

***THE LOVING HEART OF A MOTHER OR A GREEDY POLITICIAN?***

**Media representations of female presidents in Liberia and Malawi**

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# JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
<p>This study examines the media representations of two female heads of state in Africa – President of Liberia (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf), and former President of Malawi (Joyce Banda). The study aims at gaining understanding of how various media sources from Malawian, Liberian, African and the international media have represented Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as well as how the female presidents have represented themselves in media. The research questions focus on gender and leadership: 1.) How has gender defined the political leadership of African female presidents: Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, according to English-language media sources? 2.) How has gender defined the presentation of these presidents in the media?</p> <p>The data consists of altogether twenty-seven news articles (including newspaper articles, interviews, columns, documentaries) and fourteen YouTube videos by Malawian, Liberian, African, and the international media, as well as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s memoir, and the website of <i>Joyce Banda Foundation</i>. The research data is analyzed using the methods of rhetorical analysis, critical discourse analysis, thematic analysis, as well as taking into account the narratives of the presidents. The theoretical approach of the study is based on Africana womanism by Clenora Hudson-Weems, and Nah Dove. Africana womanism has an Afrocentric perspective when it comes to dealing with African women’s issues, and this particular theory highlights the role of African women and motherhood in society.</p> <p>The themes identified from the research data are: <i>women and leadership; motherhood; African womanhood; Life story; the nicknames of female presidents; globally revered vs. internal criticism</i>. The media representation regarding both Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf contained a strong emphasis on gender in the context of leadership, and motherhood. There seems to exist a strong connection between good leadership and motherhood, not only within the media, but in the statements made by the presidents themselves as well, and occasionally also by local women in Malawi and Liberia who were interviewed about Banda and Johnson Sirleaf. The differences between the international and African (Malawian, Liberian) media pertained to criticism of their leadership. The international media also placed more emphasis on their gender, whereas local media were more critical of their leadership skills, and perceived them as typical self-serving, greedy African politicians. From the representations there also emerged a strong emphasis on African womanhood, and particularly the grass-roots level support for Liberian and Malawian women to the female presidents. However, in the context of Joyce Banda’s representation it was pointed out that the mutual support of women does not exist at all political levels, meaning that the women who operate at the highest levels of the political sphere have not supported her. The representations of Joyce Banda’s and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s leadership are influenced by local political and cultural settings which take into account gender roles, the economic situation of the country, as well as the relationship between Africa and the Western world</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords female presidents, Africa, Liberia, Malawi, politics, gender and leadership, representation, media, rhetorical analysis, critical discourse analysis, thematic analysis, Africana womanism	
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Aika – Month and year Toukokuu 2016	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 97
<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Pro gradu-tutkielmassani tarkastelen miten kahta afrikkalaista naispresidenttiä - Liberian presidentti Ellen Johnson Sirleafiä, ja Malawin presidentti Joyce Bandaa on kuvattu mediassa. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on ymmärtää miten eri medialähteet (malawilaiset, liberialaiset, afrikkalaiset ja kansainväliset mediat) ovat kuvanneet kahta naispresidenttiä, ja miten naispresidentit ovat tuoneet itsensä esille mediassa. Tutkimuskysymykset ovat keskittyneet sukupuoleen ja johtajuuteen: 1) miten sukupuoli on määritellyt afrikkalaisten naispresidenttien poliittisen johtajuuden englanninkielisten medialähteiden pohjalta? 2.) miten sukupuoli on määritellyt kyseisten presidenttien esittämisen mediassa?</p> <p>Aineisto koostuu yhteensä kahdestakymmenestä seitsemästä malawilaisista, liberialaisista, afrikkalaisista, ja kansainvälisistä media-artikkeleista (mukaan lukien lehtiartikkelit, haastattelut, dokumentit) ja neljästätoista YouTube-videosta, sekä Ellen Johnson Sirleafin muistelmateoksesta, ja Joyce Bandan järjestön nettisivuista. Tutkimusaineisto on analysoitu kriittisen diskurssianalyysin, retorisen analyysin, sekä temaattisen analyysin avulla, ja analyysissä on myös otettu huomioon naispresidenttien kerronta. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys perustuu Clenora Hudson Weemsin, ja Nah Doven afrosentriseen Africana womanism-teoriaan, mikä painottaa afrikkalaisen naisen ja äitiyden merkitystä yhteiskunnassa.</p> <p>Tutkimusaineistosta tuli esille seuraavat teemat: <i>naiset ja johtajuus; äitiys; afrikkalainen naiseus; elämäntarina; naispresidenttien lempinimet; maailmanlaajuinen arvostus vastaan kotimaan kritiikki</i>. Molempien naispresidenttien kuvaus mediassa painottui vahvasti sukupuoleen poliittisen johtamisen yhteydessä, sekä äitiyteen. Mediakuvauksissa tuli esille hyvän johtajuuden ja äitiyden välinen vahva yhteys, joka ilmeni niin naispresidenttien omassa kerronnassa kuin myös toisinaan malawilaisten ja liberialaisten naisten kommentteissa. Tutkimustulokset osoittavat miten afrikkalaisen (malawilaisen, liberialaisen) ja kansainvälisen median välillä esiintyi eroavaisuuksia liittyen naispresidenttien johtajuuden kritisoimiseen. Kansainvälinen media painotti enemmän presidenttien sukupuolta, kun taas paikallinen media kritisoi enemmän heidän johtamisen taitoja, ja pitivät heitä tyypillisinä, ahneina ja itsekkäinä afrikkalaisina poliitikkoina. Afrikkalaisella naiseudella, ja varsinkin malawilaisten ja liberialaisten naisten ruohonjuuritason tuella naispresidentteille oli myös vahva painotuksensa naispresidenttien mediakuvauksissa. Naisten välistä solidarisuutta ei kuitenkaan esiintynyt kaikilla tasoilla, sillä varsinkin Joyce Bandan yhteydessä tuli esille se, että naiset jotka toimivat politiikan ylemmillä portailla, eivät olleet tukeneet Bandaa. Joyce Bandan ja Ellen Johnson Sirleafin johtajuuden kuvaamiseen vaikuttavat paikalliset poliittiset ja kulttuuriset kontekstit, joihin liittyy myös sukupuoli-roolit, maiden taloudellinen tilanne kuin myös Afrikan ja läntisen maailman välinen suhde.</p>	
<p>Asiasanat – Keywords naispresidentit, Afrikka, Liberia, Malawi, politiikka, sukupuoli ja johtajuus, representaatio, media, retorinen analyysi, kriittinen diskurssianalyysi, temaattinen analyysi, Africana womanism</p>	
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# THE LOVING HEART OF A MOTHER OR A GREEDY POLITICIAN?

