Is Transitology Relevant for Effective Gender Sensitive Conflict Transformation Practice in Africa?

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ABSTRACT: The continuously evolvement of complex conflicts like terrorism and cyber warfare necessitate the quest for theories that are relevant and applicable across the global geographical divide. This triangulation of theories aids to a better understanding of how past and present human relations, historical dynamics and material conditions intersect to shape conditions for conflict and peace. Few researchers have inquired how the triangulation of old and new theories can enhance an understanding of modern democratic transitions. To address this research gap, I reflect on transitology and feminist epistemology, to explore their relevance, rationality and value addition to the study of conflict transformation in modern Africa. Transitology, one of the oldest theoretical frameworks that enhanced the study of conflict transformation in the West before the end of the Cold War, is majorly criticised as outdated and irrelevant to the study of modern governance and democracy processes (Mohamedou & Sisk, 2017; Saxonberg and Linde, 2016). Likewise feminist epistemology is criticised for narrowly focusing on women and girls' rights, thus detaching itself from realities of conflict and peace studies (True, 2014; Anderson, 2020). Against this background, I strive to establish the link between transitology - a framework of theories of change towards democracy and feminist epistemology - a framework of theories of change towards inclusive conceptualisations of knowledge, to prove the relevance and rationality of both frameworks, and their capability to catalyse democratic practice towards egalitarian relations and societies. This study contributes to new modalities of knowledge production in the field of women, peace and security. Using secondary data from seventy-five articles, I juxtapose transitology against feminist epistemology, drawing examples from various African countries, to build evidence that demonstrates the relevance of both theoretical frameworks in the study of conflict transformation.

KEYWORDS: Transitology. Feminist epistemology, conflict transformation, Zimbabwe, theories

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War showcased the tension between theory and real world politics. On one hand, world events in this era raised expectations for waves of democratisation (Huntington, 1991). These perceived expectations led many States to pursue democracy, good governance and the protection of people's human rights. In reality however, the post-Cold War era fulfilled Huntington's (1996) postulation of the clash of civilisations and political ideologies, which in turn facilitated the rise of intra-state conflicts. In Africa the period following the wars of liberation witnessed power transfers that came through democratic elections. Decades later, military *coups d'état* have become a regular occurrence. As a matter of concern, the shift from inter-state to intra-state conflicts has prompted the international community to re-think and push for new strategies of countering this coup scourge. There is silent consensus that a shift from state-centricism towards the human security paradigm is the most appropriate framework for countering the rise of violent conflicts and *coups d'état* (Fukuda-parr & Messineo, 2012). As such, the framework of the responsibility to protect (R$_2$P) exemplifies the international community's efforts to place the concept of human security at the heart of security and development policies. The focus of R$_2$P shifts the primary responsibility of the state from protecting its interests to protecting the interests of human beings from conflict, poverty, human rights violations and all forms of insecurity, as Puley (2005:18) notes that, ... sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their citizens from avoidable catastrophe – from mass murder and rape, from starvation – but that when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader community of states.

The framework of R$_2$P enables better collaboration on human security, politics and development issues between and among the state, development institutions, foreign policy and defence institutions. In view of the background of violent conflicts that are currently raging in Africa, one of the areas that require concerted effort and collaboration on is the area of conflict transformation. Conflict transformation is a theory of political transition which entails transforming violence or dispute to peace and tranquility. In the case of political conflicts, conflict transformation also aims to transition states from authoritarian regimes to democracies. With the objective of generating knowledge for a better understanding of conflict transformation processes in Africa, this article explores

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relevance rationality and value addition of two theoretical frameworks, transitology and feminist epistemology, to the understanding of the notion and practice of conflict transformation in Africa. Transitology, one of the oldest theoretical frameworks that enhanced the study of conflict transformation in the West before the end of the Cold War, is majorly criticised as outdated and irrelevant to the study of modern governance and democracy processes (Mohamedou & Sisk, 2017; Saxonberg and Linde, 2016). Likewise feminist epistemology is criticised for narrowly focusing on women and girls' rights, which is perceived as a departure from the realities of conflict and peace studies (True, 2014; Anderson, 2020).

The perceived shortcomings of these two theories, coupled with the dearth of literature on how the combination of old and new theories can enhance an understanding of processes of transition from conflict to peace define the research problem of this article. The question guiding the arguments in the article is, what is the relevance, rationality and value addition of the framework of transitology and the framework of feminist epistemology to the study of conflict transformation in Africa? The article strives to establish a link between transitology as a theory of change towards democracy and feminist epistemology as a theory of change towards democratic conceptualisations of knowledge theories, and to prove the relevance and rationality of both frameworks. Based on a desk review of available literature, the study contributes to knowledge production, and to a better understanding of how past and present human relations, historical dynamics and material conditions intersect to shape conditions for conflict and peace in Africa. The article draws examples from various African countries to build evidence that demonstrates the relevance and applicability of transitology and feminist epistemology to the study of conflict transformation in Africa.

Understanding Transitology

Transitology emerged to explain processes of democratization in a variety of contexts, from bureaucratic authoritarianism and other forms of dictatorship in Latin America, Southern Europe and Northern Africa, to post-communist developments in Eastern Europe from as way back as the late 60s and the post-Cold War period (Rustow, 1970). Transitology was founded by Dankwart Rustow, a former Columbia University professor, also known as the father of the theory of transitology, and a professor for 25 years at the City University of New York (Rustow, 1970). Transitology likewise is not a theory per se, but a sub-field of theories, thus, a framework of theories for democratisation. Transitology is therefore quite distinguished from transition, which is the process of transformation, or of transition to democracy. The transition archetype was in turn introduced in the 19th Century by O'Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead (1986). It was founded on the reality of political transitions that most South European and Latin American countries went through from authoritarian rule, towards a political democracy in the seventies and eighties (Horhonen, 2012). Transition can be understood as a revolution from an authoritarian regime into an alternative one. The alternative in this case can range from the installment of a political democracy (Mohamedou & Sisk, 2013), the reinstatement of a new form of authoritarian rule, or the state of political malaise whereby successive governments fail to institutionalize political power, leading to widespread violence, which in turn gives way to a revolutionary regime (Horhonen, 2012). Transition is in other words never an event but a process. As a framework of transition, transitology is concerned with the patterns of processes of change from one political regime to another, mainly from authoritarian regimes to democratic ones (Mohamedou & Sisk, 2017). As such, transitology entails complex revisions in the political economy of states emerging from a crisis (Bratton & de Walle, 1997).

