GAMBIA’S DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION
A CASE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF POLITICAL ELITES IN DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

Amat Jeng
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Department of Government
Uppsala University
Supervisor: Dr. Camille Pellerin
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i. Abstract

After ruling The Gambia for twenty-two years with an iron-fist, Yahya Jammeh was democratically defeated by a Coalition of seven of the eight opposition parties in December 2016. Since it gained independence from Britain in 1965, The Gambia had never experienced a transition through the ballot-box. To understand the country’s political transition and the prospects of democratisation, it is therefore important to answer the following questions: How has the establishment of a new political settlement affected the democratic transition in The Gambia? How has elite consensus or its lack thereof shaped the country’s democratic transition? How have exclusive elite bargains affected the political settlement?

Combining semi-structured interviews and internet sources, enriched with participant observation, this work is an explanatory single case study, which departs from an interpretivist epistemological standpoint. Using inclusive and exclusive elite bargains as analytical frameworks in relation to the theory of democratic transition, I found that politics and political processes have become too personalised in today’s Gambia, making consensus among the political elites on national issues very difficult to achieve. I further found that the lack of inclusive and deliberate consensus in the part of the leadership has been impeding the Gambia’s fragile democratic transition. In addition to theory development, this work contributes to the modus operandi of studying and understanding African politics that is different from the religious, ethno-linguistic, tribal, and regional, prisms used by many scholars who analyse the continent’s political trajectory.

Keywords: Political settlements, democratisation transition, consensus, elites, Gambia.
### ii. List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APRC</td>
<td>Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BYM</td>
<td>Barrow Youth Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDC</td>
<td>Gambia Democratic Congress</td>
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<td>GMC</td>
<td>Gambia Moral Congress</td>
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<td>GPDP</td>
<td>Gambia Party for Democracy and Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>National Convention Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRP</td>
<td>National Reconciliation Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDOIS</td>
<td>People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>People's Progressive Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>TANGO</td>
<td>The Association of Non-governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDP</td>
<td>United Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>National Assembly</td>
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iii. Acknowledgement

To my mother, Khadijatou (Ejatou) Barry, I owe the greatest thanks for ensuring that I became the first child in the village to graduate from high school. My journey into academia is built on the sacrifices she made as a widow with seven children, selling dairy products in the weekly markets to put food on the table. She is a living embodiment of a feminist. I also owe many thanks to Dr. Camille Pellerin whose great and critical mind has helped me to see things differently. I wish to also thank my former classmates at the Department of Government who have read this work and suggested further editing. A final thanks to my colleagues at SFI Hermods Uppsala both for providing the space for me to work and for encouraging me.
iv. Prologue

On December 1st 2016, Musa, 38, a Gambian dissident, called his boss at his work in the IKEA mall in Uppsala, saying he was sick. At his 32-square-meter apartment in Gamla Uppsala, he was boiling Gambia’s most famous tea, ataya, while listening to Freedom Radio (an online radio operated by a member of the Gambian diaspora which provide unfiltered news to Gambians and which has been instrumental in the struggle against Jammeh) from his laptop and following live streams of events in the streets in Banjul. For Gambians, this was one of the most important days in the history of the country since Independence. Yahya Jammeh had just lost the election; and the streets were inundated with enthusiastic supporters of the Coalition-government-to-be.

Musa left The Gambia in a scorching afternoon on the 11th of April 2000, a day after Jammeh’s security forces shot at student protesters, killing 14 of them. Musa escaped and sought asylum in Sweden. Since then, he had literally spent every evening talking, writing, and thinking about how to remove Jammeh and return home. Consequently, he had stayed low and had not stepped foot on the African continent, fearing the long arm of the dictator, Yahya Jammeh.

The next day when Musa showed up at work, he was greeted with flowers by his colleagues. They had already heard in the news what was going on in little Gambia. Musa hugged everyone as tears rolled down his cheeks. He told his boss that he was quitting the job by January; and that he is going back ‘home’ to The Gambia to participate in the democratic transition of the country, now that Yahya Jammeh is leaving.
Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. A Brief History of Gambian Politics

Just like the fall of the Soviet Union that caught political scientists off-guard, no political scientist had ever predicted Yahya Jammeh’s downfall in 2016. Considered a classic tinpot dictator, Jammeh ruled the small West African country with an iron-fist for more than two decades, jailing opponents, kidnapping critics, and abducting dissidents and journalists (BBC News, 2017). Where the Soviet Union was underpinned by the Communist ideology, Gambian politics, African politics to a large degree, has lacked the conservative, left-wing, or right-wing vigour which has led to political polarisations in the West.

Jammeh came to power in 1994 through a military coup. Before this, The Gambia had prided itself as one of the very few countries in post-Independent Africa that had been able to insulate themselves from the military coups and civil instabilities that gripped the continent (Diouf, 1998, p.4). Before 1994, The Gambia had been a relatively peaceful multi-party country whose politics had been characterised by a single-dominant party system since it gained Independence from Britain in 1965. After Independence, Dawda Kairaba Jawara, under the People's Progressive Party (PPP), became the first Prime Minister and eventually President in 1970 when the country became a Republic (Hughes & Perfect, 2006). Jawara was re-elected on several occasions (1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, & 1992) (Mckenna, 2019).

After the coup in 1994, Jammeh remained in power under a transitional military rule for two years. In 1996, he formed his own party, the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC, later Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC)), and contested and won the 1996-election (Saine, 2009). He engineered the drafting of the 1997-Constitution, which allows the President to serve as the head of the Executive branch of government. Jammeh won again in 2001, 2006, and 2011.

During these years, many Gambians, especially the educated critics had left for exile to the West. This group of exiled and self-exiled Gambians together with the opposition parties at home, mobilized and mounted very strong campaigns both nationally and internationally against Jammeh. By the time the country was headed to the polls in December 2016, a

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1 The failure of social scientists to predict Jammeh’s downfall in 2016 could partly be explained by the fact that Jammeh was so much entrenched, brutal, and financially relatively advantaged vis-à-vis the opposition; second, The Gambia had never experienced a transition through the ballot-box; and third, dictators in post-colonial Africa hardly ever lose peaceful elections.
political settlement had been formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding between seven of the eight political parties on how to administer a coalition-government. Adama Barrow, a member of the UDP, the dominant political party, was eventually elected as the flagbearer. This led to the defeat of Yahya Jammeh, one of the continent’s last-standing authoritarian leaders.

The political elites seemed to have had a strong consensus amongst them at the beginning. Amidst this, post-Jammeh Gambia offered a state of euphoria and hope. This hope dissipated as the Coalition-government disintegrated; consequently, a year later, protests gripped some parts the country and the security forces fired teargas at the protesters. Observers and analysts started asking questions about what has gone wrong with Gambia’s first democratic transition.

Transitologists would argue that inclusive and deliberate consensus in the part of the leadership are needed for democratic transition to be successful (Rustow, 1999, p.30). Democratic transition here is defined as the “dissolution of an authoritarian regime […] and the installation of some form of democracy” (O’Donell, Schmitter, & Whitehead, 1986, p.6). This form of transition can come through different forms: elections, national conference, negotiated transition, authoritarian reaction, civil war, and negotiated transition. For The Gambia, this came through a free and fair national election. The ability of the Gambian political elites and the society in general to maintain a stable democratic society has never been tested through the ballot-box.

The term political elite here follows the definition advanced by John Higley and Michael G. Burton (1989), who “conceive national elites as persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organisations, to effect national political outcomes, regularly and substantially” (p.247). In my case, this means leaders of the various political parties – not the military or economic elites. I have categorised these elites into two groups: the dominant elites, which lead major political parties; and the minority elites, who lead weak parties.

Using these elites as the units of my analyses, I have divided my empirical analyses into three critical junctures. The first (1) critical juncture came in November 2016 when the political elites reached a new and inclusive political settlement. This political settlement was formalised through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which led to the formation of a Coalition force amongst seven of the eight political parties. (2) The second juncture came in June 2018. I called this a period of less inclusive elite bargains, because, on the one hand, it showed the deeper integration and inclusion of the dominant elites, but on the
other hand, it led to the exclusion of the minority political elites. (3) The third critical juncture came in March 2019, and it is called the complete exclusionary elite bargains. It is a period which showed the complete disintegration of the Coalition, which consequently led to a wide political divide and a lack of consensus amongst the political elites.

Exclusionary and inclusionary elite bargains are two analytical frameworks that look at how key elites are excluded or included in a political settlement (Lindemann, 2008). An elite bargain is inclusive when the leadership “integrates a broad coalition of key elites by defining inclusive access to state structures” such as jobs and state resources (Lindemann, 2008, p.2; emphasis mine). This form of bargain, therefore, is a strategy for accommodating key political elites for the purpose of creating a political stability. In an exclusionary elite bargain, the leadership “establishes a narrow coalition of elites by defining exclusionary access to state structures” (Lindemann, 2008, p.2; emphasis mine).

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is four-fold: First, it aims to understand and explain how elite consensus can shape democratic transition, especially in a post-authoritarian society where democratic values have been absent. Secondly, by this, the study contributes further to the development of Rustow’s theory of democratic transition, by looking at how consensus or its lack thereof has shaped Gambia’s democratisation transition. Analytically, I have been able to use inclusionary and exclusionary elite bargains (my analytical frameworks) to link Rustow’s theory to political settlement (the concept I used).

Thirdly, this study also aims for theoretical generalisation. The theory of democratic transition posits that the marginalisation of the protagonists of any transition (Rustow, 1999, p.30) can lead to abortive outcomes in the next phase towards democracy. The Gambian experience confirms the validity of this theoretical proposition. This can be generalised to cases that have the same inter-contextual similarities with The Gambia. Even though Rustow applied his theory to understand the democratisation trajectories of Sweden and Turkey, the former a developed Western country and the latter a Westernizing country, my analyses have shown that the theory can also be used to explain democratisation processes in a non-Western context.

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2 There might be a question of how one can generalise from a single case. As Yin (2014, p.20) argues, the same can be asked of an experiment. To aim for theoretical generalisation here is grounded in the proposition of the theory – analytical generalisation not statistical generalisation (for more on this see Yin).
Fourthly, this study contributes to the understanding of African politics that is different from the prisms of religion, ethno-linguistic, and tribal used by some scholars to analyse African political configurations (Lindemann, 2008; Langer, 2004; Huntington and Fukuyama, 1968). The Gambian experience shows that the politics of inclusions and exclusions in post-Jammeh Gambia was informed by ideas, strategic thinking and political commitment, rather than religious, ethno-linguistic, tribal, and regional calculations. But it also shows that politics and political processes have become too personalised in today’s Gambia, making consensus among the political elites on national issues very difficult to achieve.

1.3. **Research Questions**

The fundamental question this work seeks to understand is: (1) How has the implementation of the political settlement affected the democratic transition in The Gambia? This question will be answered through two sub-questions: (a) How has the lack of consensus among the political elites shaped Gambia’s democratic transition? (b) How have inclusionary and exclusionary elite bargains affected the political stability of the country?

1.4. **Structure of the Chapters**

This work is divided into seven chapters. Under each chapter I have discussed what the chapter deals with. In Chapter 1, I introduce the whole work, including purpose and research questions and a brief history of politics in The Gambia. In Chapter 2, I deal solely with methodology, but also briefly with epistemological and ontological considerations. Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual and analytical frameworks, looking particularly at how I define my concept and study my phenomenon. Chapter 4 deals with the literature review, looking at various works on political settlement both inside and outside Africa. In Chapter 5, I deal with the theory that I have used in this work. Empirical analyses are on Chapter 6. This work ends with Chapter 7, which summarises the work, but also suggests different directions for future research.

