

AUDACITY



**Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya
Abdul-Aziz Awal Jemus Junkung
Jammeh Naasiru Deen Babili
Mansa**

AUDACITY

Table of Contents

Preface.....	5
Introduction	8
Chapter 1.....	49
The Enigma Of Jammeh's Childhood And Early Adulthood.....	49
Chapter 2	59
The 1994 Coup d'état.....	59
Chapter 3	70
Yahya Jammeh's Cultural Heritage	70
Chapter 4	86
Yahya Jammeh's Political Transformation: From Military Rule To Authoritarian Regime.....	86
Chapter 5	90
Allah's Bank: The Politics Of Aid And Repression.....	90
Chapter 6	115
Unlawful Arrests, Forced Disappearances, And Assaults On Human Rights Advocates.....	115
Chapter 7.....	121
A Violent Crackdown on The Gambia's Largest Opposition Party, The United Democratic Party	121
Chapter 8	135
The Vital Role of The Gambian Diaspora	135
Chapter 9	145
Economic Exploitation.....	145
Chapter 10	162
Unveiling The Darkness: Yahya Jammeh, The Polygamist President.....	162
Chapter 11.....	184

AUDACITY

The "Rubber Stamp" National Assembly And Judiciary	184
Chapter 12	192
The 2016 Presidential Election	192
Chapter 13	202
The Triumph Of Hope: Adama Barrow - The Chosen Flagbearer Of The United Opposition	202
Chapter 14	212
The Day The Gambia Decided	212
Chapter 15	239
The Balance Of Religion And State	239
Chapter 16	246
Contemplating Jammeh's Reign	246
Chapter 17	261
Conclusion	261
Acknowledgments	284
References	286

AUDACITY



Dedicated to My Beloved Parents, the Roots of My
Journey:
Guardians of My Heart, Keepers of My Story
May their souls and all the souls of the faithful
departed rest in perfect peace.

AUDACITY

Preface

Dedicated To Pa Nderry Mbai & Alhagie Mustapha Faye

Within the upcoming chapters, we embark on a poignant journey through a tumultuous chapter in The Gambia's history—a chapter characterized by oppression, resilience, and the relentless pursuit of justice. At its core is the narrative of a leader whose rule left an enduring imprint on a nation and its people.

This memoir is a heartfelt tribute to the revered memory of Pa Nderry Mbai, a valiant voice in the face of adversity and an unyielding seeker of truth. It also extends its dedication to Alhagie Mustapha Faye and all those who endured human rights abuses and, in some instances, sacrificed their lives during a challenging period in The Gambia's past.

Pa Nderry Mbai served as the proprietor of the Freedom Online Newspaper based in the United States of America (U.S.A) until his passing in the early hours of Tuesday, 22nd November 2021, after a brief illness.

In commemorating Pa Nderry Mbai's memory, we pay homage to his unwavering commitment to journalism and the pursuit of justice. His steadfast dedication to unveiling the truth, even in the face of danger, stands as an enduring inspiration for those who cherish freedom of expression and recognize the crucial role of the press in holding those in power accountable.

Alhagie Mustapha Faye and others who endured human rights abuses, and tragically, those who paid the ultimate price for their convictions, are revered as heroes. Their sacrifices serve as a poignant reminder of

AUDACITY

the imperative to safeguard human rights, champion justice, and tirelessly work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

As we navigate the pages of this memoir, we reflect on the resilience of individuals like Pa Nderry Mbai and Alhagie Mustapha Faye, who boldly stood up for their principles of truth, justice, and freedom. Their legacies endure, motivating us to persist in the pursuit of a better world for all.

Pa Nderry Mbai transcended his role as a journalist; he became a beacon of hope for a nation stifled by fear. In an era where freedom of the press was perpetually under threat, Pa Nderry fearlessly wielded his pen and microphone, exposing the dark underbelly of a regime striving to conceal its transgressions from the world.

His commitment to truth-telling and unwavering resolve to hold those in power accountable garnered him the respect and admiration of many.

As we delve into the pages of this book, we are reminded of Pa Nderry's unyielding pursuit of justice. His relentless quest for the truth, even when confronted with danger, inspires all who hold dear the principles of freedom of expression and the transformative power of journalism to illuminate the darkest corners of society.

This book encapsulates the essence of an era marked by oppression and resistance, where ordinary citizens became heroes, and the pursuit of justice evolved into a collective endeavor. It serves as a testament to the resilience of The Gambian people and their unwavering commitment to forging a better future.

AUDACITY

In dedicating this book to Pa Nderry Mbai, we honor his memory and the countless individuals who, like him, courageously stood up for justice and truth in the face of tyranny.

May their stories resonate as a reminder of the enduring power of the human spirit and the imperative of never relenting in the pursuit of justice and accountability.

As we turn the pages and immerse ourselves in the heart of this narrative, let us draw inspiration from the legacy of Pa Nderry Mbai and the myriad others who dared to speak truth to power, even in the darkest of times. Their courage and determination serve as a poignant reminder that the pursuit of justice will prevail.

AUDACITY

Introduction

Yahya Jammeh: Unveiling The Enigma



Yahya Jammeh, the central figure in this memoir, was an enigmatic and complex character whose personality elicited diverse opinions and emotions among The Gambian populace and the international community.

Jammeh earned a reputation for his brutality and megalomaniacal tendencies. He bestowed upon himself an elaborate and grandiose official title, incorporating numerous honors, titles, and even claims of being a spiritual healer.

His full title read as "His Excellency Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya Abdul-Aziz Awal Jemus Junkung Jammeh Naasiru Deen Babili Mansa."

Additionally, he held the positions of Commander in Chief of The Armed Forces and Chief Custodian of the Sacred Constitution of The Gambia.

Jammeh's leadership style, rooted in his cultural beliefs and a fervent commitment to his interpretation of Islam, painted a deceptive picture of a defender of faith and a bridge between tradition and modernity.

Some argue that the reality was a farcical narrative, characterized by irreligiousness and diplomatic blunders that turned The Gambia into a global laughingstock.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's assertion as a defender of Islam contradicted the reality of his reign, which left an enduring mark of irreligiousness in The Gambia.

Instead of navigating the balance between tradition and modernity, he disrupted the delicate equilibrium, introducing confusion and disillusionment to the cultural and religious landscape of the nation.

In a metaphorical sense, some argue that Jammeh portrayed himself as a "king of bridges," but instead of forging connections, he burned bridges both domestically and internationally. Despite his claimed diplomatic prowess, his actions resulted in scorched alliances, diminishing The Gambia's standing and reputation, inviting mockery and disdain on the global stage.

Jammeh's leadership became unpredictable as he claimed to possess a sixth sense, allowing communication with his ancestors' spirits. This supernatural influence introduced confusion into decision-making, resulting in policies shaped by insights from an unseen realm.

Anecdotes and testimonials revealed the mystical nature that surrounded Jammeh's leadership.

President Jammeh, with claims of supernatural abilities, wielded an influence that negatively impacted The Gambia's global image. His apparent lack of concern for national and international matters resulted in a comical outlook on the nation's standing in the world, tarnishing its image. Jammeh's legacy has left a lasting stain on The Gambia's reputation.

AUDACITY

This chapter of the memoir delves into Yahya Jammeh's claimed sixth sense and its role in diplomatic engagements. It portrays him as an unpredictable and theatrical leader, not taken seriously on the world stage. Rather than showcasing astuteness, Jammeh's sixth sense is depicted as a distraction from his brutal actions against the Gambian populace.

Jammeh's tenure, defined by his unique interpretation of Islamic teachings, burnt bridges, and supernatural claims, left an embarrassing legacy that defies conventional leadership narratives in The Gambia.

This chapter scrutinizes the impact of Jammeh's rule in The Gambia and on the international community global stage, unraveling the threads of Jammeh's extraordinary but misguided leadership. It prompts reflection on the surreal interplay between the earthly and the otherworldly.

In this memoir, we unravel the absurdity of Jammeh's leadership – vastly different from the defender of Islam and king of bridges he purported to be.

The narrative explores the consequences of his delusions and diplomatic failures, leaving behind an embarrassing legacy that challenges our understanding of leadership and the fine line between the earthly and the otherworldly.

This memoir unravels the harrowing tale of Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia, infamous for its oppressive and brutal methods employed during his tenure from 1994 to 2017.

AUDACITY

The narrative delves into grave human rights violations, including but not limited to murder, rape, and torture, as exposed in the conclusive report of the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission.

To his ardent followers, Jammeh stood as a staunch Pan-Africanist dedicated to promoting African unity and self-sufficiency. In their eyes, he was someone determined to resist external influences and propel the African continent forward, guided by a vision of purpose that they believed to be divinely ordained.

Some believed Jammeh had a divine mission and a higher purpose throughout his rule. This perception was sometimes fueled by Jammeh's claims of mystical powers and spiritual connections.

Yet, in the eyes of his critics, both in The Gambia and internationally, Jammeh was perceived as an ignorant tyrant and authoritarian leader, earning him the infamous moniker “the butcher of Kanilai.”

Kanilai, a remote village on the southern outskirts of The Gambia, was claimed by Jammeh as his birthplace. Critics accused him of stifling dissent, violating human rights, economic mismanagement, controversial policies, and undermining democratic institutions.

Throughout his presidency, suspected dissents were crushed with ruthless efficiency as political opponents, journalists, and activists faced arbitrary arrests, torture, and mysterious disappearances.

His regime clamped down on media freedom, imposing strict censorship that cast a long shadow over press freedom. Corruption, economic

AUDACITY

mismanagement, and purges within the military became rife, sowing seeds of discontent among the populace.

Jammeh's tight grip on power extended to the media, where strict censorship curtailed the freedom of the press, silencing any voices of opposition. A free press is the cornerstone of any democracy, but Jammeh had different plans.

The media faced relentless attacks, with journalists subjected to harassment, imprisonment, and even murder. This memoir would narrate the plight of brave reporters who risked everything to expose the truth and the heavy price they paid for their courage.

As Jammeh consolidated power, he disregarded international norms and standards, clamping down on media freedom, fostering corruption, and contributing to gross economic mismanagement.

Furthermore, Jammeh's staunchly conservative stance on LGBTQ+ rights and his participation in witch-hunting expeditions within The Gambia's population added to the growing concerns about his regime.

The narrative unfolds a grim picture of Jammeh's reign, detailing grave human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and torture. The title, "The Reign of Terror: Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh and The Gambia's Darkest Hour," reflects the severity of his rule.

The following chapters in this memoir will explore the bleakest dimensions of Jammeh's rule and expose a

AUDACITY

leadership marked by oppression and a blatant disregard for human rights.

This dichotomy prompts the question

Who was Yahya Jammeh, this enigmatic former President of The Gambia, and what defined his tumultuous reign in modern African history?

This memoir's chapters would delve into specific events, stories, and analyses related to its respective topic, providing a comprehensive account of Yahya Jammeh's regime and its impact on The Gambia's image as a sovereign nation and her people.

In the heart of West Africa, where the verdant landscapes of The Gambia River cradle a nation, Yahya Jamus Junkung Jammeh emerged from obscurity to become one of the most enigmatic and notorious figures in the annals of African history as the President of The Gambian people.

The story of Yahya Jammeh is a tale of contrasts, a complex narrative that oscillates between the promising glimmers of a young man's life and the ominous shadows cast by the ruthless dictator he would become. It is a story etched into the collective memory of a nation, a story of hope betrayed, and dreams replaced by nightmares.

The exact details of Jammeh's birthdate and place of birth have long been subjects of speculation. While researchers estimate his birth year to be around 1965, concrete records still need to be discovered.

AUDACITY

The lack of clarity surrounding his early life, coupled with the absence of photographic evidence and recollections from close friends and close family members, has compelled us to assemble fragments from The Gambia's national census and military archives. Through these sources, we can start to unveil glimpses of the enigmatic dictator's formative years.

Surprisingly, individuals who were intimately connected to Yahya Jammeh during his formative years, including his relatives, seem to possess limited information about the specifics of his birth, the origins of his name, and the identity of his biological parents.

A notable void in Jammeh's early life emerges with the absence of compulsory preschool education registry in the rural regions of The Gambia, where he spent his childhood.

The scarcity of preschools, kindergarten elementary schools in remote villages leaves a void in his educational history.

Born into humble beginnings, Jammeh's early years were marked by the absence of privilege. His path was unremarkable in a land where the river's gentle flow sets the sunbathes, the savannas, and life's rhythms. Raised in the village of Kanilai, nestled in the rural embrace of The Gambia, the young Jammeh faced challenges that would define the trajectory of his life.

But the questions surrounding Jammeh's origins are as numerous as the threads in the tapestry of his life. A veil of mystery shrouds his birthdate and birthplace, casting doubt on the very foundation of his identity.

AUDACITY

The details of his early years are like fragments of a puzzle scattered by the winds of time, challenging those who seek to understand the man behind the enigma.

In this memoir, we journeyed to unravel the intricate layers of Yahya Jammeh's life. We delve into the speculations and whispers that have swirled around him for decades.

We explore the gaps in his biography and the questions that have confounded historians and fueled conspiracy theories.

We strive to unearth the humanity within the dictator, uncover the forces that shaped him, and confront the legacy of his rule.

As we delve into the journey of Yahya Jammeh's life, let us seek answers and a more profound understanding of the intricate tapestry that constitutes human experience. His narrative extends beyond the confines of Africa, echoing universal themes like power, ambition, and the resilient spirit of those who confronted dictatorship.

In the pages that follow, we will navigate the treacherous waters of autocracy, the enigmatic terrain of identity, and the uncharted territories of one man's life, Yahya Jammeh: a former Gambian military officer who transitioned into politics and held the position of President in The Gambia from 1994 to 2017.

From the dusty paths of Kanilai to the Corridors of Power in Banjul, from the halls of education to the barracks of Yundum, a 'Stone's throw' from The Gambia's only international airport, this memoir takes you through a land of stark contradictions. Here, the

AUDACITY

beauty of the landscape clashes with the brutality of tyranny, and the unwavering resilience of a people outshines the darkest of regimes.

Welcome to the unfolding narrative of Yahya Jammeh, which begins in the shadows of tyranny. Yahya Jammeh was born on May 25, 1965, in Kanilai, a remote village in the Foni Kansala District of The Gambia's southern region, his alleged birthplace.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge that this book will thoroughly explore the grounds upon which critics raise questions about this claim.

A malevolent African dictator trained in the United States, Yahya Jammeh remained under the international radar, garnering attention primarily from those with direct connections to The Gambia, the smallest country on the continent, unfamiliar to many. Over twenty-two years until 2017, Jammeh clung tenaciously to power, wielding an iron grip over the reins of authority and The Gambian populace.

The Gambia: A Tapestry of History and Politics

To utterly understand the authors journey and experiences in The Gambia, it is essential to grasp the historical and political context that has shaped this tiny West African nation. The Gambia's history is a tapestry woven with threads of colonialism, independence struggles, and the complexities of post-colonial governance.

The Gambia, a slender strip nestled within Senegal, bore the imprints of European colonial ambitions, under British rule for most of the colonial period.

AUDACITY

The lasting impact of British influence, evident in the adoption of English as the official language, left an enduring mark on the nation.

In the tapestry of the author's childhood, remnants of colonial architecture and echoes of a bygone colonial era painted the backdrop. His home nestled near the presidential palace, the esteemed State House in Marina Parade, Banjul, immersing him in the palpable history and grandeur of that time.

In 1965, The Gambia gained independence from British colonial rule, marking the dawn of a new era. Under the leadership of the country's first President, Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, a democratic government emerged, fostering the development of political institutions, a multi-party system, and a stable political climate, distinguishing it from other African nations.

However, The Gambia's post-independence journey was challenging. Economic struggles, ethnic tensions, and political instability occasionally marred the nation's progress. A series of coup attempts and the proclivity of some leaders for authoritarian rule exacerbated these challenges.

The Gambia's post-independence journey was marked by economic struggles, ethnic tensions, and political instability.

A pivotal moment occurred in the sweltering heat on July 22, 1994, when a cadre of youthful military officers, led by the 29-year-old Commander of the Military Police, Yahya Jammeh.

AUDACITY

Yahya Jammeh, orchestrated a coup that would forever alter the destiny of Gambia. With a swift and audacious move, they ousted the long-serving President Dawda Jawara, allowing Jammeh to grasp the reins of the nation.

This ended the tradition of electoral democracy, leading to Jammeh's authoritarian rule marked by human rights abuses and a lack of political freedoms.

Jammeh's rule, characterized by a mix of democratic and autocratic methods, faced criticism for human rights violations and suppression of dissent. The aftermath of the 1994 coup brought a tumultuous period, with individuals like O. J. Jallow resuming political careers post-arrest, and Sam Sarr detailing torture during detention.

The AFPRC launched investigations into corruption, but transparency issues arose. Charges against Jawara were dropped due to insufficient evidence. Jallow defended the PPP, disputing corruption allegations. Despite doubts, Jammeh won elections from 1996 to 2016.

Jammeh faced challenges in attracting civil servants due to concerns about his administration. His long rule left a lasting impact, and his exit in 2017 marked a significant shift in The Gambia's history.

"Whispers in the Shadows" delves into human rights abuses, revealing the complicity of security forces. The memoir highlights the resilience of the human spirit and the pursuit of justice.

AUDACITY

"The Gambia, my beloved homeland," narrates the nation's journey through triumphs and tribulations. The AFPRC's mission in 1994 evolved into a prolonged rule by Jammeh, marked by promises unfulfilled, doubts, and challenges.

Jammeh's decision to stage a coup in 1994 was influenced by perceived corruption, economic challenges, and dissatisfaction with the political system. The coup, initially supported, led to Jammeh's autocratic rule, facing international isolation.



Efforts to end Jammeh's rule involved diplomatic pressure, sanctions, and regional intervention. Public protests and advocacy shed light on abuses. The ICC called for Jammeh's prosecution. International support aided the transitional government.

Jammeh's coup in 1994 marked a significant era, with promises of change. Captain Sadibou Hydara played a role in exposing corruption but faced assassination for dissent. The coup's initial promises of accountability

AUDACITY

and transparency eroded over time, revealing a darker reality.

The memoir captures the nation's seismic shift as Jammeh rose to power and the subsequent disillusionment. Captain Hydera's assassination underscored the harsh consequences of dissent. The coup revealed the erosion of promises regarding accountability and transparency.

Jammeh's Leadership

Jammeh wielded both democratic and autocratic tactics during his over two-decade rule in The Gambia. Despite securing victories in multiple elections, his tenure was marred by accusations of human rights violations, suppression of opposition voices, and an authoritarian approach. The impact of Jammeh's 1994 coup on The Gambia's political landscape was profound, shaping the nation's governance and stability.

Behind the serene landscapes and the Atlantic Ocean's waves lies a sinister chapter in The Gambia's history, shrouded in secrecy. This memoir delves into the harrowing reality of the nation under the shadow of oppression, where state protectors turned into perpetrators of unspeakable atrocities.

The security forces, entrusted with safeguarding the nation, became entangled in a web of abuse and impunity. The memoir uncovers their complicity in systematic human rights violations, exposing how they transformed into instruments of fear and repression.

AUDACITY

The narrative bears witness to the stories of those who suffered, revealing unspeakable horrors, torn families, and the cruelty of a regime thriving on silence and submission. Victims, survivors, and those who dared to speak out become part of this narrative, lending their voices to the chorus of justice.

As the memoir navigates the labyrinth of human rights abuses, it confronts the painful truth that these violations knew no boundaries, affecting every corner of society. Amidst the darkness, glimmers of hope emerge – individuals and organizations defying the odds, fighting for accountability, justice, and a brighter future.

"Whispers in the Shadows" serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, a reminder that even in the face of unspeakable cruelty, there is potential for change and redemption. The memoir illuminates the darkest corners of shared humanity, urging readers to confront the past in the pursuit of a more just and compassionate world.

Memoirs of The Gambia: A Journey through Triumphs And Tribulations

Jammeh's Rule: A Complex Legacy

The Gambia, my beloved homeland, has always been where history is etched into the fabric of our lives. Our journey through time brings us to the pivotal moment in 1994 when the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC), led by Yahya Jammeh, took control of the Gambia. At first, the AFPRC's mission seemed

AUDACITY

clear – investigating corruption and nepotism in the previous government.

In the aftermath of the 1994 coup, Jammeh made promises to Gambians. However, as the days turned into weeks, the reports of corruption and embezzlement charges leveled against the Jawara government and his officials that were supposed to be public remained concealed, and the charges were quietly dropped.

The nation found itself with more questions than answers, and the truth seemed elusive.

The AFPRC's mantra of "Accountability, Probity, and Transparency" resonated with many, but doubts lingered about the extent of corruption they alleged.

Despite initial doubts about Jammeh's ability to complete his first term, he won all four elections from 1996 to 2016. However, his rule was marked by challenges in attracting experienced civil servants for fear of reprisals and the peculiar nature of his administration.

Jammeh's leadership style evolved over the years, straddling a fine line between democracy and autocracy. He secured victory in multiple elections during his time in power, but his rule was marred by allegations of human rights violations, stifling of opposition voices, and an authoritarian approach.

In 2016, Adama Barrow's election marked a significant moment in Gambian history, leading to the exile of President Yahya Jammeh. Barrow's victory

AUDACITY

emphasized the need to rebuild institutions, address human rights issues, and promote reconciliation.



Jammeh initially disputed the election results, causing tension, but international pressure and regional diplomacy ultimately forced his exile to Equatorial Guinea in January 2017. Barrow's inauguration symbolized a return to democratic governance and a commitment to rebuilding democratic institutions, addressing human rights concerns, and fostering national reconciliation.

This event showcased the resilience of democratic principles and the role of international actors in supporting democratic transitions in Africa. However, it also carried the weight of managing the scars left by Jammeh's decades-long rule.

Jammeh's exit marked a significant shift in The Gambia's history, showcasing the resilience of democratic principles and the role of international actors in supporting democratic transitions in Africa. As we looked ahead, we knew that rebuilding

AUDACITY

institutions, ensuring justice for past abuses, and addressing economic disparities were paramount tasks.

Background of The Gambia: A Historical and Cultural Tapestry The Gambia's History and Geography



The historical narrative of The Gambia is intricately woven with the mysterious rule of Yahya Jammeh, reflecting the complex interplay between its past and present. This West African nation, named after the majestic The Gambia River, stands out for its unique geography.

It is a slender strip of land, approximately 295 kilometers long and averaging twenty-four kilometers wide, with its capital, Banjul, situated on St. Mary's Island at the mouth of the river. Referred to as the "smiling coast of Africa," The Gambia holds the distinction of being the smallest country on the African

AUDACITY

mainland, nestled within Senegal and bordered by the Atlantic Ocean.

The Gambia Ethnic Group Demographics and Cultures

The Gambia's population of about 2.4 million is a mosaic of ethnic groups, including the Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jola, and Serer, each contributing their traditions and languages to the societal fabric.

English is the official language, complemented by Indigenous languages such as Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, and others. The Gambian society is Islamic, with a Christian minority and practitioners of traditional religions.

In the heart of The Gambia, a tapestry of cultural richness unfolds as diverse ethnic groups contribute to the nation's vibrant mosaic.

Leading the cultural symphony are the Mandinka, a formidable 42% of the population, celebrated for their dynamic expressions in music, dance, and the eloquence of oral literature. Their influence permeates the very essence of Gambian cultural life.

In urban hubs like Banjul, the Wolof, constituting 16%, take center stage with their captivating storytelling tradition known as "Griot." Their narratives weave through the city, embodying the spirit of a people deeply connected to their roots.

The Fula (Fulani) people, comprising 18%, bring a nomadic herding tradition, adorned with vivid attire, enchanting music, and spirited dance. Their cultural

AUDACITY

flair paints a colorful canvas across the Gambian landscape.

In the western Foni region, the Jola, constituting 10%, carve out a distinct cultural identity, etching their mark with unique music, dance, and religious practices. Their traditions thrive in the fertile soil of Gambian heritage.

Traveling to the eastern part, the Serer people, constituting 9%, intertwine rich cultural heritage with traditional religious practices. Their presence adds depth to the diverse cultural tapestry of The Gambia.

Across the eastern regions, the Sarahuli, a smaller yet significant group at 7%, diligently preserve their language and cultural practices. Their commitment is a testament to the resilience of cultural identity.

In the southern realms, the Manjago, a smaller percentage, contribute their unique cultural traditions, expressed through captivating dance and music. Their presence is a testament to the cultural kaleidoscope that defines The Gambia.

Remarkably, amidst this diversity, these ethnic groups coexist harmoniously. The Gambia proudly celebrates its cultural kaleidoscope through various festivals and events, emphasizing the unity that binds its people.

While each ethnic group cherishes its distinct languages and cultural practices, a common thread unites them—the English language, serving as the official language, fostering a sense of shared identity among the diverse communities. In The Gambia, diversity isn't just acknowledged; it is celebrated,

AUDACITY

creating a harmonious blend that defines the nation's soul.

In the heart of Senegal's Lower Casamance region, the Jola ethnic group thrives as a vibrant and resilient community, intricately connecting the cultural fabric across Senegal, The Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. This memoir delves into the nuanced layers of Jola heritage, unraveling the threads that intricately weave together their collective history and culture.

Central to Jola identity is the Foni dialect, a linguistic gem resonating as one of SeneGambia's local languages. It acts as a conduit across generations, embodying the essence of their shared journey.

Set against the backdrop of a millennium-long legacy of wet rice cultivation, Jola's agrarian civilization harmonizes with the land in small villages, echoing with ancient practices and a rhythm of life sustained by nature.

The spiritual tapestry of the Jola, rooted in animism and fetishistic rituals, encounters transformative winds of change ushered by the Mandinka people, leading to a delicate dance between tradition and the evolving embrace of Islam.

Economic vitality courses through the Jola community, expressed in wet rice cultivation, peanut farming, palm wine tapping, honey collecting, and the artful rearing of livestock. The land generously yields sweet potatoes to watermelons, sustaining the intricate tapestry of Jola life.

AUDACITY

At the heart of Jola rites is the Futampaf initiation festival, an essential passage into maturity recurring frequently in each village. This ceremonial dance binds generations, forging a continuum of shared experiences and cultural significance. The Futampaf, encompassing initiation ceremonies, typically draws the entire community or clan.

The naming ceremonies among the Jola tribe bear significant cultural importance, offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of traditions within their community.

During these ceremonies, which include initiation rituals, the entire community or clan converges. This communal gathering serves as a platform for bestowing names upon newborns. Additionally, cultural dances and Kumpo masquerades form integral parts of the festivities, symbolizing the celebration of new life a week after birth.

These naming ceremonies play a crucial role in emphasizing the profound significance of names in The Gambian culture. Far beyond mere labels, names carry a deep connection to ancestral stories and familial bonds, acting as a bridge that spans across generations. In doing so, they link the past, present, and future of the Jola people.

The name "Jola" echoes the spirit of reciprocity, derived from the Mandinka word 'payback,' encapsulating the Jola reputation for embodying principles of give-and-take, whether in goodwill or adversity.

AUDACITY

Diverse dialects within the Jola language mirror the community's various tribes, adding unique threads to the vibrant fabric of Jola identity. Through linguistic nuances, the Jola people narrate stories of resilience, adaptation, and unity.

This memoir extends an invitation to traverse the landscapes of the Casamance, immersing oneself in the tales etched into the soil. It celebrates the enduring spirit of the Jola tribe, a testament to their ability to harmonize tradition and change—a journey into the soulful echoes of "Jola" resonating across the West African horizon.

In this memoir, we delve into the vibrant tradition of data and information preservation within the Jola tribal people of The Gambia, particularly within the cultural enclave of Jammeh's tribal community in the Foni region—the southern part of The Gambia and, purportedly, Jammeh's birthplace.

The heartbeat of this cultural legacy reverberates through the indispensable role played by oral tradition, where griots, oral historians, and storytellers stand as the revered custodians of historical information.

Through their eloquent narratives, pivotal life events such as births, naming ceremonies, circumcisions, marriages, deaths, and more are meticulously passed down across generations.

Within this rich tapestry, visual art takes center stage, with murals and sculptures serving as vital conduits to convey the intricate web of historical events within The Gambia. Additionally, certain tribes in the region embrace written forms, employing inscriptions on

AUDACITY

stone and the use of Arabic script, thereby adding an extra layer to the preservation of their cultural heritage.

Professional historians, intricately linked with religious or political institutions, emerge as key figures in this narrative. Their pivotal role involves advising tribal leaders and regulating power dynamics in centralized states and chiefdoms.

Armed with expertise in the memorization and interpretation of historical events, they significantly contribute to maintaining the continuity of cultural heritage and guiding decision-making processes within the community.

Economic Overview

Key pillars of The Gambian economy are agriculture, tourism, and remittances from the diaspora. The nation is recognized for its ecotourism and birdwatching opportunities, thanks to its diverse river ecosystem.

Political Landscape and Historical Milestones

The Gambia gained political independence from Britain in February 1965, transitioning from a constitutional monarchy within the Commonwealth to a republic in 1970, with Dawda Jawara as its first president. The country's political history includes the lengthy rule of President Yahya Jammeh and a significant peaceful transfer of power to Adama Barrow in January 2017.

AUDACITY

Slavery's Legacy and Cultural Impact

The transatlantic slave trade is a significant chapter in The Gambia's history, with ongoing efforts to commemorate this period. Alex Haley's "Roots," which follows the life of Kunta Kinte, an African man from The Gambia sold into American slavery, has had a profound impact on cultural discourse about race and history, particularly in the United States.

Colonial History and European Influence

European exploration of The Gambia began in the 15th century, with the Portuguese being the earliest arrivals, followed by the English and French. The Gambia officially became a British colony in the 18th century, undergoing various changes, including the introduction of schools, roads, and legal systems.

AUDACITY

The Coup



Today, The Gambia stands as a sovereign nation, actively addressing social, economic, and political challenges while preserving its rich cultural heritage. Its journey through history is marked by periods of political stability and instability, shaping the nation into what it is today.

Yahya Jammeh's decision to stage a coup in The Gambia in 1994, was influenced by a complex set of factors that he often cited. Among these were perceived corruption and mismanagement within President Sir Dawda Jawara's government, economic challenges in the country, dissatisfaction with the existing political system, and a desire for political change.

On July 22, 1994, a watershed moment unfolded in The Gambia's history. A group of junior military officers, including prominent figures like Sana Sabally, Edward

AUDACITY

Singhatey, Sadibou Hydara, and Yankuba Touray, rallied under the leadership of Yahya Jammeh. They orchestrated a peaceful and non-violent coup, effectively toppling the democratically elected government of President Jawara.

Jammeh and his group of junior military officers believed that they could establish a more efficient and accountable government, which they felt was lacking under President Jawara's leadership. This coup marked a significant turning point in the country's history, ushering in Jammeh's 22-year rule as the President of The Gambia.

Jammeh and his fellow coup leaders were resolute in their commitment to dismantling Jawara's government, considering it an essential step for the nation's redemption despite enduring international isolation and economic hardships.

In response to Jammeh's autocratic rule, major donors such as the European Union and the United States suspended aid to The Gambia.

To secure his regime's control and eliminate perceived threats, Jammeh initiated severe purges within the country's military. These purges had critical aspects, including demands for political loyalty, allegations of coup plots, human rights abuses, consolidation of power, and their impact on military effectiveness.

The aftermath of President Jawara's departure marked a horrifying era in The Gambian history characterized by a surge in murders, wrongful imprisonments, enforced disappearances, torture, corruption,

AUDACITY

nepotism, and a ruthless crackdown on the freedom to voice dissent.

Efforts to halt Yahya Jammeh's oppressive rule comprised a multi-pronged strategy involving diplomatic pressure from global entities such as the United Nations, the African Union (AU), and regional bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). These efforts included election monitoring missions by international organizations, serving as a deterrent against election-related violence and fraud.

Diplomatic endeavors focused on mediation and negotiation with Jammeh, aiming for a peaceful transition of power. Statements, resolutions, and sanctions were utilized to condemn human rights abuses and the erosion of democracy in The Gambia.

Various countries and international organizations imposed political sanctions, encompassing travel bans and asset freezes, on critical figures within Jammeh's regime.

The numerous coups attempted against Jammeh underscored the deep-seated political instability and internal challenges of his regime. Regional actors considered military intervention as a last resort, as seen when ECOWAS deployed an army force to The Gambia in 2017, pressuring Jammeh to step down after refusing to accept the election results.

Public protests, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts by civil society organizations, human rights groups, and media outlets were instrumental in shedding light on the human rights abuses and political

AUDACITY

repression in The Gambia, exerting international pressure on the regime and garnering support for the cause of democratic change.

Calls from the International Criminal Court (ICC) for Jammeh and his associates to face prosecution for alleged crimes against humanity and human rights violations provided a potential avenue for justice.

International donors and organizations extended economic support to the transitional government in The Gambia to facilitate a smooth transition, stabilize the country, rebuild institutions, and promote democracy.

Yahya Jammeh's authoritarian rule, marked by human rights abuses, political suppression, economic challenges, and confrontational diplomacy, faced skepticism and resistance both domestically and internationally.

Jammeh's legacy in The Gambia is one marked by fear, repression, and a departure from the democratic ideals that the country had once embraced. His departure signaled a new chapter in the nation's history as it sought to rebuild and establish a more open and democratic society, free from the shadows of the past.

It is crucial to note that Jammeh seized the presidency through a coup in 1994 and governed The Gambia with an iron grip for 22 years, implementing oppressive policies. His refusal to accept the results of the December 2016 elections highlighted the tumultuous nature of his tenure.

AUDACITY

In the annals of The Gambian history, 2016 stands as a defining moment—a testament to the power of democracy, the will of the people, and the unwavering pursuit of a brighter future. "The 2016 Election" recounts the remarkable story of The Gambia's unexpected triumph over dictatorship and the peaceful transition of power that followed.

As the nation held its breath, Yahya Jammeh, who had ruled with an iron fist for over two decades, faced an unexpected challenger in the presidential election. Through the lens of this memoir, we revisit the electrifying campaign, the fearless voices of opposition, and the citizens who dared to dream of change.

The memoir delves into the emotional rollercoaster of election night, where the impossible seemed possible. The shockwaves of Jammeh's concession, a concession that few had anticipated, reverberated far beyond The Gambia's borders. International actors played a crucial role in facilitating this momentous transition; their involvement is examined in detail.

We uncover the hopes and fears that accompanied the transfer of power, the jubilation in the streets, and the cautious optimism that filled the air. The memoir captures the euphoria of a nation that had defied the odds and the promise of a new beginning.

Yahya Jammeh's coup in The Gambia occurred on July 22, 1994, signifying the beginning of a significant era in the nation's history. As the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) leader, Jammeh assumed the presidency following the successful coup. This marked the commencement of his lengthy rule over The

AUDACITY

Gambia, which persisted for over two decades until his departure in 2017.

In 1994, Jammeh's rise to power came through a military coup that deposed the democratically elected President, Sir Dawda Jawara. Following this coup, he assumed the presidency and established a rule in The Gambia marked by authoritarianism, rampant human rights violations, political oppression, and stringent curbs on freedom of the press.

This coup abruptly ended The Gambia's longstanding tradition of electoral democracy and left a profound impact on the nation and its people. Notably, the 1994 coup in The Gambia was carried out by a cadre of junior military officers who had received training in Western countries, including the USA and the U.K.

This began a new era in The Gambia's history, characterized by hope, uncertainty, and profound change. The origins of this momentous event can be traced to joint training exercises conducted with U.S. Marines aboard the USS La Moure County, stationed off the coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

Unbeknownst to many Gambians, on the day of the coup, these exercises had already concluded. Amid an atmosphere of perceived normalcy, President Jawara, along with his family and several government officials, sought asylum with the assistance of the U.S. ambassador and departed for Senegal.

The new military junta, known as the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC), assumed control of the nation, with Yahya Jammeh at its helm.

AUDACITY

The coup unfolded with exceptional efficiency, bloodless and no reported violence, catching many Gambians off guard, standing in stark contrast to the tumultuous 1981 rebellion led by Kukoi Samba Sanyang.

Kukoi Samba Sanyang, The Gambian military officer and political figure, played a leading role in the 1981 attempted coup in The Gambia to overthrow President Jawara's government. The coup failed, leading to several days of armed conflict.

For a brief period, Kukoi Samba Sanyang and his group declared themselves in power but were defeated by government forces with help from Senegalese military forces. After the unsuccessful coup, Kukoi Samba Sanyang went into exile, and his whereabouts remained undisclosed for many years. He died on August 12, 2017. The aftermath of the 1981 coup left a lasting imprint on The Gambia's political history, signifying a period of notable instability in the nation.

In contrast, following the 1994 coup, a sense of calm settled over the streets of The Gambia, maintained by a curfew. Captain Sadibou Hydara, who acted as the ruling party's spokesperson, regularly reassured The Gambian people through Radio Gambia. Notably, television stations were absent in The Gambia before the 1994 coup.

Jammeh's leadership was marked by controversial and eccentric behavior. He made outlandish claims, including the ability to cure diseases like AIDS with herbal remedies and prayer. These claims drew international criticism and skepticism, further isolating The Gambia on the world stage.

AUDACITY

Throughout his rule, Jammeh faced several coups attempts and internal opposition, responding with violence and crackdowns on his political opponents. While he won multiple presidential elections during his tenure, these elections were widely criticized for their lack of fairness, with opposition parties and candidates encountering numerous obstacles and intimidation.

The public greeted Jammeh's rise to power with a profound belief in divine intervention. Yahya Jammeh, a central figure in the coup, spearheaded the overthrow of the Jawara administration and instituted a ban on the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which had been the dominant political entity since 1965.

The PPP found itself excluded from electoral processes in 1996 and 1997, only aligning with the opposition National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD) in 2005.



AUDACITY

Under Jammeh's leadership, The Gambia faced strained relations with the international community due to controversial policies and human rights abuses. After Jammeh's departure, the country withdrew from the Commonwealth of Nations in 2013 but rejoined in 2018.

Jammeh's long and oppressive rule profoundly impacted The Gambia, presenting numerous challenges for the country as it sought to transition to a more democratic and open society after his departure.

The Coup and the Promise of Change

The Gambia experienced a seismic shift in its history as Yahya Jammeh, an unknown army lieutenant at the age of twenty-nine, led a group of junior military officers in a bloodless coup in 1994. The coup was swift and successful, toppling the democratically elected government of President Dawda Jawara, who had ruled for three decades.

Jammeh's initial promises of accountability, transparency, and probity during the early days of his rule inspired hope among Gambians weary of corruption and mismanagement under the previous administration. These promises aimed to combat the alleged corruption and political malfeasance of the Jawara government.

Captain Sadibou Hydara, the former interim spokesperson of the Junta, played a significant role in the early days of the regime. On July 22, 1994, he made a public radio announcement revealing corruption and mismanagement within President Jawara's

AUDACITY

government. The grievances that fueled support for the coup included a sense of delegitimization, a lack of accountability, overall ineffectiveness, and pervasive corruption.

However, as time progressed, Jammeh's promises began to lose credibility. The veneer of reform gave way to a darker reality as Jammeh consolidated power, extended the transitional period indefinitely, and clung to power through elections criticized for lacking transparency and fairness.

The erosion of promises became evident, and skepticism grew as the nation realized the divergence from the hoped-for path. Captain Sadibou Hydara, who had played a significant role in exposing corruption.

Captain Sadibou Hydara's courageous stance came at a great personal cost, culminating in his brutal assassination on December 16, 2004, in the capital city of Banjul. His tragic demise sent shockwaves through the nation and reverberated across the international community, underscoring the harsh consequences of dissent in the face of political power.

The coup, initially a mutiny, unfolded against the backdrop of ongoing corruption scandals within The Gambian Government. High-ranking officials faced accusations of embezzling millions of dollars from state funds.

Captain Hydara, the junta's spokesperson, highlighted the atmosphere of discontent that set the stage for the events of July 22, 1994. The coup marked a turning point in The Gambian history, revealing the erosion of promises regarding accountability and transparency.

AUDACITY

Jawara's Departure and the American Connection

President Dawda Jawara, a symbol of peace and the first African leader knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, departed under the advice of American diplomats on July 22, 1994. The departure left many government officials at the mercy of Yahya Jammeh and his junta coup members. Despite Jawara's legacy of Western financial support for education and healthcare, allegations of corruption and the erosion of public institutions tarnished his leadership.

Jammeh's Rise to Power - Broken Promises

Yahya Jammeh's meteoric rise to power through a military coup promised a new era of reform, transparency, and accountability. However, the initial optimism faded as Jammeh's leadership revealed a stark contrast to his pledges. Rigged elections, voter intimidation, and a betrayal of democratic ideals characterized his rule. Captain Hydera played a significant role, shedding light on the corruption and mismanagement that fueled the coup's support.