The framework of transitology has largely been criticised by some scholars as outdated and irrelevant. Scholars of this framework, including Mohamedou and Sisk (2017) and Saxonberg and Linde (2016) critique transitology for its teleological perspective that is in their view, based on the assumption of a single end-point to liberal democracy. These scholars further allege that transitology lacks the means of formulating and proving social science hypotheses on processes of transition in governance. This lineal view to democracy distorts the reality that regression, stagnation or multi-linear tracks of development have potential to better characterize the trajectory of post-communist transitions (Mohamedou & Sisk, 2017). This paper presents counter arguments to those of the scholars projected above,, positing that transitology is not a theory but a framework theories and therefore, it can continuously evolve as opposed to expiring. I further argue that transitology is a continuum or a constantly evolving framework of theoretical developments in democratisation processes, and that all currently existing democratisation theories fit within this continuum of transitology. Moreover, the fact that transitology dates back into history of the study of conflict is a strength that helps root the discourse on democratisation processes across a wide variety of experiences and historically-informed analysis of socio-political and security transformation.

The framework of transitology, thus, remains relevant and of important epistemological value in the current conflict dispensation, as it provides the benchmarks upon which to monitor and evaluate the development of democratisation theories from the period it was founded to date. Furthermore, the fact that there has been regression, stagnation, or multi-linear tracks of development as opposed to a lineal trajectory towards liberal democracy may only be an unforeseen reality of global and historical trends and their causal effects on projected outcomes as opposed to a shortcoming of the transitologists. This point makes the transitology framework a more valid discourse to provide proven reasoning as to why governance processes have not been and may not be lineal at all at any point in history. The research further argues that governance processes, like social processes, can hardly be lineal. They are constantly evolving processes determined by time, and also curved and driven by human subjectivities who reside within historical contexts and processes which are never lineal. Again, the validity of a framework of analysis cannot be

solely judged on its ability to prove pre-conceived social science hypothesis on processes of transition in governance, but on its ability to produce new social science hypotheses based on the evolvement of reality. Conflict is not a once-off event. Conflict develops in stages on a continuum, and, as such, conflict dynamics are rooted in old, present and future historical epochs and processes. Understanding current conflict transformation dynamics requires an investigation of the drivers of that particular conflict in the past, as an enabler to plan for the management of that conflict in the present and in the future. Most importantly, conceptualizing future democracies based on today's governance complications requires knowledge about the past as a baseline to inform an understanding of the present, just as a medical doctor requires a patient's past epidemiological information in order to do a prognosis for the patient's future well-being. Thus, an understanding of the past is a prerequisite for conceptualising present and future conflict transformation strategies.

Transitology as a conceptual framework in studying conflict transformation remains relevant, and can be enhanced by developing even more theories on the same subject going forward, for a complete understanding of the development of conflict processes on a continuum. Literature on transitology does not represent a single, overarching body but several strands meeting at key points, constitutive of the markers of transition theory. As such, several African scholars have produced rich analysis on various forms of political transitions on the continent, which has been tagged under various other themes, without being ascribed the value that they deserve under the rubric of transitology. Transitology seeks to examine common patterns, sequences, crises and outcomes of transitional periods based on a practical analysis of specific conflict trends (Mohamedou & Sisk, 2017). As a framework of analysis, transitology also embraces methodological concepts to the study of conflict transformation, in addition to concepts that explain the phenomena of conflict and conflict transformation. This being said, a focus and application of tenets of the framework of transitology aids not only in advancing conflict transformation processes, but also in advancing the methods of advancing conflict transformation, as well as advancing the epistemic value to the study of conflict transformation processes, research and documentation. Theorising on the nature of political transitions, Samuel Huntington (1996) argues that political order and state stability are important goals of developing states, regardless of whether the said order was democratic, authoritarian, socialist or free-market. Francis Fukuyama (2015) further asks broader and more ambitious questions, focusing more on the specific fundamental components of state formation and transition; the factors that enable political transformation, political stability and governance effectiveness in some regions, while failing in other regions, to the extent of regression into an institutional breakdown and state collapse.

In the above arguments, the fascinating historical parallel drawn between the authoritarian and radical political and social transformations of the Arab Springs and the European revolutions of 1848 may prove that historical dynamics of conflict, violence and attempts for democratisation may not necessarily be confined to specific historical epochs. They have the potential to recur beyond time and space, in response to historical dynamics on the ground. State transformation is thus a process that happens on a continuum over time, and cannot be confined to a political event of a fixed period. Having noted that transitology is a sub-field of theories, four concepts that are located under the framework of transitology for the purposes of this analysis are the conflict transformation theory, the theory of hegemony and ideology, the hybridisation theory and the notion of decolonial peace.

