opposition movements must navigate the complex ideological landscape of postcolonial Africa, which is characterised by competing ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, and nationalism.

Social Movement Theory also resonates with the theme of the role of ideology in shaping opposition politics. According to Social Movement Theory, ideology plays a crucial role in shaping the identity and objectives of social movements (Tilly & Wood, 2015). African opposition movements must develop a clear ideological vision to mobilise support and challenge dominant power relations. Critical Discourse Analysis provides a valuable framework for analysing the language and discourse of African opposition movements. According to Critical Discourse Analysis, language and discourse are key mechanisms for exercising power and maintaining dominance (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). African opposition movements must use language and discourse to challenge dominant power relations and assert their ideological vision.

These theoretical frameworks highlight the critical role ideology plays in shaping African opposition politics. African opposition movements must navigate the complex ideological landscape of postcolonial Africa, develop a clear ideological vision, and use language and discourse to challenge dominant power relations. The prospects and challenges of Western interference in opposition politics are multifaceted. On the one hand, Western influence can provide opposition movements with significant resources and opportunities,

which can help to strengthen their ideological vision and challenge dominant power relations. On the other hand, Western influence can also undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements, as they become perceived as puppets of Western powers. The question of whether opposition politics constitutes genuine activism or conflict-entrepreneurial activism is a complex one. Many African opposition movements are driven by a genuine desire to promote democracy and human rights. On the other hand, some opposition movements may be driven by more self-interested motivations, such as a desire for power and resources.

Theme 4: The Impact of Western Interference on Democratic Consolidation

The impact of Western interference on democratic consolidation is a significant finding in the literature on African opposition politics. This theme highlights the complex and multifaceted impact of Western interference on the consolidation of democracy in Africa. Postcolonial Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the impact of Western interference on democratic consolidation. According to Postcolonial Theory, Western powers have a long history of interfering in the internal affairs of African countries, often under the guise of promoting democracy and human rights (Berrebbah, 2020). This interference can take many forms, including providing funding and logistical support to opposition movements, as well as diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions.

Social Movement Theory also resonates with the theme of the impact of Western interference on democratic consolidation. Social Movement Theory posits that opposition movements are fueled by a complex interplay of ideology, resources, and opportunities (Tilly & Wood, 2015). Western interference can provide opposition movements with significant resources and opportunities, thereby strengthening their capacity to challenge authoritarian regimes. However, Western interference can also undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements, as they become perceived as puppets of Western powers.

Critical Discourse Analysis provides a valuable framework for analysing the language and discourse of Western powers and African opposition movements. According to Critical Discourse Analysis, language and discourse are key mechanisms for exercising power and maintaining dominance (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). Western

powers frequently employ language and discourse to advance their interests and values, while African opposition movements often utilise language and discourse to resist and challenge Western dominance. The synthesis of these theoretical frameworks highlights the complex and multifaceted impact of Western interference on democratic consolidation in Africa. Western interference, while offering resources and opportunities, can also compromise the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements. Furthermore, Western interference can also perpetuate dominant power relations and undermine the agency and autonomy of African opposition movements.

The prospects and challenges of Western interference in opposition politics are multifaceted. On the one hand, Western influence can provide opposition movements with significant resources and opportunities, thereby strengthening their capacity to challenge authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, Western influence can also undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements, as they become perceived as puppets of Western powers. The question of whether opposition politics constitutes genuine activism or conflict-entrepreneurial activism is a complex one. Many African opposition movements are driven by a genuine desire to promote democracy and human rights. On the other hand, some opposition movements may be driven by more self-interested motivations, such as a desire for power and resources.

Theme 5: The Need for African-Led Solutions

The need for African-led solutions is a significant finding in the literature on African opposition politics. This theme underscores the significance of African-led solutions to the challenges confronting opposition politics in Africa. Postcolonial Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the need for African-led solutions. Postcolonial Theory argues that centuries of colonialism and neocolonialism have undermined the autonomy and agency of African countries (Berrebbah, 2020). African-led solutions are crucial for autonomy and agency, as they develop tailored approaches that address the continent's specific needs and contexts.

Social Movement Theory also resonates with the theme of the need for African-led solutions. According to Social Movement Theory, social movements are driven by a complex mix of ideology, resources, and opportunities (Tilly & Wood, 2015). African-led solutions are crucial for fostering social movements that are rooted in African ideologies,

resources, and opportunities, rather than relying on external support and guidance. Critical Discourse Analysis provides a helpful framework for analysing the language and discourse of Western powers and African opposition movements. According to Critical Discourse Analysis, language and discourse are key mechanisms for exercising power and maintaining dominance (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). African-led solutions are necessary to challenge the dominant discourse of Western powers and develop a discourse rooted in African perspectives and experiences.

These frameworks emphasise the need for African-led solutions to challenges in African opposition politics. African-led solutions are necessary to reclaim autonomy and agency, develop social movements rooted in African ideologies and resources, and challenge the dominant discourse of Western powers. The prospects and challenges of Western interference in opposition politics are multifaceted. On the one hand, Western influence can provide opposition movements with significant resources and opportunities, thereby strengthening their capacity to challenge authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, Western influence can also undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements, as they become perceived as puppets of Western powers. The question of whether opposition politics constitutes genuine activism or conflict-entrepreneurial activism is a complex one. Many African opposition movements are driven by a genuine desire to promote democracy and human rights. On the other hand, some opposition movements may be driven by more self-interested motivations, such as a desire for power and resources.

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

This article examines the complex dynamics of African opposition politics, with a focus on the influence of Western powers on opposition movements in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique. The analysis has revealed five major recurring themes that highlight the challenges of African opposition politics. Firstly, Western influence is a double-edged sword, providing significant funding and logistical support to opposition movements while undermining their autonomy and legitimacy. Secondly, the African agency has been revealed to be complex and multifaceted, with opposition movements navigating and resisting Western power in creative and innovative ways. Thirdly, ideology has been shown to play a significant role in shaping opposition politics, with different movements

driven by distinct ideological commitments. Fourthly, Western interference has been shown to affect democratic consolidation negatively, undermining the legitimacy and autonomy of opposition movements and creating divisions and conflicts within opposition coalitions. Finally, the need for African-led solutions has been emphasised, with opposition movements needing to develop strategies and solutions to challenge authoritarian regimes and promote democratic consolidation.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the field of African studies, where it highlights the complexities and nuances of African opposition politics. The research highlights a critical policy need: Western powers must adopt a more nuanced and supportive approach to African opposition movements. Rather than providing funding and logistical support that undermines the autonomy and legitimacy of opposition movements, Western powers should focus on providing support that strengthens the capacity of opposition movements to challenge authoritarian regimes and promote democratic consolidation. In terms of future research directions, this study highlights the need for more nuanced and contextualised analyses of African opposition politics. Future research should focus on examining the complex and multifaceted ways in which opposition movements navigate and resist Western power, as well as how ideology shapes opposition politics.

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Firstly, Western powers should adopt a more nuanced and supportive approach to African opposition movements, providing support that strengthens their capacity to challenge authoritarian regimes and promote democratic consolidation. Secondly, African opposition movements should prioritise developing their strategies and solutions to challenge authoritarian regimes and promote democratic consolidation, rather than relying solely on Western support. Finally, researchers should prioritise conducting more nuanced and contextualised analyses of African opposition politics, examining the complex and multifaceted ways opposition movements navigate and resist Western power.

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