The Erosion of Democratic Ideals

As Jammeh's rule progressed, the promises of accountability and transparency lost their luster. The veneer of reform quickly gave way to a reality marked by fear, repression, and a departure from democratic principles. Captain Hydera's radio announcement in 1994 drew attention to the multifaceted grievances that fueled support for the coup, including the delegitimization of Jawara's government, lack of accountability, and pervasive corruption.

AUDACITY

Captain Sadibou Hydara's sacrifice and the tumultuous events surrounding the coup underscore the complex tapestry of The Gambia's history. The echoes of shadows cast by these events would leave a lasting impact, shaping the nation's trajectory for years to come.

Yahya Jammeh's grappling ascension to power took root in The Gambia faced with corruption, economic challenges, and discontent. In 1994, the landscape shifted dramatically as Jammeh, an unassuming army lieutenant, orchestrated a bloodless coup that ousted President Sir Dawda Jawara. This marked the beginning of an era defined by Jammeh's consolidation of power.

Reign of Fear and Human Rights Abuses

Jammeh's regime plunged The Gambia into a period marred by severe human rights violations. Survivors, including figures like Fatou 'Toufah' Jallow, Fatoumatta Sandeng, and 'Bintu,' bravely share their stories of rape, murder, and torture.

The Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC) emerged as a beacon of hope for the victims of Yahya Jammeh's regime, playing a crucial role in investigating the crimes committed during his rule. In this pursuit of truth and justice, Fatu Camara, the proprietor of The Fatu Network radio station, took on the role of documenting numerous stories of rape victims, both directly and indirectly affected by Jammeh's leadership.

AUDACITY

The focus of her documentation, particularly concerning young girls, brought to light a grim reality orchestrated by the Jammeh regime.

Through these efforts, the TRRC and individuals like Fatu Camara sought to expose the atrocities and provide a platform for the voices of those who had long been silenced.



Post-Jammeh, the #Jammeh2Justice campaign becomes a powerful advocacy movement, envisioning justice for survivors and reshaping the narrative of The Gambian women.

President Barrow's leadership takes swift action in addressing the legacy of financial mismanagement. Assets linked to corruption during Jammeh's regime are seized, and individuals involved face consequences.

Efforts concentrate on rebuilding The Gambia shattered by decades of autocracy, with a particular focus on addressing the challenges faced by marginalized groups like the Mandinka ethnic group.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's micromanagement style grants him complete control, with ministers awaiting his approval on even minor decisions. Limited international oversight allows human rights abuses and corruption to persist. This chapter unveils the complex tapestry of Yahya Jammeh's rise to power and the enduring impact on The Gambia's people, institutions, and collective psyche.

The genesis of this memoir finds its roots in the intricate tapestry of The Gambia's history – a story interwoven with threads of colonialism, independence struggles, and the complexities of post-colonial governance.

The author, tethered to The Gambia by birth, embarks on a journey fueled by a two-decade-long mystery surrounding the rule of Yahya Jammeh, the former President of The Gambia.

Inspiration for Writing this Book

Driven by an unyielding desire to uncover the truth behind Jammeh's brutal reign, the author's investigation navigates the complexities of Jammeh's background, his rise to power, and the elusive motivations that propelled him down the path of violence and repression. Through this exploration, the memoir aims to illuminate the dark legacy of Jammeh's twenty-two years of rule in The Gambia.

The author's decision to pen this memoir stems from a profound sense of responsibility to preserve the historical accuracy of Jammeh's regime. Rooted in the author's personal perspective and goals, the narrative is a commitment to providing future generations with

AUDACITY

a comprehensive account of Jammeh's rule, an era that significantly shaped The Gambia.

As a citizen of The Gambia and a sponsor through remittance, the author intimately engaged with Jammeh's regime. Frequent visits as a tourist added firsthand experiences and insights, compelling the author to share personal accounts and reflections. This citizen's perspective serves as a vital lens through which to unravel the layers of Jammeh's rule.

Motivated by a profound sense of duty, the author endeavors to raise awareness about the human rights abuses and alleged atrocities associated with Jammeh's rule. The memoir becomes a platform for advocating justice and accountability, shedding light on corruption, embezzlement of state funds, and the impact of Jammeh's policies on The Gambia's political landscape.

In the aftermath of Jammeh's rule, The Gambia embarked on a journey of truth and reconciliation. This memoir seeks to contribute to this process by providing insights, testimonies, and a nuanced perspective from the lens of an observer living abroad. The author aims to bridge the gap between international relations and geopolitical considerations, examining Jammeh's regional and global implications.

For the author, writing about his experiences and observations of Jammeh's regime serves as a therapeutic exercise. Beyond personal catharsis, the memoir aims to offer a healing space for Jammeh's victims, aiding them in processing and overcoming the trauma and challenges they faced during that tumultuous period under his leadership.

AUDACITY

In this deeply personal and multifaceted memoir, the motivations behind the narrative vary widely but converge on the overarching goal of informing, educating, and advocating for change based on the profound impact of Yahya Jammeh's rule on The Gambia and its people.

Embark on a captivating exploration into the audacious life of Yahya Jammeh, the former President of The Gambia, as you delve into the pages of this memoir.

The narrative fearlessly navigates the intricate layers of Jammeh's tumultuous rule, revealing a dark tapestry intricately woven with the embezzlement of government funds and the collusion of his inner circle of enablers. Join us on a compelling journey as we meticulously peel back these layers, laying bare the shocking truths that defined Jammeh's reign and shedding light on the financial exploits orchestrated by him and those who facilitated his audacious actions.

Prepare for an enlightening expedition that exposes the unsettling aspects of Jammeh's leadership, casting a revealing light on the profound impact on the lives of those who endured the harrowing reported cases of rape involving young girls. Delve into the complexities of polygamous relationships in his personal life, providing profound insights into the persona concealed behind the public facade.

The narrative adeptly unveils a dark tapestry intricately woven with the involvement of Jammeh's inner circle of enablers, unmasking their roles in the covert world of intrigue entailing drugs and the trafficking of young Gambian girls to Arab states. This

AUDACITY

memoir offers an immersive journey into the heart of Jammeh's regime, exposing the shocking truths that defined his controversial legacy and unveiling the sinister forces that determined the destiny of a nation.

Accusations of involvement in drug trafficking stained his regime, and survival of a 2006 military coup only solidified Jammeh's grip on power.

His response was ruthless—oppression intensified, opposition figures vanished without a trace, and journalists faced imprisonment without trial.

Chapter 1

The Enigma Of Jammeh's Childhood And Early Adulthood

Yahya Jammeh's early life remains shrouded in mystery, characterized by uncertainty regarding both his birthdate and birthplace.

Born as the only child to Junkung Jammeh and Aja Fatou Ashombi Bojang, he often depicted his parents as respected herbal healers and farmers within their village.

The exact details of Jammeh's birthdate and place of birth have long been subjects of speculation. While researchers estimate his birth year to be around 1965, concrete records are yet to be discovered.

This obscurity surrounding his early life prompts us to piece together fragments from The Gambia's national census, education records, and military archives. Through these sources, we can begin to unveil insights into the enigmatic dictator's formative years.

Growing up as the only child in a family of herbal healers and farmers, Jammeh's childhood was colored by the traditions and practices of his parents. His narrative often featured anecdotes of the village, the herbal remedies passed down through generations, and the agrarian lifestyle that shaped his early worldview.

Yahya Jammeh's childhood, marked by the influence of his herbalist and farmer parents, was deeply rooted in

AUDACITY

the traditions of his close-knit village community. Despite the absence of concrete details about his birthplace, recollections from peers and relatives offered a glimpse into his formative years. Notably, there was a mysterious gap in childhood stories about Jammeh from birth to age eight.

Being the only child publicly embracing strong cultural beliefs in a community reliant on traditional healing set Jammeh apart. This early enigma had a lasting impact on him.

In Jammeh's public life as an adult, his interactions with childhood peers, those he elevated to executive and level positions in his administration, and exposure to their shared values and customs within the tight-knit Jola community played a pivotal role in revealing his character as a keeper of Jola traditions and cultural beliefs.

Piecing together these fragments, we explore the dynamics of the village, the roles of his parents in the community, and the socio-economic backdrop that influenced his early years. The census becomes a crucial puzzle piece in reconstructing the narrative of Jammeh's formative experiences.

As Jammeh's journey progresses from childhood to adolescence, the records of his education introduce new layers of ambiguity.

While acknowledging six years of primary schooling and five years of high school education, the details remain sparse. The education records become a canvas where gaps in his timeline raise further questions about the shaping of his worldview and aspirations.

AUDACITY

The military archives provide a chronicle of his ten-year career, highlighting milestones, training, and the gradual accumulation of power that led to his emergence as a significant figure in The Gambian history – The second president of The Republic of The Gambia.

The turning point in Jammeh's life comes with his entry into the military, setting the stage for the subsequent coup in 1994.

The quest to unravel Jammeh's early life takes us to The Gambia's national census, where fragments of information begin to surface. The census, while not comprehensive, offers a snapshot of the familial and communal context in which Jammeh's adulthood unfolded.

As we navigate through military records, the shadows of ambiguity persist, leaving us to contemplate the motivations and influences that propelled Jammeh from a military career into the corridors of political power.

In the chapters that follow, we delve deeper into Yahya Jammeh's enigmatic journey, exploring the complexities of his rule, the geopolitical implications, and the lasting impact on The Gambia and its people. The memoir seeks to unravel the layers of mystery surrounding a leader whose origins remain as elusive as the legacy he left behind.

This memoir conscientiously acknowledges the diversity of cultural practices across the region, casting a spotlight on the oral, visual, and written forms of art.

AUDACITY

It vividly portrays the richness of historical traditions within The Gambia, where the transmission of histories—whether through oral performances or across generations by specialists—encompasses both mythic narratives and practical accounts of legal codes, village life, and clan history.

This memoir captures the profound essence of a cultural legacy deeply rooted in the meticulous preservation and transmission of data and history within the Jola ethnic group of The Gambia.

The Jola Tribe in The Gambia has a tradition known as Futampaf, involving initiation ceremonies attended by the entire community or clan. During these ceremonies, names are bestowed upon babies, and cultural dances celebrate the arrival of newborns a week after birth, emphasizing the significance of names in The Gambian culture.

Surprisingly, not only do those close to Yahya Jammeh during his childhood, but even his relatives have limited knowledge about the details of his birth, his namesake, and whether he participated in any of the Jola cultural rituals. With no recollection of Jammeh's involvement in these rituals, determining his familiarity with the neighbors proved to be a challenging task.

One significant gap in Jammeh's early life is the absence of mandatory preschool education in rural Gambia, where he spent his childhood. The scarcity of preschools, kindergartens, and elementary schools in remote villages leaves a void in his educational history.

AUDACITY

Gaining insights from Jammeh's early education, which typically began in rural Gambia around age six or seven, reveals details about his academic journey.

Documented records confirm his completion of six years of primary schooling and five years of high school education. His subsequent ten-year military career culminated in the successful 1994 coup at the age of twenty-nine. Despite detailed documentation, a noticeable gap exists in our understanding of his life from birth to age eight.

One theory suggests Jammeh might have been born elsewhere and later brought to Kanilai village, where he was raised. This theory emphasizes the absence of photographic evidence and narratives from his supposed birthplace, proposing the possibility of him being born in Casamance, a Senegalese village near The Gambian border, and later entrusted to guardians or relatives.

The absence of Jammeh's participation in traditional Jola cultural coming-of-age rituals, particularly male circumcision, adds an intriguing dimension to his enigmatic early life. In some African communities, like the Jola ethnic group, which differs from most other ethnic groups in The Gambia, circumcision serves as a significant rite of passage from childhood to adulthood.

Nevertheless, the customs, rituals, and significance of circumcision can vary significantly among diverse ethnic groups and regions in Africa. In the Gambia, circumcision holds distinct meanings, particularly within the Jola Tribe; it symbolizes maturity, identity, or social status, contingent on the cultural context.

AUDACITY

It is crucial to understand that these practices can vary significantly, and what applies to one ethnic group may not apply to another in The Gambia. Furthermore, opinions on circumcision, its cultural importance, and its medical implications can be diverse.

It is essential to note that the circumcision practice and attitudes towards circumcision can vary among different ethnic and religious groups within The Gambia. While male circumcision is widely observed to this day, there has been a shift in attitudes towards circumcision in The Gambia, with more emphasis on medical safety and health benefits. However, traditional practices persist in some regions.

Nonetheless, male circumcision holds considerable cultural, religious, and hygienic significance in The Gambia, with variations across regions and communities. In the rich tapestry of The Gambian culture, circumcision has a prominent place, intertwined with both Christian and Muslim traditions as a sacred religious obligation.

This age-old practice signifies a profound rite of passage into adulthood, marking a crucial milestone in a young person's life.

Circumcision rituals typically occur during infancy or adolescence in the picturesque rural village settings that adorn The Gambian landscape. This profoundly ingrained tradition is rooted in local customs, reflecting the essence of the community and its heritage.

AUDACITY

In certain remote villages such as Foni, situated within the boundaries of Kanilai, Yahya Jammeh's claimed birthplace, these time-honored ceremonies are overseen by skilled non-medical local traditional circumcisers, often village elders, adding to the cultural richness that defines The Gambian society.

These initiation ceremonies are a central aspect of village life and are considered obligatory for all parents of infants or young boys. They serve as a means of imparting cultural knowledge and traditions to the younger generation. During these ceremonies, boys are initiated into adulthood, taught essential life skills, and instilled with the values and norms of their community.

The fact that there are no records, narratives, or photographs documenting Yahya Jammeh's participation in these essential cultural rituals adds another layer of mystery to his early life. It raises questions about his upbringing, his connections to his cultural heritage, and the extent to which he adhered to these deeply ingrained traditions.

Jammeh's decision or circumstance that led to his apparent exclusion from these rituals remains unknown, adding to the complexities surrounding his early years and upbringing. Yet another aspect of his life contributes to the enigma of Yahya Jammeh.

Adding complexity to the narrative is Jammeh's religious identity. He converted to Christianity from Islam during his early years of education, attending Christian missionary primary and high schools. He was welcomed into the Tamba family, his foster family, with open arms and integrated into their household.

AUDACITY

These mysteries surrounding Jammeh's early life raise questions about his origins, upbringing, and experiences. Although theories suggest he may have migrated to The Gambia as a young boy, concrete proof remains elusive. Despite the uncertainty, it is reasonable to conclude that Jammeh belonged to the Jola ethnic group from the Casamance region of Senegal.

Jammeh's enigmatic past, foster care experiences, and educational journey contributed to the complex narrative that shaped his character and influenced his future actions as a brutal dictator.

Kinship in The Gambia unifies communities, nurturing social bonds and offering crucial support, mainly when children from impoverished rural backgrounds aim to pursue higher education.

It is a guardian of cherished traditions and plays a pivotal role in shaping individual identities by providing access to education and a stable family environment. This benevolent influence extends beyond personal interests, underscoring the profound interconnections among Gambians, especially in a society marked by poverty.

In many cases, primary and secondary Christian missionary schools are situated in towns or cities near urban centers, posing challenges for children from rural villages who aspire to further their education. In the case of Yahya Jammeh, the Tamba Family's kinship support during high school played a crucial role in his educational journey.

AUDACITY

This exemplifies how kinship networks facilitate educational opportunities for individuals striving to break free from the constraints of their rural upbringing.

Despite the challenges and mysteries surrounding his upbringing, Jammeh excelled academically and earned a place at the prestigious Gambia High School in Banjul, the capital city. This marked his initial exposure to city life, a significant departure from his rural upbringing. Jammeh performed exceptionally well academically, passing the General Certificate of Education (GCE O' Level) in 1983 and securing credits in several subjects.

His high school years were not without difficulties; Jammeh faced rejection and mockery from his urban peers, particularly his classmates. Their lack of acceptance and respect pushed him to persevere and find his path.

In the rustic embrace of Kanilai, a remote Gambian village steeped in tradition, Yahya Jammeh, a devout Muslim of the Jola ethnic group, embarked on a journey that intricately woven his destiny into the fabric of a nation.

This memoir unravels the chapters of Yahya Jammeh's life, tracing the contours of his journey from the halls of The Gambia High School to the disciplined realms of The Gambian National Gendarmerie.

Eventually, he took the helm of The Gambian National Army, leading to a turning point in Jammeh's narrative in July 1994 when the political landscape of The

AUDACITY

Gambia underwent a seismic shift—a bloodless coup d'etat orchestrated by his hands.

The echoes of this event resonated through the subsequent years as he transitioned from ruling by decree to ascending as the democratically elected president in 1996. The ballot boxes affirmed his leadership in 2001, 2006, and 2011, solidifying his formidable presence in the corridors of power.

However, the political tides shifted abruptly in 2016, casting shadows over his presidency as Adama Barrow emerged victorious.

Chapter 2

The 1994 Coup d'état

Yahya Jammeh's coup d'état in 1994 marked a significant turning point in the history of The Gambia. President Jawara, alongside a small cabinet and limited resources, gained international recognition for his leadership. After independence from England in 1965,

Jawara prioritized open-market systems and invested significantly in national projects to establish a functional democracy. This propelled The Gambia to prominence, even earning Jawara the knighthood recognition from Queen Elizabeth of England.

Unlike many African leaders, Jawara also held the honorary title "Sir," bestowed by the British monarch. His development goals aimed to enhance essential health, education, and infrastructure. Under his leadership, The Gambia made progress in education accessibility and increased life expectancy. The nation attracted Western financial support, with tourism and remittances from Gambians living abroad contributing significantly.

Background

The Gambia, a slender strip of land nestled within Senegal, was shaped by the colonial ambitions of European powers. It was under British rule for most of the colonial period. The British influence left an indelible mark on the nation, including adopting English as the official language. As a child, the author

AUDACITY

was surrounded by remnants of colonial architecture and the echoes of a colonial past.

The Gambia gained its independence from British colonial rule in 1965, marking the beginning of a new era, and it adopted a democratic system of governance. Sir Dawda Jawara, an honorable figure, served as the President and was internationally recognized for his leadership.

He held power for three decades. The country's first President, Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, presided over a democratic government. This period saw the development of political institutions, a multi-party system, and a stable political climate, especially compared to other African nations.

However, The Gambia's post-independence journey was challenging. Economic struggles, ethnic tensions, and political instability occasionally marred the nation's progress. A series of coup attempts and the proclivity of some leaders for authoritarian rule exacerbated these challenges.

The Gambia's captivating Atlantic coast became a tourism hotspot thanks to Swedish entrepreneur Bertil Harding, who uncovered the country's tourism potential in 1965. The nation was promoted as a "paradise" in tourist brochures, highlighting its friendly people and natural beauty.

Known as the "Smiling Coast of Africa," Gambians were renowned for their friendliness and unwavering faith. Despite grappling with poverty and high illiteracy rates, they embraced life with optimism, often echoing

AUDACITY

"The Gambia: No Problem" and believing that God would resolve their daily challenges.

Growing Discontent

Over time, there was growing discontent within the military regarding their pay, living conditions, and perceived corruption within the Jawara government. However, as the years passed, discontent festered within the military over issues of pay and living conditions.

Many Gambians grew disenchanted with a government they perceived as self-serving. While they yearned for change, they could not have foreseen the arrival of Yahya Jammeh.

Former President Dawda Jawara faced accusations of neglect, inefficiency, and fostering a culture of corruption among his ministers. The absence of term limits in The Gambian Constitution also raised concerns among citizens.

Many Gambians, including Yahya Jammeh and his co-conspirators, also became disillusioned with the government, viewing it as self-serving and ineffective in addressing the needs of The Gambia's population.

On July 22, 1994, The Gambia underwent a profound transformation when a group of junior military officers led by Yahya Jammeh masterminded a bloodless coup that abruptly ended the nation's era of electoral democracy under President Jawara. This coup left an enduring impact on the country and its people, reshaping its political landscape for decades.

AUDACITY

The 1994 coup was not an ordinary event; it was meticulously planned by well-trained junior military officers who had received their education and training in the United States and the UK. As they executed their plan, The Gambian public embraced the junta with open arms, viewing it as a divine intervention—an eagerly awaited opportunity to break free from a regime tainted by corruption and economic challenges.

At the forefront of this coup stood Yahya Jammeh, a dynamic twenty-nine-year-old military officer whose leadership deeply resonated with the nation's youth. The coup gave birth to the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC), a group of young military officers who took it upon themselves to guide the nation through this critical juncture.

Yahya Jammeh assumed the presidency of The Gambia, a position he would occupy for over two decades until his eventual defeat in the December 2016 presidential election. Sana Sabally, another critical figure in the AFPRC, served as the Vice Chairperson but later witnessed his relationship with Jammeh deteriorate, leading to his arrest and imprisonment.

Edward Singhatey, Secretary of State for Defense, emerged as a prominent member of the AFPRC. His influence extended across various roles during the regime's early years, leaving a lasting mark on the nation's political landscape.

Sadibou Hydara, Secretary of State for the Interior, also played a role in the AFPRC but eventually distanced himself from the government. He evolved into a vocal critic of the regime, standing up for what he believed was right.

AUDACITY

Yankuba Touray, who had served as the Minister of Local Government and Lands under the AFPRC government, faced charges related to the murder of Ousman Koro Ceesay, Ousman Koro Ceesay, former finance minister of the Armed Forces Provincial Ruling Council (AFPRC).

The conviction stemmed from Touray's refusal to testify before the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC) regarding the circumstances of Ceesay's death in 1995. Some TRRC witnesses alleged that the incident occurred at Touray's residence.

On July 14, 2021, the High Court of The Gambia rendered a verdict, finding former Junta member Yankuba Touray guilty of the murder of former Finance Minister Ousman Koro Ceesay. Consequently, Touray was sentenced to death by hanging.

Collectively, these coup members orchestrated the overthrow of the democratically elected government of President Dawda Jawara, ushering in an era of military rule in The Gambia. The coup's consequences would reverberate throughout the nation's politics and history.

The coup members swiftly assumed control, toppling the long-standing government of President Dawda Jawara. After their takeover, they banned the People's Progressive Party (PPP), the dominant political force since The Gambia's independence in 1965.

The exclusion of the PPP from the political landscape left a void in the nation's political arena. As The Gambia transitioned to military rule, the PPP

AUDACITY

remained on the sidelines. It was not until 2005 that the PPP joined the opposition National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD), marking a significant turning point in the nation's political history.

As The Gambia grappled with its newfound reality, the AFPRC and its charismatic leader, Yahya Jammeh, embarked on a journey to shape the nation's destiny and its people for decades. The 1994 coup was not merely a change in leadership; it was a seismic shift reverberating throughout the country, setting the stage for a complex and often tumultuous chapter in its history.

Public Reception

The coup of 1994 in The Gambia initially sparked enthusiasm among a massive portion of The Gambian population, particularly the youth. At the age of twenty-nine, Jammeh appeared relatable to many. The change they had long hoped for had finally come.

The Gambian people wholeheartedly embraced the new AFPRC government, warmly and enthusiastically welcoming Jammeh and his fellow coup leaders. Among them, the youth found in Jammeh a relatable figure, even though he lacked the political education that Burkinabé military captain and revolutionary Thomas Sankara considered essential for soldiers. This enthusiasm persisted, undeterred by Jammeh's educational background.

Yahya Jammeh, initially hailed as a force for change, swiftly metamorphosed into Gambia's enigmatic dictator. His views, more outrageous and unsettling

AUDACITY

than those of his predecessor, cast an ominous shadow over the nation. What began as a quest for reform evolved into a regime characterized by eccentricity, oppression, and unparalleled excess.

As Jammeh's reign unfolded, he forged unlikely alliances with international pariahs like Muammar Gaddafi, and built connections with Cuba and Iran, raising eyebrows across the global stage.

Promises and Skepticism

Jammeh promised to address the struggles faced by the average Gambian and assured the population that his regime would not establish a military dictatorship. Jammeh's promises resonated deeply with Many Gambians who shared his vision for transformation.

He pledged to tackle the hardships experienced by the average citizen and gave his assurance that his regime would not morph into a military dictatorship. Jammeh further promised that he would willingly return to the barracks once they had successfully addressed these issues.

Despite the enthusiasm that followed the 1994 coup in The Gambia, some individuals, such as Kenneth Best, the owner of the Daily Observer and a survivor of a military coup in Sierra Leone, remained cautious and skeptical of the new regime. Best's firsthand experience with the consequences of military takeovers made him acutely aware of the potential risks to democratic institutions.

In the coup's aftermath, Kenneth Best, driven by his dedication to journalism, approached the situation

AUDACITY

with caution. He understood the dangers of prematurely endorsing or excessively praising the junta. Through his weekly editorials, he carefully balanced his skepticism, avoiding any actions that might provoke a negative response from the ruling authorities.

Recognizing the vital role of a free and independent press in upholding democracy, Kenneth Best ensured that the Daily Observer maintained its commitment to journalistic integrity. The newspaper continued to serve as a beacon of responsible journalism during political transition and uncertainty in post-coup Gambia.

Despite some opposition, Jammeh garnered the confidence of many Gambians, and life quickly returned to normalcy after the removal of the former President.

Former ministers and supporters of Dawda Jawara were arrested, and the AFPRC brought stability to national security. The Gambia stood at the precipice of change, its people embracing newfound hope, but skepticism lingered beneath the surface, casting a shadow on the path ahead.

Political Transition

The Gambia, affectionately known as the beloved homeland by those with direct ties to the country, has always been where history is etched into the fabric of The Gambian lives. Their journey through time brings them to the pivotal moment in 1994 when the Armed

AUDACITY

Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC), led by Yahya Jammeh, took control of The Gambia.

The AFPRC's mantra of "Accountability, Probity, and Transparency" resonated with many, but doubts lingered about the extent of corruption they alleged. O.J Jallow defended the People's Progressive Party (PPP), acknowledging their imperfections while challenging the sweeping accusations made by Jammeh's regime. We were left to grapple with these conflicting narratives As The Gambia embarked on an uncertain path.

Despite initial doubts about Jammeh's ability to complete his first term, he won all four elections from 1996 to 2016. However, his rule was marked by challenges in attracting experienced civil servants for fear of reprisals and the peculiar nature of his administration.

Jammeh's leadership style evolved over the years, straddling a fine line between democracy and autocracy. He secured victory in multiple elections during his time in power, but his rule was marred by allegations of human rights violations, stifling of opposition voices, and an authoritarian approach.

In the wake of Yahya Jammeh's departure from power in 2017, The Gambia embarked on a profound journey that sought to reckon with the past, heal deep wounds, and forge a path toward a more just and united future. "Legacy and Accountability" captures the essence of this pivotal moment in the nation's history.

As the dust settled on Jammeh's authoritarian rule, the memoir explores the immediate aftermath, from the

AUDACITY

cautious optimism that permeated the country to the challenges of rebuilding democratic institutions and restoring trust in government. It delves into the collective sigh of relief that accompanied the return of exiled citizens and the hope of a fresh start.

Central to this memoir is the call for justice and accountability. The truth about the human rights abuses, atrocities, and crimes committed during Jammeh's regime could no longer remain hidden.

"Legacy and Accountability" delves into establishing the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC), tasked with uncovering the painful past and providing a platform for victims to share their stories.

The memoir profiles the brave individuals who testified before the TRRC, their resilience in the face of trauma, and the impact of their revelations on the nation's psyche. It explores the pursuit of justice through international legal avenues and the clamor for Jammeh's extradition to face the consequences of his actions.

Yet, "Legacy and Accountability" does not shy away from the challenges and complexities of reconciliation. It acknowledges that the scars of the past run deep, and forgiveness is a process that requires time and effort. The memoir captures the debates and dialogues shaping the national reconciliation discourse.

This memoir is a testament to The Gambia's commitment to confronting its past, seeking justice, and forging a more inclusive and united future. It reflects the nation's resilience and determination to

AUDACITY

ensure that a legacy of accountability, truth, and reconciliation replaces the legacy of dictatorship.

Jammeh's exit marked a significant shift in The Gambia's history, highlighting the resilience of democratic principles and the role of international actors in supporting democratic transitions in Africa. As we looked ahead, we knew that rebuilding institutions, ensuring justice for past abuses, and addressing economic disparities were paramount tasks.

The Gambia's history is a complex tapestry, and understanding this context is essential to appreciate the journey that unfolded during Jammeh's 22 years in power and the subsequent rebirth of The Gambia. It is a story of triumphs and tribulations, and it continues to shape our path forward as we strive for a brighter future.

Chapter 3

Yahya Jammeh's Cultural Heritage

In this chapter, we delve into the cultural roots of Yahya Jammeh, focusing on his affiliation with the Jola tribe, one of The Gambia's minor ethnic groups. The Jolas, among the last in the Senegambian region to embrace Christianity and Islam, possess distinctive cultural traditions, including the utilization of palm wine in their rituals.

The memoir highlights the Jola people's spiritual beliefs. Discover the profound significance attached to spirits known - (referred to as Jalang in Mandinka) among the Jola community.

These spirits are revered as guardians, entrusted with the protection of families, villages, and the crucial rice fields. Delve into the unique aspect of their belief system, where these spirits are believed to offer safeguarding not only for the community but also against the influence of conversion to Islam and Christianity. This narrative unveils the spiritual landscape that shapes the cultural identity of the Jola people.

The memoir explores the Islamization of Jola populations in well-connected areas, influenced by nearby Mandinka people. Additionally, it delves into the Mandinka ethnic group, a significant West African community primarily situated in southern Mali, The Gambia, and eastern Guinea.

AUDACITY

The Mandinka ethnic group, the largest in The Gambia, communicates through the Manding languages, serving as a lingua franca in much of West Africa.

Many Mandinka individuals adhere to Islam and participate in subsistence farming in rural villages. The historical roots of the Mandinka people extend to the Mali Empire, which was established in the 13th century under the leadership of King Sundiata Keita. This historical background highlights the cultural and religious aspects of the Mandinka community, emphasizing their connection to Islam and their engagement in agriculture, particularly in rural settings.

While socially stratified with castes, Mandinka societies traditionally feature leadership by chiefs and elders in autonomous villages. The Mandinka culture places a strong emphasis on the oral transmission of mythologies, history, and knowledge, with griots and guilds playing crucial roles in preserving music and literary traditions.

Consequently, many Jola tribal communities no longer speak their original language, and a significant majority are now Muslims. In contrast to the prevalent cultures in West Africa, most Jola communities lack social or political stratification, organized instead into families or neighborhoods.

While some communities have central authorities, such as kings, their roles more closely resemble that of priests rather than traditional secular leaders.

AUDACITY

We explore Jammeh's formative years and upbringing in Kanilai, a village in the Foni region near the border with Senegal. This section delves into the profound impact of Western Christian missionaries in the area, who sought to convert the local populace to Christianity through education.

In the tapestry of Jola culture, the belief in mystical traditions, deeply intertwined with the enigmatic supernatural realm and the practice of prayer to ancestral spirits, known as “Jalangs” in Mandinka, weave threads of tradition that connect the Jola people to their roots.

This memoir delves into the profound significance of these rituals, exploring how the Jola community believes in the protective power of these ancestral spirits to safeguard their families and villages.

Their reliance on charms and sacred rituals played a substantial role in shaping Jammeh's cultural upbringing. Furthermore, Jammeh's peculiar superstitions and assertions of possessing supernatural powers, divination, and healing abilities were avenues for forging connections with his followers.

Yahya Jammeh, the former President of The Gambia from 1994 to 2017, was known for his eccentric and controversial beliefs, including a fascination with ancestral spiritual worship and witchcraft. While he primarily practiced Islam and claimed to be a devout Muslim, he also had a deep interest in traditional African religions and mysticism.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's ancestral spiritual worship beliefs blended various elements from African traditional religions, Islamic mysticism, and superstitions. He consulted with local witch doctors and traditional healers, seeking their advice and protection through rituals and charms. Jammeh believed these practices could provide him with supernatural powers, protect him from enemies, and secure his rule.

The controversies surrounding Yahya Jammeh's inherited cultural beliefs, notably his assertion of possessing supernatural powers through rituals such as "smudging," were integral to Jammeh's political strategy. This strategy was reminiscent of the famous adage often attributed to military strategists: "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer." These practices find their origins in ancient traditions, with some tracing back to the primitive rituals of the Jola tribe.



One of the most well-known instances of Jammeh's involvement in mystical practices was his assertion that he had been personally chosen by God and bestowed with divine revelations and healing powers capable of curing HIV/AIDS.

In the chilling dawn of January 2007, Yahya Jammeh, divine the enigmatic leader of Gambia, stood before his nation with a revelation that would send shockwaves through the fabric of reality. Claiming to have received a divine mandate from God, he declared an

AUDACITY

unprecedented mission—to concoct a miraculous solution from seven herbs found in the Quran. This solution, he boldly proclaimed, possessed the power to eradicate the scourges of HIV/AIDS, Diabetes, Infertility, and Cancer in a mere three days.

This divine revelation marked the genesis of the Presidential Alternative Treatment Program, a venture that would cast a shadow of skepticism and fear across the Gambian landscape. Jammeh's audacious promise, delivered with unwavering conviction, set the stage for a surreal chapter in the nation's history.

The purported cure, touted as a divine gift, became the cornerstone of Jammeh's narrative—a narrative that would unfold over the next nine years. The Presidential Alternative Treatment Program operated clinics from 2007 to 2016, becoming a controversial institution where hope and coercion danced in a macabre duet.

Patients, driven by desperation and the promise of a miraculous cure, found themselves ensnared in Jammeh's web. Recruitment into the program occurred through a disturbing spectrum—some entered willingly, clinging to the hope of healing, while others were coerced into submission by a regime that brooked no dissent.

As this chapter of the memoir unfurls, we delve into the labyrinthine corridors of Jammeh's concoctions and the lives altered by his dubious claims. The divine treatment, purportedly the answer to life's most formidable adversaries, unraveled a narrative where faith clashed with skepticism, and the boundaries between free will and duress blurred in the face of an autocrat's grandiose visions.

AUDACITY

This marked the inception of his controversial Jammeh Foundation HIV/AIDS treatment program. He frequently referred to himself as the "Babilimansa," signifying the "King of the Bridges," and claimed to possess extraordinary powers bestowed upon him by the spirits of his ancestral ancestors.

The unorthodox methods employed by the Jammeh Foundation in the treatment of HIV/AIDS patients



garnered both fascination and concern during his tenure. While these practices played a role in his ascent within the military and political spheres, they also contributed to his erratic behavior and unpredictable rules. Jammeh's regime was marred by violence, human rights violations, and political instability,

culminating in his removal from power in 2017.

The rituals, ceremonies, and herbal treatments that distinguished this program from conventional medical practices shed light on the experiences of former patients and program participants.

Regrettably, many patients experienced a deterioration in their health, resulting in numerous unavoidable deaths among HIV/AIDS patients in The Gambia. Jammeh's beliefs were a unique blend of traditional African religions, Islamic mysticism, and superstitions. They played a significant role in his personal life and influenced some of his actions during his presidency,

AUDACITY

contributing to his rule's controversial and tumultuous nature.

While Jammeh's cultural practices were essential to his identity and belief system, they often faced skepticism and criticism from his detractors. Many questioned the empirical evidence supporting his claims of possessing mystical powers, primarily through practices like smudging, a traditional Indigenous cleansing ritual used by the Jola tribe to rid individuals or spaces of negative energy and spirits.

The clash between Jammeh's deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and the skepticism of those who regarded these practices as primitive or lacking scientific basis became evident, contributing to the divisive nature of politics in The Gambia. With their historical significance, these rituals were exploited by Jammeh and profoundly impacted his presidency.

Additionally, the broader cultural context in which Jammeh employed these practices added to the complexity of his rule. Yahya Jammeh's controversial HIV/AIDS treatment program, which gained international attention and raised significant concerns within the global medical community, involved herbal remedies personally developed by him and incorporated ritualistic ceremonies with historical roots dating back to the 18th century.

Jammeh's unconventional approach to treating HIV/AIDS

The origins of Jammeh's conviction in his healing powers, involving the administration of herbal medicinal concoctions and the enactment of rituals and

AUDACITY

ceremonies as integral elements of his treatment program, can be linked to his Jola ancestral traditions and customs. These practices, at times having adverse effects, exerted a profound influence on the well-being of HIV/AIDS patients and their families, resulting in an unimaginable level of skepticism and criticism from medical professionals and the global community.

The consequences of Jammeh's treatment program, including its impact on public health and the ethical concerns raised by international health organizations, were undeniably severe. The experiences of patients who participated in these rituals were deeply disappointing. Moreover, it becomes evident that the program was primarily a sham, designed to prolong Jammeh's rule and enhance his political image, highlighting its extensive and contentious nature.

Throughout his rule, a comprehensive understanding of Jammeh's HIV/AIDS treatment program, its historical origins, and its significance in the broader narrative of his presidency remained a mystery to many. Jammeh's contentious approach to treating HIV/AIDS patients, characterized by his upbringing in Kanilai, a Jola tribal settlement village hamlet, added to the intrigue surrounding his regime.

The pinnacle of absurdity occurred in January 2007 when Jammeh declared a divine mandate to create a cure from Quranic herbs, purportedly eradicating HIV/AIDS, Diabetes, Infertility, and Cancer in just three days, which was ridiculously blasphemous.

Thus, the controversial Presidential Alternative Treatment Program was born, operating clinics from

AUDACITY

2007 to 2016 where patients were recruited, willingly or by duress, into Jammeh's fraudulent cure.

This is the unsettling prologue to a memoir chronicling the tumultuous era of Yahya Jammeh—a chapter in history where power, excess, and dubious claims intertwined, leaving an indelible mark on the sands of Gambia.

Jammeh's unwavering commitment to his cultural values and profound connection with nature, particularly his reverence for the natural forest and traditional agricultural practices, were integral to his identity. However, this devotion to his cultural beliefs sometimes clashed with Western ideologies.

Overall, Yahya Jammeh's cultural background, his early life in Kanilai, and the cultural milieu that shaped his eccentric beliefs and practices remained a constant influence throughout his life. His unique upbringing in Kanilai and the cultural context in which he developed his eccentricities and ideas resonated with many African people, especially in The Gambia and the broader sub-region.

The cultural beliefs and upbringing of Yahya Jammeh had a particular focus on his connection to the Jola ethnic group and their spiritual traditions. The Jola people hold strong beliefs in protective spirits, which safeguard their families, villages, and cultural heritage.

Before the influence of Islam and Christianity, the Jolas attached great significance to proper funeral ceremonies. They believed these rituals allowed the deceased's soul to join their ancestors peacefully.

AUDACITY

Additionally, they emphasized leading a morally upright life to avoid becoming an exiled spirit.

Yahya James Jammeh's journey after converting to Christianity coincided with the beginning of his primary school education in Bwaim. This period marked a significant chapter in his childhood, marked by the constant shuffling between foster homes during his formative adolescent years.

Despite the challenges ahead, his unwavering determination to pursue an education led him to decide to leave his village behind. However, this decision came at the cost of trauma, as the anxiety of separation from his family, friends, and familiar surroundings left an enduring mark on his psyche.

Renowned UK social worker Shelia sheds light on the effects of such traumatic experiences, emphasizing how they can leave individuals feeling trapped, overwhelmed by fear, and devoid of agency. Such emotional scars punctuated Jammeh's early life, and his struggles with trust would resonate throughout his life.

Prominent Gambian social media blogger Nyang Njie delves into the potential influence of these early life experiences on Jammeh's later actions as a leader. He expresses profound bewilderment at Jammeh's apparent lack of gratitude towards The Gambian people, especially the families who extended their hospitality by providing him shelter, sustenance, clothing, and invaluable educational support during his formative years.

AUDACITY

This sense of ingratitude becomes a central theme in understanding Jammeh's complex personality and leadership style. The narrative that follows in this book details Yahya Jammeh's cultural journey, including his conversion from Christianity back to Islam during the latter stages of his higher education and early military career.

Despite encountering challenges, such as frequently changing foster homes, he remained steadfast in his pursuit of education. Despite his limited formal education of a High School Diploma certificate, he bestowed upon himself the title of "Doctor."

Jammeh's transition to Islam and his educational journey at The Gambia High School played a pivotal role in shaping him into the devout Muslim he often proudly proclaimed to be. During his presidency, Yahya Jammeh often made public appearances clutching the Holy Quran, the sacred text of Islam.

During his presidency, Yahya Jammeh was often addressed with various titles and honorifics, one of which was "Nasurideen" – defender of Islam. This title reflects his Muslim faith and is a sign of respect. He could be seen adorned with prayer beads and a ceremonial sword, dressed in pristine white gowns, symbolizing his strong connection to his Muslim faith and the leadership role he sought to project.