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3 Strategic is defined in terms of struggle for power that was not based on ethnic, religious, or linguistic calculations.
Chapter 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological choice used in this work, beginning first with the epistemological and ontological considerations. The chapter discusses case selection, research design, methods for data collection, data analysis, internal and external validity, ethical consideration, and finally, limitations.

2.1. Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

This work departs from an interpretivist epistemological standpoint. For the interpretivist who is also an anti-foundational ontologist, there is no real world out there independent of the meaning we give to it (della Porta & Keating, 2008). To understand human nature as well as the diversity of societies and cultures, this work has therefore, focused on local and specific realities within The Gambia. As this work takes an interpretivist epistemological stance, it departs from the standpoint that objective and subjective meanings are deeply intertwined and contextual. Because of this, I am not interested in testing hypotheses.

However, this is not to rule out the possibility to generalise the elite phenomena to similar cases as The Gambia by pointing out inter-contextual similarities. In other words, the events I have studied, for example, the exclusion and inclusion of the dominant group and how this has shaken the political space, are generalizable to other contexts similar to The Gambia. I must say this with a caveat: I am aware that there are other contextually specific phenomena for The Gambia that interplayed with the elite-phenomenon I have studied and thus may affect the political transition. Examples of these phenomena can include poor economic performance, unemployment, institutional inertia, etc..

2.2. Reflexivity
In this section, I have reflected upon the question of positionality. I felt this necessary since my work is underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology. First, I have discussed how I dealt with positionality, and finally and more importantly, I have reflected upon how, in relation to other literature, the African political elites can ‘also’ be studied.4

There are four types of reflexivity: The first deals with the critical consciousness of the researcher (personal reflexivity); the second deals with the researcher’s emotional engagement; the third variant is concerned with the research design and method; and finally, the fourth deals with the method for data collection and procession (Jackson, Backett-Milburn & Newall, 2013; Munkejord, 2009).5

When I conceived of the idea to write about the democratic transition in The Gambia, I was confronted with two fundamental questions: The first question came about when I decided that I will take an interpretivist approach grounded in anti-foundationalist ontology. Then and only then, the problem of positionality came into my thoughts. The second and biggest question is the issue of how to study the concept political elite in contemporary Africa, given its antithetical nature to what I have seen and experienced in the West.6

After having lived, studied and been involved in politics in Sweden for quite a while, I came to understand that the political elites in the West are akin to the metaphor of a pod of dolphins: dolphins protect one another from outside threats. This raised two questions: ‘Do the political elites in The Gambia – in Africa, to be more ambitious – operate in similar ways we have in the West?’ ‘If so, then why has the political elites in Africa not been able, to borrow Harvard’s professor, Dani Rodrik’s own words, “create a gap between society and the elite” (Kleinknecht & Jessayan, 2019), or create elite-solidarity as we have it today in the West?’ This concern has been addressed later in this section.

2.2.1. The Problem of Positionality

As case study researchers, we are always confronted with the problem of subjectivity and positionality – preconceived positions – because we, most often, have deeper understandings of some of the phenomena beforehand. As Malterud argues, "A researcher's background and

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4 I used the adverbial ‘also’ here to mean that there are other ways, but not to agree that all ways are good ways.
5 I have not discussed all four types. I have only focused on the first and fourth
6 Until 2017, I was a member of a political party in Sweden and even served at the local Board of Employment (Arbetsmarknadsnämnden) in Karlskrona, Blekinge.
position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (Malterud, 2001, p.483-484). I am not invulnerable to this proposition.

There is no social world independent of the meanings we give to it, therefore, meanings are contextual and subjective, thus the need to study intersubjectivity. In this study, I have tried to confront the problem of subjectivity by being aware of how my identity and positionality would affect my ability to study the social world of a people I identify with. First, my lack of identifying with any political party in The Gambia has been very helpful, because it has allowed me to stay focused on the goal of my research, instead of influencing its outcome. Secondly, having been aware of my positionality, I have strived to be as transparent as possible. I have done this through two basic approaches advanced by Mats Alvesson and Kaj Skölberg (2012): careful interpretation and reflection.

The interpretation of material has been done with a caveat: I have used my access to carefully triangulate the data I have gathered. In term of careful reflection, I did what Skölberg and Alvesson (2012, p.9) call turning attention inwards. This includes me being aware of my community, the political environment, intellectual and cultural traditions, language and narratives. For Skölberg and Alvesson:

Thus, in reflective empirical research the centre of gravity is shifted from the handling of empirical material towards, as far as possible, a consideration of the perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, (inter)textual, political and cultural circumstance that form the backdrop to – as well as impregnate – the interpretations. (Skölberg and Alvesson, 2012, p.9).

2.2.2. Studying the African Political Elites

Now, I will take a short turn to the question about studying the African political elites. My case study of The Gambia has shown that the study of political elites in trying to make sense of African politics needs urgent reflections, and that such study must first try to disaggregate the elites by understanding their place and relations with the rest of society. Because politics is personal, it is difficult to talk of the political elites in Africa as some sort of a ‘ruling class’ – if class is defined here as a social group constituted self-consciously by people of similar status, and who are organised to defend their status (Duignan, 2019).
The absence of a ruling class does not at all imply the absence of pragmatic politics or that the political terrain is occupied by the lumpen proletariat; rather, it means that there is a lack of class solidarity among the political elites. As Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz (1999) have argued, the political elites in Africa will always have closer links with supporters than with their contending rivals.

In his research on the political elites in five African countries, Martin Koper (2018, p.15), who is also a former diplomat at the Dutch Embassy in Kenya, echoes a similar proposition:

> While the political process in the West is relatively autonomous and as such a recognizable part of society, this is much less the case in sub-Saharan Africa. Politics and power in African countries are primarily informal and personal.

This symbiotic relationship between the elites and the non-elites in Africa has made it important to not forget the non-elites while we study the political elites. Therefore, as Chabal and Daloz (p.41) have argued, African societies do not at all postulate a radical cleavage between those we consider the elites and the rest of the population.

Finally, a number of scholars who have parsimoniously looked at political consensus in Africa have often done so through the ethnicity, cultural, linguistic, regionalism, and tribal prisms (Huntington, 1991; Olson, 1993). For example, when we read books about African politics, words such as ‘ethnicity’, ‘tribes’, ‘corruption’, ‘patronage’ ‘roving bandit’ keep resurfacing, as if African politics is only characterised by these metaphors.

The study of politics, elite consensus and political decision-makings in Africa should be informed by ideas, rational choice, political commitments, and strategies, instead of appropriating metaphors to the continent’s political trajectory. To take this line of argument is by no means tantamount to dismissing the ubiquitous nature of clientelist politics on the African continent. But as Matev Tomšič (2017) argues, elite consensus has led to clientelist politics in the West as well. Therefore, the epistemological and ontological inquiries into political settlements in Africa should not be confined to the sui generis prisms of clientelism, tribalism and ethno-linguistic.

### 2.3. Case Selection

Studying The Gambia was primarily motivated by the lack of studies on the country’s recent transition. This study is therefore, the first of its kind. Gambia’s ongoing transition is unique in many ways, given the historical and the political environment which preceded it: First, Yahya...
Jammeh was so much entrenched, brutal, and financially relatively advantaged that no one would have predicted his downfall in 2016; second, The Gambia has never experienced a transition through the ballot-box; and third, dictators in post-colonial Africa hardly ever lose elections.

Secondly, The Gambia is an important case in relation to how inclusive and exclusive elite bargains can affect democratic transition, and it illustrates the challenges of maintaining a political settlement in a post-authoritarian society that is yet to fully democratis. In such a society, political elites and their followers, or to borrow from Dankwart Rustow (1999, p.30), “the protagonists of the preparatory struggle,” often tend to have a larger room to manoeuvre their way through government because their political participation is no longer constrained by an authoritarian leader.

Thirdly, I have also been able to use The Gambia to contribute to Rustow’s democratic transition theory by looking at the country’s democratisation trajectory. Although the theory has been applied to Western countries, notably Sweden, my study shows that it can be used to understanding democratisation processes in a non-Western case. Furthermore, The Gambia is an interesting case to study, because it has become one of the latest countries on the continent to experience a transition after the Arab Spring. As a sovereign country in the international system entering its unexpected democratic transition, it avails us the opportunity to be able to study and understand the continent’s most recent political transition.

Finally, my in-depth knowledge of the country was another motivating factor: I was born in The Gambia and therefore, speak and understand all the languages (Fula, Wolof, Mandinka, Sarahule). The trade-offs this brings to this study has been discussed under the section Reflexivity. However, this biographical opportunity gives me deeper knowledge and understanding of the phenomena. Therefore, it has equipped with the tools to know where and how to source my data, and thus achieve the role of what Yin (2014) calls ‘a good detective’ – someone who can interpret and reiterate information as it comes.

2.4. Research Design

Christopher Lamont (2015, p.132) argues that two fundamental questions are worth asking when conducting case studies – I consider them three. For Lamont, first, one needs to ask
what one hopes to learn from the case; and second, why this case and not any other cases. Both questions have been answered in the preceding sections. In this section, I aim to discuss the third question: Why I adopt an explanatory single-case study instead of other methods of inquiry in the social sciences? I must say that I do not aim to reproduce the hierarchical debate between those who espouse case study and those for other methods, because the verdict is subjective and contextual.

This is a case of democratic transition in which I have looked at the roles of political elites and non-elites. To do this, I have adopted a qualitative and an empirical single case approach in order to allow me to gain better understanding of the phenomenon I chose. Scholars have argued that case studies can lead to reassuring explanation and despite their contested definitions, they can help us accomplish and understand larger cases given proper evidence has been provided (Lamont, 2015; Gerring, 2007).

Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett (2005) have defined case study as “a well-defined aspect of a historical episode that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than a historical event itself” (p.18). This is similar to Robert K. Yin’s (2014) understanding: “Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p.12).

I have chosen this method in order to understand and explain a contemporary social phenomenon. As Yin argues, “The more that your questions seek to explain some present circumstance (‘how’ or ‘why’ some phenomenon works), the more that case study method will be relevant” (p.4). And since I do not have control over the behaviour of my subjects and the phenomenon, I see this method as relevant, because it allows me to study how intersubjectivity and meaning-making have shaped the life of the people and phenomenon I have chosen to study.

The questions I have asked are suitable for an explanatory case study, because, instead of dealing with mere frequencies (Yin, p.9), they deal with people, society, and meanings. And unlike other methods such as experiments (where we are required to control the behaviour of the subjects we study), surveys (where we would want to collect a large data, describe the prevalence of our phenomena and/or make prediction) or archival materials (where we are required to dig deep into historical materials), the explanatory case study approach has helped
me to reiterate between the theory and the empirical data without needing to establish *a priori*.

Finally, this case is contemporary, and given this contemporality, I have been able to observe the phenomenon and have been able to interview my subjects in order to further understanding how they make meanings in their environment.

### 2.5. Methods for Data Collection

Given the interpretivist epistemological stance of my case, my data collection takes a qualitative approach, where I have tried to integrate real-world events with my data collection plan. Data for this study was collected using few approaches: semi-structured interviews via email and Skype, direct observation, documentations, online media publications, such as newspaper articles, TV interviews and talk shows, and other related internet publications. Few of these approaches are discussed subsequently.

A total of three elite interviews were conducted, two by email and Skype, and one by email. I conducted a Skype and e-mail interview with Halifa Sallah, the Coalition government’s former adviser and today the most influential politician in the country. I had an e-mail interview with Ismail Ceesay, a prominent political science lecturer at the University of The Gambia. I had a Skype and an e-mail interview with Madi Jobarteh, today, considered one of the most prominent political experts on Gambian politics. An appendix of the e-mail interviews is achieved for any future inquiries. No appendix for the Skype interviews has been provided, because these interviews were a mixture of English, Mandinka, and Wolof.