The theory of conflict transformation was introduced by Paul Lederach (2003). Anchoring the concept of conflict transformation in the subject under discussion requires a consideration of the semantic nuances and operational differences between the term and three other terms: conflict resolution, conflict management and conflict intervention (Botes, 2003). The major apprehension is the need to establish the value that the theory of conflict transformation brings to the arena of peace and security, over and above the pre-existing concepts of conflict resolution, conflict management and conflict intervention (Botes, 2003). Conflict resolution focuses on resolving existing conflict through dialogue, mediation or adjudication. Conflict management refers to an ongoing process of fire-fighting the manifestations of the conflict to contain it, without necessarily ascertaining a resolution to the conflict. Conflict intervention refers to the actual involvements or methods that are undertaken to influence the direction of a conflict, with the aim of either managing it or resolving it and the intervention can be by either by violent or non-violent means. All these three notions focus more on the conflict and the possibility to silence, manage or resolve it, without necessarily focusing on the longer term sustainability of peace, as well as the continuous involvement of other actors in the maintenance and sustenance of the peace process going forward. Unlike the concepts of conflict resolution, conflict management and conflict intervention which have been well known and widely accepted in mainstream academic and political circles for a long time, the concept of conflict transformation has become more encompassing and more inclusive of other concepts, actors and practices. Conflict transformation is therefore inclusive of aspects of conflict intervention, conflict management and conflict resolution. This notion is more focused on longer-term constructive change initiatives that include and go beyond the resolution of a particular problem (Miali, 2004). According to Lederach (2003), conflict transformation brings into focus the construction of healthy relationships and communities locally and beyond. Conflict transformation is thus more than an act of intervening, managing and resolving conflict. It is also a continuum of processes that happen on a scale or overtime, and a framework of change that includes the strategies of intervention, the aspect of conflict management, conflict resolution and other variables all put together towards building lasting peace.

This conflict transformational approach is characterised by two pro-active foundations which include a positive orientation towards the conflict, and a willingness to engage in further peacebuilding processes post the conflict resolution stage, to produce

constructive change or growth that counters visible and hidden long-standing cycles of hurt and destruction (Lederach, 2003). A transformational view does not look at isolated conflict episodes but rather seeks to understand how these specific or various episodes are embedded in history and the greater pattern of human relationships. In conflict transformation, change is understood both at the level of immediate issues and the broader patterns of interaction (Lederach, 2003). Where the conflict is of a political nature, transforming it from one stage to another is closely related to politics and systems of governance. Thus in the situation of political conflict, conflict transformation seeks to build constructive change out of the energy created by conflict, moving from destructive processes towards constructive ones. Conflict transformation does not seek to find quick solutions to immediate problems, but rather, to generate innovative platforms that can in turn tackle the manifestations of conflict while at the same time changing the underlying social structures and relationship patterns. Some of the variables of conflict transformation include reducing violence, increasing justice and peaceful interaction in human relationships, increasing participation, equality and respect in relationships and developing capacities to understand and sustain dialogue. Overall, conflict transformation promotes constructive change processes inclusive of but not limited to immediate solutions (Lederach, 2003). Based on these patterns, the notion of conflict transformation is a splinter of the framework of transitology, which seeks to support transitions from authoritarian to democratic ones.

There are various conflict transformation strategies. Some scholars have reasonably explained conflict transformation in the context of a continuum that begins with conflict management, followed by conflict resolution, ending finally with conflict transformation. The transformational aspect in this case denotes a sequence of necessary transitional steps, what Lederach (2003) further refers to as "reconstruction of social organisation and realities." The notion of reconstruction of social organisation and realities in turn, links with the concept of social or systemic change and change of "institutions beyond the immediate issues under dispute" (Dukes, 1999:48), which insinuates transitional processes from one form of the regime to another. For purposes of this analysis, understanding conflict transformation strategies will entail looking beyond the overt or practical aspects of managing, resolving and intervening in conflicts, towards embracing both the practical and theoretical aspects of implementing peace agreements. Primarily, conflict transformation demands adhering to the requirements of the peace agreement and financing the peace implementation process. A critique of the theory of conflict transformation is that it is a relatively new theory which has not been a core construct in the field of peace and security studies. Furthermore, when compared to the terms conflict resolution, conflict management and conflict intervention, there is a tendency to use the term interchangeably with the other three, in turn, confusing the essence of its meaning.

The hybrid peace theory, a recent alternative to liberalism, was espoused by Richmond and Mac Ginty (2015). Hybridity means the amalgamation of local and liberal practices as means of empowering local states to solve their problems and transition to better political positions. In the area of peacebuilding, hybrid theoretical approaches emphasise the importance of blending exogenous and endogenous as well as top-down and bottom-up interactions (Mac Ginty, 2010). The concept of hybridity, an intersectionality of complex and tangled interactions between liberal models and indigenous paradigms (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015), is concerned with giving back value to the local peacebuilding paradigms that were eroded by colonialism.

Examples of Hybrid peace theories are the United Nations (UN) supported Reconciliation Commission set up in 2000 in East Timor to investigate human rights violations by Indonesian soldiers and locals before independence. Likewise, the *Gacaca* tribunals that were used to inform traditional restorative justice post-genocide in Rwanda showcase the effectiveness of the hybrid peace theory (Mac Ginty, 2008). Hybridization has been critiqued for simply jolting liberal hegemony but failing to uproot it. In Afghanistan for example, hybridisation has been criticised for failing to establish a transitional government through a forum of traditional elders, the Loya Jirga, in 2001 (Mac Ginty, 2008). Other scholars also critique the assumption that hybridization, which in most cases has been tested through intellectual projects, will easily influence a shift of mindsets among policymakers (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015). Despite these perceived shortcomings, hybrid peacebuilding has induced pro-liberal scholars to theorise peace through new prisms. Again, it is a new theoretical discourse still in the making, with the potential to mature over time and to provide greater clarity and practical alternatives to liberalism. The Zimbabwean military intervention that took place in November 2017, though a bit far-fetched, can illustrate the partial effectiveness of hybridisation. The role played by the military, working hand in hand with civilians who marched on the streets, with Parliament and the group of negotiators who were led by the Catholic Priest Father Fidelis Mukonori is an example of how a mixture of parties working together to resolve a conflict enhance the notion of local ownership of a conflict transformation process. An exception is the fact that the Father Mukonori-led negotiation table fell short of including women, the youths, traditional leaders, other Church representatives and civil society.