Yahya Jammeh's life journey began to unfold as he successfully completed his primary education. This pivotal period marked a significant chapter in his development as he embraced a conversion to Islam and chose to adopt the name Yahya Jamus Junkung Jammeh.

AUDACITY

Transitioning to Banjul, he enrolled in The Gambia High School, where he displayed academic excellence. Despite being dubbed the "Jola Boy" by peers, his disciplined behavior and commitment to studies remained steadfast. Financial support from host guardians played a crucial role, especially since his parents could not afford his education, as detailed in Pa Nderry Mbai Freedom newspaper articles.

Embarking on city life, Jammeh's engagement in activities like clubbing, smoking, and drinking can be interpreted as attempts to assimilate into urban culture, aligning with the "city boy" narrative—a term often associated with kids born and raised in the city, typically the offspring of elite government officials or part of the middle class.

Subsequently, he joined The Gambian National Army, undergoing military training in Senegal and the United States.

Jammeh's military career saw him rise through the ranks, eventually becoming the commanding officer of the military police at Yundum Barracks. Despite limited formal education, his military records portrayed him as a disciplined soldier. According to

Essa Bokarr Sey, a former Gendarmerie officer and military colleague, Jammeh was known for making extravagant claims, including self-proclaimed spiritual powers involving divination and healing.

Sey described Jammeh as a profoundly complex and resentful individual, exhibiting anger and a sense of entitlement. Sharing living quarters in the barracks for three years, Jammeh's diverse pursuits included reading Marx during his free time and stopping

AUDACITY

ministers' cars for a ride, only to criticize them for corruption.

Political discussions took center stage in Jammeh's interactions, and in 1993-1994, he faced a brief arrest on coup accusations. However, a successful coup in mid-1994, led by Jammeh and four soldiers, ousted President Dawda Jawara, marking a pivotal moment in The Gambia's history.

The narrative then delves into Jammeh's military career, specifically his role as the national presidential guard before the 1994 coup, leading to subsequent instability and strained relations with the West. Future chapters will explore his election victories, refusal to accept defeat in 2016, and eventual exile in Equatorial Guinea.

The focus shifts to Jammeh's government's controversial crackdown on individuals accused of practicing witchcraft. Witch hunts, forced rituals, and human rights abuses became prevalent, targeting vulnerable and elderly individuals based on superstitions or community suspicions. The National Intelligence Agency (NIA) played a significant role in these actions, drawing condemnation from international human rights organizations.

Examining Jammeh's symbolic rituals, such as offering water to soldiers and officials and distributing biscuits during motorcade journeys, reveals actions embedded with layers of meaning. These gestures played a pivotal role in shaping his public persona within the context of his authoritarian rule, marked by human rights violations and political suppression.

AUDACITY

During the author's time in The Gambia, he had the unique opportunity to witness firsthand the impressive spectacle of President Yahya Jammeh's motorcade. As the president of the compact West African state of two million, Jammeh routinely drove his black stretch Hummer from his official residence in Banjul, the capital, to a luxurious private estate in his hometown of Kanilai.

It was not merely a convoy of vehicles; it symbolized his authority, captivating the fascination and curiosity of many. The grand procession featured his official presidential limousine at the forefront—a meticulously designed fortress on wheels, emphasizing Jammeh's commitment to ensuring his safety and preserving his position.

Surrounding the presidential limousine, the numerous security vehicles were impossible to ignore. Armored SUVs and trucks carried stern-faced armed personnel, reflecting the authoritarian nature of Jammeh's rule. Their significant and unwavering presence served as a stark reminder of the power he wielded.

The motorcade, equipped with sirens and flashing lights, served a dual purpose. The blaring sirens and flashing lights ensured the president's swift passage through the streets, commanding the immediate attention of all who heard and saw them.

As Jammeh's motorcade hit the road, temporary closures of thoroughfares were often necessary to guarantee the president a smooth and secure passage. However, these measures occasionally disrupted the regular flow of traffic, inconveniencing many.

AUDACITY

The sight of Jammeh's motorcade became a public spectacle, drawing attention from pedestrians and motorists alike. Some would pause to wave or show signs of respect, while others observed with a sense of intrigue.

Jammeh's motorcade was not just a procession but a visual representation of his dominion and control over the nation. It served as a constant reminder of his presence and influence within The Gambia and on the international stage.

While lighthearted, Jammeh's habit of throwing biscuits held more profound significance in his leadership style and connection to cultural beliefs in the village of Kanilai.



This peculiar practice remains a curious footnote in the history of his presidency. He frequently flung biscuits from his high-speed Hummer pickup truck to bystanders, primarily children and ardent supporters, though this unconventional act occasionally caused physical harm.

AUDACITY

Despite its awe-inspiring nature, the motorcade was not without controversy. The opulence of Jammeh's convoy and the substantial resources allocated to it raised eyebrows, especially considering the country's economic challenges and allegations of human rights abuses during his regime. It sparked debates about priorities and the use of public funds.

Yahya Jammeh's motorcade, beyond being a vehicle procession, symbolized his presidency. It indicated his authority and control but was also a subject of scrutiny and critique, given the circumstances of his rule and the substantial resources devoted to his convoy. Riding within its ranks provided a unique perspective on the power dynamics during Jammeh's tenure.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these benign rituals occurred within the broader framework of Jammeh's complex and contentious presidency, characterized by a range of issues, including allegations of human rights abuses and political repression. Therefore, while distributing biscuits may have served as a symbolic and public relations-friendly gesture, it remained inextricably linked to the intricate tapestry of his rule.

Chapter 4

Yahya Jammeh's Political Transformation: From Military Rule To Authoritarian Regime

The memoir chronicles Yahya Jammeh's unexpected journey from a military leader to a prominent political figure in The Gambia. Despite initially denying political intentions, Jammeh established the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) in 1996, consolidating power as the ruling party.

The narrative explores allegations of election tampering, revealing the daily lives of Gambians under Jammeh's oppressive regime.

Investigations into atrocities during his rule uncovered figures like Alhagie Kanyi and Finance Minister Ousman Koro Ceesay. Jammeh's micromanagement granted him complete control, steering The Gambia toward authoritarianism. The memoir details his international relations, exploitation of ties with Arab nations, and controversial moves such as declaring The Gambia an Islamic state.

In the annals of Gambian history, Yahya Jammeh's journey unfolds like a turbulent novel, marked by unexpected twists and the ominous shadows of authoritarian rule. The memoir, "Shadows of Power," traces Jammeh's evolution from a military leader to a formidable political figure in The Gambia, revealing the complex tapestry of his regime.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's foray into politics began with the establishment of the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) in 1996. Despite initial assurances of non-political intentions, this move marked the consolidation of power, setting the stage for a regime characterized by oppression and fear.

The narrative plunges into the heart of Gambian life under Jammeh's rule, where allegations of election tampering cast a dark shadow over the democratic process. Through the lens of ordinary Gambians, the memoir unveils the daily struggles and pervasive climate of fear that defined life in this era.

Atrocities committed during Jammeh's rule come to light through investigations, exposing figures like Alhagie Kanyi and Finance Minister Ousman Koro Ceesay. Jammeh's micromanagement style granted him complete control, steering the nation toward authoritarianism.

The memoir delves into Jammeh's international relations, exploring his exploitation of ties with wealthy Arab nations. Controversial decisions, such as declaring The Gambia an Islamic state, reveal the calculated nature of his friendships and the severe consequences for human rights, the economy, and the nation's standing in the international community.

Jammeh's web of dependence on Arab nations and dictators is laid bare, stifling the development of The Gambia. The regime's brutal suppression of political opposition, manipulation of the state apparatus, compromised judiciary, and tight media control are

AUDACITY

vividly depicted, portraying the pervasive climate of fear that shrouded the nation.

The struggle against political repression emerges as a central theme, highlighting the resilience of The Gambian people in their quest for freedom and democracy.

"Shadows of Power" serves as a testament to the collective strength that eventually triumphed over the shadows of oppression, shaping The Gambia's journey toward a brighter and more democratic future.

The struggle against political repression reflects the resilience of The Gambian people in their quest for freedom and democracy.

As a result, The Gambia was left to rebuild itself, confronting deep-rooted issues and addressing the consequences of two decades under a dictator who prioritized personal gain and political survival over the welfare of his people.

Adama Barrow's election in 2016 marked a pivotal moment for The Gambia, signaling a departure from the oppressive regime of Yahya Jammeh. Barrow's commitment to restoring democracy, human rights, and the rule of law brought hope to a nation struggling to emerge from the shadow of its authoritarian past.

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, Jammeh initially contested the results but eventually accepted his defeat. In 2017, he fled to Equatorial Guinea, where President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo granted him asylum. The alliance between Jammeh and

AUDACITY

Mbasogo was fueled by a shared disdain for Western influence, solidifying their close ties.

As Barrow assumed leadership, the new government embarked on the challenging journey of healing and rebuilding The Gambia in the post-Jammeh era. The nation faced the complex task of reconciliation, seeking justice for past atrocities, and navigating the path toward democratic renewal.

Barrow's administration confronted the daunting challenges of addressing human rights abuses, rebuilding democratic institutions, and fostering national reconciliation. The process required delicate efforts to balance accountability for past wrongs with the need to move forward as a united and democratic nation.

The Gambia's journey under Barrow became a testament to the resilience of its people and their collective determination to overcome the legacy of authoritarian rule. As the nation navigated the complexities of post-Jammeh governance, it aimed to establish a foundation for a more just, democratic, and hopeful future.

Chapter 5

Allah's Bank: The Politics Of Aid And Repression

In the early days, Gambians held hope in their hearts. Yahya Jammeh, a young army officer, had seized power in a bloodless coup. He promised to be the savior of The Gambia, the smiling coast of West Africa. His charismatic speeches resonated with the masses, and for a moment, they believed in his vision for a prosperous nation.

As Jammeh's grip on power tightened, signs of deception emerged. The first warning came with the disappearances. People vanished without a trace, suspected of opposing the regime. Fear crept into The lives of The Gambian's, and silence became their only defense.

To divert their attention from his misdeeds, Jammeh launched ambitious projects. He built grandiose monuments and held extravagant celebrations. The world watched in awe as he squandered the economic resources of The Gambia on his ego. Behind the smokescreen, The Gambia economy crumbled.

While Gambians struggled to make ends meet, Jammeh and his loyalists indulged in unparalleled extravagance. The Gambia national coffers bled as Jammeh, and his minions siphoned off The Gambia's wealth. Corruption seeped into every crevice of society, leaving The Gambia impoverished.

AUDACITY

Under Jammeh's rule, The Gambia became a hub for drug trafficking. He ignored the cartels exploiting The Gambia's weak security and judicial systems. The Gambia's once-pristine beaches became routes for the narcotics trade, staining its reputation.

Jammeh's facade of Islamization and anti-Western sentiment masked his true intentions. He garnered foreign support, playing the victim while his regime bled us dry. The international community remains blind to our suffering.

Young Gambian girls were trafficked to foreign lands promised jobs but subjected to horrors beyond imagination. The nation's daughters suffered in silence as Jammeh's regime disregarded this inhuman trade, all for profit.

Despite the danger, dissent grew. Brave voices emerged, risking everything to expose the truth. Journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens rallied against the regime's resource mismanagement, seeking justice for our stolen wealth.

As hope dwindled, Many Gambians chose the path of exile, seeking refuge in foreign lands. The Gambian youths, the nation's backbone, left in droves, escaping Jammeh's mismanagement and repression.

Jammeh's reign of resource mismanagement could only last for a while. The world slowly began to see through the facade, and pressure mounted. Elections arrived, and the people spoke. Jammeh's grip on power crumbled, and he fled into exile.

AUDACITY

The Gambia now faced the daunting task of rebuilding. They counted their losses and mourned the years lost to mismanagement. The truth emerged, and the world learned of their struggles.

With a new government and a renewed spirit, they looked to the future. The scars of Jammeh's resource mismanagement would forever mark The Gambia's history, but they would not define The Gambia's destiny. The smiling coast would smile again, the people believe.

Jammeh's mishandling of the country's resources has left enduring scars that may never fully heal. Yet, from the wounds emerged a people who are stronger, wiser, and resolute in their commitment to prevent the recurrence of such a dark chapter. The citizens of The Gambia will always carry the memory and use it as a driving force to pursue a brighter future.

It was in October 2014 that the United Nations Human Rights Council cast a harsh light on the regime of former President Yahya Jammeh in The Gambia. The Council's criticism was a scathing indictment of the severe restrictions on freedom of expression and the many human rights violations that sustained Jammeh's grip on power.

This international condemnation had profound consequences, most notably freezing European Union aid to The Gambia, a critical funding source for the nation's development projects.

Beyond the suspension of E.U. Assistance, The Gambia's economic stability hung by a thread. The country's traditional economic pillars, groundnut

AUDACITY

exportation, and tourism, had experienced significant declines since Jammeh's ascent to power in 1994.

In response, Jammeh formed alliances with an unconventional set of partners: Iran, Venezuela, Turkey, the Hezbollah militia, Russia, Taiwan, and a consortium of wealthy Gulf nations.

Some of these nations had been labeled part of the "Axis of Evil" by U.S. President George W. Bush. Nonetheless, they provided financial, political, military, and healthcare support that bolstered the autocratic rule of the African leader.

The age-old African proverb, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," seemed to shape Jammeh's strategic economic decisions and personal choices as the father of nation –The Gambia Republic.

Following the establishment of diplomatic ties with nations often viewed as adversaries of the West, Jammeh returned to The Gambia and implemented extensive changes to strengthen his authoritarian rule.

One significant alteration was an amendment to the criminal code, raising the penalty for "aggravated homosexuality" to life imprisonment. This triggered a systematic crackdown on individuals suspected of being part of the LGBT community, creating an atmosphere of heightened fear that prompted many to seek refuge across the border in Senegal.

Jammeh's incendiary rhetoric against LGBT communities had consequences that reverberated throughout The Gambia economy. The resulting isolation from Western nations forced The Gambia to

AUDACITY

increasingly rely on aid from Muslim country donors and affluent Arab states in the Middle East.

Yahya Jammeh also made international headlines for his controversial claims. He declared that homosexuality posed an existential threat to humanity and boasted of a "foolproof" and "God-given" concoction to cure AIDS. Additionally, he blamed the United States and Western nations for their greed and aspirations of global dominance, as articulated in his address at the United Nations in New York City.

The European Union, deeply concerned about the lack of progress in human rights and the rule of law during Jammeh's 22-year rule, blocked approximately thirteen million euros in bilateral aid intended for The Gambia's development projects for the people of The Gambia.

An additional 150 million euros (\$186 million) in development aid was under review, contingent upon meeting the demands outlined in the E.U.'s 17-point dossier. However, Jammeh clung to power, refusing to loosen his grip on the nation.

Sometime around November 2014, Jammeh severed ties with the European Union upon his return from a visit to Qatar, a wealthy Arab nation where homosexuality was illegal. The then foreign minister, Bala Garba Jahumpa, declared The Gambia an independent Muslim country that would no longer engage in dialogue with the European Union. This move was perceived as a declaration of sovereignty, albeit at the expense of E.U aid funds that came with stringent conditions.

AUDACITY

While E.U aid was significant, it paled compared to donations from wealthy Arab nations, which came with no strings attached. For example, the Kuwait Fund pledged over \$80 million during Jammeh's rule, giving him the leeway to expand his repressive regime further.

Despite the efforts of The Gambian Diaspora activists and international appeals, Jammeh's international community overlooked brutality and governance. Some dismissed his actions, attributing them to his lack of formal education and portraying him as a clown who made audacious claims, such as possessing a cure for AIDS and asthma.

Even during his recent visit to The Gambia to meet the newly elected President Adama Barrow, UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson referred to Jammeh as "a guy who was holding things up, even mocking him by calling him Jammeh the Dodger'." The West, though critical of Jammeh, often brushed aside his threats and rhetoric, viewing him as an erratic and attention-seeking leader.

Despite the accusations leveled by The Gambian Diaspora activists, international efforts to end Jammeh's rule yielded limited results.

The international community hesitated to intervene, viewing The Gambia's situation as emblematic of many developing African countries after a change in government. Jammeh's provocations, rhetoric, and diplomatic maneuvers were deemed more of an annoyance than a genuine menace.

AUDACITY

As the world grappled with Jammeh's eccentricities, The Gambia's youth population confronted economic hardships and a lack of opportunities. This vulnerable demographic became susceptible to human traffickers and extremist recruitment efforts, posing a potential threat to regional stability.

Amid these international complexities, one thing became increasingly clear: Yahya Jammeh's regime was a unique and potent blend of repression, rhetoric, and resourcefulness, and it was not to be underestimated.

Yahya Jammeh took center stage in his pursuit of a newfound bilateral "friends with benefits" arrangement, a term amusingly coined by Fatou Jaw Manneh in her Mafanta online editorials.

One conspicuous episode in his diplomatic endeavors was his quest for additional aid and grants from Taiwan. Recognizing Taiwan's aspiration for international recognition and an enhanced global role, Jammeh embarked on a vigorous campaign on Taiwan's behalf. During the Sixty-Fourth United Nations General Assembly in New York, Yahya Jammeh's voice resonated as he championed Taiwan's cause, declaring, "There is also the lingering issue of the Republic of China (Taiwan)."

His delegation passionately argued that Taiwan should be invited to participate in all meetings and activities of international bodies, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Jammeh went a step further, asserting that Taiwan, with its population of twenty-three million

AUDACITY

and democratic status, deserved full membership in all U.N. specialized agencies. He emphasized that the U.N. should uphold this fundamental human right.

However, when Taiwan failed to meet its financial obligations within the stipulated timeframe, Jammeh abruptly severed diplomatic ties. He declared Taiwanese officials' non-grata and gave them forty-eight hours to depart from The Gambia.

Critics scrutinized Jammeh's public image, especially examining how his relationships with his "friends with benefits," such as Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, abruptly unraveled. Subsequently, Jammeh's dwindling credibility in the Western world compelled him to seek financial assistance from affluent Arab nations in exchange for his commitment to Islamize The Gambia.

He officially declared The Gambia an Islamic state in 2015 and withdrew from the Commonwealth of Nations. More overt actions followed these subtle moves to demonstrate his dedication to Sharia law, including declaring Friday and Sunday as public holidays and advocating for the persecution of Christians. He even threatened to exhume Christian graves in the Christian cemetery to make way for a chain of hotel resorts.

Jammeh strategically leveraged his connections with Qatar, Dubai, and Saudi Arabia for human trafficking purposes, exploiting young Gambian girls as housekeepers for wealthy Arab landlords. He established sham charities, like the Kanilai Charity Foundation, to attract donations from affluent Arab benefactors for his personal use.

AUDACITY

Jammeh engaged in what could only be described as gross inter-governmental economic theft and corruption, shamelessly exploiting The Gambia's local economic institutions. The National Water and Electricity Company (NWAEC), GamTel, and The Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) were in dire financial disarray.

Yahya Jammeh often played the role of a "placeholder" or a participant in a series of "trial-run friendships." His cautious approach involved assessing these relationships to determine if he could achieve his desired goals before fully committing to becoming "friends with benefits" with wealthy Arab nations and any global dictatorial leaders seen as adversaries of the West. Under his self-imposed identity as Nasurideen - a defender of Islam, he presented himself as a devout Muslim.

He was a common sight, carrying his signature prayer beads in one hand, gripping the holy Quran in the other, and donning traditional attire during begging trips and public appearances. This carefully cultivated public persona, characterized by strict piety and eccentric beliefs, mirrored the ideologies of his mentors, Gadhafi, and Hugo Chavez, both of whom harbored deep animosity toward Western powers and cultures.

Imam Baba Leigh, speaking to his congregation during mosque sermons, shed light on the stark contrast between Jammeh's public image and his true nature, stating, "Jammeh portrays himself as a pious man when in fact he was the vilest person alive after Satan." Jammeh began by castigating prosperous Western nations, accusing them of running an immoral

AUDACITY

empire of greed, pursuing global dominance, and condemning other countries for not embracing homosexuality as a human right.

In 2013, he declared that same-gender relationships were one of the three "biggest threats to human existence." In 2014, he went as far as labeling gay men as "venom" during a speech commemorating his country's independence from the British, earning him the reputation of a provocateur seeking attention from wealthy Arab nations.

In response to Jammeh's threats against the LGBT community, The Gambian police and officials from the National Intelligence Agency promptly rounded up dozens of individuals suspected of their sexual orientation.

Unhinged, Jammeh signed a law in 2014 imposing a life sentence on anyone found guilty of "aggravated homosexuality."

This led to an individual who attended a 2012 birthday party, considered to be "promoting homosexuality," fleeing The Gambia due to safety concerns. Jammeh's threats of violence towards gay or LGBT individuals engaging in same-gender relationships in The Gambia did not elicit a strong response from "rich Western nations and the LGBT communities."

Consequently, due to international isolation and a prolonged shortage of aid funds, which Jammeh often dismissed as "chicken change," he engaged in various illicit global activities. These activities included arms trading in sub-Saharan Africa, drug trafficking, interference in the internal affairs of other countries,

AUDACITY

and trafficking of young Gambian girls to Arab nations as housekeepers.

Jammeh created a facade, such as the Kanilai Charity Foundation, to attract donations from wealthy Arab donors for personal use, all while siphoning funds from The Gambia's local economic institutions, leaving them financially devastated.

Russell Long aptly noted, "A country whose population has been trained to accept the government's word and to shun those critical of it only injures the people it seeks to serve; it damages its integrity and operation." Jammeh's penchant for government secrecy served his interests alone.

In 2010, Jammeh made an abrupt decision to sever ties with Iran, ordering all Iranian government representatives to leave The Gambia within 48 hours. This move had significant repercussions, leading to the termination of several Iranian-funded projects in The Gambia, including a two-billion-dollar agreement for the supply of commercial vehicles.

Reports indicated that Nigeria had informed the U.N. Security Council about the seizure of a container filled with weapons, including rocket launchers and grenades, destined for The Gambia. However, Iran's response, as conveyed by Mr. Borujerdi, chairperson of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's parliament, dismissed these concerns as being "in line with international laws."

AUDACITY

Similarly, Jammeh's decision to terminate ties with Hugo Chavez's government lacked public explanation, leaving the populace to speculate about its reasons.



Shortly after that, two tons of cocaine were discovered in The Gambia, resulting in the arrest of several individuals, including Venezuelans, Dutch nationals, a Nigerian, and a Mexican. This marked a stark departure from The Gambia's historical stance as a drug-free zone with a zero-tolerance policy on illegal drugs.

The prevailing lawlessness and corruption, which extended to high-ranking officials, including Jammeh himself, had transformed the country into a transit point for narcotics, with an estimated 27 percent of all cocaine destined for Europe passing through The Gambia.

Christopher Kirkland's 2011 report highlighted The Gambia's lucrative role as a hub for drug transit, attributing it to the region's lawlessness and corruption, involving top government officials, including Jammeh himself.

AUDACITY

Despite his vocal opposition to coups and his commitment to executing numerous coup plotters against his regime, Jammeh provided refuge to José Américo Bubo Na Tchuto. Born in Guinea-Bissau in 1949, Na Tchuto served as an admiral in the country's Navy and held the position of Chief of Staff.

In 2008, he orchestrated a failed coup against President João Bernardo Vieira, leading to his exile in The Gambia. Fearing for his life, Na Tchuto sought refuge in The Gambia. After two years in The Gambia, weary of exile, he returned home to Guinea Bissau in 2009, a return that coincided with his country's president - Nino Vieira's assassination.

In 2013, Na Tchuto's life took a drastic turn when he was captured in international waters near Cape Verde during an operation by North American and Cape Verdean police. Subsequently, he was extradited to the United States and charged with conspiring to import drugs.

The charges extended to co-conspirators, encompassing narco-terrorism, drug trafficking, and aiding FARC by storing cocaine not only in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau but also in neighboring Senegal and other areas across the West African sub-region.

Prosecutors asserted that Na Tchuto had proposed utilizing Guinea-Bissau for contraband smuggling, particularly following the 2012 coup. Na Tchuto was arrested by the former navy chief of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency for cocaine smuggling into the United States, was at large in The Gambia for extended periods of time.

AUDACITY

The intoxication of power consumed Jammeh's former close aide, Bubo Na Tchuto, facing accusations in his home country, Guinea-Bissau, for an alleged coup plot against then-President Nino Vieira. Internationally recognized as a known drug trafficker, and in 2008, Bubo faced a life-threatening situation after a coup he orchestrated to overthrow then-President Nino Vieira failed.

As revelations about Jammeh's global maneuvers unfolded, The Gambia found itself at a crossroads, its reputation tarnished, and its citizens caught in the crossfire of a leader driven by personal wealth accumulation personal and greed.

While the drug trade thrived in Banjul, BBC's Mark Doyle, present in the city during the bust, observed that some Gambian officers involved in the operation wore expressions of satisfaction, understanding that drug cartels exploited the region's poverty and weak security and judicial systems.

Christopher Kirkland added that it was difficult to fathom that among those involved in drug trafficking, despite Jammeh's strong anti-drug stance, was none other than The Gambian president, Yahya Jammeh. Jammeh's accusations of extensive torture and enforced disappearances had marred Jammeh's regime.

Moreover, there were troubling claims of over eleven million dollars (£8.8m) disappearing from The Gambia's state coffers after Jammeh's departure in January.

AUDACITY

According to Facebook posts by Hon. Mai Fatty, The Gambia's Interior Minister, the full extent of Jammeh's crimes might remain concealed forever, as he was declared the country's wealthiest individual. He had amassed a personal fortune surpassing The Gambia's state funds, as the Jollof Media Network reported.

Yet, this was just the beginning. The allegations against Yahya Jammeh painted him as a ruthless criminal and a corrupt leader whose crimes were only partially revealed to the world. Under Jammeh's rule, what was once known as "the smiling coast" had turned into "a grieving coast," lamented Hon. Sedat Jobe, former foreign minister and Current Gambian ambassador to France.

Unfortunately, Jammeh received support both from opportunistic Gambians and foreigners, both within the country and abroad (from the Lebanese and Saudi Arabian communities), as well as other dictators akin to him. Jammeh's sole objective was to exploit Gambians relentlessly. External supporters, especially Iran and Venezuela, played a pivotal role in bolstering his regime.

Jammeh capitalized on his facade of Islamization and anti-Western sentiments, portraying himself as a victim, who garnered sympathy and foreign currency from dictatorial governments without checks and balances. Coach Pa Samba Jow added, "With these 'blank cheques,' he purchased military hardware to continue to terrorize the unarmed Gambian population."

AUDACITY

The inflow of drugs into The Gambia's coastal borders was primarily through the waters off Guinea-Bissau, originating from South America. Guinea-Bissau's Bijagós Islands, often described as a tourist's paradise with palm trees and sandy beaches, had unfortunately become a haven for drug traffickers. Isolated, inhabited by impoverished Indigenous people with limited access to global news, it was an ideal location for traffickers.



The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) noted that around 2005, it became evident that drugs worth billions of dollars were being funneled through Guinea-Bissau in West Africa, destined for European shores and even the United States. During this period, Guinea-Bissau experienced coups, attempted coups, and even the assassination of its president as the competition for cocaine profits escalated, inflaming tensions among rival factions.

AUDACITY

In 2013, after the arrest of Guinea-Bissau's former navy chief, José Américo Bubo Na Tchuto, for trafficking cocaine into the United States, Jammeh's name surfaced during his interrogations in U.S. custody. Tchuto claimed that he and Jammeh were partners in drug smuggling.

Jammeh, during his briefings, reassured Gambians that while "the devilish Western leaders refused to help The Gambian people with aid money," he believed that he would obtain money from 'Allah's Bank,' implying that God would provide funds for The Gambian people from then on.

However, unbeknownst to Gambians, two tons of cocaine with an estimated street value of one billion dollars were discovered stacked in a warehouse in a small village called Burnto in The Gambia, prepared for transport to Europe.

Despite Jammeh and his government officials vehemently denying any involvement or knowledge of drug smuggling activities in The Gambia and attributing it to drug cartels exploiting the region's poverty and weak security and judicial systems, police evidence squarely pointed at him and his associates.

Faced with mounting evidence, Jammeh had no choice but to act swiftly, arresting all foreign nationals connected to Colombian and South American drug cartels. A member of the drug squad noted, "He knew where the drug smugglers lived and frequented, and when pushed into a corner, he unleashed his drug squad personnel to apprehend them."

AUDACITY

While individuals of various nationalities were apprehended, tried, and imprisoned, some perished in custody. All the while, Jammeh walked away unscathed, still looking for avenues to generate funds to fuel his failing dictatorial regime. It was a shocking revelation that The Gambia president was now internationally labeled as a drug lord.

Jammeh's excuse was that The Gambia lacked the means to combat drug smugglers effectively. The drugs primarily arrived by sea, often through Guinea-Bissau waters, making it difficult to investigate. Intercepting boats was a logistical challenge, and by the time authorities received information about drug shipments at sea, it often took days to act.

Jammeh, in a bid to deflect blame, accused the West of fostering drug addiction and urged them to deal with their drug problems, effectively dissociating The Gambia from any drug dealings.

"As a nation, Gambians don't even know what cocaine is or what it looks like," quoting Jammeh.

With allegations of close connections between Yahya Jammeh and a business partner of the incarcerated Russian arms trafficker, Viktor Anatolyevich Bout, known as "the merchant of death," Mr. Essa Bokarr Sey, a former Gambian ambassador to Washington, France, and Taiwan, revealed, "Mr. Bout facilitated the procurement of the President's grounded New Millennium plane."

AUDACITY

This plane, associated with Jammeh's former confidant, the late Baba Kajali Jobe, was accused of trafficking arms to war-torn Liberia in exchange for conflict diamonds, often referred to as blood diamonds.

Mr. Jobe had been placed on a U.N. travel ban list before his untimely demise in prison. Viktor Anatolyevich Bout, serving a life sentence in the United States for terrorism-related charges, was tasked with recruiting pilots for Jammeh's jets. It is important to note that all Jammeh's pilots were Russian and had been stationed in Banjul before a dispute with their employer led to their expulsion from the country.

Ambassador Sey, who had once served as the ambassador to the United States, possessed valuable insider information. He resided in Lowville, Kentucky, after his abrupt dismissal by Jammeh.

He openly referred to his former boss, Yahya Jammeh, as a confirmed drug dealer and arms trafficker. Sey was bewildered by the regime's attempts to defend Baba Jobe when the U.N. released its indictment against him, only to abandon him like a sacrificial lamb at the last minute.

Additionally, Ambassador Sey recalled instances during his tenure in Taiwan when Mr. Jammeh attempted to distance him from knowledge of or involvement in his covert arms acquisitions.

He cited an example where former army chief Lang Tombong Tamba, who was later arrested and served time for plotting to overthrow Jammeh's regime,

AUDACITY

served on death row until his pardon by Adama Barrow's presidency.

According to Sey, Jammeh dispatched Tamba to Bulgaria and Hungary to negotiate arms deals. Tamba, then a captain in the army, consistently kept Sey out of the loop, asserting that the president sent him to secure fertilizer and scholarships for students.

As it turned out, the Senegalese government captured rebels from Casamance, Senegal, armed with weaponry bearing Iranian and Russian serial numbers. According to Sey, Jammeh's desire for arms was primarily driven by financial gain. The dictator supplied arms to the MFDC rebels in exchange for timber, a lucrative venture for Jammeh in the region. He also owned a timber sawmill factory in Kanilai, his purported birthplace.

Sey concluded that "Jammeh is determined to eliminate potential witnesses who might testify against him in the future if he faces indictment," referring to the deaths of Baba Jobe and Sadibou Hydara. Despite this, Lang Tombong Tamba survived to witness Jammeh's downfall and could potentially serve as a crucial witness in any future trial involving Jammeh.

Banka Manneh, a prominent Jammeh Diaspora activist, pointed out that The Gambia had witnessed numerous unpunished murders and crimes over the past twenty-two years under Jammeh's leadership.

Salif Sadio, also known as Salif Sarjo, is a prominent rebel leader in the Casamance region of Senegal. He is the leader of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), a separatist group involved in a

AUDACITY

long-running conflict seeking independence for the Casamance region.

The Casamance conflict dates to the early 1980s and has resulted in sporadic violence, displacement of civilians, and instability in the region. Salif Sadio has played a crucial role in leading the MFDC's armed struggle for independence, although the conflict has seen various factions and leaders within the MFDC over the years.

Efforts to resolve the Casamance conflict through negotiations and peace talks have been ongoing, with periods of relative calm followed by renewed violence. Salif Sadio's leadership and the complex dynamics within the MFDC have been central to the challenges of finding a lasting solution to the conflict in the Casamance region.

However, Salif Sadio and his group of rebels played a significant role in financing Yahya Jammeh's rogue government machinery.

Despite receiving unwavering support from Salif, the Casamance rebel leader, Baba Jobe's achievements included securing additional funding from Muammar Gadhafi and establishing connections with Charles Taylor, sent by Jammeh to Liberia for blood diamond negotiations.

They also traveled to meet with the President of Mauritania, facilitating Jammeh's visits to Libya. Reports were tying Nino's escape from Guinea-Bissau on one occasion before his assassination to Jammeh's involvement, as indicated by an anonymous source.

AUDACITY

Apart from serving as a presidential transport for official duties, Jammeh's Millennium presidential aircraft was frequently used for arms trafficking and the transportation of blood diamonds across the region and Europe.

Baba Kajali Jobe, Jammeh's close associate, youth mobilizer, and founder of the Green Boys, managed the Millennium aircraft and recruited young women who posed as air hosts. These women, known as "Jammeh's girls," benefited financially from their roles as air hosts on the Millennium fleet.

Jammeh's affiliation with Viktor Anatolyevich Bout, a Russian arms dealer known as the "Merchant of Death" and "Sanctions Buster," smuggled arms from Eastern Europe to Africa and the Middle East in the 1990s and early 2000s, was exposed during his U.S. federal court trial.

In 2011, he was convicted in a U.S. federal court of conspiracy to kill American citizens and officials, delivering anti-aircraft missiles, and providing aid to the terrorist organization Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Bout was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment but was released in December 2022 in a prisoner exchange for American basketball player Brittney Griner.

Upon returning to Russia in 2022, Bout joined the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and won a seat in the Legislative Assembly of Ulyanovsk Oblast in July 2023.

AUDACITY

Yahya Jammeh was notorious for betraying his close associates under pressure, like his actions with former ally Charles Taylor. He openly supported Charles Taylor, who was eventually extradited from Nigeria in 2005, facing international formal accusation for war crimes. Jammeh's name appeared in the formal accusation documents as an emissary of Charles Taylor.

As arms trafficking and blood diamonds faced international scrutiny, Jammeh turned to other illicit means to generate funds for his regime, including manipulating foreign exchange rates and international call termination charges. This led to an increase in per-minute charges for international calls. Blogger Nyang Njie shared a personal experience on Facebook, highlighting concerns about fraudulent practices in the telecommunications sector.

A former GamTel employee estimated that these gateway termination call charges had generated over forty-eight million dollars for Jammeh during his twenty-two-year rule. The exact start date of this illicit practice remained uncertain but began around eleven years ago.

These GamTel gateways called termination charges were just one aspect of the hidden secrets within Jammeh's inner circle, known only to loyalists, ministers, Jammeh himself, and a select group of outside confidants.

These revelations were only the beginning, as a commission of inquiry prepared to trace the Jammeh money trail, promising a long, chilling saga filled with unexpected twists and unsettling revelations.

AUDACITY

Before the GamTel Gateway call termination charges were exposed, another scandal had shocked the entire country and garnered international attention. It involved allegations of female human trafficking to Arab states under the guise of employment as housekeepers. Young Gambians were lured into perilous employment journeys, enduring horrendous working conditions in a bid to improve the lives of their impoverished families back in The Gambia.

According to the 2016 U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report Country Narrative, The Gambia was considered both a source and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking.

Within The Gambia, women, girls, and, to a lesser extent, boys were victims of sex trafficking and domestic servitude. The report highlighted that women, girls, and boys were recruited for commercial sexual exploitation in The Gambia.

It also noted the presence of European child sex tourists in the country, a phenomenon that had persisted since The Gambia became a tourist destination. It was believed that organized sex trafficking networks colluded with both Europe and The Gambia travel agencies to facilitate child sex tourism.

The report further stated that some Gambian boys attending Quranic schools, led by religious teachers locally known as 'Maurits,' were forced into begging and street vending by corrupt or unscrupulous elders-also locally known as 'Oustass.'

AUDACITY

Moreover, The Gambian children were also identified as victims of forced labor in neighboring West African countries, including Ghana and Senegal. Notably absent from The Gambian history books were the stories of women and girls subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking in Middle Eastern countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Lebanon in recent times.

According to the Freedom newspaper, "hundreds of Gambian girls have been trafficked to the Gulf states of Kuwait, Dubai, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Lebanon over the years, under the disguise of 'business trips and work-related visas.' These girls were sold to Arab families for significant sums of money by traffickers, some of whom resided in The Gambia, Senegal, and the Gulf states." This inhumane human trafficking of young Gambian girls to the Gulf region brought in millions of dollars in foreign remittances annually.

In Kuwait, for instance, Innocent Gambian girls were sold for 100,000-dalasi, equivalent to 2,500 US dollars. The girls endured various forms of abuse, including physical beatings, denial of food, strenuous labor, and confinement, all at the hands of their Arab enslavers.

Sometimes, they were tasked with dangerous jobs like climbing trees and roofs, cleaning air conditioners, walls, fences, and even babysitting. Sohna, one of the girls interviewed on Freedom Radio Gambia, revealed that her Arab enslaver in Kuwait claimed she was sold for 750 dinars.

Chapter 6

Unlawful Arrests, Forced Disappearances, And Assaults On Human Rights Advocates

As President Yahya Jammeh marked his twenty-second year in power on July 22, 2014, he celebrated with lavish parties held at the statehouse, McCarthy Square, and his alleged birthplace in Kanilai. Cultural dance performances, the distribution of contraceptives, and an abundance of food, beverages, and marijuana characterized these events.

Yet, amidst this growing autocracy, Jammeh's personal excesses knew no bounds. Looting an estimated \$975 million, he constructed a lavish private estate in his home village.

The estate boasted opulence—a palace, an extravagant car collection including Ferraris, Rolls-Royces, and Maseratis, a private mosque, and an exotic animal-filled orphanage that housed hyenas, lions, zebras, and more.

Throughout this period, Amnesty International consistently urged Jammeh and his administration to address the increasing restrictions on political opposition and freedom of expression in The Gambia.

Throughout his twenty-two-year rule, Amnesty International's Secretary General, Salil Shetty, vociferously condemned Jammeh's regime, labeling it a "murderous" administration marred by daily arbitrary arrests, detentions, and enforced

AUDACITY

disappearances. Shetty also criticized neighboring nations for their silence regarding the human rights abuses transpiring in The Gambia.

Human rights defenders, journalists, and political opponents continually faced intimidation, harassment, death threats, arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, and enforced disappearance with complete impunity. In this environment, most civil society organizations and media outlets resorted to self-censorship, operating within an overarching climate of fear.

Pa Nderry Mbai, originally from Touba Mourid, Niamina, in the Central River Region of The Gambia, was a seasoned journalist and the founder of Freedom Newspaper, an online news outlet headquartered in the United States. His journalism journey began in the early 1990s at the Daily Observer Newspaper, and he later joined The Point Newspaper in 1989, where he remained until 2004 before relocating to the United States.

Mr. Mbai is widely acknowledged for his pivotal role in challenging the government of former President Yahya Jammeh. Through his online radio and newspaper, he fearlessly and consistently shed light on the government's and its officials' wrongdoings. His unwavering dedication contributed significantly to the eventual downfall of President Jammeh's regime.

On Tuesday, November 22, 2021, Pa Nderry Mbai sadly passed away in Raleigh, USA, following a brief illness. He leaves a legacy as a prominent Gambian journalist who used his platform to expose human rights abuses, corruption, and political injustices in The Gambia. His reporting was vital in raising awareness about the

AUDACITY

country's situation and advocating for justice and accountability.

Pa Nderry continued his relentless pursuit of exposing Jammeh's brutality, emphasizing what was the most harrowing aspect of Jammeh's regime: the specter of forced disappearances. Through his widely followed radio broadcasts, he delved into the heart-wrenching stories of individuals who vanished without a trace, leaving their families in perpetual anguish. The regime's denial and obfuscation only deepened the wounds of the bereaved.

This chapter compels us to confront the chilling reality of enforced disappearances during Jammeh's rule, where families were torn apart, lives shattered, and a nation held captive by fear.

Illustrating the countless human rights abuses endured by defenders and journalists in The Gambia during that dark period would be an overwhelming task, akin to compiling an encyclopedia. Secrecy was pervasive, and avenues for victims to seek justice or even report missing loved ones were scarce.

