

<b>Institution:</b> The University of Oxford
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UOA27
<b>Title of case study:</b> Promoting free and fair elections and democratization in Africa
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Dr Nic Cheeseman's research has informed and influenced electoral practices in Kenya and Zambia. In Kenya, his work shaped the findings of the official Kreigler Commission, whose report on the controversial elections of 2007 led to the restructuring of the electoral commission. In Zambia, his advice led the UK Department for International Development (DfID) to include parliamentary scorecards and the training constituency based officers of the National Assembly as part of its democracy promotion activities for the first time, and resulted in the World Bank adopting a more flexible Country Partnership Strategy. Dr Cheeseman also influenced the way in which policy makers prepared for and responded to electoral crises, establishing an innovative academic 'Early Warning and Long-term Monitoring Team' to support the work of the UK government around the 2013 Kenyan elections. His advice enabled representatives of the UK to identify potential new sites of violence and to increase the pressure on the electoral commission to better communicate electoral procedures to the public, which contributed, albeit in a small way, to a peaceful election.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research that Dr Cheeseman has conducted at Oxford University since 2008 addresses the questions of how elections lead to violence and how political systems can be designed to promote more accountable and effective government. His work on political parties in Zambia demonstrated that even in ethnically diverse societies, political leaders could still mobilize large support bases by crafting programmatic policies and harnessing them to populist political machines (2008b; 2013). He also demonstrated that, in contrast to much of the literature which suggests that African politics can be treated as an 'ethnic census', Zambian political leaders were so concerned about public opinion that they regularly changed their positions on key policy issues in response to the policy proposals of rival parties and the public mood (2008b). Research conducted for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) as part of a £20,000 research project went further, and suggested that, in many African countries, there were untapped 'programmatic constituencies' that could be mobilized by parties. Finally, research as part of a £700,000 UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grant on executive-legislative relations in new democracies found that contrary to conventional wisdom, many African presidents lack secure legislative majorities. As a result, they must deploy a range of legislative 'tools' such as patronage to pass legislation, which in turn generates a number of negative externalities, undermining the development of durable political parties and the quality of legislative scrutiny and thus harming the prospects for democratization (2013).</p> <p>The combination of this research led Dr Cheeseman to argue that African politics could be made more 'programmatic' or 'policy based' by increasing the information available to citizens regarding the activities and performance of their MPs, strengthening the ties of communication between citizens and representatives, and enhancing the policy capacity of political parties. He therefore advocated that donors should enhance the information available to citizens about their representatives and assist political parties to enable them to better anticipate and respond to popular concerns.</p> <p>Dr Cheeseman also conducted research on elections and violence. Combining testimony from those on the ground in Kenya with theories of state collapse, he identified four processes that had led to post-election violence in Kenya in 2008: the creation of rigid communal identities, the informalization of state institutions, the evolution of a deeply divided political elite, and the gradual diffusion of capacity for violence to non-state actors such as militias (2009). He also explained the pattern of voting by showing that while rigging had occurred, it had not done so on the scale alleged by the opposition (2008a). This research and the special issue of the Journal of Eastern African Studies that Dr Cheeseman co-edited with Daniel Branch (Warwick University) shaped how the 'Kenya crisis' came to be understood.</p>

In related work, Dr Cheeseman found that that one of the most important factors in explaining turnover is whether or not the sitting president contests the polls (published in *Journal of Democracy* 2010). When this is not the case—and there is therefore an ‘open-seat’ election—the opposition is 33% more likely to win. These finding enabled Dr Cheeseman to develop a framework for assessing when elections were most likely to result in a change of power and electoral violence. On the basis of this research, Dr Cheeseman argued that the 2013 Kenyan elections, in which the incumbent cannot stand, had the potential to lead to an opposition victory and so would be particularly prone to electoral violence.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- ‘The 2007 Kenyan Election: An Introduction’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2 (2) pp. 166-184 (2008a). DOI:10.1080/17531050802058286 (*This specialist journal is the number one journal for eastern African studies. The special issue (co-edited with Dr Branch) has already been cited over 150 times*).
- ‘Parties, Platforms, and Political Mobilization: The Zambian Presidential Election of 2008’, *African Affairs*, 109 (434) pp. 51-76 (2008b) [with Maja Hinfelaar]. DOI: 10.1093/afraf/adn065 (*At the time this article was published, African Affairs was the No 1 journal in African Studies and Area Studies*).
- ‘Democratization, Sequencing, and State Failure in Africa: Lessons from Kenya’, *African Affairs*, 108 (430) pp. 1-26 (2009) [with Daniel Branch]. DOI: 10.1093/afraf/adn065 (*At the time this article was published, African Affairs was the No 1 journal in African Studies and Area Studies. This article was the most downloaded and cited article published by the journal in the last three years and was subsequently included in a compilation of essential works: Jean Grugel (ed), Democratization, London: Sage.*)
- ‘The Internal Dynamics of Power-sharing in Africa’, *Democratization* 18, 2 (2011). DOI:10.1080/13510347.2011.553358 (*Democratization is one of the most widely cited journals on democracy, impact factor: 0.917*).
- ‘African Elections as Vehicles for Change’, *Journal of Democracy* 21, 4 (2010). DOI: 10.1353/jod.2010.0019 (*The Journal of Democracy is one of the most widely read policy journals, impact factor: 1.008*).
- ‘Rethinking the “Presidentialism Debate”: Conceptualizing Coalitional Politics in Cross-Regional Perspective’, *Democratization* (2013a) [with Paul Chaisty and Tim Power]. DOI:10.1080/13510347.2012.710604 (*Democratization is one of the most widely cited journals on democracy, impact factor: 0.917*) – *This article was in part supported by the ESRC grant on executive-legislative relations*)

