

New Narratives

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# New Narratives Report

March 2020

In collaboration with  
**M&C SAATCHI** | RESEARCH,  
**WORLD SERVICES** | INSIGHT &  
EVALUATION

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# Foreword

In both our roles as Regional Directors for Sub-Saharan Africa and Middle East and North Africa, we are often preoccupied with perceptions – or more troublingly – misperceptions.

Misperceptions or gaps in perceptions are the root cause of misunderstanding in all sort of situations: from friends and family, to relationships between countries. In our lives we have encountered outdated, incorrect and incomplete pictures across the African continent and the UK.

Trust and familiarity are closely linked. So, we commissioned M&C Saatchi World Services, to conduct this extensive piece of research across Africa and the UK, with a focus on five major cities of the United Kingdom and eight major cities across Africa.

It reveals both obstacles to engagement and understanding, but also a will on both sides to engage differently and re-examine the reputation of the other. It chimes with other British Council research that shows young Africans do not share the same views or attachments to the UK as their parents' generation.

Africa's young demographic, its 'youth bulge', is the most significant factor for the future of the continent; their relationship with the UK has huge ramifications for our shared prosperity and security. We need to listen and try to understand these voices, we need to respect and respond to them – especially the desire to engage differently.

The legacy of colonialism is perennial in both Africa and the UK, but the perceptions of it change. As we saw in recent Black Lives Matters protest, interrogation and criticism of that legacy is not limited to Africa, it is also a current and passionate debate among young people in the UK – one that is visible to Africans across social media.

However, colonialism is more than a legacy between the UK and Africa. With emerging powers seeking to gain influence across the continent the conditions present a familiar pattern to those aware of history. It makes the British Council's objective of building trust more difficult and hinders the kind of productive and more modern relationship that Africa and the UK could and should have.

The findings of this research will feed into our five-year New Narratives programme which commences in April 2021. It aims to build new and stronger connections between young people of Africa and the UK, improve how we exchange knowledge and facilitate reciprocal engagement and projects, online and offline.

New Narratives will be driven through partnerships between different types of organisations, particularly those committed to Africa and the UK who contribute to new dialogues between young people in African nations and the four nations of the UK.

At the end of our five-year programme we hope that the British Council, UK government and a critical mass of institutions in Africa and the UK would have developed new approaches to working between countries to build new connections with a fresh understanding between peoples.

**Moses Anibaba**  
Regional Director, Sub-Saharan Africa  
British Council

**Chris Rawlings**  
Regional Director, Middle East North Africa  
British Council

In interacting and working with young people across Africa and the UK, both professionally and socially, I have been confronted by reciprocal stereotypes resulting from either incomplete or outrightly false perceptions of both sides in almost every sphere of engagement. These stereotypes have become entrenched over time and have undermined the prospects of a more productive and modern relationship between the (young) people of the nations of Africa and the UK

Building trust and connections between the UK and Africa is at the core of our Cultural Relations mandate at the British Council and this is often made more challenging against the backdrop of false narratives.

Against this backdrop, we commissioned research to understand perceptions between young people in the UK and across Africa, how narratives shape these perceptions and ultimately the willingness to network.

This piece of research builds our insight and provides clear and relatable lenses through which to view not only the historical basis but also the contemporary shapes and forms of the relationship between the nations of Africa and the UK. It has been conducted across Africa and the United Kingdom using a methodology that uses a wide range of secondary data and primary data collection from 8 major African cities; Lagos (Nigeria); Yaounde (Cameroun); Addis Ababa (Ethiopia); Nairobi (Kenya); Johannesburg (South Africa); Casablanca (Morocco); Algiers (Algeria) and 5 major cities across the 4 devolved nations of the United Kingdom; Belfast (Northern Ireland); Edinburgh (Scotland); Cardiff (Wales); Manchester and London (England).

Insight from this research not only lays bare what these outdated perceptions are and what has and continues to contribute to them but also shows very clearly that on the converse, young people want to engage differently across Africa and the UK and are challenging some of the narratives around their realities.

Insight from this research will also contribute to the British Council's new programme, *New Narratives*, which will launch in April 2021. *New Narratives* aims to develop new paradigms in the relationship between young people of Africa and the UK – one defined by a more wholistic reciprocal understanding, stronger connections and enhanced trust. Through a series of activities and projects, online and offline, in Africa and the UK, *New Narratives* programme will be partnership driven and engage with African and UK institutions working in the same area.

Success on *New Narratives* will be new ways of engaging with young people across the countries of Africa and the UK, more plural narratives between both places and new approaches to working between Africa and the UK and stronger collaborations that lead to mutual benefit.

**Ojoma Ochai**

Regional Arts Director, Sub-Saharan Africa and *New Narratives* Programme Director  
British Council

# About us

The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.

We work in two ways – directly with individuals to transform their lives, and with governments and partners to make a bigger difference for the longer term, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

We connect the best of the UK with the world and the best of the world with the UK. These connections lead to an understanding of each other's strengths and of the challenges and values that we share. This builds trust between people in the UK and other nations which endures even when official relations may be strained.

We work on the ground in more than 100 countries.

In 2019-20 we connected with 80 million people directly and with 791 million overall, including online and through our broadcasts and publications.

# Acknowledgement and credit

The challenge to understand young Africans' and young people from the UK's perceptions of each other and each other's country warranted a multi-pronged approach. Over the last four months, we have worked with our partners across the nations and regions of the United Kingdom as well as Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa, to advance three integrated research strands to resolve this challenge. We thank our local research partners and expert consultants, as well as the young people who generously shared their insights and perspectives with us. The youth workshop participants at the New Narratives convening in Kigali provided invaluable contributions to the interpretation of the research findings. We also acknowledge our technical partners within M&C Saatchi World Services and externally. We are grateful for the substantive contributions from Lucia Laurent-Neva, Madeline Surman, Tim Spencer, and Maria Pavlopoulos. Finally, we thank Ojoma Ochai and the New Narratives team at the British Council who provided valuable guidance throughout.

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# Executive summary

The British Council commissioned M&C Saatchi World Services to conduct a comprehensive investigation into youth perceptions in the UK and across Africa. The findings of this investigation are designed to inform the British Council's five-year New Narratives programme, which aims to help contribute to changing reciprocal perceptions between Africa and the UK to stimulate new understanding which will unlock new connections and collaborations for mutual benefit.

To support the British Council to achieve this vision, this report provides a roadmap that illustrates, first, the trajectory of UK-African relations from c.1500 to the present; second, where we are today in terms of how young people from the UK and African countries perceive the other's home country/region; and third, the opportunities for the British Council to refine and advance these perceptions in the future. This roadmap has been generated employing a research design that was deliberately innovative, boldly experimental and iterative. This design integrated multiple and varied data streams, including a historical review of the narrative trajectories and cultural and socio-political themes dominating UK-African relations; a semiotic analysis drawing on images in popular culture and gathered by narrative scouts and young people themselves across the two regions; and conversations with young people aged 18-35 in five UK cities: London (England), Manchester (England), Edinburgh (Scotland), Cardiff, (Wales) and Belfast (Northern Ireland); as well as eight cities in eight African countries: Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Algiers (Algeria), Casablanca (Morocco), Cairo (Egypt), Johannesburg (South Africa), Lagos (Nigeria), Nairobi (Kenya), and Yaoundé (Cameroon),

By tracing the evolution of narratives of the UK-African relations across six key periods starting with the Transatlantic Slave Trade (c.1500 – 1833) and ending with the present day, this report summarises the socio-cultural, economic and political backdrop to current and emerging narratives between the UK and Africa, and provides an aide memoire to understanding the historical context in which current relations are framed. This review highlights the fundamental and enduring importance of economic parameters in defining UK-African relations, which continues to this day in debates about the extent to which Brexit presents an opportunity for the (re)forging of a special economic partnership between the British and African states. Simultaneously, the review illustrates the historical persistence of racially coded tropes, motifs and stereotypes in British discourse about Africa, suggesting how these have evolved and adapted to changing social norms around, and an increasing sensitivity to the power relations concealed by, acts of representation. In tracing the evolution of these parameters and modes of representation, the review highlights evidence of the historical marginalisation of African voices and perspectives in the history of UK-African relations and narratives. At the same time, it demonstrates a gradual, and continuing, redistribution of power relations between African countries and the UK, as part of which this marginalisation has come under increased scrutiny and resistance.

Conversations with young people from the UK and African countries suggest how, in 2020, youth perceptions of both the UK and African countries are subject to a forcefield of competing interpretations about what they are like as places and as destinations; how they

relate to one another; and the position they occupy on the international stage. These interpretations rarely derive from a single source; instead, they are the product of young people's engagement with a wide array of 'touchpoints' - a piece of terminology developed as part of this research to capture the interplay between sources and conditions that defines how young people engage with narratives. These touchpoints fall into four categories: direct, bridging, mediated and iconic. Direct touchpoints refer to experiences where young people come in contact with people from the other place, such as through family and friends who live in the other place, or within settings that serve as meeting points, for example universities. Bridging touchpoints are formats or platforms that involve people from both places, for example the English Premier League, where the teams are from Britain, but many of the leading players are from African countries. Mediated touchpoints refer to media that are specifically produced to represent and communicate content about the other place. This category includes the majority of film, television, advertising and news media. Iconic touchpoints refer to individuals, institutions, places, monuments and structures, rituals and customs, and brands that are intrinsically identified with either the UK or Africa. Notable examples discussed in groups included the British Royal Family, William Shakespeare and Big Ben for the UK; as well as Nelson Mandela, Robert Mugabe, the Egyptian Pyramids and Kilimanjaro for African countries.

From the perspective of young Africans, while the UK embodies a diverse range of positive values and characteristics including security, tradition, prosperity, efficiency, justice, equality and freedom, there are widespread concerns about British racism and elitism, as well as doubts about how accessible the UK is for all but the most wealthy and privileged young people. These concerns are rooted in young Africans' knowledge of the UK's colonial past; reinforced by a diverse range of contemporary instances of British prejudice and discrimination; and reflected in a sensitivity to signs of latent neo-colonialism in the UK's dealings with African countries. If left unaddressed, these more malign associations threaten to undermine both the currently dominant image of the UK as a gateway for young Africans to achieve their aspirations, and to compromise its leading position relative to other countries globally. As yet, young Africans tend to imagine their British peers as allies against, rather than perpetrators of, social issues such as racism and inequality. For many young Africans, it is not the nations and regions of the UK but England and London that dominate perceptions of the UK as whole.

From the perspective of young people in the UK, the African continent, as a whole, is imagined in accordance with one of two opposing frames. On the one hand, decades of images and stories communicated by the news media and charities highlighting themes including famine, drought, disease, corruption, inequality and instability have contributed to a perception of African countries as impoverished, dangerous, and lagging behind the rest of the world socio-economically and in terms of human rights. On the other, romantic idealisations of Africa as a place of sublime landscapes, beautiful wildlife, ancient peoples and exotic cultures mean that, in the minds of young people in the UK, African countries hold the promise of unique adventures and experiences. Both extremes inflect the way in which young people in the UK picture their peers in African countries, with young Africans commonly imagined in terms of their strong family and community values, on the one hand, and as struggling to escape poverty, on the other. While both extremes demonstrate the persistent 'othering' of Africa relative to the UK, there is evidence that young people in

the UK are increasingly conscious and critical of the biases in the media they consume, as well as cognizant of their own limited knowledge and understanding. There is also evidence that young people in the UK are moving away from the idea of Africa as a monolithic entity, as they gradually become sensitised to sub-regional and national differences. These changes may be attributed to the availability within UK popular culture and the media of images and stories which challenge stereotypes and provide more nuanced and accurate representations of African countries and peoples.

Comparing across locations, conversations with young people suggest that there is a dualism in terms of how both the UK and African countries are perceived by the other, with both subject to a forcefield of competing positive and negative narratives. There is also evidence to suggest that this dualism is inverted for young people living in African countries looking towards the UK, versus young people from the UK looking towards African countries. Whereas young people living in African countries, for example, frequently identify the UK as the antithesis to their country due to the perceived stability and fairness of its systems and structures, young people living in the UK commonly imagine African countries as home to tightly knit, organic and rooted communities with strong social bonds - a condition which they feel has attenuated somewhat in 'more developed' countries due to, for example, the rise of technology and consumer culture. As these examples suggest, a degree of romanticised othering is evident in both directions, with young people imagining the other place as the embodiment of what their country lacks. Finally, while narratives of British-African relations in both places are pervaded by concerns about both colonialism and neo-colonialism, at the interpersonal level, evidence of common values, aspirations and pastimes, shared by virtue of the shared experience of being young at the same historical moment, suggests fertile common ground for cultivating stronger connections moving forward.

Looking to the future, this report presents a foundational evidence base that is aligned with a set of four communication imperatives for influencing perceptions of the UK among young African audiences, and of African countries among young people from the UK. These imperatives are to understand, for a given country: how it is currently perceived by foreign audiences; trends which may affect these perceptions in the future; considerations for adapting communications to the target audience; and salient reference points which can help communicate new knowledge and understanding about the country in question. To address these imperatives, this report maps imaginary topographies of the UK and Africa that reflect how different countries and regions are currently perceived; identifies potential changes on the horizon in terms of how both places are perceived by the other; highlights key demographic and psychographic characteristics which may influence perceptions of young audiences in the UK and African countries; and collates the reference points and positive associations that young Africans and Britons believe represent their countries.

The report also, finally, outlines four overarching considerations for the New Narratives programme moving forward. These are:

1. To highlight the **regional, socioeconomic and sociocultural diversity** of both the UK and the African continent and countries

2. To actively **counter the dominant negative narratives** shaping perceptions of each place, doing so (where possible and appropriate) by leveraging positive narratives that are already shared by young people in the other place
  
3. To **align with trends in the popular environments of both places**, for example by expanding the range of touchpoints for young Africans to engage with new narratives of the UK to break out of the current institutionalisation of the communications landscape; as well as by amplifying influential and emerging voices championing new narratives of Africa in the UK
  
4. To **explore opportunities for narratives which communicate shared youth values, hopes and aspirations**, as the basis for building stronger bridges and shared identities between young people living in both place

# Introduction

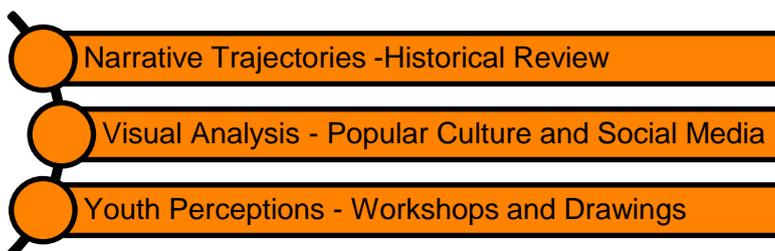
The British Council New Narratives programme is designed to help contribute to changing reciprocal perceptions between Africa and the UK, to stimulate new understanding which will unlock new connections and collaborations for mutual benefit. To help realise this vision, the British Council commissioned the Research, Insight and Evaluation (RIE) team at M&C Saatchi World Services to undertake a comprehensive investigation into how young people in the UK and African countries perceive each other and their countries.

*'The real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance between people and their environment. People construct a pseudo-environment that is a subjective, biased, and necessarily abridged mental image of the world, and to a degree, everyone's pseudo-environment is a fiction. People live in the same world, but they think and feel in different ones.'*<sup>1</sup>

Walter Lippmann 1922

Nearly 100 years ago, the US media scholar Walter Lippmann recognised the significant impact of mediated knowledge and experience on one's view of the world. To understand the perceptions that young Africans and young people from the UK have of each other and each other's countries, it is imperative to analyse the plethora of experiences and influences that have informed that perspective. It is also critical to understand, of the pictures that form inside young people's heads, which of these are widely shared in common, and therefore represent the dominant ways of seeing and talking about other people and other places within a society.

The challenge to capture young Africans' narratives of the UK and young people from the UK's narratives of Africa warranted a research design that: recognised the long and chequered history between the two regions; acknowledged the significance of popular culture and especially social media in framing one group's view of the other place; and provided young people the opportunity to communicate the 'pictures in their heads' without the requirement to only verbalise how they perceived young people from the other place. The approach adopted is deliberately innovative, boldly experimental and iterative. Three methods were employed: a historical review of the narrative trajectories and cultural and socio-political themes dominating relations between the UK and Africa from 1500 to Brexit; a semiotic analysis drawing on images in popular culture and gathered by narrative scouts and young people themselves across the two regions; and young people's drawings of young people from the other place gathered in the youth workshops. The multiple and varied data streams have afforded a rich tapestry of perspectives and insights on the narrative architecture prevalent in each region about the other place.



<sup>1</sup> Lippmann, Walter (1922). Public Opinion. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

# Methodology

## Historical Review

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The historical review concentrated on UK-African relations from the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century until the present day. This period was chosen to encompass six transitional moments in relations between the UK and African countries. While it is acknowledged that many other significant events and developments occurred in the UK and African countries throughout these periods, these six transitions were chosen due to the significant changes and subsequent effects that they had on relations between the UK and African countries and their respective cultural and socio-political landscapes. The transitions explored are as follows:

1. The elevation of the transatlantic slave trade from the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century until the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833
2. The rapid colonisation of Africa by European countries, which reached its height from 1881-1914, also known as the New Imperialism period and the '*Scramble for Africa*'
3. The two World Wars and their repercussions
4. The independence of African countries from the 1950s and the development of independent African countries (Postcolonialism)
5. The emergence of development agendas in the 1980s, 90s, 00s.
6. The UK and Africa beyond Brexit (2016 onwards)

A broad range of academic, policy, literary and media documents were consulted as sources to compile this review.

## Visual analysis

The visual analysis utilised an Applied Semiotics approach to conduct an immersive and detailed process of sourcing, classifying and decoding multi-dimensional data. Semiotics draws on various forms of cultural stimuli such as advertising, communications and popular culture (films, music, magazines, websites, social media) to explore and identify visual codes, contexts, metaphors, myths and stories influencing perceptions that can be used to shift paradigms and create informed strategies. For this project, materials were sourced via Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube and other relevant online media and offline outlets.

The data gathering process employed locally based teams of narrative scouts to gather cultural stimuli from most populous countries in the UK and five countries: Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa. The narrative scouts in the UK and in the five African markets were asked to source cultural stimuli for the project – materials ranging from images, packaging, billboards, signs on the streets, newspapers, magazines, as well as audio material salient to the narrative analysis. Online materials were sourced in each of these locations using the hashtags #Africa #AfricanCulture #AfricanYouth #UKYouth

#UKinAfrica, as well as by identifying relevant leading websites and links pertaining to each location

These data gathering activities resulted in the capture of more than 8,500 multidimensional datapoints composed of images, videos, sounds, websites, magazines, newspapers, and other offline resources. The data were then tagged, and the intended message of each post was captured. After this initial decoding, the analysis identified commonalities and classified them into codes or 'patterns' of meaning drawn from visual and textual data.

## Youth workshops

To identify young Africans' perceptions of the UK and young Briton perceptions' of Africa, a total of 44 youth workshops comprising 6-8 participants each were convened with young people aged 18-35 years old in the UK and across eight African countries: Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa. Participants were recruited from both the central and surrounding regions of each city, to ensure greater representation of views. A recruitment screener was employed to ensure that groups comprised a mix of participants in terms of their interest in and attitudes towards the other place, and that no participants were a citizen of or had ever visited or lived in the other place.<sup>2</sup> This ensured that all perceptions were based on representations of the other place, for example via media or in conversations with others, as opposed to direct experience.

In the UK, 12 groups were conducted across 5 cities: Belfast, Edinburgh, Cardiff, London, and Manchester (see

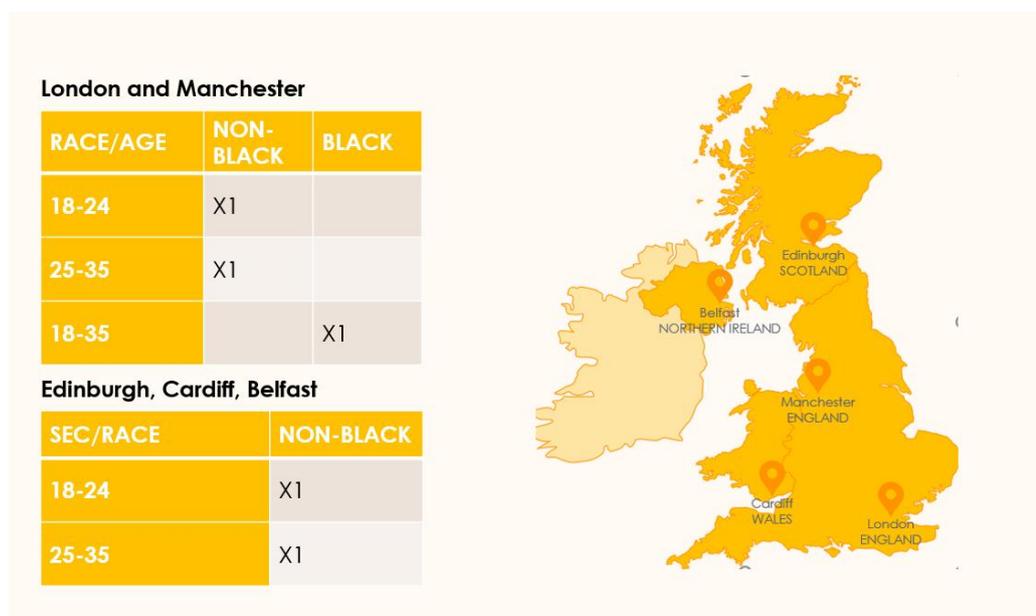
Figure 1). Two groups each were conducted in Belfast, Edinburgh, and Cardiff. Participants were divided into two age groups: 18-24 and 25-35. All groups were mixed in terms of sex and socio-economic class (SEC) and comprised non-Black ethnicities only. In England, three groups were conducted in each city, with the additional group reserved for Black participants only, aged 18-35. The decision to separate non-Black and Black

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<sup>2</sup> Travel and citizenship criteria were relaxed for the recruitment of Black UK participants.

participants was taken to ensure that all participants did not experience any group pressure to express socially desirable responses.

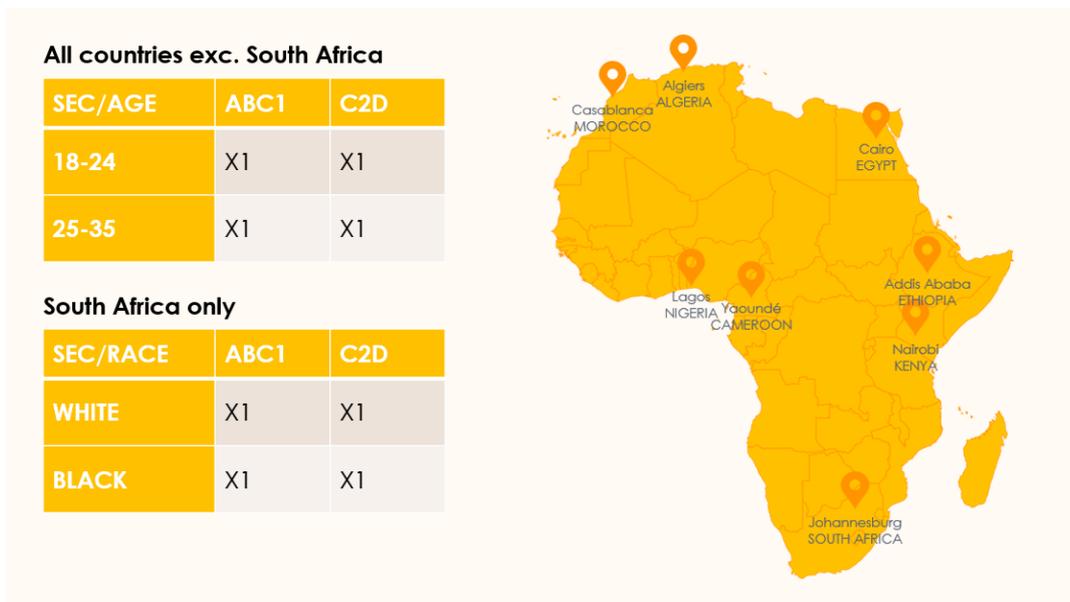
**Figure 1: UK workshops**



Four workshops were conducted in each of the eight African cities (see

Figure 2). In all countries except South Africa, groups were divided on the basis of age and SEC. In South Africa only, groups were split based on race and SEC, with all participants aged 18-35. All groups were mixed sex.

**Figure 2: African workshops**



Workshops were conducted using a semi-structured discussion guide comprising three sections:

### 1. Narratives of the other (stimulus exercise)

The first exercise involved the participatory analysis of words and images sourced by participants themselves, as part of a youth journalism exercise in which they asked up to three friends, family members or peers to select one word and image that they associate with the UK (for African participants) or Africa (for UK participants). Participants were invited to group and label the images and words provided, and then to explore the categories they had developed.

### 2. Narratives of Us (stimulus exercise)

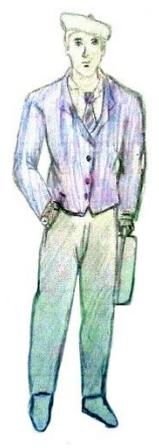
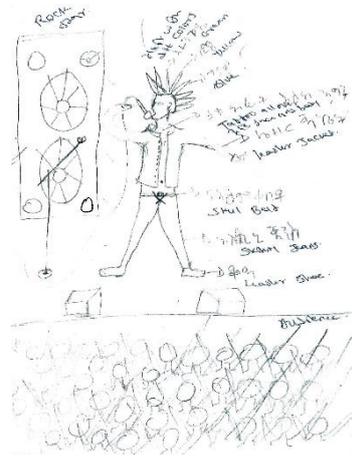
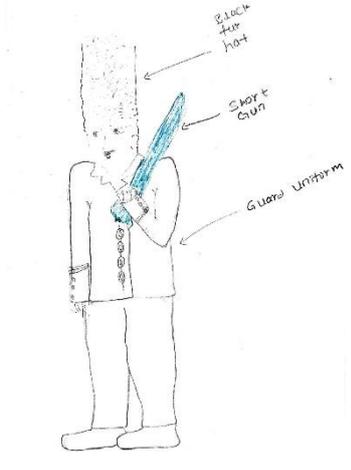
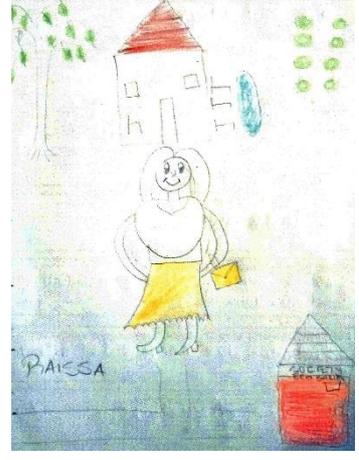
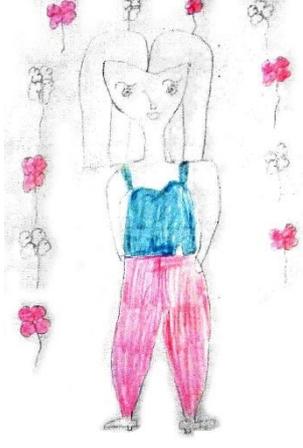
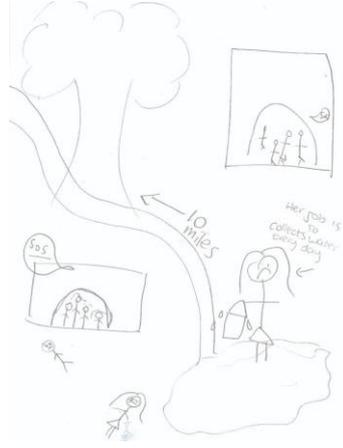
The second exercise involved stimulus provided by the narrative scouts collaborating with M&C Saatchi World Services' local partners in each location. In African workshops, participants were provided with images sourced from the UK representing African countries and themes; in UK workshops, participants were presented with representations of the UK sourced from African countries. These sets of stimuli formed the basis for discussions about how Africa and the UK is represented in other countries.

### 3. Finding common ground (drawing exercise)

For the final exercise, participants were asked to draw and describe a young person their age, sex and gender, but who is from the UK (in African workshops) or a country in Africa (in UK workshops). Participants were provided with a template with instructions about what to think about when drawing their imaginary peer, as well as a set of attributes for them to fill in. Participants were then invited to present back their imaginary peer, as the basis for further discussion (see

Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Drawing examples**





**1.**

# HOW WE GOT HERE

The United Kingdom and the African continent have a long and chequered history. The following section will serve to provide a concise overview of historical relations between the United Kingdom and countries in Africa, chronicling key moments and transitions in the forcefield of relations between the two places. This brief chronology summarises the necessary background to current and emerging narratives between the UK and Africa, and provides an aide memoire to understanding the historical context in which current relations are framed.

This historical review concentrates on UK-African relations from the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century until the present day. This period was chosen to encompass six transitional moments in relations between the UK and African countries:

1. The elevation of the transatlantic slave trade from the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century until the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833
2. The rapid colonisation of Africa by European countries, which reached its height from 1881-1914, also known as the New Imperialism period / '*Scramble for Africa*'
3. The two World Wars and their repercussions
4. The independence of African countries from the 1950s and the development of independent African countries (Postcolonialism)
5. 80s, 90s, 00s (LiveAid, Comic Relief, '*Hopeless Africa*', Africa Rising, etc.)
6. The UK and Africa beyond Brexit (2016 onwards)

It is acknowledged that many other significant events and developments occurred in the UK and African countries throughout these periods,. However these six transitions have been chosen due to the significant changes and subsequent effects that they had on relations between the UK and African countries and their respective cultural and socio-political landscapes.

# The transatlantic slave trade (c.1500 – 1833)

## Introduction

In examining African-British relations across this time period, it is imperative to acknowledge the inherent European bias implicit in the study of the transatlantic slave trade. A lack of primary materials or documentation depicting African perspectives on the British has meant the narratives from this epoch are dominated by the latter's attitudes and views. As such, the African experience must be approached indirectly, and with a clear understanding of the explicit and implicit biases that this necessarily entails. Furthermore, much of the British experience comes from the viewpoint of the upper- and middle-classes, particularly men, and thus are limited in their scope to express the generalised views of British society as a whole. From this standpoint, the broad theme that emerges from the literature is that economic interests set the parameters for relations between Africa and Britain from the mid-fifteenth century until the abolition of the slave trade. While complex, the relationships that developed did so between specific sub-groups within each population – namely, those involved in the slave trading itself. Further, these relations must be couched in the wider understanding that the majority of Africans were invariably portrayed and imagined as slaves, which in turn were defined as a tradable commodity by both the British and Africans.