## Media representations of female presidents in Liberia and Malawi

**Key terms:** female presidents, Africa, Liberia, Malawi, politics, gender and leadership, representation, media, rhetorical analysis, critical discourse analysis, thematic analysis, Africana womanism

### 1. Introduction

In recent years I have become interested in the female presidents of Africa, because, first of all, I have been fascinated with women leaders; women who have political power and have gained a leadership position in a traditional male-dominated culture. When searching for information about women presidents, it became quite obvious how few they still are. At the moment of my writing (in October 2014), there are nine women presidents in the world, according to the *Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership*<sup>1</sup> in South America there are currently three women presidents (Chile, Argentina, and Brazil), in Asia one female president (South Korea), and in Europe three women presidents (Kosovo, Lithuania, and Malta), and in Africa two female presidents (Liberia, Central African Republic). When talking about the female head of states, it is also important to mention the female prime ministers such as the Prime Minister of Denmark (Helle Thorning-Schmidt), the Prime Minister of Bangladesh (Sheikh Hasina Wajed), or the Chancellor of Germany (Angela Merkel), although they are not the presidents, they still have political power and are the leaders of their countries.<sup>2</sup>

In the contemporary world it is still rare that women are presidents, for example, just observing the political situation in the United States, where still there is no woman president even though the country is considered to be an advanced democratic western country. It appears a woman president is still a questionable choice in many parts of the world. Therefore, it seems that when reviewing the continent of Africa, and its many poor countries, it is remarkable that there has been a possibility for a few women to be in a position of power, when it is known that many African countries have a patriarchal culture which does not generally encourage women to pursue leadership positions in the political arena. Nevertheless, when observing in general the development of women's political participation in Africa, it should be mentioned that since the 1990s, there has been an increasing visibility of women as political actors, and also a new generation of policies have been adopted for advancing women's rights, as Aili Mari Tripp, Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga and Alice Mungwa have stated (2009). For instance in Senegal, there have been two female Prime Ministers in the 2000s; Mama

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Current-Women-Leaders.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Current-Women-Leaders.htm>.