This grim reality made it impossible to comprehensively document, record, or report every instance of intimidation, harassment, death threats, arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, ill-treatment, and enforced disappearances that afflicted individuals from all strata of The Gambian society. The extent of suffering and injustice was profound and deeply entrenched.

Soldiers enjoyed impunity through laws like the Indemnity (Amendment) Act of 2001, effectively granting them free rein to act without accountability.

AUDACITY

This law, according to a concerned legal practitioner, shielded soldiers from consequences, even in cases of fatal shootings.

After two decades of Jammeh's rule, the universal periodic review of The Gambia provided a unique opportunity for The Gambian authorities to address their human rights challenges. This included repealing legislation that curtailed freedom of expression, investigating allegations of human rights violations, and prosecuting the perpetrators.

The Gambia government had ratified several human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, as outlined in the Article 19 report.

However, the government had failed to ratify other crucial international human rights treaties, including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Due to the high number of disappearances and disregard for the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which aimed to abolish the death penalty, the international community began to focus on Jammeh and his nefarious intentions towards his people.

The Gambia consistently failed to implement resolutions from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and decisions from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of Justice.

AUDACITY

These decisions called for investigations into allegations of torture in detention, extrajudicial executions, and compliance with the ECOWAS Court of Justice's rulings, including those related to Ebrima Manneh, Musa Saidykhan, and Deyda Hydara, as detailed in the Article 19 report.

During Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia, the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the police routinely engaged in arbitrary arrests, often exceeding the constitutional seventy-two-hour limit without charge. Journalists and human rights advocates exercising their freedom of expression were targeted using vague legal provisions like giving false information to a public servant.

Over Jammeh's twenty-two-year rule, numerous journalists fled The Gambia due to fears of arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, or death. Some journalists were ambushed and killed, while others faced assassination attempts. Enforced disappearances, a grim reality in The Gambia, violated international law and subjected victims and their families to a legal black hole.

Jammeh manipulated national and international laws to prolong his rule, recruiting a group of soldiers into The Gambian National Army, known as the "Junglars" or "Black Black Boys." Trained in Libya, they operated covertly, employing torture and covert operations until their revelations in 2016 damaged Jammeh's reputation.

Aware of the risks, journalists adopted self-censorship, using pseudonyms and online platforms for reporting. The government, accusing Diaspora media of

AUDACITY

fabricating stories, blocked IP addresses nationwide. Security forces, notably the NIA and PIU, arrested and detained political activists, religious leaders, and journalists critical of the government. Sheriff Mustapha Dibba, a prominent politician, tragically died in police custody in 2008 after advocating for lower fuel prices.

His death highlighted the government's failure to provide prompt medical attention. The narrative also touches on the broader human rights violations, torture, extrajudicial killings, and political oppression during Jammeh's rule. Imam Baba Leigh, Fatou Camara, Musa Sheriff, Sainey M. K. Marenah, and others faced abuse and harassment. Jammeh's presidency, infamous for brutal tactics and human rights violations, left a dark and harrowing legacy. The accounts of torture, arbitrary arrests, and executions were part of a larger pattern of abuses that permeated The Gambian society.

Jammeh's rule ended in 2017, but the scars persisted. The Gambia embarked on healing, reconciliation, and justice, addressing past abuses to build a more democratic and accountable government. The memoir unveils the untold stories of those who endured the relentless storm of abuses during Jammeh's controversial regime.

Chapter 7

A Violent Crackdown on The Gambia's Largest Opposition Party, The United Democratic Party

In a world where protests often rally behind iconic figures and movements, the power of collective voices has resounded throughout history. While The Gambia's case lacked famous names like Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement, these figures and their enduring symbols of peaceful protest have left an indelible mark on reshaping America's landscape and emphasizing the importance of civil rights and equality.

Dr. King's impassioned call for the U.S. government to do what is right resonates globally, a timeless reminder of the unifying force that protests can embody. Regardless of the diverse causes behind protests, they converge into one voice and purpose.

Recent years have witnessed protests erupting across the United States, from calls for the repeal of Stand Your Ground laws in memory of Trayvon Martin to Brazilians rallying against bus fare hikes and Turks opposing controversial construction projects.

Indonesians rejected higher fuel prices, Bulgarians decried government cronyism, and the Eurozone saw marches against austerity. The Arab Spring began as a series of protests and evolved into a persistent movement addressing many grievances. Each demonstration has unique concerns yet shares a common yearning for meaningful change.

AUDACITY

Beneath the surface of these diverse causes, common threads unite protesters. Recently, protests have emerged globally with astonishing speed and precision, with democracies witnessing more activism than dictatorships.

These demonstrators are often ordinary citizens, including students, youths, and middle-class individuals, rather than professional lobbyists with specific demands. Fueled by frustration over poor governance and the denial of fundamental human rights, they vent their anger against corruption, inefficiency, and the arrogance of those in power.

In 1989, the Soviet regime, which clung to power through fear and divisive tactics, met its downfall. However, it is worth considering Karl Marx's notion that the prosperity of capitalism in the 1860s primarily altered societal norms rather than politics. African politicians often recycle old policies with little deviation, a practice akin to a dream.

Technological advances have significantly accelerated the pace of protests. Protests in São Paulo, Istanbul, the Arab states, or anywhere on Earth can be witnessed within minutes if not seconds.

Social networks organize hubs, disseminate information, inspire emulation, and make causes fashionable with a simple mouse click, leading to larger crowds. In this era of smartphones, news and stories spread faster than wildfires, even faster than social media platforms.

AUDACITY

In the era of rapid information dissemination through platforms like Twitter and Facebook, noteworthy events such as the Iranian protests, contested election results, or the onset of the Arab Spring were broadcasted within seconds.

This shift has transformed traditional union and political lobby-driven protests into exceptions, as news now travels so swiftly that a small group of individual protesters can effectively challenge a dictator without a single bullet being fired.

The youth unemployment crisis in The Gambia, coupled with a lack of freedom, provides fertile ground for organizations advocating peaceful protests joblessness. Many Gambians face insufficient education and lack prospects or a safety net, leading to a low standard of living.

In years past, we have seen educated young Indians took to the streets in multiple cities following the gang rape of a 23-year-old medical student, protesting the lack of protection for women. The Gambian students attempted a similar endeavor, only to be suppressed and brutalized by cowardly, armed soldiers acting on the orders of President Yahya Jammeh's office.

Under the dark and foreboding pretext, democracy has grown increasingly elusive and costly. The diaspora allocated resources among interest groups, resulting in massive street demonstrations in Western cities. These rallies were a response to the attacks orchestrated by Jammeh's security agents in Washington, D.C., particularly the one in front of the Adam Hays Hotel.

AUDACITY

Similar demonstrations took place in front of the United Nations headquarters, drawing international attention to Jammeh's tactics of intimidation against the families of those participating in marches abroad.

Protesters do not anticipate immediate change but exhibit unwavering determination, regardless of the potential repercussions, even death, if it advances their desired changes.

It is worth noting that Jammeh believed he could suppress demonstrations, as other nations, like China, have succeeded in preventing local protests from coalescing into a national movement. Saudi Arabia has silenced dissidents through bribery, while Russia has employed threats of fines and imprisonment.

The Gambian "struggle" protesters agitated, provoked, and demanded justice. They persevered, enduring scorching heat for hours. Jammeh, the autocrat and dictator, paid a steep price. His use of force to disperse demonstrators weakened his regime, especially as they subjected protesters to physical abuse and attacked individuals like Fatu Camara and Saul Mbenga in Washington, D.C.

The "struggle" leveraged social media to effectively and efficiently share images, stories, and videos online. They orchestrated effective, cost-free protests, using email (bulk email), Facebook, and Twitter to send memos and secret messages while maintaining anonymity to safeguard themselves from future actions.

AUDACITY

However, these freedom fighters needed a central leadership figure or a cohesive team to plan. Their inability to maintain secrecy and unity hindered their success, as bickering and accusations flooded social media platforms and online interactions.

Jammeh lacked the institutions to channel the protesters' anger. As he witnessed his security personnel and secret service grapple with the demonstrators, he could only hope and pray. The persistence of the protestors prevailed over his malevolent resolve.

President Jammeh aimed to promote social cohesion in one of his Eid-Tobaski festive messages broadcasted on national GRTS TV and published in the Daily Observer.

He stated, "We live in a highly integrated world in economics and culture, yet we have our own beliefs and value systems anchored on and enhanced by religion, to which we must adhere at all times. No success or progress will endure unless it is founded on the Laws of God as promulgated in the Holy Qur'an."

This theme, "living according to our religion," appeared to serve as a smokescreen, diverting attention from the harsh challenges Gambians faced under Jammeh's rule. His decision to take this hardline stance stemmed from nostalgia and frustration over the lack of carte blanche from the EU, Britain, and other nations.

Jammeh withdrew The Gambia from the Commonwealth and intensified his rhetoric against the global LGBT community, labeling them "the biggest

AUDACITY

threat to humanity." When Yahya Jammeh initially criticized "rich Western nations," the world considered him eccentric. He sought attention from "wealthy Arab Nations" that shared his philosophies and ideologies.

In 2013, he addressed the U.N. General Assembly, naming same-gender relationships among the three most significant threats to human existence. A year later, during a speech commemorating The Gambia's independence from the U.K., he described gay men as "venom."

Following Jammeh's signing of a 2014 law imposing life sentences for "aggravated homosexuality," "The Gambian police and National Intelligence Agency officials swiftly arrested dozens of individuals suspected of their sexual orientation.

A man who claimed to be among eighteen people arrested at a 2012 birthday party for "promoting homosexuality" fled The Gambia shortly after the law's enactment. Consequently, the E.U. decided to withhold over 150 million euros in aid funds.

Jammeh responded defiantly to the backlash, dismissing it as insignificant. He called upon civil servants to protest the E.U.'s 17-point demands, alleging that the E.U. blocked aid money because he refused to allow the "export of homosexuality into The Gambia." Protesters chanted slogans like "no to colonization and capitalism," proclaiming that The Gambia was not for sale. Jammeh even vowed to slit the throats of any gay or LGBT individuals caught engaging in same-gender relationships in The Gambia.

AUDACITY

Consequently, in late 2014, the Obama administration declared that The Gambia would no longer qualify for a duty-free trade program providing access to U.S. markets for sub-Saharan African countries.

Additionally, the European Union had postponed a 150 million Euro aid package. This economic downturn painted a grim picture for The Gambia, as it faced challenges in receiving Foreign Direct Investment, crucial for an economy heavily reliant on support from the E.U. and other "rich Western nations."

In the annals of Gambians' tireless pursuit of justice and democracy in The Gambia, there exists a chapter resonating with the echoes of diaspora activism. This chapter is dedicated to the valiant members of The Gambian diaspora who, despite residing far from home, emerged as resounding voices challenging the oppressive regime of Yahya Jammeh.

As the sun dipped below distant horizons, the children of The Gambia living abroad were united with a shared concern for the plight of their compatriots. Bearing witness to unspeakable atrocities, hearing heart-rending tales of suffering, and feeling the anguish of those back in their homeland, they recognized that the time had come for them to act. They were resolute in their commitment to lend their voices to the chorus demanding change.

These gatherings eloquently expressed their unwavering solidarity with their brethren enduring the daily hardships of Jammeh's regime back home. They stood as a testament to the unbreakable bonds that united them across the miles.

AUDACITY

From bustling New York to vibrant London and across cities worldwide, they took to the streets with placards and chants, steadfastly calling for justice, human rights, and democracy in their beloved homeland. These diaspora protests transcended mere gatherings; they embodied their unwavering dedication to justice and freedom.

Through spirited rallies, impassioned demonstrations, and potent social media campaigns, they endeavored to ensure that the world would not avert its gaze from the suffering of their fellow Gambians. They understood that their voices could exert tremendous pressure on the Jammeh regime.

Their protests were intended to serve as an unequivocal reminder that the international community remained vigilant and the human rights violations in The Gambia would not be ignored.

They provided essential financial and logistical assistance to opposition groups and activists within The Gambia. These contributions kept alive the flicker of hope for a brighter tomorrow. Additionally, some among the protestors boldly called for economic sanctions against the Jammeh regime, urging the world to employ financial leverage to compel respect for human rights and democratic values.

The diaspora protests transcended the boundaries of geography; they epitomized their unwavering dedication to justice and human rights. They were the voices that resonated across borders, a testament to the potent force of unity and a living embodiment of the truth that no distance could weaken their resolve. Though separated by oceans and continents, their

AUDACITY

actions were underpinned by the shared dream of a free, democratic Gambia.

As the world turned its gaze toward their protests, their struggle continued unabated, their voices grew more robust, and their resolve deepened. Together, they persisted in their pursuit of change, in their call for justice, and as a testament to the indomitable spirit of The Gambian people. Their chapter in this ongoing struggle is one of diaspora activism, a narrative of unity, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the cause of justice and human rights.

Technology shattered Jammeh's control over the flow of information. Dissidents could collect and disseminate information from all corners of The Gambia, even within government agencies such as the NIA and police headquarters. This made it challenging for the regime to suppress dissent or conceal its actions.

Jammeh's failure to adapt to the evolving technological landscape was pivotal in his downfall. The world watched As Gambians harnessed the power of technology to expose human rights abuses, demand justice, and rally for change, contributing to the end of Jammeh's decades-long rule.

For instance, prominent opposition leader Solo Sandeng, a prominent opposition leader, who, along with more than ninety opposition activists, marched alongside the entire leadership of the UDP party. They were promptly arrested, including the party's prominent leader, Ousainou Darboe. Nevertheless, the rapid dissemination of social media livestreams caused

AUDACITY

their arrest to become a global spectacle, exposing Jammeh's harsh crackdown.

Their sole offense was participating in peaceful protests, symbolizing the beginning of a severe crackdown on the United Democratic Party (UDP), The Gambia's largest opposition party.

The Gambia's key international partners, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States, often criticized the government's abuses against political opponents.

In 2016, Yahya Jammeh's brutal actions in The Gambia went unchallenged by the international community. The lack of meaningful sanctions against The Gambian government for its abuses against journalists, opposition figures, diaspora Gambians, and critics were evident. The tragic killing of Ebrima Solo Sandeng, head of the opposition party's youth wing, while in police custody, exemplified the grim reality.

UDP leader Darboe, after Sandeng's death, confronted Jammeh, displaying legal wisdom and determination. Darboe's subsequent arrest during a protest march brought international attention. Social media played a crucial role in exposing Jammeh's atrocities, keeping Gambians informed and connected globally despite his attempts at isolation.

Jammeh, unprepared for the force of technology and social media, underestimated their role in mobilization. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter, along with hashtags like #GambiaRising, united dissidents, facilitating coordination and information

AUDACITY

dissemination. Live streaming and encrypted messaging apps allowed real-time sharing of events and secured communication.

Social media and online news outlets raised global awareness, making it challenging for Jammeh to operate covertly. The Gambian Diaspora used online activism to expose human rights abuses and corruption within Jammeh's regime, bypassing state-controlled media.

Amid international pressure and hashtags like #GambiaRising, The Gambian protests were characterized as "an act of great defiance." Solo Sandeng's death, Darboe's arrest, and the disappearance of Americans Mamut Ceesay and Ebou Jobe sparked global outrage. The European Union canceled aid, and the U.S. State Department condemned human rights violations, demanding adherence to international laws.

The "Kalama revolution," led by courageous women armed with sweeping brooms, symbolized resilience amidst turmoil. The U.S.-Africa Summit protests in 2014 were unprecedented, showcasing dissidents' dissatisfaction with Jammeh. Jammeh faced isolation during his Washington visit, encountering vehement protests demanding justice and his departure.

In Washington, a diverse group of Gambians united globally by one mission, echoing a collective call for Jammeh's ousting and the remaking of The Gambia into a better place.

AUDACITY

This chapter in The Gambia's recent history resonates with the echoes of courage, justice, and the relentless pursuit of human rights. It exemplifies the power of collective action, fueled by the determination to bring about positive change in the face of oppression.

This memoir chronicles that pivotal moment when ordinary people became torchbearers of justice and champions of human rights. It captures the spirit of resilience that thrived amidst adversity as these individuals sought to shine a piercing light on the injustices plaguing their homeland. The story unfolds against the backdrop of one of the world's most influential cities, where decisions reverberate globally.

Their mission was clear: to challenge the status quo, to confront a regime that had silenced dissent through fear, and to give voice to the voiceless in The Gambia. As we journey through these pages, we witness their unwavering commitment to a cause larger than themselves—a cause rooted in justice, equality, and the sanctity of human rights.

Amidst the uncertainties, as diplomatic relations hung in the balance and the risk of arrest loomed, these individuals stood resolute. The occupation of The Gambia Embassy in Washington DC, the capital city of The United States of America, became a symbol of hope, a plea for change, and a stark reminder that even within the corridors of diplomacy, the call for justice cannot be ignored.

The occupation of The Gambia Embassy in Washington, D.C., marked a pivotal moment in the ongoing struggle for human rights in The Gambia, underscoring the resonance of justice even within

AUDACITY

diplomatic spaces. Gambians who faced arrest that day did so boldly, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the cause of justice and human rights.

In a surprising turn of events, The Gambian activists gained global attention by seizing control of The Gambia Embassy in Maryland. Chaining themselves inside, they took a principled stand against human rights abuses under Jammeh's regime, garnering international support. Sohna Sallah, Pa Samba Jow, and Ousainou Mbenga, the brave individuals confronting tyranny, found themselves in the heart of the U.S. Supreme Court District of Columbia.

Facing potential imprisonment, these activists displayed unyielding resolve, transforming the courtroom into a stage where the cry for justice met the courage of those who witnessed oppression firsthand. In a decision reflecting the enduring spirit of justice, the Judge ruled in favor of their release, turning Sohna Sallah, Pa Samba Jow, and Ousainou Mbenga into symbols of hope and determination.

This memoir emphasizes the courage and dedication of Gambians in the diaspora, aptly named the "Defenders of Justice," who challenged Yahya Jammeh's regime. Their actions unfold the stories of individuals fully aware of the risks, relentlessly pursuing a brighter future for The Gambia. It underscores the power of unity in the face of formidable challenges.

Reflecting on that fateful day reinforces the truth that fighting for human rights often demands significant sacrifices. The courage displayed by those who occupied the embassy remains a symbol of resilience and determination against injustice.

AUDACITY

Following the Washington protest, The Gambian dissidents organized larger demonstrations in major European cities. With valid permits, protesters spread across EU cities, capturing the attention of local and international communities. Jammeh gained infamy, likened to notorious dictators like Gadhafi and Idi Amin.

On August 3, the assault on Fatou Camara and others by the "Black Black Boys" led to widespread media coverage. The D.C. Metropolitan Police intervened, and news of the assault broke in real-time, prompting efforts for independent criminal investigations.

The confrontation marked a turning point, humbling Jammeh on the global stage. Diaspora Gambians had become a force to be reckoned with, demanding their place in shaping The Gambia's future. Jammeh, feeling cornered, replaced key officials and initiated reconciliation efforts, but suspicions and divisions within the diaspora community strained these efforts.

While Jammeh attempted reconciliation, suspicions persisted, and the diaspora community, divided on the matter, regrouped. The use of encrypted platforms intensified their efforts, weakening Jammeh's hold on power and contributing to his eventual downfall.

This memoir encapsulates the resilience of those who fought for justice, capturing the indomitable spirit of a community determined to bring about positive change in the face of oppression.

Chapter 8

The Vital Role of The Gambian Diaspora

The Gambian Diaspora occupies a central position in the country's socio-economic development, with annual financial remittances amounting to approximately 1.7 billion Dalasi (fifty million dollars).

This support serves as a lifeline for numerous Gambian families, highlighting the significant contributions of the Diaspora to the nation's advancement, as confirmed by Foroyaa newspaper—an independent Gambian newspaper owned by the opposition party, PDOIS.

A litany of human rights abuses, including torture, disappearances, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and illegal detentions, marred President Jammeh's oppressive rule of two decades.

This brutal regime forced many journalists from independent media outlets into exile. The heart of activism was driven by the victims of these abuses and former government employees who had been forcibly exiled, whether as private individuals or civil servants.

Over time, diverse segments of The Gambian Diaspora emerged, and these individuals played a pivotal role in the unforeseen downfall of Jammeh, ushering in much-needed peace for the nation. United by their conviction that every citizen, irrespective of tribe, social status, or political affiliation, deserved fundamental human rights, this cohesive group of Diaspora Gambians earned the moniker "Strugglers."

AUDACITY

It was a diverse collective encompassing various profession, age groups, genders, sexual orientations, tribes, races, and even foreign nationalities.

Effectively managing such a diverse and geographically scattered group, each with varying viewpoints, through social media platforms presented its challenges but proved to be an instrumental aspect of their success. The "Struggle" remained an all-inclusive organization, open to anyone wishing to participate, free from hidden fees or tiered memberships.

Social media platforms such as Skype, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp played pivotal roles in organizing the "Strugglers," serving as channels for daily communication and robust information sharing. This technological connectivity facilitated the dissemination of vital information, dealing significant blows to Jammeh's oppressive regime.

The introduction of WhatsApp further empowered the "Strugglers." This encrypted messaging platform enabled the secure sharing of documents, photos, and information, allowing members to expose human rights violations committed by the Jammeh regime. WhatsApp emerged as the primary tool for sharing information, providing user anonymity and privacy.

The rise of online Gambian newspapers and radio outlets also contributed significantly to challenging Jammeh's rule. Leading the charge was Freedom newspaper, with its editorials and articles becoming widely discussed topics across the country.

AUDACITY

Despite government attempts to block specific IP addresses, these outlets persisted in their mission to unveil the regime's actions.

Fatu Camara, a former government press secretary who fled the country after being accused of tarnishing Jammeh's image, played a prominent role. She launched the Fatu Network, utilizing Twitter to reach international human rights organizations and government agencies. Her Facebook group page and online radio broadcasts further eroded Jammeh's control over information.

The media's relentless efforts, combined with grassroots fundraising campaigns organized by The Gambian Diaspora, played a pivotal role in financing opposition parties during the 2016 Presidential Elections. This financial support significantly contributed to the eventual victory of the coalition opposition party and the restoration of democracy in The Gambia.

Despite The Gambian government's efforts to suppress the media, the emergence of online news outlets and the influence of social media ensured that information continued to flow. Jammeh's grip on the country gradually weakened as more Gambians became aware of his dictatorial regime and its human rights violations.

The unwavering commitment of the media to exposing the truth and the financial and organizational support provided by the Diaspora were indispensable in the downfall of Jammeh's regime and the restoration of democracy in The Gambia.

AUDACITY

The nation owed an immense debt of gratitude to these tireless individuals who refused to be silenced in the face of oppression.



Living within The Gambia often felt like inhabiting an open-air prison, where the entire nation had transformed into an expansive detention facility. People vanished without a trace, a grim reality that persisted, with most meeting gruesome fates. Rather than defending and safeguarding its citizens, the government endorsed terror.

These horrifying circumstances were no secret; they had tormented The Gambian populace for two decades. Daily humiliations, enforced disappearances, imprisonments, torture, kidnappings, and even death had become the accepted norm.

President Jammeh's authoritarian tendencies had reached new heights, solidifying his reputation as an emerging dictator.

AUDACITY

Once celebrated as the "Smiling Coast of West Africa," The Gambia had lost its peaceful and tranquil essence. The National Resistance Movement of The Gambia (NRMG) gave voice to the collective frustration of The Gambian people. They decried Jammeh's "delusional leadership" and his unfulfilled promises of freedom, accusing him of enslaving the populace through forced labor on his confiscated farms.

During Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia, numerous reports and allegations surfaced regarding forced labor practices involving civil servants who were compelled to work on his farms. Jammeh, who maintained a firm grip on power during his more than two-decade rule, exploited his position to extract labor from government employees for his benefit.

Civil servants, including teachers, nurses, and various government employees, were frequently coerced into mandatory farming, and often seen toiling on Jammeh's farms during specific periods of the year. This mandatory labor was imposed in addition to their regular duties and often demanded long hours of arduous work.

These civil servants were not remunerated for their toil on Jammeh's farms. They were compelled to work without compensation, further burdening their already modest incomes.

For most civil servants, declining to participate in Jammeh's farming endeavors was not an option. The regime relied on fear and intimidation to ensure compliance. Those who resisted or attempted to voice their opposition to these practices faced the threat of

AUDACITY

reprisals, including potential loss of employment or even physical harm.

Under Jammeh's authoritarian rule, there was little to no accountability for these forced labor practices. The regime tightly controlled government institutions, making it exceptionally challenging for victims to seek justice or redress.

The forced labor imposed on civil servants by Jammeh's regime had profound and distressing consequences

Many civil servants found it much more challenging to make ends meet due to the additional unpaid labor forced upon them. This compelled labor only exacerbated their financial struggles, making it increasingly challenging to support their families.

The grueling farm work exacted a heavy toll on the physical and emotional well-being of civil servants. They often worked in harsh conditions without proper equipment or protective gear. The resulting physical and emotional strain was considerable.

The perpetual fear of reprisals or punishment for non-compliance casts a shadow of fear and trauma over civil servants' lives. This fear extended beyond the workplace, permeating their daily existence.

These forced labor practices attracted widespread condemnation from international human rights organizations and governments. The exploitation of civil servants for personal gain represented a blatant violation of labor rights and fundamental human rights principles.

AUDACITY

Following Yahya Jammeh's removal from power in 2017, The Gambia embarked on a process to address past human rights abuses, including forced labor. Efforts were initiated to provide support and compensation to victims alongside initiatives aimed at promoting accountability and justice for those responsible for these abuses.

The forced labor endured by civil servants on Jammeh's farms serves as a stark reminder of the abuses that transpired during his regime. It underscores the utmost importance of upholding labor rights, ensuring accountability for human rights violations, and collectively working toward a society where such egregious abuses are unequivocally rejected and eradicated.

The NRMG demonstrated unwavering determination to remove the illegitimate government from power. They rallied all progressive forces behind a common goal: the ousting of Jammeh, the despotic ruler. However, they also championed peaceful means to effect this change and restore democracy and the rule of law.

Publicly declaring war on Jammeh was not a viable option, given the asylum status of NRMG members in Western countries and legal constraints like the US Neutrality Act. They made it explicitly clear that they ruled out no option if political processes failed to yield the desired results.

As a new military threat loomed over Jammeh, he taunted the NRMG, daring them to come to The Gambia. Despite dissent within the Struggle groups, the NRMG persisted in pursuing their military agenda,

AUDACITY

driven by the urgency to liberate their country from poverty, lawlessness, crime, drugs, and immorality.

The NRMG was serious, mobilizing independent Gambians in the Diaspora and key Struggle members. They initiated a fundraising campaign and retreated into the shadows to organize and plan for an impending confrontation with Jammeh on his home turf.

The anticipated showdown between the NRMG and The Gambian military officers never transpired. Instead, The Gambia's State House faced an assault by a well-equipped group of Diaspora Gambians, labeled as "terrorists" by the government, according to reports from The Point newspaper.

The attack sowed confusion initially, as no one knew the identity of the assailants. Media outlets like Freedom Newspaper Radio and Fatu Radio conducted investigations to unmask them. Eventually, The Gambia government issued a statement, revealing the alleged terrorists and sharing details of the plot.

The attack, meticulously planned around October 2014, with involvement from Gambians in the United States, Germany, Britain, and Senegal. Their target was the State House complex where President Jammeh resided and worked. The attackers launched their assault from various points surrounding the complex.

Tragically, during the intense battle, two of the attackers, Sanneh, and Jagne, mistakenly believed that some members of The Gambian Armed Forces would join their cause. They were ambushed and killed by Jammeh's militia snipers positioned on rooftops.

AUDACITY

Some attackers managed to escape; one was captured, and others fled, leaving behind a cache of weapons and equipment. Despite their defeat, the attackers had intended to use these items for communication and as a contingency after turning off the country's communication infrastructure.

In the end, all four attackers escaped, including Cherno Njie and Papa Faal, both of whom faced legal charges in the United States due to their involvement. Banka Manneh, a prominent Gambian activist in the US, also received a prison sentence for his role in the plot.

The failed coup attempt garnered international attention, with The New York Times describing it as a "botched coup attempt" in The Gambia. While some sympathized with the attackers, others labelled the mission a "suicide mission." The Struggle faced backlash for placing trust in individuals who betrayed them.

The US Attorney General charged the defendants with violating the Neutrality Act and conspiring to possess firearms in furtherance of a crime of violence. Despite their intentions to restore democracy and improve the lives of Gambians, their actions bore legal consequences.

Jammeh's foreign policy shifted toward Muslim countries like Qatar and the UAE as he distanced himself from Western donors. He even attempted to introduce sharia law in The Gambia but withdrew the plan after facing opposition.

The Struggle's relentless pressure and international efforts significantly tarnished Jammeh's global image,

AUDACITY

leading to diplomatic isolation. However, Jammeh remained defiant, asserting that The Gambia was impervious to colonization and deflecting criticism by emphasizing his Islamic identity.

As the Struggle continued to expose his regime's brutality and corruption, Jammeh's days in power appeared numbered. The strategy to "make him famous" had a profound impact on his reputation, even if it was not the kind of fame he desired.

Chapter 9

Economic Exploitation

During his 22-year rule, The Gambia's former President Yahya Jammeh orchestrated an extensive embezzlement scheme that siphoned \$1 billion from public funds and illegal timber revenue.

Thousands of documents have brought to light the intricate details of corruption orchestrated by former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh.

This memoir explores the systematic plundering of state-run entities, the establishment of private accounts, and the creation of a patronage network during the rampant looting from 2011 to 2016.

Jammeh's rule targeted essential areas, including state-run telecoms, pension funds, illicit timber revenue, foreign aid, central bank reserves, social security, and the state-run oil company. Investigations estimate a staggering \$975 million misappropriated, financing Jammeh's extravagant lifestyle and projects, with a legacy marked by fear, human rights abuses, and widespread corruption.

An exploration of the inner circle, known as "enablers," reveals two distinct groups: economic non-governmental business (personal business) associates and "executive orders enforcement check-cashing" individuals. The TRRC and Jammeh commissions shed light on their roles, with some transitioning to wealth and others remaining in poverty due to fear of Jammeh's brutality.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's mismanagement of Western aid led to a precarious situation, transforming The Gambia from a thriving hub to a global laughingstock. The memoir contrasts neighboring countries' success with democratic governance, highlighting Jammeh's failed policies and autocratic leadership.

Jammeh's focus on internal resources involved drastic currency control measures, including revoking Forex bureau licenses and imposing restrictions on travelers. These abrupt changes caused financial strain and suspicion, earning the Jammeh government a reputation as "scammers."

Jammeh's manipulation of foreign currency exchange rates disrupted sacred observances and led to hoarding within the Diaspora community. Outrage ensued, as Gambians felt exploited, forcing Jammeh to reverse his currency control policies.

The memoir culminates in an exclusive revelation by OCCRP, exposing Jammeh's unprecedented corruption through thousands of documents. These unveil how Jammeh misappropriated government funds, constructed a patronage network, and ruled through cunning, unrestrained power, and violence.

The memoir concludes with a poignant scene as the sun sets over Banjul, the capital city of The Gambia. Against this backdrop, the nation is depicted as having been plunged into a financial abyss, a consequence of Jammeh's deeply entrenched corruption policies. The narrative highlights executive orders that involved substantial withdrawals of cash from government accounts across both domestic and international banks operating in the country and outside.

AUDACITY

This vivid imagery encapsulates the dire economic consequences wrought by Jammeh's governance, leaving The Gambia grappling with the aftermath of financial mismanagement and corruption.

The truth about his economic exploitation spreads, prompting the Diaspora to halt remittances and forcing Jammeh to shift his illicit schemes. The memoir stands as a testament to the resilience of a nation betrayed and the pursuit of justice against corruption.

A staggering sum of over five million dollars had been deposited, but the withdrawals left only a paltry \$292.37 in the account. It was a blatant example of how Jammeh had bled The Gambia's resources dry.

The chaos that followed the exposure of Jammeh's opaque dealings was a wake-up call for Gambians. The telecommunications sector was in disarray, with international call prices soaring to fifty cents per minute. Diaspora Gambians, eager to stay connected with their loved ones, felt the brunt of Jammeh's exploitation.

Amid online radio discussions and debates, the nation could not comprehend why Jammeh was so determined to dismantle vital government institutions. His actions did not just result in revenue losses; they inflated call prices and discouraged potential investors. It was a downward spiral that threatened to undermine The Gambia's progress.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's exploitation knew no bounds. He looted GAMTEL and pushed GAMCEL, its subsidiary, to the brink of collapse. Shockingly, it was alleged that he embezzled a staggering \$48 million from GAMTEL during his presidency.

The extent of Jammeh's economic mismanagement continued to unravel. Finance Minister Sanneh exposed his attempts to exploit other entities, including The Gambia Ports Authority and the Jammeh Foundation for Peace. Funds meant for public goods had been diverted for personal use, funding lavish lifestyles and dubious ventures.

To compound matters, Jammeh ventured into the Casamance region of neighboring Senegal, where timber and cannabis trafficking thrived. His alliance with the Casamance separatist group MFDC revealed the depths of his greed.

He coordinated illegal timber trafficking, bypassing taxes, and levies, and even delved into the world of cannabis trafficking, further tarnishing his legacy.

These revelations painted a stark picture of Jammeh's ruthless exploitation of The Gambia's economy and resources. The clamor for justice and accountability grew louder with each revelation as Gambians came to terms with the magnitude of the economic exploits of Yahya Jammeh.

Yahya Jammeh's tenure as the leader of The Gambia left an indelible mark on the nation's agricultural sector and its broader economy, but it was far from a positive one. What unfolded during his rule could only

AUDACITY

be described as a convoluted and expansive economic exploitation scheme that spanned well over a decade.

Jammeh's policies and his unwavering pursuit of personal wealth were at the core of this complex web of exploitation, resulting in a cascade of problems that inflicted lasting harm on the very nation he was supposed to lead.

Before Jammeh's ascent to power, agriculture was the lifeblood of The Gambia, employing more than 70% of its population and significantly contributing to the country's GDP. Groundnut exports had been a driving force behind the nation's economic prosperity. However, Jammeh's approach to agriculture was marked by ineptitude and a stark disconnect from the realities on the ground.

Jammeh's agricultural policies needed to be sounder. He abruptly terminated partnership arrangements with agribusiness associations that had previously facilitated groundnut purchases on behalf of the government.

This centralization of control led to inefficiencies and the collapse of The Gambia Groundnut Corporation (GGC). Even attempts to privatize the GGC proved futile and only exacerbated the crisis.

The president's intervention in land allocation could have been more problematic. He seized lands from farmers through executive directives, often resulting in their imprisonment without due process.

AUDACITY

This created an environment of uncertainty and fear among the very individuals responsible for feeding the nation. The agricultural equipment donated by foreign countries fell under Jammeh's control, further crippling the capacity of local farmers.

Jammeh's neglect extended to the vital tourism industry, which suffered due to his lack of attention and global events like the Arab Spring that diverted tourists away from traditional hotspots. Instead of bolstering this critical sector, Jammeh's focus was on consolidating his power and pursuing his interests.

The energy sector faced crippling challenges under Jammeh's rule. Despite recommendations from international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to prioritize revitalizing energy, transportation, and agriculture, Jammeh's government still needs to address these concerns adequately.

Poor government policies, a decline in tourism, and Jammeh's unfavorable stance towards Western donors all contributed to the nation's economic woes.

The Central Bank of The Gambia became an instrument of Jammeh's financial schemes. He used the bank to launder money from various illicit sources, including drug trafficking and business enterprises.

These funds were deposited into Jammeh's accounts, allowing him unfettered access to immense wealth. This misuse of the Central Bank raised questions about accountability and transparency, highlighting the stark contrast between Jammeh's actions and his professed commitment to The Gambian people.

AUDACITY

Jammeh sought to monopolize the supply of essential commodities, such as food, bread, clothing, and sand. While he claimed to make these items more accessible and affordable for the public, his tactics involved intimidation, executive orders, and the marginalization of other vendors. This stifled competition and entrepreneurship, further harming the economy.

Throughout his rule, Yahya Jammeh consistently prioritized personal gain over the welfare of The Gambian people. His mismanagement of crucial sectors, his stranglehold on economic activities, and his disregard for institutional integrity left a lasting mark on the nation. The Gambia, once a thriving agricultural hub and a potential tourist destination, was plunged into economic uncertainty and turmoil under Jammeh's reign.

Yahya Jammeh's impact on The Gambia's agricultural sector unfolded as a complex and far-reaching economic exploitation scheme that spanned over a decade.

Jammeh's misguided policies and relentless pursuit of personal wealth birthed a cascade of problems that harmed the very nation he was tasked with leading. In this chapter, we delve deep into the intricacies of his exploitative tactics and the devastating consequences they wrought.

Competing in a free market became an insurmountable challenge under Jammeh's rule. His government granted him unchecked authority, allowing him to issue executive orders banning meat imports while providing tax exemptions.

AUDACITY

His interference manifested in stringent price controls and intimidation tactics, with the specter of arrests looming over those who dared to defy his directives.

This environment allowed him to sell his merchandise and livestock below market value, facing minimal resistance or competition.

Yahya Jammeh's sphere of influence extended even to livestock importation, putting his livestock dealers at a disadvantage when competing with him. By maintaining low prices and devaluing The Gambian Dalasi against the dollar, he provisionally banned meat imports across the nation.

With half of the country's meat and cereal consumption reliant on imports, this ban had a significant impact. It drove up prices for domestic cereals like rice and wheat, which were already influenced by global prices and exchange rates. Local livestock vendors had no option but to raise their prices, further exacerbating the food crisis.

The UN Food and Agricultural Organization spoke plainly when condemning The Gambian government for its reckless agricultural policies and monopolistic business model. The situation warranted international assistance to address the ensuing food crisis, as Kanilai Farms alone could not meet the nation's high demands.

Jammeh's annual retreat to Kanilai, where he transformed the village into a modern city with uninterrupted utilities, raised suspicions among the public. His "vacations" defied the norm; instead of leisure, they focused on returning to the land and farming.

AUDACITY

To some, it seemed like a ploy to coerce or extort civil servants into working on his farms in exchange for retaining their government positions. These tactics of intimidation were all too familiar, yet many succumbed to them.

Jammeh expanded Kanilai Farms to include a wide range of plant and animal species, from lions and crocodiles to various medicinal plants. He claimed to have found cures for terminal illnesses and intended to produce and sell herbal medicines for research and healing purposes.

This venture extended to horticultural farming, as Jammeh emphasized the need for horticultural products despite the diminishing tourism industry.

Jammeh's plan to erect an aluminum processing plant further disrupted the business landscape. While some farmers and business owners supported the idea of value addition and preservation, others felt marginalized as they were unable to process their produce in Jammeh's plant or sell it at competitive prices. Jammeh's use of technology allowed him to reduce production overheads while local farmers struggled to compete.

During a problematic farming season, The Gambia Red Cross Society stepped in to provide seeds and fertilizer to struggling farmers. While this aid was appreciated, it was clear that Jammeh's policies were causing significant harm, and the Red Cross's assistance was insufficient to ensure a bumper harvest.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's practice of exploiting civil servants for his gain under the guise of "back to the land" initiatives raised concerns. Many civil servants, who had never worked on farms before, were coerced into laboring in Jammeh's fields without pay. This exploitation was seen as a violation of their roles and responsibilities, and it fueled public frustration.

The consequences of Jammeh's policies were profound. The farming workforce dwindled, affecting not only the horticultural industry but also dairy and various other local businesses. The Gambian youth were discouraged from pursuing farming as a viable livelihood, and older women, who were the backbone of the industry, faced economic hardship. Farming became a less attractive option as produce rotted on the market due to high overhead costs and prices.

Opposition leaders and concerned citizens called for a change in Jammeh's policies. They emphasized the need to prioritize the nation's interests over personal wealth accumulation. They argued that Jammeh's exploitative practices were detrimental to both local farmers and the broader economy.

Jammeh's exploitation schemes were made possible by enablers within The Gambian society. While many pointed fingers at Jammeh, others believed that it was the enablers—those who implemented his policies and carried out his orders—who were equally responsible for the economic turmoil.

As the agricultural sector crumbled under Jammeh's rule, the livelihoods of countless Gambians hung in the balance. The nation desperately needed a change in

AUDACITY

leadership and policies to break free from this cycle of exploitation and rebuild what had been lost.

Despite Yahya Jammeh's claimed concern for The Gambian population, a growing body of evidence indicates that the gains from both international and national criminal activities, fueled by drug trafficking and money laundering through corrupt channels, have been surreptitiously deposited into offshore accounts in Panama.

Those funds not withdrawn in cash by Jammeh's officials or directed to bank accounts under the president's control were directed to businesses securing lucrative contracts (or for undisclosed purposes). Some funds were also channeled to foreign shell companies, details about which remain scant.