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

In Zambia, Dr Cheeseman designed a democracy and accountability program for DfID that included a number of innovative policies to foster a more accountable and responsive government. This impact came about as a result of Dr Cheeseman’s publications on Zambia, political parties and the challenges of cultivating effective accountability and legislative scrutiny in new democracies, and his experience of briefing the UK High Commissioner to Zambia and his Deputy in 2011-12. Relatively few scholars have worked on the political economy of Zambia under the Kaunda, Chiluba and now Sata administrations, and so Dr Cheeseman was uniquely well suited to the project. As a result, in May 2012, he was asked to draft a multi-million pound Business Case to guide DfID’s democracy promotion activities in Zambia for the next five years. As DfID Governance Advisor Sam Waldock explains, ‘Nic’s work on DFID Zambia Business Cases helped us to analyse the viability of proposed interventions and suggest a few new interventions.’<sup>[1]</sup>

Following an assessment of a number of options identified by DfID Zambia, Dr Cheeseman conducted a period of fieldwork in July 2012. Based on this experience and his prior research, he recommended that DfID launch a Scorecard for MPs, through which Zambian voters will be able to access a summary of the activities of their MPs in key areas. A second new proposal was to provide training for the staff who operate MPs Constituency Offices for the first time, enabling them to better educate and serve their constituencies. A third strategy proposed by Dr Cheeseman was to provide think tanks for political parties to enable them to develop more rounded and considered

manifestoes. This significantly expanded DfID's general framework for democracy promotion activities, which has very rarely engaged directly with political parties to date. Taken together, these policies represent an important evolution in the way that the UK government conducts democracy promotion activities in Zambia – a change that will provide greater information to citizens, strengthen ties of vertical accountability, and hence support the evolution of a more effective democracy in the long-run.

Similar work on the political economy of the new Patriotic Front (PF) government that Dr Cheeseman conducted in June 2012 as a consultant for the World Bank also had a significant impact, leading the Bank to adopt a more pragmatic approach in response to the contradictions at the heart of the PF's policy platform. According to Governance Officer Kate Bridges, Dr Cheeseman's work was 'absolutely critical' to the development of the Bank's Country Partnership Strategy, and his 'report has consistently been referred to ... The candid diagnosis of the barriers to effective donor intervention (particularly in key Bank sectors such as agriculture, roads and mining) has had a direct effect on the work plan that country staff ultimately agreed upon and the sectors we decided to prioritise. Nic's emphasis on the policy incoherence and idiosyncratic leadership ... led us to develop a CPS that has enshrined flexibility as a core principle ... In short, Nic's work has helped contribute to us having one of the most politically responsive and aware CPS strategies to date.'<sup>[2]</sup>

In Kenya, Dr Cheeseman's research both shaped the UK government's approach to the 2013 general elections and strengthened the ties between academic research and the policy process more generally. This impact evolved out of a deep engagement with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) over a number of years<sup>[3]</sup>. In 2009, he delivered a workshop to the Cabinet Office of the UK government on the prospects for unrest, and has briefed every High Commissioner to Kenya since 2008. These sessions led the FCO to ask Dr Cheeseman to organise and deliver a 'Diplomatic Excellence Day' attended by the entire Africa Directorate of the FCO in Oxford in November 2011. Consistent policy engagement facilitated the integration of academic and policy communities, leading to further requests for academic input on policy issues. Based on this experience, Dr Cheeseman and two colleagues (Gabrielle Lynch of Warwick University and Justin Willis of Durham University) argued that, given the potential for election violence, donors required more systematic and longer-term academic engagement ahead of the 2013 elections. The Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP) Programme of the UK government – which draws together DfID, the FCO and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) – agreed and provided almost £70,000 to fund the project. The resulting 'Early Warning and Long-term Monitoring' project brought together 10 British and Kenyan experts to conduct regular fieldwork and draft and submit monthly reports. Dr Cheeseman helped manage the project, drafted reports, edited the work of others, wrote executive summaries, and regularly presented the project's findings to policy makers in London and Nairobi. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first time that an academic team of this size has been systematically integrated into the UK's election management strategy.