## Historical context

English curiosity about the New World stimulated voyages of exploration in the sixteenth century, with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 paving the way for English colonisation in North America and the Caribbean. The rise of the slave trade began in earnest in the mid-seventeenth century, wherein the colonies had become markets for manufactured goods and sources of raw materials, generating significant amounts of capital for Britain.<sup>3</sup> The continued exploitation of available lands to produce staple commodities required the organisation of a large labour force to maximise output and thus maximise returns.<sup>4</sup> The Native American experiment largely failed, as they either refused to submit or died out before 1650 from imported diseases. White workers, mainly in the form of indentured servants, had some legal rights that protected them to negotiate their contractual positions in local courts, and limited the length of their term of service. Thus, to satisfy labour needs, the English followed the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and French in shipping large numbers of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic and put them to work on plantations.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup> Morgan, K. (2000). *Slavery, Atlantic trade and the British economy, 1660-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

transatlantic slave trade expanded exponentially from 1600, reaching its zenith in the eighteenth century where approximately 3 million slaves were transported from Africa via British vessels to its various colonies. This formed one of the largest intercontinental forced migration of people in the early modern world and had profound long-term social and political impacts on the lives of Africans and the global landscape thereafter.<sup>6</sup>

## Trade: a common understanding

British views towards Africans at this time were not monolithic, nor based solely on a racial divide, but rather shaped by the position of Africans within the trading system itself. The co-existence of pro-slavery views with favourable characterisations of African trading partners epitomises this duality and is evidenced by artistic depictions of the slave-trade process. Within Nicholas Pocock's sketch of the *Southwell* privateer in 1760 there stands three figures: an African in a loin cloth holding a parasol over a second African, who is wearing a three-cornered hat, next to whom stands a more elaborately dressed Englishman in a buckled jacket and breeches, wearing a similar hat (see Image 1).<sup>7</sup>



**Image 1:** Pic 6: detail of left-hand bottom panel from the *Southwell Frigate*, Nicholas Pocock. Southwell.

The significance of this vista is that the African man being shaded is clasping hands with the Englishman and appears to be facilitating a friendly exchange between the other two.<sup>8</sup> This idealised, but not uncommon, image of the African and Englishman as equal trading partners represents the extent to which economic relations undergirded the relationship between the two within the context of the transatlantic slave trade.

*The slave-trade was a bilateral exchange, the experience of which was not wholly controlled by Europeans in general, nor the British specifically.*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>7</sup> Dresser, M. (2001). *Slavery obscured*. New York: Continuum.  
<sup>8</sup> Ibid

The economic interests of those involved in the slave-trade engendered a minimal level of trust between British and African merchants that permeates their interactions in this period. The need for traders to agree on rules and practices to regulate affairs meant that some sort of common understanding had to develop to allow cross-cultural trade. Understanding the slave-trade as a bilateral exchange in this way is vital in conferring agency onto African traders. African brokers were vital to trade relations: they acted as messengers between European vessels, spoke multiple European languages, and took on different European names and titles depending on with which nation they were trading.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, alongside this cultural flexibility, they controlled the conditions of trade – they carefully checked the quality of the merchandise, required goods to be brought to them before they would give over slaves, and often the European officer who would take the goods ashore stayed for the duration of the trade at the broker's home.<sup>10</sup> Such examples are illustrative that the slave-trade was a bilateral exchange, the experience of which was not wholly controlled by Europeans in general, nor the British specifically. Furthermore, it reiterates how relations between the two were predominantly shaped by economic parameters. That African elites were also operating within a framework wherein they viewed the relationship with the British as an economically motivated relationship is manifest in the hard bargaining that accompanied transactions with European buyers: each sale saw rigorous Afro-European negotiations over terms of trade, with each party seeking to maximise its own advantage in light of the latest market information available.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the overarching theme of relations between British and African traders within this time period is that perceptions were not preponderantly determined by racial views, but by economic interests.

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## **African perspectives**

The narrative of economic interests as the prevailing factor in shaping Afro-British relations, however, lacks the historical-temporal context of slavery within Africa itself – an element vital to understanding the experience of African slaves. From the British perspective, the slave trade seemingly began on the African coast with the purchasing of slaves and ended with their sale in various colonies. Historians' heavy focus on the 'middle passage' has inadvertently embedded the European perspective within the historical narrative, eliding the 'first passage' from the story altogether. Rather, there is a fundamental difference between two versions of slavery

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<sup>9</sup> Vos, J. (2016). The Growth of the Atlantic Slave Trade on the Windward Coast of Africa. In: P. Misevich and K. Mann, ed., *The Rise and Demise of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Atlantic World*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Richardson, D (2016) Consuming Goods, Consuming People: Reflections on the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In: P. Misevich and K. Mann, ed., *The Rise and Demise of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Atlantic World*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

– Euro-American and African – which met in the Atlantic trade. To oversimplify, ‘*in Euro-America, slavery was, above all, a system of economic exploitation; in much of West Africa, slavery was, above all, a system of political domination*’.<sup>12</sup> In much of pre-colonial West Africa, slavery began with capture: a warrior who would have otherwise been killed was allowed to live on as a slave. Though most slaves were agricultural labourers, many were employed as soldiers, state ministers, diplomats, and placeholders for kings and princes; some slaves even owned slaves.<sup>13</sup> Thus, West African slavery has often been described as a system of institutionalised marginality, by which one group of people held wealth in another.<sup>14</sup> Those who entered the Atlantic slave trade had been extracted from their own histories of enslavement, with their story as they understood it being embedded in personal and local histories of slave-producing conflicts and patronage networks which occurred hundreds of miles from the coast.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the story for many of the Africans sold into the slave trade begins before they ever came into contact with British slave traders.

Furthermore, African ideas of the British were uniquely informed by their own cultural and religious traditions, making sense of the situation by recourse to the supernatural. Olaudah Equiano, known for most of his life as Gustavus Vassa – a writer and abolitionist from the kingdom of Benin – recounted in his writings that when he first saw white slave traders who would eventually carry him to the West Indies, he thought they were ‘bad spirits’ who were going to eat him.<sup>16</sup> This fits in with wider narratives of the supernatural seen throughout West and Central Africa: many peoples thought that the universe was divided between two worlds, the living and the dead, with any body of water serving as a passage between the two worlds.<sup>17</sup> They believed that the dead were more knowledgeable and powerful than the living, and could influence their lives in various ways.<sup>18</sup> Crucially, the dead were said to be white in colour, with ‘whiteness’ a term analogous with the land of the dead.<sup>19</sup> This system extended through much of central Africa as a social theory, and an organising structure for the lives of many people. Understanding this cultural history allows for some insight into the feelings of African slaves, who would have thought that the trip across the Atlantic was ‘kalunga’: crossing over the body of water separating the two worlds, a flight from time measured by the gradual physical deterioration of the worldly body.<sup>20</sup> The experience of the slave trade must include

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◦ Johnson, W., 2004. Time and revolution in African America: temporality and the history of Atlantic slavery. In: K. Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660 - 1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.197 - 215.

◦ Ibid.

◦ Ibid.

◦ Ibid.

◦ Equiano, O. and Sollors, W., 2001. *The Interesting Narrative Of The Life Of Olaudah Equiano Or Gustavus Vassa The African Written By Himself*. New York: W.W. Norton.

◦ MacGaffey, W. (1994). Dialogues of the deaf: Europeans on the Atlantic coast of Africa. In: S. Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounters Between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.249 - 267.

◦ Ibid

◦ MacGaffey, W. op. cit.

◦ Johnson, W. op. cit.

historical context, both of temporality and cultural histories, often unheeded in the common narrative.

### **Anti-slavery: a change in attitude?**

Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807, emancipating all slaves within her colonies in 1833. Many credit the rise of the abolitionist movement in the late eighteenth century with religious moralism, with the Clapham Sect, a group of Church of England social reformers, and Thomas Clarkson, an ordained deacon, key figures in the campaign. Indeed, the importance of religious sources of anti-slavery thought and the religious transformations that made slave emancipation a symbolic test of the efficacy of Christian faith should be emphasised.<sup>21</sup> However, the British public showed little interest in the slavery issue: in 1814, an eruption of petitions expressed outrage at the prospect that the government would allow France to resume the Atlantic slave trade, but this was based on nationalistic pride rather than moral outrage.<sup>22</sup> Much of the crucial anti-slavery measures from 1800 to 1823 were driven by government leaders and a few influential abolitionists, thus notions of common humanity did not permeate British popular culture vis-à-vis attitudes towards Africans. Rather, anti-slavery could be seen as mirroring the needs and tensions of a society absorbed with problems of labour discipline at the onset of the industrial revolution.<sup>23</sup> By denouncing slavery, governing elites accentuated the moral contrast between free and slave worlds, to valorise wage labour as a universal norm and thus legitimise the working conditions of the labour class.<sup>24</sup> While not a sufficient explanation of abolition, opposition to slavery cannot be removed from the economic conditions of the time.

*In framing them as such, the abolition movement created a narrative of the African as dependent on the English to provide them with liberty, ensuring that Africans remained passive, subservient, and eternally grateful.*

Doulton, 2010

Ironically, the anti-slavery movement in Britain directly led to tropes, clichés and stereotypes of Africans that were imbued with new meaning during the nineteenth century, feeding into the imperialist mindset and reflecting the hardening of racial attitudes of the British towards Africans. A central tenet of the abolitionist campaign was framing the enslaved as a 'victim' – a key image of the anti-slavery movement was of an African man kneeling in supplication underneath the heading, '*am I not a man and a brother?*' – appealing to common humanity and Christian ideals to further

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<sup>21</sup> Davis, D., 1987. Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony. *The American Historical Review*, 92(4), pp.797-812.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

their political campaign.<sup>25</sup> Where abolitionism had used this image to illustrate Africans and Britons as sharing a common identity, that of a human being, it was also crucial to the denial or misremembering of Britain's slave-trading past: while the African remained the victim, Britain was no longer the perpetrator of their suffering but the brave liberator and moral superior to those still engaging in the practice.<sup>26</sup> In framing them as such, the abolition movement created a narrative of the African as dependent on the English to provide them with liberty, ensuring that Africans remained passive, subservient, and eternally grateful.<sup>27</sup> The discourse of anti-slavery thus became one of national honour, rather than national guilt, and fundamentally shaped the British national identity as being virtuous and as having a duty to 'civilise' those people who they were seen to be liberating.

The Royal Anti-Slavery Squadrons represent the zenith of this notion, with Naval officers' views reflecting the shift towards more aggressive racial attitudes.<sup>28</sup> Images and reports from these squadrons reinforce how anti-slavery images were imbued with new meaning. The centrality of the African slave body remained a symbol of physical suffering, with depictions of slaves as child-like or animalistic serving to dehumanise and deindividualise them, to enable their perception as uncivilised and unable to help themselves.<sup>29</sup> The trope of kidnapping and family separation was key to anti-slavery discourse and was invoked to appeal to sympathy and sentimentality of British audiences, used by anti-slavery squadrons to reinforce the moral superiority of the British. Furthermore, visual narratives of Africans as 'savages', wielding spears and wearing 'exotic' clothing, elided ethnic complexities.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps most vitally, in this period the racialisation of slavery occurs – free whites are defined in opposition to enslaved blacks, fostering a vision of blacks as natural slaves where white Britons could never be.<sup>31</sup> Such a discourse fostered an attitude of overt racial superiority as realised in the imperial project and scramble for Africa in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

## New imperialism (1881 -1914)

### Introduction

There are two key concepts for understanding British conceptions of national identity in the late-Victorian era: empire, and modernity. The imperial mindset which emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, and precipitated a hardening of

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<sup>25</sup> Kaye, M., 2011. *BBC - History - British History In Depth: The Tools Of The Abolitionists*. [online] Bbc.co.uk. Available at: <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/abolition\\_tools\\_gallery\\_06.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/abolition_tools_gallery_06.shtml)> [Accessed 9 March 2020].

<sup>26</sup> Doulton, L., 2010. *The Royal Navy's Anti-Slavery Campaign In The Western Indian Ocean, C. 1860-1890: Race, Empire And Identity*. PhD. University of Hull.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

racial attitudes towards Africans, persisted and grew as British imperial power expanded across the African continent. Indeed, the patterns of imperial power explored in the previous section provided the framework for Britain's imperial dominance in the late Victorian period.<sup>32</sup> Hence, empire should be viewed as a cultural project as much as a political project: by the late 1880s, Enlightenment epistemology of keywords of the period had been internalised, wherein 'culture' was taken to mean 'to civilise', and 'race' went from denoting a breed or stock to one of the broad differences among humankind.<sup>33</sup> The tropes, stereotypes and images of Africans that originated in the anti-slavery movement, namely, the appropriation of the black body, animalistic depictions, and the definition of whites in opposition to blacks through recourse to 'civilisation', continue throughout this era. These intersect, however, with changing race relations within Britain as the white population comes to terms with the 'free' black man, reiterating the paradox that abolishing slavery exacerbated the racism that allowed for slavery to flourish in the first instance. Further, the notion of modernity, key to nineteenth century British identity, is a direct result of the imperial project: Britain's self-conceptualisation as 'modern' hinged on an emergent social consciousness, that was produced by its contact and exchange with the wider world, and Britain's place in it.<sup>34</sup> The imperial mindset of British racial superiority, a duty to civilise, and inherent moral virtue, reached their acme during the 'scramble for Africa', fundamentally informing British identities in this period, and thus central to shaping relations between Britain and Africa within the context of the British Empire. Further, it is vital to once again acknowledge the scarcity of African voices in the imperial and colonial experience, and thus the inherent bias of British perspectives in this narrative.

*By the late 1880s, Enlightenment epistemology of keywords of the period had been internalised, wherein 'culture' was taken to mean 'to civilise', and 'race' went from denoting a breed or stock to one of the broad differences among humankind.*

Wilson 2004

## Constructing colonialism

The dominance of imperial discourse in describing the colonial project, and the continuation of tropes throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, is seen in the construction of a colonial narrative which was then 'sold' to the British public. The most powerful determinant for bridging the 'mother' country and its colonial peripheries was the press.<sup>35</sup> Between 1890 – 1892, three newspapers published

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= K. Wilson., 2004 ed., A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660 - 1840. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1 - 29.

= Ibid.

= Ibid.

= Codell, J.F. (2003). Imperial co-histories : national identities and the British and colonial press. Madison, N.J. Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, pp.15–28.

letters from writers describing the South African colonial project, from within the country itself. All three wrote from the metropolitan point of view, assumed the primacy of Britain's imperial interest and viewed South Africa in terms of its economic potential – an extension of how economic interests dominated British-African relations within Africa during the slave trade.<sup>36</sup> They also utilised the dominant imperial discourse, employing accepted notions of race, class and gender to perpetuate the view that the British empire was justified due to the inherent superiority of the English as a governing 'race'. Notions of race were constituted by immutable differences between different peoples, while also urging a policy of educating and assimilating 'racial others' to British civilisation.<sup>37</sup> As such, the imagery describing colonial South Africa reinforced existing tropes and stereotypes of Africans. Metaphors of time and motion were used to construct racial identities: the author describing a 'wretched hut' from a train window invokes an image of the native inhabitant gaining poor subsistence from the soil, imagining a timeless indigenous African who exists out of the context of history.<sup>38</sup> Further, the train at the time was associated with Englishmen rushing to the mines, exemplifying the energetic capitalist entrepreneurs shaping the future in the colonies.<sup>39</sup> This narrative of the British as civilising, improving, and saving the African from their backward existence is a repeated one throughout the imperial period. A second author describes visiting a 'native kraal', recounting its friendly hospitality and kindness, but continues, '*the squalor, alive with vermin...the half-articulate animalism of the whole scene...stuck in...my memory*'.<sup>40</sup> He uses a familiar description of African's 'animality' as a defining characteristic, a common European stereotype, contrasting those in the 'native kraal' with those being assimilated to the work requirements of 'civilised' society.<sup>41</sup> These letters helped to construct and reinforce a familiar image of 'Africa' for British readers and strengthening the imperial discourse among the British public. That these letters were published in the first three years of the 1890s, they provided an early framework for readers to assess imperialism and interpret later developments with a heightened patriotic fervour.

*The most powerful determinant for bridging the 'mother' country and its colonial peripheries was the press.*

Codell 2003

## Race relations inside Britain

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- O. Helly, D. and Callaway, H. (2003). Constructing South Africa in the British Press 1890-92: The Pall Mall Gazette, the Daily Graphic and The Times. In: *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, pp.125–146.

- Ibid.

- Ibid.

- Ibid.

- Ibid.

- Ibid.

Representations of race in Britain during this period highlight the shift in racial attitudes within the dual context of empire and the aftermath of abolition, epitomised by stereotypes explored in Victorian theatre wherein representations of race are reflective of race relations in society. The use of blackface by white actors in Britain was used to defuse cultural fears that were prevalent at the time: that miscegenation brought contamination to a nation seeking a purified identity distinctly different from imperial peoples, and that the burgeoning number of free blacks would take domestic jobs from Englishmen.<sup>42</sup> By simulating black male bodies, often in a sexualised or satirical manner – a variation on the abolitionist propaganda which used the black body to symbolise suffering, pain and the need for British liberation – blackface helped to regulate race relations by diminishing the threat of black masculinity for the white audience.<sup>43</sup> Blackface allowed white men to inhabit black male bodies, to shape and mould cultural perceptions of them, while also implying that race is ephemeral and can be ‘washed off’.<sup>44</sup> This also reflects the racial essentialism characteristic of the time – where black is alien and decorative, the white actor is exerting control over its effects. The use of blackface shows British society’s attempt to distract itself from the violence perpetrated on the actual black body and erase its slave history to supplement the critical sense of virtue necessary for imperialism.<sup>45</sup> As such, *‘Freeing the slave paradoxically exacerbated the racism that had fostered slavery in the England of early nineteenth century, and abolishing the slave trade encouraged racism’s evolution into newer, more modern and more firmly located forms of credible fictions’*.<sup>46</sup> Empire thus informed British attitudes towards Africans within the domestic context, and sees a continuation of the narrative of superiority conceived within the abolition movement.

*The use of blackface shows British society’s attempt to distract itself from the violence perpetrated on the actual black body and erase its slave history to supplement the critical sense of virtue necessary for imperialism.*

Doulton 2010

Favourable imaginations permeated British society in this period alongside the largely derogatory representations of Africans, illustrating how empire informed British identities and created intertwined historical narratives between the two. The preoccupation with ‘manliness’, martial prowess, and the fascination with warmongering saw the favourable perception of ‘warlike’ African tribes.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the representation of masculinity was inextricably tied up with empire and the exposure of British men to African tribes, as evidenced by the variety of masculinity espoused in late-Victorian literature being

**Image 2:** Image from Rudyard Kipling, ‘Shtrip, bhoys’, image depicting British men stripping down naked to find their inner

– Nussbaum, F.A. (2004). The theatre of empire: racial counterfeit, racial realism. In: *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.71–90.

– Nussbaum, F.A., op cit.

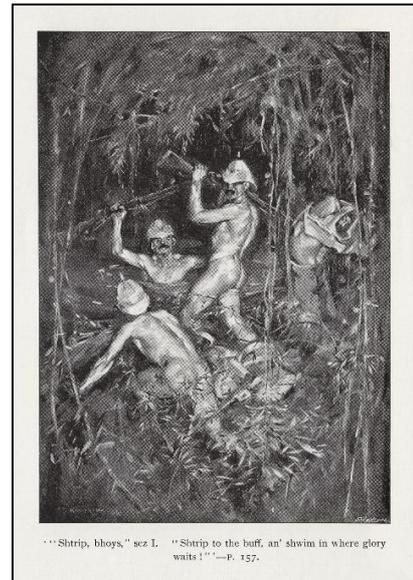
– Ibid.

– Ibid.

– Ibid.

– Doulton, L., 2010. The Royal Navy’s Anti-Slavery Campaign In The Western Indian Ocean, C. 1860-1890: Race, Empire And Identity. PhD. University of Hull.

very different from early Victorian literature: as Britain came to see empire as an end in itself, and as part of the geopolitical struggle with other European nations, fictional heroes shed mid-Victorian idealism for a version of masculinity that was fiercely competitive.<sup>48</sup> This is seen in Rudyard Kipling's 'The Taking of Lungtungpen' (1887) and A.E.W Mason's 'The Four Feathers' (1902), where British troops strip naked to access the 'savage' within, viewing the best way to beat their colonial enemies – other European nations as well as African populations themselves – as giving up on civilising mission and using whatever tactics needed to win (see Image 2).<sup>49</sup> At the height of the imperial project, aggressive masculinity trumped Englishness as a value: the British empire was willing to borrow the manly trappings of 'othered' peoples while diligently policing lines between ethnicities.<sup>50</sup> This reiterates the trope of Africans as 'savages', a view used to justify their colonisation in the name of 'civilisation', and that African peoples were stereotyped and perceived with no recourse to their cultural, social, or historical context.




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- Daly, N. (2015). Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Literature 1870 - 1914. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 69, No. 4 pp. 560 - 563  
 - Ibid.  
 - Ibid.

# The World Wars (1914 – 1945)

## Introduction

Africa's role in the two World Wars has traditionally been an issue in both the historiography of the wars themselves and the modern history of Africa. The adage that Africa is the 'forgotten front' bears truth in the common perception of these conflicts as European in origin and conclusion.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, for the majority of Africans these were European wars, within which African populations were used at the behest of the colonial powers in a conflict that viewed them as a sideshow, at best.<sup>52</sup> As such, the African experience – especially of WWI – is severely underrepresented, and Eurocentric narratives once again dominate. Often, the African voices that were included at the time were co-opted by the colonial power as propaganda to consolidate imperial rule.<sup>53</sup>

However, with the decline of colonialism post-WWII, scholarly attention returned to Africa in an attempt to integrate the continent into the global narrative of war, and highlight the narratives of those who had previously been ignored. The repercussions of the World Wars differ significantly between WWI and WWII: the overall effect of the first world war was to strengthen the colonial systems of the

victorious powers, who in 1918 felt a complete sense of ownership over Africa.<sup>54</sup> The repressive methods of rule that followed in the interwar period, however, precipitated the beginnings of mass resistance among African populations which came to fruition in the second world war. While WWII saw the British retain, or even strengthen, their economic hold over Africa, their political and social control weakened significantly as increasing numbers of Africans became politically conscious of the injustice of the empire.<sup>55</sup>



Image 3: African soldiers in WWI

<sup>51</sup> Orosz, K., 2019. *Literature (Africa) | International Encyclopedia of The First World War (WW1)*. [online] Encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net. Available at: <[https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/literature\\_africa](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/literature_africa)>

<sup>52</sup> Koller, C., 2019. *Historiography 1918-Today (Africa) | International Encyclopedia Of The First World War (WW1)*. [online] Encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net. Available at: <[https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/historiography\\_1918-today\\_africa](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/historiography_1918-today_africa)>

<sup>53</sup> Orosz, K. (2019) op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Davidson, B., 1989. *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*. 3rd ed. London: Longman

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

# World War I and its repercussions: 1914 – 1920s

## Historical context

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 saw each European power draw upon its colonies for men and money. At the beginning of the conflict, this mostly entailed enlarging colonial regiments that already existed, such as the British West African Frontier Force, but the unexpected increase in the intensity of warfare and the numbers of casualties led to the demand for greater African participation.<sup>56</sup> The British mainly used their colonies to obtain porters and other service personnel needed in their war against the Germans in Tanganyika (modern Tanzania).<sup>57</sup> The numbers of men raised from the African colonies was significant: Nigeria provided 17,000 fighting men and 58,000 service personnel, most of whom were sent to East Africa where 1,000 were killed.<sup>58</sup> The Gold Coast (Ghana) raised 10,000 men with losses on the same scale, and upwards of one million East Africans were forced to become porters for the British, of which 100,000 were killed by military action, hunger or disease.<sup>59</sup> The overall figures of African losses from the war service remain under dispute, but it seems unlikely that the total losses were less than 300,000 men.<sup>60</sup>

*British firms, especially in West Africa, took advantage of war conditions to strengthen their hold on export-import trade, squeezing out African traders who had managed to remain active.*

Davidson 1989

Beyond the military consequences on African communities, the war also had much broader economic, political, and social consequences. British firms, especially in West Africa, took advantage of war conditions to strengthen their hold on export-import trade, squeezing out African traders who had managed to remain active.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the war years also saw a few major British trading companies secure control of all big-scale business. In this respect, the period of WWI saw the completion of the dispossession of Africans that the colonial conquests had begun.<sup>62</sup> Further, the post-war re-partitioning of Africa between the Allied powers saw frontiers drawn with no thought to the existing communities within them, leaving one part of the community in one colonial system and another in another system.<sup>63</sup> This meant that

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= Ibid.  
= Ibid.  
= Davidson, B (1989) op. cit.  
= Ibid.  
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the immediate results for Africans under colonial rule post-WWI were twofold: a further loss of power, and new kinds of disunity.<sup>64</sup> With the overall effect of the first world war being the strengthening of colonial systems of power, Britain set itself to the tasks of transforming military occupation into civilian methods of rule, and finding new ways of drawing profits from the colonies. The first task was achieved by 'pacification', which involved the often violent and repressive means of crushing any forms of civilian resistance; the second by forced labour and high levels of taxation. Generally, the colonial systems aimed successfully at extracting wealth from Africa and transferred abroad by setting up patterns of working and earning that left African communities impoverished and unstable.<sup>65</sup>

*The post-war re-partitioning of Africa between the Allied powers saw frontiers drawn with no thought to the existing communities within them, leaving one part of the community in one colonial system and another in another system*

Davidson 1989

## Narratives

The narratives that emerge from the First World War regarding British perceptions of Africans very much reflect a continuation of the imperial mindset. Notions of the British as inherently superior and overtly racist attitudes run throughout memoirs from this time and range from those in the Colonial Office determining the use of Africans within the war to ordinary soldiers – many of whom were coming into direct contact with Africans for the first time during the conflict. Such attitudes are evidenced in the debates surrounding the decision to engage African troops in the war effort. Within the British governmental and military elite, there were dissenters and advocates for recruiting African men into active combat, both of which illustrate internalised racist stereotypes. Several reasons were given to justify the resistance of using African troops outside of Africa, namely that they had lower levels of training, were generally unreliable, and wouldn't survive the temperate climate.<sup>66</sup> All of these are imbued with racist stereotypes: that Africans are intellectually inferior and thus would not be able to reach the sophisticated training level of their white contemporaries; that their unreliability was part of their 'savagery' and thus reflected their continued need for 'civilising' by the British; and the stereotype of African tolerance to heat and humidity. The reluctance of British war officials to engage African men in combat roles, especially in Europe, stemmed from the fear that trained and disciplined blacks, familiar with firearms and '*disabused of the sanctity of and solidarity of the white man*', would threaten white supremacy and colonial power.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, this fear seems to imply an awareness of the suppressive nature of colonial rule on behalf of the British elite, however, it does not imply a

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- Ibid.

- Ibid.

- Davidson, B. (1989) op. cit.

- Killingray, D., 1979. The Idea of a British Imperial African Army. *The Journal of African History*, 20(3), pp.421-436.

questioning of the moral implications of empire but rather a concern for the continued economic exploitation of the region. Arguments in favour of recruiting black troops for use in military action also reflect the racist attitudes of the time. The 'Million Black Army Movement', a lobby group headed by Josiah Wedgwood – who designed the 'kneeling African' image of the abolition movement – claimed that engaging African troops would raise the status of colonial races, while simultaneously stating that such a move was necessary '*because we don't want all the whites killed...to slow down the rate of killing our own men and to eke out the finest race on earth*'.<sup>68</sup> This combined vision of Africans as lesser than whites, and thus dispensable, alongside a paternalistic attitude of the need to 'raise their status' is a clear example of how the stereotypes first established in the late-nineteenth century hangover continued to be accepted throughout the early twentieth century.

*This combined vision of Africans as lesser than whites, and thus dispensable, alongside a paternalistic attitude of the need to 'raise their status' is a clear example of how the stereotypes first established in the late-nineteenth century hangover continued to be accepted throughout the early twentieth century.*

British perceptions of the colonial troops that were deployed in Europe were fundamentally shaped by prevailing colonial racist ideology stressing European superiority, elements of exoticism and biological essentialism. In reaction to German propaganda describing African troops as barbaric and 'beastly devils', British press and propaganda accounts incorporated certain racist imagery and imperialist notions: they depicted Africans as infantile and devoted savages, and as absolutely obedient to colonial masters due to white intellectual superiority.<sup>69</sup> African soldiers were at once 'childlike' and 'heroic', intellectually inferior but wholly loyal in an attempt to paint the colonial masters as in complete control and thus positioning African soldiers as a threat to Germany, and not to Britain.<sup>70</sup> This infantilization of Africans is a recurrent trope within this period: '*In his black innocence he seems to be struggling with the things he cannot understand*' is how a 1915 report in *The Times* described a West African soldier.<sup>71</sup> European Allied soldiers' perceptions of colonial troops vacillated between racism and exoticism, expressing ambivalence towards them but never accepting them as comrades unconditionally.<sup>72</sup> This is evident in a letter from Second Lieutenant Roland Leighton to his fiancée Vera Brittain in July 1915 within which he mentioned North African troops: '*A company of Turcos has just gone along the road, singing a weird chant punctuated with hand clapping. They all look very Negroid, but are well-built men and march well*'.<sup>73</sup> As

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Koller, C., 2011. Representing Otherness: African, Indian and European soldiers' letters and memoirs. In: S. Das, ed., *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.127 - 142.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

such, British perceptions of Africans in World War I were very much informed by imperialist attitudes and reflect the internalisation of racist narratives which originated in the colonial project of the nineteenth century.

*British press and propaganda accounts incorporated certain racist imagery and imperialist notions: they depicted Africans as infantile and devoted savages, and as absolutely obedient to colonial masters due to white intellectual superiority.*

Koller 2011

Direct descriptions of the African experience of World War I are rare, however, the emergent narrative from the limited sources available is that of resistance – particularly, the use of language as a place of this resistance and agency, along with the co-optation of the imperialist language to challenge the racist notions within them. This is most evident in works of Samuel Mqhayi, a Xhosa poet from South Africa. His 1916 poem, ‘The Dark-Skinned Army’, suggests an alternative history about black participation in WWI and is in confrontation with British imperialism. The poem is an African rally cry which demonstrates allegiance to the British Crown, but in which the expressed fealty is not actually subservient. Mqhayi uses irony to maintain contact with African reality while embedding notions of ‘loyalty’ in resistance.<sup>74</sup> In this way, the poem embodies a clear vision of a way to end foreign domination. The opening lines ‘*who are we as people/to deny aid to the King of Britain*’ subversively suggests a reversal of the powerlessness of the black nation now that their labour is urgently needed to power the war machine.<sup>75</sup> The tone throughout the poem is one of tribute mixed with implicit criticism, whereby he sketches the colonial and imperial hierarchy in which Africans find themselves trapped.<sup>76</sup> Mqhayi expresses the view of mostly educated African’s that loyalty to the King and service in the war was an advance payment to Britain, who would later address the political grievances within South Africa, and colonies more generally. He shows an awareness that the final objective of gaining rights and justice at home demanded that allied nations understood African loyalty, and that in helping Britain to victory, only then would blacks stand as equals with whites.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the use of language as a site of resistance continued into the post-war period, upon which it had become clear that political power was far from being shared. When the Prince of Wales toured South Africa in 1925, Mqhayi likened him to a wild, monstrous animal who was the ‘*eater of our country’s inheritance*’.<sup>78</sup> This reference to animalism on behalf of the British reflects a reversal of the animalistic expressions used to describe Africans, and the reclamation of the narratives that had so long been used to repress and dehumanise Africans.