When I conceived of the idea to do this research, I compiled the names of all potential interviewees. I then identified which language to use to get to the ‘heart’ of each interviewee, even though they all speak English. The reason for speaking to them in their own language is to create trust in-between.

First, I emailed all my interviewees separately without any questions about the phenomenon, introduced my topic and explained the purpose of the interview and what the data would be used for. I told them that the interviews will be done via Skype and e-mail. This is because I wanted to know why and who will refuse the face-to-face interview. They all consented and
agreed to be mentioned. In my empirical analyses I have mentioned if the interview data was done by email or Skype.

In my second emails to my interviewees, I sent the questions. When I got my first answers from some of them, the interviews continued on Skype. This was helpful, because I was able to ask new and instance questions and get instance answers. Where an interviewee was not willing to give a quick answer, I took their response with a caveat. For me, the silence during the Skype interviews gave me the opportunity to ask more questions. Tea Torbenfeldt Bengtsson and Lars Fynbo (2017, p.33) have argued, silence in interviews “allow[s] for unwanted and unexpected expressions between the interviewer and the interviewee but also sometimes lead to valuable data.”

In addition to the interviews, this study has also made use of TV, and newspaper interviews conducted with various members of the Coalition government. Some of these interviews are not conducted in English, but in Wolof and Mandinka, even though the official language of the country is English. My fluency in these languages has helped me to triangulate the data I collected. I realised that a lack of knowledge in Wolof and Mandinka in particular would have made it difficult to reiterate these sources. This reiteration has helped me to be able to understand the position of some of the coalition members long before I interviewed them.

One of the methods that have been very helpful in my data collection is direct observations. These observations were not formal in the sense that no instruments were developed as part of the case study protocol; rather, observations were made during three family trips to The Gambia (Nov-Dec., 2016; Aug-Sept.,2018; & Aug-Sept., 2019). The first trip lasted two months; the second, a month; and the third, a month. I attended two sittings at the National Assembly, one in August 2018 and another in August 2019; I watched live debates on TV and listen to debates on the radio during my stay in the country. Given the contemporaneity of this case, I have been able to witness the phenomena as they unfolded in real-life. During my visits to The Gambia, I informally interacted with key political elites, young political activists, and bureaucrats. These interactions gave me entrée and deeper understanding of the phenomenon beforehand.

The use of documents has also been valuable, as they have helped to corroborate and augment evidence from my sources. I examined the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by
all members of the Coalition, and the President’s letter of resignation, which officially unties him from any party affiliation.\(^7\) All documents are archived for future need.

2.6. Data Analysis

I have periodized this work between November 2016 to mid-December 2019. Within this period, I have examined three critical junctures, using qualitative empirical analysis. I must note that since the phenomenon has been an ongoing process, periodizing it has been able to help me both in my data collection and data analysis.

The first empirical analysis looks at the first critical juncture which came in November 2016, when the political elites reached a political settlement and a Coalition was formed by seven of the eight opposition parties. The analysis then continues with the second juncture, which came in June 2018. This juncture led to a broader integration and inclusion of the dominant elites but a narrow exclusion of the minority political elites. The third critical juncture has been, analysed using the complete exclusive elite bargains framework. This analysis looks at how the final disintegration of the Coalition and the lack of consensus amongst the political elites have widened the political divide and led to the political instability in the country. This part has also examined simultaneously the recirculation of Yahya Jammeh’s former ministers and how this reinforces disenchantments with and distrust of the government.

2.7. Internal & External Validity

Since this is a case study of a particular phenomenon involving actors’ goals and preferences, I have triangulated my interview data by looking for multiple sources and comparing what my interviewees have told me and what they have said or written in previous interviews or news articles. All data used in this study has passed the tests of reiteration. This has helped to mitigate some of the major pitfalls associated with case studies.

This study contributes to the development of the theory of democratic transition by Dankwart Rustow (1999). I argue that this case can help us understand the important roles of deliberate consensus in democratic transition, especially in contexts where democracy has not fully been established. I have tried to account for the lack of a consensus amongst the political elites as a

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\(^7\) Note that this does not mean he resigned as the President; rather, it means he, according to the MoU, is no more a member of any political party.
‘part’ of the reasons that led to the current situation. By taking this position, this paper leaves room for equifinality. In other words, I am not able to examine all the potential causes that are affecting the democratic transition in the country; and it is important to remember the possible existence of other causes – that way, we can deal with the threat to internal validity (Yin, 2014).

2.8. Ethical Consideration

This study has reflected upon the issue of ethical behaviour in order to not inflict any harm on all those who consented to be named and quoted during my interviews. Since my interviews were conducted by email exchange and Skype, I have made sure that all materials generated from these interviews are archived. These materials serve to provide evidence that the interviews have been conducted and that interviewees have not been misquoted or wrongly paraphrased.

As a direct observant, I visited the ministry of information, the National Assembly, the Gambia Press Union, the University of The Gambia, headquarters of three major political parties (UDP, PDOIS, & PPP). In all visits, I interacted informally with people. I did not seek clearance from my University, because this was not a formal data collection plan; it was a casual visit to interact with acquaintances and former colleagues in the Press. Therefore, these interactions have not been used in my data analysis; however, they have been able to help me gain entrée and also to know whom to interview and what questions to ask.

When I had returned home to Sweden and decided to send my questions to my interviewees, I informed them about the purpose, what the study would mean to them, asked if they see any risk in participating, and if they wanted anonymity. I secured informed consent from all my interviewees to be mentioned and quoted.

2.9. Limitation and Weakness

The biggest weakness this work faces is that it studies an ongoing process and decides to periodise it. Democratic transitions, as some scholars have argued (Menocal, 2017; Tomšič, 2017; Rustow, 1999), can take years if not decades before they can materialise. Therefore, critics might ask: How do we measure democratisation within three years? I have been grappling with this question from the dark corner of the Carolina Rediviva Library.
At the end, I see periodization as a way of mitigating the problem of studying an ongoing process. Since democratic transition can take years if not decades, I realised that I cannot measure anything within the period covered by this study. There, the focus of this work has been on understanding and explaining the trajectory of the democratic transition in The Gambia within the chosen period, rather than on measuring whether the country has achieved democracy or not.

Another weakness I have observed is the use of e-mail interviews. Despite, the fact that it is one of the most convenient ways of reducing the constraints associated with the lack of time and the nature of geographical proximity, some scholars have warned of the risk of email interviews. One such problem is the lack of the ability to observe and interpret tone, hesitation, silence etc. (Hawkins, 2018; Fritz & Vandermause, 2017). To mitigate this risk, I was able to even conduct Skype interview with two of my three interviewees. This has helped me to clarify certain ambiguities, but to also ask questions that they were not perhaps prepared to answer.

Now, some readers might point to certain explanations in this work and ask about the source. This can be viewed as a weakness, because of the lack of clarity on sourcing. However, as I stated earlier, this work has been enriched both by participant observation and my closeness to the phenomenon. Finally, I have examined how the lack of consensus between the elites has undermined the political settlement but has not been able to explain how a successful political settlement looks like when we see one. Critics might argue that even in established democracies, there is a lack of consensus on certain issues. Indeed, it is common knowledge that certain outcomes, especially the lack of consensus, are constitutive element of political settlements. I therefore, do not pretend to argue that the prevention of certain outcomes is a sign of a successful democratic transition or stable political settlements; however, when certain outcomes, especially instabilities, are linked to excluded groups, the need to understand how this exclusionary approach affects democratic transition becomes an important undertaking; thus, the focus of this work.

CHAPTER 3. CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This section first begins by discussing how different scholars see political settlement, then defines political settlement, and discusses briefly why a certain conceptual framework is
preferred for our case over others. The section ends by explaining how this study is operationalised.

3.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

First, it is important to note that the epistemological nature of political settlement is contested and vary from context to context; thus, the need to understand how the concept has been applied in my work.

The term ‘political settlement’ is a relatively new concept in the field of Political Science. However, it has gained prominence in the works of many scholars (Khan, 1995; Higley and Burton, 1998; Laws and Leftwich, 2014; North et al., 2009, Putzel & Di John, 2012). Over the years, the term has also been used widely within the international development community (Menocal, 2017; Laws and Leftwich, 2014).

Just like many concepts in the social sciences, such as democracy, power, terrorism, etc., political settlement has also been a subject of different definitions. While the term was first implicitly used in Joseph Melling’s work (1991) on industrial capitalism and the welfare state in 19th century Britain, Melling never defined the term (Laws, 2012, p.7). The term gained currency in the work of Mushtaq Khan (1995), where he looks at political settlement from an institutional and political economy perspectives. Since then, other scholars have looked at it from broader perspectives (Menocal, 2017; Putzel & Di John, 2012).

For Khan (1995), political settlement refers to the balance or distribution of power “across organizations that are relevant for analysing a specific institutional or policy problem” (Khan, 1995, p.640). By organisations here, Khan means “groups of individuals” with great powers, operating in structured ways and who are bound by nominative rules in their dealings with one another. This definition is horizontal and all-encompassing and can include the economic and cultural elites – both of who are not the focus of this paper.

For some scholars, an inclusive and a stable political settlement is a key political strategy for taming politics, for avoiding ‘deadly, warlike affairs’, for preserving unity and stability, and for coming to common understandings or agreements amongst elites and broader actors in society about how to achieve a common goal without resorting to violence (Higley & Burton, 1998; Menocal, 2017; Arend Lijphart, 1977; Laws & Leftwich, 2014; Putzel and Di John 2012).
Sometimes, some scholars have used political settlement and elite pacts interchangeably (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens, 1992; Deborah Yashar, 1997). This can create analytical confusions, because most elite pacts are “one-off events that are part of the ongoing political settlement” (Laws, 2012, p.1), while political settlements are renegotiable (Menocal, 2017, p.561) And for Higley and Burton (1998), elite pacts can be temporal and are mostly “aimed at papering over, rather than settling, core disputes” (p.101).

Laws (2012) goes further to argue that political settlement is a two-level game, involving both vertical and horizontal dynamics and interactions. For him, “political settlements need to be responsive to the interests of the non-elite general public if they are to be sustainable over time” (p.9). Scholars like Laws who look at political settlement from both a vertical and horizontal perspectives are of the view that elites do not operate in a vacuum (Menocal, 2017; Laws, 2012; Putzel and Di John 2012; Higley and Burton, 1998). Thus, for the effective implementation of politics settlement, some non-elitist segments of the society cannot be put into oblivion. This is also true for our case.

Therefore, for contextual and analytical simplicity, I have followed the understanding of George Lowell Field, John Higley, and Michael Burton (1990), who have seen political settlement as a moment when “the warring factions of a disunified national elite suddenly and deliberately reorganize their relations by negotiating compromises on their most basic disagreements, thereby achieving consensual unity and laying the basis for a stable representative regime (p.160-1). This definition is clear, and it helps us understand the urgency of the agreement reached by the various opposition parties. It also shows that prior to the political settlement, the political elites in the country were disunified. During the initial period of negotiations which led to the formation of the Coalition, there was no single, powerful, and unified identifiable elite group, because the ruling regime had penetrated deep into society and weakened the individual elites. Political settlement is therefore, an ongoing agreement between political elites on how to work together to achieve a stable political system of governance, taking into consideration the broader society.

3.2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the political elites are my units of analysis, I have used inclusive and exclusive elite bargains as analytical frameworks to operationalise my study. An elite bargain is inclusive when the leadership “integrates a broad coalition of key elites by defining inclusive access to
state structures;” and exclusive when the leadership “establishes a narrow coalition of elites by defining exclusionary access to state structures” (Lindemann, 2008, p.2; emphases mine). The term political elite here follows the definition advanced by John Higley and Michael G. Burton (1989), who “conceive national elites as persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organisations, to effect national political outcomes, regularly and substantially” (p.247).