The discourse of hegemony and ideology comprises key research concepts to explain the nexus between the social production of knowledge and the perpetuation of power relations. This theory explains why those who lack economic power consent to hierarchies of social and political power, and why those with economic power subject those who lack economic power to perpetual ideological subjugation (Stoddard, 2007). The discourse of hegemony and ideology explains for example, how a political party that exercises enough power is organised to defeat any potential contester in the system. The aim is to gain access and control to raw materials, natural resources, capital and markets. To achieve this, the super-power designs and normalises an ideology perceived as functionally different from other states in the system, reflecting the desired status quo under the guise of the unchallenged ability to

provide specific public goods such as security, or commercial and financial stability (Schenoni, 2018). This situation leads to the global capture of less powerful member states, which in the long run normalises a dependence syndrome on the superpower (Korhonen, 2012). Strange (1988) opines that structural power bestows control to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which other states operate and relate to each other, relate to their people or corporate enterprises. This agrees with the Marxian concepts of ideology, which espouses how the dominant ideas within a given society reflect the interests of a ruling economic class, further explained by Gramsci as how a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates (Laurie, 2018).

The theory of hegemony and ideology is best illustrated by the relationship between the United Nations and the African Union, a relationship that in-turn illustrates the fallout between the United Nations Charter and the African Union Constitutive Act. Chapter VII of the UN Charter (1945) prohibits interference in sovereign states, unless authorized by the United Nations Security Council. The African Union Constitutive Act's sovereignty clause (Organisation of African Unity, 2000: art. 4a, f, g) likewise prohibits foreign interference in sovereign states, except when authorized by the United Nations Security Council, and such authorisation can take place only in the case of genocide, crimes against humanity and unconstitutional change of government (United Nations, 1945: art. 4h). Article 23 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance lists as instances of unconstitutional change of government, firstly, any putsch or *coup d'état* against a democratically elected government, and secondly, any intervention by mercenaries, rebels or armed dissidents to replace a democratically elected government. As an extension to that, any refusal by an incumbent government to relinquish power to the winning party or candidate after free, fair and regular elections is deemed unconstitutional. Furthermore, any amendment or revision of the constitution or legal instruments, which is an infringement on the principles of democratic change of government, adds to the list of unconstitutional acts of governance.

Sovereign states should protect their countries from gross human rights violations and refrain from perpetrating similar violations on their citizens (Kaplan, 2012). Where a state fails to discharge its responsibilities, the international community is obligated to take necessary steps, which may include the use of military force in line with stipulations of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations Charter authorizes states to use military force only when there is a need for individual or collective self-defence, in response to any arisen armed attack (United Nations, 1945: art. 24 -25). Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter further makes regional organizations sole entities for enforcing military action (UN, 1945) (art. 3, para. 1-3), taking care to do so either as ordered by the UNSC or on their own, following authorization from the United Nation Security Council (United Nations, 1945: art. 3 para. 4). The legal system presents tension in the chain of prohibition of the use of force against states, the principle of non-interference in state internal affairs and the promotion and protection of human rights. The Rwanda genocide of 1994 can demonstrate how the incapacities of the then Organisation of African Unity, aggravated by the complacency of the West, presented loop-holes that led to the massacre of close to one million Rwandese citizens. Findings of extensive research that included interviews with most of the policymakers who made decisions in the run-up to the Rwanda genocide concluded that the US government knew much about the genocide early on to save lives, but passed on countless opportunities to intervene (Hehir, 2011). Likewise, findings evaluating the United Nations' involvement in Rwanda reported that this global organ failed Rwanda by disregarding indications that the genocide was planned, declining to act once it was underway and finally by forsaking the people of Rwanda to perish (Winfield, 1999). Endogenously, the African state has been reduced to a site for intra-elite struggles for power, predatorily turning against its citizens, when for example the elite leaders imbibe the dictatorial tendencies handed down from the global political set-up as the means to procure space for development cooperation and aid. Smith (2013) argues for a total transformation of the state and a relationship between the state and its citizens as a prerequisite for effective peacebuilding. This entails involving local actors in conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes, and of including the marginalised populace, including women and youths, as actors in governance and peacebuilding processes, as a condition for achieving a 'sustainable democratic reconstruction of the state' in post-conflict Africa (Smith, 2013).

The notion of transformative constitutionalism is a reversal of the theory of hegemony and ideology. Transformative constitutionalism entails an alternative and peaceful policy perspective aimed at eradicating all sorts of relational hegemonies. This policy perspective includes documents such as state constitutions, [protocols and related organisational laws] as the essential instrument[s] that policy makers at all levels can apply as part of efforts to ensure the enforcement of human rights, security and rule of law in all political transitional processes (Hailbronner, 2017). Based on this postulation, there is need to align all conflict transformation strategies, processes and initiatives to relevant continental and national protocols and constitutions, to attune conflict transformation strategies to the needs of the citizens. Du Plessis, Jansen and Siebrits (2015) highlight the need to think about the role of constitutional rules in realising political stability, further arguing that constitutional rules must become self-sufficient to safeguard nations from conflict by enabling democratic transitions. The theory of transformative constitutionalism, like the theory of decolonial peace, is applied in this research to offer a critique of the global arrangements for conflict transformation and peacebuilding as hegemonic. The same theory highlights the need for Africa to evolve as an autonomous continental conflict interlocutor, with fully functional and home-grown institutions and normative frameworks that can work in tandem with the global institutions and normative frameworks, where necessary.

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The theory of decolonial peace implies pursuing conflict transformation processes in a manner that reverses colonial continuities. These colonial continuities include for example, the colonial institutions that the African state inherited at independence, without instituting context relevant security sector reforms (Grosoguel, 2011). The theory of decolonial peace emphasises relevant, home-grown and gender-sensitive normative frameworks that are supported by a viable, influential, autonomous, inclusive, transformative and politically willing governance system. Espousing the theory of decolonial peace, Ndhlovu-Gatsheni (2013) establishes that Africa has suffered an incomplete transition from colonial to post-colonial, leading to neo-colonised postcolonial conditions where coloniality constrains the transition to sustainable peace and where paradigms of war, violence and the post-colonial political economy continue to haunt post-colonial African society. Likewise, Zondi (2013) further opines that the AU has successfully innovated useful strategies that are in line with the 20th century conflict transformation agenda, yet the regional body's failure to deal with the colonial residue limits the attainment of decolonial peace. Thusly, the notion of decolonial peace as noted above, entails an agenda for deliberate inclusion of the marginalised populations as participants in decision making concerning peace and governance processes. This inclusive agenda is fertile ground for the establishment of sustainable and egalitarian societies that rely on the democratic ethos of dialogue and equitable sharing of resources and ideas. This agenda of inclusive participation of women links issues of transitology and democracy with the women, peace and security agenda, and with the notions of feminist epistemology, which is an agenda to bring the marginalised to the centre of decisions and actions. At the normative level, the framework of feminist epistemology summarises the goal of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which is the agenda to focus on the attainment of gender equality in all theoretical and practical processes of existence. This agenda is also in line with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2000) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325, 2000). As part of its peacebuilding architecture, the United Nations adopted the Sustaining Peace Agenda in 2016.