"He governed the nation akin to an organized crime syndicate, and these transfers potentially violated The Gambian law," expressed Jeggan Grey-Johnson, The Gambian activist and communications officer at the African regional office of the Open Society Foundation, a pro-democracy and good governance organization.

"Jammeh was the epitome of dictatorship, yet because he ruled a seemingly insignificant country, nobody paid much attention," Grey-Johnson remarked.

In entirety, Jammeh and his cohorts plundered or misused a minimum of \$975 million. Notably, Jammeh's primary targets included intergovernmental agencies such as pension funds under the Social Security and tax collected from Revenue Authority accounts.

AUDACITY

To comprehend the repercussions of Jammeh's heist on The Gambian economy, a thorough examination of the country's pension fund and other economic facets is imperative.

An in-depth analysis will unveil the extent to which these crucial elements were exploited, shedding light on the profound impact of Jammeh's actions on the economic landscape of The Gambia.

As we express a critical perspective on the situation in The Gambia, citing issues such as corruption within immigration, police, judiciary, and government officials. The characterization of the country being led by a leader who operates like a "mob boss" suggests concerns about governance and leadership practices.

It's important to note that such statements represent a subjective viewpoint, and addressing these issues typically involves a comprehensive understanding of the political, social, and economic contexts within The Gambia.

Just how much of the great The Gambian heist ended up in Jammeh's own pockets — through offshore accounts or bags full of cash — is still unknown. In the UK, Jammeh's government gained infamy for its relentless pursuit of personalized wealth enrichment, laying the groundwork for the exposure of illicit activities involving seven Gambian diplomats.

This group, often referred to as "Jammeh's enablers-his inner circle from his heist fraternity," led by Yusupha Bojang, a central figure in the notorious Gambia London Embassy in the UK, the Gambian London Embassy Tobacco debacle, were in trouble and

AUDACITY

sentenced for selling illegal Tabacco shipped from The Gambia and sold for profit.

The London embassy, officially a diplomatic institution, transformed into a hub for tax-free tobacco sales, operating discreetly as a tobacconist store in Kensington Court, says the London court papers.

Diplomats, surpassing their annual earnings through significant tobacco orders, resulted in a £4.8 million loss in tax revenue and subsequent conspiracy convictions.

The seven defendants involved in the Gambia London Embassy Tobacco debacle served mandatory jail terms. Notably, The Gambian government deviated from diplomatic tradition by waiving immunity for four individuals among the defendants, emphasizing a commitment to holding them accountable for their actions.

This departure from diplomatic norms underscores the government's dedication to pursuing justice and accountability in the face of illegal activities related to the tobacco sales operation.

In a surprising turn of events, disclosures from the Panama Papers uncovered that several Gambian-registered companies were secretly holding close to one billion dollars in offshore Panamanian accounts. The Gambian public has been in the dark for an extended period, and it is now crucial to bring them into the light of truth.

AUDACITY

In a significant move, The Gambian government under Adama Barrow's leadership seized the assets of several individuals through the committee for financial mismanagement set up to recover stolen government assets under Jammeh's reign.

The story centers on "White-collar enablers," implicated in non-violent financial crimes benefiting Yahya Jammeh.

Key figures, such as Amadou Samba, Tarek Musa, Muhammad Bazzi, and eleven others, alongside two major banks in The Gambia, were exposed by the Janneh Commission of Inquiry for their involvement in fraudulent activities, leading to the laundering of stolen public funds.

The accused individuals were confronted with severe allegations of financial improprieties, leading the government to insist on repayment and subsequently pursue the forfeiture and seizure of their properties.

Amadou Samba took center stage in the embezzlement saga, playing a pivotal role in draining substantial amounts—over a billion dalasi, 304 million dollars, twenty-nine million euros, and two million pounds sterling—from the government's coffers.

Samba's educational journey commenced in Banjul, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, leading to a legal career where he ascended to the position of Senior State Counsel in the Attorney General's Chambers. Transitioning to the private sector, he ventured into various businesses, including ALFRON, The Gambia Import/Export Co. Ltd and Mohsam Fisheries The Gambia Ltd.

AUDACITY

In 1992, he assumed the crucial roles of President and Chairperson of GACEM Company Ltd.

The memoir chronicles the collective demand for accountability from Amadou Samba and Yahya Jammeh by both The Gambian Diaspora and local populace, coupled with the threat of involving professionals for a thorough investigation.

Sidi Sanneh, a Diaspora activist, hinted at the possibility of hiring professional independent auditors to investigate the matter should the Barrow government not treat the defrauding of the government by Jammeh and his inner circle of enablers seriously.

The narrative explores Jammeh's potential involvement in international crimes, money laundering, and the repercussions of his wealth accumulation and land-grabbing on the local community.

The Jammeh land grabbing fiasco unfolded widely across the nation, particularly impacting individuals from the diaspora who fell victim to deceitful real estate companies and agents. This resulted in substantial financial losses, amounting to millions of dollars.

Online platforms were filled with expressions of sorrow, highlighting the fraudulent scheme of selling identical plots of land to multiple individuals using government-issued documents and particulars. The situation spread like wildfire, causing widespread concern and condemnation.

AUDACITY

The later years witness heightened land grabs, protests, and international scrutiny into Jammeh's passport-selling scheme linked to terrorism. The ongoing struggle against Jammeh's oppression is fueled by the quest for justice and the restoration of The Gambia's global credibility.

The Janneh Commission of Inquiry and U.S. sanctions shed light on Jammeh's financial wrongdoing. The memoir concludes with Barrow's political triumph and ECOWAS's pivotal role in ousting Jammeh, emphasizing the organization's mission and member states.

Furthermore, at the close of the preceding year, the United States imposed a ban on Jammeh from entering the country, citing evidence of his involvement in what they termed "significant corruption."

The documents scrutinized by OCCRP reveal an intricate web of fraud that surpasses the figures acknowledged by Barrow.

Even after prevailing over Jammeh in the 2016 polls, Barrow could only successfully remove the former president from power when neighboring West African states, collectively known as ECOWAS, threatened military intervention.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional organization that was established to promote economic integration and cooperation among West African countries. It was founded on May 28, 1975, with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos.

AUDACITY

ECOWAS aims to achieve economic development and stability in the West African region through various means, including the establishment of a common market and the adoption of a common currency. The organization also plays a role in addressing political and security issues in the region.

ECOWAS member states include Benin, Burkina Faso, the Republic of Cabo Verde, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and The Gambia.

Chapter 10

Unveiling The Darkness: Yahya Jammeh, The Polygamist President

In the heart of The Gambia's complex history lies a chapter that exposes the intriguing, often controversial, and highly secretive life of Yahya Jammeh, the former President of The Gambia. Beyond his role as the country's President, Jammeh lived a life marked by his practice of polygamy.

This memoir delves into the personal life of a leader who kept his multiple marriages concealed from the public eye, exploring the impact of his polygamous lifestyle on his presidency, his family, and the nation.

Known for his trademark prayer beads and a distinctive walking stick, Yahya Jammeh emerged as one of the world's most enigmatic and ruthless leaders in modern history. Jammeh, only twenty-nine when he seized power, suddenly found himself the most eligible bachelor in The Gambia.

Despite newfound fame and notoriety in 1994, Jammeh pursued his affection for Tuti Faal, a woman he had desired even before the 1994 coup. However, at that time, she had dismissed him due to Jammeh's unrefined demeanor.

Tuti Faal was a young, beautiful, light-skinned Gambian woman who worked for The Gambia Telecommunication Company (GamTel) before July 1994. Imam Ratib of Banjul officiated their union. Initially, everything seemed harmonious in their

AUDACITY

marriage, but it soon became apparent that they struggled to conceive a child. Tuti Faal eventually sought medical treatment in Saudi Arabia for fertility issues.

During Tuti's absence, Jammeh was introduced to Zeinab Suma, a Moroccan woman, allegedly by Baba Jobe, a former close aide to Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi, known for his extravagant lifestyle. Rumors circulated that Zeinab Souma, the daughter of a former Guinean diplomat in Rabat, participated in an affair with Jammeh while his wife Tuti was away. Upon Tuti's return from Saudi Arabia, she was escorted directly to her family home in Kembujay.

Commander Lang Tombong Tamba, the former presidential guard who was later imprisoned and recently pardoned, oversaw Tuti's relocation. Tamba, a fellow Jola ethnic group member, had been a loyal confidant of Jammeh.

News of the affair became public knowledge, leading to Jammeh abruptly ending his marriage to Tuti and filing for divorce under secretive and sudden circumstances.

Shortly after, he married Zeinab Suma Jammeh, born in Morocco on October 5, 1977, is the former First Lady of The Gambia and the primary wife of ex-President Yahya Jammeh.

Although, the September 2019 findings of the Janneh Commission, initiated by the Barrow government to investigate Jammeh's financial activities, revealed allegations that Zeinab Suma Jammeh had

AUDACITY

misappropriated public funds from The Gambia, amounting to 3.3 million Dalasi and 2 million US dollars through her foundation. with whom he remains married and has two children, Mohammed, and Mariam Jammeh.

In 2010, he would go on to marry another woman, Alima Sallah, the daughter of the Former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Jammeh's office directed that Alima is not referred to as the first lady, reserving that title for Zeinab, according to protocol. "There could be only one First Lady, and in this case, which is Madam Zeinab Yahya Jammeh," the newspaper quoted the President as saying.

According to Ebou Jallow, "Tuti Faal's relationship with Yahya Jammeh was tumultuous, marked by arguments and fights." Jammeh desperately wanted a child with Tuti, but it seemed impossible. Tuti allegedly faced fertility issues, leading her to seek medical help in Saudi Arabia.

Jammeh, however, believed that spiritual factors might be at play, suspecting the involvement of traditional healers (marabouts). Some even speculated that Tuti may have deliberately avoided pregnancy. Determined to uncover the truth, Jammeh enlisted the help of his mother, protocol staff, and the NIA to accompany the former first lady to Saudi Arabia.

Tuti Faal hailed from a lineage of Islamic scholars with parents of Mauritanian descent who were devout Muslims. Her life took a drastic turn upon her marriage to Jammeh, and she now resides in exile in Seattle,

AUDACITY

Washington, out of fear of harassment and intimidation by Jammeh's security agents. According to sources from Freedom newspaper, "reports suggest that the dictator does not want her to remarry, and Tuti believes she is under constant surveillance by Jammeh's security agents while in The Gambia."

According to Ebou Jallow, it was Tuti Faal who taught Yahya Jammeh how to read and recite the Holy Qur'an and its chapters (suras). Prior to 1994, Jammeh was a non-practicing Muslim, engaging in behaviors contrary to Islamic law, including forbidden practices.

Zeinab Yahya Jammeh, on the other hand, was a perplexing figure, an individual many Gambian women could not relate to due to her high-maintenance lifestyle, which was both burdensome and costly to The Gambian taxpayers. She faced accusations of pushing Jammeh to exploit The Gambian people relentlessly to boost his wealth.

Consequently, his pursuit of personal enrichment showed no mercy on one of the poorest nations on earth and instead resulted in their suffering, torture, and, in some cases, death. Notably, their mansion in Potomac, Maryland, valued at over four million dollars, was primarily attributed to Zeinab's influence, as were other luxury property acquisitions worldwide. Her materialism and extravagant lifestyle endured most of the blame.

Jammeh's financial misconduct was attributed to Zeinab, who was perceived as an outsider using her position to pilfer money from impoverished The Gambian taxpayers and illicitly gather funds under The Gambia's name for her extravagant shopping sprees.

AUDACITY

From the moment she became first lady, Jammeh seemed less concerned about the welfare of The Gambian people.

Jammeh's decision to divorce Tuti Faal marked the onset of a series of troubles, leading to torture, enforced disappearances, and the death of many Gambians, as well as drug, arms, and human trafficking.

However, little is known about Alima's influence on The Gambia's plight, given her short-lived marriage to Jammeh. She rarely spoke on public platforms, often referred to as "the mistress" even after her legitimate marriage to Jammeh. Many did not recognize her as the second wife due to her absence from the public eye.

Alima was a mere seventeen years old when she married Jammeh, and rumors circulated that she had taken Jammeh from her friend Natalie Gomez, who was secretly dating him at the time. Alima was perceived as a naive but wonderful young woman with a promising future, one that Jammeh disrupted.

Zeinab Jammeh's role in the regime was unquestionably evident, causing controversy and disbelief among some. Some believed she had no control over her husband, while others held her equally accountable for the atrocities committed under his rule.

Some even went as far as to suggest that she was the mastermind behind forced disappearances and killings in The Gambia, using Yahya Jammeh as a puppet to execute these heinous acts. Regardless of public opinion, there was no doubt that she was aware of these

AUDACITY

crimes, given the numerous reports by organizations like the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), ECOWAS, and the International Criminal Court (ICC), all detailing Yahya Jammeh's crimes.

Insiders claim that Mrs. Jammeh had firsthand knowledge of the extent of Jammeh's alleged crimes, even accompanying her husband to Banjul's notorious NIA HQ, known for its torture and beatings. It is difficult to fathom the actions of a woman who derived pleasure from such brutality.

Zeinab Jammeh also held the dubious title of vice chairperson of the National Women's Federation (NWF), a prestigious post in The Gambia. It was previously led by Jammeh's close associate and coup co-conspirator, Yankuba Touray. Touray played a pivotal role in Jammeh's rise to power and was implicated in the torture, murder, and disappearance of several Gambians.

Zeinab's return to The Gambia was unexpected by many, as she had been absent from the public eye. Her role in taking The Gambian leader away from the spotlight was evident to those knowledgeable.

However, those familiar with The Gambian politics were intrigued when she accompanied her husband to New York, Washington, DC, and Paris, even though she remained invisible.

Many political analysts and activists initially regarded Jammeh's wife as inconsequential. To some, her role as the first lady seemed to involve extravagant spending

AUDACITY

of The Gambia's resources across the globe, leading to a noticeable decline in the living conditions of The Gambian citizens following her arrival. Many attributed this downturn to her influence.

While Yahya Jammeh had made political errors in the past, it became evident that marrying Zeinab was a particularly detrimental decision and proved to be his Achilles' heel.

In the turbulent years of Yahya Jammeh's rule in The Gambia, a sinister narrative began to take root within the country. It was a narrative that would eventually come to cast a shadow on his wife, Zeinab, and their life together. As First Lady of The Gambia, Zeinab became the target of widespread accusations and allegations that would forever taint her reputation.

Jammeh's regime was characterized by corruption, human rights abuses, and a complete disregard for the welfare of The Gambian people. But, oddly enough, the blame for this misrule seemed to fall squarely on Zeinab's shoulders.

The whispers and rumors that circulated painted her as a foreign interloper, someone who had never truly integrated into The Gambian society. She was labeled a "gold-digger", accused of being interested only in stealing money from the already impoverished The Gambian taxpayers.

The allegations against Zeinab did not stop at mere corruption. She was accused of using The Gambia's name to illicit, illegal donations and fundraising, all of which were funneled into her coffers. The narrative painted a picture of a woman who cared only for her

AUDACITY

extravagant shopping sprees while The Gambian people suffered.

But the truth was far more complex than the rumors suggested. Zeinab had her struggles, trying to find her place in a country that was often suspicious of outsiders, even if they held the highest office. Her background as a woman of Moroccan descent further fueled the accusations of her foreignness.

However, some argued that Zeinab did genuinely care for The Gambia and her people. Citing that, she initiated charitable projects and worked to improve the lives of many Gambians, especially women and children.

As for Jammeh, his priorities had shifted drastically from the day he took the oath of marriage with Zeinab. He seemed far less concerned with the plight of The Gambian people, more interested in consolidating his power and wealth.

The man who had promised so much during his rise to power had become a stark contrast to the leader he had once claimed to be.

Their life together during those years was a constant struggle against the accusations and the dark cloud of suspicion. Zeinab remained resilient, focusing on the positive impact she could make despite the relentless attacks on her character.

In the end, history would reveal the true extent of Jammeh's misrule, and the blame that had been unfairly placed on Zeinab would slowly begin to dissipate.

AUDACITY

Indeed, Zeinab Jammeh's involvement in her husband's regime became a subject of controversy and disbelief, frequently leaving others baffled by the enigmatic role she assumed. Many wondered how she, as a mother, wife, and woman, could stand by and condone the atrocities committed right under her nose by her husband.

The perceptions surrounding Zeinab's role were as diverse as the opinions themselves. Some believed that she had no control over her husband and that she was merely a bystander in the tumultuous events that unfolded during Yahya Jammeh's rule. To them, she was a woman trapped in a marriage with a man whose actions were beyond her influence or comprehension.

On the other hand, some held a quite different view. They argued that Zeinab was not merely a passive observer but an active participant in her husband's regime. They saw her as equally guilty and accountable for the horrifying brutality that occurred under Jammeh's leadership. In their eyes, she held the key to her husband's darkest secrets, and her silence made her just as liable as he was.

One voice that raised eyebrows and added fuel to the controversy was that of Sally Jeng, the former fiancée of the murdered soldier, Ello Jallow, who had served as a personal bodyguard to Zeinab. Sally's belief was unequivocal: "Zeinab Jammeh is just as accountable for Ello Jallow's murder as Jammeh himself."

Her perspective was a stark reminder that those close to the corridors of power often held knowledge and responsibility for the regime's actions.

AUDACITY

The image that emerged was of Zeinab living a modest life with her family in exile, far removed from the horrors that had transpired in The Gambia. While she went about her daily life, countless nameless and faceless victims of the regime remained a secret to her and her husband, a mystery that continued to haunt the rest of the country.

The question of accountability in the Jammeh era remains a complex and contentious one. Zeinab's role, whatever it may have been, continues to be a subject of debate and speculation. Her silence and actions during those tumultuous years have left an impression on the collective memory of The Gambia, a reminder that even in the darkest of times, individuals must grapple with their conscience and the consequences of their choices.

But those years would forever serve as a reminder of the dark side of Jammeh's monstrous politics, where the truth often became obscured by the weight of power and the burden of perception. Zeinab and Jammeh would continue to weather the storm, living in exile in Equatorial Guinea, hopeful that one day, The Gambia would emerge into a brighter future, free from the shadows of the past.

The litany of atrocities committed under Jammeh's rule is haunting. Torture chambers became all too common, enforced disappearances plagued our society, and the chilling spectra of murder cast a long shadow over The Gambia. But the horrors did not end there. The country witnessed a surge in drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking, all conducted with impunity.

AUDACITY

The man who had once vowed to lead The Gambia to greatness was now held responsible for the suffering that had befallen our people. The very name Yahya Jammeh became synonymous with oppression, tyranny, and injustice. The dreams of a better tomorrow that Tuti's presence had kindled were ruthlessly extinguished.

In the face of such adversity, the unwavering resilience of The Gambian people emerged as a powerful testament to the indomitable human spirit. Even within the darkest hours, flickers of hope illuminated the path forward.

The remarkable resilience of The Gambian people who, against all odds, persevered in their resistance against Jammeh's oppressive regime. A network of formidable opposition, including civil society organizations and diaspora activists, labored quietly but tirelessly to usher in the winds of change.

In the darkest hours of tyranny, a spark of courage ignited within the hearts of a few, and that spark grew into a roaring flame of resistance. This memoir is a tribute to the fearless activists, brave journalists, and ordinary individuals who chose to raise their voices against the oppressive regime of Yahya Jammeh.

The memoir paints vivid portraits of these remarkable men and women, sharing their stories, their motivations, and their unwavering commitment to justice and freedom. From journalists who risked their lives to report the truth to activists who organized behind closed doors, their collective determination serves as an inspiring testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

AUDACITY

Each profile offers a glimpse into the challenges and risks these individuals face. From threats and harassment to arbitrary arrests and forced exile, their paths were fraught with peril. Yet, they refused to be silenced, even when the cost of speaking out was unfathomable.

"Voices of Courage" captures the essence of their struggles, their sacrifices, and their unyielding belief in a better future for The Gambia. It explores the power of collective action, showing how these disparate voices came together to form a chorus of change that resonated both within the nation and around the world.

Through these profiles, the memoir highlights the immense impact that individuals can have when they stand up against tyranny. It serves as a potent reminder that, even in the face of insurmountable odds, the courage to speak truth to power can be a force capable of toppling even the most entrenched dictatorships.

The struggles endured, the sacrifices made, and the yearning for justice would pave the way for a brighter future.

As we reflect on this dark chapter in our history, we cannot forget the role played by Tuti Faal—a woman whose intentions were noble but whose presence inadvertently set in motion a series of events that assessed the very soul of The Gambia.

In the annals of The Gambian history, the name Tuti Faal, a bona-fide Gambian citizen, has etched itself as a symbol of hope for women during a dark chapter that

AUDACITY

unfolded during the early years of Yahya Jammeh's presidency.

Tuti's brief tenure as the First Lady of The Gambia would come to be synonymous with a period marked by turmoil, violence, and immense suffering for The Gambian population.

Her brief reign serves as a stark reminder of the profound impact that individuals can have on the course of history, both for better and for worse.

Tuti's entry into the realm of The Gambian politics as Jammeh's first wife and The Gambia's first lady brought with it a glimmer of hope. She was seen as a beacon of change, a symbol of the potential for progress and prosperity.

Yet, as history would soon reveal, her departure would catalyze a series of events that plunged The Gambia into a bottomless abyss.

The departure of Tuti Faal from Yahya Jammeh's life catalyzed a series of dark and ominous developments that would leave an indelible mark on the collective memory of The Gambia.

The promises of a brighter future under Jammeh's leadership were swiftly shattered, replaced by a regime that thrived on fear, brutality, and oppression.

Yet, amidst the chaos and destruction that followed Tuti Faal's departure, there existed another figure who played an understated but significant role in Jammeh's tumultuous rule, Alima- his third wife, a Gambian citizen by birth.

AUDACITY

Unlike Tuti, Alima's impact on The Gambia's plight remained unknown and shrouded in silence, owing to her brief and enigmatic marriage to Jammeh.

Alima, who had entered matrimony with Jammeh at the tender age of seventeen, was a beautiful and naive young woman.

Many believed that she had a promising future ahead of her, a life filled with opportunities and dreams. However, the reality that unfolded was far from the idyllic life she might have imagined.

From the moment Alima became Jammeh's second wife, she retreated into the shadows of The Gambian society. Her presence was a quiet one, never gracing public platforms or making any public statements. She became an enigma, referred to by many as "the mistress," a moniker that persisted even after it was clear that she was legally married to Jammeh.

One of the enduring mysteries surrounding Alima was the circumstances of her marriage to Jammeh. Rumors swirled that she had, in fact, stolen Jammeh away from her friend, Natalie Gomez, who had been secretly dating the charismatic leader. The details of this romantic entanglement remained obscured, hidden beneath the weight of the Jammeh regime's brutal reign.

In the broader narrative of the Gambian population enduring suffering under Jammeh's rule, Alima's story remained untold. Her youth, beauty, and quiet presence concealed a tragic existence. Jammeh, driven by his quest for power and dominance, had ensnared yet another life, overshadowing her potential and

AUDACITY

imprisoning her in a marriage that provided little comfort.

As we delve deeper into the history of those turbulent years, it becomes increasingly evident that the shadows conceal as much as they reveal. Alima's story serves as a poignant reminder of the collateral damage inflicted by power-hungry leaders, and her voiceless suffering echoes the untold stories of so many who were affected by the tumultuous reign of Yahya Jammeh.

The year was 2016, and shocking allegations rocked the nation. Girls as young as sixteen came forward with claims of kidnapping and rape at the hands of Yahya Jammeh, the man who had ruled The Gambia for over two decades. The radio waves buzzed with disbelief and anger as listeners struggled to come to terms with the horrifying revelations.

Beyond the realm of politics, Jammeh's presidency is tainted by grave accusations of human rights violations, encompassing acts like rape, murder, and torture. The courageous testimonies of survivors, including individuals like Fatou 'Toufah' Jallow, Fatoumatta Sandeng, and 'Bintu,' shed light on a somber period characterized by organized sexual abuses under Jammeh's orchestration.

The Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission in The Gambia stands as a guiding force, earnestly examined these crimes, and provided survivors with a platform to seek justice.

In the heart of The Gambia, a small West African nation where lush green landscapes meet the gentle

AUDACITY

waves of the Atlantic Ocean, a shadow loomed over the hopes and dreams of its people.

This memoir is a collection of harrowing stories, a testament to the strength of survivors, and an exposé of the darkest chapter in The Gambia's history - the reign of Yahya Jammeh.

Amidst this darkness, a beacon of hope emerged: Fatu Radio. The lead investigator, Fatu Camara, courageously embarked on a mission to document the stories of these young girls, many of whom came from humble backgrounds.

These girls had innocently responded to harmless job advertisements, which merely requested front and back full-size photos and brief descriptions of potential applicants. Little did they know that this innocent step would lead them into a horrifying nightmare.

Jammeh's sinister preferences became evident as these stories unraveled. He selected these girls based on their fair skin complexion and model-like bodies. The President, who should have been a protector of the nation, had become its worst nightmare.

In 1996, the insidious nature of Yahya Jammeh's character began to reveal itself. Women from far-flung places like Guinea-Bissau, the Philippines, Europe, and the Americas were flown in, all in the name of secrecy, according to Ebou Jallow.

The revelation of girls as young as sixteen coming forward with allegations of kidnapping and rape against Yahya Jammeh has shocked and disgusted most radio listeners. These girls can provide detailed

AUDACITY

descriptions of the Banjul State House and Kanilai palaces, highlighting a section of the State House complex called "Jamaica," which was allegedly used as a "whore house" or "pimp pad" where they were trapped and forced to serve as sex slaves to Jammeh.

Fatu Radio, the lead investigator in this case, began documenting these horrifying experiences with girls from poor backgrounds who had responded to want ads for protocol officer positions at the President's office published in the Daily Observer.

Jammeh was accused of sexually exploiting these young girls, often selected based on their fair skin complexion and model-like bodies. Jammeh responded to criticism by denying his preference for light-skinned women but admitted to feeling sexually targeted during public functions.

Fatu Radio's commendable investigative journalism brought to light the stories of these girls who were lured into sexual encounters with Jammeh in exchange for job security, money, and gifts. Some of these girls, now in exile and having undergone counseling and treatment for trauma-related issues, have bravely begun sharing their stories, leaving the radio audience in shock.

On October 15, 2016, even the designated personal chauffeur to the girls, now also in exile, admitted in an interview with Fatu Radio that he was part of a group of drivers tasked with running errands for the President, including picking up young girls for him late at night. Their shifts typically ended around 5 a.m. when the President was done with the girls, and they

AUDACITY

were responsible for giving the girls rides back to their homes, usually after midnight.

These pick-up and drop-off errands were conducted with strict orders not to engage in any conversation with the young girls, as instructed by Jammeh himself.

Jammeh meticulously planned and orchestrated these crimes against young girls to satisfy his desires and superstitions, which included a belief in the need for virgin blood.

One report details the account of a young woman in her late teens who claimed to have been a sex slave of Yahya Jammeh for almost six months. Her bravery in coming forward, despite the trauma she endured, has encouraged others to share their experiences. This has shed light on the extent of Jammeh's abuse of power and the horrors inflicted upon innocent young girls.

While the evidence against Jammeh is compelling, it also suggests the involvement in the kidnappings and rapes of young women during his presidency. The silence of those involved, even after Jammeh's exile to Equatorial Guinea, raises questions about their motives.

The motives behind Jammeh's actions remain a topic of debate. Some listeners believe he may have been asked to sacrifice "virgin blood" to his superstitious spirits. Others argue that his ego and desire for power and control drove him to commit these heinous acts.

Jammeh's behavior and actions went beyond sexual exploitation. His disrespect for The Gambian women was evident in his public comments and actions. He

AUDACITY

made derogatory remarks about women's dress codes, blamed them for the declining birth rates, and even commented on their private parts discolorations after skin bleaching.

This behavior was met with strong condemnation from The Gambian women, who saw it as an apparent lack of respect and understanding.

In conclusion, the revelations about Yahya Jammeh's sexual exploitation and abuse of power have shocked and appalled the public. The bravery of the victims in coming forward has shed light on these crimes, and there is a call for further investigation and justice for the victims. Jammeh's actions not only violated the rights of these young girls but also showed a complete disregard for the dignity and well-being of women in The Gambia.

In the aftermath of Jammeh's rule, as the nation grapples with reconciliation, efforts must address ethnic stereotypes and economic disenfranchisement.

The resilience of survivors like Toufah, Fatoumatta, and Bintu, who bravely confront their abuser, reflects a yearning for systemic change and the dismantling of a culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

The campaign #Jammeh2Justice emerges as a rallying cry for accountability, with survivors becoming agents of change, advocating for The Gambia where stories, narratives, and power are reclaimed by its women.

The journey to justice is underway, challenging not only the legacy of Yahya Jammeh but also confronting

AUDACITY

broader issues of power dynamics, abuse, and the pursuit of a united and empowered nation.

Momentarily, Hon. Mai Fatty, the then newly appointed Minister for Interior, stood unwavering in his commitment to ensuring that justice prevails for all those who have endured suffering, including Yahya Jammeh and his wife. He utilized social media as a platform to deliver a heartfelt message:

"The Ministry of the Interior is intensifying its efforts to investigate cases of enforced disappearances in the wake of the discovery of an unmarked grave containing the remains of the late patriot, Mr. Sendeng—an emotionally devastating revelation."

Furthermore, he underscored that the Missing Persons Panel, which he established, would continue its operations, and urged anyone with information to contact their nearest police station promptly. To date, the Ministry of Interior has taken fourteen Junglars into custody, and some of them are already facing trial on charges related to torture and murder, with former NIA DG Yankuba Badjie among those implicated.

Gambians quest for justice entered a new and pivotal phase, one that transcended its national boundaries, thanks to authorized international criminal repatriation cooperation processes.

Notably, fugitives like Ousman Sonko, who had sought refuge in Senegal, were brought back to Switzerland to be prosecuted for crimes against humanity for his role as interior minister during Jammeh's rule. As he arrived in Switzerland, he faced the daunting prospect

AUDACITY

of interrogation as the long arm of the law tightened its grip around him.

Simultaneously, David Colley, the man who had once occupied the position of Director of Prisons, experienced a profound reversal of fortune. His services were abruptly terminated, and he confronted the grim reality of arrest and detention. The allegations against him were nothing short of grave, revolving around his oversight of a system that subjected prisoners to systematic and dehumanizing treatment.

Hon. Mai Fatty's unwavering resolve in taking these actions garnered commendation from the people of The Gambia. They viewed his efforts as a resolute attempt to seal off crime scenes and thwart the escape of criminals from the clutches of justice. It sent a clear message to the former enablers of Jammeh that public service during challenging times should never serve as a cloak for heinous deeds. Accountability was the prevailing ethos.

In a national address, the Minister of Interior made a resounding declaration: "Journalists and citizens alike are free to express their views, and he deeply regrets the unexpected incidents that transpired.

Under no circumstances shall anyone vanish without thorough investigations into their disappearances. The era of unchecked criminality in The Gambia has come to an end."

These words resonated deeply with The Gambian populace, reigniting their faith that justice would triumph and that no one, regardless of their stature or past affiliations, would evade responsibility for their

AUDACITY

actions. The gears of justice continued to turn, fueled by an unyielding commitment to mend the wounds of the past and ensure that the rule of law prevailed universally, without exception.

Chapter 11

The "Rubber Stamp" National Assembly And Judiciary

In The Gambia, the National Assembly stands as the central oversight institution entrusted with the duty of safeguarding the integrity of The Gambian Constitution. Its primary role is to act as a vigilant guardian, preventing violations and addressing misconduct through impeachment proceedings.

The overarching mission of the National Assembly is to preserve The Gambia's essence as a secular, democratic, and sovereign republic, where the authority emanates from the people's consent. Elected representatives are both accountable to and subject to removal by the populace, a principle underscored by Halifa Sallah.

However, during Jammeh's tenure under the APRC (Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction), the composition of The Gambian National Assembly was profoundly lopsided. During Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia, the National Assembly played a unique and controversial role in the country's political landscape.

Under Jammeh's political party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), the APRC held a dominant and unyielding position within the National Assembly. Most seats in the National Assembly were filled by members who exhibited unwavering loyalty to Jammeh and his party. This significant majority granted the APRC an ironclad grip

AUDACITY

on the legislative process, rendering it challenging for opposing voices to make any significant headway.

The majority, holding Fifty-three seats, a commanding 51.8% of the total, were firmly under the sway of Jammeh's loyalists. These members hailed from Jammeh's Jola tribe, their roots deeply entrenched in rural backgrounds, and many held ties to The Gambian military.

This lopsided makeup of the National Assembly wielded immense power during Jammeh's reign, effectively extinguishing any flicker of meaningful opposition. It was a stronghold, an impervious bastion, where the APRC reigned supreme. This formidable coalition, with its iron grip on the legislature, held the pivotal sway of 50 percent of the votes in the momentous 2016 national presidential elections.

The National Assembly, under Jammeh, had limited opposition representation in the house. Opposition parties struggled to secure seats in the legislature due to alleged electoral irregularities and intimidation. This lack of robust opposition hindered the checks and balances necessary for a healthy democracy.

Facilitating Jammeh's Agenda raised alarm among the opposition in the National Assembly, which often operated as a rubber-stamp institution during his regime. It routinely endorsed laws and policies that served Jammeh's individual and political agendas, encompassing measures that bolstered his authority, stifled opposition, and legitimized his contentious actions.

AUDACITY

The legislative process in the National Assembly faced accusations of lacking transparency and accountability. Numerous decisions were reached with insufficient debate or scrutiny, and this deficiency in transparency extended to the approval of laws and budgets, often cloaked in secrecy.

The National Assembly, despite its constitutional mandate as an oversight body, operated with constrained capacity to effectively scrutinize government actions and hold officials accountable. Jammeh's pervasive influence extended throughout various government agencies, rendering it arduous for lawmakers to investigate allegations of corruption or abuse of power.

Furthermore, the National Assembly passed legislation that curtailed freedom of speech and assembly, creating obstacles for civil society organizations and opposition groups to voice dissenting opinions or organize protests against Jammeh's government.

Members of the National Assembly, particularly those aligned with the APRC, encountered pressure, intimidation, and threats designed to secure their unwavering loyalty to Jammeh. This control over lawmakers further cemented Jammeh's authority and granted him unchecked leeway to pursue his agenda.

Although the National Assembly theoretically possessed the authority to initiate impeachment proceedings against the president for misconduct, such proceedings were exceedingly rare and unlikely to succeed due to the overwhelming dominance of the APRC in the legislature.

AUDACITY

In summary, the National Assembly under Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia was characterized by limited opposition, a glaring lack of transparency, and a pronounced inclination toward advancing Jammeh's personal and political interests. It functioned more as a tool for consolidating power and stifling dissent than as an authentic legislative body within a democratic framework.

The pivotal moment arrived with the 2016 elections, resulting in Jammeh's defeat and subsequent exile in Equatorial Guinea. The memoir culminates with the events leading to Jammeh's eventual downfall. The 2016 presidential election, once thought impossible to challenge, became the battleground for change. The world watched as The Gambian people defied fear and voted for a new future.

A strategic realignment unfolded as the majority in the National Assembly shifted allegiance from the APRC (symbolized by "green") to the UDP party (symbolized by "yellow"). This shift culminated in a resounding victory for the UDP, securing approximately 95 percent of the vote in the elections. Nevertheless, Jammeh had already enacted laws that favored his enrichment schemes at the expense of national interests, effectively overshadowing any viable economic policies", as stated on the IEC website.

Members of the National Assembly grappled daily with challenges and intimidation from dysfunctional inter-ministerial entities that coordinated national-level efforts. These entities prioritized national security over principles of good governance and the pursuit of a flourishing economy, leading to feeble strategies and

AUDACITY

operational cooperation at regional and international levels.

Jammeh, who had initially pledged to "drain the swamp" and institute ethical reforms in The Gambia, grew disillusioned with the laws he had instituted for his gain. With the National Assembly effectively under control, compliance with his personally crafted laws became non-negotiable. This marked the beginning of the erosion of sound legislation and the rise of compromised independent ethics institutions.

Instead of addressing urgent issues such as tax reform and healthcare, Jammeh channeled his efforts into intimidating National Assembly members and the general populace into endorsing, implementing, and adhering to laws designed for his enrichment.

During Yahya Jammeh's prolonged presidency in The Gambia, spanning from 1994 to 2017, the National Assembly passed a series of laws that mirrored the authoritarian nature of his regime and its disregard for fundamental human rights. This callous approach often extended into the legislative process itself, with laws being enacted to consolidate Jammeh's grip on power and stifle dissent.

Some of the noteworthy laws enacted during his tenure include the Public Order Act (2009), which exerted significant constraints on the freedom of assembly and expression. It mandated that individuals or groups must obtain permits for gatherings, a provision frequently exploited to suppress opposition rallies and peaceful protests.

AUDACITY

The Media Commission Act (2002), presented as a measure to regulate the media, this law was used to exert control over and censor the press. In practice, it severely restricted freedom of the press and expression, enabling the government's heavy-handed involvement in media operations.

The Information and Communications Act (2013) granted the government sweeping authority to intercept communications, including those conducted online, without requiring a warrant. Its implementation raised concerns about citizens' privacy violations and the stifling of freedom of expression.

Also, the Defamation Act (2013), which enacted penalties under the law, was unduly harsh, including imprisonment, for defamation offenses. Consequently, it cast a chilling effect on freedom of speech and media independence.

The Amendment to the Constitution (2002) allowed amendments made to The Gambian Constitution in 2002 to eliminate presidential term limits, allowing Jammeh to extend his tenure in power. This change played a pivotal role in his prolonged rule.

Additionally, the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act (2004) enabled the Amendment to the Criminal Code to criminalize same-gender acts, sparking international human rights concerns and leading to the persecution of LGBTQ+ individuals in The Gambia.

Suffice, the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) Act (1995) laid the foundation for the establishment of the NIA, an agency implicated in numerous human rights

AUDACITY

abuses and extrajudicial actions during Jammeh's oppressive rule.

Not to mention the controversial Supreme Islamic Council Act (1995), which conferred significant control over Islamic institutions and religious leaders to the government, granting Jammeh undue influence over religious affairs.

While the Amendment to the Elections Act (2005) allowed alterations to the Elections Act, it introduced provisions that made it exceedingly challenging for opposition parties to participate in elections, further consolidating Jammeh's power.

Finally, the Amendment to the Public Service Act (2015) vested the president with the authority to appoint and dismiss public officials, including judges, at their discretion. Such sweeping powers undermined the independence of the judiciary.

It is crucial to recognize that many of these laws faced severe criticism from human rights organizations and the international community due to their detrimental impact on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in The Gambia.

Following Jammeh's departure from power in 2017, the nation has embarked on a path of reform, including efforts to repeal or amend these laws, with the aim of restoring democratic governance and upholding respect for human rights.

A telling example revolved around the deteriorating state of the ferries operating on the crucial seven-mile route between Banjul and Barra. Despite repeated

AUDACITY

warnings from National Assembly members, Jammeh's administration failed to take corrective action, imperiling the possibility of a maritime disaster.

Lawmakers, including Honorable Ebrima Jammeh of Foni Bintang, criticized the allocation of funds for purchasing new ferries that had remained unused since July 2011 due to inadequate landing points. They contended that the funds could have been better allocated to upgrading the existing ferries.

Nevertheless, the prevailing sentiment within the National Assembly left no room for non-compliance with Jammeh's directives.

The deteriorating condition of the ferries incited public outcry, with passengers expressing alarm over the state of services. Legislators, such as Honorable Mam Cherno Jallow from Upper Niumi, underscored the urgency of rectifying the situation. Despite these appeals, the majority leader and member for Serrekunda East, Honorable Fabakary Tombong Jatta, attributed the problems to sabotage rather than acknowledging managerial shortcomings.

The public speculated that the issues stemmed either from Jammeh's personal enrichment agenda or from corruption and incompetence within ferry management. In either case, Jammeh was swift to take credit for successes while distancing himself from failures, consistently assigning blame to others. His rule was characterized by a conspicuous absence of self-responsibility, a defining feature of his leadership.

Chapter 12

The 2016 Presidential Election

In the annals of The Gambia's history, the reign of Yahya Jammeh stands as a stark reminder of the depths to which political repression can reach. During his more than two decades in power, Jammeh orchestrated a systematic campaign to stifle political opposition and tighten his control over the state apparatus.

This memoir delves into the dark underbelly of Jammeh's rule, where suppression of dissent and the utilization of the state machinery for control were the norm.