3.2.1. **The Inclusionary and Exclusionary Elite Bargain as Frameworks**

An inclusive elite bargain is a strategy for accommodating key political elites for the purpose of creating a political stability. Using the formal political elites as the units of my analyses, I have divided my empirical analyses into three critical junctures. Pritish Behuria, Lars Burr, and Hazel Gray (2017) have argued that critical junctures are moments that “can lead to changes in the distribution of power among different groups within society, although they may not result in formal regime change or institutional change” (p.512). Therefore, I have used inclusionary and exclusionary as my analytical frameworks to examine who has been included and excluded in various critical junctures, and how this has affected the political space in the country.

The first critical juncture came in November 2016, when the political settlement was formalised by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between all members of the Coalition. The second critical juncture came in June 2018, and it is called the less inclusive elite bargains. My analysis here is on the inclusion of the dominant elites, but also the exclusion of the minority political elites. The third juncture is characterised by a complete exclusive elite bargain. Here I examined how exclusionary politics eventually led to the gradual and complete disintegration of the Coalition. Using this analytical framework, I have been able to also look at who is excluded, and more importantly the relationship between those who are excluded and included.

Analysing the inclusionary elite bargain has allowed me to enter the black box of the transitional government. And I have been able to examine how the co-opting of key members of the coalition has led to some semblance of stability and legitimacy. The complete exclusionary elite bargain has helped me to examine how the marginalisation of many key members of the Coalition has led to increased disenchantments with the governments, and eventually and consequently to the mobilisation of political activists and popular protests in the country.
CHAPTER 4. PREVIOUS WORKS ON POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS

4.1. Inside Africa

In the absence of a single work on Gambia’s democratic transition, this Chapter tries to provide a recent and diverse, yet inconclusive, review of scholarly work on how political settlements has been applied in studying other democratic transitions in other cases. I have looked at how the concept has been used by different scholars to study different phenomena and I have tried to understand the similarities and differences with The Gambia. A large part of this Chapter has explored the literature on political settlements in Africa; however, a brief look at some works on political settlements outside Africa has also been attempted. This modus operandi is motivated by the fact that the democratic transition and the political elites in The Gambia have relatively more in common with those in some of the African countries discussed here than can be pointed out in countries outside the African continent. Also, this section is not going to review all the literature on political settlement in Africa.

The term political settlement first made its entrée into the academic lexicon when Mustapha Khan (1995), a political institutionalist, brought it up in his early writings. Khan is of the view that “socially desirable ‘inclusive’ economic institutions” are contingent upon the degree of inclusiveness in political organisations (p.645). Stephan Lindemann (2008), in his study of instability in Sub-Saharan Africa, picks up from where Khan left off. He observes that while ethnic diversity, poor economic performance, inequality, scarcity/abundance natural resource, and regime types determine stability, the main drivers of stability is the politics of inclusion and exclusion.

Lindemann observes that three types of states emerged in post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa: one where the dominant political party was able to build and maintain an inclusive elite politics; another one with a ‘fusion of the elite’, where social fragmentation was successfully accommodated by the ruling elites; and finally, the one with an exclusive elite politics where “political parties established only narrow coalitions of elites by providing exclusionary access to state patronage” (p.19). The third category is most likely to experience political and civil instability, he argues. While his main argument that states with inclusionary elite bargains will enjoy relative stability holds strong for our case, his analysis falls short of explaining the
trajectory of states where democratic transitions came peacefully through elections. Despite this, Lindemann’s work is rich and offers better understanding of elite bargains.

In what appears to be another of his great works on elite bargains, Lindemann (2011) lifts up important theoretical inquiries into the notion of political settlements. For example, he observes that there are theoretical lacunae as to “who needs to be included and with what effects for peace and economic development” (p.1844). Using Zambia as a case study, he argues that although inclusive elite bargains have helped Zambia to escape the scourge of civil instability, it has, nevertheless, led to the “dilemma of unproductive peace” (p. 1844), where economic progress has been lagging.

Combining field works and direct observation with interviews, Lindemann uses ethnicity, linguistic, regional, and religion prisms to examine the distributions of government portfolios in Zambia and how that led to stability. The result paints Zambia as a “partially defiant case… where inclusive elite bargains have been accompanied by enduring peace, but also by persistent economic stagnation” (p. 1846) – something Lindemann calls the ‘dilemma of unproductive peace.’

While Lindemann’s analysis on the power relations between the elites and non-elites in this latter work can be useful in understanding inclusive elite bargains in heterogenous societies, the prisms (ethnicity, religion, regionalism, linguistic) in which he grounded his analysis, cannot help to explain the case I have studied. The Gambia is a secular heterogenous state, so religion has never been a bone of contention; second, both the President and the excluded political elites share the same ethnic identity; and finally, regionalism is largely an absent explanatory variable, given the small size of the country.

In their study of the role of the elites in successfully propelling Botswana along a developmental path, David Sebudubudu and Patrick Molutsi (2011) have observed that the absence of a dominant ethnic group and the development of a political and social value have made Botswana a success story of elite-consensus. The absence of a dominant ethnic groups means no political party can enjoy a single majority, availing all ethnic groups the opportunity to be co-opted. “The political parties were formed by identifying key individuals from each ethnic and/or racial grouping” (p.16). What Zambia, Botswana, and The Gambia might have in common is that all have been bastions of peace and stability. However, where Lindemann (2011) uses certain prisms to examine the distributions of cabinet post in Zambia, and where
Sebudubudu and Molutsi (2011) examined party-formation through ethnic and/or racial groupings. The Gambia lacks such political configurations.

In his recent study of political settlements in Tanzania, Tim Kelsall (2018) looks at the configuration of political elites and businessmen in Tanzania from Independence to the current government. He observes that the coming of President Magufuli to power (Magufulism) with radical political and economic reforms (anti-rent-seeking) has altered the political settlements in the country.

Kelsall (2018, p.5) disaggregates political settlements into four categories (broad-dispersed, broad-concentrated, narrow-dispersed, and narrow-concentrated), factoring in the role of potentially disruptive and non-disruptive groups. However, he has largely seen political settlements as the extension of political patronage by other means, instead of being informed by rational and strategic thoughts.

In his study of the elite bargains which characterised Kenya’s 2007 presidential election, Martin Koper (2018) observes that the lack of a consensus amongst the elites, especially between Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, constituted important reasons for the collapse of their coalition, eventually paving the way for inter-ethnic clashes which resulted in the death toll of more than one thousand people. In Uganda, Koper argues that the country was only able to witness a period of stability since gaining independence after President Museveni was able to tame the horizontal and vertical bases by successfully winning over elites from other parts of the country.

Koper’s analysis takes us to five countries in East Africa; and the results have shown that elite-exclusion can create conditions for fragility and even state collapse. Like some African countries, the post-independence political arenas of Kenya, Democratic Republic Congo, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Uganda were also characterised by elite-divisions, and that even after “the introduction of political pluralism [in these countries], political elites remained divided along ethnic and regional lines” (Koper, 2018, p.188). These divisions were exacerbated further by the closeness of the political elites to other unsatisfied broader actors in these societies, and this, perhaps, helps explain their slow progress towards democracy. Koper’s

\[\text{However, each political party in the country is incorrectly and unofficially labelled according to the ethnic belonging of its flagbearer It is analytically wrong, because there is no single party that can win elections by leaning playing the ethical card. Yahya Jammeh, for example is a member of the Jola ethnic group which constitutes only 4% of the population, nevertheless, he won four consecutive terms. One of the reasons he became unpopular was his attempt to play the racial and religious card, first by illegally declaring the country and Islamic Republic, and second by attacking the Mandinka tribe. For more on this see, Jeng, A (BA), NAI, etc.}\]
main points are that elites are an integral part of political stability, and that consensus achieved pre-elections can easily be altered after elections; and this is a proposition which holds firm to the case of The Gambia.

Jok Madut Jok (2015), writing about one of the most recent and critical political settlements in Africa (the case of the Sudans) shows that for political settlements to be sustainable, other non-elitist actors in society need to be catered for. These actors do not necessarily have to have political powers; it is enough for them to exhibit disruptive characteristics. He contends that the instability between Khartoum and Juba and within Juba itself is not only the results of the failure of the political settlements between the Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party (NCP), but also the failure of the political elites in both countries to include other armed groups.

His central argument is that conflicts cannot just be solved by reaching a political settlement which puts politicians in public offices; rather, a mechanism that addresses the fundamentals of conflict, injustice, and accountability must be put in place. This is true for The Gambia: The political settlement did not address the political differences between the Coalition members; rather, it was devised as a tactical approach to remove Yahya Jammeh from power. However, the case of Sudan is unique vis-à-vis The Gambia, in that the political bargains in the former are the results of a protracted armed conflict.

4.2. Outside Africa

Political settlements have been studied most notably in some the post-Soviet states in an effort to understand the role of the elites in these societies’ attempts to democratis and consolidate democracy. Tomšič (2017) examines some communist countries that became members of the EU in 2004. He argues that their success and failure are contingent upon the character of their national political elites. Tomšič observes that in Eastern Central Europe, political space has largely been characterised by consensual politics, while in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, fragmentations and divisions became the hallmarks of politics. Therefore, “democracy remained unconsolidated in Eastern and South Eastern European countries, with a high level of political instability, and some even experienced the return of authoritarianism” (Tomšič, 2017, p.156).

Mirza Hassan and Sohela Nazneen (2017) have looked at political settlements around regime successions in Bangladesh. For years, politics in Bangladesh has been underpinned by fragile political settlements, which the authors said finally broke down in 2011. Like my approach,
the authors also focus on critical junctures, especially when major renegotiations of power between the political elites took place. The authors were able to examine the strategies used by political elites in order to negotiate and maintain the settlement around regime succession in Bangladesh. The case of Bangladesh has some similarities with The Gambia. Bangladesh is a country which has alternated between nominal democracy (1972–1975; 1991–2006; 2009-present) and civilianised military or military rule (1975–1990; 2006–2008) (Mirza & Nazneen, 2017); The Gambia underwent a similar process where from 1965-1994, it has a nominal democracy, and between 1994-2016, a civilianised military rule or military rule.

Higley and Burton (1989) have examined the relationship between elites and regimes in the West after 1500. The authors have argued that a successful democratic transition is contingent upon elite consensus, given other conditions such as economic variables also permit. In the absence of an elite consensus, instabilities such as revolts, strikes, mass demonstration and/or frequent change of the governing coalition of a country become the hallmarks of a democratic transition. “For a lasting democratic transition to occur, the national elite must first be transformed from disunity to consensual unity” (p.21).

Examining Sweden (1808-9) England (1688-89), and Colombia and Venezuela (1950s), the authors have argued that the road from disunity to consensual unity is through elite transformation, which can be achieved through political settlements (p.251). The palpable differences between Higley and Burton’s analysis and those discussed earlier, especially the ones on the African continent, is the resilient of elite-solidarity in the former. In my case, elite-solidarity is largely absent.

Finally, taking into consideration the various works done on political settlement, we should be postulating here that any future democratic transition must be contingent upon elite consensus. Democratic transitions vary from context to context, and therefore, to borrow Rustow’s words, “there may be many roads to democracy” (p.20). However, the role of the political elites as agents of democratic stability cannot be put into oblivion.

CHAPTER 5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This Chapter discusses Dankwart Rustow’s (1999) theory of democratic transition. The section looks at the theory in relation to what is happening in The Gambia. First, the Chapter
begins by looking at other scholarly approaches to democratic transition; then ends with a brief discussion on why I chose Rustow’s model.