This historic decision marked the United Nations' commitment to increased coherence in coordinating peace-building activities across the organisation (Bell & O'Rourke, 2010; United Nations, 2005; United Nations, 2015b). This is in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2282 (UNSCR2282) which buttresses the value of an inclusive approach to sustaining peace, particularly through the prevention of conflict and all efforts to address its root causes, as well as promoting inclusive dialogue and mediation (United Nations, 2016). A commitment by the new Secretary-General, likewise, emphasises the importance to address a persistent problem within the United Nations and the urgent need to ensure gender parity at all levels of development processes (Women, 2012a; UN Women, 2021b). UNSCR1325 is founded on three pillars of protection, prevention and participation (UNSCR1325, 2000). UNSCR1325 acknowledges the dual reality that, despite the important roles that they play in conflict prevention and peace processes – including peacekeeping, negotiations and peacebuilding, women are disproportionately affected by violence during conflict (UNSCR1325, 2000). As such, theories that study women's involvement in peace and security processes are important categories in the study of political transformation processes. Furthermore, UNSCR1325 recognises that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women participate in conflict prevention, mitigation, and delivery of relief and recovery measures. Hence, the need for them to be first protected from the ravages of conflicts and the conditions that lead to and stem from conflicts as a guarantee to their effective participation. Based on the tenets of UNSCR1325, the Women, Peace, and Security agenda essentially recognizes that gender equality is also a security issue much as it is a social justice issue (Johnson-Freese, 2020).

Globally, UNSCR 1325 has largely impacted the understanding and practice of the security concept, including the inclusion of a gender perspective in military security. This Resolution calls on military institutions to effectively address the differing needs and challenges regarding the protection of civilians in conflict, preventing and addressing Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, as well as creating positive conditions of service for military personnel (UNSCR1325, 2000). Globally, implementation progress within militaries has been slow since the promulgation of UNSCR1325, largely stemming from both lack of resources and a lack of organizational commitment - or both, while the former also impacts significantly on the latter (Johnson-Freese, 2020). Presently, 103 United Nations member states have adopted National Action Plans on UNSCR1325 globally. National Action Plans guide the context-specific implementation of the tenets of UNSCR1325 in an inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive manner. The United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations has likewise issued guidelines for integrating a gender perspective into the work of the United Nations Military in Peacekeeping Operations. Some of the National Action Plans in the 98 countries globally cover the role of the armed forces, focusing on three main areas of increasing the representation of women in the armed forces and international missions. This also includes integrating a gender perspective in pre-deployment training and promoting the protection of women's rights in conflict and post-conflict areas. In 2017 the United States of America became the first nation to codify the domestic implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, with the bipartisan passage of the Women, Peace & Security Act, signed by President Donald Trump, followed by a U.S. National Strategy for implementation latter in June 2019.

In Africa, 30 countries including Angola (2017 – 2020), Burkina Faso (2013 – 2016), Burundi (2012 – 2016), Cameroon (2018 – 2020), Central African Republic (2014 – 2016), Cote d'I Voire (2008 – 2012), Democratic Republic of Congo (2019 – 2022), Djibouti (2017), Gabon (2020 – 2023), Gambia (2012), Ghana (2012 – 2014), Guinea (2009 – 2013), Guinea-Bissau (2010 – 2011), Kenya (2016 – 2018), Liberia (2009 – 2013), Malawi (2021 – 2025), Mali (2015 – 2017), Mozambique (2018 – 2022),

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Namibia (2019 – 2024), Niger (2016 – 2018), Nigeria (2013 – 2017), Republic of Congo (2021 – 2023) Rwanda (2009 – 2012), Senegal (2011 – 2015), Sierra Leone (2010 – 2014), South Africa (2020 – 2025), South Sudan (2015 – 2020), Sudan (2020), Togo (2011 – 2016), and Uganda (2011 – 2015) have adopted national action plans, rising from 17 countries in 2015. At the regional level, 6 regional economic communities including the Economic Commission for West African States, IGAD, Mano River region, SADC and ECCAS have regional action plans. On the lead among the African regional economic commissions is the Economic Commission for West African States (ECOWAS), which already has 13 out of its 15 countries that have adopted NAPs (Bangura, 2020). Likewise, ECOWAS also has a Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (2010-2013). In addition to this, a women peace and security-Action Plan was developed as a component of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) 2018 – 2020 (Bangura, 2020).

On the other hand, the adoption of national action plans does not correspond with their effective implementation. Global support for implementation of national action plans has lacked active commitment, and less than 25% of the 103 states with formalized national action plans have budgets to implement them. A further example of how some countries have integrated the women peace and security agenda in the work of armed forces at the global level can be drawn from the Argentina gender policy (2006) which incorporates the establishment of gender offices in the military. It also integrates the establishment of a Gender Policy Council, creation of knowledge on sexual abuse, formulation of policies on pregnant women, establishment of kindergartens in military units and the launch of a plan on UNSCR 1325 specific to the armed forces. In Africa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, implementation of the National Action Plan on women, peace and security has focused on the need for soldiers to have a strong understanding of the provisions in the guidelines and a gender perspective more generally, further stressing the importance of pre-deployment training and interactions with civil society and NGOs in peacekeeping missions (Amling & O'Reilly, 2016). In view of the above arguments, the establishment of a link between transitology and feminist epistemology is imperative. Transitology is a theory of change towards democracy, while feminist epistemology is a theory of change towards democratic conceptualisations of knowledge theories and practice to inform egalitarian relations and societies. Just as studies seeking to theorise about societal and political transformations increase in response to the changing conflict landscape, aspirations and claims about new modalities of knowledge production in the area of peace and security have equally increased. Thus the aspiration to decolonise peace practices is matched by the equal desire to decolonise methods of attaining specific peace practices. An identified reflexive mode of knowledge assumes that science has lost its traditional status of relative autonomy and thus becomes increasingly interwoven with other societal spheres, further encompassing the need to transform classical research towards a more application-oriented mode of scientific knowledge (Kulawik, 2018).