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» Smith, N. (2019) “Recruitment and Re-Memory: S.E.K. Mqhayi’s ‘Umkosi Wemidaka: The Dark-Skinned Army’ (1916) and Fred Khumalo’s *Dancing the Death Drill* (2017)”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 45:2, 303-321

» Ibid.

» Ibid.

» Ibid.

» Limb, P (2015) “The Empire Writes Back: African Challenges to the British (South African) Empire in the Early 20th Century”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41:3, 599-616

*This narrative of resistance fits into the political developments of the 1920s, whereby two powerful ideas began to circulate within African communities: Pan-Africanism and nationalism.*

This narrative of resistance fits into the political developments of the 1920s, whereby two powerful ideas began to circulate within African communities: Pan-Africanism and nationalism. The first form of this movement was really a Pan-Black movement which took form outside of Africa, with origins in North America and the Caribbean by those liberated from slavery and united by their suffering under racism. By the middle of the 1920s, the ideas of Pan-Africanism were developing into a new form: that Africans must find their own way towards unity and freedom, and that this must be led by Africans themselves.<sup>79</sup> The idea of African nationalism was popular among the educated minority, and took on the European notion that peoples in the colonies could only become free in combining together. These ideas came into increased focus in the 'middle years' of the 1930s, and with the onset of the Second World War.

## **World War II and the 'middle years': 1930s – 1945**

### **Historical context**

The onset of World War II followed much of the same pattern in Africa as World War I: Africans had to pay in men, labour, and loss of trade. Large numbers were either forced or compelled to serve in the British forces – from its East African colonies among others, a total of 280,000 men were recruited, mostly by conscription.<sup>80</sup> West African demands were smaller, but still significant, with the four western colonies providing 270,000 men.<sup>81</sup> No part of Africa was untouched by the conflict. Outside of the armed forces, farming and other labour was conscripted on a large scale and with much the same destructive results. The huge African labour force was asked to produce raw materials for export, reinforcing the export-dependency and wealth-transfer systems established in the aftermath of WWI. The long and forced 'war effort' had severe effects on rural people, deepening rural instability and poverty and interrupting family life.<sup>82</sup> However, while the war made colonial Africa still more dependent in the economic field, it weakened the social and political control of the colonial governments. The experience of the Second World War raised political consciousness among Africans, especially as the anti-Nazi, and therefore anti-racist, nature of the war on the Allied side raised the inherent contradiction with the colonial

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- Davidson, B (1989) op. cit.

- Ibid.

- Ibid.

- Ibid.

project. Having joined the war to end Nazi domination, many African servicemen began to see that the war should bring an end of colonial domination as well.<sup>83</sup> The social and political problems that colonial rule had created, and the sense of empowerment felt by Africans as a result of their position in the war, severely weakened colonialism.

*The experience of the Second World War raised political consciousness amongst Africans, especially as the anti-Nazi, and therefore anti-racist, nature of the war on the Allied side raised the inherent contradiction with the colonial project.*

The fifteen years from 1930 – 1945 saw the seeds of a new independence come to fruition, in the political renewal post-WWII. Two major developments encouraged this political renewal: The Great Depression, and new forms of resistance.<sup>84</sup> Africa's dependence on the outside world for the purchase of their exports meant that if the rest of the world failed to buy these products, or paid a lower price for them, then Africa's livelihood must suffer.<sup>85</sup> When the global downturn started, it brought into question the confidence of the colonial powers having found solutions to all of the problems of making money out of Africa. It highlighted that the system was not fool-proof, and importantly highlighted the inequality between African workers, who bore the brunt of the consequences, and the colonial elites. While the Great Depression did not itself begin to end colonial rule, it helped to create tensions within colonies that highlighted the injustice of the extractive economic regime. Furthermore, it illustrated to Africans that they must find ways to advance their interests – one such way being the formation of modern tribes.<sup>86</sup> When colonies were made, colonial rulers had appointed or invented 'chiefs' to rule the various 'tribes' that they believed all African people lived in. Gradually, this had success, whereby several tribes combined under one chief and the treatment of this combined community as one people. In short, inventing chiefs had led to the invention of modern tribes.<sup>87</sup> African nationalists saw an escape route in this: that the groupings of each tribe should join to form a nation, as only united action could set them free. The combined experience of the Great Depression and the Second World War saw leaders and organisers turn to mass mobilisation, calling directly for independence. These developments are reflected in the changing narratives between Africa and Britain both during and after WWII.

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- Ibid.

- Ibid.

- Ibid.

- Davidson, B. (1989) op. cit.

- Ibid.

## Narratives

From the British perspective, the stereotypes and tropes visible in WWII very much reflect a continuation of those experienced in 1914. British forces recruiting black troops in South Africa voiced their disappointment at the lack of enthusiasm for joining the war exhibited by Zulu men – illustrating the continued favouring of ‘warlike’ tribes, and that the idea of a ‘natural martial race’ was still prevalent among British people.<sup>88</sup> Popular white superracist ideas from the nineteenth century, as well as the rationalisation of Darwin’s notion of the ‘survival of the fittest’ spilled over into the twentieth century, and persisted in the British military mind.<sup>89</sup> Such biological essentialism is characteristic of the broader imperialist superiority that continued with the second world war. Indeed, the recruitment campaign clearly exhibited colonial, patriarchal and racist attitudes regarding black people, and a defined vision of who a black soldier would be.<sup>90</sup> Their recourse to Western senses of patriotism ignored the prolific race and class issues that permeated South African society. Black South Africans clearly saw the inherent contradictions of war recruitment within the oppressive ideological milieu and structural constraints of South African society.<sup>91</sup> They saw no reason to pledge allegiance to ‘democracy’, arguing that if blacks participated, they would only be fighting to maintain the status quo of the present policy against them, in what was clearly a ‘white man’s war’.<sup>92</sup> Thus, a growing mistrust of whites and government shaped black apathy. Further, the decision to arm black soldiers only with assegais and knobkerries was seen as a major insult, alienating many black soldiers who felt that they were not fully trusted nor seen as having an equal right to life.<sup>93</sup> To a large extent, those black soldiers that did enlist did so as a way to escape the poverty and famine brought on by the drought, and subsequent increased unemployment due to farmers summarily dismissing black employees when money became tight.<sup>94</sup> As such, relations between Africans and the British throughout the war are dominated by racial tensions, precipitated by the continuation of overtly racist stereotypes on behalf of the colonial power, and shaped by an increased political consciousness among Africans as to the injustice of their treatment.

*Relations between Africans and British throughout the war are dominated by racial tensions, precipitated by the continuation of overtly racist stereotypes on behalf of the colonial power, and shaped by an increased political consciousness among Africans as to the injustice of their treatment.*

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= Grundlingh, L., 2015. The Military, Race and Resistance: The Conundrums of Recruiting Black South African Men during the Second World War. In: J. Byfield, C. Brown, T. Parsons and A. Alawad Sikainga, ed., *Africa and World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.71 - 88.

= Ibid.

= Ibid.

= Ibid.

= Ibid.

= Ibid.

= Grundlingh, L. (2015) op. cit.

The most significant consequence of the Second World War for African-British relations, and the exploration of African self-narratives, is how the conflict awakened African political consciousness. This is most evident in the masculinity that emerged among Nigerian coalminers: the war provided a crucial conjecture in the development of working men's consciousness of themselves and their role in the empire and community.<sup>95</sup> Mines were colonial workplaces where racism was the organising principle, with racial hierarchies expressed through the subordination of men by representing them as weak, or effeminate. Hence, African miners were referred to as 'boys' (an offshoot of the infantilization trope common within imperial relationships), and racialised rituals (workers were forced to transport British foremen to work in hammocks).<sup>96</sup> Poor ventilation standards reflected the racist stereotypes about African tolerance of heat and humidity, which caused oxygen deficiency.<sup>97</sup>

However, this all came to encourage a strong masculine identity within African workers. They understood their power in the economy in a gendered way. Furthermore, the global scale of the war made colonial workers aware of working conditions of their metropole counterparts, and thus aware of their own exploitation at the behest of the British. Interestingly, African workers shared with English coalminers a gendered occupational 'life world' which celebrated masculine values like bravery, rough but warm male camaraderie, and an awareness of special intuitive skill that allowed them to survive the danger, psychological strain, and exhaustive work regime of mining.<sup>98</sup> Their complaints regarding unequal wages were couched in their self-perception as modern, industrial men, confronting and challenging colonialists' perception of the imaginary 'African worker' whom managers abused and reviled.<sup>99</sup> These comparisons with their English counterparts' came with the implicit rejection of the notion that they were not equal or deserving of the treatment given to Europeans. This saw increasing challenges of English authority and the 'imperial masculinity' characterised by arrogance and impunity, epitomised by Isaiah Ojiyi winning the court case against a British manager slapping him twice in the face.<sup>100</sup> The decision of the British to rule in his favour illustrates their awareness that they could not afford to alienate the African workforce. More importantly, it illustrates how, as the political realities of war filtered into the workplace, African workers realised their strategic position and thus came to challenge the racist abuse of their colonial rulers. Thus, the myth that Africans were not equal collapsed for Africans when they rescued Britain from war, for a second time.<sup>101</sup> This fundamentally shaped relations between the two after 1945, and into the era of de-colonialism.

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<sup>95</sup> Brown, Carolyn A. (2015) To Be Treated as a Man: Wartime Struggles over Masculinity, Race, and Honour in Nigerian Coal Industry In: J. Byfield, C. Brown, T. Parsons and A. Alawad Sikainga, ed., *Africa and World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 276 - 302

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Brown, Carolyn A. (2015) op. cit.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

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Brown 2015

# Post colonialism (C.1950s+)

## Introduction

When exploring the decline of the British Empire and the de-colonisation of the African continent, it is important to remember that African national independence was not a monolithic experience, nor did it have uniform outcomes and consequences. De-colonisation was, and is, a complex phenomenon with intricate nuances that remain contested. The commonality of the tag 'postcolonial' as a cognomen for countries that once laboured under colonial rule tends to obscure the fact that this is a hotly debated label.<sup>102</sup> Scholars who embrace the term argue that it is a convenient term for referring to those societies that continue in different ways to display the imprints of European colonialism.<sup>103</sup> Those who refuse it insist that behind what is presented as an attempt at periodisation often lurks a derogatory tendency to totalise those societies as sharing certain characteristics because of their status as a former colony, and the seeming intractability of problems within them as due to their definition as 'postcolonial'.<sup>104</sup> This dichotomy between viewing independent African nations as steeped in an inescapable colonial history and as having agency in the determination of their narrative shapes the discussion of the relationship between newly independent Africa and Britain from 1945 to the 1980s.

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## Historical context

At the conclusion of World War II, the British colonial system was significantly weakened, but it still believed that it would have enough strength to keep its colonies well into the twentieth century and beyond.<sup>105</sup> Given the rising tide of African nationalism which now made even greater demands for progressive change and independence, it is argued that officials in London thought it wise to think of how to dominate Africa in a new way. Increasingly influential was the thought that colonial rule should now find ways in Africa of promoting a 'responsible middle class' to which political responsibility could be 'safely' transferred.<sup>106</sup> This transference of power would occur gradually and to African groups and persons who could be relied upon

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<sup>102</sup> Marks, S. et.al, 2010. *Freedom from Empire: An Assessment of Postcolonial Africa*. [online] Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at: <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Freedom-from-Empire-An-Assessment-of-Postcolonial-Africa-1707631#ref296574>>

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Davidson, B., 1989. *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*. 3rd ed. London: Longman

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

to safeguard British interests into the future. In short, if they gave way in the political field, cautiously and slowly, they could hope to safeguard their interests in the economic field. These economic interests were undergoing an important change: with the development of transnational capitalism in the aftermath of the war, the dominant business interests of new multinational companies saw that direct political control, like colonial control, was no longer useful to the continued extraction of wealth from Africa. Colonial powers would protect their own interests to guard the monopoly they enjoyed in the parts of Africa they controlled.<sup>107</sup> It would, therefore, be better for these companies if African economies were endowed with sovereignty, but remained tied to the Western capitalist system.<sup>108</sup> It is this calculation that provides the basis for the great paradox of decolonisation: political independence on the one hand, and renewed and reinforced economic dependence on the other.<sup>109</sup> Thus, British concessions to African independence were based on the objective of protecting its long-term economic interests, by attempting to ensure that there were in-built limits to the amount of independence Africans could win and use. This program is defined as neo-colonialism, and gradually became to be pursued more transparently. African nationalism fundamentally challenged this approach.

*It is this calculation that provides the basis for the great paradox of de-colonisation: political independence, on the one hand, and renewed and reinforced economic dependence on the other.*

Davidson 1989

During the 1950s and later, African nationalists had an urgent duty to their peoples, and had to take the first steps towards liberation. These were to abolish the direct and political controls of the colonial systems, end the racism and oppression associated with them, and free their countries from foreign rule.<sup>110</sup> As mentioned previously, de-colonisation was not a monolithic experience, and thus nationalists faced a myriad of different situations. In much of West Africa, where there were not large numbers of European settlers, independence movements were able to make progress by peaceful means. Where European settlers were numerous, progress could only be made through recourse to violence. This differentiation in approach had long-term consequences for these nations: where colonised peoples were obliged to use their own counter-violence against the violence of the colonial systems, the later imposition of neo-colonial limits became more difficult to achieve. These wars of independence could only be won by completely destroying the colonial systems; in doing so, they weakened the neo-colonial threat.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Davidson, B. (1989) op. cit.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

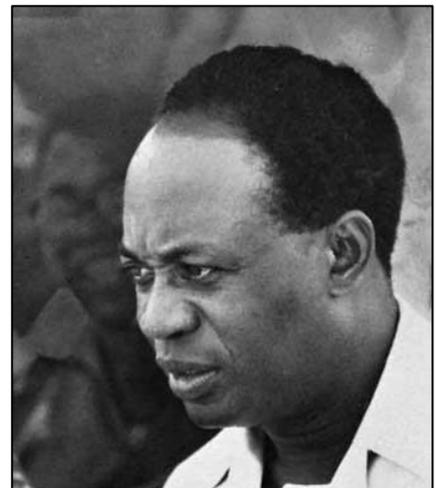
<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

## Decolonisation or national liberation

The dichotomy of labelling the end of British colonial rule in Africa as decolonisation is exemplified when discussing the role of African nationalist leaders. Indeed, rather than viewing it as a process of decolonisation, and thus a narrative that Britain controlled, by assessing the end of British colonial rule as national liberation, appropriate levels of agency are granted to colonial subjects.<sup>112</sup> While changes in international relations post-WWII did exert some pressure on colonial powers, it is suggested that their impact should not be overstated: it was the political, economic and cultural changes taking place on the African continent that had the greatest impact.<sup>113</sup> The role played by nationalist leaders, and by extension, the populations of African nations themselves, is best exemplified by the independence story of The Gold Coast (modern Ghana). In 1948, official British discourse regarding political concessions towards The Gold Coast followed the narrative of gradual transitions of power to 'responsible' politicians: British officials placed a focus on 'local' government, where regional councils and educated people would play a large role in self-government, while believing that internal self-government was unlikely to be achieved in less than a generation.<sup>114</sup> The private British discourse, however, saw their perception of farmers as backwards subsistence workers, political leaders as demagogues manipulating the masses, and that African participation in their own affairs was an 'apprenticeship' that required their leadership.<sup>115</sup> In 1947, the British had no plan to devolve power; by 1951, they had backed into a situation that left them no other choice.

*In 1947, the British had no plan to devolve power; by 1951, they had backed into a situation that left them no other choice.*

African nationalism proved to have no respect for the timeline of colonial bureaucrats. A critical event in the undoing of British Empire was in February 1948, when police fired shots and killed two Ghanaian former servicemen involved in a veteran's protest.<sup>116</sup> The killing led to rioting and looting in the city, where eventually 29 people died. This event was a warning to the colonial administration that they had lost the political initiative to the nationalists: the social tension it created made self-government an immediate issue, not a distant goal, and not one that the British could control.<sup>117</sup> By 1949, nationalist parties – most notably the Convention



**Image 4:** Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana

<sup>112</sup> Anta Babou, C., 2010. Decolonization or National Liberation: Debating the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 632(1), pp.41-54.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Cooper, F., 2002. *Africa Since 1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.38 - 65.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Anta Babou, C, 2010 op. cit.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

People's Party (CPP) led by Kwame Nkrumah, who had come to embody the Ghanaian people's desire for self-government – swept the election of 1951, winning 24 of 38 seats.<sup>118</sup> This set Britain on a constitutional course to grant self-government to Ghana, and the subsequent victories of the CPP in the elections of 1954 and 1956 convinced them that independence could not be denied any longer.<sup>119</sup> In 1957, the Gold Coast achieved independence under the new name of the Republic of Ghana. The experience of the Ghanaian people illustrates that independence was not controlled by the British, but rather won by the political agency of the African people. The leaders who spoke to and won the appeal of the masses originated organically from the struggles of the previous century. The shift in the relationship between Britain and Africa, therefore, in the direct aftermath of the war through the 1950s, was generally underpinned by the reclamation of an African identity not dictated by the British experience. British legitimacy in an age of self-determination depended on the illusion of orderly political progress; the actions of Nkrumah and nationalist movement across the continent exposed this to be exactly that, illusory.<sup>120</sup>

*The shift in the relationship between Britain and Africa, therefore, in the direct aftermath of the war through the 1950s, was generally underpinned by the reclamation of an African identity not dictated by the British experience.*

## Colonialism continued

If the first generation of independence can be characterised as an age of hope, the second can be depicted as one of cynicism. As the economic prosperity of the post-independence period started to decline in the early 1980s, and political unrest unfolded across the continent, the 'reductive repetition' motif began to be applied to Africa.<sup>121</sup> The reductive repetition motif used by Orientalist scholars in their depictions of Islamic culture '*insists, repeatedly, in reducing the histories, traditions, ideologies and other manifestations of civilisation to a 'theory' of the Orient that is defined by its juxtaposition, and inherent inferiority, to the West*'.<sup>122</sup> Similar processes of oversimplifying and distorting the origins of African peoples are discernible throughout the post-colonial period and beyond, as it is an effective tool to conflate many heterogenous characteristics of African societies into a core set of deficiencies which are internal to that society.<sup>123</sup> As these troubles started to sweep across newly independent countries, British relations with Africa began to be dominated by a 'development' narrative. The tradition of internal problems within Africa requiring external solutions, the post-colonial period represents the continuation of the imperial mindset with a modern hue, and devoid of the overtly racist attitude. 'Development'

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Cooper, F. 2002 op. cit.

<sup>121</sup> Andreasson, S., 2005. Orientalism and African Development Studies: the 'reductive repetition' motif in theories of African underdevelopment. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(6), pp.971-986.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Andreasson, S., 2005 op. cit.

fits within the tradition of Britain having a 'civilising duty', in that 'the natives' cannot govern themselves, their cultures provide no tools for organisation and government, and the tools to do so must be provided by colonial 'masters'.<sup>124</sup> As such, there is a marked degree of continuity from the nineteenth century to the twentieth in terms of this conceptualisation of Africa, and in turn, British attitudes towards Africa.<sup>125</sup> The main problems for Africa, as put forward by the West in the 1990s, were the inability of African governments and individuals to properly harness Western notions of law and order, markets, good governance, transparency, and democracy, all of which are pre-requisites for development.<sup>126</sup> The vision of Africa as a place of suffering that only well-meaning foreigners can alleviate comes to its apex in the latter half of the twentieth century under the 'developmental agendas', within which little of substance has changed since the nineteenth century.<sup>127</sup>

*The tradition of internal problems within Africa requiring external solutions, the post-colonial period represents the continuation of the imperial mindset with a modern hue, and devoid of the overtly racist attitude.*

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<sup>124</sup> Andreasson, S., 2005 op. cit.

<sup>125</sup> Reid, R., 2014. Horror, hubris and humanity: the international engagement with Africa, 1914-2014. *International Affairs*, 90(1), pp.143-166.

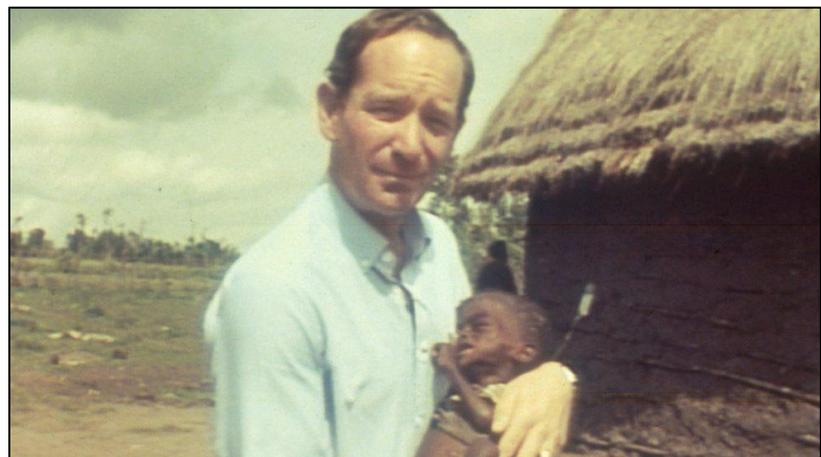
<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

# Development agendas (c.1980 – 2000+)

## Introduction

The importance of Africa in the British national identity is clear: modern Britishness has always involved a certain relationship between Britain and Africa.<sup>128</sup> Since the eighteenth century, it has been suggested that there has been an African presence in the British self-perception and public space – and since the Atlantic slave trade, the images of Africa that form this presence have been mediated and moderated.<sup>129</sup> This continues from the 1980s to the 2000s, particularly focused within the use of public campaigns, which have served to consolidate national self-perceptions in Britain. Africa campaigns, throughout history, conform to a national identity whereby *'Africa's particular place in British global imaginings speaks to aspirations to see Britain as the 'home' of good, pragmatic liberal...citizens who can campaign on behalf of Africans to ensure that the British state does the right thing'*; Africans themselves do not play a large part in this narrative, but rather this identity exists between the campaigns, Britons, and the British government.<sup>130</sup> Thus, this period is defined by the



**Image 5:** Michael Buerk, a BBC reporter who covered the Ethiopian famine, holding a severely malnourished infant

continuation of tropes and stereotypes of Africans within British consciousness that began in the abolitionist campaign, without the overtly racist tones which, by this time, were recognised as such. Similarly, in continuation of the common narrative woven throughout this review, African voices and perceptions of these campaigns are difficult to find – those that offer an African perspective are criticised for having 'internalised' colonialism and as acting in concert with the Western neoliberal agenda.<sup>131</sup> Criticism of the development agendas – which are personified by the campaigns of Band Aid, Live 8 and Comic Relief – by African leaders illustrates their awareness of the complexities of reconciling the colonial-era tropes that exist in the development agendas of this time period, with the realities of the very real problems

<sup>128</sup> Harrison, G. (2012). Campaign Africa: Exploring the Representation of Africa and its Role in British Identity. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 15(4), pp.528–547.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Hillary, J. (2010). Africa: Dead Aid and the return of neoliberalism. *Race & Class*, 52(2), pp.79–84.

of famine, political conflict, and economic instability that have occurred with Africa since the wave of independence.<sup>132</sup> Once again, British narratives seem to dominate the African experience.

*Criticism of the development agendas – which are personified by the campaigns of Band Aid, Live 8 and Comic Relief – by African leaders illustrates their awareness of the complexities of reconciling the colonial-era tropes that exist in the development agendas of this time period, with the realities of the very real problems of famine, political conflict, and economic instability that have occurred with Africa since the wave of independence.*

## Historical context

The decades of the 1980s, 90s and 00s were defined by the explosion of 'development' agendas levelled towards Africa. The period between the mid-1980s and the 2000s represent a significant watershed in the history of international engagement with Africa. The overt emphasis on the economic and political 'development' of Africa was shared by African and Western governments alike, emphasising the primacy of the free market and attributing the upturn of African annual DGP growth rates in the 2000s with the success of neoliberal models.<sup>133</sup> Before this upturn, the economic and political crises within Africa meant that an enormous swathe of engagement with Africa was concerned with the distribution of aid and organisational assistance.<sup>134</sup> The Ethiopian famine premised the founding of Comic Relief, a British charity started by Richard Curtis and Lenny Henry, and Live Aid/Band Aid, a worldwide concert organised by Bob Geldof.<sup>135</sup> It is this boom in charitable campaigns within the West, particularly Britain, that shaped relations between the two places throughout this time period.

## Africa campaigns and their British identity

Relations between Britain and Africa within the context of the popular campaigns for aid mirror colonial relations of paternalism and the internalisation of the image of Africans as second-class world citizens. Indeed, examples such as Band Aid and Live Aid illustrate a reincarnation of specific tropes and stereotypes which first appeared within the abolitionist movement, devoid of the racist overtones which had become socially unacceptable. Band Aid and Live Aid demonstrate that while the manner in which people from Africa and their abilities were portrayed, differed in the

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<sup>132</sup> See <https://www.cato.org/publications/economic-development-bulletin/african-perspectives-aid-foreign-assistance-will-not-pull-africa-out-poverty> for an overview of African responses to aid

<sup>133</sup> Reid, R., 2014. Horror, hubris and humanity: the international engagement with Africa, 1914-2014. *International Affairs*, 90(1), pp.143-166

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> History.com Editors (2018). "Live Aid" Concert Raises \$127 Million for Famine Relief in Africa. [online] HISTORY. Available at: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/live-aid-concert>.

1980s-2000s from the colonial era, within popular culture, problematic ‘truths’ were still being promoted.<sup>136</sup> Following African independence and the economic decline of the 1980s, the ‘othering’ of African populations as ‘inferior’ continued within the popular British imagination, which, in turn, reinforced perceived ‘truths’ of global north ‘superiority’ which are manifest in these campaigns.<sup>137</sup> The Band Aid charity single *Do They Know it’s Christmas?* promoted, albeit subtly, a Eurocentric view of Ethiopia and African more generally, with the language throughout serving to ‘other’ the African people who are referred to. In the song, African people are referred to as ‘them’, ‘they’ and ‘the other ones’, differentiating them from the audience, ‘you’, who are essentially people of the West.<sup>138</sup> References to Africa as a place ‘[w]here the only water flowing, [i]s the bitter sting of tears’ is juxtaposed with ‘our world of plenty’, suggesting that Britain and the West more generally is a place of abundance, in comparison to a desolate and barren Africa.<sup>139</sup> The irony of asking ‘do they know it’s Christmas time at all?’ when the majority of the victims of the Ethiopian famine were Christians, reflects a lack of basic understanding of the people they were aiming to help.<sup>140</sup> Overall, the song serves to construct a Eurocentric perception of Africa which renders it an inferior place, lacking Christianity and in need of British assistance – tropes used to portray Africa in the nineteenth century.<sup>141</sup> This represents a reinvention of the ‘civilising duty’ justification of anti-slavery: by maintaining othering, it is easier for the British people to help the people of Africa, while attributing the problems they face to the people of the African countries. Thus, these campaigns can be said to convey harmful ‘truths’ that reflect colonial attitudes – while British audiences may find these representations socially acceptable, this does not mean they are not problematic.

*Thus, these campaigns can be said to convey harmful ‘truths’ that reflect colonial attitudes – while British audiences may find these representations socially acceptable, this does not mean they are not problematic.*

Further, the images used by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) during this period are categorised as the ‘pornography of poverty’: the use of images such as children with distended stomachs and fly-ringed eyes, often naked or dressed in rags, portrays them as helpless victims, dependent, and unable to take action on their own behalf, and thus they are reliant on British assistance to solve these development problems.<sup>142</sup> Once again, these are stereotypes and tropes of Africans

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<sup>136</sup> Grant, J. (2015) Live Aid/8: perpetuating the superiority myth, *Critical Arts*, 29(3), pp. 310-326

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Plewes, B. and Stewart, R. (2009). The Pornography of Poverty: A Cautionary Fundraising Tale. In: *Ethics in Action: The Ethical Challenges of International Human Rights Nongovernmental Organisations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.23–37.

first articulated in the context of anti-slavery – the use of the African body as a symbol of suffering, and the motif of Africans as a ‘victim’ to be liberated by the British. Perhaps more importantly, however, is the continued internalisation of these tropes by the British public: in 2001, the Voluntary Service Overseas, a volunteer sending agency based in England, examined the impact of Live Aid, a charity pop concert that raised \$100 million for Ethiopian famine relief in the mid-1980s.<sup>143</sup> Their research report was based on polling data and detailed interviews, and found that ‘*stereotypical beliefs and outdated images hold a vice-like grip on British understanding of the developing world*’.<sup>144</sup> The study found that 80 per cent of the British public associated the developing world with doom-laden images of famine, disaster, and Western aid and that the victims were seen as less than human.<sup>145</sup> These campaigns have reinforced a sense of superiority, and inferiority, with the global North seen as benevolent givers and Southerners as grateful receivers. This theme of British superiority, alongside the belief that Africans remain indebted thereafter to them, is woven throughout the historical narrative of African and British relations.