Given the critical ontological nature of democracy, I would want to make some qualifications here: My interests lie in the process of democratisation; therefore, I never sought to explain the genesis of democracy, neither its ontology.

The study of democratic transition is often centred around the transition from authoritarianism to a democracy – our case is no exception. Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (1986) have seen transition as “[d]elimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy” (p.6). In the study of democratic transition, we have different approaches. Some transitologists look at economic factors (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013; Lipset, 1959), others look at social and cultural factors (Rustow, 1999; Whalen, Almond and Verba, 1964; Huntington, 1991), and some lean more towards political factors, especially the role of the political elites (Tomšič, 2017; Lindemann, 2008).

As Adam Przeworski (1991) observes, the literature on democracy is dyadic in nature: some focus on the objective conditions of regime transformation, while others are dedicated to looking at political strategies and choices. Citing Przeworski, Sujian Guo (1999, p.132) categorises the literature into four theoretical approaches (structure-oriented, process-oriented, institutional context-oriented, and finally, political-economy).

Structure-oriented scholars (Lipset, 1959; Almond & Verba. 1963; O’Donnell &Philippe Schmitter, 1986) look at macro-level social conditions, socio-economic and cultural prerequisites to democratic transition. These scholars rely on wealth, industrialisation, urbanisation, and education as units of analysis. Thus, the nutshell of their argument is that democracy is contingent upon certain social and socio-economic. Political-economy scholars of democratic transition are not far from the abovementioned scholars, because they also focus on the interplay between politics and economy. However, the latter, while examining the effects of short-term economic conditions or the impacts of crises on the terms of transition and nature of political alignment, also focus on the correlation between economic crisis and regime change (Haggard & Kaufman, 1997, 2008; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2001).

In the case of The Gambia, I decided to relegate the macro-level social and economic conditions, because I do not see the prospects of economic transformations in the absence of a consensus among the political forces that are supposed to help unleash these transformations.
In the *institutional context-oriented*, scholars are preoccupied with historical institutionalism, where institutions instead of individuals become the subjects of study. Civil society is often factored in this approach and the interplay between structural and strategic approaches matters in democratic transitions. *Process-oriented* scholars on the other hand, look at micro-level phenomenon, especially the critical role of elites, elite pacts, elite bargains, their strategic choices, and the split between soft-liners & hard-liners. Scholars in this camp look extensively on inter/intra-elite relations, elite calculations, and considered these phenomenon as crucial determinants of political outcomes. The central concern is on the process of transition rather than structural conditions.

Since my interest is not to offer any panacea for how democratic transition can be achieved, rather on explaining and understanding the phenomenon, I have adopted the *process-oriented* approach. Like them, this paper sees consensual politics as the bedrock of any social stability. To explain why and how The Gambia gets to where it’s today, there is a need to look at the process-oriented approach, and thus, the choice for Rustow’s theory.

To relegate economic explanations in our case does not at all mean that they are irrelevant; in fact, political and economic explanations do constitute each other. In our case, the choice is motivated by the fact that there would not have been any talks of an economic transition without any political consensus to begin with.

### 5.1. Rustow’s Four Phases of Democratic Transition

In his work, Rustow (1999, p.26) considers *national unity* or background condition as the first phase of democratic transition. He argues that national unity serves as the background condition which precedes all other conditions, such as economic and institutions that may lead to democratic consolidation. Rustow argues that it is in the national unity phase “that the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong to” (p.26). In our case, this is tantamount to the time The Gambia gained Independence in 1965 and eventually became a Republic and a sovereign state within the Westphalian-state system. For Rustow, national unity, therefore, can sometimes precede the other phases by decades. For The Gambia, this phase was therefore achieved by those who agitated and eventually won Independence from Britain in 1965 and established the Republic in 1970.

The achievement of national unity would lead to the second phase of democratisation, the *preparatory phase*. This stage is what Rustow calls a prolonged and inconclusive political
struggle. This is the stage that coalition are forged, but it is also a phase characterised by political jockeying for power. “Polarization, rather than pluralism, is the hallmark of this preparatory phase” (p.29). The Gambia seemed to have reached a defining moment of this phase in 2016, as a new political framework was reached, leading to the democratic defeat of Yahya Jammeh. The framework was aimed at taming politics, preserving unity and stability, and forging common understandings or agreements among the various political parties about the democratic future of the country.

In explaining the preparatory phase, Rustow looks at the struggle of farmers, the urban lower-middle and working class against a conservative alliance of bureaucrats in 19th century Sweden, and how rising wages enabled the Stockholm workers to overcome the existing tax barrier for the franchise (p.28). In The Gambia, this was akin to the dyadic and prolonged struggle between, on the one hand, Jammeh’s critics, the opposition parties, and the vast majority of the middle-class, and on the other hand, the regime of Yahya Jammeh. To achieve their common goal, the opposition parties, through the pressure and support of the Gambian diaspora, had to form a Coalition-front, which was formalised by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Rustow argues further that during this phase, consensus matters, because “If conditions such as consensus or prosperity will help to preserve a functioning democracy, it may be argued, surely they will be all the more needful to bring it into existence” (p.17). Some scholars have argued that elite-consensus on the direction of a society could lead to effective outcomes in terms of policies and goals. On the other hand of the political spectrum, this view is critiqued. Other scholars have argued that while elite-consensus could serve as conditions for democratic stability, they could also lead to clientelism (Tomšič, 2017). However, in The Gambia, consensus amongst the opposition at this phase paid dividend as it led to the end of Jammeh’s grip on power.

The third stage of democratic transition is what Rustow calls the decision phase. This phase involves decisions in the part of the leadership to “institutionalize some crucial aspect of democratic procedures” (p.30). Any attempt at this phase to drive an exclusionary politics would likely lead to instability. Since the whole democratisation process involves different forces in society, decisions in favour of democracy are not to be made in isolation; rather, they involve different forces – forces such as those Rustow calls “the protagonists of the preparatory struggle” (p.30). Rustow argues:
The decision in favour of democracy results from the interplay of a number of forces. Since precise terms must be negotiated and heavy risks with regard to the future taken, a small circle of leaders is likely to play a disproportionate role. Among the negotiating groups and their leaders maybe the protagonists of the preparatory struggle.

This phase is also marked with the possible breakdown of agreements and the continuity of differences at party-level, especially if the leadership has not been able to meet the challenges that came with this phase head-on. What this tells us is that the success of the decision phase is contingent upon deliberate consensus and the inclusion of certain forces that have been crucial in the first and second phase, who perhaps have also endured some loss more in both phases. Looking at the current events in The Gambia, one can argue that this is the phase in which the country has got stuck since 2016.

The last phase of democratic transition in Rustow’s model is the **habitual phase**. This phase is characterised by strong beliefs and commitments to democratic values in the part of the leadership and the broader citizenry. In other words, this is a stage where democracy has become established, consolidated and habituated. For Rustow, the fourth phase is a critical turning point, because any “conspicuous failure to resolve some urgent political question will damage the prospects of democracy; [and] if such a failure comes early in the habituation phase, it may prove fatal” (p.33). In Sweden, Rustow observes that the political stalemate that resulted from the change of policies, ranging from taxation to conscriptions, was resolved in the last third of the nineteenth century through compromises between the once nationalist conservatives, liberals and the socialist democrats (p.29-32).

The Gambia has not managed to reach the fourth stage, because it is stuck at the third phase. For now, the breakdown of agreements has continued to split the coalition government. Scholars have argued that the essential for democratic stability lies, among other things, on the ability of political leaders and society at large to compromise and commit themselves to democratic values (Eckstein, 2015 & Dahl, 1956). This is not to imply that democratisation has to be conflict-free for it to be successful. As Rustow (p.20) argues, there are many roads to democracy and that political attitudes do not often spread in equilibrium throughout the population. However, the political elites must be in a position to resolve conflicts, especially when these conflicts come at the beginning of a new phase.
CHAPTER 6. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

"What makes 2016 successful and unique is that we were able to put aside our difference. We were all thinking in this framework," Halifa Sallah, (pers. comm. Dec. 2019).

6.1. The First Critical Juncture: Political Parties and the Formation of the Political Settlement

This section outlines the configuration of the political elites in The Gambia during the run-up to the 2016-election. It ends by discussing the distribution of ministerial positions amongst the Coalition-members, and how the Coalition began to gradually disintegrate after the National Assembly elections, also known as the parliamentary elections. I do not aim to discuss what the various political parties stand for because that is not the direction of this paper.10

In the run up to the 2016-elections, there were eight opposition parties, but only seven agreed to form a Coalition. In The Gambia, all political parties are led by their founders, except the PPP of the late President, Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, who was overthrown by Yahya Jammeh in 1994. The Gambia electoral system is based on the first-pass-the-post system (Eeas.europa.eu, 2019).

Table 1: Political parties and Independent Candidates in the 2016-elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES (2016)</th>
<th>LEADERS</th>
<th>Year est.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Democratic Party (UDP)</td>
<td>Ousainou Darboe (Adama Barrow)</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS)</td>
<td>Halifa Sallah</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reconciliation Party (NRP)</td>
<td>Hamat Bah</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC)</td>
<td>Mama Kandeh</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Progressive Party (PPP)</td>
<td>Omar Jallow (OJ)</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Convention Party (NCP), Gambia Moral Congress (GMC)</td>
<td>Lamin B Darboe</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia Party for Democracy and Progress (GPDP)</td>
<td>Mai Ahmad Fatty</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Independent)</td>
<td>Henry Gomes</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Independent)</td>
<td>Isatou Touray</td>
<td>(2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Independent)</td>
<td>Fatoumatta J. Tambajang</td>
<td>(2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, it is important to note that the formation of the political settlement was not motivated by ideological, regional, linguistic, or tribal convictions; rather, it was done as a tactical and strategic approach to defeat Yahya Jammeh.11

Barrow represented the UDP, because Ousainou Darboe and most senior members of the United Democratic Party, the country’s dominant party, were in jail, in connection to a protest they had held after the death of Solo Sandeng, a member of the UDP. Sandeng was tortured and killed in prison by Jammeh’s brutal security officers for leading a protest for electoral reforms (Kandeh 2019).
In November 2016, a political settlement was reached and formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between all opposition parties except the newly-founded party, the Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC). Each of the seven parties sent a candidate to contest in a closed vote where on party executives had the right to vote. Adama Barrow eventually won the Primary and thus, became the flagbearer of the Coalition. This very particular understanding between the formal political elites is the first of its kind in The Gambia. The MoU formalised the political settlement as it outlines how political power would be administered. As outlined in the MoU, the flagbearer’s main function is to serve as a transitional leader for a period of three years, after which he shall oversee a peaceful, free and fair elections. Other key functions of the flagbearer include:

1. not support any party during the transition period.
2. not seek for re-election until after the five years after the transition period.
3. make a pledge to respect and uphold all the conditions circumscribing his or her tenure as established by the coalition. (Coalition MoU, 2016).

The MoU also outlines the function of the Transitional Cabinet as follows:

a. The Transitional Cabinet shall comprise not more than 19 Ministries.
b. Cabinet position(s) will be allocated in consultation with each signatory stakeholder in the Coalition Executive Committee (CEC).
c. All Presidential appointments and Removals shall be done in consultation with the CEC.
d. In the event of the removal of a Minister, the President must consult the signatory stakeholder affected for proposal before appointment of a replacement.

Presidential elections were held on the 1st of December 2016, and Yahya Jammeh was defeated by the Coalition. Jammeh accepted defeat but reneged a week later; but after a short political impasse and negotiations, Jammeh left for exile to Equatorial Guinea (BBC News, 2017). This gave the Coalition government an opportunity to form a new cabinet without any condition of including any of Jammeh’s former ministers.