In modern development discourse, democracy is incomplete without the achievement of sustainable development. One of the central tenets of sustainable development goals is gender equality, and in essence, there cannot be any sustainable development and democracy without the attainment of gender equality - the inclusive representation of people of both genders on all fronts and spheres of life (IDEA, 2013). This principle brings out the link between the theory of transitology, which is a study of change processes towards democracy and feminist epistemology, which seeks to examine social, political and ethical aspects of knowing, using a wide range of approaches, including the political and ethical dimensions of knowing. These dimensions pertain to power relations along the axis of oppression, and relevant to this research are variables such as sex, gender, class and (dis)ability, among others (Cianetti, 2019). In recent years, as the globe grapples with the agenda of democratising politics, there has been a notable increase in the number of women who are gaining entry into the field of representative politics over the years (IDEA, 2013).

Likewise, superfluously new democratic spaces have been created through the proliferation of promotion of rights of civil society organizations, as well as the promotion of participatory governance mechanisms at institutional levels. All these efforts have the potential to democratise other political spaces beyond those of formal politics. Ironically however, the degree to which transformations in the sex ratio in formal democratic spaces translates into tangible gains in policies that remedy previous gendered differences remain vague (IDEA, 2013). Suffice to mention that 'engendering democracy' by adding women or multiplying democratic spaces is necessary but not sufficient to address historically and culturally embedded forms of disadvantage that have been the focus for feminist politics (Cornwall & Goetz, 2005). In addition to enhancing women's political apprenticeship in political parties, civil society associations and the informal arenas in which political skills are learned and constituencies built, there is need for democratizing democracy itself (Cornwall & Goetz, 2005). Democratising democracy is a feminist notion that places value in creating new forms of knowledge and its articulation across and beyond existing democratic spaces. Democratising democracy thus also entails introducing gender and feminist lens to the study of military intervention, peace and security, fields often perceived as incompatible with feminist epistemological thinking and practice (Wibben, 2018). Rather than just inserting women into existing democratic structures, with an emphasis primarily on formal political institutions, conceptualising new methods of bringing about changes in political systems using inclusive means is a theory of change that is linked to the study of change processes, transitology. This feminist theory of change includes reforming pedagogical knowledge production methodologies towards inclusivity, which is the gist of feminist epistemology (Schoeman, 2015).

Is Transitology Relevant for Effective Gender Sensitive Conflict Transformation Practice in Africa?

Key arguments are that current prescribed methods of acquiring dominant conceptions and practices of knowledge attribution, acquisition, and justification disadvantage women and other subordinated groups. Dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women by excluding them from inquiry and policy analysis, denying them epistemic authority and producing theories of women that remain significant only in the ways they serve male interests. Most importantly, dominant knowledge practices produce theories of social phenomena that render women's activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible. Such knowledge, when produced, has been deemed not useful for people in subordinate positions, and that it further reinforces gender and other social hierarchies (Dotson, 2011). Feminist epistemology thus traces these failures to flawed conceptions of knowledge, knowers, objectivity and scientific methodology (Mason, 2011). As an ethos, feminist epistemology strives to reform the culture of research to serve the interests of marginalised groups (Anderson, 2020). As such, the central model of feminist epistemology is situated knowledge. Situated knowledge is the knowledge that reflects the particular perspectives of the knower to how gender situates knowing subjects (Anderson, 2020). Gender, in this article, is defined as a societal idea as opposed to sex, which is biological. Gender relations are organised in terms of obtaining models of power and domination that structure the life chances of men and women, which has links to the theory of hegemony and ideology already discussed above. Thus based on the pre-conceived power norms, society enforces diverse social roles premised on sex differences which by nature often take the form of male control and female subservience (Anderson, 2020).

This norm, which in many spaces has become a status quo, is used to legitimize the relegation of women from leadership and decision-making processes and frameworks. Supremacy of the male sex thus becomes not only a sexual and social problem but a political strategy for maintaining existing power relations that subordinate women. These unequal power relations manifest through women's failure to access basic resources that enable their full and equal participation in substantive positions in politics and governance processes. Under the framework of feminist epistemology, three theories that are relevant to this research are discussed, and these are the feminist international relations theory, decolonial feminist theory and feminist standpoint theory. Feminist International Relations theory highlights the power relations present at the state and societal levels. True (2014) argues that what distinguishes most feminist theories of international relations is their ethical commitments to inclusivity and self-reflexivity, as well as their attentiveness to relational power. Thus Feminist International Relations theory is fundamental in analysing international hegemonic structures such as the United Nations, their functions and elements, and how these in turn impact relations at the micro-levels.