During Yahya Jammeh's oppressive rule, The Gambia felt like one big, dysfunctional family torn apart by differences in ethnic group, politics, and social affiliations. Yet, beneath these divisions, Gambians remained a family united by the shadow of Jammeh's leadership. The true extent of this dysfunction, however, became glaringly evident during the 2016 presidential elections.

The 2016 elections showcased the resilience of The Gambian people in the face of adversity. It demonstrated what unity could achieve, even in a country where the internet had been shut down, and daily threats from Jammeh's security forces loomed large. These threats were justified under the pretext of national security following sporadic unrest triggered by the imprisonment of UDP leader Ousainou Darboe and his entire executive team.

AUDACITY

They had marched to demand the body of Solo Sandeng, another opposition figure who had died while advocating for electoral reforms. Such conditions, emblematic of the inhumanity under Jammeh's rule, were endured by Gambians.

Traditionally, Gambians had taken pride in their nation—a place characterized by law-abiding citizens who held their faith close and generously helped one another. While disagreements were commonplace, they were not fraught with fear of retribution.

However, all of this changed under Jammeh, and it escalated during the 2016 election campaign. Political discourse degenerated into personal attacks and denigration, with each party blaming the other for the country's woes.

Some of The Gambian people who had managed to escape Jammeh's brutalities believed they were immune to his madness. They avoided political discussions, keeping their convictions to themselves. Fatoumata Jahumpa Ceesay, former speaker of the House, recalled, "I did my best to stay above the fray, as did some of my friends. I quietly dodged and weaved my way through opposing political conversations, even though I stood strong in my convictions."

However, many Gambians who had withstood the worst of Jammeh's brutality held their feelings closer, fearing imprisonment or even death for criticizing the inflated cost of living.

Under Jammeh, speaking out against such sentiments was forbidden and punishable. He was the sole voice allowed to speak about Gambians and their beliefs,

AUDACITY

consistently disparaging anyone who dared to disagree. This marked a stark departure from the Gambian identity, leading to relentless protests, open defiance, and the rise of online resistance movements.

Gambians uphold and strongly believe in a proverb: "Gambians could choose their friends but not family." The significance of family bonds is deeply cherished, often surpassing the importance of friendships. The notion of severing family ties over political differences was considered inconceivable.

O. J. Jallow, executive member of the coalition alliance and leader of the PPP opposition party, asserted, "Elections will come and go; you'll vote for the lesser of two evils, but family, they are forever." I would not allow myself to suffer the loss of family over an election. That's just not possible."

Yet, the 2016 elections exposed the ugliness and divisiveness of politics. Initially, the election campaign proceeded smoothly, with Yahya Jammeh, Adama Barrow, and Mama Kandeh passionately vying for the presidency. They urged Gambians to vote as one, emphasizing the importance of a united front to topple Jammeh's dictatorship.

O. J. believed that unity was crucial, even if it occasionally meant electing someone with whom they did not entirely agree.

He recognized that democracy would be restored only when Jammeh was ousted and that required collective action by every citizen, both locally and abroad. Despite doubts about politicians' trustworthiness,

AUDACITY

Gambians could engage in constructive discourse and pursue their goals with dignity and empathy.

Jammeh's regime had witnessed him emerge victorious in four elections but doubts persistently lingered about their fairness. The predominant factor casting a long shadow of suspicion over these electoral proceedings were Jammeh's iron grip on state media.

Behind the veneer of democracy, these elections became nothing more than a charade, with Jammeh expertly manipulating the electoral process to secure his uninterrupted rule.

This chapter delves into the stories of elections that were far from free or fair, where the opposition found themselves systematically undermined, and where the outcomes seemed preordained.

Even after his defeat in the 2016 election, he refused to leave office, asserting, "Allah elected me, and only Allah can remove me." Opposition parties alleged bribery and intimidation, and journalists reporting on the election were arrested.

Skeptics doubted the effectiveness of international bodies, viewing them as toothless, capable only of making speeches. The international community had previously condemned Jammeh's rigged elections through speeches on global TV networks. The absence of international election observers, citing an unfair playing field, added to the skepticism. Opposition rallies faced harassment, intimidation, and threats of arrest by Jammeh's security forces.

AUDACITY

Human rights organizations had long criticized Jammeh's government for arbitrary detentions and intimidation of journalists. The newly united opposition coalition aimed to not only improve the economy but also restore human rights and dignity. Their goal was to ensure that The Gambia would finally experience a peaceful transfer of power.

The 2016 election campaign was marred by turmoil, leading to the death of Solo Sandeng, a prominent opposition member, while in custody. His death in custody drew global condemnation and calls for an independent investigation grew louder.

The 2016 elections were a turning point for The Gambia, assessing the unity and determination of the opposition to bring about change and end Jammeh's oppressive rule.

The passing of Solo Sandeng cast a glaring spotlight on the unsettling pre-election atmosphere in The Gambia, confirming the reports of the government's heavy-handed approach towards peaceful gatherings and the ill-treatment of detainees. Al Hussein, a prominent advocate for human rights, underscored the paramount importance of safeguarding the freedom of assembly and expression in the run-up to elections.

Upon learning of Solo's untimely demise, UDP leader and senior party officials convened an urgent meeting at Darboe's residence in Fajara. With unanimous resolve, they took to the streets, demanding the return of Solo's body, whether "DEAD or ALIVE."

AUDACITY

In a matter of minutes, Darboe emerged as the leading figure, guiding his party executives and supporters in a peaceful protest aimed at securing justice for Solo Sandeng.

Regrettably, their peaceful demonstration was met with arrests, detentions, and subsequent instances of torture.

Darboe passionately asserted, "These individuals have committed no wrong. They have merely exercised their constitutional rights, rights we are determined to uphold." He continued, "Our purpose is clear—to secure Solo's body, to secure the release of Madam Fatoumatta Jawara, and others. We adamantly refuse to allow anyone to infringe upon our rights under the pretext of maintaining security and stability in The Gambia."

Prior to embarking on the streets, Darboe gathered his fellow executive members, bestowing his final blessings and delivering a resolute speech. During the protest, Darboe and fifteen other UDP members were subjected to physical assault, arrested, and transported unceremoniously to various security detention facilities.

The United States issued a vehement condemnation of The Gambia government's crackdown on opposition members, characterizing it as an "excessive response to recent peaceful protests" that culminated in arrests, detentions, and the tragic demise of Solo Sandeng.

AUDACITY

The U.S. called for an immediate cessation of violence, urging Gambians to remain composed while emphasizing the government's responsibility to uphold international human rights standards, particularly concerning the right to peaceful assembly.

The UDP's principal "offense" lay in their advocacy for electoral reforms. Regrettably, their appeals were brushed aside by President Yahya Jammeh's administration and the Independent Electoral Commission.

This compelled UDP members to exercise their constitutional right to engage in peaceful protests to address concerns surrounding the impending December 2016 elections. It was a widely shared sentiment that The Gambia electoral system favored Jammeh due to his control over state resources.

Despite prior expressions of condemnation by intergovernmental and regional bodies, such as the Economic Community of West African States' refusal to dispatch observers for the 2011 elections, little progress had been made in democratizing The Gambia electoral process. The need for additional efforts to effect meaningful change had become painfully apparent.

In the wake of the initial arrests and crackdown, the UDP, in collaboration with Amnesty International, reported a return to relative normalcy in the Greater Banjul Area. However, security forces, led by State Guards officers, resorted to using live ammunition against protesters, resulting in numerous casualties.

AUDACITY

Additionally, there were troubling accounts of torture, encompassing methods like waterboarding, simulated genital electrocution, suffocation, and various deprivation techniques designed to mimic death.

During this tumultuous period, seven UDP youth members apprehended during the protests endured the most of brutal torture. Tragically, this ordeal claimed the lives of three elderly party members while they remained in state custody.

In the face of such adversity, the opposition parties fervently conveyed their concerns to international bodies, emphasizing the dire threats posed to democracy and the urgent need for free, fair, and credible elections.

They remained steadfast in their commitment to peaceful demonstrations, refusing to compromise their rights or yield to threats. Collectively, the opposition parties beseeched the international community for intervention and support to end the tyranny in The Gambia.

Although Jammeh sought to downplay the protests and arrests, asserting that the situation had been brought under control, opposition leaders like Mai Ahmed Fatty issued stern warnings against further government-sanctioned torture. They reiterated the non-negotiable nature of the right to peaceful protest and cautioned against heavy-handed tactics that might lead to unintended consequences.

AUDACITY

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed profound dismay at the loss of Solo Sandeng, an ardent opposition supporter, demanding a comprehensive investigation into the circumstances of his death. Ban also called for the release of all opposition detainees, including Ousainou Darboe.

Meanwhile, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights urgently convened with The Gambia justice minister to address the alarming allegations of illegal detention and torture.

The People's Progressive Party joined forces in the campaign to secure the unconditional release of all political detainees, intensifying the mounting pressure on Jammeh's regime.

As the opposition parties and their supporters remained resolute in their determination to bring about change and end Jammeh's rule, messages of support poured in from across the nation and fellow opposition parties.

Calls for Jammeh to address pressing issues, such as the economy, freedom of the press, liberty, and foreign policy, grew louder. The opposition leaders-initiated discussions about forming a united front against Jammeh in the upcoming elections.

Notwithstanding differences and moments of discord among the opposition leaders, there was a growing consensus among Gambians that a united coalition under a single flagbearer represented the most effective strategy to challenge Jammeh.

AUDACITY

They acknowledged the detrimental impact of Jammeh's rule on the nation and perceived the forthcoming election as an opportunity for transformative change.

The international community, along with human rights organizations and transparency groups, sustained their pressure for the release of political detainees and the establishment of a fair election process. The Gambia stood at a pivotal juncture, with the opposition parties and their supporters steadfastly committed to ushering in a new era characterized by democracy and liberty.

Chapter 13

The Triumph Of Hope: Adama Barrow - The Chosen Flagbearer Of The United Opposition

In the annals of The Gambia history, the year 2016 would etch itself as a watershed moment, a time when the ember of hope ignited into a blazing fire. At the center of this epochal transformation stood Adama Barrow, a name that would soon become synonymous with courage, unity, and the indomitable spirit of The Gambian people.

Adama Barrow, a soft-spoken businessperson and member of the United Democratic Party (UDP), had dwelled in relative obscurity within the labyrinth of The Gambia politics. Little did the world know that this unassuming figure would emerge as the fulcrum of change in one of West Africa's smallest nations.

The stage was set for a seismic shift as the presidential elections loomed on December 1, 2016. President Yahya Jammeh, a towering figure who had held the reins of power for an astonishing 22 years, sought an unprecedented fifth term. Allegations of human rights abuses had marred his tenure, and the nation yearned for change.

What transpired in the run-up to the elections was nothing short of remarkable. In a rare display of unity, the opposition parties in The Gambia decided to set aside their differences and forge a formidable alliance. Their objective was clear: to rally behind a single

AUDACITY

candidate capable of challenging the entrenched rule of President Jammeh.

From the crucible of this unity emerged Adama Barrow, who would go on to receive a unanimous endorsement as the flagbearer of this united front of opposition parties. The coalition was a motley crew comprising not only the UDP, the largest opposition movement in the country, but also several smaller groups joined in. Their shared goal was unambiguous: to bring an end to President Jammeh's rule.

As the stage was being set for this historic showdown, nominations for the upcoming presidential election took place from November 7 to November 10. Nine registered political parties and one independent candidate declared their intentions to participate in the election.

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) had outlined that this three-day nomination window would enable prospective candidates to submit their nomination papers for the December 1 presidential election, followed by legislative and local elections in April 2017 and April 2018, respectively.

Adama Barrow embarked on a journey that would see him transcend the confines of his relative anonymity. His campaign resonated with Gambians, and he quickly became a charismatic figurehead for change. His message was one of hope, promising to address the pressing needs of the people and to dispel the illusions that had lured The Gambia youth toward the treacherous path of emigration to Europe.

AUDACITY

As the campaign gathered steam, international observers turned their gaze towards The Gambia, their watchful eyes tinged with concern about the integrity of the electoral process. President Jammeh had, at times, issued defiant declarations, asserting that his presidency was ordained by a higher power and impervious to the influence of Western nations.

The potential candidacy of the incumbent President, Yahya Jammeh, cast a long shadow. It was evident that Jammeh intended to seek a fifth term, extending his rule over this small West African nation with a population of less than two million people.

In the 2011 presidential election, President Yahya Jammeh secured an impressive 72 percent of the votes, solidifying his reign that had commenced in 1994. Notably, the number of registered The Gambia voters had increased to 886,578 for the 2016 election, compared to 796,929 in the previous election.

In accordance with its duty to ensure free and fair elections, the electoral commission announced that active political campaigns were scheduled from November 16 to 29.

Additionally, they revealed an increase in the number of polling stations from 1,300 in 2011 to 1,422. Votes would be counted on-site immediately after the polls closed at 1700 hours, as affirmed by the chairperson during a press conference.

Emphasizing the importance of maintaining law and order, both by the public and stakeholders, the electoral commission reiterated its unwavering

AUDACITY

commitment to conducting accurate, transparent, free, and fair elections.

A significant development in this election was Dr. Isatou Touray's entry into the political arena. Dr. Touray, a prominent human rights activist dedicated to eradicating harmful traditional practices, especially female genital mutilation, became the first female politician in The Gambia's history to vie for the highest office.

Her candidacy received a warm welcome, with Mai Ahmad Fatty, the leader of The Gambia Moral Congress, applauding her patriotism, unwavering integrity, and dedication to addressing pressing issues affecting the female population, including the eradication of harmful traditional practices.

On his Facebook page, Mai openly endorsed Dr. Touray, highlighting her strong public service record and integrity compared to some career politicians who had recently entered the race.

He expressed his readiness to join forces with her to form a formidable alliance aimed at ousting President Jammeh from power. Mai made it clear that while unity was welcomed, any compromise or arrangement that could jeopardize The Gambia's future was unacceptable.

O. J. Jallow echoed the sentiment that disunity among the opposition could extend Jammeh's rule for another five years. He urged all opposition parties to seize the opportunity presented in this election and prioritize national interests over individual interests. Jallow even offered to be the advocate and his party's candidate,

AUDACITY

willing to lead the mission to unite all opposing parties in the quest for the presidency.

In an unusual display of unity, The Gambia's opposition parties announced their intention to rally behind a single candidate for the December presidential election.

At a meeting held at the Kairaba Hotel, they agreed to select a single contender through a convention on October 30, just weeks before the election. The signatories of a published memorandum emphasized their willingness to set aside differences in pursuit of the supreme national interest: removing Jammeh from power.

Membership in this united front was extended to all opposition parties, including the United Democratic Party (UDP), the largest opposition movement in the country.

The coalition also included several smaller groups and marked the inclusion of The Gambia's first female presidential candidate, Isatou Touray, and the newly formed GDC party led by Mama Kandeh. Mama Kandeh's campaign had garnered substantial attendance at rallies, surpassing other opposition parties by attracting hundreds of thousands of people.

Adama Barrow emerged as the frontrunner. He secured unanimous endorsement as the flagbearer of The Gambia's united opposition parties. Barrow, a businessperson, and member of the United Democratic Party (UDP) would lead the coalition into the December 2016 presidential elections. His election by over three hundred opposition delegates at a

AUDACITY

convention marked a significant turning point in The Gambia's political landscape.

Adama Barrow offered a ray of hope to a nation eager to leave behind the pain of the past and move forward into a brighter future. Though quiet, unassuming, and unknown, the people placed their hopes and dreams in him, signaling the beginning of a new era of change in The Gambia.

Barrow's sudden prominence followed the incarceration of top officials from the United Democratic Party in July 2016. While not a seasoned politician, his lack of political baggage, in contrast to other candidates, including Jammeh, made him an appealing choice to represent the coalition of parties united to challenge Yahya Jammeh's rule.

Confident in his chances of victory, Barrow boldly proclaimed, "It's very clear, the writing is on the wall that I'm going to win." His confidence resonated strongly, galvanizing support from seven Gambian political parties and an independent candidate who had joined forces to field a single unified figure. They all unequivocally rallied behind Barrow.

Barrow had an interesting background. He had lived and worked as a security guard in London, where he developed a passion for the Arsenal Football Club. As a husband to two wives and a father of five children, he was known as a dedicated workaholic. Football was one of his few known distractions, and his work ethic impressed many during the endorsement and voting process.

AUDACITY

Moreover, Barrow empathized with The Gambia youth population and their struggles, particularly with the "Backway" syndrome. He understood the false allure of Europe and was committed to dispelling misconceptions.

He conveyed the message that Europe did not possess money-growing trees and that similar opportunities for success could be found within The Gambia. Barrow encouraged the youth to invest in their homeland, create employment opportunities, and contribute to the nation's prosperity.

Barrow's popularity surged, his face becoming a ubiquitous sight on car windows, campaign posters, and grey T-shirts donned by The Gambia youth populace. This grassroots support was not mere chance; it was fueled by Barrow's strategic use of technology and social media.

Through these channels, the coalition organized, mobilized, and drew large crowds to campaign rallies. Yet, looming over this digital success was the potential disruption of internet and phone services on polling day, a concern that could hinder opposition communication and media coverage on platforms like Facebook.

Amid this digital battlefield, Barrow emphasized the importance of information dissemination. He believed it would help voters make informed decisions, steering them away from voting along tribal lines, as Jammeh had often encouraged. The Gambia had a history of electoral integrity concerns, and Barrow aimed to address them head-on.

AUDACITY

Leading up to the 2016 election, international observers were closely monitoring the situation. The Gambia authorities had denied access to a European Union observer mission, though African Union observers were accredited to attend. President Jammeh, meanwhile, intensified his rhetoric, asserting that his presidency was in the hands of the Almighty and that Western powers could not dislodge him.

Amid this tense political climate, Adama Barrow emerged as the strongest contender Jammeh had faced in all his previous presidential election victories. The prospect of political change prompted Jammeh's government to clamp down on critics and opponents, with allegations of a torture squad being used to intimidate those who dared to speak against him.

In a profound show of solidarity, Dr. Isatou Touray suspended her presidential campaign and withdrew from the race to support the coalition's efforts to end tyranny and restore democracy. Her decision was driven by patriotism and a desire to address the suffering endured over the past twenty-two years under Jammeh's rule.

Barrow, in a pivotal moment, resigned from his party to lead the coalition of opposition parties. However, Jammeh's state media reported his resignation without further explanation, causing confusion among voters. Nonetheless, the news of the coalition alliance provided clarity and hope to the electorate.

Progress and history were unfolding as the opposition stood united in solidarity with the coalition alliance. In contrast, President Jammeh initially engaged with opposition candidates but later postponed a key

AUDACITY

meeting, leaving questions unanswered. This marked a rare willingness on his part to interact with opposition leaders.

Adama Barrow expressed his determination to bring about positive change, emphasizing the end of unlawful arrests and detentions. He pledged to depoliticize development and prioritize the needs of the people, ensuring a departure from the self-enrichment agenda of the past.

As the election drew closer, tensions mounted. Jammeh, heavily influenced by his beliefs, remained defiant, and Barrow's popularity continued to grow. The Gambia was on the brink of a historic election, with the hope of achieving a peaceful democratic transition of power for the first time since independence.

Adama Barrow's nomination symbolized the united opposition's determination to challenge the incumbent President, Yahya Jammeh. The stage was set for a crucial electoral battle that would determine The Gambia's future.

The culmination of this momentous struggle occurred on December 1, 2016, when Gambians headed to the polls to cast their votes. The results were nothing short of historic: Adama Barrow secured victory with 43.3% of the vote, while President Yahya Jammeh garnered 39.6%. In a surprising turn of events, Jammeh initially conceded defeat, igniting flickers of hope for a peaceful transition.

However, the path to change was fraught with obstacles. President Jammeh, once the harbinger of a gracious concession, later contested the election

AUDACITY

results, plunging the nation into a period of uncertainty and tension. The Gambia stood at the precipice of a political crisis, teetering on the edge of the unknown.

It was in this crucible of adversity that Adama Barrow's resilience and The Gambian people's unwavering determination shone brightest. Diplomatic efforts and regional pressure, including the intervention of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) forces, were instrumental in securing a peaceful resolution.

On January 19, 2017, history was made as Adama Barrow was solemnly sworn in as the President of the Gambia. The venue was The Gambian embassy in Senegal, a poignant reminder of the challenges that had been overcome. It marked the first peaceful democratic transition of power in The Gambia since the nation's independence, in 1965.

Adama Barrow's election and the subsequent peaceful transition to power reverberated far beyond The Gambian shores. It was hailed as a triumph of hope, a symbol of democracy's resilience, and a testament to the courage of a people who had long yearned for change. His presidency ushered in an era of political reforms, international re-engagement, and the promise of a brighter future for The Gambia.

Chapter 14

The Day The Gambia Decided

The Gambia was poised at a crossroads, a nation on the brink of a historic decision that would shape its future. As the election day drew nearer, the atmosphere in the country became charged with anticipation and tension. The threat level alert was elevated to "severe," and the pulse of the nation quickened.

During this charged environment, the coalition party, led by Adama Barrow, announced their candidate. This marked a turning point in the nation's political landscape. For more than two decades, Yahya Jammeh had held the reins of power, but now, a united coalition consisting of various political parties was determined to bring about change.

The contest had its challenges. Jammeh, known for his formidable political machinery and a crowd of loyal supporters, had always seemed like an unbeatable force. However, the coalition, with its diverse support base and determination, was ready for the battle ahead.

As election day loomed, both Jammeh's and Kandeh's support appeared to dwindle. Despite a promising start to his campaign, Mamma Kandeh's numbers were on the decline. The police issued calls for calm and adherence to the rule of law during the electoral process. It was a crucial moment for the nation, a test of its democratic spirit.

On the day of the election, all 1,422 designated polling stations across the country opened at 0700 hours. Gambians queued patiently, waiting to cast their votes.

AUDACITY

The Independent Electoral Commission reassured the nation that the election would be conducted with integrity, transparency, and fairness. They called upon the political leadership to accept the outcome, emphasizing the importance of a peaceful transition of power.

However, in Serre Kunda, the largest town in the country, a minor scuffle occurred between President Yahya Jammeh's supporters and the opposition. It was a reminder of the tensions that simmered beneath the surface.

In the hours leading up to the election, concerns mounted that Jammeh was formulating fraudulent plans, including election rigging tactics driven by intimidation and fear. Just before the polls opened, he ordered GamTel to shut down the internet, plunging the nation into a communication blackout. While authorities cited security reasons, many saw it as an attack on freedom of expression.

Amnesty International strongly condemned the internet shutdown, viewing it as an unjustified assault on freedom of expression. It shattered the sense of newfound freedom that had characterized the electoral campaign and raised fears of a return to the repression of Jammeh's rule.

In his final campaign rally, Jammeh promised accelerated development for the country. However, skepticism hung heavy in the air as Gambians remembered two decades of unfulfilled promises. They hungered for change and knew that Jammeh had nothing new to offer.

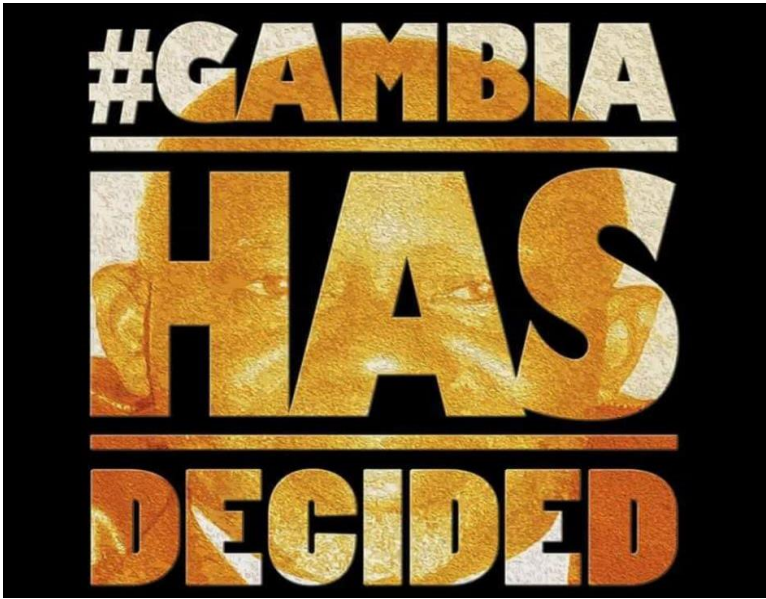
AUDACITY

Gambia's unique voting system, involving dropping a marble into a colored drum representing a candidate, was in place. Green, silver, and purple drums stood for different candidates, and votes were counted using the newly implemented "on-the-spot counting" with wooden tablets. Jammeh insisted that this system was immune to fraud and rigging.

International observers from the European Union and ECOWAS had initially been denied access but later were allowed in. On Election Day, as the polls closed at around 1700 hours, the nation awaited the results expectantly.

In a historic turn of events, Adama Barrow secured a commanding victory with 45.5% of the vote compared to Jammeh's 36.7%. In a surprising move, Jammeh initially conceded defeat, acknowledging the transparency and integrity of the elections. A peaceful transition was on the horizon.

However, this sense of hope and optimism would soon be dashed. Jammeh's concession turned out to be short-lived as he reneged on his promise and refused to step down. The world watched in disbelief as African leaders, regional organizations, and the international community rallied against him. ECOWAS even prepared a regional military force for intervention if Jammeh resisted a peaceful transfer of power.



But as the news of Jammeh's defeat spread, the streets of The Gambia erupted in celebrations. Jubilant crowds flooded the streets, and social media buzzed with the #GambiaHasDecided hashtag. The nation had made its choice, and the promise of a brighter future beckoned.

The international community congratulated The Gambia on its peaceful and democratic election. Jammeh's departure marked the end of a 22-year dictatorship, and Gambians were eager to embrace their newfound freedom and opportunities.

Amidst the celebrations, questions arose about the fate of Kanilai, Jammeh's hometown, which had enjoyed free utilities for over two decades. Residents were informed that they, like all Gambians, would now have to pay for these services. It was a symbolic reminder of the changes sweeping across the nation.

AUDACITY

In this historic moment of transition, Gambians looked ahead with optimism and hope. The chapter of Jammeh's rule had closed, and a new one had begun. The Gambia had decided, and the future beckoned with the promise of democracy and progress.

"I'm a poor old man," Seedy Jammeh said, raising his voice and his thick, grey eyebrows. "I can't go out to the field and farm anymore; I'm too old. I cannot afford to pay the bills, and many people here cannot. They will have to cut water and electricity and take our village back to what it was before President Jammeh." He puffed heavily as though trying to contain his emotions.

More benefit cuts were in the pipeline, the authorities informed the villagers. Hundreds of young villagers attending Kanilai's schools or universities elsewhere in the country could soon find themselves pushed out of their classrooms. "My son is in university with two years left. We think they will also take away free education.

How can I pay for his fees?" asked Seedy. With all these worries in the back of the villagers' minds, coupled with no sense of confidence whatsoever in the new "Mandinka" government, as narrated by the elders of Kanilai, they embarked on a "mission damage control" and ordered Jammeh to rescind his decision and reject the elections.

They declared their unwavering support, stating that if the authorities came for him, they would have to face all of them, as they were willing to fight tooth and nail to their last drop of blood.

AUDACITY

Jammeh took heed and decided to make a U-turn. "After a thorough investigation, I have decided to reject the outcome of the recent election. I lament serious and unacceptable abnormalities which have transpired during the Independent Electoral Commission's official announcement of the results of the election."

Spontaneous celebrations that engulfed the tiny West African country were cut short when news spread that Jammeh had rejected the entire results four days later, citing "unacceptable abnormalities" in the elections. International, continental, and regional organizations called on Jammeh to accept the result of the polls and ensure the peaceful transfer of power to Mr. Barrow. ECOWAS threatened to use force in The Gambia if Jammeh did not step down on January 19 as scheduled.

Jammeh's U-turn called for strong condemnation and a firm stance on his childish attitude, wanting to hold the whole country hostage. This left The Gambia's new rulers with no choice but to vow to prosecute the outgoing president for crimes against humanity.

In the aftermath of rejecting the election results, Yahya Jammeh pivoted from his initial acceptance speech, declaring, "I recommend fresh and transparent elections, overseen by a god-fearing and independent electoral commission." This unexpected turn of events marked a significant shift in his stance, emphasizing the call for a renewed electoral process guided by transparency and divine principles.

Jammeh began military deployments onto the streets, even while the US embassy in Banjul urged the army to continue to show "respect for the rule of law and the

AUDACITY

outcome of the presidential election.” Soldiers began placing sandbags in strategic locations across Banjul, a development that triggered widespread unease among the already spooked population, who had been panic-stricken and buying food before the vote due to fear of unrest.

“The Gambian people have made a clear choice for change and a new start,” the embassy added.

Opposition spokesperson Isatou Touray criticized a “violation of democracy” on social media and called for people to “remain calm, lucid, and vigilant and not retreat.” Babatunde Olugboji, deputy program director at Human Rights Watch, responded to Jammeh’s U-turn as well. “We are deeply concerned by reports of belated objections to The Gambia election results raised by President Jammeh,” he said. “The international community, notably ECOWAS, should loudly protest against any unlawful attempt to subvert the will of the people of The Gambia.”

He also reiterated the analysis his group had issued immediately after the election defeat: “Given the Jammeh government’s record of intimidating and targeting perceived opponents, the transition period also carries risks.”

“It is essential that during the political transition, The Gambia security forces continue to show respect for human rights and the rule of law,” Barrow said while addressing the security forces.

Barrow was set to take over in late January 2017 following a transition period, but Jammeh was set to

AUDACITY

make strenuous efforts to ensure that it did not happen.

International organizations and heads of state, especially in France, the UK, and the United States, as well as in the sub-region, including Senegal, Nigeria, and Liberia, called Barrow to congratulate him on his election victory and consider him “the legitimately recognized president of The Gambia come January 18 when he was supposed to be officially inaugurated.”

The Gambia Constitution says Barrow must take office within sixty days of his election. Smith told the Blade that Jammeh might officially step down before the deadline if he continued to provoke the national and international community with his threats of “defending The Gambia’s national security and sovereignty”—meaning he was threatening to start a civil war in The Gambia if the impasse negotiations failed between Barrow and him under the auspices of the ECOWAS contingent.

Shuttling back and forth between Monrovia, Lagos, Accra, and Banjul, Nigeria's president Muhammadu Buhari, Sierra Leone's Ernest Bai Koroma, and Ghana's outgoing president John Mahama all flew in with Sirleaf to find common ground between the two sides. Liberia's president said no deal was reached by a heavyweight delegation for Yahya Jammeh to transition power to Adama Barrow. A day of talks with Jammeh and Barrow yielded constructive conversations but no resolution, she added.

Jammeh’s political party filed a legal challenge to the result, further complicating the situation. “We come to

AUDACITY

help Gambians find their way through a transition. That was not something that could happen in one day.

It is something that one must work on," said Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, acting as the head of a delegation of four West African heads of state visiting the country. The Liberian leader said Jammeh had "expressed some concerns" on the same day his party filed the petition with the country's Supreme Court. "The ECOWAS mission was here to meet with him to understand the status quo a bit better," Sirleaf added.

Nigeria's Buhari had said that the long-time ruler had been "receptive" to their pleas, but president-elect Barrow said the talks were in gridlock. "There has not been an agreement so far," said Barrow, who also met the delegation. The leader of the opposition described a "standoff" with the government. Referring to the court challenge filed by the ruling party, he said Jammeh "doesn't have the authority" to annul the result.

The lack of a deal came as a blow to the opposition, who had hoped Jammeh would leave power within a month under international pressure. In fact, they had already started the transition planning process, assigning a transition team to handle the entire process while the president-elect was busy putting together his cabinet nominations.

That transition will be even more complicated given the legal petition, seen by AFP, which claimed the country's Independent Electoral Commission had violated the law and that Barrow was not the elected president, and the result was void. The ruling Alliance

AUDACITY

for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction said it was not present when the IEC issued a recount on December 5, claimed there were irregularities in the process and alleged voter intimidation. Jammeh questioned the 300,000 AWOL votes, and he wanted fresh elections to be held.

A top ECOWAS official had said that if Jammeh and the delegation do not reach an agreement, West African states would "contemplate more draconian decisions"—sanctions, threats, and possible military intervention—as a last resort should negotiations fail before January 18.

Jammeh had surprised observers by initially conceding defeat in the poll but then reversed his stance sometime later, triggering an avalanche of international condemnation and a multitude of calls for him to cede power peacefully. His decision was triggered in part by a readjustment of the votes counted in the election, made by the IEC a week after the elections, reducing the number of ballots for all three candidates but confirming Barrow's victory.

After Jammeh's election results rejection and annulment announcement, The Gambia police force locked down the offices of the electoral commission, raising fresh fears that Jammeh might not leave office without a fight.

The electoral commission chairperson, Alieu Momar Njie, told AFP that when he went to work, riot police prevented him from entering the premises. Later that day, Njie maintained the results still stood and questioned Jammeh's ability to bring a legal challenge.

AUDACITY

A group of the country's most influential lawyers has said there is "no legitimate legal mechanism available in The Gambia to hear and determine the election petition" and that Jammeh would have to stuff the court with his appointees.

This contrasted with the Liberia situation when ECOWAS had to pick up the baton and send in its peacekeepers. Although that intervention was not an unqualified success (the fighting continued, and peacekeepers were accused of rampant looting), similarly, as in The Gambia's case, ECOWAS broke with a tradition of looking the other way.

"Countries in the region realized that their neighbor's problems could soon become theirs," Mr. Melly said.

They blocked the IEC chairperson from accessing his office. Opposition coalition members had been more confident of a breakthrough. The world was watching via social media. At the same time, they were responding unilaterally with strong statements like "the world was watching, and Jammeh better get his acts together and pack and leave."

Hedging all hopes on the credentials of the negotiating team, "Remember President Buhari is from the military. Jammeh is from the military. I think that will be effective," said Hamat Bah, a senior coalition official.

Up until then, the president may have exasperated his regional peers, but he had never threatened peace in the area.

AUDACITY

The situation has dramatically shifted, however, ever since Jammeh's move to void the election.

The Gambia army chief CDS Ousman Badjie also seemed to reverse a previous declaration of support for Barrow and arrived at the delegation preparation talks wearing a badge that featured Jammeh's face on his uniform. This was seen as showing his allegiance to President Jammeh because, as he said, "he pays his wages." Badjie said he supported the commander-in-chief in brief comments to journalists.

"May I please seize this opportunity to renew to President Jammeh the assurance of the unflinching loyalty and support of The Gambia Armed Forces," General Ousman Badjie wrote in an open letter published in a pro-government newspaper, The Daily Observer.

Jammeh, citing irregularities, filed an election petition to the Supreme Court. His vow to hang onto power despite a wave of regional and international condemnation and the threat of possible military action bewildered The Gambian community, including those in The Gambia and elsewhere. For his part, Mr. Barrow also vowed to assume power as president on January 19, 2017.

The Gambia was now mired in a political deadlock that could rapidly degenerate into widespread violence. This report examined the unfolding political crisis in The Gambia. Gambians devolved into contending schools of thought on how to resolve the issue.

AUDACITY

Everyone started thinking about scenarios that could play out in the days and weeks ahead. Jammeh was the only topic of discussion in both The Gambia and the sub-region, as well as concerned Western nations like the UK, France, and America.

Jammeh became the most famous man in Africa, as every international and local African TV station directed their lenses towards The Gambia geopolitical landscape.

He flourished under such spotlight, loving every minute of it, sporadically giving regular bizarre statements, and even telling the ECOWAS soldiers that, should they invade The Gambia, he was prepared to “slaughter them like flies.” He said that he was ready to defend the security and sovereignty of The Gambia with his last drop of blood.

While all this was going on, Adama Barrow had been stuck in neighboring Senegal for a week, waiting for the incumbent he defeated, Yahya Jammeh, to step down and leave the country. Barrow fled to Senegal and was sworn in during an inauguration at The Gambia Embassy in Dakar, capital city of neighboring Senegal.

A coalition of other African countries sent troops into The Gambia to evict Mr. Jammeh by force if necessary. But Jammeh finally let go. He boarded a plane headed for exile, accompanied by the president of Guinea, who had gone to The Gambia to persuade him to leave.

Jammeh’s first stop was Conakry, Guinea; however, it was not clear where his final new home would be. News began to circulate that he may, in fact, have had Equatorial Guinea as his destination. That information

AUDACITY

turned out to be true, although not a lot was known about his relationship with Equatorial Guinea. Back in the United States, he and the president of Equatorial Guinea were, in fact, next-door neighbors in a suburb of Washington, DC.

Jammeh and his new host are not known to have been close before, but they may find many reasons to get along. Both seized power in coups, and both have clung to power for decades: Mr. Obiang, who has been in office for thirty-seven years, is the world's longest-serving political leader.

Both also care little for human rights: Jammeh withdrew The Gambia from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court in the waning years of his administration; Mr. Obiang never signed up in the first place.

Hence, Jammeh could potentially relish his retirement without facing extradition and legal consequences for the dissidents who endured plastic bags over their heads in his prisons. Witnesses reported that as part of his departure from The Gambia, Jammeh transported two Rolls-Royces, a Bentley, and eleven million dollars in cash onto a waiting cargo plane at Banjul International Airport. He currently resides in exile in Equatorial Guinea.

Barrow, who has never held office, inherited a country with little experience with democracy. He will govern via a shaky, seven-sided coalition whose only common ground was an intense dislike of Jammeh. Most Gambians also conceded that for all its faults, Jammeh's police state managed to keep civil war, Ebola, and jihadist terrorism at bay.

AUDACITY

Mindful of the challenges, Barrow planned to focus on reforming the economy and security forces rather than trying to bring his predecessor to justice. Instead, he proposed a truth and reconciliation commission. Though odious, Yahya Jammeh has far less blood on his hands than, say, Liberia's former president, Charles Taylor. Even if Mr. Obiang could be persuaded to give up his guest, ECOWAS may simply deem it not worth the effort of pursuing him, particularly if it risks reopening old wounds.

Consequently, despite Senegal's sympathy toward Gambia's plight, it has refrained from official interference in condemning Jammeh's regime. Unlike Nigeria, which can avoid The Gambia's cooperation without harming its economy, Senegal cannot.

The Gambia is an island surrounded by Senegal and the Atlantic Ocean and formerly relied on The Gambia port for its material and consumer goods import and export.

The Gambia, once a flourishing provider of products and services for almost three decades under Jawara's rule, faced economic challenges during Jammeh's regime. The relationship between The Gambia and Senegal was deeply intertwined, with Senegalese traders relying on The Gambia's territorial waters and land for export trade. The economies of both nations were interconnected, sharing sovereign national borders.

The border closures by Jammeh further exposed how much Senegal and The Gambia depended on each other. These moves drastically affected The Gambia's trade with her neighbors and forced it to establish more economic cooperation with Senegal than before.

AUDACITY

“Given this delicate economic interdependence, the Senegalese were in no position to make any official condemnation of the Jammeh’s regime,” says Ebou Jallow, former spokesperson of the Jammeh ruling council. The failure to condemn Jammeh’s regime is also attributable to the support he received from some Muslim countries.

This group of countries, spearheaded by Moammar Gadhafi of Libya, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, has commissioned Jammeh to conduct an uphill task of turning a secular country into an Islamic one.

Jammeh took over The Gambia business sector, selling bread, mining sand, gold, and lucrative minerals, as well as running taxi and commercial truck services and food supplies like oil and vegetables. Such subtle business moves were followed by more covert actions like Jammeh self-enriching himself, and Jammeh became the wealthiest man in The Gambia, “wealthier than the state,” said, the finance minister of The Gambia.

The Gambia situation, divided by ethnic factions; under Jammeh’s leadership, continued to breed division and suspicion.

The Mandinka ethnic group encountered considerable difficulties under Jammeh's leadership, revealing a stark contrast between his promises as the president for all citizens of The Gambia and the actual treatment of specific ethnic groups.

In the intricate tapestry of The Gambia's diverse society, Yahya Jammeh, the nation's autocratic leader,

AUDACITY

wove a sinister thread of division. His rule was marked by a calculated strategy of divide and rule aimed at exploiting existing fault lines within the society for his political gain.

This chapter delves into the insidious tactics employed by Jammeh to sow discord among different ethnic and social groups in The Gambia.

From the very outset of his regime, he skillfully manipulated historical grievances, economic disparities, and ethnic identities to maintain his grip on power.

One of the key elements of Jammeh's divide-and-rule strategy was the manipulation of tribal loyalties. The Gambia is home to numerous ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture and history. Jammeh exploited these differences, fostering suspicions and rivalries among communities. By doing so, he diverted attention away from his regime's mismanagement and human rights abuses.