Figure 1: December 2016-election results. Source: http://iec.gm/registration/registration-statistics/#.
After Adama Barrow had been sworn-in as the President in January 2017, he, in accordance with the MoU, resigned as the flagbearer of the UDP, and continues his role as the Coalition president. He released Ousainou Darboe and colleagues from jail. With this, Darboe took back his official role as the party leader of the UDP.\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{Figure 2: 2017-Coalition Cabinet}

\textsuperscript{12}This does not mean Barrow resigned from his post as the President; rather, that he resigned as a member of the UDP. The MoU states that in the event the Coalition won, the flagbearer shall resign from his party in order to show equal support to all parties in the Coalition.
The subsequent month, the Coalition government formed its first cabinet, and all Coalition-parties but one – the PDOIS – got ministerial positions (see Figure 2 above). The leadership of the PDOIS refused to take any executive position; rather, it said it will contest for seats at the National Assembly, where it can make laws to shape the democratic feature of the country.13

Darboe, the leader of the dominant party, the UDP, became the Foreign Affairs Minister; Hamat Bah, the leader of the relatively weak NRP, became the Culture and Tourism minister; GMC’s Mai Ahmad Fatty became the Interior Minister; and PPP’s Omar Jallow became the Minister of Agriculture, a post he once held before the 1994-coup. Two women who had been influential in the Coalition building process are Fatoumatta Jallow-Tambajang and Isatou Touray. The former became the Vice President; and the latter the Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (John & Petesch 2017).

Other ministerial appointees included GPDP’s Henry Gomez for minister of Youth and Sports; Lamin B. Dibba (NCP), became minister for Forestry, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources; James Gomez (PPP), minister for Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters; Amadou Sanneh (a key UDP senior member), was made the minister for Finance and Economic Affairs; and Lamin N. Dibba (another key UDP senior member), became minister for Lands and Regional Government.

Apart from the United Democratic Party, the PDOIS is the most influential party in the Coalition. Despite the absence of the PDOIS in the cabinet, there was some degree of inclusiveness in the government, thus leading to some semblance of political stability. However, the PDOIS’s absence would also mean that the UDP and the now-independent and partyless Barrow have a larger room to manoeuvre the government, after many factions of the political oppositions had been accommodated in the new government. Accommodating the political elites can happen in different ways; one of which is through the distribution of government jobs (Lindemann, 2008).

However, unlike other cases where such jobs are distributed along tribal, religious, regional, and ethnolinguistic lines, the distribution of cabinet posts and other high posts in the Coalition-government was a strategic attempt by the Coalition to tame politics and co-opt key players into the government. Therefore, all the members of the Coalition, noticeably, the

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13 You can read more on PDOIS’s refusal to take any ministerial position in an article I authored for the Nordic African Institute, Uppsala: (Jeng, A. 2017): https://nordicshadesofafrica.com/2017/07/18/challenges-facing-africas-youngest-democracy/
members of the UDP were given different functions, such as cabinet positions, Ambassadorial positions, bureaucratic positions etc.

With vigour of inclusive politics, Jammeh’s departure into exile, and political prisoners released, The Gambia began its third phase of democratisation, the decision phase, with euphoria of hope. As Rustow (p.30) argues, this is the period where a handful of leaders is to “play a disproportionate role” in deciding what direction the country should take. This small number of decision-makers does not only have to be inclusive, but it has to also include “the protagonists of the preparatory struggle” (p.30). In The Gambia, these protagonists would include the elites from the UDP, PDOIS, PPP and NRP – the four key parties in the Coalition. During our Skype interview, PDOIS’s Sallah said: “What makes 2016 successful and unique is that we were able to put aside our differences. We were all thinking in this framework. The mission was let’s move forward” (pers. comm. Dec. 26, 2019).


One of the key points agreed upon in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is that the flagbearer shall “not support any party during the transition period” (MoU). This was aimed at avoiding the advantage associated with incumbency, which is very resilient in politics. In other words, the MoU understands that an incumbent can possess a strong political advantage over the challenging parties, therefore, the flagbearer was obliged to resign from his original party. All of this was geared towards laying the ground for free and fair National Assembly (NA) and Presidential elections.

The subsequent months, the National Assembly (NA) elections were held. The results of the NA-elections produced mixed feelings in the country. President Barrow was accused of campaigning for the UDP, which is a violation of the MoU. This, combined with other factors, resulted to the UDP dominating the NA for the first time in the history of The Gambia, giving Darboe, whom Barrow saw as his political godfather, a stronger political edge.
2017-NA results. Seats in the NA: 58

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APRC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDP</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDOIS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPDP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The National Assembly is composed of 58 parliamentarians of whom 53 are elected in a popular vote. The remaining 5 are nominated by the President. Source: [http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/2575/](http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/2575/).

After the NA-elections, the dominant discourse in the country was centred on the President’s neutrality and whether he violated the MoU or not; and also, on whether the President should serve three years as per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or five years according to the 1997-Constitution. The MoU says that the President is to remain neutral and independent even though he was initially a member of a party. And as per the MoU, President Barrow had to resign from the UDP and distance himself from partisan politics – the former he did, while the latter was questioned.

During the campaigns for the NA, Barrow embarked on a tour around the country. For other parties, this was an indirect attempt to campaign for the UDP. As is the case for all coalitions and transitions, the rule of the game is more complicated than ex ante anticipations. Guillermo O’Donnell and Phillip Schmitter (1986) argue that in a transition, actors do struggle to “define rules and procedures whose configuration will determine likely winners and losers in the future” (p.6). Coalition members often tend to struggle to satisfy their immediate interests and supporters; and during the early months of the Coalition, it appeared each party leader was doing just that instead of working together to solve the transitional challenges the country faces. During our Skype interview, Halifa Sallah, the leader of the PDOIS who also served
shortly as the President’s adviser on governance when the Coalition came to power, said party difference could have been suppressed until the proper democratic structure that were missing under Jammeh, are put in place. However, Sallah decried that “The democratic transition is derailed, because Coalition members wanted to go back to their parties because they didn’t want their parties to die out.”

Even though PDOIS won 4 seats in the NA, Sallah went on to say that the action of the President during the NA-campaigns defeated the purpose of the MoU and produced a climate of political disequilibrium. He argued that this turned the political environment into something which reminisces of Jammeh’s era, where “there was no level ground for multi-party elections.” (cited in Jallow 2019).

6.2. The Second Critical Juncture: A less inclusive Elite Bargain

This section discusses President Barrow’s first cabinet reshuffle and how it led to the inclusion and exclusion of key political elites in the Coalition. The central concern of this section is who has been included and excluded and how this has shaped the political system.

A critical juncture as Menocal (2017) argues, “may offer space for reshaping political settlements along more inclusive lines” (p.4). In June 2018, more than a year after the NA-elections and the formation of the first cabinet, President Barrow reshuffled his cabinet for the first time. No reasons were given as to why he fired his ministers. For the country, the important issue is not what the ministers did, but what the MoU says about the manner in which they are fired. One of the points agreed upon in the MoU was that any cabinet reshuffle has to be done in consultation with the Coalition Committee (MoU, 2016). Without consulting the Committee, Barrow fired PPP’s Omar A. Jallow, Vice-President Fatoumatta Jallow-Tambajang, and GPDP’s Henry Gomez – all key members in the Coalition. Before this, GMC’s Mai Fatty was replaced for speculations about corruption.

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14 From Yahya Jammeh to Barrow, the public has never been given the reasons for the firing of ministers. Since it has become a de facto rule not to give any reasons, the society has been left to speculate.
This reshuffle meant that there are only three political parties left in the Coalition government. Consequently, this brought Darboe to the Vice-presidency. However, this cabinet reshuffle produced dichotomous narratives: On the one hand, it was seen as a strategic attempt by Barrow to both control corrupt government officials, create consensus, tame politics, and pave the way for his future political ambitions; on the other hand, it was seen as an attempt by Barrow to gradually run a UDP-government. In an e-mail interview, Madi Jobarteh, the Executive Director of the Association for non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO), said that whatever people made of it, the reshuffle is the first clear indication of the lack of cohesion and consensus in the cabinet (pers. comm. Dec. 11 2019). Jobarteh is one of Gambia’s most prominent political analysts. He wrote:

The way and manner he [Barrow] removed coalition members is a direct violation of the MoU. The MoU has set out a process for the appointment and removal of cabinet members. There is the Coalition Executive Committee which should have been the body to determine who will be appointed from the coalition. In case of removal, the president was to consult the head of that respective coalition party such that if an individual is removed it was the party who would provide a replacement. In other words, the MoU’s goal was to have a truly compact group from the beginning to the end [of the Coalition-period] through a process of consultation and consensus.

PDOIS’s Halifa Sallah made same statements during our Skype interview. He said The Gambia had a perfect start, had the Coalition neutralised the party differences. Sallah argued:
In a Republic, sovereignty resides in the people, but the leadership must be committed to democratic values. We could have emboldened the Gambian people to remain united until all required institutions are built. By virtue of the fact that The Gambia had never changed through the ballot-box, that the state was an instrument of coercion, we could have buried our difference. We could have neutralised the party differences and consolidate the sovereignty of the people. In essence then, the democratic transition is derailed. The whole mission of building a sovereign people before going for multiparty election failed.

Scholars have continuously observed the resilience of consensus in creating and preserving democracy but also in taming politics and avoiding deadly warlike affairs (Higley & Burton, 1989; Rustow, 1999; Menocal, 2017; Lindemann, 2011; Tomšić, 2017; Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2012; Di John, Jonathan & Putzel, 2009). For Rustow, “If conditions such as consensus or prosperity will help to preserve a functioning democracy, it may be argued, surely they will be all the more needful to bring it into existence” (p.17). As Jobarteh argues, the lack of consensus is not based on policy and development approach; rather, “The disagreement is mainly because of their personal and party interests,” adding that this has “served to severely polarise the country.”

The sackings of the PPP, GPDP, and the Vice-president came as a shock, not only because it is an arbitrary violation of the formal political settlement established by the MoU, but because it saw the recirculation of Yahya Jammeh’s former ministers, who had been instrumental in the Jammeh’s regime. However, the appointment of Darboe, on the other hand, shifted the narratives in favour of Barrow and eventually helped to stave off fears, distrust, and suspicions about President Barrow. But PPP’s Omar Jallow turned into a stern critic of the cabinet and in a TV-interview, reprimanded the President and said he seems to be leading the country to a UDP-rule (Fatu Network 2018).

Jallow is a veteran politician, and like the other politicians who were fired, leads a relatively weak political party, and therefore, lacks the incentives to mobilise huge supports against the President for the violation of the MoU. This gives impetus to the argument that if excluded elites are weak and yield relatively little influence, the political and social stability might not experience disruptions (Lindemann, 2008).

In The Gambia, the exclusion of the relatively weak political elites resulted to the inclusion of the dominant party. And since “political parties are prime institutions linking state and society, and [that] they are instrumental vehicles for collective action and organisation” (Menocal, 2017, p.158), their leaders play instrumental roles in democratic transitions. Consequently, the dominant discourse on whether the President should step down after three
years or not, which dominated the country after the NA-elections, gradually seemed to die out with the appointment of Darboe as the country’s Vice-president. This is because Darboe, as the leader of the dominant political party, has the incentives to galvanise mass support for Barrow. VP Darboe even went on TV and said he would not hesitate to go to the courts against anyone who wants to force Barrow to step down after three years (Bojang 2019). In other words, he would not hesitate to sue anyone who wants to force the President to honour the Coalition’s MoU. This did not register well with the other Coalition members.