The project was deemed such a success that, in May 2013, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office asked Dr Cheeseman and his colleagues to apply for ESRC Knowledge Exchange funding as Co-PIs in order to extend the relationship and consider the policy lessons that can be learnt from the elections. Writing in support of that application, Political Officer Tamsin Clayton noted that the project had 'met all of its aims and objectives' and that 'reports and discussions have informed ACPP planning and policy advice regarding potential hotspots and the credibility of forthcoming elections by a) confirming existing knowledge, b) providing additional detail and c) offering fresh analysis. Two of the most significant contributions of this project have been the geographic coverage provided, which is difficult for London and Nairobi-based ACPP staff to garner, and the insightful analysis of potential conflict areas and the effectiveness of potential interventions, such recommendations on areas to focus on going in to the election including placement of international election observers - and discussions regarding responses to different election and post-election scenarios.'<sup>[4]</sup>

More specifically, the advice of the academic team was important in helping the UK government identify likely locations of conflict. Dr Cheeseman argued that due to different patterns of coalition

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politics, inter-communal violence would not erupt on the same cleavage as 2007/8. It was therefore essential that the DfID, FCO, and MoD pay greater attention to Luo communities living on tea farms and along the borders with Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities. The Early Warning project also highlighted the danger posed by poor levels of voter education and the mixed messages given by the Electoral Commission, leading DfID to put greater pressure on the Commission to use the national media to explain the electoral process. In this way, the team played a small role in promoting a credible and peaceful process. The reports were considered to be extremely valuable to important policy decisions and so were shared with the donor and NGOs community, most notably with the US State Department and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), from their inception in December 2012 through to the end of the project in June 2013. Writing to thank Dr Cheeseman for his input during the election, Jonnie Carson, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (who reports directly to the US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton) wrote, 'Many thanks for including me on your running commentary of the Kenyan elections ... I appreciate the insights, the perspective and the data that you provided ... given your rich knowledge of Kenya, your views were important in helping us to shape our own'. Project findings were also shared with the Dutch government through a presentation in the Hague.

Dr Cheeseman also shaped the findings of the Independent Review Commission<sup>[i]</sup> (IREC – popularly known as the Kriegler Commission), the official investigation into the 2007 elections established by the Kenyan government in 2008. In part, the Commission assessment on the extent of electoral manipulation was guided by Dr Cheeseman's article in the *Journal of Eastern African Studies* – which was frequently cited in the final document – where he argued that in many constituencies the discrepancy between the vote for the ruling party in the presidential and parliamentary elections resulted from the presence of strong independent candidates in parliamentary contests. These candidates often drew support away from ruling party's candidates, and it was often this, and not ballot box stuffing, that explained why the ruling party did better in the presidential election. The Commission also cited Dr Cheeseman's work in support of the conclusion that one of the main problems in the election was the lack of independence of the Electoral Commission. This was significant because the Kriegler Commission's laid down the blueprints for the design of a more autonomous electoral management body ahead of the 2013 election. According to Jorgen Elklitt, the Secretary of the Commission, 'During this work it was very useful for me – but also for the IREC Chair, Judge Johann Kriegler – to have access to the special issue of the *Journal of Eastern African Studies* of which Dr Cheeseman was a guest editor. The content of this issue of the journal contributed substantially to our understanding of the entire situation ... and helped us to formulate some of the many complicated questions we had to look into.'<sup>[5]</sup>

Research findings were also disseminated to a mass audience through appearances on BBC News 24, the World At One (Radio 4), the Today Program (Radio 4), RFI Radio (French World Service), Material World (BBC Radio 4), and The One Show (BBC 1 – approximately 5 million people watched the program). Most notably, Dr Cheeseman's column in the Daily Nation – the highest selling newspaper in East and Central Africa with a daily circulation of 205,000 – has helped to bring important debates and research findings to ordinary Kenyans, many of whom correspond with him regularly.

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

###### Testimony

- [1] Statement from Governance Advisor, DfID
- [2] Statement from World Bank Governance Officer
- [3] Corroboration of engagement with the FCO available from Former FCO Research Analyst, Africa Research Group
- [4] Statement from FCO Political Officer
- [5] Statement from Secretary to the Kriegler Commission

###### Other Evidence Sources

- [i] **The Kriegler Report** (Nairobi, 2008): <http://www.communication.go.ke/media.asp?id=737>