Jammeh also utilized economic disparities to further his agenda. The Gambia, like many nations, has disparities in wealth and development between urban and rural areas. Jammeh exacerbated these disparities, channeling resources disproportionately to areas and individuals loyal to his regime. This economic favoritism deepened divisions within society.

Furthermore, Jammeh employed a strategy of silencing dissent through coercion and fear. He targeted opposition figures, journalists, and civil society activists, often accusing them of being enemies of the state. By suppressing voices of dissent, he

AUDACITY

created an environment where people were hesitant to speak out against his divisive tactics.

This chapter explores the stories of individuals and communities affected by Jammeh's divide-and-rule tactics. It sheds light on the resilience of those who sought to bridge divides and promote unity in the face of adversity. It also discusses the challenges The Gambia continues to face in healing these divisions as it strives for national reconciliation and unity.

Jammeh's divide and rule tactics revealed the lasting scars of a regime that sought to pit neighbor against neighbor and tear apart the social fabric of a nation. It underscores the importance of unity, reconciliation, and the collective effort required to overcome the legacy of division left behind by Jammeh's rule.

During the Jammeh era, the marginalization and neglect faced by the Mandinka ethnic group could be described as a distorted sense of loyalty. Since 1994, The Gambia witnessed a troubling trend where individuals belonging to the Mandinka tribal clan willingly allowed themselves to be manipulated in Yahya Jammeh's political maneuvers, forsaking their heritage and identity in pursuit of a glimpse of power.

Under Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia, the Mandinka ethnic group, along with various other ethnic groups, experienced mistreatment, and neglect. Jammeh's divisive tactics were designed to exploit preexisting fault lines within The Gambia society, and unfortunately, the Mandinka community often endured the most of these detrimental strategies.

AUDACITY

Jammeh, during his final election campaign, threatened to kill off the country's most populous ethnic group — the Mandinka's — and put them "where even a fly cannot see them."

This sentiment was typical of a president who ruled through terror. At the core of his ability to strip The Gambia of its meager wealth was Jammeh's ruthless control of the government and its institutions. After capturing power in a bloodless coup in 1994 at just twenty-nine, he quickly deployed an array of official and unofficial security forces to silence dissent.

The Mandinka ethnic group is one of the largest ethnic groups in The Gambia, a West African country. They are part of the broader Mandinka ethnic group, which extends beyond The Gambia and includes neighboring countries such as Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, and others. In The Gambia, the Mandinka people have a rich cultural heritage, and they play a significant role in the country's social, political, and economic life.

The Mandinka ethnic group constitutes a substantial segment of The Gambia's population, estimated to be 35-40%. Their primary settlements are concentrated in the central and eastern regions of the country. While English serves as The Gambia's official language, the Mandinka people communicate in the Mandinka language, a member of the broader Manding language family.

Mandinka culture is defined by its keen sense of community, traditional music and dance, rich storytelling traditions, and vibrant oral heritage. A noteworthy element of Mandinka music is the kora, a traditional West African harp-like instrument.

AUDACITY

In matters of faith, the majority of Gambians Mandinka's adhere to Islam, although a minority Christian community is also present among them. Islam exerts a major influence on the cultural and daily life of the Mandinka people.

Mandinka society holds a distinctive reputation for its adherence to traditional practices, encompassing rites of passage, ceremonial events, and festivals. These customs encompass a wide array of occasions, including naming ceremonies, weddings, and circumcision rituals.

Historically, the Mandinka people have deeply rooted themselves in agriculture, with farming serving as a cornerstone of their way of life. Their cultivation efforts encompass a variety of crops, including rice, millet, and ground nuts.

Mandinka individuals have historically played prominent roles in The Gambia politics, spanning both the colonial era and the post-independence period. Several of the nation's political leaders have hailed from the Mandinka ethnic group. Mandinka society itself is structured around clans and familial networks, placing a strong emphasis on kinship and extended family bonds.

Respected elders hold positions of authority and reverence within the community.

The Mandinka people boast a history marked by migration, with certain Mandinka groups tracing their origins beyond The Gambia's borders and settling in the region over centuries. In sum, the Mandinka ethnic group enriches The Gambia's cultural diversity, with

AUDACITY

their language, cultural traditions, and practices serving as integral components of the nation's identity.

Jammeh's government actively practiced discrimination against Mandinka individuals and communities. This marginalization could take various forms, including limiting their access to government positions, subjecting them to targeted harassment, and constraining their economic opportunities.

Mandinka leaders and activists who dared to oppose Jammeh's rule became particularly vulnerable to persecution. They experienced harassment, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, and, in some instances, were forced into exile. Jammeh's regime employed a combination of legal and extrajudicial measures to suppress any dissenting voices within the Mandinka community.

Jammeh's manipulation of tribal loyalties and the exacerbation of ethnic divisions in The Gambia contributed to heightened tensions among different communities, including the Mandinka. This deliberate fostering of suspicion and rivalry only served to divide the nation further.

Members of the Mandinka community, like others, were subjected to widespread human rights abuses during Jammeh's rule. These abuses encompassed arbitrary arrests, torture, and violations of their freedom of expression and assembly.

Despite the myriad challenges they faced, the Mandinka community, along with other affected groups, displayed remarkable resilience and solidarity. They tirelessly worked to bridge divides and promote

AUDACITY

unity within The Gambian society, underscoring the vital importance of national reconciliation.

As The Gambia embarked on its path toward democracy and accountability following Jammeh's departure, addressing the injustices suffered by the Mandinka and other affected communities became an integral part of the nation's journey toward healing, unity, and reconciliation.

It is crucial to investigate the troubling pattern exemplified by individuals like Almamo Manneh, Baba Jobe, Tabora Manneh, Yankuba Touray, Kaba Bajo, and Momodou Sabally, Njogu Bah, Nuha Touray, Amadou Samba, Muhammed Bazzi, Tariq Musa et al.

These individuals, in their pursuit of recognition and favor with the president for senior lucrative roles in the administration, were often willing to not only forsake their roots but even distance themselves from their Families and long-lasting childhood friends.

This distressing aspect of Jammeh's regime sheds light on the extent to which personal ambition and loyalty to the president could lead individuals to sever deep familial and cultural ties.

But, as history would predict, Jammeh's loyalty to his collaborators was as fleeting as his grip on power was relentless. One by one, these once-prominent figures found themselves cast aside and discarded like used pawns on a chessboard. Their fates were sealed, and Jammeh swiftly moved on to his next willing acolyte, leaving behind a trail of shattered reputations and tarnished legacies.

AUDACITY

As Ndey Tapha Sosseh eloquently argued in her insightful piece from a couple of years ago, Jammeh's unrelenting insults and abuses continued because The Gambian people permitted it. The nation collectively insulted itself by engaging in a desperate scramble for Jammeh's meager offerings, fighting over the crumbs he tossed their way.

This self-inflicted betrayal unfolds against a backdrop of complex dynamics, revealing the twisted loyalty that sustained Jammeh's reign of fear and manipulation. Personal accounts, historical analysis, and the piercing insights of figures like Ndey Tapha Sosseh, Pa Nderry Mbye, Fatu Camara, and others bring to light the psychological and political forces at play. Together, they paint a vivid picture of an era marred by opportunism and the profound toll of wielding power.

Throughout his presidency in The Gambia, Yahya Jammeh consistently portrayed himself as a devout Muslim, strategically employing religion to consolidate power, exert control, and gain support from the Muslim population of the country.

Even applying extreme methods to project his image as a committed Muslim. Jammeh regularly attended mosque prayers, particularly during significant religious events, ensuring that these public appearances received widespread coverage. This strategy cultivated the perception of him as a dedicated leader deeply rooted in his faith.

In a surprising move in 2015 that stunned not only the citizens but also Western nations, Jammeh officially declared The Gambia as an Islamic state, signaling his intent to govern in accordance with Islamic principles.

AUDACITY

This declaration was widely perceived as an attempt to secure the support of conservative Muslim groups.

Jammeh consistently integrated Islamic symbols and iconography into his public appearances and official statements, which included wearing traditional Islamic attire, using Islamic greetings, and incorporating religious terminology into his speeches.

Jammeh was seen actively providing financial backing to Islamic organizations and religious leaders, a tactic that bolstered his influence within the Muslim community.

He consistently spoke out against behaviors that he deemed inconsistent with Islamic teachings, such as homosexuality, positioning himself as a defender of Islamic values and moral standards. Jammeh undertook the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, a mandatory religious duty for Muslims. He used this opportunity to amplify his image as a devout Muslim further.

In contrast, while Jammeh projected himself as a devout Muslim, his actions as a ruler often contradicted Islamic principles. Allegations of human rights violations, political oppression, and corruption marred his tenure. Many critics argue that his use of religion was primarily a means to perpetuate his authority and control rather than a genuine adherence to Islamic values.

Furthermore, Jammeh portrayed himself as a devout Muslim, frequently appearing in his signature white gowns while clutching prayer beads in one hand and the Holy Qur'an. However, his actions often contradicted Islamic principles.

AUDACITY

For example, he executed nine death row inmates after the holy month of Ramadan without adhering to Sharia law principles, and their bodies were not provided with a proper Islamic burial but instead were placed in mass graves.

Jammeh was instrumentalizing Islam for political purposes, and the "wealthy" Mediterranean Arab countries that supported him, due to religious reasons, found him relatable in this context.

Following his initial refusal to accept the election results, Jammeh was eventually removed from power in The Gambia and compelled to seek exile in Equatorial Guinea.

In his current residence, he was accompanied by his wife, children, mother, and a small group of devoted followers. Certain governments, dissatisfied with Western European positions on delicate matters like Jammeh's treatment of Gambians, perceive his rhetoric as that of a sanctioned performer echoing sentiments aligned with their preferences.

In truth, there is a pressing need for a rigorous scholarly analysis of the events that unfolded in The Gambia during Jammeh's reign to provide a credible assessment of his regime. Without such an analysis, people may have to wait for the return of political sanity in the country to gain a full understanding of the past. Some prior researchers who delved into the Jammeh regime's intricacies had impeccable credentials for the task at hand.

AUDACITY

They may have been traumatized victims of Yahya Jammeh's brutal rule or lived in fear for their lives and the safety of their innocent families and loved ones back in The Gambia who were vulnerable to retribution. Many were apprehensive that their families and loved ones might face the wrath Of Jammeh's anger if they dared to voice any criticism of his regime.

With the recent African exodus from the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the ineffective response from other international organizations, Gambia might be left wondering who will hold their leaders accountable.

Consequently, many exiles who fled the Jammeh regime—former soldiers, ministers, and aides—even after reaching the safety of Europe and the USA, may be hesitant to accept invitations to conduct research studies.

Some of the victims who shared their stories via online newspapers and radio outlets have faced criticism, being labeled as "enablers of Jammeh" by online radio audiences.

Alternatively, they have been accused of fabricating sensational headlines to bolster their asylum applications or petitions. This skepticism often arises from some active "social media junkies" and activists living in the Diaspora who scour the internet for news coming out of The Gambia.

Certain academic work on contemporary history on the Gambia has faced criticism for its lack of depth. For example, although online newspaper editors-in-chief

AUDACITY

are capable, their writings on Jammeh's regime have been questioned.

Critics argue that these pieces fail to provide a pragmatically disciplined portrayal of Jammeh's political process or that online radio forum hosts need to develop their arguments with sufficient detail. Some have been accused of having a history of support and employment with Yahya Jammeh, and their arguments often lack the necessary realistic support for their assumptions.

Given the existence of such skepticism regarding interpretations of Jammeh's brutal rule and history of economic corruption, this book delves into the questions of myth versus reality. It explores Jammeh's childhood, his ascent to power, the wave of enforced disappearances, electoral processes, personal enrichment endeavors, arms trafficking, drug trade, and human smuggling into wealthy Western nations and Middle Eastern Arab states.

The book also examines his relationships with wealthy Arab states, the extrajudicial killings that took place, and the reactions of UN organizations and the global community to these events.

Chapter 15

The Balance Of Religion And State

The concept of the "separation of religion and state" has its origins in the struggles of American Baptists in Virginia, where Anglicanism (Episcopalians) was the official state religion. These early Baptists fought for religious tolerance, reminiscent of Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia. Baptists drew parallels between their historical struggle and the principles upheld by figures like James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

The Gambia Constitution Act, which enshrined religious freedom, emphasized that both Christianity and Islam granted individuals "free will." However, Jammeh chose a different path, using intimidation and legislation to propagate his interpretation of Islam.

Instead of diminishing the influence of religion on the government, his policies introduced strict penalties, such as those for skin bleaching, and declared both Friday and Sunday as public holidays.

Crucially, the Constitution did not curtail public displays of faith. This was evident in Jammeh's distinctive dress code, treatment programs (including the public holding of the Holy Qur'an), and his unabashed public displays of idol worship, like his water sprinkling ceremonies. The presence of a mosque within the State House was a tangible reminder of the Islamic nature of his regime.

On the global stage, Jammeh seized the opportunity to address world leaders at the United Nations General

AUDACITY

Assembly. There, he lectured them on Islamic teachings and criticized Western "evil cultures."

Among Jammeh's talking points was his decision to withdraw The Gambia from the Commonwealth after 48 years, a move that left the U.K. deeply regretful. However, Jammeh provided no further justification for this decision, emphasizing instead The Gambia's resolve to defend its independence and dignity at any cost.

In stark contrast, former U.S. President Barack Obama attempted to bridge divides among nations of varying faiths. He called for an end to the "cycle of suspicion and discord" between the United States and the Muslim world, seeking to mend relations between Western states and Arab nations with diverse Islamic beliefs. Regrettably, Jammeh remained steadfast in his approach, dismissing calls for peaceful coexistence between the state and religion.

Jammeh's struggle to grasp the separation of loyalty between the state and religion was not an isolated case. It mirrored a persistent challenge in many African countries, where leaders often lay claim to divine authority.

In The Gambia, some of Jammeh's ardent supporters genuinely believed in his god-like powers, which he claimed were bestowed upon him by his ancestors. Consequently, anyone daring to challenge his perceived "sainthood" risked arrest and torture, as Jammeh perceived it as a direct challenge to his authority.

AUDACITY

Though the situation has evolved under President Barrow, who refrains from claiming divine status, suspicions persist regarding his beliefs in marabouts or fortune tellers. Barrow has publicly thanked Senegalese fortune tellers, referring to them as "elders who prayed for him."

Within both the Christian and Muslim communities in The Gambia, some individuals openly or privately admit to seeking assistance from marabouts and engaging in idol worship. These confessions are often kept discreet and highly personal, shared only with those remarkably close to the person. The disclosure is typically on a need-to-know basis to avoid public condemnation or overt displays of their practices.

This discretion is warranted, serving to safeguard individuals' spiritual practices and keep their defense psalms or charm-washing ingredients hidden from potential adversaries.

It is important to note that idol worship and seeking assistance from marabouts are considered forbidden in both Islam and Christianity. Despite this prohibition, some individuals may still engage in such practices for various personal reasons, as mentioned in the context of the Gambian communities. Different interpretations and cultural influences can sometimes lead to variations in individual beliefs and practices within religious communities.

Jammeh, who once converted to Catholicism, used his limited biblical knowledge to advance his interpretations of the Bible among Christians. He even invited Dr. Naik, an Indian Muslim scholar, to compare verses from the Bible and the Qur'an.

AUDACITY

Jammeh is portrayed as consistently demanding what many deemed an unreasonable level of religious tolerance from The Gambian citizens. He often underscored his commitment or intentions by invoking his signature oath, "Bilai Walai, Talai," a Wolof tribal phrase invoking God's name. This phrase signified his solemn commitment or promise, affirming his dedication to a specific course of action or the truth of a particular situation.

An illustrative example is Jammeh's shocking vow to consume alcohol and pork if he did not proceed with the killings of the 9 Death Row inmates, which generated global sensation and international news headlines.

While Jammeh had the constitutional right to expect loyalty from the people he governed, people of faith also sought respect and recognition for their beliefs, even in the face of assertive executive power.

Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia was marked by his insistence on exclusive "loyalty" from the people. He expected individuals to choose between him and their religious beliefs, a demand that many found unreasonable. This approach conflicted with the fundamental principle of the separation of religion and state.

Islamic imams, despite acknowledging and condoning Jammeh's brutal actions, often expressed gratitude, believing that he was working in the best interests of the state. They contended that Jammeh's principles and policies should supersede religious teachings and principles. In one shocking instance, they supported and defended the summary executions of nine death

AUDACITY

row inmates, citing that such actions were in line with the Holy Qur'an.

Jammeh, as revealed throughout this book, used his portrayal of religious loyalty to tap into international funds. Arab states understood the complex history between The Gambia and Christian colonialists, making Jammeh and The Gambia attractive to wealthy Arab nations. Jammeh adeptly used religious texts, interpreting biblical passages to impress and suppress the Christian communities, just as he had done with verses from the Holy Qur'an to control the Muslim population.

However, The Gambia cultural principles and interpretations of religious texts often diverged significantly from Jammeh's interpretations. The imams read their scriptures through a lens that aligned with Jammeh's agenda—to remain in power indefinitely and accumulate wealth for himself.

One notable example of this individualist culture was Jammeh's practice of using money to buy loyalty from imams and district elders (Alkalos), contrasting with the more communal values of The Gambian people.

Additionally, Jammeh's public displays of idol worship and televised ceremonies were meant to increase the intimidation factor, assuaging the concerns of his covert supporters about his ability to govern a secular state.

Critics within the Muslim community dubbed the religious leaders who continued to support Jammeh "highway imams." Their unwavering loyalty to Jammeh contradicted the teachings of the Holy Qur'an

AUDACITY

and seemed more focused on fostering a unique "Gambian spirituality" that could facilitate the integration of The Gambian people.

The founders of The sovereign Gambia, liberated from British colonialism, could never have imagined The Gambia where religious freedoms were restricted to Jammeh's interpretations of the Islamic religion.

It is baffling to consider how Jammeh arbitrarily declared Friday and Sunday as National Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving, demonstrating incredible arrogance and ignorance. He went as far as to interfere in matters related to women's bodies and clothing choices, effectively rearranging the Bill of Rights.

Posters and photos of Jammeh adorned office walls, and the courthouses and billboards across the country bore inscriptions portraying him as a form of God. These acts were tantamount to religious mandates. In Jammeh's eyes, displaying the banner of a favorite sports team was equated with establishing that team's dominance.

The founders of The Gambia would undoubtedly be dismayed by how Jammeh undermined the secular state they envisioned, where religion, culture, and state were meant to operate as separate entities. They recognized that states could compete globally without adhering to uniform values, understanding the diversity in how people live and worship.

While the cultural spiritualists held diverse opinions, they would emphasize the value of "unanimity, in small doses, of course." History provides examples of the dangers of forcibly separating faith from the state, as

AUDACITY

seen in the bloodshed and oppression that accompanied the French Revolution's "de-Christianization" policy.

In contrast, The Gambia's independence was viewed as a culmination of the march toward liberty, not a rejection of cultural affiliations. The Gambians embraced tradition and preserved local autonomy.

As Alexis de Tocqueville observed, individual liberty and vibrant faith were intertwined, and it was impossible to separate one from the other. Even nonbelievers recognized the importance of religion in state affairs.

The founders and ancestors of The Gambia aspired to a progressive nation and would unequivocally reject the foundations of Jammeh's religious education, laws, and cultural beliefs.

They would swiftly condemn and distance themselves from Jammeh's principles, by embracing values centered on progress and development.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 underscored the importance of religion, morality, and knowledge in constructing good government and fostering the happiness of humanity.

Chapter 16

Contemplating Jammeh's Reign

For a considerable period, Yahya Jammeh's peculiar rhetoric and inhumane treatment of The Gambian people went unnoticed. This oversight can be attributed, in part, to the fact that events unfolding in The Gambia were regrettably not uncommon in many developing nations, especially following a change in leadership.

Some individuals offered explanations for Jammeh's actions, citing his limited formal education and the need for time to adapt to his new role. He was merely twenty-nine years old when he ascended to power.

As The Gambia began its journey towards healing and rebuilding after the departure of Yahya Jammeh, the nation found itself at a critical juncture. The twenty-two years under Jammeh's rule had left deep scars in the fabric of the country, scars that would take years, if not decades, to heal fully.

The ousting of Jammeh marked the end of an era, but it also opened a new chapter filled with questions, reflections, and contemplations about the past, present, and future of the nation.

Nevertheless, after enduring twenty-two years of misrule and brutality, it is imperative to glean valuable insights from Jammeh's reign. There exists no justifiable reason for any Gambian to accept the suffering imposed upon them during his tenure.

AUDACITY

One must acknowledge the complexity of his legacy before one can contemplate Jammeh's reign. Contradictions and paradoxes marked his time in power. On one hand, he initiated infrastructure development projects that, in some cases, did improve the lives of Gambians.

Roads were built, hospitals were constructed, and schools were established. These tangible improvements were undeniable, and some segments of the population genuinely benefited from them.

However, these achievements were often overshadowed by the authoritarian nature of his rule. Human rights abuses, censorship, and a climate of fear characterized Jammeh's regime.

Dissent was not tolerated, and those who dared to speak out against the government often faced dire consequences. The balance between development and oppression was precarious, and it left Gambians with a complex view of their former leader.

Contemplating Jammeh's reign also requires an examination of the role played by the international community. For many years, the world watched as Jammeh ruled with an iron fist, and the response was often lukewarm at best. It was only in the later years of his rule that significant international pressure began to mount.

The contributions of Gambians in the Diaspora should not be underestimated. Their tireless efforts to raise awareness, mobilize support, and push for sanctions against Jammeh played a pivotal role in his eventual downfall. The lesson here is that international action,

AUDACITY

when driven by grassroots movements and supported by determined individuals, can indeed make a difference in challenging oppressive regimes.

The determined efforts of Gambians in the Diaspora, who rallied international support to topple Jammeh's regime, played an instrumental role in effecting change. Their financial contributions fueled the coalition alliance campaign that liberated The Gambian people from Jammeh's oppressive rule.

They relentlessly castigated the United Nations and the African Union for their failure to condemn Jammeh and called for sanctions and asset freezes targeting him, which eventually led to his ousting from power.

In retrospect, the international community's reluctance to take decisive action against Jammeh may, in fact, have been a blessing in disguise. Jammeh was notorious for casting unfounded aspersions on individuals, governments, and organizations, subsequently responding with severe retaliation and punishment.

The international community's silence underscores the notion that covert condemnation only carries weight when followed by economic sanctions against oppressive regimes.

This collective inaction in the face of Jammeh's atrocities mirrors historical instances in other African nations such as Uganda, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. The international community often faced criticism for leaving dictators to govern with impunity, leading to egregious human rights abuses and oppression.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's human rights abuses and corruption faced minimal international scrutiny due to The Gambia's small size and relative obscurity. The wave of violence in West Africa during his reign further contributed to Jammeh escaping significant attention.

Some have speculated that The Gambia's lack of valuable natural resources for Western consumption may have contributed to the world's muted response to Jammeh's regime.

Indeed, due to The Gambia's limited influence on the international stage, as noted by Cameron Hudson, a former West Africa analyst for the CIA, the country was considered inconspicuous and often overlooked. "The Gambia wasn't even like a back-burner issue — it was a backwater issue."

Given these limitations, many Gambians may have preferred global silence and subtle pressure over the appeals made by Diaspora Gambians to Western governments and human rights organizations.

One noteworthy example of such appeals was made by Dr. Amadou Scattered Janneh, The Gambian American politician, served as the Minister of Information and Communication for the national government briefly under Yahya Jammeh.

Born on September 17, 1962, Amadou Scattered Janneh holds dual Gambian and American citizenship. Janneh faced a life sentence for treason after distributing T-shirts with the slogan "End to Dictatorship Now."

AUDACITY

Following international protests, including efforts by organizations like Amnesty International and an appeal by US activist Jesse Jackson, Janneh was eventually pardoned and returned to the United States.

Undeterred, he passionately implored the EU and the US State Department to take more robust action against Jammeh's regime's rampant disregard for human rights. Dr. Janneh even personally addressed the EU in Brussels on multiple occasions.

While they appreciated the moral condemnation, he and his compatriots in the Struggle believed it was insufficient and should have been followed by economic sanctions, especially targeting Jammeh, his family, government officials, and their associates.

One effective measure would have been to deny individuals with visas the ability to travel abroad or service Jammeh's planes in Europe or the United States.

Nevertheless, the EU's withholding of \$150 million in aid money and the US's removal of The Gambia from the AGOA trade treaty were welcome developments. These actions significantly impacted Jammeh's finances and curtailed his ability to access foreign exchange, which his wife used for extravagant international travel and luxury shopping.

The decision to expel The Gambia from the Commonwealth to some extent, was a response to Jammeh's involvement in the Taiwan debacle. Taiwan's refusal to meet Jammeh's financial demands in exchange for lobbying for its international

AUDACITY

recognition as a sovereign democratic government alienated Western nations.

Jammeh's stance cut him off from Western support, leaving him reliant on his portrayal of loyalty to wealthy Arab donors.

During his tenure as President of The Gambia, Yahya Jammeh made a controversial statement in response to the declining Western aid to the country, referring to it as "chicken change." This statement faced widespread criticism for downplaying the significance of international assistance in The Gambia's development.

It also conveyed a dismissive attitude towards the aid contributions of Western nations and international organizations aimed at addressing the socio-economic challenges confronting the nation. Jammeh's remarks not only exacerbated tensions with Western donors but also raised doubts about his dedication to addressing the country's development requirements.

However, the relationship between Jammeh and certain Arab nations, notably Iran, appeared to be rooted more in fiscal interests than shared religious or ideological principles. Jammeh's associations with South American countries involved in drug cultivation and trade, along with dictatorial regimes like Hugo Chavez's Venezuela, raised moral questions about his partnerships.

Despite Jammeh's efforts, European countries did not hold him in high regard or protest vehemently against his brutal actions, signaling the limited influence he had in their priorities. In contrast, Senegal maintained a cautious stance, apprehensive about being drawn

AUDACITY

into a conflict in Casamance and the possibility of Jammeh sponsoring insurgencies against the Senegalese army.

Senegal's ambivalence toward Jammeh's regime was evident in President Macky Sall's response to Jammeh's alleged killing of two Senegalese citizens.

Although Senegal could have adopted a more resolute stance, its overall criticism of Jammeh's human rights violations remained apparent. Senegalese callers on online radios also played a pivotal role in articulating their concerns about Jammeh's regime and its repercussions on both Gambians and Senegalese nations, respectively.

Jammeh's divisive strategies, which exploited religion and tribal affiliations, ignited tensions and schisms among various communities. While Christians often refrained from cooperating with Jammeh, some Muslim nations supported him, albeit unquestioningly.

The Gambia's geographical reliance on Senegal for trade added complexity, as border closures and economic interdependence left Senegal unable to censure Jammeh openly.

During Yahya Jammeh's presidency in The Gambia, there were several instances where he made threats against specific ethnic groups, including the Mandinka's. Jammeh's rule was marked by authoritarianism, and he often used divisive rhetoric to maintain his grip on power.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's threats and actions against certain ethnic groups, including the Mandinka's, contributed to a climate of fear and instability in the country. Here are some examples of Jammeh's threats and actions:

Jammeh, who belonged to the Jola ethnic group, was known for targeting and persecuting individuals from other ethnic backgrounds, particularly the Mandinka's, who make up a massive portion of The Gambia's population. He accused them of being involved in conspiracies against his government.

Jammeh's security forces carried out arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals from the Mandinka ethnic group. Many were detained without trial and held in deplorable conditions.

Some prominent Mandinka leaders and politicians were forced into exile, fearing for their safety. Those who remained in the country faced harassment and surveillance by the security forces.

Jammeh frequently used divisive rhetoric in his public speeches, targeting the Mandinka and other ethnic groups. He accused them of being enemies of the state and threatened to act against them.

Jammeh carried out purges in the military and security forces, targeting individuals from ethnic groups perceived as disloyal. This further exacerbated ethnic tensions within these institutions.

It is important to note that international human rights organizations and governments widely condemned Jammeh's threats and actions against the Mandinka

AUDACITY

and other ethnic groups. A lack of respect for human rights and the rule of law marked his rule.

Jammeh's authoritarian regime ended in 2017 when he was defeated in the presidential election and subsequently went into exile. Since then, The Gambia has been working to address past human rights abuses and promote national reconciliation.

Yahya Jammeh's rule in The Gambia was characterized by the troubling use of tribalism as a political tool. He exploited tribal divisions and loyalties to maintain power and suppress opposition.

Jammeh, a member of the Jola ethnic group, favored his tribe while marginalizing others. This approach created suspicion and rivalry among different ethnic groups, diverting attention from his regime's mismanagement and human rights abuses.

Jammeh appointed fellow Jolas to key government and military positions, leading to perceptions of tribal favoritism and discrimination. Opposition figures from different ethnic backgrounds faced harassment and persecution, both legally and through extrajudicial means. Ethnic-based violence and tensions were sometimes fueled by Jammeh's divisive tactics, creating fear and instability.

In the process, Jammeh's tribalism eroded national unity in The Gambia, emphasizing ethnic differences over a shared Gambian identity. This legacy of division continues to challenge the nation's pursuit of reconciliation and healing.

AUDACITY

Jammeh's endeavors to Islamize The Gambia, including controversial actions like exhuming Christian graves for a luxury hotel chain, sowed discord, and disunity. His relationships with countries like Iran, primarily known for their economic interests, raised doubts about the true nature of his international alliances.

Despite his ostentatious development projects, Jammeh's legacy is marred by brutality and repression. While some of his achievements may be commendable, the question remains whether they outweigh the suffering inflicted upon The Gambian people. Jammeh's regime was marked by an excessive focus on individualism, resulting in corruption and economic mismanagement.

Jammeh's role as a puppet leader for certain Arab nations, who used his platform to advance their agendas, remains a cause for concern. He frequently employed incendiary rhetoric at international forums, drawing condemnation from Western nations and subsequent blocking of aid funds and trade partnerships.

While Jammeh's departure provides reason for optimism, his influence still lingers among his supporters and the Foni tribe members who benefitted from his largesse. The path to political stability and the promotion of human rights in The Gambia will necessitate a collective endeavor to overcome the legacy of Jammeh's divisive rule.

One of the most painful aspects of Jammeh's reign was the divisions it sowed among The Gambian people. Jammeh skillfully exploited religious and tribal

AUDACITY

differences to maintain his grip on power. This strategy not only weakened the social fabric of the nation but also caused lasting rifts that persist to this day.

Contemplating Jammeh's reign calls for a collective effort to heal these divisions and build a more inclusive and united Gambia. It requires a commitment to tolerance, dialogue, and understanding among different religious and ethnic groups. The scars of the past must not define the future.

As The Gambia moves forward, it faces numerous challenges and uncertainties. Rebuilding the institutions of government, ensuring accountability for past abuses, and addressing the socioeconomic disparities that persist will not be easy tasks. However, the experience of enduring Jammeh's rule has forged a resilient spirit among The Gambian people.

Contemplating Jammeh's reign is not just an exercise in revisiting the past; it is a call to action. It is a reminder that the prize of freedom and democracy is eternal vigilance. It is a recognition that the mistakes of the past must inform the decisions of the future.

In the end, The Gambia's story is not solely about Jammeh's rule but also about the strength and determination of its people to overcome adversity. It is about a nation that refused to be defined by its darkest chapter and instead chose to author a new narrative—one of hope, unity, and progress. The journey ahead will be challenging, but it is a journey worth taking, for the lessons of Jammeh's reign must guide the way toward a brighter future.

AUDACITY

In conclusion, Jammeh's rule awaits judgment by history, and any scholarly evaluation of his regime should await the restoration of political sanity in the country. However, Jammeh was beyond reform, driven by bitterness, resentment, and anger, and governed through intimidation rather than effective leadership. His legacy remains a complex and painful chapter in The Gambia's history.

In the aftermath of Jammeh's rule, The Gambia faced the monumental task of healing and rebuilding. The memoir reflects on the lessons learned from this dark period in the nation's history and the importance of safeguarding democracy, human rights, and political freedoms.

As The Gambia emerges from the shadows of repression, a newfound sense of optimism permeates the air. The memoir concludes with a glimpse of the nation's journey toward reconciliation, justice, and a brighter, democratic future.

In concluding this memoir, we stand at the intersection of a tumultuous past and a hopeful future—a juncture where the weight of history collides with the promise of a nation reborn. The impact of Yahya Jammeh's regime on The Gambia is indelible, and "Conclusion" seeks to encapsulate the enduring spirit of this nation as it moves forward.

Throughout the preceding chapters, we have navigated the treacherous terrain of dictatorship, bearing witness to the human rights abuses, political repression, and economic hardships that defined Jammeh's rule. We have glimpsed the resilience of a people who, in the

AUDACITY

face of tyranny, clung steadfastly to the ideals of justice, truth, and reconciliation.

In the aftermath of Jammeh's departure, The Gambia embarked on a quest for redemption—a journey characterized by the pursuit of justice and healing. "Conclusion" reflects on the profound impact of this undertaking, recognizing the bravery of survivors who shared their stories, the tenacity of activists who fought for change, and the dedication of those who bore the burden of restoring democratic institutions.

It is a testament to The Gambia's unwavering commitment to rebuilding its national identity—a commitment that transcends political affiliations, ethnic divisions, and personal hardships. The memoir acknowledges the scars of the past but also emphasizes the nation's determination to transcend them.

"Conclusion" serves as a reminder that the pursuit of justice is a perpetual endeavor. The echoes of Jammeh's rule still reverberate, and the quest for accountability and reconciliation continues. It underscores the importance of remembrance and collective responsibility in ensuring that the lessons of history are not forgotten.

As The Gambia navigates the complexities of its present and charts the course for its future, "Conclusion" encapsulates the nation's aspirations for a more just, unified, and democratic society. It is a testament to the resilience of people who have refused to be defined by their past but instead choose to be inspired by the possibilities of tomorrow.

AUDACITY

In this epilogue, we step into the present to examine the remarkable transformation that has taken place in The Gambia since the departure of Yahya Jammeh. The nation's journey toward democracy, human rights, and national healing is a testament to the resilience of its people and their unwavering commitment to a brighter future.

Since the unexpected defeat of Jammeh in the 2016 presidential election, The Gambia has undergone a profound transition. A nation once held captive by fear and oppression has found its voice and its path toward renewal. The election marked a turning point, as it ushered in Adama Barrow as the new President of The Gambia, bringing hope and a promise of change.

Under President Barrow's leadership, the nation has taken significant steps to rebuild its democratic institutions and protect human rights. Efforts have been made to restore the rule of law, ensure media freedom, and strengthen civil society. The Gambia's vibrant and diverse society has played an active role in shaping its democratic future, with citizens actively participating in elections and advocating for their rights.

The international community has also played a crucial role in supporting The Gambia's transition. Economic sanctions and diplomatic efforts have helped create an environment conducive to positive change. International organizations have worked alongside The Gambian government to address human rights abuses, seek justice for victims, and promote reconciliation.

AUDACITY

The Gambia's newfound democracy is not without its challenges. Rebuilding a nation takes time, and the scars of the past are still visible. However, the nation's commitment to justice and healing remains resolute. The truth, reconciliation, and reparations process are underway, providing a platform for victims to share their stories and seek redress for past injustices.

As we conclude this memoir with an epilogue, we acknowledge The Gambia's remarkable journey—a journey from oppression to hope, from darkness to light. The nation's path to renewal is a testament to the indomitable spirit of its people and the universal values of justice, truth, and reconciliation.

The Gambia's story is far from over, but the pages of its future are filled with the promise of democracy, human rights, and national healing. As it continues to move forward, The Gambia serves as an inspiration to nations around the world, proving that even in the face of the darkest regimes, the light of justice and freedom can prevail.

Chapter 17

Conclusion

From Dictatorship to Liberation: The Unraveling of Yahya Jammeh's Regime

As Yahya Jammeh's 22-year reign in The Gambia ended, it marked a significant chapter in the nation's history—one marred by corruption, delusion, and a relentless grip on power. The young army lieutenant who ascended to the presidency in 1994 through a bloodless coup had transformed into a leader who seemed increasingly detached from the realities of his country.

Jammeh's leadership, characterized by eccentricities ranging from wardrobe choices to extravagant claims, cast a dark shadow over The Gambia.

While he donned all-white ensembles and experimented with various headgear, his country grappled with economic challenges, prompting many young Gambians to embark on perilous journeys across the Mediterranean for better opportunities. Jammeh's focus, however, remained fixated on suppressing opposition, making dubious medical proclamations, and declaring his intention to rule for a billion years.

The memoir vividly captures the events unfolding, exposing the autocratic nature of Jammeh's rule through five elections between 1996 and 2016, at least three tainted by questionable circumstances. The narrative delves into the aftermath of Jammeh's defeat in the 2016 presidential election, which he initially

AUDACITY

accepted on national television but later reneged on, plunging the nation into a political crisis.

The resistance against Jammeh's attempt to cling to power reached its climax when ECOWAS, with the support of Senegal, intervened militarily, bringing an end to the political turmoil. Despite the dramatic circumstances, the departure of Jammeh was hailed as a monumental achievement in the fight against dictatorship in Africa. The conduct of the December 2016 presidential poll, under the professional leadership of Alieu Momar Njie and amidst death threats, highlighted the bravery and tenacity of the Gambian people.

Opposition unification and the critical involvement of the diaspora emerged as pivotal factors in dismantling Jammeh's entrenched regime. The international community, especially ECOWAS, played a crucial role in pressuring Jammeh to step down, underscoring the significance of collaborative efforts in averting chaos during political transitions.

As the memoir unfolds, the voices of Gambians echo sentiments of relief and celebration upon Jammeh's exit. Many, scarred by years of fear and repression, view Jammeh as the worst thing to happen to The Gambia. Removing his posters and billboards from public spaces symbolizes a tangible shift in the nation's psyche, signaling a departure from a dark era.

Yahya Jammeh's legacy as the former president of The Gambia is marred by a dark chapter of discrimination and oppression, particularly against the LGBTQ+ community. His openly expressed homophobic views, and the implementation of policies targeting LGBTQ+

AUDACITY

individuals cast a long shadow over the nation during his tenure.

In his 2014 speech, Jammeh declared homosexuality as one of the "biggest threats to human existence," setting the stage for a disturbing era of persecution. His vow to "fight these venoms" and force them out of The Gambia instigated a series of strict measures that intensified the crackdown on LGBTQ+ individuals.

The consequences were severe, with reports emerging of arrests, detentions, and acts of violence against those perceived to be part of the LGBTQ+ community. The atmosphere of hostility created a pervasive climate of fear, forcing many to live in the shadows.

The global community, human rights organizations, and activists vehemently criticized Jammeh's stance on LGBTQ+ issues.

The discriminatory policies and human rights abuses during his presidency, including those targeting the LGBTQ+ community, contributed significantly to a negative image of his regime on the global stage. The international backlash highlighted the importance of upholding principles of equality, respect, and human dignity.

As we reflect on this troubling period in The Gambia's history, it serves as a stark reminder of the enduring struggle for LGBTQ+ rights and the relentless fight against discrimination worldwide.

Jammeh's legacy underscores the need for continued advocacy, education, and international collaboration to ensure that no individual or community faces

AUDACITY

persecution based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The resilience of those affected by his oppressive policies is a testament to the ongoing pursuit of a more inclusive and just world.

The memoir delves into a dark chapter of The Gambia's history—the era of Yahya Jammeh's witch-hunting. The author, driven by the need to investigate Jammeh's crimes, explores a sinister period marked by fear, superstition, and unchecked power. In the intricate tapestry of The Gambia's past, the thread of witch-hunting stands out, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of countless Gambians.

The author's recollections unravel a time when paranoia and suspicion cast shadows over the nation, ensnaring ordinary citizens in a web of terror. The investigation into Jammeh's authoritarianism and erratic behavior sheds light on the profound impact of this harrowing chapter on the collective memory of The Gambia.

Yahya Jammeh, the man who once held the highest office in the land, wielded power with an iron fist. His presidency, marked by authoritarianism and erratic behavior, took a particularly gruesome turn with the initiation of witch hunts.

The dark clouds of paranoia and suspicion cast shadows over the nation, and ordinary citizens found themselves ensnared in a web of terror.

The genesis of this macabre saga can be traced back to Jammeh's personal belief in witchcraft. Fueled by his conviction that witches were conspiring against him and the state, he launched a campaign of persecution

AUDACITY

that targeted those he deemed to be practitioners of dark arts.

The term "witch" became a loosely defined accusation, leading to a climate of pervasive fear and distrust.

The modus operandi of Jammeh's witch hunts was as surreal as horrifying. Public declarations, televised confessions, and arbitrary detentions became the norm.

Accusations were often based on hearsay or arbitrary suspicions, with individuals singled out for the slightest deviation from perceived norms. The accused faced the wrath of the state and the condemnation of their own communities.