Government engagement with Africa at this time also reflected the role of African relations in shaping the British national identity. During Tony Blair’s Prime Ministership from 1997 – 2007, Africa became an important symbolic policy area, with significant levels of financial and political capital.<sup>146</sup> This signified a distinct shift from the previous policy, whereby



**Image 6:** Prime Minister Tony Blair in Freetown, Sierra Leone 2007

British government disengagement with Africa after independence rendered the continent politically and economically uninteresting.<sup>147</sup> It has been suggested that , this pivot, rather than being politically motivated, had an overtly moral tone: Tony Blair saw engagement with Africa as an opportunity to involve the British state was a project that was viewed by the voting public as unambiguously moral, to show that it was capable of doing something ‘good’.<sup>148</sup> To do so, the governing elite perpetuated an idealised vision of Africa, alongside an idealised version of Britain. By viewing Africa as a ‘moral crusade’, Tony Blair’s policy fits in with the tradition of Britain

<sup>143</sup> Plewes, B. and Stewart, R. (2009) op. cit.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Gallagher, J. (2009). Healing the Scar? Idealizing Britain in Africa, 1997-2007. *African Affairs*, 108(432), pp.435–451.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

viewing Africa as the 'empty continent' onto which images and narratives are projected. In this instance, the narrative they projected was one of unambiguous morality, with no historical grounding regarding its imperial past, pitting wicked African political leaders against the morally pure, ordinary Africans suffering at their hands.<sup>149</sup> The defence of good against evil was at the core of British descriptions of its project in Africa. The idealised vision of Britain inherent to this moral project is one of distinct purity and good, reminiscent again of the civilising duty which motivated colonialism. Engagement with Africa was about minimising anxieties regarding the role, function and potency of the British state rather than motivated by concern for African needs and development.<sup>150</sup> Africa served to feed a sense of enhanced British capacity, reiterating how the narrative of Africa in the British national consciousness is really a narrative Britain creates for itself about its history, identity and role in the world.<sup>151</sup>

*Engagement with Africa was about minimising anxieties regarding the role, function and potency of the British state rather than motivated by concern for African needs and development.*

Gallagher 2009

## **A lack of African voices**

The distinct absence of African voices throughout the history of British-African relations continues in this period. The dominance of British, and by extension, Global Northern, and the systematic exclusion of African narratives is epitomised in Bob Geldof's introduction of an African woman, Birham, to the stage of Live 8 in 2005. Birham had appeared in a film which depicted famine-stricken Ethiopia, first aired in 1995 during Live Aid. She was two-years old at the time. After the film was screened, Geldof stated: '*...she [Birham] had 10 minutes to live 20 years ago, but because we did a concert...last week she did her agricultural exams in the school she goes to...don't let them tell us that this doesn't work*'.<sup>152</sup> In this speech, Geldof gives full credit for Birham's achievements to the global north: she is represented as having been able to survive and obtain an education thanks to the benevolence of the West.<sup>153</sup> More importantly, Birham entered the Live 8 stage holding a microphone in her hand, but she was not given an opportunity to address the audience<sup>154</sup>. Rather, she is rendered an object, an exotic spectacle presented in 'native' dress despite usually dressing in westernised clothing, embodying a wider tradition of ignoring or excluding African voices from their own narrative.

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<sup>149</sup> Gallagher, J. (2009) op. cit.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Grant, J. (2015) op. cit.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.



# The UK and African countries after Brexit

## Introduction

Britain's vote to exit the European Union (EU) in 2016 – 'Brexit' – caused a wave of uncertainty as to what this meant for the British state's place in the global order. The conversation about the potential impact of Brexit on Africa has been controversial and divided. Proponents boast of its ability to generate new opportunities and investment for Africa, where critics come harnessed with grim predictions of ambiguity and uncertainty.<sup>155</sup> This mixed outlook within scholarly debate is reflected in the literature: where Britain views Brexit as an opportunity to reforge strong relations between Africa and Britain, African nations stand to gain much from their newfound position as in-demand trading partners. It thus seems that post-Brexit political relations between the two will be determined by economic interests, much akin to relations within the slave trade. However, it is very different to the seventeenth- and eighteenth century, where African nations enter the negotiation as independent states, with strong growth projections seeing a shift in bargaining power in their favour. It is unclear the extent to which the 'historical influence' of Britain in Africa will provide an adequate basis for the resurgence of a special relationship that is a win-win for both parties. Equally, the effect of Brexit on cultural relations between African peoples and Britain appears just as mixed. Over the last two decades, social awareness of implicit and explicit racism in British society has been raised significantly, by movements such as Black Lives Matter UK and calls to decolonise university curricula to include the contribution of African academics. These have challenged and confronted the historic narratives of Africa within Britain. However, racism still appears to dominate conversations and perceptions within British society – the recent controversy over the treatment of Meghan Markle in the press, and the labelling of her and her husband's decision to leave the Royal family being labelled 'Megxit', brought racism in Britain to the fore. Whether Brexit itself will either improve or exacerbate such relations remains to be seen.

## Context

Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced twenty-years of virtually uninterrupted growth since the mid-1990s, alongside greater political and macro-economic stability in the region.<sup>156</sup> This record has unseated the deep sense of 'Afro-pessimism' that dominated the 1980s-2000s, and replaced it with a more optimistic and at times even 'Afro-euphoric' outlook.<sup>157</sup> Combining such growth with one of the fastest growing youth populations, Africa offers multitudes on top of its image as a net exporter of raw materials.<sup>158</sup> This has rendered many African nations as in-demand trading partners. For Britain, Sub-Saharan African

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↪ Kohnert, D. (2018). More Equitable Britain-Africa Relations Post-Brexit: Doomed to Fail? *Africa Spectrum*, 53(2), pp.119–130.

↪ Frankema, E. and van Waijenburg, M. (2018). Africa rising? A historical perspective. *African Affairs*, 117(469), pp.543–568.

↪ Ibid.

↪ Yeates, E. (2019). "Global Britain" and Africa beyond Brexit. [online] Africa at LSE. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2019/09/24/global-britain-and-africa-beyond-brexit/> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2020].

countries' membership in the Commonwealth represents the perfect opportunity to benefit from this increased economic strength, and as a platform to consolidate the 'Global Britain' policy strategy. Following the 2016 referendum, Prime Minister Theresa May launched the 'Global Britain' campaign, aiming to frame Britain as an 'outward looking' country that can 'confidently meet global challenges'.<sup>159</sup> For its advocates, '*Global Britain: is about connecting with 'old friends and new allies'*' helping Britain forge 'a new place in the world for itself'.<sup>160</sup> The policy architecture is firmly in line with the 'pragmatic' foreign policy tradition in place within Britain since 1945. The pragmatic tradition aims to promote British prosperity, guarantee national security, and keep Britain at the 'top table' of global affairs through bilateral diplomacy and multilateral bargaining in overlapping institutional settings.<sup>161</sup> Hence, Brexit can be said to have been :'*packaged as a change of tactic in pursuit of a familiar grand strategy*'.<sup>162</sup> There are four pillars to this strategy: first, a free trade agreement with the EU; second, free trade agreements with other countries; third, a '*far reaching science and innovation pact*' with the EU; and last, a focus on hard power in the realm of security and foreign policy.<sup>163</sup> It is the middle two pillars which bear pertinence to a discussion of British-Africa relations post-Brexit and beyond.

*For its advocates, 'Global Britain: is about connecting with 'old friends and new allies' helping Britain forge 'a new place in the world for itself'*

Daddow 2019

## Trade: A common understanding again?

Economic considerations have always been central to the Africa-Britain relationship, and Brexit presents an opportunity for the (re)forging of a special economic partnership between the British and African states. However, some believe that there are significant doubts over whether the economic relationship as outlined in the 'Global Britain' strategy will be possible. One of the key issues at stake for Africa is whether Brexit will mean better access to British markets. For most African Commonwealth countries, Britain has been by far the biggest market for their exports.<sup>164</sup> The British parliament posits that a liberalised post-Brexit trade policy should strengthen the sales prospects for African economies. Indeed, it is possible that the majority of Anglophone state governments in Africa will pull out of disputed trade agreements with the EU – the All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa outlined how a post-Brexit Britain could offer African



↪ Daddow, O. (2019). GlobalBritain™: the discursive construction of Britain's post-Brexit world role, *Global Affairs*, 5(1), pp.5-22

↪ Ibid.

↪ Ibid.

↪ Ibid.

↪ Ibid.

↪ Kohnert, D. (2018). op. cit.

countries mutually beneficial and fairer trade deals than the existing Economic Partnership Agreements made with the EU.<sup>165</sup> However, observers note that this is extremely dependent on the deal which Britain negotiates with the EU: African countries will no longer have preferential access to the UK if London does not succeed in negotiating bilateral agreements with African governments in advance of the exit date. Further, it is also doubtful that the UK on its own could compete with other trade interests, such as China and India, in the global run for Africa's resources. Some Brexiteers and African politicians have expressed their hope for a golden era of a rediscovered but deeper and more partnership-like post-Brexit Commonwealth relationship.<sup>166</sup> African governments envisage using their negotiating advantage as an in-demand partner to press for more protection of their domestic markets and nascent industries.<sup>167</sup> However, this strategy will only work in areas where Britain is not competing with African markets, and some believe that it is questionable as to whether the UK will change trade conditions to facilitate this if the British industry could be impacted negatively.<sup>168</sup> It seems that a partnership of trading equals that is a win-win situation for both sides is unlikely. Whether a new economic relationship will emerge between Africa and a post-Brexit Britain remains uncertain and will continue to do so until the conditions of a Brexit deal become clearer.

## Cultural relations – room for improvement

A recent report conducted by the British Council investigating people's perceptions and knowledge of contemporary African arts and culture in Britain revealed a continuation of a pattern first evident in the 1980s.<sup>169</sup> The VSO (formerly Voluntary Service Overseas) 2001 survey found that the images of poverty used by campaigns such as Live Aid contributed to the public's perception of the developing world as a place of disaster and starvation.<sup>170</sup> There was, however, an additional component to the study: after the researchers elicited spontaneous reactions to the words 'developing world', they presented participants with photographs, facts and the opportunity to speak to a VSO volunteer to challenge their views with an alternative vision of developing countries. The reactions to this new information was that people showed intrigue and interest and the desire to know more, expressing relief that there were positive stories, and a feeling of ignorance due to their perceived lack of knowledge.<sup>171</sup> This eagerness to know more about the true cultural experiences of African societies is similarly reflected in the British Council report: while the survey found that the general British public has limited knowledge and awareness of contemporary African arts and culture, a significant proportion believe in its value. In fact, 97 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'it is important and helps us to see diverse perspectives on Africa'.<sup>172</sup> That a significant part of the British

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↪ APPG For Africa (2017). The Future of Africa-UK Trade and Development Cooperation Relations in the Transitional and Post Brexit Period. [online]

↪ Kohnert, D. (2018). op. cit.

↪ Ibid.

↪ Ibid.

↪ British Council (2019). Contemporary African Arts: Mapping Perceptions, Insights and UK-Africa Collaborations. [online]

↪ Grant, J. (2015) Live Aid/8: perpetuating the superiority myth, *Critical Arts*, 29(3), pp. 310-326

↪ Plewes, B. and Stewart, R. (2009). The Pornography of Poverty: A Cautionary Fundraising Tale. In: *Ethics in Action: The Ethical Challenges of International Human Rights Nongovernmental Organisations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.23–37.

↪ British Council (2019). Contemporary African Arts: Mapping Perceptions, Insights and UK-Africa Collaborations. [online]

population sees value in African perspectives and culture highlights the opportunity for increased engagement.

This opportunity comes at a time of renewed appetite across diverse sectors to redefine the African narrative landscape. #AfricaNoFilter, for example, is a multi-partner collaborative launched in 2018, that seeks to present more accurate, nuanced and contextualised stories of Africa today, by supporting emerging African voices and investing in new platforms to amplify their voices.<sup>173</sup> *Common Futures Conversations*, meanwhile, is an initiative dedicated to developing new and innovative ways for young people in Africa and Europe to engage with politics and develop their perspectives on key global challenges like climate change, conflict or inequality.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> <http://africanofilter.com/>

<sup>174</sup> <https://www.chathamhouse.org/about/structure/communications-and-publishing/common-futures>



**2.**

**WHERE WE  
ARE TODAY**

The following section begins by considering the ways in which narratives of other places are shared and engaged with by young people. It also provides a comprehensive examination of the beliefs, attitudes, presumed knowledge and perceptions that young Africans and young people from the UK hold in respect of each other and each other's countries. The findings presented are based on conversations with young people (18-35) during the youth workshops covered in all countries and regions of the UK, as well as eight African countries: Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa. To ensure a holistic representation of the perspectives of young Africans and young people from the UK towards each other and each other's countries, sections addressing the dominant narratives expressed by young people of the other place are structured to afford consideration of:

1. The themes and locations young people most associate with the other place
2. The other place's identity and position relative to the rest of the world
3. Young people's perspectives on the historical and contemporary UK-African country relations
4. What the other place would be like as a destination for young people
5. The values, hopes, worries and challenges that young people associate with each other

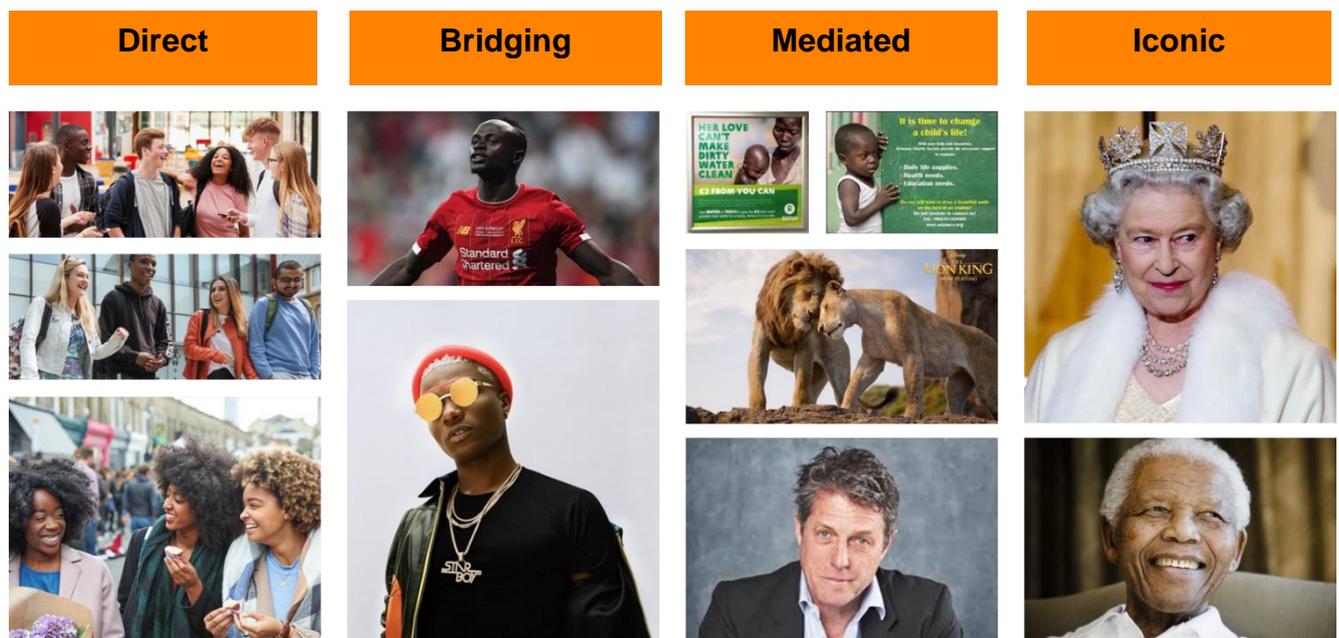
## 2.1 Narratives touchpoints

Conversations with young people from the UK and African countries highlighted the complexity of the communications landscape in terms of forming and sharing beliefs and ideas about other countries. A single belief or idea about the UK – for example, that it is a gateway for opportunity – may draw on a wide variety of sources, consumed at different points in time, in very different contexts. Moreover, once formed, this belief may shape how an audience or an individual frame and interprets any new information about the other place. As a result, it can be challenging to try to locate the ‘source’ of a narrative. Rather, conversations with young people suggest that common narratives are communicated by a wide range of sources, consumed under a diverse range of conditions.

This research employs the phrase ‘narrative touchpoint’ to capture this interplay between sources and conditions. Equipped with this phrase, the analysis focussed on categorising the most common conditions under which young people engage with information and ideas about other countries, and within each of those categories, highlighting the most prominent examples.

In conversations with young Africans and Britons, four categories of narrative touchpoint emerged: **direct**, **bridging**, **mediated** and **iconic** (see Figure 4). Each category is described and illustrated with examples from both UK and African countries below. Table 1, located at the end of the sub-section, presents an overview of the narrative touchpoints identified in conversations with young people in the UK and African countries.

Figure 4: Narrative touchpoints



## Direct touchpoints

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Direct touchpoints refer to experiences where young people come in contact with people from the other place. For young Africans, this occurs primarily via peers, friends and family members who have visited or lived in the UK.

*'I have seen persons that travel, and they will tell you that some of the things that people go and struggle for in the UK, other people do in other European countries outside the UK and get more value for their labour and they pay less for taxes and they have so much to bring home compared to those that are in the UK.'*

Nigeria, 25-35, ABC1

For Britons, this is largely materialised in education settings, most notably university, where they can meet and form friendships with people from African countries or of African descent.

*'I'd never met anyone from outside the UK until I went to university, which is crazy. But coming to Cardiff University, like you say, I feel like it's quite a cool city and quite multicultural.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

## Bridging touchpoints

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Bridging touchpoints refer to formats or platforms that involve people from both places. Notable examples include the English Premier League, where the teams are from Britain, but many of the leading players are from African countries.

*'Some good things you see though, because the football player, Sadio Mane is from Senegal and he obviously is a football player for one of the best clubs in the world, so he earns a lot of money. But what he does is donate most of his money to his country to build schools and stuff, because he wants them to have the life he never had.'*

Cardiff, 18-24

Similarly, bridges are formed by contemporary music and musicians originating in one place but heavily consumed in the other place. While somewhat less direct and more mediated, bridging touchpoints avoid a greater level of accessibility to the general population.

*'We follow [UK celebrities] a lot to actually see, like, the fashion. Celebrities from that side, they actually have an effect on us people from this side, we most want to be like them, to follow up on their lifestyle, what she is wearing tomorrow you want to get the similar thing, what is happening to her life, we talk about it daily.'*

South Africa, Black, Lower SEC

## Mediated Touchpoints

Mediated touchpoints refer to media that are specifically produced to represent and communicate content about the other place. This category includes the majority of film, television, advertising and news media. Within this category, there is inevitably a very broad range of representations and portrayals, some of which are explicitly positive and constructive in how they communicate the other place. In other cases, however, the productions, formats and storylines present an image of the other place that is inherently more superficial and trivial.

In the UK, notable examples identified as responsible for conveying negative ideas about African countries include charity advertising and the news media. Advertising by the tourism industry, meanwhile, indicates a tendency to idealise African countries and to recycle colonial and neo-colonial ideas and tropes (for examples, see Section **3.1 New Narratives of African Countries**). Conversations with young people from the UK also highlighted cherished childhood films such as the Lion King and Aladdin as early influencers of their ideas about African countries; together with the widely enjoyed David Attenborough nature documentaries.

*‘Me and my dad always watched the nature documentaries growing up, [we] loved it. And the Lion King teaches you more about the Circle of Life and all that, and I loved the Lion King, it was my favourite. That is where I got my information about Africa.’*

Belfast 25-35

For young Africans, mediated touchpoints include a wide array of British films and television, ranging from the action films of Jason Statham to classic, albeit heavily stereotyped, British comedies such as Mr. Bean.

## Iconic touchpoints

Iconic touchpoints refer to individuals, institutions, places, monuments and structures, rituals and customs, and brands that are intrinsically identified with either the UK or Africa. Notable examples discussed in groups included the British Royal Family, William Shakespeare and Big Ben for the UK; as well as Nelson Mandela, Robert Mugabe, the Egyptian Pyramids and Kilimanjaro for African countries. A full list of examples is provided in Table 1.

British icons identified by young Africans were predominantly England and London-centric, suggesting a lack of geographic representation in terms of the people and places which symbolise the UK for them. Young people from the UK, meanwhile, struggled to name a positive iconic African other than Nelson Mandela, suggesting a dearth in terms of exemplary iconic figures associated with African countries.

Touchpoint Category	Touchpoint	Examples - African Focus Groups	Examples - UK Focus Groups
DIRECT	Tourist experiences	Accounts of what the UK is like, shared in person or online, for example in the form of stories, images and videos	Widely shared on social media and face-to-face
	Student experiences		Not mentioned

## TABLE 1: NARRATIVE TOUCHPOINTS

**Table 2 (cont.): Narrative touchpoints**

Touchpoint Category	Touchpoint	Examples - African Focus Groups	Examples - UK Focus Groups
<b>MEDIATED</b>	Country-specific news media	News and information that explicitly connects the UK with an African country. Examples identified include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The return of Emperor Tewodros II's hair to Ethiopia ( )</li> <li>• Kenyan regulation of football gambling ( )</li> </ul>	News and information that explicitly connects the UK with an African country. Examples identified include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal and political visits</li> </ul>
	Education about the other place	Subject matter taught as part of everyday lessons, e.g. British history	Subject matter taught as part of everyday lessons, e.g. geography  Special projects, e.g. charity fundraising
	Received wisdom and idioms	Proverbs and sayings related to the UK (e.g. The Land of Rights')  Local idioms (e.g. 'English Saturday' in Cameroon)	African proverbs, shared for example as online memes
<b>ICONIC</b>	Individuals	The Royal Family, David Beckham, Winston Churchill, Shakespeare, J.R.R Tolkein, J.K Rowling	Nelson Mandela, Robert Mugabe, General Butt Naked
	Institutions	Monarchy, Parliament, Universities	Not mentioned
	Places	London, Liverpool, Manchester, the Scottish Highlands	Cape Town, the Sahara Desert, the Masai Mara
	Monuments and structures	The London Eye, Tower Bridge, Stonehenge, the Emirates Stadium, Buckingham Palace	Cape Town Stadium
	Rituals and customs	Changing of the Guard (Buckingham Palace); royal weddings	Unspecified tribal and traditional customs
	Brands	Bentley, Mini Classic	Not mentioned

## 2.2 African narratives of the UK

### UK as a place

#### England and London dominate popular conceptions and associations of the UK

Conversations with young Africans made clear that, for the majority, the UK is synonymous with England only. Asked to draw and describe a person from the UK, for example, 85 per cent<sup>175</sup> of African focus group participants drew someone living in England.

Similarly, virtually all UK institutions, tourist attractions and football teams discussed by young Africans were based in England – including Oxford and Cambridge Universities; the London Eye, Big Ben, Buckingham Palace and Tower Bridge; and Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Chelsea football clubs.

Of the other countries and regions comprising the UK, only Scotland stood out as being uniquely identifiable, based on its associations with traditional Highlander elements such as kilts and bagpipes.

#### The situation of people living in the UK is frequently idealised in contrast to that of young Africans

Conversations with young Africans highlighted a number of negative associations with the UK, especially in connection with the prospect of them visiting, studying and working (see page 61). Despite this, however, the overall pattern was for young Africans to compare the UK positively to their own countries, often across a variety of dimensions. At their most idealised, these positive perceptions were reflected in descriptions of the UK as a *'dreamland'*, *'greener pastures'*, *'a land of opportunity'*, and *'the future'*.<sup>176</sup> An overview of the values, qualities and characteristics associated with the UK by young Africans is provided below.

### Appealing UK

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#### Safety and security

Associations between the UK and safety and security are communicated via a diverse range of sources and British assets. Stories shared about fair and principled working environments, high wages and employment, and provisions of social welfare and security contribute to a belief in the personal economic security of the UK people. Strong assets including the police force and intelligence services, the maintenance of public gatherings such as football matches as family-friendly events, and a broad impression of efficiency, organisation, and calm, all lead to impressions of greater physical safety. Associations with

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<sup>175</sup> N = 194

<sup>176</sup> In order of appearance: Nigeria, 18-24 C2D; 18-24 ABC1; 25-35 ABC1; Algeria, 18-24, C2D

political stability, finally, embodied in both continuity of the British monarchy and UK parliamentary democracy, provide a sense of national stability.

*'The English championship is sacred, something you can do with your family, safe too especially in the stadium, where women can go and support their teams, not like before with the incident of Chelsea hooligans.'*

Algeria, 18-24, C2D

## **Tradition**

The UK is widely perceived as strongly committed to the value of tradition. This perception was in evidence across all eight African countries. For young Africans, British traditionalism connotes a range of positive attributes, including authenticity, originality, respect, continuity, unity, and stability. Communicating this commitment is recognised as a key component of the UK's strategy for presenting itself to the world.

*'They are good in promoting their country. When I compare it with our country, we have lots and lots of historic and cultural wonders which can be introduced, but we are doing nothing in this area, so I appreciate their effort.'*

Ethiopia, 18-24, C2D

The Royal Family plays a key role in communicating this value to young African audiences, who interpret the continued existence of the monarchy as a sign of the UK's commitment to preserving its national heritage. Rituals and traditions associated with the monarchy, such as the pomp and ceremony of royal weddings and the changing of the Palace guard, are likewise performative of the UK's continued commitment to tradition.

Secondarily, however, participants also recognised the preservation of monuments and historically significant sites; institutions such as the British Museum; and the historically close association between communities and their local football teams as further signs of British commitment to tradition. In Nigeria, young people also spoke positively of Scottish Highland traditions such as the kilt and bagpipes – one of the few instances of young Africans looking outside of England in their discussion of the UK.

## **Prosperity**

People in the UK were consistently imagined to be wealthier than their counterparts in African countries. Signs of the UK's prosperity in the imaginations of young Africans include the strength of the pound relative to other currencies; the vast amounts of money poured into and generated by the English Premier League; luxury brands such as Bentley; and stories told about the wages and individual wealth of average UK workers compared to employees in African countries.

*'For me I feel that you could probably be anything and make money; you could be a plumber and make a lot of money, because they practically don't have people that do*

*menial jobs, most of them are high class, they go to the offices and sit down with ties.'*

Nigeria, 25-35, ABC1

### **Orderly and efficient**

UK efficiency is communicated via stories about UK city infrastructure; its transport and educational systems; and the provision and management of services like healthcare and social security. These stories are brought home to young African by friends, families and peers who have visited the UK; learnt from films and television in which these systems feature; or else inferred from the broad notion of the UK as 'First World', and thus well-managed. There was evidence that these stories reinforce aspirations to visit, study and work in the UK, by providing reassurance about the quality of the experience they will enjoy.

*'The tourist stuff is well developed; first world focused; it's like: we have the infrastructure to provide these sorts of things. And it works. You can catch the tube to where you want to go and then walk the rest of the way; it's safe, they don't have tube surfers in the UK you know.'*

South Africa, White, Middle-class

### **Justice and equality**

Conversations with young Africans unearthed a variety of beliefs regarding the justice and fairness of the UK, including that it possesses a robust legal system; is stable and transparent in terms of governance; and is highly committed to equality and individual rights. In multiple cases, these beliefs were used to contrast the UK positively to the situations of young Africans' home countries. They also served to positively differentiate the UK from other European countries, signalling the UK as a more appealing destination for tourism, work and study, because of its perceived safety and hospitality.

*'There's an expression that says that England is the country of rights. Anybody of any religion can live there, English people respect that in comparison to other countries like France or Germany.'*

Algeria, 18-24, C2D

These beliefs draw on a diverse range of sources. Evidence of UK justice included the UK's history of female leadership, embodied by both Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May; examples of tolerance towards and the protection of rights of workers and minorities; the successful integration of the UK's constitutional monarchy with its parliamentary democracy; juxtapositions of the UK police force with their corrupt counterparts in other countries; the role of UK taxes for funding public services; and the processes put in place for dealing with rule-breakers at football games.

*'You cannot have a developed society when the government fails to play its own part; it is what we call a social contract between the governed and the government. The tax system in the UK is second to none globally, and we see the result and how it is being put into healthcare education and the likes.'*

Nigeria, 25-35, C2D

## Unity

A sense of unity was attributed to the UK at both national and community levels. For participants in multiple countries, the British monarchy served as a symbol of national unity that superseded other political divisions. Football was also seen as a great unifier, both in terms of being able to bring different people together, and in terms of the community-spiritedness associated with support for local and national teams.

*'If you watch the premier league games, you will never see a stadium half-filled or three quarter filled, it's always filled. It symbolises unity.'*

South Africa, Black, Higher SEC

## Freedom

Finally, the UK is regarded as a place in which individual freedoms are respected and maintained.

*'I think that there is freedom and pure democracy, so that everyone can express their feeling freely. I also feel like their politics is more modern and civilized.'*

Ethiopia, 25-34, ABC1

UK freedom of choice and expression was also associated with progressive attitudes in areas such as class, gender and racial relations. Harry Windsor's marriage to Meghan Markle and subsequent announcement to quit Royal duties, for example, although not always evaluated positively by participants, frequently served as an exemplar of the ability of people in the UK to go against established norms and protocols.

*'They are free. It would never be accepted in Egypt that a president son would get married to a common, dark skinned colour, and divorced lady. Whereas that would not be accepted in Egypt, it is totally accepted in the United Kingdom. They do not have such hierarchy thoughts, that since he is a prince he should get married from certain level, they do not have such way of thinking.'*

Egypt, 18-24, ABC1

While generally seen as positive from young Africans' own perspective, a number acknowledged that greater levels of social conservatism in their home countries could lead compatriots to perceive the UK as 'undisciplined'.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Kenya, 18-24, C2D

## **A growing awareness of social and cultural flux in response to recent events threatens the UK's association with continuity and stability**

Despite embodying, for many, stability and continuity, events including Brexit and Harry and Meghan's departure have raised the prospect of change on the horizon for the UK. This was not necessarily regarded as positive or negative. In general, moreover, the dominant perception of the UK remains that it is secure, stable and traditional.

*'There is political disagreement when it comes to Brexit. It will create a bad leadership management.'*

Cameroon, 18-24, C2D

*'Recently I feel like the system might fail and not continue as it used to be because of Megan. We all know how they treated her, the drama at her wedding, but finally she was able to make changes so I feel like this might change.'*

Ethiopia, 25-35, ABC1

## **Common erroneous beliefs about the UK contribute to widespread misperceptions among young Africans**

Key among these mistakes concerns the exact role of the monarchy within the UK governmental system. Conversations with young Africans highlighted a tendency to overestimate the monarch's power to influence political decisions, which typically led to associations of the UK with dictatorship and autocracy. This tendency was more common among young Africans belonging to lower socio-economic groups. While based on a (relatively) simple factual error, such misperceptions highlight the potential for serious impact on the way in which the UK is perceived.

*'I feel like the royal house is England in a way, because without them there wouldn't be even the UK, because they run, they may have the Mayor and the Prime Minister but they seem to be the ones that are actually running the country...They have huge influence in the politics that happen there.'*

South Africa, Black, Lower SEC

# The UK in the world

## The UK is seen as a world leader academically, economically, and in terms of football

In all eight African countries, participants associated the UK with high achievement. This association was expressed both in terms of the national achievements of the UK itself, signalling the country's status of the world stage; and the promise of achievement for young Africans who travel to the UK to live, work or study, thereby framing the UK as a gateway for personal aspirations.

*'For students who are studying in London, their degrees are more valued. For example, I'm doing medicine, if an article is out from England, it has value in other countries, because they are correct, they would not share anything if they are not one hundred percent sure. The best-known universities internationally are in England.'*

Morocco, 18-24, C2D

Institutions including the English Premier League and Oxford and Cambridge Universities were widely identified as world-leading, signalling the high achievement of the UK in comparison with other countries. As such, these institutions signal the global cache of the UK relative to other countries.