Reardon (1996) further opines that there are gender hierarchies and power structures present in society that manifest both in times of war and peace. These gender hierarchies have reproduced a condition in which war and governance issues are masculinized and hegemonic, while peace is feminized and subordinated. This standpoint neither claims that all women are just nor that all women-led peace processes are just and sustainable. The position neither assumes that all men are conflicted nor that all men-led peace processes are fraught. The standpoint rather points to the fact that the ordering of power hierarchies conforms to patriarchal standards, in turn giving advantage to the more powerful at the expense of the less powerful. As such, in many patriarchal societies, and worse so in Africa, where patriarchal dynamics were aggravated by the principles of colonisation whose tenets of male bias favoured African men against African women, those in positions of power have imbided the creed of oppression of the marginalised in line with the political economy of colonial patriarchy, often manifesting as a combative and controlling masculinity even in times of peace (Cockburn & Enloe, 2012). Cockburn and Enloe (2012) further remark that while a combative and controlling masculinity is necessary to war and conflict, male dominance and the culture of hegemonic masculinities give rise to war thoughts and habits. As a result, conflict and violence are experienced in gendered ways, as reflected in the masculine nature of the state itself, such that any action that is state-centric supports patriarchy (Boehmer, 1996). Taking the modern Nigerian family as a microcosm of Africa, (Nzegwu, 2006) argues that under contemporary globalisation, the international community has sought to compartmentalise and homogenise the universe under one value scheme. A critique of feminist international relations theory is that it promotes the rights of only women and girls worldwide, and is not a system where everyone is responsible for integrating gender perspectives (True, 2014). This critique is however limited in itself because it positions feminist international relations theory under one strand of feminism, which is radical feminism, with its focus on female power that exists outside the realms of relationships with men. Liberal feminism, African feminisms, environmental feminism to mention a few, all promote a world in which men, women, boys and girls co-exist as equal partners to complement each other's skills and efforts in all politics, development, peace and security processes.

The link between the framework of transitology and the framework of feminist epistemology is further demonstrated through the tenets of decolonial feminism (Kusnierkiewicz, 2016). Similar to the goals of decolonial peace (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015) already espoused under the framework of transitology, the goals of decolonial feminism are to confront and transform the colonial axis or the colonial matrix of power that originates from the history of colonial domination. From an African feminist standpoint, decolonial feminism further identifies the negative effects of the coloniality of power that has been perpetuated by the global super-powers under the guise of the liberal peace agenda since the end of the Cold War. This axis of power continues to dictate relations between states and citizens at different levels of society. Thus the women's peace agenda is more embracing and more inclusive, rising above class agendas for capital accumulation towards a human security agenda (Campbell, 2003).

Is Transitology Relevant for Effective Gender Sensitive Conflict Transformation Practice in Africa?

Feminist standpoint theory is a type of critical theory, aiming to empower the oppressed through creating and acknowledging a multiplicity of voices with which they can claim for themselves the value of their own experiences (Harding, 1991). This epistemic advantage allows the marginalised groups to both create and consume up to date knowledge about their context as well as the worlds of their oppressors (Hartsock, 2018). The assumption is that such knowledge will further lead them to critical insights and perspectives regarding how to curve a suitable trajectory for their liberation. For example, reconceptualising feminist methodologies, research policy and practices that inform a gendered understanding of the hegemonic relations between the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council through a feminist lens has the potential to impact a transformative discourse on the need to make Article 27 of the UN Charter more inclusive of both male and female membership representation from countries of the Global South, a reality that malestream engagements have failed to change for the past seventy-five years since the formation of the UNSC. Furthermore, traditional conceptions of research and knowledge production tend to prescribe specific methodologies for specific subject areas. For example, peace and conflict transformation studies are considered as hard subject areas with sacrosanct theories and methodologies and are often perceived as a preserve for men. As such, women's contributions to knowledge production methods for peace processes are rarely emphasised, let alone spoken about in conflict management research and praxis (O'reilly, Suilleabhain, & Paffenholz, 2015). In response to this hegemonic epistemic set-up, breaking the divide between conventional and feminist frontiers in the peace and security academy is a highly political tool for challenging patriarchy. A practical challenge is that feminist researchers seeking to transform development policies often confront positivist policy makers who insist on quantitative data. Institutional policy, in turn, resists unfamiliar research innovation, often dismissing qualitative material as anecdotal, emotional and un-objectively feminine. This is partly right, because research is more than packaging findings, and should emphasise epistemology, method and strategy. At the same time, feminist epistemology also finds it reductionist to pedantically limit women's experiences and perceptions which in most cases reflect reality to follow textbook instruction. A feminist ethic provokes the means (methods and practices) to be compatible with the ends (liberatory and transformative). Feminist approaches prompt a deeper and more transformative dialogue within the scholarship and practice of critical peace and conflict studies (McLeod & O'Rilley, 2019).

The concept of intentionally imaging peace is a vein of feminist standpoint theory that entails a process of intentionally questioning pedagogic processes, deconstructing mainstream notions of the academy and demilitarizing the mind to enable a new visioning for peace and global security that can free itself from the stranglehold of what this research facilitator re-coins as realpoliti*k* academic ideology' (Lazarus, 2000). Realpolitik academic ideology is a wrong assumption that academic research and writing can only be carried out in strictly specific forms and processes, devoid of creative exploration that is rooted in the quest for transforming old methods of knowledge construction towards re-building new and befitting ones (Lazarus, 2000). In line with feminist standpoint theory, objectivity is advanced by reflexivity, which demands that inquirers place themselves on the same causal plane as the subject of knowledge. Reflexivity thus affirms the partiality of representations without denying their claim to truth. As such, the inclusion of marginalized groups into inquiry improves reflexivity, because the marginalized are more likely to notice and contest features of accepted representations that reflect the perspectives of the dominant (Anderson, 2020). Harding (2007) argues for both reflexivity and democratic inclusion as key features of more objective processes of inquiry, what she terms "strong objectivity." Likewise, Longino (2001) advances the same conception of democratic inclusion through what she coins as democratic discussion, arguing that knowledge production is a social enterprise, secured through the critical and cooperative interactions of inquirers. The products of this social enterprise are more objective the more responsive they are to criticism from all points of view. Lloyd's (1997a) notion of "all points of view" in a similar manner stresses the influence of the social positions of inquirers on their theorizing and a greater stress on the importance of equality among inquirers. Creating space for a shared criticism of knowledge claims as well as responding to criticisms by changing perceived theories according to publicly recognized standards of evaluation strengthens the quality of research findings (Lloyd, 1997a).