6.3. The Third Critical Juncture: The Complete Exclusionary Elite Bargain

“Political stability will be maintained as long as the ruling party follows an inclusive approach to crisis management and manages to prevent the emergence of exclusionary elite bargains,” Stephan Lindemann, 2008.

This section discusses how President Barrow’s newly-created youth movement metamorphoses his relationship with the UDP, leading to a political battle between him and his political godfather, VP Ousainou Darboe. The section concludes by discussing how other political elites responded to these events.

The fact that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) says that the flagbearer would only serve three years and step aside for fresh elections, made a lot of people in the country to believe that the reason Barrow promoted Darboe as VP in the second critical juncture was to make him the likely successor. But by September 2018, a youth wing called the Barrow Youth Movement (BYM) had been founded. This movement was criticised for being a clear indication that Barrow has no intention of stepping down; and for many Gambians, these movement reminisces of Jammeh’s Green Youths, who had played a big role in Jammeh’s self-perpetuating rule (Manneh 2018).

Bolstered by his angry supporters, VP Darboe, at the UDP’s congress in early December 2018, condemned the formation of BYM, calling it a precursor for Barrow’s own political party to run for re-election (Manneh 2018). This marks the beginning of what would be a long political feud between Barrow and Darboe. Few days later, Barrow fired back: “I said it is only those who are not doing [any] efforts for the country are the ones feeling angry about the movement” (quoted in Manneh 2018).
The political feud between Barrow and BYM on the one hand and Darboe and his supporters on the other hand escalated both on social media and in the streets in The Gambia. The lack of politically consensus between Barrow and those marginalised political parties has been unhealthy enough for a fragile democratising society; and now it is Barrow, a partyless leader, and the Vice-president, the leader of the dominant political party. John Higley and Michael G. Burton (1989) have argued that “so long as elites remain disunified, political regimes are unstable, a condition which makes democratic transition and democratic breakdowns merely temporary oscillations in the forms unstable regimes take” (p. 17).

PDOIS’s Halifa Sallah, the country’s most respected political leader, was the first to raised concerns about the country’s seemingly oscillation towards authoritarianism. In a speech delivered in London in early October 2017, Sallah said The Gambia has achieved a regime change, but not a system change. Two years after his London’s speech, he went to argue that the “change that we have been calling for is yet to come […] the trajectory of this government is not heading towards changing the system” (cited in Jallow 2019).

In March 2019, after a long political bickering between Barrow and his Vice-president, the former fired the latter from his post, and also fired all other UDP-ministers, and Diplomats from the government. This marked a definitive split between Barrow and his political godfather. However, Darboe, unlike the victims of the first critical juncture, is a leader of a
dominant political party, therefore, by virtue of his strategic position, his sacking was able to shake the political and social stability of the country. During our email exchange, Madi Jobarteh argues:

Darboe’s sacking has rekindled the debate with more force and heat. While the UDP was not initially in support of three years as Darboe had himself spoken against the *Three-years*, yet his sacking served to turn many UDP folks in favour of three years just to spite Barrow… More than anything, it also shows that Barrow was on a direct collision course with UDP and Darboe in particular on the presidency.

In his work on inclusive elite bargains, Lindemann (2008) has found that exclusionary politics becomes a breeding ground for protests and violence, especially if the excluded elites are from dominant groups. These elites can be incentivised to mobilise their supporters. Lindemann argues that “political stability will be maintained as long as the ruling party follows an inclusive approach to crisis management and manages to prevent the emergence of exclusionary elite bargains” (p.22). For Madi Jobarteh, Barrow’s weak leadership and the deliberate violation of the MoU have been the main catalysts for instabilities and the re-emergence of a nostalgia for the former regime, “a final nail on the coffin” (personal communications, 11 Dec. 2019). He observed that Barrow has ignored accountability and efficiency for his own personal political interests; consequently, this has fuelled “resentments and impacted hugely on the economy and political stability in the country.”

Months after Darboe’s sacking, protests gripped the country, setting ablaze a police station in response to what protesters called police brutalities. The military police cracked down heavily on these protests and there were reports that protesters were tear-gassed and rubber bullets fired at them (APA news, 2019). Human rights activists raised concerns and said this is a reminisce of Jammeh’s era. Elsewhere in the countryside, villagers denounced both Barrow and the BYM, saying they are not welcome in their villages (Gambia Current Affairs 2018). Darboe and his followers just like the leaders of the other major parties and their followers (PDOIS and PPP) are today considered the protagonists of the current transition in the country. Their marginalisation from the political scene has continued to impact both the image of the President, but also his ability to maintain a stable political system.

Meanwhile, the debates on whether Barrow should leave after three years or not, made a huge comeback into the political scene, and questions over his youth wing gained momentum.
When asked about his opinion on BYM, the embattled former Vice-president Darboe said he was disappointed when Barrow created his own youth wing, because he was expecting Barrow to come back to the UDP after his mandate has ended; and that when he defended Barrow on TV, it was his own personal opinion not that of the UDP (Bojang 2019). In early November 2019, the UDP issued a communiqué, urging Barrow to “serve a term of three years and step down to supervise free, fair and transparent Presidential elections” (Fatu Network, 2019).

This statement was not well-received by Barrow, so one of his advisers, Saihou Mbellow, responded to the communiqué:

I learn with great dismay reports that the leader of the United Democratic Party, Lawyer Ousainou Darboe has reneged on his principled position of support for the five-year constitutional mandate of President Adama Barrow. Just as it is disappointing, the decision is meaningless and cannot stand even the slightest constitutional scrutiny and rigors. (Mbellow, S, 2019).

On the other side of the political spectrum, other politicians blamed both Darboe and Barrow for the political quagmire in the country. For PPP’s Omar Jallow, Darboe is the scapegoat for the failure of the Coalition to yield stability. Jallow, like Sallah, also blamed Barrow for violating the MoU by campaigning for the UDP (Manneh, 2019). For Jobarteh, Barrow has not played his role as a transitional president, and this has undermined the ability of the country to rebuild and democratise. And for a lot of people in the country, the last straw was the re-appointment of Jammeh’s former minister, and Barrow’s attempts to jeer at the Coalition members.

6.4. Reproduction-recirculation: The Return of the Old-Guards

This section discusses how those ministers who served under Yahya Jammeh were gradually recirculated into the Barrow’s administration. These ministers are not leading any political parties neither do they anymore identify with Jammeh’s APRC, but the fact that they once worked for Jammeh and now Barrow, a partyless president, has been enough to shake the political space. Therefore, this section also discusses how this has impacted on the political environment.
Higley et al. (1998, p.3-5) have put forth four patterns of elites replacements and/or circulation: (a) classic circulation, which is extensive and thorough but peaceful and gradual changes; (b) reproduction circulation is peaceful and gradual, yet has small and shallow changes; (c) replacement circulation is thorough, extensive, fast and violent changes; and finally (d), quasi-replacement circulation, which is fast and violent but small and shallow changes.

In the case of The Gambia, none of these patterns of elite replacement singlehandedly stands out during my periods of study. However, observing Gambian politics, one can best describe the phenomenon as having some patterns of what I have herein called ‘reproduction-recirculation’. By this, first, I mean the pattern of elite replacement has not been violent and thorough, rather, gradual, small and shallow; and second, this pattern of elite replacement has brought back the old-guards who served under the authoritarian government of Yahya Jammeh. The third critical juncture, in particular, paved the way for the return of Jammeh’s former ministers, something that has continued to fan the flame of resentment with President Barrow.

In his study of elite consensus and destabilisation of the political space in post-Communist Europe, Tomšič (2017) argues that “The configuration of elites is connected to the dynamic of the replacements that are made within it, namely with the method of recruitment to elite positions and the relationships between the different factions of the elite.” (p.155). In the case of The Gambia, there has been a major concern about the recirculation of Jammeh’s former ministers who have been instrumental in aiding and entrenching him.

Even though studies by the World Bank (2011) and even Call (2012) have found evidence from post-Cold War cases of civil war that cases where former opponents are excluded tended to fall back into conflict, the inclusion of Jammeh’s former cabinet ministers did not go well with the political elites in the Coalition and their followers. It is one thing to include and exclude elites who have been part of an initial coalition agreement, but it is another to bring back the old guards who have not played any role at all in the formation of such a coalition. After Yahya Jammeh had ruled the country for two decades with an iron-fist, aided and abated by his ministers and aides, Gambians expected a new system with new faces in the cabinet. Unfortunately for many people, the disintegration of the Coalition gave Barrow the opportunity to appoint Jammeh’s former ministers. For some people, this will go a long way to helping Barrow to win the APRC-sympathisers whenever he embarks on forming his own
party, even though these ministers are no longer officially and explicitly associated with the APRC.

During our Skype interview, Madi Jobarteh have argued that the recirculation of Jammeh’s former ministers and the sacking of Coalition members have led to increased distrusts of President Barrow, thus threatening the stability of the political landscape (person. comm. December 13). The dominant view in the country about this recirculation is that it caricatures all efforts made in the preparatory phase, as Jammeh’s close aides are allowed to rub shoulder with Barrow in the cabinet. This means a mark of continuity in the country’s political struggle to democratise and stabilise. As Rustow (1999) argues, the decision phase is such a crucial one that some decisions might not go well with other forces, leading eventually to the “continuation of the preparatory phase or to some sort of abortive outcome” (p.30) – The Gambia experience shows signs of both.

6.5. Operations Remove the President: The Challenges of a Poor Democratising Society

"What I agree on is what was agreed on during the formation of 2016 Coalition. President Adama Barrow needs to be faithful to it. UDP surely, is not coming out to support 3 years Jotna. We are just calling on Barrow to fulfil the promise he made to the Gambian people”, Ousainou Darboe, UDP leader, Nov. 2019.

This section discusses the emergence of two new pressure groups: Jotna, a movement which protests against President Barrow’s refusal to honour the Coalition’s MoU; and Dafa Doy, an anti-corruption movement which seeks to expose human rights abuses by state agents under Barrow. The section ends by discussing how the national discourse surrounding the latter’s ultimate goal has continued to reinforce the political divide in the country.

The departure of Jammeh came with euphoria of hope, which has not yet correlated with the improvements of conditions and basic services. As of 2018, The Gambia has an unemployment rate of 35.2% compared to 29.8% and 30.2% in 2010 and 2014 respectively (Un data 2019). Some analysts are of the view that unemployment and lack of hope for the Barrow government are the main causes of the movements. Both Dafa Doy and Jotna are social movements composed of youths, majority of whom are in their early 30s; and it was these who came out to vote for the Coalition in December 2016. This means that from the onset, these youths were members of the various opposition parties in the country. This
vertical relationship between the political elites and the rest of society plays an important role in the maintenance of political stability in The Gambia.

In an email, Madi Jobarthe said:

This poor leadership has therefore become the main ingredient for the growing incidence of crime, thus giving rise to police brutality, to the widespread abuse of power within public institutions hence poor public service delivery as well as the growing incidence of corruption. (Jobarteh, M, 2019, person. comm. December 11).

Social movements scholars have observed the prevalence of relative deprivation in societies where protests erupt (Ravnda, 2017; Koopmans, 1996; Lipset & Raab, 1970). In the case of The Gambia, grievance and lack of opportunity are combined with a society polarising along political lines. This has turned the country into a breeding ground for protests and political instability. During our Skype interview, Sallah argued that the genesis of the disenchantments is not easy to pinpoint; however, he said the fact that there exists a leadership that can hire and fire anyone at will, a lot of young people have not seen the changes they fought for.