*'I think they are way ahead of us in most of the things, for example if we see the stadium it is well advanced and even when we talk about football everybody thinks of the English Premier League and nothing else. In terms of sport, especially football, the UK is way ahead of all.'*

Ethiopia, 18-24, ABC1

The prosperity of the UK was also seen as a cornerstone of its international status, serving to secure its position as one of the world's economic 'superpowers', and prompting positive comparisons with the struggling economies of African nations.<sup>178</sup>

## British entertainment and creative exports also contribute to the UK's international status

Although not as widespread or pervasive as associations with academic excellence or the English Premier League, UK artists and creative industries including the television and film industries; Adele, Stormzy and Ed Sheeran; J.R.R. Tolkien, J.K. Rowling and William Shakespeare were all acknowledged as globally recognisable figures akin to brands with strong links to the UK.

*'There is literature: Shakespeare is very remarkable for his writing; he has really put UK in the limelight when it comes to art, likewise in music too, it is remarkable worldwide and it has really put them on the limelight.'*

Nigeria, 18-24, ABC1

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<sup>178</sup> Cameroon, 25-35, ABC1

Consumption of these exports was widespread and constitutes a key channel by which young Africans access, learn about, and interact with the UK in their daily lives. In some cases, most notably football, consumption of these exports has become a regular feature in the lives and schedules of young Africans.

*'In my life I would say it's probably the best they have to offer because I can enjoy it here and now. I can't wait until I visit them; but the BBC has been prime for me. They push out the best reality shows, like the classic Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond; all of those are really great entertainment.'*

South Africa, White, Higher SEC

### **The UK's perceived commitment to traditional values serves as a key differentiator of its global identity**

Participants in several countries (mis)identified the UK royal family as the last remaining monarchy in Europe, an achievement generally interpreted positively as a sign of the UK's singular success in both preserving its national heritage amid the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and reconciling monarchy and democracy within a coherent system. On the topic of Brexit, similarly, some participants framed the UK's decision to leave the EU as an attempt to maintain its unique cultural identity. Those who did so tended to view Brexit positively, as a sign of the UK's desire to maintain its authenticity in contrast to other European nations.

*'We see a monarchy when other countries have lost theirs, so seeing all this portrays the United Kingdom's history and a different evolution that took place...I think Brexit is England's population choice because it is a way of coming back to their culture.'*

Cameroon, 25-35, ABC1

Participants also compared the UK's commitment to tradition with the perceived failure of their countries to do the same. This comparison juxtaposed, on the one hand, a positive image of the UK as a country defined by continuity of traditions, with an image of African countries as disconnected from their roots. Compared to the U.S.A, finally, the UK's blend of monarchy with democracy was perceived as more distinctive than the presidential system. Combined with the UK's status as a more historically significant country than the younger U.S.A, this distinction served for some participants to increase the status of the UK relative to the US, despite the latter's superior material power.

### **Brexit and the UK's military history both signify the power and influence of the UK**

UK influence and power on the world stage was acknowledged by at least one group in all eight countries. These discussions were most frequently connected to Brexit, which participants interpreted variously as a move to dissociate the UK from 'weaker' countries such as Greece; to re-establish sovereignty and control outside of the EU; and to maintain financial independence and act as an independent trading power. While interpreted by many in a positive light, some participants saw the move as self-serving and potentially damaging in the long run. From a military perspective, the UK's role in the World Wars, symbolised by iconic figures like Winston Churchill, tended to be viewed positively as a sign of courage and power. The UK was also identified as a key member of NATO –

although in that instance, question marks were raised over whether this was a positive or negative association.

*'They established NATO. So they are the main reason for wars in Iraq, Syria and Libya. They interfere forcibly in countries that have wars.'*

Egypt, 25-35, ABC1

## UK-African country relations

### The colonial legacy looms large in conversations about the UK's relationship with African countries

The UK's colonial legacy, outlined in detail in the Historical Review in Section 1, is perceived in a distinctly negative light by young Africans. This legacy is felt to include the sowing of seeds of contemporary unrest in African regions due to arbitrary partition of regions and communities, as well as the theft of historical artefacts. This legacy contradicts many of the positive perceptions which young Africans have of the UK, leading some to consider the UK as hypocritical and inconsistent in its application of values.

*'Britain invaded Egypt before. It pretends to have great values, ethics, and democracy – but while they are applying such great values in their country, they do not apply them to others. Rather, they are committing crimes in other countries.'*

Egypt, 25-35, ABC1

Participants in several countries indicated that, despite the end of the British Empire, the UK has continued its exploitation of African countries. The repatriation of artefacts such as the Ethiopian Emperor Tewodros II's hair, while a step in the right direction, was likewise regarded as insufficient to close the rift of the past.

*'Half of their economy is built on other countries' minerals and stuff, they take everything, and then they manufacture them and then they come back and overprice them in every country that they have taken minerals from.'*

South Africa, Black, Higher SEC

*'I feel like they are colonising Africa still, but in a modern way'*

Ethiopia, 25-35, ABC1

### There is little evidence of associations between the UK and the operation of charity organisations

In contrast to the influential role played by charity and private sector organisations in shaping how young people in the UK talk about and picture African countries (see Development agendas (c.1980 – 2000+)

, young Africans very rarely mentioned these types of organisations in connection to the UK. Of 94 groupings of words and images associated with the UK that participants collected before the groups, only one referred to the work of British charities and INGOs. Discussing this association, participants in Ethiopia in fact perceived the UK as a minimal provider of aid, indicating that aid is not considered a dominant aspect of UK-African countries relations by young Africans.

*'I would say UK has less involvement in this sector when compared to other European countries. We know most European countries helping our country and others with various things like in the construction sector, hotel and several areas, but*

*the support that comes from the UK is so minimal and I would say they are not supporting enough.'*

Ethiopia, 18-24, C2D

## **The UK as a destination**

### **For many young Africans, the UK represents a gateway for personal aspirations**

As a destination, the UK was imagined as both a place where young Africans could achieve a higher standard of living and income, as well as a place where they could acquire skills, credentials and status which would ensure their success back home.

As pinnacles of achievement in the footballing and academic worlds, participants regarded both the Premier League and UK universities as routes to and signs of individual success. The promise of better economic opportunities and security, similarly, contributes to the widespread image of the UK as an ideal place for realising professional and financial aspirations. The status of English as a global language, meanwhile, means it is perceived as an invaluable asset for young Africans.

*'English is a universal language. To study in England will help your English, which will enable you to become an interpreter or English teacher in other countries.'*

Cameroon, 18-24, C2D

The availability of African success stories ensures the continued currency of the UK as a gateway for individual aspirations. Participants frequently cited examples such as Riyad Mahrez, from Algeria, and Mohammed Salah, from Egypt, as evidence of the possibility of young Africans succeeding at the highest level. In terms of academic achievement, meanwhile, a number cited personal anecdotes of the achievement and status accrued by friends, family and peers who had studied at a UK university.

*'Mohammed Salah, he is an Egyptian person, and he proved there that he did a great success in the field of football.'*

Egypt, 18-24, ABC1

### **The UK also promises high-quality, unique experiences to visitors**

The majority of conversations with young Africans highlighted the UK as an alluring travel destination. This appeal is grounded in the promise of novel and exciting experiences, including sightseeing opportunities, the excitement of a Premier League match, a diverse and rich cuisine, and a beautiful countryside. Young Africans who spoke of these experiences frequently also represented them as unique to the UK, or else of a better quality than similar experiences available in other destinations.

*'For me, travelling to the United Kingdom is considered a psychological comfort, because of the breath-taking places there. Places are clean; nature is prevalent. I can see different people, different lives.'*

Egypt, 25-35, C2D

## **However, British racism and elitism; visa worries, and prohibitive costs all act as inhibitors to travel**

The UK remains widely associated with racism and elitism, factors which undermine its positive image in the eyes of many young Africans and lead them to question the welcome they would receive if they ever travelled there. Linked to this sense of elitism, concerns about the costs meant that some young Africans felt that the UK was a feasible destination for the wealthy only. In the wake of Brexit, meanwhile, there are significant concerns about the feasibility of getting through the visa process. All of these issues are discussed in greater details below.

## **Inhospitable UK**

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### **Racism**

Conversations with young Africans indicated that, from their perspective, British racism and prejudice towards Africans remains a very real and live issue. As a result, several participants expressed concerns about the safety of the UK as a destination for them and their family. British racism constituted the most widespread negative association with the UK and was raised in all countries except South Africa.

As is illustrated by the Historical Review's overview of the evolution of UK-African country relations, the UK's association with racism is grounded, first and foremost, in young Africans knowledge of the UK's historical role as both a slave-trading nation, and a colonial power. Multiple participants believed, for example, for the continued currency of stereotypes formed during these periods in the imaginations of British people today.

*'Racism in UK? They think we are monkeys. The white people hate the Africans. You find that an African woman wants to marry a white guy, and there is still an entrenchment of colonial or slavery mind set. [They] made us feel we are less of human beings, but I believe we are more intellectual. They think Africa is a country.'*

Kenya, 18-24, ABC1

Compounding this historical awareness, young Africans perceptions of the UK as racist are confirmed by evidence drawn from a diverse range of sources. These include the persistent debate about the attitudes towards and treatment of Meghan Markle by the Royal Family and the British public; recurrent evidence of racism in football; stories in the media suggesting prejudice towards Africans by UK institutions; and the experiences of friends and family who have suffered racist abuse while in the UK.

*'Sometimes their laws are not fair. An Algerian citizen got killed in England by an English person for being Arab and Muslim, the case got closed and no one spoke of him because they didn't want to harm their image.'*

Algeria, 25-35, ABC1

## **Elitism**

Young African conversations indicated a belief that people in the UK place great emphasis on material wealth, background, speech, manners, and fashion, as the basis for social hierarchies. As a result, they tended to think of British people as inherently snobbish and elitist. Touchpoints for this perception included UK institutions like the Royal Family, as well as prominent figures like Boris Johnson. These touchpoints indicate that young Africans based this impression on the overrepresentation of aristocratic and upper-class figures and institutions in discourse about the UK.

*'I think the chip on the shoulder is what everybody would think about when they say British... you just have that tone of voice [...] if you look at Brexit and some of the way that Boris Johnson would speak, it sounds very royal...very posh.'*

South Africa, 18-35, White, Higher SEC

*'They have a protocol in life, it's just different... even the language: they do not like the Americans, even though both speak English, but their English is different. It's difficult, they are not easy people. As she said, there's that feeling of superiority.'*

Morocco, 18-24, C2D

While not universally regarded as a negative, British elitism was nevertheless regarded as a potential barrier for young Africans who lacked the wealth or education to meet these standards. It was also perceived as a source of stereotypes about British rudeness and poor hospitality towards people considered as social inferiors.

*'They have kept their cultures or identity to the point where we couldn't infiltrate in or immigrate. It's positive to them because they are prosperous, the proof is that they want to come out of the European Union to maintain their culture. But to us it isn't.'*

Cameroon, 25-35, ABC1

## **Prohibitive costs**

Young Africans often spoke of costs of travelling to, studying and living in the UK as a serious obstacle to any dreams they might have to go there one day. This perception often serves to compound the association between the UK and elitism, by reinforcing the idea that only the wealthiest and most privileged of young Africans could expect to be able to reap the promises communicated by the UK.

*'Their currency [is] expensive. The cost of living is expensive too, you have to work in several jobs in order to have a decent life.'*

Algeria, 25-35, C2D

*'Some people have dreams, they don't just have the money. If they have the money, I am sure they will go.'*

Nigeria. 18-24, ABC1

## **Restrictions on immigration**

Concerns about the viability of immigration to the UK, finally, were expressed by young Africans across multiple countries. Many of these conversations revolved around the topic of Brexit, which a number of young Africans interpreted as a sign that immigration will only get harder from hereon in. This was attributed to a number of factors, including a broad association between the decision to leave the EU, on the one hand, and rising anti-immigration attitudes in the UK, on the other; as well as uncertainty regarding the future of movement between the UK and European countries. Conversations suggested that, pre-Brexit, the EU's rules on freedom of movement not only made the UK easier to access for young Africans already in Europe, but also meant the UK was appealing as a gateway into the rest of Europe. This status is, however, now questioned by young Africans.

*'If you are looking at opportunities for jobs, Brexit messes you up a lot. Previously you were able to take your job and work elsewhere in the EU or study elsewhere; now you have to do what we do; you have to get visa's and work permits and all of that; the opportunities get like cut immensely. But we don't know what the deal is...'*

South Africa, 18-35, White Higher SEC

In cases where young Africans identified Brexit as an opportunity for them, meanwhile, concerns were expressed about the UK visa system's efficiency and practicability.

*'I think it will be a good thing for us. They will need young workers; however, they must facilitate the issuing of visa.'*

Morocco, 25-35, ABC1

## African perspectives on young British people

During conversations about the UK, young Africans were asked to imagine a person their age and gender, but from and living in the UK. This section offers insights into African perspectives on young British people based on their discussions of young British peoples' values, worries, hopes and aspirations, and the societal challenges they would like to solve (Figure 5).

### **Young people from the UK are imagined as committed to interpersonal values and good character**

Values most commonly associated with young people in the UK include respect, honesty, family and integrity. **Error! Reference source not found.** These suggest that, from the perspective of young Africans, building and maintaining strong interpersonal relationships and embodying 'good character' in their day-to-day lives is key for young people in the UK. Such values stand in contrast to the negative narratives of the UK and British society as racist and elitist, suggesting that young Africans dissociate their British peers from these issues.

### **Young people from the UK are defined by their ambitions for personal success**

The hopes and aspirations associated with young people in the UK highlight young Africans' views of the strong personal aspirations held by their British peers. Professional success stands out as most commonly associated with hope; and is conveyed by references to business, jobs, riches, companies and brands. Underlying this, however, values of social and interpersonal harmony are also expressed in references to children, family, contribution, and community.

### **Idealisations of the UK are reflected in the belief that young people in the UK are free of worry**

Personal worries most commonly associated with young people in the UK include a mix of the universal (money, family and friends), youth-focussed (studies, the future, and dreams), country-specific (Brexit), and the superficial (looks and likes). This variety sits in contrast to the similarly popular view that young people in the UK worry about nothing, which reflects the narrative of the UK as an idealised place of prosperity, security and opportunity.

Figure 5: Young people from the UK's Values, hopes, worries, and challenges, according to young Africans

TOP 15 VALUES MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK



TOP 15 HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK



TOP 15 WORRIES MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK



TOP 15 SOCIETAL CHALLENGES MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK



## 2.3 British Narratives of Africa

### Africa as a place

#### **'Africa is not a country' - but generalisations remain habitual and pervasive**

The mantra that 'Africa is not a country' is a recurrent feature of contemporary UK communications about Africa. The phrase acts as a call to British people to wake up to the diversity of Africa – to stop seeing it as a monolithic entity and to educate themselves on regional and national differences. As such, it constitutes one of a number of counter-narratives currently active in British popular culture environments seeking to challenge stereotypes about the African continent, African nations and African identities.

Conversations with young people from across the UK suggest that these counter-narratives are gaining traction. Focus group participants were often highly conscious and critical of the biases in the media they consume, as well as cognizant of their own limited knowledge and understanding. In the absence of this knowledge and understanding, however, the tendency of UK youth remains to generalise heavily when talking about Africa, extrapolating based on what they have seen or heard about particular countries or regions in Africa.

*'Not so much countries, but the plains... My geography is so bad. We're saying these countries, and I'm, like, Morocco? So, don't trust anything I say, but in general, in my mind, you've got culture at the top and culture at the bottom, and then plains in the middle. That's a really, really dumb and ignorant way of seeing it.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

What is seen or heard typically derives from piecemeal consumption of information gathered from a diverse range of touchpoints, including news stories, charity fundraising adverts on television and online, holiday brochures, second-hand accounts of people's visits to a single country, photographs posted on social media, and special adaptations of popular television shows. The information provided by these sources is often one-dimensional, poorly contextualised, and inherently invested in portraying only extreme representations of African countries, whether that be to grab and hold attention, elicit a donation, or encourage a purchase. However, while a number of young UK audiences were conscious of the limitations of the media they are exposed to, it remains the best available to them without actively taking steps to conduct research.

*'Ethiopia for me seems to always be in the programmes and adverts because they constantly need aid... And, in fact, that might not be the case. There must be other areas of Ethiopia that are developing, but the perception is war, pirates... I imagine there's a school system, and healthcare - I don't think it's as awful; I think times change quicker than we realise.'*

Manchester, 25-35

## These generalisations tend towards idealised or demonised extremes

Idealised generalisations of Africa as a place focus primarily on African communities, cultures and places. Negative generalisations, meanwhile, emphasise a diverse range of issues, including poverty inequality, corruption, instability, conflict and violence, and negative cultural practices. All are described in detail below.

### Idealised Africa

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#### Communities

Both UK communications of Africa and African-ness and conversations with young people in the UK demonstrated a pattern of imagining people in Africa as highly socially engaged and committed to one another. A number of UK participants, for example, imagined family values as a defining characteristic of young Africans the same age as them. This view was attributed to a range of factors, including the close family ties associated with members of the African diaspora in the UK, families; as well as the tight social fabric connoted by ideas of 'the tribe'.

*'I don't know if this is across all of Africa, but I know in East Africa definitely, there is a tribe mentality. So if you're in the clan or tribe and you need help with your medical bills, you can go inside that clan and you can also go to the other ones because you're part of the main tribe.'*

Cardiff 18-24

#### Cultures

UK conversations consistently pointed towards a view of African cultures as defined by a number of positive attributes, including the commitment to preserving local traditions and history; connectedness with the environment; a strong sense of spirituality; and an innate vibrancy expressed with colour, music and dance.

*'The clothing is really bright, like when you see African people wearing their traditional clothing, it's really colourful. It's bright. Like with their flags: you'll realise it's an African flag most probably because it's got kind of the cream, red, kind of the bright colours and lots of combinations of those.'*

London, 25-35

#### Places

Idealisations of African places recurrently highlighted the rich and unique biodiversity and ecology of the African continent, as well as iconic landscapes and geographical features like the Sahara Desert and Table Mountain. These idealisations consistently privilege rural, natural settings, largely excluding references to urban African environments. Audiences often associated them with David Attenborough and the BBC, although other sources including special African episodes of shows such as Top Gear, as well as awards like National Geographic's 'Wildlife Photographer of the Year', were also mentioned by participants. Disney's The Lion King, too, was identified by a number of participants as an

early and influential information source which invested their image of Africa as a place with extremely positive associations.

## Demonised Africa

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### Poverty

The association between Africa and poverty in the imaginations of young UK audiences has become entrenched following decades of charity communications highlighting issues such as famine and drought; lack of clean drinking water; poor health and sanitation; and lack of access to lifesaving medicines. As a result, participants frequently imagined Africa as poor, largely undeveloped in terms of housing, infrastructure and industries, and predominantly rural.

Charity organisations repeatedly named as sources of the Impoverished Africa narrative include WaterAid, Oxfam, the Red Cross, Comic Relief and LiveAid. Many of these organisations have played an influential role in shaping the rise of development agendas described in the Historical Review (see pg. 35). Communications by these organisations highlighting an overwhelming need for aid was regarded by many participants as the single biggest influence on how UK audiences imagine Africa today.

*'[People who wouldn't associate Africa with poverty are those who have] not seen, I know it sounds bad, but Live Aid. There's the big thing at Christmas, the one song in the background that they redo, and that's what you associate. Every year, that comes back around, you see the same starving children and whatnot, and that is your image of Africa again.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

### Inequality

The conversation in the majority of UK youth groups indicated a view of Africa as beset by a wide range of inequalities. In order of frequency of mention, these included severe socioeconomic inequality, racial inequality, and gender inequality.

*'I'm sure there will be more affluent parts of it. You could go to Malawi and there will be places in Malawi where there are huge villas and rich people live there. You could easily have areas of South Africa that are poor too.'*

Edinburgh, 18-24

Awareness and knowledge socioeconomic inequality in African states derived from a number of different sources, including the availability of stories about extravagantly wealthy leaders of impoverished countries; the juxtaposition of charity communications highlighting poverty with the tourism and entertainment industries representation of Africa as a place of luxury and adventure; and experiences brought back by friends and family. Racial inequality was associated by participants primarily with South Africa, thanks, in large part, to the iconic figure of Nelson Mandela and his role in bringing about the end of Apartheid. Gender inequality, meanwhile, is becoming increasingly salient following awareness-raising efforts of figures like Meghan Markle and Harry Windsor.

*'Gender mutilation, that happens a lot in African countries and women are less likely to get an education and they're seen as children breeders.'*

Cardiff, 18-24

## **Corruption**

UK conversations consistently highlighted corruption as an endemic problem across the African continent. The notoriety of members of African country elites who have amassed vast wealth at the expense of their country, such as Robert Mugabe and Isabel Dos Santos, mean that UK audiences have a ready pool of icons of corruption with which to substantiate this association. Socioeconomic inequality was also frequently linked to poverty and acted as a signal of endemic corruption for a number of participants. Finally, question marks were raised over the perceived failure of decades of charitable donations to have a discernible impact on the wellbeing of African countries,

*'There's so much aid that goes to these countries but does the money actually get to the end person where it's needed? Does it actually filter down to the people who need it? Like you see it again coming back to South Africa, the President, he was ousted out of some corruption scandal.'*

London, 25-35

## **Instability, conflict and violence**

The perception of Africa and African countries as dominated by threats of conflict and violence was widespread among the youth discussion groups in the UK. In its most extreme form, focus group participants expressed concern about the serious risks posed by severe political instability across the continent; repressive Government regimes and rebels; the activities of militia, pirate, and other rogue armed groups; and Islamic terrorist groups. Problems related to organized crime and gang violence were also highlighted, most frequently in connection to South Africa.

*'If I was going to South Africa, I'd want a tour guide with me to make sure that I didn't wander into off the beaten track. And that's also like Somalia where they have the boats and the pirates. Then disease because of the HIV. There are child soldiers in Kenya and all the civil wars and there are war factions so there's not concrete developed government in some countries. It's like war chiefs that rule the lands, and a lot of tribal people.'*

Edinburgh, 18-24

## **Negative cultural practices**

A distinctly negative narrative of African cultures was indicated by a series of associations of Africa with violent and culturally proscribed (from a UK perspective) superstitions and practices. These included stories of men in Uganda forcing their wives to breastfeed them as a cure for AIDS, references to cannibalism, forced marriage, child marriages, female genital mutilation and voodoo.

*'My mom sent me an article about how women are being forced to breastfeed their husbands. They believe it can cure AIDs and cure cancer. But these women don't have the milk to feed their children.'*

Belfast, 18-24

In terms of information sources, a number of social documentaries, news media stories and popular entertainment media were identified as contributing to the overall narrative. Participants also, once again, linked the negative narrative to the overarching association between Africa and poverty, suggesting that these negative cultural practices are a product of, sustained by, and help to sustain harsh socioeconomic conditions and underdevelopment.

### **These extremes mean that, as places, African countries are frequently imagined and represented in opposition to the UK**

The recurrent 'othering' of African countries in contrast to the UK may indicate the influence of neo-colonial framings in the construction of UK and African identities. UK conversations indicated, for example, a primitivist tendency to idealise the timelessness of African tribal culture, to the extent that they were regarded as wholly cut off from 'modern' society.

*'In Kenya, the Masai tribes that still live rural, since the dot of time. Since man has been living, they've been doing the same stuff. [It's] so different from here, very different. No matter where you go, you're going to find nothing like that in Europe.'*

Edinburgh 25-35

Similarly, imagery of Africa often shows vast, empty, sublime landscapes, signalling a fantasy of complete 'otherness' to the UK: while the UK is congested and stressful, Africa is portrayed as vast, fantasy-like, sparsely-populated, spacious and serene. Aerial views of the land reinforce the emptiness of these landscapes. They also represent Africa as a place that is devoid of people with their own voices and narratives.

Such examples suggest a pattern of imagining and representing African countries always in terms of their oppositional relationship to the UK, rather than in their own right. This pattern serves to perpetuate myths of African countries' total otherness, by repeatedly portraying Africa as extreme relative to the more moderate UK.

### **Countries and regions which diverge from negative stereotypes are often dissociated from the idea of 'Africa'**

The majority of groups described Africa as unevenly developed in terms of its countries, cities, industries, and services. Countries and regions that were seen as more developed include Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, and South Africa, with Cape Town standing out as the location considered most developed by young UK audiences.

The tourism industry has played a key role in promoting these diverging perceptions of specific places in Africa, as has the capacity of countries like South Africa to host

international sporting events (e.g. 2010 FIFA World Cup, South Africa) and compete successfully on the world stage (e.g. South Africa's victory in the 2019 Rugby World Cup).

*'From a sporting perspective, South Africa has held the World Cup in rugby and football, but that's more focused on South Africa really. There never seems to be anything held out with the other African nations. The cup gets held but there's never an Olympics in Lagos or something like that.'*

Edinburgh, 25-35

However, while these places provided a more positive foil to the otherwise overarching association between Africa and poverty, this association was sometimes so dominant as to lead audiences to dissociate countries like Egypt and South Africa with 'Africa' as a whole.

*'When I think of Egypt, I think of luxury. Hotels and things like that. I actually didn't know Egypt was even in Africa until I was doing my homework. Morocco as well. You hear that more as being a holiday destination than poverty.'*

Belfast, 18-24

# African countries in the world

## The African continent as a whole is perceived as lagging behind

This perception relates both to ideas of the material and socioeconomic development of the continent, as well as to the degree to which it aligns with international standards of human rights. From a socioeconomic perspective, this view is clearly linked to the entrenched association of African countries with poverty and corruption. Even in the cases of 'more developed' countries like South Africa, participants queried the extent to which they could be considered developed on a global scale.

*'I think developed is probably not the best word to use because while there are really rich people in Africa, I don't think there are any areas that would be classed as developed, even Nairobi or Cape Town or stuff. I don't think they would even be classed as developed. They're just more affluent than other areas.'*

Edinburgh, 18-24

In terms of human rights standards, meanwhile, the associations of African countries with inequality, instability, conflict and violence all contribute to the image of Africa as a place in which people live in a heightened state of vulnerability – often due to the failings of African countries themselves.

*'I think they're behind the times really, aren't they? Like, they're treating women like they're not equals, just really behind the times isn't it?'*

Belfast 25-35

## The exploitation of African countries by foreign agents is recognised as both an historical and contemporary reality

The exploitation of African countries by non-African countries, organisations and individuals was acknowledged by participants as both an historical and contemporary reality, indicating their awareness of the trajectory described in Historical Review. European colonisation was identified as project which effectively stripped many African countries of their wealth and natural resources. Contemporary exploitation of African countries was observed in, for example, the operations of gas and oil giants in Nigeria; mining operations in countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Botswana and South Africa; poaching and trophy hunting; and financial indebtedness of African states to foreign powers. Compounding these issues, Black British participants also spoke of how African countries were frequently dissociated from the many luxury items and amenities their resources are used to produce, effectively rendering them invisible within the global supply chain of high-value products.

*'Like we said, we talk about poor in money and society and people think, oh, obviously the UK make everything, or the US, or China. But then the products in your phone, they're from Africa. You could talk about all those products that are made in Africa, but because of this perception that we're so poor and we don't have money, it means that, oh, only the West makes such things.'*

Some young research participants, finally, asked questions about the complicity of citizens and leaders of African countries in the exploitation of their country. These questions presumed that some people in African countries were happy either to facilitate or actively exploit their own countries, in return for financial incentives.

*'There was something on Facebook and it was a little cartoon of a woman who'd raised a little cub, and when it gets big, the cub goes off and gets shot. And it looks back at the women and the woman just walks away from it, because there's that side of it in Africa that provides the trade for it to be able to be done. But it's not the majority; it is the minority.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

### **There is evidence of variance in the degree to which regions and countries in Africa are imagined as connected both to Europe and the wider world**

At a very broad level, participants tended to split the continent into four parts, reflecting different types and degrees of connectedness to Europe and the wider world.

Culturally and socioeconomically, South Africa was frequently perceived as the most aligned with Western norms and standards of living. This was based, variously, on the diagnosis of common ground in the form of rugby, cricket and football; the belief that South Africa was far more affluent and developed than other African countries; and on the idea that South Africa was simply 'more white' than the rest of the continent.

*'I think there's more influence from European culture. There's a larger white population in South Africa who have been in power for most of the time there, so they've had a lot of influence on what we see. Then North Africa is almost part of Europe in how it's developed over its history.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

Northern African countries, notably Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, were acknowledged as socio-culturally distinct from Europe, but nevertheless perceived as more connected due to their close historical ties and physical proximity to Europe. These countries were also frequently dissociated from Sub-Saharan African countries, on the basis of both racial, socio-cultural, and socio-economic characteristics. In general, the remainder of Sub-Saharan Africa was identified as the least connected to the wider world. For some participants this was especially the case for landlocked countries towards the centre of the continent, which were seen as more remote and isolated.

*'[At school we learned] about the countries being landlocked. They said the more centralised countries can't receive goods from other countries in the world because they've not got shores to transport things off.'*

Manchester 18-24

## **The growing profile of African creative industries, sports and brands indicates a growing awareness of African brands and products competing successfully on the global stage**

The success of the Afrobeat genre as a global force in today's global music scene was acknowledged by a number of groups in the UK. This success is embodied in the international popularity of artists including Burna Boy, Wizkid and Davido, from Nigeria; as well as UK-born groups such as NSG.

*'Afrobeats music is really popular today. If you look at the charts and stuff, you've got groups, and it's really big. [Groups like] NSG, its where they got their influences from - they've all adopted African styles.'*

Manchester, 18-24

Sporting success has also contributed to the global cache of African countries such as South Africa, which hosted the FIFA World Cup in 2010, and won the Rugby World Cup in 2019, as well as Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, all of which are seen as leaders in the world of athletics thanks to iconic athletes such as Kenyan Eliud Kipchoge and British-Somalian Mo Farah.

Evidence of the wide variety of UK communications aimed at portraying African brands as high-quality, refined and aspirational also signals a shift in the representation and currency attributed to African products in the international consumer marketplace.

## UK-African country relations

**UK-African relations are framed by one of two lenses: exploitation and aid**

### Exploitation

UK audiences were very aware of the UK's role in the exploitation of Africa and African countries, described in depth in the Historical Review. Some participants exhibited concern that this history could potentially poison relations between themselves and citizens of African countries in the future.

*'The whole continent was colonised by Europeans... you had French colonies, you had Belgian, you had German and you had UK, Portuguese, everyone had a piece of the action unfortunately. I think that what was left over was stripped of all their assets over a period of time and they have been left with this. Which is why you think they will hate us whenever you go there.'*

Edinburgh, 25-35

Participants among Black-British groups, in particular, also spoke of contemporary, more subtle forms of exploitation perpetrated by the UK against African countries. These included, for example, the mobilisation of tropes and stereotypes drawn from colonial discourse to portray African countries as unable to look after themselves and the UK as the noble provider of aid; to provide a smokescreen for the persistent exploitation of African countries at the hands of UK businesses.