Madior Boye in 2001, and Aminata Touré in 2013.<sup>3</sup> Many African countries such as Uganda, Namibia, and South Africa have established quota systems to secure the representation of women or have reserved seats for women in governance (Burnet 2008).

When reviewing the list of women in parliament on a global scale, it is an astonishing finding that the number one country on the list is Rwanda. According to a study made by UNWOMEN (2014), Rwanda was ranked as the first country in the world when it came to the percentage of female parliamentarians (in the lower house of parliament or unicameral parliaments) which reflected appointments and elections up to 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014. Thus, in Rwanda 63, 8% of women had seats (51 women/80 seats) in lower or single house of parliament, and in upper house or in senate, 38.5% of women had seats (10 women/26 seats). Other African countries that were ranked in the top 25 were the following countries: South Africa (5<sup>th</sup>), Senegal (7<sup>th</sup>), Mozambique (14<sup>th</sup>), Angola (20<sup>th</sup>), United Republic of Tanzania (23<sup>rd</sup>), and Uganda (24<sup>th</sup>). However, it should be noted that Malawi was ranked 66<sup>th</sup> due to the fact there were only 23.3% of women in lower or single house of parliament (43 women/193 seats). On the other hand, Liberia was ranked as 112<sup>th</sup> (11%, 8 women/73 seats in lower or single house of parliament; as well as 13.3%, 4 women/30 seats in upper house or in senate). In the top 20 list of women in ministerial positions in 2014, there were six African countries: 5. Cabo Verde, 13. Rwanda, 16. South Africa, 17. United Republic of Tanzania, 18. Burundi, 20. Kenya<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that even if the country has a female head of state this does not automatically lead to an increased amount of women in parliament. In the context of Rwanda one should take into account legal reforms which caused important gains for women in the years since the genocide in the country. Rwanda's 2003 constitution guaranteed gender equality by securing women are granted at least 30% of decision making posts. Government of Rwanda adopted various institutional and legal reforms which were actively supported and utilized by Rwandan women. Thus in Rwanda, it was the combination of women's qualitative impact and their quantitative representation that made a unique success story of women's agency (Uwineza & Brown 2011: 154). Nevertheless, there seems to exist contradictive perspectives regarding how well women's participation in Rwandan politics has actually come true. Anthropologist Jennie E. Burnet (2008) who has conducted research on gender, ethnicity and reconciliation in Rwanda has discussed the increase of women's participation in governance and public life in the country. Burnet argues that the discussions about female political participation in post-genocide Rwanda seem to presume that women's increased participation in politics

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<sup>3</sup>[http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/wmn-map14\\_en%20pdf.ashx](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/wmn-map14_en%20pdf.ashx)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/8FD64A021C8840AC9AE6906D50658487.ashx>

would lead to greater gender equality, yet the changes have not certainly increased women's political power. Across the African continent, the increase in women's engagement such as in the legislative and executive branches of government and in the grassroots administrative structures has led to a loss of human capital (experienced female leaders) from civil society organizations (women's organizations). The second negative consequence of the increased female participation in governance is that it has impeded the cooperation between women in office and women in civil society (for example in Rwanda), meaning that some women have criticized their female colleagues who had been elected to office, for not engaging in activism on supporting women's interests (Burnet 2008: 380-381).