The notion of epistemic injustice focuses on the impact of gender and other hierarchical relations on attributions of epistemic authority (Shapin, 1994). Dominant groups tend to ascribe themselves epistemic authority while withholding it from subordinates by constructing stigmatizing stereotypes of the marginalised (Shapin, 1994). The marginalised are in most cases treated as research objects rather than subjectivities and equal participants to the process of knowledge production (Addelson, 1993). Such practices commit epistemic injustice against members of subordinate groups, undermining their ability to participate in and contribute to collaborative research inquiry. Hookway (2010) identifies epistemic injustice in practices that prevent people from participating in inquiry in non-testimonial and non-interrogative ways, such as asking too many questions, suggesting hypotheses, raising objections, and drawing analogies. Some research participants may be inhibited from taking part in research processes by certain research methods that ask too many complicated/generic/boring questions, an injustice that injures the speaker not as a knower but as an inquirer, and the participant (often termed the respondent in what this research conceptualises as value-laden language) as the object of the inquiry (Smith, 2018).

A critique of feminist standpoint theory has been advanced as its corrosive cynicism about science. Further criticism of feminist standpoint theory is that feminists are like everyone else engaged in a cynical power-play, trying to impose their beliefs on everyone else in a manner and thus holding them accountable for perpetuating another form of discursive knowledge hegemony.

However, these criticisms depend on misunderstandings of the feminist research paradigm. Feminists do not reject objectivity and science. They instead seek to improve it by correcting andro-centric and sexist biases in scientific inquiry, and by promoting inclusivity in research methods, as well as criticism of research from all points of view (Anderson, 2020). Feminists contend with the reality that science alone offers a narrow-minded view of the world and that feminist inquiry, which is more subjective and closer to human experiences, can help complement the process of discovering those truths that serve particular human interests in material control and maintaining current social hierarchies (Harding, 2007). Feminist standpoint theory offers a critique of its own beliefs, cautioning that too orthodox a definition of feminist research may inhibit rather than facilitate research with scientifically balanced insights for conflict transformation knowledge production (Millen, 1997). As such, a focus on feminist epistemology, as opposed to feminist methodologies, is more imperative since there are no specific feminist methods but rather, a set of feminist ethos to ensure inclusivity, reflexivity, respect for human rights and respect for a balance of voices in terms of positions of power.

CONCLUSIONS

The two theoretical frameworks, transitology and feminist epistemology have political and epistemic value as well as the potential to foster a democratic ethos in the peace and security narrative. The two theories have a nuanced relationship in that they reconcile towards a similar goal of influencing inclusive, people-centred and human security-oriented transitions from authoritarianism to democracy. Transitology is a continuum of theoretical developments in democratisation theories and feminist epistemology. Likewise, it calls for a continuous assessment of gender-sensitive theories of change that democratise human relations and development processes from the micro to the macro levels. The various theories located under them are similarly interconnected, relevantly feeding into each other concerning the aspect of transformation, transitions towards democracy. For example, the discourse of hegemony and ideology comprises key research concepts to explain the nexus between the social production of knowledge and the perpetuation of power relations. This theory explains why those who lack economic power consent to hierarchies of social and political power, and why those with economic power subject those who lack the economic power to perpetual ideological subjugation. In contrast to this theory, the hybridisation theory and the theory of conflict transformation provide a counter-narrative to this theory, bringing into focus the fact that inclusive participation of all sectors of the polity in conflict and peace processes enables the construction of healthy relationships and peaceful communities. The hybridisation theory builds upon the tenets of the theory of conflict transformation, and together the two theories suggest a comprehensive and wide-ranging approach emphasising support for various groups and stakeholders within the society in conflict, further recognising that conflicts are transformed gradually not instantly (Sawade, 2014). Transformative constitutionalism entails an alternative and peaceful policy perspective aimed at eradicating all sorts of relational hegemonies. It takes state constitutions, protocols and related organisational laws as the essential instrument[s] that policymakers at all levels can apply. This can be done as part of efforts to ensure the enforcement of human rights, security and rule of law in all political transitional processes. Hence, the need to align conflict transformation strategies, processes and initiatives to relevant continental and national protocols and constitutions to attune conflict transformation strategies to the needs of the citizens. Likewise, the theory of decolonial peace is linked to this agenda, since it implies pursuing peace in a manner that reverses colonial continuities like the inherited state (Grosoguel, 2011). The theory of decolonial peace emphasises relevant, home-grown and gender-sensitive normative frameworks that are supported by a viable, influential, autonomous, inclusive, transformative and politically willing AU governance system, which is the aim of this research. Feminist international relations and feminist standpoint theory, likewise, critique hegemonic power relations in society, holding them responsible for structural violence, cultural violence and the direct violations of women, girls and other human rights during the war. Feminist theory aims to bring the voices of all marginalised sectors of society to the centre for active participation in peace and security issues.

Moreover, the fact that transitology and feminist epistemology date back into the history of conflict and human relations respectively, is a strength that roots the discourse on democratisation processes in Africa across a wide variety of experiences and historically-informed analysis of socio-political and security transformation. The two frameworks of transitology and feminist epistemology thus remain relevant and of important epistemological value in the current conflict dispensation because it provides benchmarks upon which to monitor and evaluate the development of political processes. For example, the two theories have provoked a debate on the importance of including all sectors of society in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes for democratic political reforms. Discussions have shown how the inclusion of women in peace talks fostered progressive political reforms, for example in the case of Liberia which was referenced in the discussion. These theories have thus exhausted a discussion that provided an understanding of governance processes not as lineal but subjective processes that are curved and driven by human relations. Furthermore, both transitology and feminist epistemology also added value to the research in that they considered as key the emerging trends on methodological concepts for the study of conflict transformation and further proffer theories to the study of conflict transformation. Both transitology and feminist epistemology alike content for a theory of change towards democratic theories and practices that are inclusive, participatory and relevant enough to transform the conflict landscape and inform egalitarian relations and societies. Exploring the Zimbabwean case concerning conflict transformation strategies in Africa is socially relevant,

as it will add new insights to the already existing literature on the role of both mediators and militaries as peace agents in political transitions to democratization.

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