*'The whole aspect of focusing on corruption and Africa, I think it goes back to colonial days. Like, look at these people – they're savages; we need to go over there and help them. And while you're helping them, you're stealing their products and stuff like that. Look at this, the whole thing in Nigeria with Shell and exploitation; it's just like, oh, they've done it again, let's go over there and help them, type thing.'*

London, Black-British, 18-35

### Aid

The association between Africa and poverty in the imaginations of young UK audiences has become entrenched following decades of charity communications highlighting issues such as famine and drought; lack of clean drinking water; poor health and sanitation; and lack of access to lifesaving medicines. The influence of British charities, including LiveAid, Comic Relief, Oxfam and the Red Cross, was clear in UK conversations about the source of this association.

UK conversations indicated dissatisfaction with aid-based framing of UK-African relations, which was manifest in one of two forms. First, participants exhibited an awareness of the expediency of showcasing the worst of Africa and African countries, as a tactic for increasing donations. As such, participants felt that that charity advertisements could not be relied on to 'tell the whole story'.

*'Obviously, even when charities do try to do good work, they obviously have to make Africa seem really bad to get help in the first place. So even a party that's trying to do good actually depicts it as bad - it's not just the media.'*

London 18-24

Second, the credibility of charity organisations was called into question, largely on the basis of the perceived lack of positive impact of over three decades of charity advertisements and donations. This was most pronounced among participants who questioned if and how the money raised was being used for the intended purposes – either due to the fault of charities themselves, or because of endemic corruption in the countries those charities work in.

*'If it helps then no matter what the motivation is, then I guess that's a good thing. But I know a lot of the charities are involved in Africa and in a way, it's exploitative because they have huge salaries and they're getting paid massive amounts. And then a lot of the aid and money that's there gets diverted elsewhere into the military coups and stuff like that.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

## African countries as destinations

### The promise of unique, bucket-list experiences is the main driver for travel to African countries

In all conversations in all locations in the UK, participants spoke of Africa as a land where 'once-in-a-lifetime' experiences await people who visit the continent. These experiences include safari, ancient monuments such as the Egyptian pyramids, diverse landscapes and ecologies, adventure sports such as scuba diving and dune-surfing, and luxury vacations. Many of these experiences are regarded as unique to Africa, and so constitute a key differentiator in the imagination of UK audiences.

*'There are only a few places where you can see the big five, the main ones. I have a friend who goes to South Africa every year. She loves talking about it and she actually volunteers, making sure the animals are in the right place and they're breeding. I think that's a cool side of it: actually getting your hands dirty.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

Despite contributing to an attractive and appealing image of African countries in the eyes of UK audiences, communications which draw on and reinforce this narrative exhibit a tendency to commodify African countries, as well as to recycle elements of the UK's colonial legacy (for example, the safari pith helmet) in their attempt to evoke ideas of adventure in their audience.

A thriving tourist industry, supported by both the 'owned' media of various travel brands, and the 'earned' media of UK holiday goers sharing their experiences via social media, is the primary source of the Bucket List Africa narrative. Secondly, however, UK conversations highlighted the role of popular entertainment media set in African countries for popularizing this particular narrative.

*'I do think of South Africa when I think of wildlife, like The Apprentice when they went to South Africa and tried to sell wine and safari tours. It would be an expensive holiday.'*

Edinburgh, 18-24

### The appeal of volunteering is dimming in the wake of criticisms of vanity and 'white saviourism'

Volunteering as part of development projects was acknowledged by several groups as a reason why people from the UK travel to African countries. Participants expressed mixed sentiment towards these acts of charity, however: while the development aims of projects themselves were regarded as admirable, they were also regarded as platforms for individuals to demonstrate altruism to peers back home. This suggests a resistance to virtue signalling by young people from the UK.

*'They go to Africa for two weeks volunteering and that's all they talk about and then they feel deep because they're going to Africa. If someone does it, it's always a big*

*thing. Everybody jumps on the bandwagon: you are amazing. Well done. They've helped these kids, they've taught them English for two weeks, they're unreal.'*

Edinburgh, 18-24

Continuing debates in the UK regarding the issue of 'white saviourism' in media produced by charities like Comic Relief were also highlighted in UK conversations, suggesting the traction gained by these critiques among young people in the UK.

### **Safety concerns constitute the single biggest inhibitor of travel to African countries**

The perception of Africa and African countries as unsafe for both inhabitants and visitors was widespread among the UK groups. This sense of danger manifested along a spectrum from more to less extreme, and also varied in the extent to which 'Westerners' were perceived as more or less at risk than the population at large.

At the most extreme end of the spectrum, focus group participants expressed concern about a serious risk to the lives of inhabitants and visitors to African countries alike. This risk was associated with threats including severe political instability; piracy and militias; disease, most notably Ebola; and Islamic terrorism. Less extreme, but nonetheless a clear obstacle to visiting and living in African countries, participants also expressed concern about the possibility of organised crime such as kidnapping, as well as gang violence. Finally, there were concerns about the threat of petty crime such as theft and scamming, as well as threats posed by traffic. Participants attributed many of these perceptions to stories reported in the news, as well as to advice shared by tourism agencies and shared by other tourists and members of the diaspora.

*'There's Boko Haram and the girls in Nigeria who were kidnapped. And there was that killing campaign a few years ago - I feel it was Nigeria - about children being recruited for insurgent groups.'*

Manchester, 18-24

In terms of the specific risks posed to non-Africans, some participants identified people from the UK as high-value targets for kidnappers, as well as potential targets for acts of religious extremism. They referred to recent news stories, including the murder of Scandinavian women Louisa Vesterager Jespersen and Maren Ueland in Morocco, as evidence of the specific threat posed to non-Africans. Tourists were also generally seen as more likely to fall victim to scams. Other young research participants, however, suggested that the availability of 'gated' tourist hotspots, including luxury hotels, villas and beaches, served to reduce the risk to non-Africans, by isolating them from the most high-risk areas.

*'I remember my teacher had come back from South Africa and they were robbed twice at gunpoint in the space of a week, and I was horrified. But I read quite a lot growing up about how kidnappings are very common, and murder and rape. It's because there's such a wealth disparity between the rich and the poor, and especially with tourism, because it's quite a popular place to go, the crime rates are quite high.'*

Cardiff 25-35

## UK perspectives on young Africans

During conversations about African countries, young people from the UK were asked to imagine a person their age and gender, but from and living in an African country. This section offers insights into UK perspectives on young Africans based on their discussions of young African peoples' values, worries, hopes and aspirations, and the societal challenges they would like to solve (see Figure 6).

### **Young people in the UK and African countries refer to a common set of values when imagining each other, and appear to share common hopes and aspirations**

Associations between young Africans and family values were by far the most common in conversations with young people from the UK. These values were echoed in other popular associations which emphasised interpersonal values and good character, such as kindness, caring, loyalty, respect and community. In terms of hopes and aspirations, meanwhile, hopes for professional success were prominent. This aligns with what young Africans think about their peers in the UK, suggesting the presence of common ground in terms of how young people in each place think about the other. Finally, there was evidence of a common set of hobbies and pastimes, including sport, music, going to bars and clubs, reading and watching popular television and films.

### **However, this common ground is currently belied by the perceived gulf in material circumstances**

In terms of values, conversations with young people in the UK made clear the extent to which their perspectives of their African peers are mediated primarily through the lens of poverty. Young Africans are imagined having to constantly care for one another to overcome hardships, hence the attribution of strong family values.

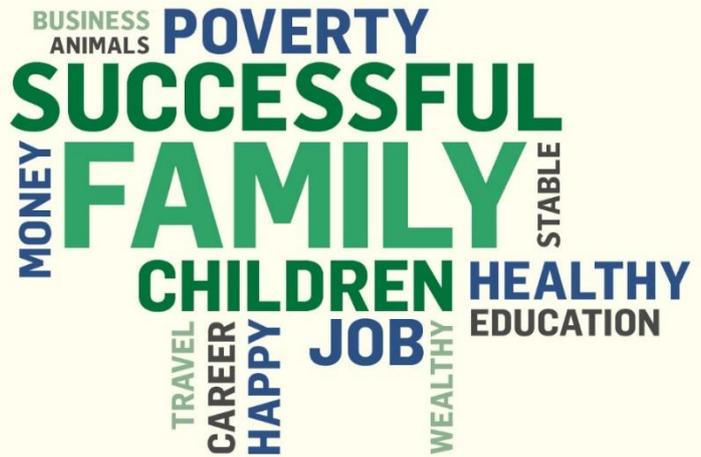
Likewise, conversations reflected the extent to which young people in the UK imagine their African peers as driven primarily by a desire to escape adverse conditions such as poverty and instability, which were reflected in discussions of their hopes and aspirations; worries and societal challenges.

Figure 6: Young Africans values, hopes, worries and challenges, according to young people from the UK

TOP 15 VALUES MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG AFRICANS



TOP 15 HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG AFRICANS



TOP 15 SOCIETAL CHALLENGES MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG AFRICANS



TOP 15 WORRIES MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG AFRICANS



## 2.4 Comparing Narratives: A summary of key insights

Comparing African narratives of UK expressed by young people living in African countries with those expressed by young people from the UK about Africa brings a number of key insights to light. These insights are summarised below, to better define the mission of the New Narratives programme.

**There is a dualism in terms of both young Africans narratives of the UK, and of young people from the UK's narratives of Africa**

In both cases, a forcefield of competing, positive and negative narratives about the other place is apparent. This is illustrated by Figure 7, which arranges the dominant perspectives of each place as expressed by the other, grouping these based on whether they are positive or negative.

**Figure 7: Young people's perspectives of the other place**

	Young people from the UK's perspectives of Africa	Young Africans perspectives of the UK	
+VE S	Community Culture Landscapes and nature	Security Tradition Prosperity Efficiency Justice	Equality Unity Freedom
-VES	Poverty Inequality Corruption Instability, conflict and violence Negative cultural practices	Racism Elitism Inaccessibility	

**Young people in both places imagine the other place as the embodiment of qualities and characteristics which they believe their place lacks**

A number of young people living in African countries, for example, identified the UK as the antithesis to their country due to the stability and fairness of its systems and structures, whereas a number of the UK perceived Africa as home to tightly knit, organic and rooted communities with strong social bonds - a condition which they thought has attenuated

somewhat in 'more developed countries due to, for example, the rise of technology and consumer culture.

### **There is an inversion in terms of the positive and negative narratives of that young people express of the other place**

As the previous sections illustrate, the UK is admired principally for its strong systems and structures, which provide, for example, increased security, prosperity, efficiency, and access to justice. However, young Africans are concerned about social issues such as racism and elitism.

Africa, by contrast, is perceived by young people from the UK to be systemically weak, lacking the infrastructure and capacity associated with greater levels of 'development'. However, at the community and interpersonal level, young people from the UK maintain an (albeit heavily romanticised) image of African cultures as extremely rich, vibrant, colourful, and largely unchanged by time, and share the understanding that African communities are characterised by a high level of social engagement and commitment to one another.

### **Considered on the international stage, there is a distinct contrast and opposition between how young people from the UK perceive Africa, versus how young Africans perceive the UK**

For example, whereas Africa is perceived as lagging behind both socioeconomically and in terms of human rights, the UK is perceived as world leading in a number of sectors, most notably in terms of academia, sports, and creatives industries such as music, film and television.

Likewise, whereas Africa is perceived as perpetually exploited by nation-states and powerful private sector interests from different parts of the world, the UK is regarded as an economic and military superpower with substantial influence worldwide

Finally, whereas Africa in general, and sub-Saharan and central Africa in particular, is perceived as poorly connected to the rest of the world, the UK is perceived by young Africans as projecting a strong, coherent and unique identity to the rest of the world – with this perception drawing on factors including the belief that the UK is the last, and certainly the most visible monarchy, in Europe, as well as its history as an influential actor in global affairs.

### **Signs of a shared set of 'youth' values, aspirations and pastimes point to fertile common ground for cultivating stronger connections between young people**

Across both the countries and regions of the UK, and those of Africa, narratives of British-African relations in both places are pervaded by concerns about colonialism and neo-colonialism, which have the potential to render the prospect of young people engaging with peers from the other place as fraught and uncertain. At the same time, however, evidence of common values, aspirations and pastimes suggests a potentially more equal, comfortable, and recognisable common ground for young people to engage with each other. As comments by young people across both places suggest, these common values, aspirations and pastimes are felt to be rooted in the shared experience of being young at the same point in time.



**3.**

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This section provides a broad array of findings and insights designed to support the British Council in the exploration and development of New Narratives of African countries and the UK. The section is structured to reflect four questions that influence perceptions of the UK among young African audiences, and of African countries among young young people from the UK. These questions include:

**1. How is the UK/African country in question currently perceived by the target audience?**

To inform the objectives of New Narratives – what perceptions do they seek to change?

**2. What are the key changes on the horizon?**

To future-proof New Narratives, by anticipating and responding to opportunities and challenges.

**3. What are the considerations for adapting communications to the target audience?**

To ensure that New Narratives has the best opportunity of reaching, engaging and impacting the target audience.

**4. What are young people from the UK/young Africans' perspectives of their own countries?**

To contextualise New Narratives with the perceptions and expectations of young people whose countries they aim to represent.

To address these questions, this section presents the following for both the UK and African countries:

**1. Imagined topographies:** Mappings of the UK and Africa that reflect the variation in how young people from the UK speak about and picture different parts of Africa, and how young Africans spoke about and picture different parts of the UK. Based on data gathered during youth workshops in all locations.

**2. Trends in visual communications and popular culture:** Insights into how representations of the UK (in African countries) and Africa (in the UK) may be changing, based on visual analysis of data gathered from across all countries and regions in the UK, as well as five African countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

**3. Demographic and psychographic factors, plus key touchpoints:** Overviews of the key demographic, psychographic and key touchpoints that may affect how young African audiences respond to representations of the UK, and vice versa. Based on data gathered during youth workshops in all locations.

**4. Youth perceptions and expectations about their own country:** Insights into the salient reference points that young people in each country recognise as representing their own country.

Together, these knowledge components and bodies of evidence provide the basis for a UK/African ***New Narratives inquiry and engagement framework*** (see Figure 8).

**FIGURE 8: UK/African new narratives inquiry and engagement framework**

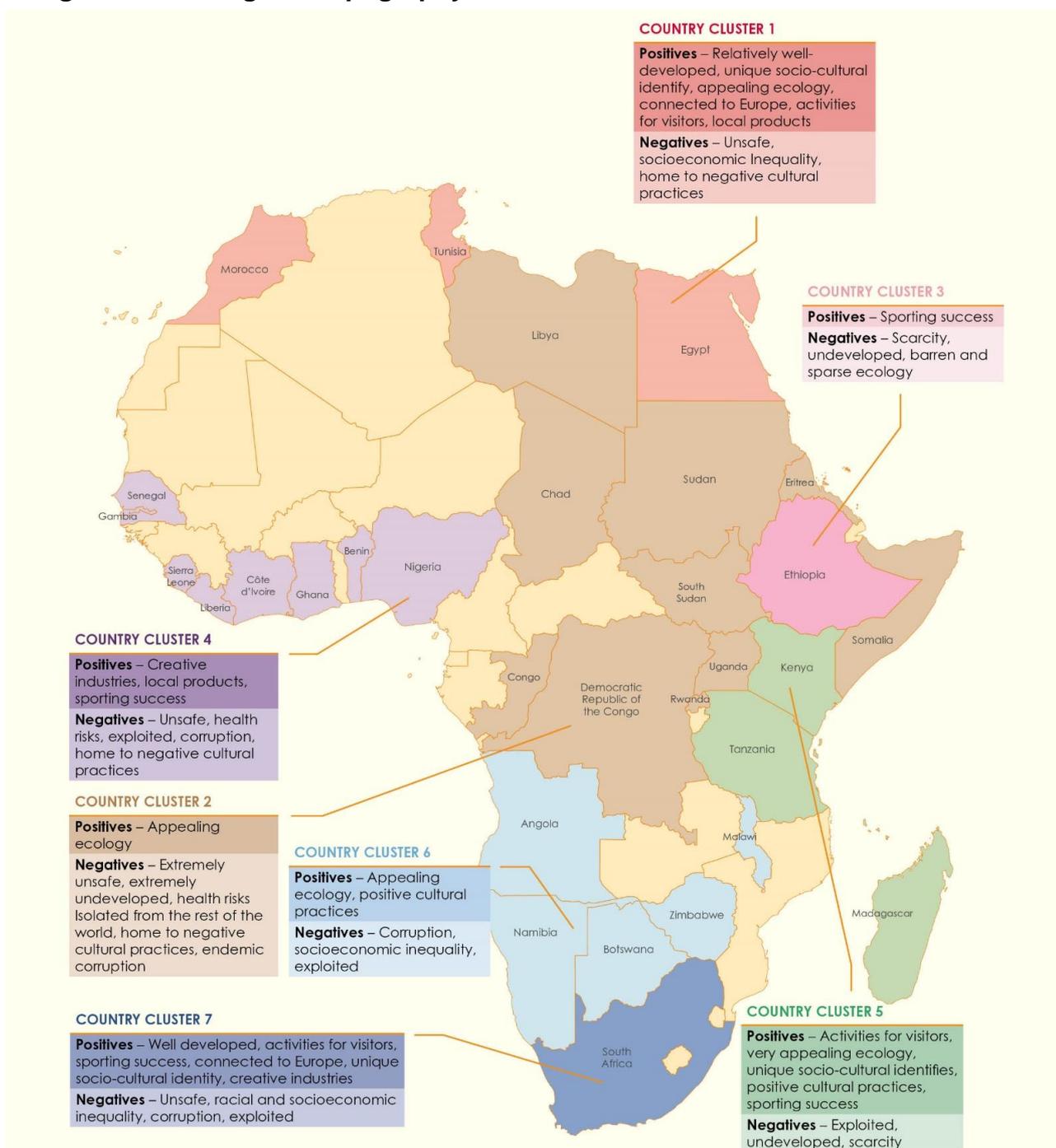


# 3.1 New Narratives of African Countries

## Imagined topographies: mapping UK perceptions of Africa

At an individual level, young people from the UK tended to show very poor knowledge about the geography or social or cultural diversity of Africa. However, treating conversations in aggregate reveals a set of patterns in terms of how young people from the UK discuss and picture specific countries and clusters of countries. Figure 9 maps these patterns to re-create an imagined topography of Africa from the young British perspective. This topography identifies seven distinct country-clusters, the key positive and negative associations of which are described in greater detail below.

**Figure 9: An imagined topography of Africa**



## Country cluster 1: Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco

<b>Positives</b>	
<b>Relatively well developed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luxury tourism, beach holidays, hotels and resorts mean that countries in this group are perceived as more developed than Sub-Saharan countries (exc. South Africa), as well as other North African countries like Sudan and Libya</li> <li>• Greater awareness of urban (and urbane) hubs such as Cairo also contribute to a perception of superior levels of development, both in terms of city infrastructure, and industrialisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Unique socio-cultural identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utterly socio-culturally distinct from the rest of the continent – to the point that some participants did not readily identify these countries as ‘African’, but rather part of the Middle East</li> <li>• Signifiers of differences included: skin colour, religion (Islam), history (Ancient Egypt + monuments not seen as ‘African’ but uniquely Egyptian), language (Arabic); Aladdin vs. the Lion King.</li> </ul>
<b>Appealing ecology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautiful/sublime natural landscapes, e.g. waterfalls in Morocco; sunsets in Egypt, desert exploration</li> <li>• Dry, very hot – but generally connected with suntanning rather than droughts (which connect with Sudan, Ethiopia, etc. more)</li> <li>• Not connected with wildlife – although one mention of scuba diving, marine wildlife.</li> </ul>
<b>Connectedness to Europe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived as closer to and more in touch with Europe (both culturally and historically); more ‘westernised’.</li> </ul>
<b>Activities for visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sightseeing and historical tourism – most notably Egyptian pyramids, mummies, etc.</li> <li>• Desert adventures: camels rides, 4x4s, dune surfing.</li> <li>• Also some more urbane attractions: nightlife, brunches, markets etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Local products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food - couscous, meat, Moroccan cakes</li> <li>• Luxury items – e.g. Egyptian cotton towels.</li> </ul>
<b>Negatives</b>	
<b>Unsafe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrorist attacks targeting luxury resorts in Tunisia have resulted in general concern for safety</li> <li>• Suggestion that, for some people in the UK, the connection with Islam (e.g. hear Islam, think ISIS) heightens this concern</li> <li>• Piracy</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kidnappings of holiday goers in Morocco</li> <li>• Dangerous streets, chaotic driving, etc.</li> <li>• Sense that danger increases outside of the gated communities of luxury resorts and established tourist routes.</li> </ul>
<b>Socioeconomic inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High number of billionaires in Morocco</li> <li>• Gated resorts segregated from the native majority who live in poverty</li> <li>• Areas of high development alongside impoverished areas – uneven urban development.</li> </ul>
<b>Home to negative cultural practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child brides and arranged marriages, forced marriages – tentatively linked to the perceived religiosity of these countries.</li> </ul>

**Country cluster 2: Uganda, Sudan, DRC, The Congo, Libya, Chad, Rwanda, Somalia, Eritrea**

<b>Positives</b>	
<b>Appealing ecology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some appeal in terms of lush rainforests; unique wildlife such as gorillas. However, this was not widely recognised, and localised to Uganda, DRC/Congo and Rwanda.</li> </ul>
<b>Negatives</b>	
<b>Extremely unsafe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of conflict and (civil) war - particularly in Sudan and 'Congo' – suggest the region is war-torn and dangerous. This association take precedence over any potential positives</li> <li>Notorious warlords such as Kony (Uganda) reinforce this association</li> <li>Also, the legacy of civil wars meaning that even if violence isn't happening now, its aftershocks are still felt, and danger persists – e.g. landmines in the Congo, visited by Diana and Harry</li> <li>Threat of violence means these places are even worse off than the 'Bob Geldof' countries – e.g. Ethiopia – where the main issue is scarcity</li> <li>Unstable nation-states – partition of Sudan</li> <li>Pirates – particularly connected to Somalia – association due to media including Ross Kemp's documentary; Tom Hanks film (Captain Philips)</li> <li>Somalian refugees also connected to civil war, country's history of violence and instability.</li> </ul>
<b>Extremely undeveloped</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>So poor and undeveloped respondents can't imagine a coherent political system in the region</li> <li>Reinforced by media coverage – e.g. of Sudan crisis.</li> </ul>
<b>Health risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threat of disease – communicated via charity appeals</li> <li>Also substance abuse, e.g. moonshine epidemic in Uganda (<a href="#">VICE documentary 2012</a>; <a href="#">Al Jazeera 2015</a>).</li> </ul>
<b>Isolated from the rest of the world</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived as physically isolated, limiting ability to interact with the wider world</li> <li>Also seen as remote, unvisited by outsiders – lack of visibility of tourism, people like them on social media going to visit.</li> </ul>
<b>Home to negative cultural practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media reporting on Ugandan men demanding to be breastfed (<a href="#">reported in the Guardian, 2020</a>).</li> </ul>
<b>Heavily exploited</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raw materials for iPhones etc extracted from Congo</li> <li>Also, diamonds, minerals, resources exploited</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connection with China and 'the West'; dissociative de-linking of Western tech and the African resources which go into them</li></ul>
<b>Endemic corruption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explanation for the poverty.</li></ul>

### Country cluster 3: Ethiopia

<b>Positives</b>	
<b>Sporting success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethiopian runners mentioned – but generally success in athletics was connected with Kenya.</li> </ul>
<b>Negatives</b>	
<b>Scarcity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People extremely poor, not enough to eat, have to walk long distances just to get basic amenities like water</li> <li>Ethiopian famine in particular ‘when I was growing up’ still prominent in reinforcing this image, associated with charities such as Oxfam, Red Cross, Comic Relief, Water Aid, Bob Geldof, BandAid</li> <li>General association with crises such as drought, famine, hunger, again largely attributed to the charities listed above</li> <li>‘Constantly need aid, obviously too behind’.</li> </ul>
<b>Undeveloped</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Living in (mud) huts; negatively juxtaposed with Egypt, Morocco (the northern countries ‘next to Europe’) and South Africa</li> <li>Not got real houses, no facilities, no proper healthcare, always need injections etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Barren and sparse ecology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No wildlife</li> </ul>

## Country cluster 4: Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Liberia

Positives	
<b>Creative industries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern music – artists mentioned include Burna Boy, WizKid, Davido.</li> </ul>
<b>Local products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food – e.g. rice and peas and curried goat. Associated with Nigeria and Ghana.</li> </ul>
<b>Sporting success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senegal and Ivory Coast footballers mentioned positively</li> <li>• Not just because of achievement, but because of altruism and focus on giving back to their country, e.g. Sadio Mane, Droga, Zaha.</li> </ul>
Negatives	
<b>Unsafe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats of violence due to conflict: in Sierra Leone, civil war and conflict over natural resources such as diamonds (Blood Diamonds); in Nigeria especially, terrorism; Boko Haram</li> <li>• News of kidnappings – particularly in Nigeria. Both endemic to the country, some connection with Boko Haram, but also a sense that these are particularly focussed on Westerners</li> <li>• Scamming and fraud, particularly again associated with Nigeria, scam artist stereotype</li> <li>• Legacy of political violence, e.g. General Butt Naked in Liberia. Communicated via documentaries.</li> </ul>
<b>Health risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ebola – particularly Sierra Leone. Contagious and therefore unsafe places to go</li> <li>• HIV - again connected to Sierra Leone</li> <li>• General association of Nigeria with disease.</li> </ul>
<b>Exploited</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploitation by big private companies, e.g. Shell, BP and oil in Nigeria.</li> <li>• Some connection with colonialism, e.g. French in Senegal</li> <li>• Sierra Leone and diamonds.</li> </ul>
<b>Corruption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linked to exploitation, Nigerian Government failing to use the money from oil-rich natural resources to improve the country. Where does it go?</li> <li>• Suggestion that this feeds stereotype of greedy lazy Africans – i.e. not enough scrutiny on the role of international private companies.</li> </ul>

<b>Home to negative cultural practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Voodoo – possibly from Nollywood movies</li><li>• Religion – particularly strict religious practices and views</li><li>• Both only identified by Black British groups.</li></ul>
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## Country cluster 5: Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles

Positives	
<b>Activities for visitors (Safari)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land of safari – Kenya the place to go, friends, family and tourism industry all concentrate the promise of safari in Kenya. Also connected to the Lion King</li> <li>• Safari variously identified as: the ideal holiday, trip of a lifetime, family friendly, something everyone wants to do, unique to Africa</li> <li>• Also connected with the country making the most its natural resources, economic empowerment. Made a business out of it</li> <li>• Some connection with tropical Madagascar (film), Mauritius – again, lush wildlife and ecology</li> <li>• Also, some connections with adventure holidays like Kilimanjaro.</li> </ul>
<b>Very appealing ecology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lush, green, full of wildlife – unique; the Big Five, biodiverse</li> <li>• Connects positively with conservation efforts</li> <li>• Also connects positively with the idea that people are close to the animals</li> </ul>
<b>Unique socio-cultural identities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local tribes and culture – embodied by the Masai – ancient, true to old traditions and cultural practices; ‘untouched’</li> <li>• Tribe mentality – caring for one another, strong family bonds, sharing within the tribe. Positive tribalism.</li> </ul>
<b>Positive cultural practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vibrant culture</li> <li>• Not bogged down with technology, sticking to more organic, native ways, close to the earth and nature</li> <li>• Languages, dress, food, dancing, music.</li> </ul>
<b>Sporting success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long distance runners. Best runners in the world come from Kenya.</li> </ul>
Negatives	
<b>Exploited</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poaching, big game hunting – particularly by Westerners and the uber-rich, e.g. <a href="#">Donald Trump Jnr, Ollie James from Love Island</a>.</li> <li>• Also, some sense that country / people are complicit in exploitation: e.g. raising animals for slaughter, enabling trophy hunting.</li> </ul>
<b>Undeveloped</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seen as predominantly rural, lacking development – even Nairobi, compared to the global ranking, is not ‘developed’</li> <li>• Wide open spaces, Savannah</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Also connected with poverty, need, aid.</li></ul>
<b>Scarcity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Friends at school going to help 'children in need' in Kenya – still a latent connection with poverty, need, aid.</li></ul>

## Country cluster 6: Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Angola

Positives	
<b>Appealing ecology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associations with wildlife, nature, etc. – e.g. wildlife reserves in Botswana.</li> </ul>
<b>Positive cultural practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional tribal lifestyles – communicated in particular by Scarlett Moffatt's the <a href="#">British Tribe Next Door</a> (Namibia)</li> <li>• Music, dance, headdresses, etc. (Zimbabwe).</li> </ul>
Negatives	
<b>Corruption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mugabe's legacy of corruption strongly linked to exploitation and inequality. 50 houses around the world while people are poor and dying</li> <li>• Also Panorama doc on <a href="#">Isabel Dos Santos</a>, Africa's 'Richest Woman', daughter of Angolan president, all corruption and exploitation.</li> </ul>
<b>Socioeconomic inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of human rights for the poor vs the rich – failure to provide basic needs like shelter, food, medicine, etc. while you have the super-rich dictators, etc.</li> <li>• socioeconomic inequality.</li> </ul>
<b>Exploited</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural resources being exploited by foreign powers; sold off to feed corruption of dictators</li> <li>• Connection with the De Beers diamond company, originally founded by British colonialist Cecil Rhodes.</li> </ul>

## Country cluster 7: South Africa

Positives	
<b>Well-developed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By far the most developed of any country in Africa – particularly associated with Cape Town</li> <li>• Seen as completely distinct from the rest of Africa in terms of its level of development</li> <li>• However, some awareness that this level of development may not be evenly distributed (inequality), and that big infrastructure projects such as the Cape Town Stadium may have been better spent on supporting impoverished areas</li> <li>• Level of development communicated via things like: the world cup; luxury Love Island villa; successful and heavily invested-in tourism industry (see also: <a href="#">The Apprentice South Africa</a>); reporting of democratic politics in the media (they actually have a functioning democracy of sorts).</li> </ul>
<b>Activities for visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safari, although not as frequently associated as Kenya. Volunteering on conservation projects</li> <li>• Landscapes, e.g. Table Mountain</li> <li>• Wine tasting and vineyards – e.g. more luxury activities</li> <li>• Shark diving</li> <li>• A place they would like to go, a great tourist attraction.</li> </ul>
<b>Sporting success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rugby World Cup. Also connected to racial inequality, using rugby, in particular, to move past that (Siya Kolisi)</li> <li>• Cricket</li> <li>• Sports which resonate in the UK, that most people in the UK play or watch.</li> </ul>
<b>Connected to europe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More influence of ‘European’ – read: white – culture, due to elite white population</li> <li>• Also, just more exposure to the European culture, more overlaps.</li> </ul>
<b>Unique socio-cultural identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinct from the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa: more like Europe, again due to colonial history and White population</li> <li>• Speak English, therefore more westernised</li> <li>• Looks more like Europe</li> <li>• Also, some reference (positive) to Afrikaans, blending local and European languages to create a unique socio-cultural signifier.</li> </ul>
<b>Creative industries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music, both traditional (vuvuzelas) and modern (NSG – Afrobeats).</li> </ul>

<b>Negatives</b>	
<b>Unsafe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread concerns about safety due to gang violence (the hood); guns, murder, rape; crime in general</li> <li>• Extremely urban associations with the crime – rather than political instability or militia-style violence</li> <li>• Need to not wander off the beaten track</li> <li>• Linked to high socioeconomic and racial inequality</li> <li>• Johannesburg perhaps more than Cape Town, which is more touristy, developed and safe.</li> </ul>
<b>Racial and socioeconomic inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legacy of apartheid – racial inequality, lack of human rights, Nelson Mandela. Racial segregation (towards Whites!), in <a href="#">Reggies Yates docs</a></li> <li>• Awareness of severe socioeconomic inequality, reflected in gated communities down the road from starving children.</li> </ul>
<b>Corruption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corrupt governments and mismanaged public spending</li> <li>• High profile court case against corrupt politicians, e.g. <a href="#">Zuma</a>, <a href="#">Ramaphosa</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Exploited</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wildlife poaching</li> <li>• Gold, diamonds, natural wealth in resources. For example, KrugerRand.</li> </ul>

## **Trend in visual and popular culture: British representation of African subjects and themes**

**Africa is far more salient within the UK visual communications landscape, than the UK is within the communications landscapes of African countries**

The visual data gathered representing Africa and African-ness in the UK was far richer, varied and more pervasive than that representing the UK and Britishness in African countries. This may indicate the greater relevance of African-centred discourse within the UK, compared to UK-centred discourse within African countries.