Witnessing the televised displays of alleged witches confessing to crimes they never committed was a chilling experience for the nation. These confessions, extracted under duress, laid bare the extent of the psychological and physical torment inflicted on the victims. Families torn apart lives shattered, and communities plunged into a collective state of terror—such was the aftermath of Jammeh's witch hunts.

The international community, human rights organizations, and activists raised their voices in condemnation. Arbitrary arrests, torture, and forced confessions violated the most basic principles of justice and human dignity. The echoes of the witch hunts reverberated beyond The Gambia's borders, staining the nation's reputation and deepening the scars on its social fabric.

AUDACITY

The memoir delves into a perplexing chapter of Gambian history marked by Yahya Jammeh's audacious claims to possess a cure for AIDS. Jammeh, once the nation's highest authority, declared 2007 that his herbal concoction could alleviate and eradicate the virus.

This proclamation sparked emotions from hope to skepticism, causing shockwaves nationally and internationally. The secrecy of Jammeh's herbal treatment protocol drew people with HIV to seek a cure, while experts and activists voiced concerns.

The international community responded sceptically, triggering diplomatic strains and debates on leaders' ethical responsibilities in public health. The administration of Jammeh's treatment saw human rights abuses, creating ethical quandaries.

As the promises of a cure unraveled over the years, Jammeh's venture stands as a cautionary tale of unchecked authority, emphasizing the need for evidence-based medical practices, transparency, ethical governance, and international collaboration.

The memoir concludes by reflecting on the intricate interplay between leadership, health, and solutions, underscoring the enduring lessons that shape a nation's collective journey toward evidence, compassion, and ethical governance.

As the curtain fell on Jammeh's presidency, the survivors of the witch hunts were left to grapple with the haunting memories of those dark days. The scars on the national psyche serve as a somber reminder of

AUDACITY

the fragility of human rights in the face of unchecked power.

The collective trauma endured by those accused of witchcraft, their families, and the nation at large underscores the imperative of vigilance against the erosion of democratic values.

In penning this memoir, the author witnessed a nation's resilience that emerged from the shadows of witch hunts with a renewed commitment to justice, human rights, and healing. The scars may linger, but so does the unwavering spirit of those who, against all odds, stood up to the darkness and emerged into the light.

The narrative also shines a light on the heinous crimes perpetrated by Jammeh, particularly the sexual violence and predation of young women. The courage of survivors, such as Fatoumatta, Bintu, and Toufah, who have come forward to share their harrowing experiences, is a testament to the resilience of those who suffered under Jammeh's rule.

The conclusive investigations by the Gambian Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC) provide a glimmer of hope for justice and redress.

This memoir captures the arc of Gambia's journey from dictatorship to liberation. While dramatic and challenging, the departure of Yahya Jammeh opens a new chapter for the nation. The lessons learned from this tumultuous period serve as a beacon for other African countries still grappling with the shackles of authoritarian rule.

AUDACITY

The hope is that the resilience of the Gambian people and the collaborative efforts that led to Jammeh's exit will inspire positive change across the continent, ushering in an era of democracy, justice, and human rights.

In conclusion, this memoir navigates the intricate dynamics of Yahya Jammeh's regime in The Gambia, a period marked by a significant departure from democratic principles. It begins by placing Jammeh's rule within the context of the global democratization wave, recognizing the concerning trend of backsliding in transitional democracies.

Despite the prevalent belief in competitive elections as a pathway to democracy, entrenched non-democratic regimes persist.

The narrative then delves into Jammeh's tenure, characterized by severe human rights violations against journalists, opposition figures, and dissidents. The dominance of Jammeh's political party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), through intimidation, repression, and the politicization of security forces, paints a troubling picture of the political landscape.

Jammeh's resilience in power, securing victory in four presidential elections and resisting attempts to limit his term highlight the challenges faced by democratic institutions.

The pivotal 2016 election, echoing global milestones like the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of apartheid in South Africa, witnessed an unexpected defeat orchestrated by a united opposition coalition.

AUDACITY

Despite the initial surprise, the memoir explores the factors contributing to Jammeh's downfall, including the unprecedented merger of opposition parties, the selection of an independent candidate, the incarceration of key opposition figures, and Jammeh's authoritarian practices.

The narrative captures the tension of December 1, 2016, when Gambian voters faced a crucial choice between change and continuity. In reflection, the trajectory of Gambia's political landscape, shadowed by the ominous presence of Yahya Jammeh, reveals a turbulent narrative of democratic setbacks and undulating opposition struggles.

Jammeh's rise to power in 1994 initiated a disheartening era for democratic aspirations, with subsequent elections characterized by persistent questions about fairness and transparency.

The recurring theme of opposition disunity proved to be a consistent Achilles' heel in challenging Jammeh's dominance. The 1996 and 2001 elections displayed opposition parties grappling with internal conflicts, enabling Jammeh to secure victories despite contentious circumstances.

Tragic events, such as the loss of lives during the April 10 and 11 incidents, did little to deter Jammeh's hold on power, as international validation outweighed domestic grievances.

The convergence of mass migration and political repression in The Gambia during this tumultuous period has woven a complex tapestry of challenges and resilience.

AUDACITY

As this memoir concludes, the mass movement of Gambian youth towards Europe, vividly illustrated by the perilous 'back way,' has emerged as a powerful force shaping the nation's political destiny. The economic struggles and the oppressive political climate, exacerbated by governance failures and a lack of democracy, fueled a desperate search for better opportunities beyond the borders. Dr Isatou Touray's response to this migration crisis, coupled with her broader critique of politically motivated prosecutions and state-sanctioned repression, became a rallying cry against the incumbent regime.

The migration surge, fueled by economic hardships and political discontent, served as a stark reminder that unstable political environments can function as decisive push factors, influencing migration patterns and shaping the outcomes of African elections.

Simultaneously, the imprisonment of opposition leaders, notably Ousainou Darboe and the executive members of the UDP, initially intended to stifle dissent, had paradoxical consequences. Instead of sowing division, it became a catalyst for opposition unity.

The absence of Darboe from inter-party talks proved instrumental in facilitating a smoother coalition-building process, contrasting with previous acrimonious attempts.

Jammeh's strategy to weaken the opposition inadvertently created a collective spirit of resistance. The incarceration of Darboe and UDP leaders following the tragic death of Solo Sandeng mobilized discontented citizens and catalyzed the formation of a

AUDACITY

seven-party coalition. Far from diminishing the opposition's chances, this move energized a movement against the authoritarian rule, marking a turning point in The Gambia's political landscape.

Lastly, the intersection of mass migration and political repression has defined a critical chapter in The Gambia's history. The migration crisis, fueled by economic struggles, political discontent, and the oppressive response of the incumbent regime, intertwined to shape a narrative of resilience and transformation.

The memoir stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Gambian people as they navigate the challenges of their time and forge a path towards a more democratic and hopeful future.

Jammeh's strategic prowess in exploiting opposition fragmentation reached its pinnacle in the 2006 elections when the National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD) crumbled under irreconcilable differences.

The disarray within the opposition not only failed to propel Gambia toward democratic ideals but paradoxically cemented Jammeh's authoritarian rule.

The 2011 elections, marked by another attempt at alliance-building, ended in a familiar pattern of internal discord leading to defeat. As discontent burgeoned domestically and among the Gambian diaspora, 2016 became a watershed moment.

In an unprecedented move, seven opposition parties and an independent candidate set aside their

AUDACITY

differences to form the Coalition 2016. Spearheaded by Adama Barrow, this coalition presented a formidable challenge to Jammeh's decades-long grip on power.

The 2016 polls, fueled by grievances over human rights abuses, economic woes, and endemic poverty, delivered a resounding verdict. The Coalition 2016 emerged victorious, shattering 22 years of iron-fisted rule and offering a glimmer of hope for democratic change in the tiny West African nation.

The buildup to these elections underscored the intricate interplay of political strategies, the debilitating impact of opposition disunity, and the unwavering quest for democratic transformation.

Though fraught with setbacks, Gambia's journey exemplifies the resilience of a people determined to break free from the shackles of authoritarianism and usher in a new era of governance. As the dust settled on Jammeh's reign, the lessons learned from this tumultuous period served as a poignant reminder of the enduring pursuit of democratic ideals amid formidable challenges.

The Gambia's 'Billion Year' President, Yahya Jammeh, witnessed the end of his reign, marking the conclusion of a brutal era in the nation's history. The termination of his leadership ushered in the end of a fierce and tense political impasse that necessitated international intervention involving ECOWAS and Western diplomatic efforts.

The memoir detailing the 2016 presidential elections in Gambia vividly accounts for a pivotal moment in the nation's history. As the sun rose on December 1, 2016,

AUDACITY

Yahya Jammeh, Gambia's long-reigning president, and Adama Barrow, his formidable opponent, cast their ballots, setting the stage for a day filled with anticipation and political intrigue.

Amidst concerns of potential electoral manipulations, Jammeh's assertion of the invulnerability of Gambia's elections collided with restrictions imposed on international observers, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty.

The introduction of on-the-spot counting aimed at transparency, but as the results trickled in, it became evident that Jammeh was trailing behind Barrow. The narrative captures the tension and disquiet that permeated the announcement of results, particularly as strongholds like Kiang, Jarra, Badibu, and the Kombo shifted allegiance, dealing blows to Jammeh's prospects.

A moment of suspense, marked by an abrupt halt in announcements and Quranic verses, intensified the uncertainty surrounding Jammeh's final effort to manipulate the outcome.

Revelations of Jammeh's pressure on the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) Chairperson to alter results hinted at a failed sinister plot. The culmination of the electoral process saw Adama Barrow confirmed as the newly elected president, ending Jammeh's 22-year autocratic rule. Jammeh's surprising public concession on state television marked a historic moment, acknowledging the Gambian people's decision and signaling the end of his strongman era.

AUDACITY

The subsequent analysis delved into ethno-regional dynamics, unravelling the complex interplay of ethnicity and regionalism in shaping electoral outcomes. While Foni, Jammeh's stronghold, remained loyal, other regions, notably Badibu and Kiang, witnessed a shift in allegiances.

Barrow's strategic navigation of ethnic sensitivities, adapting speeches to various languages, proved instrumental, especially in Mandingo-dominated areas.

The 2016 elections in Gambia marked a transformative moment and revealed the intricate threads of ethnic and regional dynamics that influenced voter preferences.

The memoir provides a comprehensive exploration of this critical juncture in the nation's political landscape, offering insights into the factors that shaped the outcome and the ensuing transition of power.

The culmination of Jammeh's rule signified more than just a transfer of political power; it marked the conclusion of an oppressive era gripping The Gambia. Authoritarian tactics, human rights abuses, and a notorious claim of an enduring presidency characterized Jammeh's leadership.

In the annals of The Gambia's history, the 2016 presidential election marked a watershed moment, signifying the conclusion of Yahya Jammeh's 22-year rule—a regime characterized by an audacious claim of a 'billion-year' presidency.

AUDACITY

This memoir navigates through the intricate political landscape of that era, delving into the unexpected twists and turns that unfolded during and after the elections, leading to Jammeh's downfall and the birth of a new chapter in Gambian politics.

The illusion of Jammeh's eternal presidency began to crumble as the nation headed to the polls in December 2016. What ensued was not merely an electoral process but a seismic shift in the political dynamics of Africa's smallest mainland country.

The aftermath of the elections plunged The Gambia into an unprecedented political impasse, as Jammeh defiantly rejected the results 'in its entirety' and adamantly refused to relinquish power.

The memoir vividly recounts the tumultuous aftermath of Gambia's 2016 presidential elections, focusing on Yahya Jammeh's unexpected rejection of defeat.

From initial confidence to a dramatic about-face, Jammeh's political maneuvers, including accusations of bias and a declaration of annulment, unfold against public tensions and warnings against protests. The narrative delves into the complexity of Jammeh's desperate attempts to negotiate, leveraging legal challenges and a State of Emergency to maintain control.

International condemnation, notably from ECOWAS, highlights the global insistence on respecting the Gambian people's will. Legal hurdles add suspense, including a petition to the Supreme Court and Jammeh's strategic ploys to extend his rule through the State of Emergency.

AUDACITY

The memoir captures the resilience of democratic principles, highlighting the obstacles faced by regional mediation, notably by Nigeria's President Buhari and former Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.



The climax features Jammeh's final retreat under the shadow of regional military intervention threats, culminating in his exile to Equatorial Guinea. The memoir underscores the pivotal role of international pressure and regional intervention in preserving democratic norms against authoritarian resistance, marking the end of Jammeh's 22-year rule.

This memoir focuses on the lessons gleaned from the 2016 polls, where Adama Barrow emerged as the victor. It transcends the mere retelling of events, offering a nuanced analysis of the underlying factors contributing to Jammeh's historic defeat. The narrative unfolds as a tapestry, weaving together the threads of political transitions, election discourse, and

AUDACITY

the pivotal role played by a united opposition in reshaping the trajectory of Gambian politics.

Amidst the ruthless reputation that shrouded Jammeh's rule, the Gambian populace emerged as torchbearers of democracy, dismantling the notion of an unassailable incumbent. The memoir argues that the circumstances leading to Jammeh's defeat align with a broader theoretical and empirical understanding—the potency of a united opposition in challenging entrenched power structures across the African continent.

Drawing parallels with opposition fragmentation in other African nations, the narrative underscores the significance of collaboration among major factions. The Gambian case, highlighted by the Coalition 2016, mirrors successful coalitions in Kenya and Senegal, offering a compelling testament to the transformative potential of unity in opposition ranks.

The memoir emphasizes that unity alone is insufficient; transparent vote-counting mechanisms play a pivotal role in ensuring credible elections. The adoption of on-the-spot counting by The Gambia's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) emerges as a groundbreaking factor, setting a new standard for transparent electoral practices in Africa.

The Gambian experience challenges the prevailing narrative that popular uprisings are the sole means to unseat long-standing leaders. It celebrates the resilience of democracy, highlighting those elections, when conducted transparently, possess the transformative power to challenge even the most entrenched incumbency.

AUDACITY

As the memoir concludes, it echoes a call for African electoral commissions to consider adopting on-the-spot counting and encourages a united opposition as a formidable force for political change. The Gambian experience, explored in this analysis, stands as a beacon of hope for democratic transitions across the African continent—an enduring testament to the indomitable spirit of a nation in pursuit of a new dawn.

The unexpected twist occurred when Jammeh, known for his unwavering stance, initially conceded defeat, only to reverse his position, rejecting and annulling the election results later shockingly. This sudden event had profound implications for The Gambia's fledgling democracy.

The memoir concludes with a comprehensive analysis of the pre-and post-electoral events, providing insights into the factors that led to Jammeh's electoral defeat and eventual exile to Equatorial Guinea.

The political impasse that followed the end of Jammeh's rule created a volatile and precarious situation within the country. The intense standoff required external intervention, with ECOWAS and Western diplomatic channels playing a crucial role in mediating the crisis. The international community's involvement was imperative in ensuring a peaceful transition of power and averting further escalation of tensions within The Gambia.

As the curtain fell on Jammeh's era, the nation stood at a crossroads, grappling with the aftermath of a tumultuous political transition. The events surrounding the end of his rule highlighted the significance of regional and global cooperation in

AUDACITY

resolving political crises and fostering stability in the face of uncertainty.

The Gambia's journey from the 'Billion Year' President to a new chapter in its history underscored the resilience of its people and the importance of international collaboration in fostering democratic principles and upholding human rights.

In conclusion, Yahya Jammeh's defeat in the 2016 Gambian presidential elections was a pivotal moment shaped by significant factors. Foremost among these was Jammeh's appalling human rights record, characterized by a litany of abuses ranging from killings to torture and enforced disappearances. This record tarnished his image and instigated widespread discontent and opposition among the Gambian populace.

Additionally, Jammeh's ill-fated attack on the Mandingo ethnic group during the election campaign proved to be a crucial misstep. By issuing threats and derogatory remarks, he alienated a substantial portion of the population, particularly the Mandingo voters who had traditionally supported him. The failed attempt to play the ethnic card, coupled with his divisive rhetoric, led to a significant loss of support from a community that comprised 35% of Gambians.

The intersection of these factors highlights the potency of public discontent fueled by human rights abuses and the profound impact of ethnic politics on election outcomes.

The 2016 elections not only signalled a transformative moment for The Gambia but also demonstrated the

AUDACITY

resilience and determination of the electorate in unseating a long-standing autocrat through the democratic process. This historic event serves as a testament to the potential of polls as a powerful instrument for political change in African nations, steering the trajectory towards a more democratic and accountable governance.

The unexpected twist of on-the-spot vote counting, designed to highlight the fairness of elections, inadvertently became a safeguard against potential electoral malpractice, further contributing to Jammeh's electoral defeat. This memoir offers a nuanced portrayal of a nation grappling with the intricate interplay of religion, politics, and societal dynamics, culminating in a historic electoral outcome that reshaped the destiny of The Gambia.

In the annals of Gambian political history, the chapter under President Yahya Jammeh's rule is a mosaic of intricate events that significantly shaped the nation's destiny. A pivotal moment emerged when Jammeh, driven by a desire to align with the Muslim majority and sever ties with the colonial past, declared The Gambia an Islamic state.

However, this audacious move was not without consequences, as it ignited both domestic and international backlash, laying bare the intricate dynamics of religious identity within the multi-religious fabric of Gambian society.

Jammeh's foray into religious regulation extended to attempts at dictating the dress code of female civil servants, thereby exacerbating tensions with the Christian community. His unconventional and

AUDACITY

controversial statements, whether directed at ethnic groups, women, or religious matters, proved to be a double-edged sword, alienating crucial segments of the population and contributing to his eventual electoral downfall.

The interplay of religion and politics reached a crescendo with Jammeh's declaration of an Islamic State in December 2015. In a nation where religious minorities wielded considerable influence, particularly Christians, the announcement met with widespread disapproval. Efforts to enforce specific dress codes further deepened societal divisions, fostering resistance and opposition.

Jammeh's antagonistic stance towards women extended beyond dress codes, with explicit and offensive statements that incurred widespread public displeasure. These remarks not only sparked outrage but also translated into concrete opposition at the polls, as women voted against him, perceiving his comments as a direct affront to their dignity.

This memoir also spotlighted the transformative role of opposition unity, social media, and the diaspora in shaping the political narrative. The opposition's cohesive front, forged by a common objective to unseat Jammeh, played a pivotal role in the electoral process. The diaspora, utilizing social media as a potent tool, became a driving force in disseminating information, exposing human rights abuses, and mobilizing funds to bolster the opposition campaign.

In reflecting on the memoir and the tumultuous events leading to Yahya Jammeh's departure from power, it becomes evident that The Gambia's journey towards

AUDACITY

democracy is a remarkable chapter in the broader African struggle against dictatorship. The culmination of these events serves as a beacon of hope, illustrating that even in the face of oppressive rule, the collective will of a determined populace can pave the way for a democratic future.

The conduct of the December 2016 presidential poll, orchestrated with utmost professionalism despite threats, stands as a testament to the bravery and resilience of the Gambian people. Alieu Momar Njie's leadership as the chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) played a crucial role in ensuring the transparency of the electoral process. The unity of the opposition, coupled with diaspora involvement during critical junctures, emerged as indispensable factors in dismantling Jammeh's entrenched regime.

International collaboration, particularly the resolve of ECOWAS and Senegal, demonstrated the significance of regional and international cooperation in averting chaos during political transitions.

The diplomatic and strategic efforts to pressure Jammeh into stepping down underscore the importance of collective action against authoritarianism. The December 2016 polls and the preceding political organization offer valuable lessons for other African nations grappling with dictatorship and political transitions.

The memoir serves as a comprehensive account of the intricate dynamics that led to Jammeh's exit, emphasizing key elements such as the impact of mass migration, the persecution of opposition leaders,

AUDACITY

Jammeh's controversial Islamic State declaration, and his offensive remarks towards women. The unity of opposition parties, fueled by ethnic-regional dynamics, social media activism, and the significance of on-the-spot counting, played crucial roles in shaping the historical outcome.

In conclusion, Yahya Jammeh's departure without bloodshed stands as a milestone achievement, portraying the power of democracy and the resilience of a nation in the face of adversity. The lessons from this memoir transcend national boundaries, offering insights into the complexities of political transitions and the essential role of collective action in challenging entrenched dictatorships. The Gambia's journey is an inspiring narrative for other nations seeking to break free from the shackles of authoritarian rule and embrace the principles of democracy.

AUDACITY

Acknowledgments

As this journey of writing and researching "The Enigma of Yahya Jammeh's Rule" comes to its completion, I am filled with immense gratitude for those who have supported me along this challenging yet enlightening path.

Primarily, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the people of The Gambia, whose resilience and courage in the face of adversity have been a constant source of inspiration. The stories, experiences, and insights shared by many Gambians have been invaluable in shaping this narrative.

I am deeply indebted to my family, whose unwavering support and understanding have been my pillars of strength. To my professional editors, who have been my sounding board and my sanctuary, I cannot thank you enough. My children, Daisy, Jordan, Shaniqua, and William, for their patience and encouragement, reminding me of the importance of this work.

Special thanks to my mentor, My mum Penda Therese Bass and My dad Albere Senior Correa, whose guidance and astute advice have been instrumental in navigating the complexities of this topic.

I am also grateful to Amir Anzur of Authors Mastermind Inc. for providing critical encouragement and insights and perspectives on publishing this book Audacity about Yahya Jammeh's cultural and political impact on the people of The Gambia as their leader for over two decades.

AUDACITY

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of my research team, especially Samavia Hafeez, Usama Hafeez, Maryam Hafeez, whose diligence, and commitment to uncovering the truth have been the backbone of this project.

My editors, James Kyle Fagger of Your words LLC and Thomas Hill deserve a special mention for their meticulous attention to detail and for challenging me to bring clarity and depth to my writing.

I am also thankful to the Gambian diaspora community for their invaluable contributions and for keeping the spirit of democracy and human rights alive during the darkest times.

Lastly, I appreciate the support of my publisher, Authors Mastermind Publishing company, for believing in this project and for their efforts in bringing this book to readers around the world.

This book is a tribute to the indomitable spirit of the Gambian people and a reminder of the vigilance needed to safeguard democracy and human rights everywhere.

Warm Regards

Albere Junior Correa

References

1. For a detailed discussion of this see, Jeggan Senghor, *The Politics of Senegambian Integration, 1958-1994*. Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2008.
2. Abdoulaye Saine, *Culture and Customs of Gambia* (Santa Barbara, CA, Denver, Co: Greenwood Press, 2012), 28.
3. For a comprehensive assessment of President Jammeh's rule from 1994 to 2009, see David Perfect, "The Gambia Under Yahya Jammeh: An Assessment," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 99 (2010): 53-63.
4. Abdoulaye Saine, "Post-coup politics in The Gambia," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2002): 167-172.
5. Abdoulaye Saine, "The Foreign Policy of The Gambia since the Coup, 1994-1999," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 38 (2000): 73-88.
6. Amnesty International, *Annual Report: Gambia 2011*, Washington, D.C., May 2011.
7. "Gambia: Online newspaper hacked, editor smeared and subscribers threatened." *Freedom Newspaper*, May 30, 2006. <http://www.freedomnewspaper.com/Homepage/tabid/36/mid/367/newsid367/573/GambiaOnline-newspaper-hacked-editor-smeared-and-subscribers-threatened/Default.aspx>.

AUDACITY

8. Ebrima Sankareh ed. The Gambia Echo, Discussion with author, July 2012.
9. Amnesty International, Annual Report: Gambia 2011, Washington, D.C., May 2011.
10. "Gambia Must Drop Treason Charges Against Activists,"Â Amnesty International, July 22, 2011. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/gambia-must-drop-treason-char...>
11. "Combating money laundering, terrorist financing,"Â The Point, October 10, 2011, thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/combating-money-laundering-terrorist-financing
12. "Summary Report of the NGOs Forum preceding the 50th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and 24th African Human Rights Book Fair 19-21 October 2011" Banjul, The Gambia,Â African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, October 31, 2011 <http://www.acdhhs.org/2011/10/summary-report-of-the-ngos-forum-preceding....>
13. For a discussion of this see, Harold Hongju Koh's testimony during Hearings on Ratification of CEDAW before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, June 13, 2002, in Jihn T. Rourke, Clashing Views in World Politics, Â (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012) 315-322.
14. Ylva Hernlund and Bettina Shell-Duncan, "Contingency, Context and Change: Negotiating Female Genital Cutting in The Gambia and Senegal,"Africa Today 53 (2007): 43-47.

AUDACITY

15. Saine, Culture and Customs of Gambia.
16. Â "Gamcotrap Executive Director Continues Her Defence In Alleged Theft Case," Foroyaa, December 22, 2011, <http://www.foroyaa.gm/index.php/national-news/10143-gambia-news-archive>.
17. The Gambia under Sir Dawda Jawara was instrumental in the establishment of the African Charter and partly in appreciation of his strong commitment to human rights, was named after Gambia's capital, Banjul. For an excellent discussion of these and other constitutional matters under the first and second republics, see Abou Jeng, "From Hope to Despair: Travails of Constitutional Law Making in Gambia's Second Republic" in *State and Society in The Gambia since Independence, 1965-2012*, ed. Abdoulaye Saine, et. al. (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2012). (Forthcoming)
18. U.S. Department of State, 2010 Human Rights Reports: The Gambia, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2011, 1.
19. U.S. Department of State , 2011 Human Rights Report: The Gambia, Washington, D.C., May 24, 2012.; "Gambian Lawyers Condemn Incarceration of Former High Court Judge,Â APA/ Banjul, September 2011: <http://www.apanews.net/photo/fr/photo.php?id=158550>
20. International Bar Association, *Under Pressure: A Report on the Rule of Law in The Gambia*, August 2006, 41-47.

AUDACITY

21. Abdoulaye Saine, "The Gambia," in Challenges of Security Sector Governance in West Africa, ed. Alan Bryden et. al. (London: Transactions Publishers, 2008) 95.
22. Ibid., 96.
23. "Two tons of cocaine seized in The Gambia," BBC News, June 8, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10268510>.
24. Saine, "The Gambia," 97.
25. President Jammeh's wealth is estimated in the millions of dollars. He has interests in real estate, bakery, farming, along alleged shady deals that include drugs.
26. "Veteran Politician Questions President Jammeh's Source of Wealth," The Gambia Voice, <http://thegambiavoice.blogspot.com/2011/05/gambia-news-veteran-politician-questions.html>.
27. Abdou Karim Sanneh, "Yahya Jammeh; Drugs and Arms Trade: How The Gambia has become a drug transit state," The Gambia Echo, May 19, 2009, <http://www.thegambiaecho.com/Homepage/tabid/36/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1502/Default.aspx>; Ebrima Sankareh, "The Money Trail: Yahya Jammeh's Corruption-Part III," The Gambia Echo; October 30, 2008.
28. World Organization Against Torture, The Gambia: The Climate of Fear Amongst the Community of Human Rights Defenders, July 2011, http://www.omct.org/files/2011/07/21336/the_gambia_mission_report.pdf.

AUDACITY

29. Abdoulaye Saine, *The Paradox of Third-Wave Democratization in Africa: The Gambia under AFPRC-APRC rule, 1994-2008* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009) 92, 204, 112.
30. "Tax Commission under the Microscope," *Â Jollofnews*, June 24, 2012, <http://www.jollofnews.com/20120624gambias-tax-commission-under-the-microscope.html>.
31. International Monetary Fund, *The Gambia, 2011 Article IV Consultation, January 2012*; "The Budget Speech," *Â Foroyaa*, December 20, 2012, <http://www.foroyaa.gm/index.php/national-news/7461-gambia-news-archive>.
32. United Nations, *Weekly Situation Report on Joint Response to Address Crop Failure in The Gambia in 2011/12, Issue Nr. 01, Reporting Period, 5-9*, March 2012, http://www.gm.undp.org/SITREP_CROPFailure_UNSYSTEM_8MAR2012.pdf; For a detailed assessment of agricultural policy under Presidents Jawara and Jammeh, see, Ousman Gajigo and Abdoulaye Saine, "The Effects of Government Policies on Cereal Consumption Change in The Gambia," *ÂÂ Review of African Political Economy* 38 (2011): 517-536.
33. <https://www.nytimes.com/topic/destination/gambia>
34. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/01/17/across-the-atlantic-a-far-more-contentious-inauguration-will-precede-trumps/?utm_term=.19b7465d6b99

AUDACITY

35. For this election, seven of the eight opposition parties formed a coalition and supported Adama Barrow.
36. BBC News, (2016) "Gambia's Jammeh loses to Adama Barrow in shock election result", 2 December, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38183906> (accessed 6 December 2016)
37. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbUMGUCnCAy>
38. O. Lakemfa, (2016) "The Banana Peels of the Gambia", Premium Times, 30 December, <http://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2016/12/30/banana-peels-gambia-owei-lakemfa/> (accessed 31 December 2016).
39. R. Maclean, (2016) "The Gambia's new rulers vow to prosecute outgoing President, The Guardian, 7 December, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/07/the-gambias-new-rulers-vow-to-prosecute-outgoing-president> (accessed 10 December 2016).
40. J. Bavier (2017) "Gambia army chief stands by embattled President Jammeh", 4 January, <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN1401DR?> (accessed 5 January 2017).
41. AFP, (2016) "France urges Gambia's Jammeh to accept election defeat", 20 December, <http://guardian.ng/news/france-urges-gambias-jammeh-to-accept-election-defeat/?F> (accessed 31 December 2016).

AUDACITY

42. Vanguard, (2016) "Acknowledge that Gambia is a sovereign state, Ekweremadu warns", 3 January 2017
<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/01/acknowledged-gambia-sovereign-state-ekweremadu-warns/> (accessed 5 January 2017).
43. The Nation, (2016). "Jammeh appoints six foreign judges to Supreme Court to hear his petition", 30 December, <http://thenationonlineng.net/jammeh-appoints-six-foreign-judges-supreme-court-hear-petition/> (accessed 5 January 2017).
44. M. Dwyier, (2016) "Gambia: Why the army may be the key to getting Jammeh to step down", African Argument, 16 December, <http://africanarguments.org/2016/12/16/gambia-why-the-army-may-be-the-key-to-getting-jammeh-to-step-down/> (accessed 20 December 2016).
45. S. Allison, (2015) "The Gambia coup didn't just fail. It backfired", The Guardian, 7 January, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/07/gambia-failed-coup-encourage-president-jammeh> (accessed 4 June 2015).
46. Emeka, C. (1972) "Amin's Plans for Uganda," *Africa Report*, 21, 4: 53.
47. Gupta, A. (1974) "Ugandan Asians, Britain, India, and the Commonwealth," *African Affairs*, 73, 292: 312.
48. Ravenhill, F. J. (1976) *Review of Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda* by Ali Mazrui. Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications. 1975.

AUDACITY

49. Journal of Modern African Studies, 14, 4: 725.
Southall, A. (1975) "General Amin and the Coup: Great or Historical Inevitability," Journal of Modern African Studies, 13, 1: 85-105.
50. Yeager, Rodger. (1977) Review of Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda by Ali Mazrui. Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications. 1975. International Journal of African Historical Studies, 10, 2: 293. [1] For a detailed discussion of this see, Jeggan Senghor, The Politics of Senegambian Integration, 1958-1994. Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2008.
51. Abbink, J 2017, 'Paradoxes of electoral authoritarianism: the 2015 Ethiopian Elections as Hegemonic Performance', Journal of Contemporary African Studies, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 303-323, DOI: 10.1080/02589001.2017.1324620.
52. Akwei, I 2017, 'Gambia's Vice President resigns hours before Jammeh's mandate ends', Africa News 18 January, available at www.africanews.com/2017/01/18/gambia-s-vice-president-resigns (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
53. Asingo, PO 2013, 'Opposition Coalitions and the Democratic Ouster of Dominant African Parties: Lessons from the Kenya Elections of 2002', ASPJ Africa & Francophonie 3rd Quarter.
54. Dem, M & Jadama, R 2017, 'Chief-Justice Recuses Himself From Case to Stop Barrow's Inauguration', Foroyaa Newspaper, 17 January, available at <https://www.allafrica.com/stories/201701180507.html> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).

AUDACITY

55. Bah, H 2016, 'New Leadership Will Probe Jammeh', Jollof news, 4 December, available at <https://jollofnews.com/2016/12/04/gambia-2016-new-leadership-will-probe-jammeh-hamat-bah/> (6 Jan 2024).
56. Embiricos, A 2016, 'The back way to Europe: Gambia's forgotten refugees', Open Democracy, 19 May, available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/alexandra-embiricos/back-way-to> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
57. Evangelical Focus 2016, 'Religious freedom at risk after Islamic state declaration', 23 February, available at https://www.evangelicalfocus.com/world/1391/Gambia_Religious_freedom_at_risk_after_Islamic_state_declaration (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
58. Fadera, N 2016, The role of social media in the 2016 presidential elections in The Gambia, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Westminster, London.
59. Saine, A 2009, The Paradox of Third Wave Democratization in Africa: The Gambia under AFPRC-APRC from 1994-2008, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD.
60. Sanyang, E & Camara, S. 2017, 'The Gambia after Elections: Implications for Governance and Security in West Africa', Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, available at <https://www.library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/senegal/13225-20170310.pdf> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).

AUDACITY

61. Snyder, R 2006, 'Beyond Electoral Authoritarianism: The Spectrum of Non-Democratic Regimes', ResearchGate, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327477519_Beyond_Electoral_Authoritarianism (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
62. 24 DOI: 10.20940/JAE/2019/v18i2a1 Journal of african ELEctions Standard Newspaper 2018, 'IEC Boss says he was a target for lethal injection', 21 March, available at <https://www.standard.gm/site/2018/03/21/iec-boss-says-he-was-a-target-for> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
63. SMBC News 2016, 'Gambia's Jammeh recalls his ambassador who urged him to step down', 19 December, available at <https://www.gambia.smbcgo.com/2016/12/19/gambias-jammeh-recalls>. (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
64. SMBC News 2017, 'Liberia's Johnson Sirleaf scolds Gambia's Jammeh for pulling a ruse', 16 January, available at <https://www.gambia.smbcgo.com/2017/01/16/liberias-johnson-sirleaf> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
65. The Point Newspaper 2017, 'Five other ministers resign', 18 January, available at <https://www.thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/five-other-ministers-resign> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
66. Thomson, A 2010, *An Introduction to African Politics*, 3rd edition, Routledge, Milton Park, Abingdon.

AUDACITY

67. Tordoff, W 2002, Government and Politics in Africa, Indiana University Press,
68. Bah, MS 2016, 'I'm Calling the Opposition to Follow Me to Create a Change', Says Dr. Isatou Touray, Foroyaa Newspaper, 6 September, available at <https://www.allafrica.com/stories/201609070912.html> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
69. Batty, FJ 2010, What Role for Ethnicity? Political Behavior and Mobilization in Post- Conflict Sierra Leone and Liberia, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich.
70. BBC 2017, 'Gambian minister 'quits in protest' amid political impasse', 10 January, available at www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38565502 (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
71. BBC 2016, 'Gambia President Yahya Jammeh must step down – UN', 10 December, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38275511> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
72. BBC 2016, 'How Gambia's Yahya Jammeh lost his grip on power', 10 December, 22 DOI: 10.20940/JAE/2019/v18i2a1 Journal of african ElEctions available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-38249924> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
73. BBC Africa Eye 2019, 'Bringing Down Jammeh', Documentary, available at: <https://www.youtube.be/DpBEy9Jm31w> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).

AUDACITY

74. Brooks, JC 2017, 'Pres. Sirleaf Tells Jammeh: "ECOWAS Position Remains Unchanged"', GNN Liberia, 16 January, available at <https://www.gnnliberia.com/2017/01/16/pres-sirleaf-tells-jammeh-ecowas-position-remains-unchanged/> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
75. Ceesay, I 2016, 'Gambia continues to defy existing political norms on the African continent', Africa at LSE blog posts, available at <https://www.blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2016/12/06/gambia-continues-to-defy-existing-political-norms-on-the-african-continent/> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
76. Darboe, M 2004, 'Islamism in West Africa, Gambia', *African Studies Review*, vol. 47, no. 2. pp. 73-82.
77. Gambia Independent Electoral Commission, 2006, *Presidential Election Results*, IEC, Banjul.
78. Gambia Independent Electoral Commission, 2011, *Presidential Election Results*, IEC, Banjul.
79. Gambia Independent Electoral Commission, 2016, *Presidential Election Results*, IEC, Banjul.
80. Gambia Radio and Television Services, *Radio Report June 2016*, Banjul, the Gambia
81. Gambia Radio and Television Services, TV Broadcast, 'President Jammeh congratulates Adama Barrow', Banjul.
82. Gambia Radio and Television Services, TV Broadcast, 'President Jammeh rejects 2016 elections results', Banjul.

AUDACITY

83. Gandhi, J & Lust-Okar E 2009, 'Elections Under Authoritarianism', *Annual Review of Political Science*, DOI 10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060106.095434. Hartmann, C 2017, 'ECOWAS and the Restoration of Democracy in the Gambia', *Africa Spectrum*, vol. 52, no. 1, pp 85–99. Volume 18 No 2 DOI: 10.20940/JAE/2019/v18i2a1 23
84. Hughes A 2000, 'Democratisation under the military in The Gambia: 1994– 2000', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 35-52, DOI: 10.1080/14662040008447825
85. Hultin, N, Jallow, B, Lawrence, BN & Sarr, A 2017, 'Briefing Autocracy, Migration, and The Gambia's "unprecedented" 2016 election', *African Affairs*, pp. 1–20 doi: 10.1093/afraf/adx007.
86. Human Rights Watch 2015, 'State of Fear, Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Killings', available at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/16/state-fear/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-killings> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
87. Jollofnews 2016, 'Jammeh Confident Of Election Victory', 1 December 2016 available at <https://www.jollofnews.com/2016/12/01/gambia-2016-jammeh-confident-of-election-victory/> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
88. Jollofnews 2016, 'How Yahya Jammeh Has Let The People Down', 26 December 2016, available at <https://www.jollofnews.com/2016/12/26/gambia-how-yahya-jammeh-has-let-the-people-down/> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).

AUDACITY

89. Maclean, R 2016, 'The Gambia's new rulers vow to prosecute outgoing President', *The Guardian*, 7 December,
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/07/the-gambias-new-rulers-vow-to-prosecute-outgoing-president> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
90. Nyang, SS 1984, 'Islam and Politics in West Africa', *Issue: A Journal of Africanist Opinion*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 20-25.
91. Onuoha, FC & Engwu, EC 2017, 'Report on The Unfolding Political Impasse in the Gambia', *Al Jazeera*, available at
https://www.studies.aljazeera.net/mritems/Documents/2017/2/15/6d90659cb1f74c07ab83088a9a14eb28_100.pdf (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
92. Perfect, D 2010, 'The Gambia under Yahya Jammeh: An Assessment', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 99, no. 406, pp. 53-63, DOI: 10.1080/00358530903513681
93. Saine A 2008, 'The Gambia's 2006 Presidential Election: Change or Continuity?', *African Studies Review*, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 59-83.
94. Saine, A 2009, *The Paradox of Third Wave Democratization in Africa: The Gambia under AFPRC-APRC from 1994-2008*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD.
95. Sanyang, E & Camara, S. 2017, 'The Gambia after Elections: Implications for Governance and Security in West Africa', *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, available

AUDACITY

at <https://www.library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/senegal/13225-20170310.pdf> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).

96. Snyder, R 2006, 'Beyond Electoral Authoritarianism: The Spectrum of Non-Democratic Regimes', ResearchGate, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327477519_Beyond_Electoral_Authoritarianism (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
97. 24 DOI: 10.20940/JAE/2019/v18i2a1 Journal of african ELEctions Standard Newspaper 2018, 'IEC Boss says he was a target for lethal injection', 21 March, available at <https://www.standard.gm/site/2018/03/21/iec-boss-says-he-was-a-target-for-lethal-injection> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
98. SMBC News 2016, 'Gambia's Jammeh recalls his ambassador who urged him to step down', 19 December, available at <https://www.gambia.smbcgo.com/2016/12/19/gambias-jammeh-recalls>. (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
99. SMBC News 2017, 'Liberia's Johnson Sirleaf scolds Gambia's Jammeh for pulling a ruse', 16 January, available at <https://www.gambia.smbcgo.com/2017/01/16/liberias-johnson-sirleaf> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).
100. The Point Newspaper 2017, 'Five other ministers resign', 18 January, available at <https://www.thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/five-other-ministers-resign> (accessed 6 Jan 2024).

AUDACITY

101. Thomson, A 2010, An Introduction to African Politics, 3rd edition, Routledge, Milton Park, Abingdon.
102. Tordoff, W 2002, Government and Politics in Africa, Indiana University Press.