In mid-2018, Dafa Doy (Enough is Enough) staged a huge protest against police brutality and corruption – the first of its kind since Barrow came to power. This came after allegations of corruption, abuse of power, police brutality and the flamboyant lifestyle of the Barrow administration (M’Bai 2018). In another interview with the UK’s Guardian, Madi Jobarteh, expressed concern over the status quo, saying “It’s very worrying” (Maclean, R. and Jammeh, S. (2019). In the same interview, Attila Lajos, the EU’s ambassador in The Gambia, warned of dissipating hopes: “Perception is, a bit, changing. There’s a degree of frustration among international partners … because of a certain kind of deficit, aspects of transition or development, or pretty much the lack of that” (quoted in Maclean & Jammeh, 2019).

Months after Darboe was fired, Three Years Jotna (Three Years is Enough), was formed by disgruntled youths. This is not to say that it is Darboe’s firing which gave birth to this movement; hence the Statistic parlance correlation does not imply causation. Few months after it had entered the political debate, Three Years Jotna has already become a household name in The Gambia, serving as a counter-movement to the Barrow’s youth group. Amidst this, the government has bought water cannons and security equipment in preparation for what may come. However, Ebrima Mballow, the Interior Minister, denied allegations that this was in preparation for the upcoming protests (Kerr Fatou 2019).
For many people, the movement is a result of the disintegration of the Coalition. Darboe made a diversion from his earlier support for Barrow’s ambition to serve five years. He was quoted as saying: “[The] UDP surely, is not coming out to support 3 years Jotna. We are just calling on Barrow to fulfil the promise he made to Gambian people” (Foroyaa 2019). However, other parties’ members and even politicians see Darboe’s statement as a sort of a double-standard.

PPP’s Jallow told the Press that Darboe is to blame for the current political wrangling in the country (Manneh, 2019). At the National Assembly, PDOIS’s Sallah said that the onus is on Barrow to honour the MoU. However, Sallah warned of the danger of oscillating to a self-perpetuating rule, given that the Coalition has crumbled.

The country’s Supreme Islamic Council (SIC), a venerable gathering of respected religious leaders, has been touring the country, urging people to support Barrow’s aim to serve five years. This move was condemned, and SIC has been blamed for trying to entrench Barrow as it alleged did with Jammeh. Mama Kandeh, the leader of the Gambia Democratic Party, the party which refused to partake in the Coalition, said SIC constitutes forces inimical to the interests of democracy (Darboe 2019).

The difference in opinions about whether Barrow should honour the MoU or not has been reinforced by the split of the Coalition, especially after the dominant party, the UDP, was removed from the government. Therefore, the lack of consensus has continued to widen the political divide in the country. This is not to say that difference in opinion damages the prospect for democracy to flourish, for even in “mature democracies there are marked differences in the attitudes of professional politicians and of common citizens” (Rustow, p.21). Rather, the argument lies on how consensus can help tame politics and make sure it does not become a deadly warlike affair (Higley & Burton, 1989). For Burton and Higley, one of the many ways of achieving this is through a compromise among core political elites – something that has been lacking in The Gambia since the country entered its decision phase.
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Concluding Discussions and Future Research

In December 2016, The Gambia became one of the most significant examples of how to peacefully defeat an entrenched dictator. Despite its small population (2 million in 2016) and a sketchy history of being turned into a police state by Yahya Jammeh, the West African country was able to remove one of Africa’s longest-serving dictators through a political settlement reached by seven of the eight opposition parties. Apart from Northern Sudan which saw the departure of its long-serving leader, Omar al-Bashir, in October 2019, The Gambia is today considered the youngest democratising country in Africa.

This work has examined Gambia’s democratic transition, beginning first with the period of the formalisation of a political settlement in Nov. 2016 to mid-December 2019 when the country celebrated three years of its transition. Chapter 6, Subsection 6.1.1 has been able to show that no matter how ambitious a political settlement is, the rules of the political game are often more complicated than ex ante anticipations. While this part has also shown that a common understanding between opposition parties can be a useful instrument in a country’s effort to win over an entrenched incumbent, it has also revealed the challenges of implementing a new political settlement, especially to a society were democratic values have been absent.

These challenges can include the attempts by various political leaders to augment their competitive advantages by redefining the rules and procedures of the political process, but also the leadership failure “to institutionalize some crucial aspect of democratic procedure” (Rustow, 1999, p.30). In subsection 6.1.1, we have seen how President Barrow, during the parliamentary elections, turned out to favour the UDP, even though this was in violation of the agreements that bound the Coalition together.

As the theory of democratic transition predicts, any “conspicuous failure to resolve some urgent political question[s] will damage the prospects of democracy,” especially if such urgent questions come at the beginning of a new phase (Rustow, 1999, p.33). In the case of The Gambia, the disagreements did not only come at the beginning of the Coalition-government, but also the Coalition-president, Adama Barrow, failed to uphold the agreements
that formalised the political settlement, thus, conspicuously marking the beginning of the disintegration of the Coalition.

In Section 6.2, we have seen how President Barrow continued to violate the political settlement, by firing some ministers from the government. As Rustow argues, the decision phase, in which The Gambia is stuck, is such a crucial one that any attempts by the leadership of the day to marginalise the “protagonists of the preparatory struggle” can eventually lead to “some sort of abortive outcome” (Rustow, 1999, p.30). Those fired political elites have strong political influence in the country, as most have endured jail terms under Yahya Jammeh. Their firings, therefore, emboldened their supporters and this led to increased disenchantments with Barrow, and consequently to destabilising the transitional process.

This section has further strengthened the proposition that the inclusion of dominant political parties can help create some semblance of stability especially if these parties have been very instrumental in bringing about the ongoing changes. Furthermore, the case of The Gambia also reveals that if the excluded political elites wield relatively weak power and lack the incentives to galvanise large collective actions, the political space might not experience disruptions.

Section 6.3 strengthens the preceding Section’s findings by looking at how exclusionary political bargains can affect democratic transition, especially if the excluded elites belong to dominant political parties. The firing of Darboe and his UDP-colleagues from the government was for many people the final straw. Now that all influential political parties had been removed from the government, Barrow had a larger room to hire and fire anyone he likes; thus, the recirculation of Yahya Jammeh’s former ministers, which has been discussed in Section 6.4.

In Section 6.4, I have shown that the pattern of elite replacement in The Gambia has not been violent and thorough; rather, it has been gradual, small and shallow, but accompanied by the return of the old-guards who used to serve under the authoritarian government of Yahya Jammeh. The appointments of Jammeh’s former ministers cannot be said to be motivated by ethno-linguistic, religious or any other prism; rather, it was an attempt by Barrow to prepare the ground for his future political ambition, by distancing himself from dominant-UDP, but also to gain the support of Jammeh’s sympathisers. Therefore, this paved the way for Barrow
to hire non-Coalition members, whom he can have total control over. However, this move fuelled distrust and disenchantment with the Barrow administration.

In section 6.5, I have shown that the challenges brought by unemployment and corruption have been exacerbated by the lack of consensus amongst the political elites, thus leading to the formation of pressure groups and protests around the country. The way the security responded to the protests, reminisced the country of Jammeh’s era. However, this is not to say that The Gambia has completely oscillated to its former self. Despite the failure of the political settlement formalised by the MoU, there are signs that the country’s citizens are not willing to go back to Jammeh’s era, hence the huge civic participation in politics nowadays.

The above proposition should be taken with a caveat: I am not implying that there are no possibilities ever for the country to oscillate back to dictatorship; rather that ‘The New Gambia’ – as they locally call it – has begun to embrace the spirit of freedom. From history, we know that even countries that have seen successful political settlements are now experiencing democracy backslide (Hungary and Poland as examples). This shows that even though The Gambia is unlikely to slide back into Jammeh’s eras, the development of a stable and sustainable democracy and the maintenance of a stable political settlement are not always self-evident.

However, it is of paramount to caution that studying the trajectory of the 2016-political settlement by looking at the degree in which power is distributed along ethnolinguistic, regional, and religious lines can be misleading, if a possible, task for few reasons. First, The Gambia is a predominantly secular state, so religion has not been a bone of contention; second, both Adama Barrow and the excluded political elites share the same ethnolinguistic background; and third, politics in The Gambia is centralised so much that regional governors and district chiefs are appointed by the President, eliminating any cleavage associated with regional politics.

This study is the first of its kind in The Gambia. And since political settlement itself is a relatively understudied area in Africa, there is much to do to improve this work. To study political settlement in Africa and to understand the African political elites in the absence of an ideological cleavage, few approaches can be helpful: First, with a boundless zest, we need to open the black box of the society and study the African political elites not as a ruling class,
but as loosely disorganised and unsolidaristic individuals who are nevertheless strongly associated with their average supporters.

Secondly, because the question of stability and the degree of democracy in a country depends on how inclusive a political settlement is, there is a need to look at the vertical and the horizontal factors that are needed to create a stable political settlement. This would perhaps require comparative studies of societies where political settlements have been successful, but also a type of analysis that will consider other types of elites (military and economic elites).

Thirdly, as parsimoniously demonstrated in the case of The Gambia, it is time to study the strategic and ideological bases of political settlements more to challenge the dominant narrative that everything in Africa is about ethnicity. And fourthly, and this is connected to the second concern, we need to study the transnational political engagements of people in the diaspora and how their exposure to liberal democracies are fuelling their urge for democratic reforms in the homeland. In The Gambia, in particular, the new Constitution has raised the issue of the Gambian diaspora’s voting rights (before this, no Gambian outside the territory of The Gambia was allowed to vote in any election); and now there are talks of making the Gambian diaspora a constituency of its own which would have seats in parliament (Senegal has such a political configuration in the Assemblée Nationale). This came after recognitions from all spheres of society the important role the Diaspora had played in the struggle to remove Jammeh by serving as the force which connects the opposition parties at home and the international community and partners.

Future research can also look at the making of the new Constitution. The Gambia has embarked on crafting a new ‘grass-root’ Constitution, where constitutionalists are consulting villagers, the Gambian diaspora and all citizens, asking them what they want to see included in the new Constitution expected to come by 2021. In November 2019, the first Draft was released and all and sundry had been asked to read and suggest further what needs to be changed and/or added. Apart from South Sudan, only few, if any, countries in Africa had ever embarked on such a ‘people-centred’ project. While this is hailed as a good steppingstone towards democracy, it remains to be seen how the new Constitution will work in practice given the current political development in the country.
Finally, from empirical evidence to participant observation, it becomes evident that politics and political processes have become too personalised in The Gambia, making consensus among the political elites on national issues, even on democratic procedures, very difficult to achieve, thus impeding the decision phase of Gambia’s fragile democratic transition. However, just like in the West, the political elites in The Gambia are not homogenous; therefore, conflicts and fractures across the political spectrum will always be a defining issue. How this issue is tamed, understood, and interpreted is something the Gambian political elites and society have been grappling with.

7.1. List of References


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v. Epilogue

In a scorching afternoon sometime in April 2019, nineteen years after he first left for Sweden, and now two years since Jammeh left, Musa was sitting at the airport lounge at the Banjul International Airport, headed for Sweden, again. A week before, he had been sitting in a police cell with some young people at the Serrekunda Police station. Their only crime had been to participate in a protest to show their dissatisfaction with the status quo of Gambian politics. The fear of jail was the main reason Musa first left The Gambia, so for him, the departure of Jammeh did not take away the prospect of sitting in jail. While he still had another place he called home – Uppsala –, Musa returned to Sweden with the intention of continuing his online activism, but this time, instead of speaking against Jammeh, he was going to speak against the very political elites that he had helped to bring to power. For the young people who protested with him, but who do not have the means to leave, the struggle for democratisation will have to continue at the home front.

Now in Uppsala, filled with anger and disappointment, Musa visited his colleagues at the IKEA store. When asked about The Gambia, he sank into a chair and retorted: “potayto, potahto!”