**Visual data suggests a movement away from extremely negative associations such as poverty and disaster**

This is reflected in the dominance of UK-based expressions of African empowerment, creativity, innovation and progress. Very often, these expressions signal young people, in particular, as the catalysts of these processes. Areas within which these expressions are visible include the arts, technology, and social movements aimed at social and political change.

**The landscape is increasingly defined by debate, polemic and controversy, alongside a call for deeper listening to how African people want to represent themselves**

There is robust evidence of the proliferation of counternarratives challenging many of the assumptions embedded in British discourse of Africa. These counternarratives are often communicated by hard-hitting voices from within the Black-British population and African Diaspora in the UK, many of whom have substantial influence among younger audiences, in particular. The impact of these counternarratives is visible in the greater sense of anxiety, contention and sensitivity emerging around representations of Africa – as in the controversies over white saviourism and cultural appropriation.

**Many positive portrayals still exhibit signs of idealisation, commodification and fetishization of Africa**

The idealisation, commodification and fetishization of African countries, people and themes is still widespread within UK visual communications and popular culture. These expressions are particularly dominant within the luxury travel industry, which routinely represents African countries and cultures as ripe for exploration, discovery and consumption by Western audiences.

**There are signs of renewed associations between African countries with ideas of vulnerability and fragility**

Climate anxiety and persistent associations of children with poverty threaten to undermine attempts to dissociate Africa from vulnerability and fragility. Representations of African countries, people and themes in these contexts tend to perpetuate the idea that Africa and Africans are in need of saving, rather than fellow agents in combatting these issues.

**These insights point to a set of visual trends that should be amplified, and a set that should be avoided.**

These trends are summarised in Figure 10, and illustrated in detail below, drawing on examples from the visual data analysis. Where appropriate, examples of data gathered from African countries is also provided, as evidence of trends that cut-across both African and British representations of African countries and people.

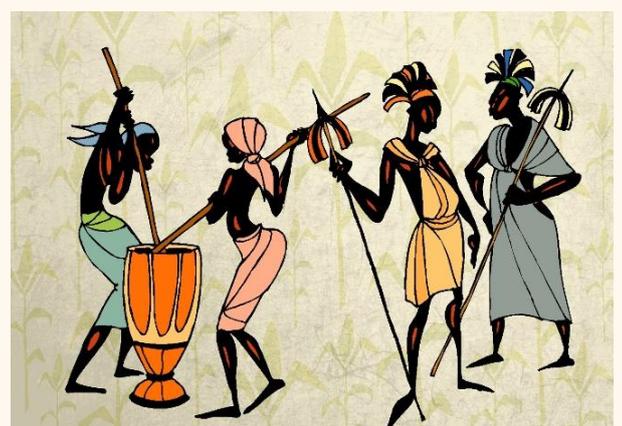
**Figure 10: New Narratives of African countries: what to amplify and avoid**

<b>Amplify...</b>	<b>Avoid...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Challenges to negative stereotypes</li><li>• Influential and emerging voices</li><li>• Innovation and creativity</li><li>• Progress and change</li><li>• Youth culture and identities</li><li>• African diversity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Latent colonial tropes, motifs and stereotypes</li><li>• Neo-colonialism</li><li>• Cultural appropriation</li><li>• Idealisations</li><li>• Expressions of vulnerability and fragility</li></ul>

# Amplify: Challenges to negative stereotypes

There is robust evidence of the proliferation of counternarratives challenging the assumptions embedded in British discourse of Africa. These counternarratives push for a transition from the idea that Africa is all about war, famine and violent military regimes, to the idea that Africa is a source of vibrant, aspirational creativity, rich in natural and cultural treasures. Assumptions challenged include:

1. **Africa is not a country:** calls for UK audiences to stop experiencing Africa as monolithic entity and to educate themselves on regional and national differences.
2. **Entrenched associations with humanitarian issues:** including war, famine, poverty and health problems.
3. **Problematic histories:** for example, assumptions encoded in the way in which the history of slavery is represented.



## Amplify: Influential and emerging voices

Throughout the UK and African popular cultural environments, there are now powerful, uncomfortable and rebellious voices coming through that are challenging perceptions and provoking passionate debate. In the UK, these voices carry unsettling messages for White British audiences, while across African countries, they challenge received ideas about, for example, female empowerment and sexuality. These voices are growing in influence and demand to be heard – particularly among younger British audiences. Examples include:

- **David Lammy, MP:** Labour MP of Afro-Guyanese descent, who regularly speaks out on behalf of Britain's African and Caribbean communities, insisting that their contribution (both past and present) is understood and honoured
- **George the Poet:** London rapper and poet of Ugandan descent, who refused an MBE in 2019 citing the treatment of Uganda by the British Empire
- **Renni Eddo-Lodge:** an award-winning British journalist and writer of Nigerian descent whose 2018 book *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* is an example of the kind of powerful, challenging polemic coming through from the African diaspora today.



- **Meaza Ashenafi:** Ethiopian lawyer and first ever female President of the Supreme Court of Ethiopia
- **Jidenna:** and Nigerian-American rap artist challenging the dissociation of African-ness from LGBTQI identities.

# Amplify: Innovation and creativity

In both UK and African popular cultural environments, there is evidence of diverse visual communications of African countries as hubs of change, innovation and creativity. Young people are often represented as the catalysts of these processes. Fields in which these communications are evident include:

- **Technology:** stories of how technology adapts to Africa's unique social and geographical challenges indicate how African countries are evolving technological capabilities in their own terms, rather than following in the wake of a linear process of modernisation (Similarly, the transition of Afro-Futurism from a late-90s cultural avant-garde movement into mainstream global movement has prompted diverse re-imaginings of the intersections between African culture and technology)
- **Arts and creative industries:** representations of African countries and people as a source of incredible creative energy across all artistic disciplines: visual arts, fashion, craft, music and literature. At its most distinctive and positive, narratives of African creativity show it as complex, eclectic, collaborative and global, rather than 'essentialised' (that is, pure, traditional and authentic, as in idealising and exoticizing narratives).

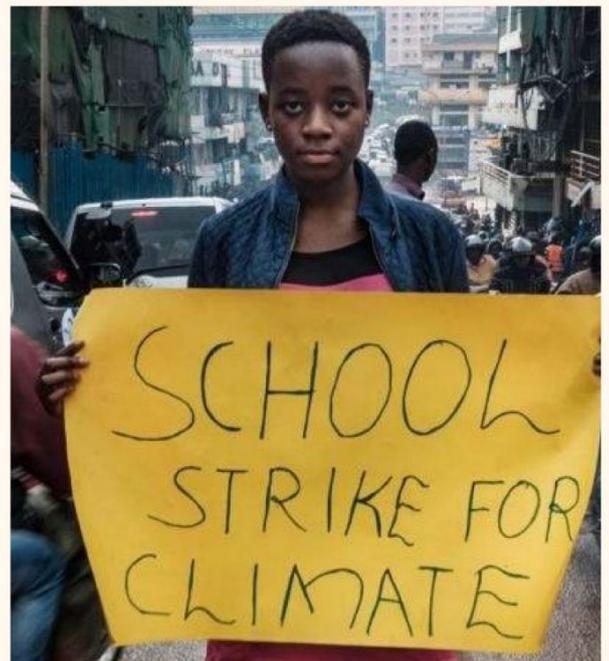


# Amplify: Progress and change

Alongside representations of African creativity and innovation, representations of social and economic change contribute to an overarching narrative of African countries in transition.

In both the UK and African countries, young people are frequently portrayed as the drivers of these positive changes in their countries, creating a drumbeat of optimism around the impact that the next generations will have in shaping their countries' future prospects. Examples of expressions of African progress and change include:

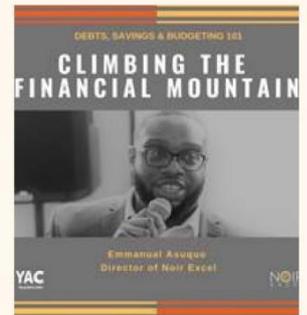
- **Future changemakers:** communications conveying the importance of African countries' next generations as the leaders of today
- **Social movements:** young Africans joining global movements, replicating these movements at the local level, and taking up the mantle of lead changemakers in their society
- **Economic growth:** events and media calling attention to economic progress and opportunity across Africa.



It's not just Greta Thunberg: why are we ignoring the developing world's inspiring activists?  
*Chika Uigwe*  
Young people in the global south have been tackling the climate crisis for years. They should be applauded for it.  
Sat 6 Oct 2019 09:00 AM



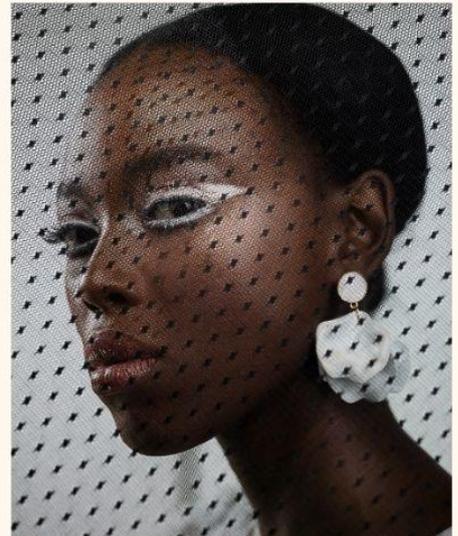
Rachema Farley was just nine years old in 2017 when she filed a lawsuit against the Indian government for failing to take action against climate change. Farley's fierce, unwavering passion for



## Amplify: Youth culture and identities

Both UK and African popular cultural environments are characterised by a forcefield of competing ideas of African youth. While many of these perpetuate either latent or manifest negative stereotypes, the examples represent those seeking to break most definitively with these established, negative associations of African youth:

- **Modern, urban, cosmopolitan:** these communications break with ideas of African youth as poor, rural, vulnerable and isolated, by showing African youth as urban, urbane, ready to take on the world, and exploring the creative and physical limits of their environments
- **Loud, proud and unapologetic:** these communications show young Africans talking loudly and unapologetically about their identities, as well as enjoying, exploring, challenging and finding new ways to express and define themselves
- **Inner connections:** self-reflection and connection with the mind are as yet emergent ideas connected with young people in Africa. The turn inwards breaks with framings which define young Africans solely in terms of their material circumstances, and also signals the search for inspiration for the creation of new individual identities.



## Amplify: African diversity

In both UK and African popular cultural environments, monolithic and essentialising ideas of African identity are being challenged through expressions of diversity, hybridity, queerness, and limitlessness. These expressions take on received notions about who is and who isn't allowed to be represented as African. Examples include:

- **Cultural diversity and hybridity:** These communications contest the very notion of an essential African culture, by calling attention to the myriad of cultures, diverse communities, and different points of view that define different African identities
- **Shifting gender norms:** expressions of African 'dandyism' defy monolithic narratives of what is to be a Black man, through fluid expressions expressed via a colourful and complex relationship between race, power, gender and style
- **Sexual diversity and queerness:** Exploration of queer identities continues across African counties, despite many countries still maintaining socio-cultural and legal restrictions prohibiting LGBTQI identities. In the UK, queer African identities are likewise being explored from a variety of angles.
- **Non-African Africans:** Artists and collectives including The Kenyan Nest and British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare MBE challenge narrow expectations of what African design and contemporary culture looks like, but asking the question: what is African enough?



## Avoid: Latent colonial tropes and neo-colonialism

Audiences in both the UK and African countries are becoming increasingly sensitised to the way power works in representation. In the UK, this has led to NGOs and other actors coming under fire for the unconscious perpetuation of an array of colonialist tropes, motifs and stereotypes.

- **White saviourism:** representations of benevolent white people stepping in to help disadvantaged, vulnerable Africans. The controversy around white saviourism is exemplified by fierce critiques of UK charity Comic Relief's use of celebrities such as Stacey Dooley and Ed Sheeran
- **Exoticisation of the African 'other':** exemplified by Channel 4's recent 'Tribe Next Door', these portrayals of the differences between UK and African country cultures' situation the UK as 'normal' relative to the exotic and unusual African
- **Anxiety about neo-colonialism:** that is, the use of economic, political, cultural and other pressures to continue the exploitation of African countries. These anxieties are also reflected in, for example:
  - **British news media stories** focussing on the interests and activities on nations and regions including China, Russia and the Middle East across the African continent
  - **Academics and other experts** calling attention to the problem, for example Mark Langan, author of *Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of 'Development' in Africa* (2017).



● This article is more than 1 year old

### Russia's scramble for influence in Africa catches western officials off-guard

Kremlin officials are offering arms and military services deals in exchange for diplomatic support and mineral extraction contracts

## Avoid: Cultural appropriation

Popular cultural environments in the UK indicate increasing cautiousness around the way non-African audiences engage with African culture. This is reflected in the emergence and proliferation of the idea of 'cultural appropriation' in UK discourse about African countries. Examples of this discourse in action include:

- **Criticisms:** H&M UK was heavily criticised for featuring a white model in a Wakanda jumper (Wakanda is the fictional African setting for the film Black Panther)
- **New debates:** the BBC has launched a series of programmes exploring cultural appropriation from different perspectives - asking whether, for example, festival fashion should be a place of total freedom (in which people can experiment with other cultures freely) or whether the idea of cultural heritage should be treated with more respect
- **New collaborations:** Fashion houses have tried to respond to accusations of cultural appropriation by launching new collaborations with African designers. These include, for example, British designer Vivienne Westwood's Ethical Fashion African Collection, produced in collaboration with the Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI), as well as Dior's Cruise 2020 collection.



 **Mark-Paul**  
@WholsMarkPaul

In what universe did you think it was okay to feature a white model in Wakanda gear?



## Avoid: Idealisation

While superficially positive, idealisations of African places and people often carry colonial and neo-colonial resonances whereby British audiences are encouraged to think of Africa as wholly other and exotic relative to the UK. Such idealisations are extremely widespread within tourist communications, in particular. Examples include:

- **Idealised landscapes:** For the British imagination, the expressions present in this narrative represents a fantasy of complete 'otherness' to the UK. The sensorial and emotional triggers of the images portray Africa as places ready to reconnect physically, emotionally and spiritually and escape from the British grey reality
- **Idealised experiences:** Africa presented as a place where British people often think 'peak experiences' are waiting for them – trips of a lifetime, bucket-list dreams and life-changing moments
- **Idealised people and culture:** African culture is often portrayed in the UK as a source of wisdom. The myth that Africans have a strong connection and understanding of the land is reinforced by the solitude hinted in the visual expressions.



## Avoid: Vulnerability and fragility

In contrast to positive idealisations, visual communications in both the UK and African countries also exhibit permutation by overtly negative depictions of African countries and people as vulnerable and fragile; perpetually at risk of poverty, social issues, and humanitarian crises. Examples of common expressions of African vulnerability and fragility include:

- **Vulnerable children:** a recurrent motif in UK visual communications about Africa in particular, these expressions have helped to fuel the one-dimensional view of Africa as the impoverished continent
- **Daily struggle:** recurrent portrayals of adversity situations and hardship and Africans being subjects of discrimination and non-privilege remain extremely salient, reinforcing negative associations of African countries
- **Climate vulnerability:** as the world becomes increasingly cognizant of the threat of climate change, historical associations of African countries with precarity have begun to take on a new form. As a result, the focus tends towards representations of African countries as subject to disasters caused by climate change, rather than on the leading role of young Africans in helping to combat a global challenge.



## Consideration for audience customisation

Conversations with young people from the UK demonstrated that while there exists a set of common, cross-country associations of Africa and African countries in the UK, British audiences' perceptions may vary depending on a range of demographic and psychographic attributes, and on the touchpoints most salient to these groups. This variation indicates an opportunity to adapt New Narratives of Africa to specific segments of the UK youth population. An overview of the key attributes identified for adapting New Narratives of Africa to UK youth audiences is provided below.

### 1. Race (Black and Non-Black)

Comparisons between the responses of young Black and non-Black Britons highlighted a number of important differences in terms of how they source information about, discuss and picture Africa and African countries. Unsurprisingly, Black British participants exhibited greater familiarity with African histories and traditions, and many were active consumers of cultural exports including music by contemporary African artists, and products such as food and fashion. They were also highly conscious of British racism, acknowledging it as both a community-level and institutional problem in the UK which affects them personally, as well as being more sensitive to the historical and contemporary exploitation of African countries.

*'We, as black British people, will have a massively different view on the police than someone from the outside. We will think of them a lot more negatively.'*

Black-British, London, 18-35

*'It really annoys me when people say, oh, where are you from? And I'm like, I'm black. Or what ethnicity or whatever are you? And I'm like, black British. And they're like, well, where are you really from?'*

Black-British, London, 18-35

A number of Black-British participants had family members who live in or regularly visit African countries, affording them a direct narrative touchpoint for learning about those countries and related themes. The role of such personal connections to African countries for shaping perceptions was also acknowledged by non-Black British audiences.

*'My mum's perception was a lot more positive. She's got a different life. She's been to Ghana. She's seen different things compared to what the younger generation have seen of Africa - like you said, all these charity adverts. Because she's actually been to an African country, she's actually seen what it's like and it's not all negative.'*

Black-British, Manchester, 18-35

Finally, Black-British participants were more attuned to the complex history and evolution of black identities in the UK, and of the contemporary socio-cultural dynamics of black and Afro-British communities today.

*'Our young people are mixing more, whereas I feel like back in the day, everyone was more segregated. The Asians wouldn't mix, the whites wouldn't mix, blacks wouldn't. So it made sense that the blacks, the Caribbean's and Africans, didn't mix. But now, everyone is just coming together; nobody really cares. We've got more knowledge. We've got social media, we've got the internet.'*

Black-British, London, 18-35

## **2. Level of education (university and non-university)**

Going to university was highlighted by a number of young people from the UK as a pivotal transition in terms of their knowledge and understanding of African countries and identities. Participants who had attended university were more likely to have formed friendships with peers with African heritage, and to have been exposed to a wider range of opportunities for learning about African issues, for example from university societies and events.

*'People at my university, a lot of them, are from African countries and their cultures are all different, their upbringing, their way of communication and stuff like that.'*

London, 18-24

## **3. Age**

Age emerged as a key attribute shaping British audiences' perceptions of Africa in two ways:

### **a. Assumed generational divides (18-35 and 35+)**

Asked who among the UK general population is likely to differ from them in the perceptions of African countries, young people from the UK often characterised older generations' views as more negative than that of younger people. These differences were based on a view of older generations as more heavily exposed to, and therefore more embracing of, dated ideas of African countries and themes.

*'[Older people] have set opinions on things, referring back to how people thought years ago, but things have changed. If I suggested to my grandmother to go on holiday to South Africa, she wouldn't be interested about where you're going. She'd be like, oh be careful. I think older people would definitely be a bit more reserved.'*

Manchester, 25-35

### **b. Differences in media consumption patterns and preferences (18-24 and 25-35)**

Comparisons between the mediated touchpoints referred to by young people from the UK aged 18-24 and those aged 25-35 reflect broader age-related patterns in terms of media consumption and income. For example, conversations with 18-24-year-olds suggested the relatively greater influence of certain mediated touchpoints including YouTube; social media influencers; and popular entertainment formats like Love Island and The Apprentice in shaping their associations with African countries. Among 25-35-year-olds, meanwhile, there was more evidence of participants drawing on the experiences of friends who have travelled to African countries for holiday, perhaps reflecting the greater spending power of

older young people from the UK. These experiences were often communicated in photographs and videos published on social media and tended to reveal the tourist attractions of African countries.

#### **4. Level of engagement with the charitable giving sector**

Finally, the insistence of young people from the UK on the influence of charity communications in shaping British perceptions of African countries suggests that audiences' level of engagement with organisations like Comic Relief and UNICEF may be a key attribute for audience adaptation.

*'There's so much rich culture in all the different communities and countries in Africa that we don't have a clue about. We jump straight to poverty because of Live Aid.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

## Young Africans perception and expectation of their own countries

Young people across all eight African countries were critical of the inadequate representation and recognition of the diversity and complexity of identities of people living in Africa. This view was expressed both in terms of the need to move past the catch-all label 'African', and through young people claiming hybrid identities for themselves, as part of which being African is just one, in some cases relatively minor, component.

*'We are Algerians, Muslims, Arabs, Amazigh and then at last Africans.'*

Algeria, 18-24, ABC1

*'People abroad feel like everybody from Africa are related or comes from the same family. When you mention Nigeria, they will say that you are an African; like there is no difference and like we are all the same.'*

Nigeria, 18-24, ABC1

*'South Africa is Africa-lite, it is not the real Africa.'*

South Africa, 18-35, Black, Higher SEC

Young people across multiple countries were also highly aware that many narratives of African countries are dated and stereotyped, in that they fail to show how African countries have developed in the 21st century, and perpetuate ideas of Africa as universally poor, rural and provincial.

*'The latest Tom Cruise movie was filmed in Morocco. When it was shown in theatres, all Moroccans were shocked, saying it was a shame how Morocco was displayed: a desert, alleys as in Derb Sultan, goats. They did not show the Moroccan development, the economy... they did not show the transition of the Moroccan culture.'*

Morocco, 18-24, C2D

To help address these overarching concerns, the tables below highlight key examples which participants in each country indicated could be leveraged to present a more accurate and contemporary representation of their own countries.

## Morocco – salient country references

Touchpoint	Examples	Summary
<b>Arts</b>	Marrakech International Film Festival	International event dedicated to Moroccan cinema, founded 2001.
	Marrakech du Rire	International comedy festival, held annually since 2011
	Gad Elmaleh	French-Moroccan comedian famous in France, Morocco, and recently the USA.
<b>Fashion</b>	Yves Saint Laurent	Algerian born designer who developed close ties to Morocco. Memorialised in the Majorelle Garden in Marrakech.
	Paul Marciano	American designer born in Morocco, founder of label 'Guess'
<b>Cuisine</b>	Argan Oil	Plant oil produced from the kernels of the <i>argan</i> tree ( <i>Argania spinosa</i> L.) that is endemic to Morocco.
	Traditional Moroccan cuisine Harissa	For example, harissa, couscous, tagine, rfiissa, tanjia, zaalouk, spices.
<b>Customs and traditions</b>	Caftans; djellaba	Robe or tunic variants worn in Morocco
<b>Natural regions</b>	Caves of Hercules	Archaeological cave complex, Cape Spartel.
	Paradise Valley	Section of the Tamraght River valley in Moroccan High Atlas Mountains.
	Bin El Ouidane	Small town and commune in Azilal province, home to an artificial lake.
	Ouzoud Falls	Collective name for several tall waterfalls in Azilal province.
	Imsouane	Beach in Assaka province.
<b>Modern design and Architecture</b>	Hassan II Mosque	Largest mosque in Africa, and seventh largest in the world.
	Fes Moroccan Tiles	Iconic tile design used globally.
<b>Historical sites</b>	Hassan Tower	Minaret of an incomplete mosque in Rabat.
	Challah	Medieval fortified necropolis, in the metro area of Rabat.
	University of al-Qarawiyyin	Located in Fez. According to UNESCO, the oldest existing, continually operating higher education institution in the world.
<b>Urban environments</b>	Jemaa el-Fnaa	Square and marketplace in Marrakech's medina quarter. Inspiration for the UNESCO project: Masters of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.
	Chefchaouen	City in North West Morocco, famous for its buildings in shades of blue.
	Casablanca Twin Center	Two skyscrapers located at Casablanca.
	Morocco Mall	Largest shopping centre in Africa
<b>Science and technology</b>	Ouarzazate Solar Power Station	World's largest concentrated solar power plant located in Drâa-Tafilalet region.

## Algeria – salient country references

Category	Examples	Summary
<b>Sport</b>	Football	Participation in international competitions, for example the 2014. Internationally recognised players, for example Riyad Mahrez
	Rally racing	The Dakar Rally, an annual off-road endurance rally race (10,000km).
<b>Ethnic and cultural diversity</b>	Amazigh (Berbers)	An ethnic group of several nations mostly indigenous to North Africa and some northern parts of West Africa.
<b>Historical sites</b>	Kasbah of Algiers	World Heritage site, includes the old citadel of Algiers and the quarter clustered around it.
	Tipaza	Roman-Berber coastal town
	Timgad	Roman-Berber city in the Aurès Mountains
	Hammam Essalihine	Roman baths in the Aurès Mountains
	Constantine	Formerly Roman settlement, now the commercial centre of Eastern Algeria
	Martys' Monument	In Algiers, commemorating the Algerian war for independence
<b>Natural regions</b>	Jijel	Coastal region famed for its beaches
	Taghit	An oasis watered by the underground
	Hogar	Highland region in the central Sahara
	M'zab valley	World Heritage Site, in the Ghardaïa province
	Tassili	National park in the Sahara Desert
	Chr�a	One of the largest Algerian national parks, Blida Province
	Yemma Gouraya	Coastal national park, B�ja�a Province
	Tikjda	Ski resort located in Djurdjura, Bou�ra province
<b>Cuisine</b>	Chakhchouka	Traditional dish, lamb or chickpea stew
	Mtawam	Traditional dish made of minced meat and chickpeas with sauce
	Lham Lahlou	Traditional dish made of meat and fruits
<b>Customs and traditions</b>	Wedding traditions	For example, the Chedda, a traditional wedding dress from the West of Algeria
	Traditional clothes	For example, Kashabiya, a traditional coat
<b>Brands and products</b>	Condor	Electronics company
	Hamoud Boualam	Drinks company
	Cevital	Food Company
<b>Modern design and Architecture</b>	ITFC	The Faculty of Political Sciences and Information Sciences of the University of Algiers. Unique architecture - 'looks like a ship'.

<b>Music</b>	Local genres, such as Rai	A form of Algerian folk music dating back to the 1920s, incorporating Spanish, French, African and Arabic musical forms
<b>Activists and activism</b>	El Hirak	2019-2020 Algerian protests, also called the Revolution of Smiles.

## Egypt – salient country references

Category	Examples	Summary
<b>Sport</b>	Weightlifting	Mohamed Ihab Youssef Ahmed Mahmoud is an Egyptian weightlifter, and World Champion.
	Volleyball	Egypt is currently one of the leading African countries in terms of world volleyball.
<b>Ethnic and cultural diversity</b>	Bedouin	Group of nomadic Arab people who have historically inhabited the desert regions of Northern African, Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and the Levant.
	Nubian	Ethno-linguistic group of people who are indigenous to the region which is now present-day Northern Sudan and southern Egypt.
<b>Customs and traditions</b>	Islamic celebrations	For example, the decoration of major cities like Cairo during Ramadan.
<b>Arts</b>	Cairo International Book Fair	The largest and oldest <i>book fair</i> in the Arab world, held every year in the last week of January in <i>Cairo</i> , Egypt.
<b>Cuisine</b>	Koshary	Egypt's national dish and a widely popular street food.
	Falafel	Well-known street food.
<b>Science and technology</b>	Dr. Magdy Yaccoub	Egyptian-British retired professor of cardiothoracic surgery at Imperial College London,
<b>Historical sites</b>	Ancient Egyptian antiquities	For example, the Pyramids, Luxor and Aswan, and mummies.
<b>Natural regions</b>	The River Nile	Among the world's longest waterways, famed for its ancient history and archaeological sites along its shores.
	Sharm El Sheikh	An Egyptian resort town between the desert of the Sinai Peninsula and the Red Sea
	Hurghaha	Beach resort town stretching some 40km along Egypt's Red Sea coast.
	Gabal Katrîne (Mount Catherine)	Highest mountain in Egypt
	Wade Al Rayan	Unique nature protectorate in Faiyum Governorate.
<b>Activists and activism</b>	25 January Revolution	Series of youth-group led strikes and protests against increased police brutality, among other social and legal issues. Resulted in the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

## Ethiopia – salient country references

Category	Examples	Summary
<b>Ethnic and cultural diversity</b>	Ge'ez script (also known as Ethiopic)	Script used as an abugida for several languages of Eritrea and Ethiopia. Seen by young Ethiopians as unique to the region.
<b>Historical sites</b>	Konso	UNESCO World Heritage Site; an arid property of stone walled terraces and fortified settlements in the Konso highlands of Ethiopia, and an example of a living cultural tradition stretching back 21 generations (more than 400 years) adapted to its dry hostile environment.
	Lalibela	One of <i>Ethiopia's</i> holiest cities, famous for its <i>rock-cut monolithic churches</i> .
	Taitu Hotel	The first hotel in Ethiopia, built in 1905 or 1906 in the middle of the Addis Ababa.
	Meyazia 27 Square	Important and historic intersection in Addis Ababa. Its name denotes both the day when Addis Ababa fell to Italy in 1936 and was liberated in 1941
	Jubilee Palace	Built in 1955 in Addis Ababa to mark the Silver Jubilee Emperor Haile Selassie.
<b>Natural regions</b>	Sof Omar Caves	The longest cave in Ethiopia, and potentially the longest system of caves in Africa.
	Danakil Depression	A vast plain, some 200 by 50 km (124 by 31 mi), lying in the north of the <a href="#">Afar Region</a> of Ethiopia. The site of discovery of some of the earliest known human remains.
	Black Abay (Blue Nile)	One of two major tributaries to the Nile.
<b>Customs and traditions</b>	Traditional styles and clothing	For example, traditional braids, armour, and dresses.
	Coffee ceremony	Ritualised forms of making and drinking coffee, first practiced in Ethiopia and Eritrea.
<b>Cuisine</b>	Injera	A national dish of Ethiopia, a sourdough-risen flatbread with a slightly spongy texture.
	Tej and Tella	Traditional Ethiopian alcoholic drinks.
	Dorowot	A national dish of Ethiopia, an onion-based chicken stew.

## Kenya – salient country references

Category	Examples	Summary
<b>Cuisine</b>	Ugali	Maize flour porridge
	Majani Chai	Kenyan tea
<b>Natural regions</b>	Swahili Coast	Coastal area of the Indian Ocean in Southeast Africa inhabited by the Swahili people
	Mau Forest	Forest complex in the Rift Valley of Kenya, the largest indigenous montane forest in East Africa.
	The Big Five	Lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant and cape buffalo, all indigenous to Kenya.
<b>Customs and traditions</b>	Traditional clothing	For example, Maasaishukas, the style and cloth traditionally worn by the Maasai people.
<b>Music</b>	King Kaka	Kenyan rapper
<b>Ethnic and cultural diversity</b>	Extremely racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse.	For example, Bantu Nilotic peoples, as well as specific ethnic groups including Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo, and Kamba.
<b>Historical sites</b>	Malindi	A Swahili port town and site of landing for Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama.
<b>Sports</b>	Kasarani Stadium	Multi-purpose stadium built in 1987 for the All-Africa games.
<b>Urban environments</b>	Matatus	Privately owned minibuses serving as a form of public transport, often lavishly decorated featuring portraits of famous people, slogans and sayings.

## Nigeria – salient country references

Category	Examples	Summary
<b>Arts</b>	Movies	Nigerian films and film industry, including Nollywood.
	Literature	Famous authors and works, such as Chinua Achebe's <i>Things Fall Apart</i> .
<b>Cuisine</b>	Dishes associated with different tribes, ethnicities and groups in Nigeria	For example: Eba and Amala (associated with Yoruba communities) Edikaikong (associated with Igbo communities)
<b>Ethnic and cultural diversity</b>	Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba (three most populous ethnic groups)	Nigeria is made up of over 250 ethnic groups.
	Linguistic diversity	Main languages and local dialects
<b>Fashion</b>	Mentioned but no examples specified	
<b>Music</b>	Fela, Afrobeats	Nigerian artists have helped cultivate genres that have gone on to become global phenomena. Afrobeats, for example, was pioneered by figures like Fela Anikulapo Kuti (15 October 1938 – 2 August 1997), also professionally known as Fela Kuti, or simply Fela, a Nigerian multi-instrumentalist, musician, composer, pioneer of the Afrobeat music genre and human rights activist.
<b>Natural regions</b>	Mentioned but no examples specified	
<b>Customs and traditions</b>	Religion	Nigeria's population is estimated 49 per cent Muslim, 49 per cent Christian, and approximately 0.9 per cent local religion (CIA World Factbook 2019).
<b>Sport</b>	Football	
<b>Urban environments</b>	Danfo	Iconic passenger buses, particularly in urban hubs like Lagos.
	Motorcycles Nightlife	

## Cameroon – salient country references

Category	Examples	Summary
<b>Sports</b>	Samuel Eto'o	Retired Cameroonian footballer, regarded as one of the greatest strikers of all time.
	Yaoundé Sports Complex	
<b>Activists and activism</b>	Martin-Paul Samba	Bulu military officer during the German colonial period; went on to plan an uprising but was caught and executed. Regarded as an early nationalist by Cameroonian historians.
	Ebenezer Akwanga	Anglophone Cameroonian (Ambazonian) independence activist
<b>Music</b>	Manu Dibango	Cameroonian musician, saxophonist and songwriter.
	Richard Bona	Cameroonian virtuoso Grammy award winning bassist.
<b>Urban environments</b>	Yaoundé central markets	A unique market unlike the typical open-air markets that are common in other African countries where sellers work from make-shift stalls. Instead this old five-storey building has been converted into several market 'rooms' with different levels focusing on one business area.
<b>Natural regions</b>	Waterfalls of Lobe	World Heritage Site located 300km from Yaoundé, represent a strong basis of the symbolic beliefs of the Batanga, Maabi and Pygmeé peoples that live in the environs and associate the falls with various cultural rites.
	Wazar Park	National park with one of the largest mammal populations in Western Africa.
	Highlands Forests	
	Mount Cameroon	Active volcano near the Gulf of Guinea.
<b>Historical sites</b>	National museum	
	Reunification monuments	Constructed in the 1970s to memorialize the post-colonial merging of British and French Cameroon. Located in Yaounde.
	Bafut Town and Palace	Town famous for having preserved its structure as a traditional kingdom (or Fondom), which operates in harmony with the modern local government palace.
<b>Cuisine</b>	Baobab Juice	Juice of the Baobab fruit
	Plantain	Cooked banana
	Cassava	Tuber root, similar to sweet potatoes.
<b>Brands and products</b>	Important material exports	For example, cocoa, shea butter and rubber trees.

## South Africa – salient country references

Category	Examples	Summary
<b>Activists and activism</b>	Anti-apartheid movement and figures	For example, Nelson Mandela, Brenda Fasi (anti-apartheid Afro-pop singer and musician).
<b>Arts</b>	Esta Mahlangu	South African artist from the Ndebele nation.
<b>Cuisine</b>	Rooibos	South African tea.
	Kota	South African sandwich made of a hollowed-out quarter loaf of bread, filled with chips, polony and atchar.
	Bunny Chow	Chicken curry originated during the depression era.
	Chesa Nyama	Barbequed meat.
	Ouma rusks	Rusks made from a traditional buttermilk recipe.
<b>Ethnic and cultural diversity</b>	South Africa as the 'rainbow nation' -	A phrase coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe post-apartheid South Africa, meant to capture the multicultural diversity reflected by groups including the Xhosa, Zulu, Venda and Ndebel peoples.
	The Born Free Generation	A term used to describe people born post-apartheid. Viewed by participants as living distinct lifestyles to older generations.
	Bubblegum Club	Online magazine and collective based in Johannesburg presenting perspectives on people and production defining South African youth culture.
<b>Music</b>	Nasty C	South African rap artists
	AKA	
	Casper Nyovest	
	Kwaito	Music genre that emerged in Johannesburg. A variant on house music incorporating African sounds and samples.
	Amapiano	Hybrid genre blending deep house, jazz and lounge music.
	Gqom	Electronic music genre that emerged in early 2010s from Durban, South Africa.
<b>Natural regions</b>	Howick Falls	A waterfall in Howick, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa.
	Hartbeespoort; Nagaliesberg Mountains	A small resort town in the North West Province of South Africa, situated on slopes of the Magaliesberg mountain range.
<b>Sport</b>	Athletics	South African athletes and sports teams, for example Caster Semenya, middle-distance runner.
	Cricket	
	Rugby	
<b>Urban environments</b>	Soweto Towers	Originally a coal power station for Johannesburg, now a distinctive urban landmark and site for the world's first cooling tower bungee jump.

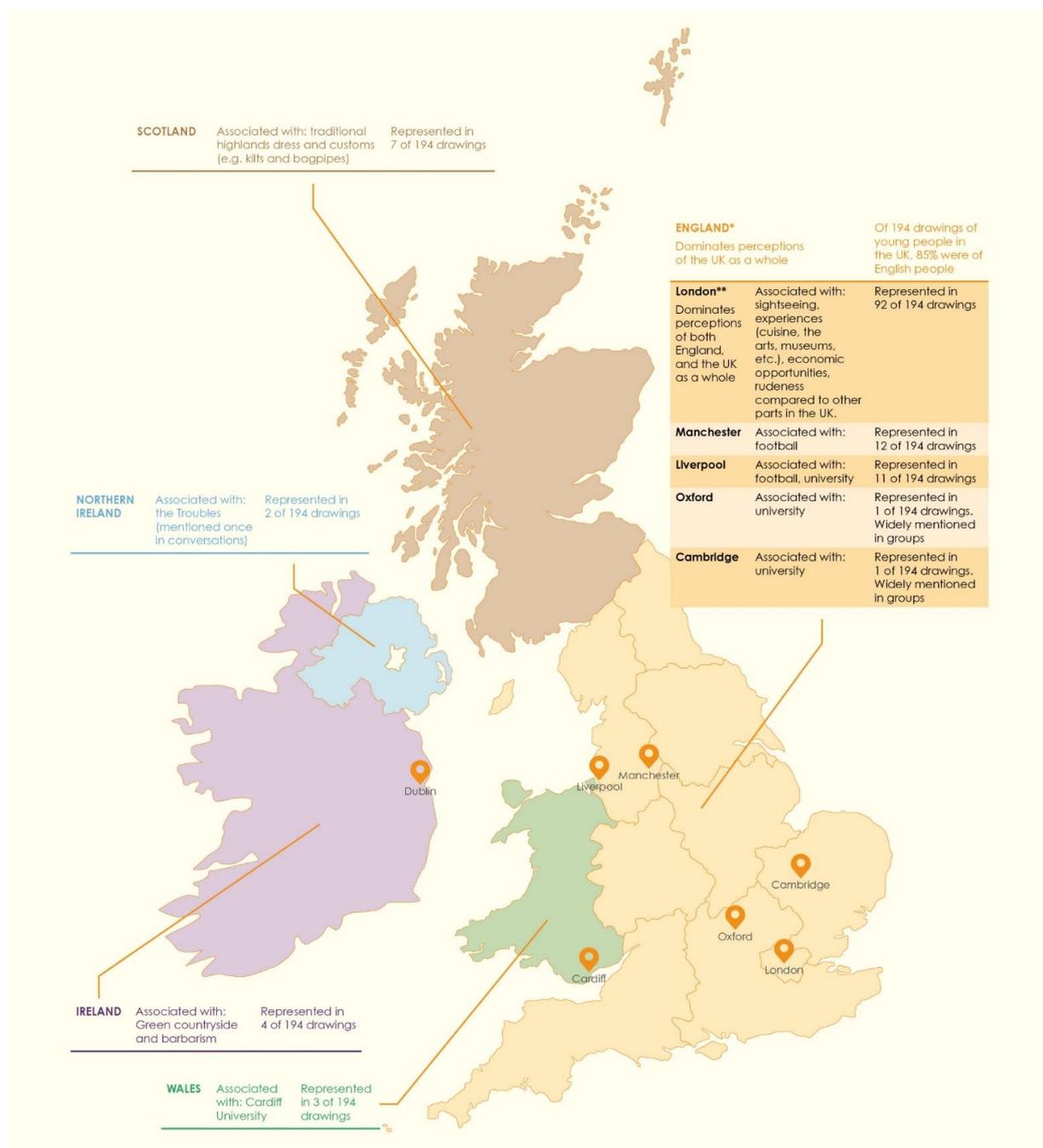
	Vilakazi Street	Iconic street that was home to Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, and includes a range of public artworks and curio stalls.
	Maboneng District	Creative, nightlife and urbane hub in Johannesburg.

## 3.2 New Narratives of the UK

### Imagined topographies: mapping African perception of the UK

Conversations with young Africans about the UK highlighted the relative invisibility of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland compared to England. They also demonstrated that young African perceptions of the UK are often London-centric, with references to other cities in England dependent on named football teams and universities. Figure 11 maps young Africans' perceptions of the UK, in terms of the dominant country, regional and city associations.

**Figure 11: an imagined topography of the UK**



Place	Associations
<b>England</b>	Often synonymous with the UK as a whole
London	<p>Central hub for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sightseeing (e.g. Big Ben, London Eye, Buckingham Palace, etc.)</li> <li>• Experiences (cuisine, the arts, museums and institutions, the London Underground)</li> <li>• Economic opportunity (financial powerhouse of the UK)</li> </ul> <p>Acknowledged as culturally diverse. However, socially, Londoners suggested as less welcoming than outside of the capital.</p>
Manchester	Football
Liverpool	Football, University
Oxford	University, dictionaries
Cambridge	University
Named but otherwise indistinguishable cities and regions	Inc. Birmingham, Bristol, Essex, Kent, Newcastle, Nottingham, Portsmouth
<b>Scotland</b>	Traditional highland dress and customs, e.g. kilts and bagpipes
<b>Wales</b>	
Cardiff	University
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	The Troubles (mentioned once in groups)
<b>Ireland</b>	Green countryside; 'barbaric'
Dublin	Named but otherwise indistinguishable

## **Trends in visual and popular culture: African representation of British subjects and themes**

### **Britishness is not as pervasively communicated in popular culture and visual communications in African countries**

Visual data representing the UK gathered from five African countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria) was far less rich and varied than that gathered in the UK representing Africa. Furthermore, the majority of data sourced focussed on England and London, indicating their dominance within African perspectives of the UK. Of other countries and regions in the UK, only Scotland was represented, with images of tartan and whiskey.

### **Visual data confirms the importance of a suite of narrative touchpoints – but also indicates a lack of focus on ‘regular’ British people and communities**

The prominence within the dataset of visual expressions relating to the English Premier League, the Royal Family, and iconic educational institutions like Oxford and Cambridge Universities confirmed these assets as key touchpoints for African audiences to engage with the UK. Less prominent touchpoints included British charities and INGOs and entertainment exports such as film and television. While these findings validate what was learned from conversations with young people across the eight African countries, they also suggest a paucity of representations of ‘regular’ British society and people.

Representations of young people from the UK, for example, were scarce across all countries where materials were sourced by the narrative scouts.

### **When communicated, the UK is presented as a place where order, quality, and grandiosity prevails**

This is reflected in, for example, portrayals of the UK as home to grandiose architecture and luxurious houses; and as a land in which precision and accuracy are highly valued (see Figure 12). Likewise, representations of British products and creative industries recurrently convey a sense of high quality.

### **Brexit, however, threatens the UK’s connection with stability and order**

Brexit has disrupted the stability and order that otherwise characterises visual communications of the UK, by changing the way in which the UK is portrayed in African media. Newer expressions convey an image of an unstable and negatively charged UK, introducing doubts about its future (see Figure 12).

### **Visual expressions of anxiety and anger towards British colonialism and racism are widespread**

Alongside negative expressions associated with Brexit, African visual communications involving the UK recurrently express resentment towards historical colonialism and contemporary cultural appropriation. The discourse of ‘taking from’ and ‘using African ideas’, for example, is widely debated in online and offline channels, while the idea that UK companies take from the continent is portrayed continuously in the media. Connections

between the UK and racism, meanwhile, are fuelled by the circulation of visual expressions of British prejudice and discrimination towards black communities (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Visual communications of the UK in Africa: key themes

### CONTROL, QUALITY AND ORDER



### BREXIT

Me trynna see a bright future for Britain



### COLONIALISM AND NEOCOLONIALISM

**8 Recent Times Luxury Fashion Brands Used African Designs Without Including Africans**

Western labels have been stealing African aesthetics for years, here are just recent examples.

Yesterday, luxury fashion label, Stella McCartney came under fire for, once again, copying from African designs, without even the slightest acknowledgment of the source.

They did not even mention their new Summer/autumn 2018 collection during their fashion show featured a number of dresses, tops, and jumpsuits with unique material. Upon seeing the list Africans on social media took note of how similar they looked to things we've all seen our moms wear for years. They showcased these "African inspired" items on a group of models who it was quite obvious that there was little to no regard for the origins of those designs, which is McCartney will undoubtedly profit generously from.

As we all know, this is not a new, or even, rare occurrence—Africa folks have been shamelessly copying from us since, well, forever. While we could list countless examples of this, we really do dig. Below we list just recent times where white designers have used African designs and folks alike.

Who knows, reading such occurrences and examining their implications, might help to help us and bring us closer to exploring real ways to protect our cultural property.

**1. Marc Jacobs' 'Dreaded Runway'**

Marc Jacobs is one of the fashion world's most opposed forces. Last year, this designer came under



### RACISM



“The continent may be a blot, but it is not a blot upon our conscience. The problem is not that we were once in charge, but that we are not in charge any more.”

– Boris Johnson



## Consideration for audience customisation

Conversations with young Africans suggest that audiences' perceptions of the UK may vary depending on a range of demographic and psychographic characteristics. Often, these variations reflect broader differences in the socio-cultural dynamics and circumstances of groups living in different African countries, as well as in the touchpoints accessed by different groups. This variation indicates an opportunity to adapt New Narratives of the UK to specific segments of the youth populations of African countries.

An overview of the key attributes identified for adapting New Narratives of the UK to African youth audiences is provided below. Even if they are not explicitly referenced, it is possible that these demographic and psychographic factors play a role in shaping the perceptions of young people in across multiple African countries.

### 1. Country

At a broad level, while conversations with young Africans pointed to a set of associations with the UK that cut across countries, they also suggested variations in terms of which associations were more or less dominant in different countries.

Conversations with young Kenyans, for example, were characterised by a higher level of consciousness of British racism compared to other groups.<sup>179</sup> Young Nigerians, meanwhile, tended to be the most emphatic in their praise of the UK relative to their view of Nigeria<sup>180</sup>, while conversations with young Ethiopians were marked by a focus on British exploitation of Africa.<sup>181</sup>

These variations suggest that, just as Africa should not be perceived as a monolithic entity, efforts to shift African perspectives of the UK should recognise that these perspectives are not uniform across the continent.

### 2. Age

In some countries, conversations suggested important differences between how 18-24-year-olds and 25-35-year-olds spoke about and pictured the UK. In Cameroon, for example, older groups expressed strong admiration for the UK based on respect for the British monarchy and history, as well as positive contrasts with the perceptions of the situations in their country and Africa more generally.

*'To me it's positive because it's a Kingdom and they assume responsibility, not like here which is in a disguised form. When there is monarchy, there is no disorder, and we can see that the English system has been able to be stabilised irrespective of what they went through.'*

Cameroon, 25-35, ABC1

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<sup>179</sup> Measured based on the prominence of references to the problem of British racism in the groups, relative to other issues discussed.

<sup>180</sup> Reflected in the use of expressions such as 'Dreamland'; 'Greener Pastures'; 'Top Notch'.

<sup>181</sup> Measured based on the prominence of references to the problem of exploitation in the groups, relative to other issues discussed.

Among younger participants, however, this more serious tone was offset by the 'cool' status attributed to the idea of Britishness. This was reflected in, for example, younger Cameroonians relatively greater focus on the English Premier League, as well as on discussions of the local idiom 'English Saturday', used to refer to end-of-the-month payments and therefore associated with people becoming cash rich and able to enjoy themselves.

*'They pay on Saturday here in Cameroon. Especially those at the public function. I think when we say English Saturday, it is party, night club, entertainment, fun, and so on, where people gather together.'*

Cameroon, 18-24, ABC1

### 3. Gender

The responses of young women in Ethiopia and Egypt indicated that the UK may hold special appeal for females. This appeal is based on a view of the UK as supportive of female empowerment and gender equality.

When asked to imagine one of their peers from the UK, for example, a number of female Ethiopians imagined women with rooms of their own, and in possession of much more freedom and independence. This difference was viewed positively, serving as evidence of female empowerment in the UK relative to Ethiopia. In Egypt, meanwhile, both male and female respondents referred positively to the fact of female leadership in the UK, embodied by figures including Queen Elizabeth II, Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May. Several also reacted positively to the permission of Meghan Markle's marriage to Harry Windsor, despite the former being divorced (and African-American).

*'The person I drew is a female. She is a student and lives in a very modern and fancy house with a separate room for her. I think there is no challenge that she faces from society... I think all girls this age would have these kinds of things because the country is a well-developed one.'*

Ethiopia, 18-24, C2D

### 4. Race

Young Africans discussions of race varied depending on the country and region in question, reflecting variations in racial diversity and sociocultural dynamics across the continent. Despite this, however, discussions consistently suggested that race can play a big part in shaping perceptions of the UK. As such, it may be necessary for the UK to think differently about how it communicates and counters particular associations in respect of particular groups in particular contexts.

In South Africa, for example, White participants suggested that their perceptions of the UK were likely to differ from that of their black compatriots, due to a combination of socioeconomic factors and the country's history of colonialism and race relations. This opinion was substantiated somewhat by the fact that lower SEC, Black South Africans exhibited the lowest interest in or knowledge of the UK, compared to other South African groups.

*'It depends where they are in the whole hierarchy of South Africa, I mean if you go to the townships and you ask someone about the Brits [...] they're only exposed to SABC one, two, three, E-TV and that other channel, and there isn't a lot of British series that are going on there.'*

South Africa, 18-35, White, Lower SEC

In Egypt, Morocco and Algeria, meanwhile, young people frequently called attention to the differences in the racial and sociocultural landscapes of Northern Africa versus Sub-Saharan Africa. They felt these differences were implicitly overlooked in the application of the label 'African', which from their perspective is largely synonymous with black, and from which many dissociate by identifying first and foremost as Arabs (or Maghreb). As such, they approached the issue of British racism and the concept of African identity very differently from their peers in Sub-Saharan countries.

*'[The British] think that being African means black and hunger, being Arab means we're thieves and not well educated and being Muslim means terrorism.'*

Algeria, 18-24, C2D

*'Even we are mistaken when we refer to African as black people, as if we were not Africans ourselves.'*

Morocco, 25-35, C2D

## 5. Values

Young people expressing different values tended to view the UK differently. For example, although not wholly or uniformly accepting of perceived UK values, in general, young Egyptian participants presented themselves as more progressive than Egyptian society as a whole. This was particularly true of younger Egyptians aged 18-24. As a result, they felt their perceptions of the UK were likely to be more positive than many of their compatriots.

*'They have the concept the divorced women can get married. Here in Egypt, we have fixed rules that we must follow. We are not creative enough to change any stereotypes in our communities - even if the rule we are following is a negative one.'*

Egypt, 18-24, ABC1

## 6. Sec

Young Africans belonging to higher socio-economic classifications often had a higher level of education and worked in professions which brought them into closer proximity with the UK, for example through professional accreditation schemes and university. As such, they exhibited a greater range of narrative touchpoints, compared to young Africans belonging to lower SECs. This distinction was also identified by young Africans themselves, many of whom saw the opportunity to visit, study and work in the UK as one reserved for those who were financially privileged.

*'For me, if anyone wants to visit England, he or she will have to think twice about the travel budget. It won't be the same as going to Paris where you can afford going back*

*and forth. England is once in a lifetime travel where you're going to spend a lot of money, so tourism in England is limited to a certain social category.'*

Morocco, 18-24, C2D

## **Young people from the UK's perception and expectation of the UK**

Across the UK, young people reported the view that current narratives of the UK effectively over-represent a minority, upper class segment of British culture, to the exclusion of other classes – in spite of the fact that these other segments make up the majority of the UK.

*'We promote middle class Britain, but most of us are working class. Hugh Grant and Love Actually, nice suits, and Union Jack minis: that's not really Britain. I think we're more, as you said, Tesco meal deal or JB Sports. I'd argue that it's even middle to upper class that people think of.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

*'[There's] more working-class diversity - especially in Edinburgh and in Glasgow.'*

Edinburgh, 18-24

Moreover, in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Manchester specifically, young people called out the way in which England and London act as proxies for the entire UK in the imaginations of people living overseas. This point was evidenced by the dominance of England and London in young Africans' drawings of the UK. To counter this, young people in different cities pointed to a range of local assets which they felt could contribute to a more nuanced picture of the UK. Examples included:

- **Creative industries**

*'For me, Manchester's kind of representative of more modern British culture [compared to London]. A lot of people do associate Manchester being one of the biggest cities in the world of music.'*

Manchester, 18-24

- **Local cultures**

*'People think of London as Britain, [but] we've got Welsh cakes, the Welsh language, obviously, we've got rugby. We've got Gavin and Stacey.'*

Cardiff, 25-35

- **Local places and icons**

*'Scotland and Ireland are probably the best countries in the world for stuff like that: The Highlands; the Giant's Causeway; the Mournes.'*

Belfast, 18-24

Discussions among participants about which reference points and associations they would be happy for the UK (or their respective city, region or country) to be represented by covered

a range of different options. The tables below categorise these options into three groups, and summarise the key points raised in respect of each. Rejected associations are those which which young people were consistently unhappy to be associated with – although this opposition did not necessarily mean that participants did not recognise the truth in these associations. Contested associations are those which some young people were happy to be represented by, but others questioned or opposed. Celebrated associations, finally, are those which were identified as acceptable and positive by consensus.

### UK – rejected associations

Association	Summary and key examples
<b>Posh-ness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus that upper-class subjects and themes tend to dominate current international narratives of the UK, despite representing a minority segment of the British population.</li> <li>• Stereotypic associations with related themes including, for example, Savile Row, posh accents, and private school education are likewise seen as unrepresentative and out of touch with the lived realities of young people especially.</li> </ul>
<b>Racism</b>  <b>Binge drinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledged as a serious issue in the UK but attributed to a minority within the population.</li> <li>• Roundly rejected by all participants on a personal level.</li> <li>• Acknowledged as a very real and unavoidable part of British culture, and of British youth culture especially.</li> <li>• However, participants frequently preferred to emphasise latent signs of British community spirit and social bonding in their interpretation of British drinking culture.</li> <li>• More negative framings were rejected as inappropriate for building positive perceptions of the UK overseas.</li> </ul>

### UK – contested associations

Association	Summary and key examples	
	Positives	Negatives
<b>The Royal Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An iconic touchpoint</li> <li>• Living connection with British history</li> <li>• A sign of British commitment to tradition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate over compatibility with principles of democracy and egalitarianism</li> <li>• Scandals including allegations of sexual misconduct by Prince Andrew</li> <li>• Concern over the treatment of Meghan Markle and Princess Diana.</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial Brands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered key touchpoints for narratives of British quality in terms of products and services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions over whether multinational brands (e.g.</li> </ul>

		Cadburys) can truly be considered 'British' anymore.
<b>Patriotism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regarded as positive and acceptable in cases of Welsh, Irish and Scottish patriotism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>British and English patriotism strongly associated with racism and xenophobia.</li> </ul>
<b>Multiculturalism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considered a personal value by participants themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not considered a truly British value, but instead characteristic of certain groups only - for example, more educated groups and residents of cosmopolitan neighbourhoods.</li> </ul>
<b>Politics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion and protection of rights to vote, protest and freedom of speech a source of pride and privilege for young people from the UK.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Politicians themselves a source of embarrassment for many young people from the UK, particularly in relation to events connected to Brexit.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of rights to education a source of pride and privilege among young people from the UK.</li> <li>Internationally prestigious institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge Universities acknowledged as key iconic touchpoints.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widespread concerns over the currency of inequality and class privilege within UK education systems.</li> <li>Criticism that Oxbridge, in particular, overshadows equally prestigious universities in other countries and regions of the UK.</li> </ul>

## UK – celebrated associations

Association	Summary and key examples
<b>Community spirit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exemplified by, for example, shows of community resilience and coming together in the face of terror attacks, such as the response to the Manchester bombings</li> <li>Regarded as a defining characteristic of cities and regions across the UK, rooted in a shared sense of local identity and pride.</li> </ul>
<b>Equalisers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refers to instances and symbols of overcoming social divisions</li> <li>Examples include champions of social justice and equal rights and representatives of marginalised groups. Rap artist Stormzy, for example, was widely identified by participants as a key representative of Black British, Black-Londoner and youth culture and experiences</li> <li>Other examples include customs, preferences and practices that are imagined as cutting across social divisions, such as tea-drinking and going for a pint at the local pub.</li> </ul>
<b>Symbols of UK diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iconic local touchpoints, such as the Giants Causeway (Northern Ireland); the Scottish Highlands and Edinburgh University; and Welsh rugby. Participants also identified public figures and celebrities</li> </ul>

	strongly associated with specific areas, for example Adele and South London, as important symbols of UK diversity.
<b>Music</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UK is commonly perceived by its young people as a historical (mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century) and contemporary powerhouse in terms of shaping musical trends and fashions</li> <li>• The relatively small size of the UK compared to the other countries compounds young people from the UK's sense of pride in British music.</li> </ul>
<b>Sports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparable to pride in the UK's musical legacy and reputation, young people from the UK regard the UK's love and promotion of sports including rugby, football and athletics as cornerstones of British culture.</li> </ul>



**4.**

# CONSIDERATIONS

The findings of this investigation are designed to inform the British Council’s five-year New Narratives programme, which aims to help contribute to changing reciprocal perceptions between Africa and the UK to stimulate new understanding which will unlock new connections and collaborations for mutual benefit. To that end, Table 3 outlines a set of key considerations for the New Narratives programme moving forward, based on the evidence and insights generated via the formative research.

**Table 3: Considerations for next steps**

Consider...	Highlighting <b>British and African diversity</b> by...	Countering <b>dominant negative narratives</b> of the UK and Africa by...	Aligning with <b>trends in popular culture environments</b> by...	<b>Building common ground</b> based on common youth sensibilities by...
<b>New Narratives of the UK</b>	<p><b>Showcasing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland</li> <li>• Cities and regions other than London</li> <li>• Middle- and working-class communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Communicating how the UK is <b>leveraging strong systems</b> and structures <b>to address social issues</b> like racism and elitism.</p>	<p><b>Expanding:</b> the range of touchpoints for young Africans to engage with new narratives of the UK, to break out of the current institutionalisation of the landscape.</p>	
<b>New Narratives of African countries</b>	<p><b>Showcasing</b> country-based assets and differentiators, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salient country references identified by young Africans</li> <li>• Emerging country- and regional- differentiators in the imaginations of young people from the UK</li> </ul>	<p>Communicating how the African countries are leveraging <b>strong social values to address systemic issues</b> such as poverty and corruption</p> <p>Building narratives which highlight African countries, organisations and individuals as <b>significant agents on the international stage.</b></p>	<p><b>Amplifying:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong and diverse youth identities</li> <li>• Challenges to negative stereotypes</li> <li>• Influential and emerging voice</li> <li>• African innovation, creativity, progress and change</li> </ul> <p><b>Avoiding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latent (neo)colonial tropes, motifs and stereotypes</li> <li>• Exoticisation, idealisation, and associations with vulnerability / fragility.</li> </ul>	<p>Exploring opportunities for narratives which communicate <b>shared youth values, hopes and aspirations</b></p>



**5.**

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