When reflecting gender and politics in the African continent, one should be aware of a multifaceted legacy of Western colonization that has had a dominating and profound influence on African states. One of the significant results that emerged from Western colonization was Western political systems. However, Western multiparty systems did not succeed in fitting into African political culture. Therefore, many African states eventually formed as mainly opportunistic bureaucracies which were separated from the masses, and the legacy of deteriorating economies has made it burdensome for African states to democratize (Gordon, A. & Gordon, D. 2007:4). Thus it is essential to be aware of the historical (and sometimes very violent) political background when discussing women in politics. Nevertheless, it is significant what kinds of transformation have emerged in African states in the context of gender and politics in recent decades. As political scientist Aili Mari Tripp et. al. (2009) have stated that autonomous women's movements in Africa have been one of the most significant factors in the new gender-based policies that have been adopted after 1990. Other important factors have been the allocation of new donor and government resources to enforce reforms related to women's rights, changing international influences and norms of regional and global women's movements, and the spread of female-friendly policies. The latter is viewed as a result of the impact of multilateral bodies (the United Nations), regional bodies (the African Union), and also sub-regional institutions (the Southern African Development Community). It is also important to highlight the fact that many conflicts ended by the 1990s, thus creating significant political opportunities for women's movements in Africa (Tripp et. al. 2009: xiv). Gender specialist Gisela Geisler (2004) has argued that women in Africa managed to force their way into the exclusively male dominated politics during a wave of democratization in many African countries such as Zambia, South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana in the 1990s. Women pushed themselves into the politics of anti-colonial movements despite male resistance, with the expectations of gaining a better society, thus improving their own position within it (Geisler, 2004: 9, 206). When discussing the perception of female African politicians, Geisler also points out that many constituencies and female politicians have asserted a different women's approach to politics, which is more practical and care oriented, and related to social issues of survival.



For example, the respondents of a survey conducted in 2001 in Zimbabwe argued that women politicians were more hardworking, caring and honest than men politicians (2004: 213–214).

My Master's Thesis will concentrate on two female heads of state in Africa – President of Liberia (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf), and former President of Malawi (Joyce Banda). Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first female head of state in 2006, and Joyce Banda became the first woman president of Malawi in 2012. However, in May 2014 she lost the presidential election, therefore now there is a new president, Peter Mutharika who is a brother of late Bingu wu Mutharika, the predecessor of Joyce Banda. At the moment, however there is also another female president in the Central African Republic, Catherine Samba-Panza, who was elected as an interim president in January 2014. However, I will focus only on the presidents of Liberia and Malawi because I have already collected more data and source materials concerning them, and they have also been longer as head of states than Samba-Panza, therefore there exist more source materials about them. In the following chapters I present the theoretical framework of my study, the methods that I use in my thesis, and my data and source materials. Then I present briefly the history of Liberia and Malawi, their societies, ethnicity issues as well Liberian and Malawian women in politics. There is also a brief biography concerning both the female presidents. In the analysis chapters, I analyze my data, and finally I offer conclusions about my data. My specific research questions are:

- How has gender defined the political leadership of African female presidents: Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, according to English-language media sources?
- How has gender defined the presentation of these presidents in the media?

## **2. Theoretical framework: Gender in Africa**

As gender is one of the main issues in my study, I bring out briefly a few theoretical approaches that can give some a kind of perspective on how gender is perceived. How anthropology, and also the feminist anthropology, and postcolonial feminism, too, have respectively covered gender in their studies. I also bring out the African perspective on gender issues, when I cover African women's power in precolonial times, as well African patriarchy and masculinities, and also African womanism in my study. To begin with, one needs to define what gender really is. Gender is a dynamic term, and it can be viewed as the meanings that a particular society gives to the biological or physiological attributes that distinguish females and males. The meanings of gender thus offer members of a society certain concepts on how to make sense of their experiences, what to believe, and how to act in a given society. Hence one could perceive gender constructs to be open to change because they are cultural interpretations of physical differences (Mascia-Lees & Johnson Black 2000: 1-2). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that sex is not totally biologically fixed or determined. Anthropologists Hastings Donnan and Fiona Magowan (2010) have pointed out that there is a lack of consensus on what is meant by the term 'sex'. From anthropologists to feminists, the terms such as 'gender', and 'sex' have been used in quite different way (2010:2).

There have been two perspectives in the anthropological approach to gender; gender as a social relationship/role, and gender as a symbolic construction, as feminist anthropologist Henrietta L. Moore points out (1988: 6, 13). The perspective of gender as a social role has emphasized gender categories (such as 'man', 'woman', and 'mothering') to be more complex and variable than they have previously regarded to be. Gender as a social role also stress that analytical distinctions (e.g. domestic/public, nature/culture) are complex and have been misrepresented because of the assumptions that these distinctions are cross-culturally common (Moore 1988: 30). The second perspective on gender (as a symbolic construction) has emphasized gender symbols and sexual stereotypes, and there has been a challenge to explain the extent of the observable variation in cultural understandings when it comes to the meanings of 'man' and 'woman'. In addition, notions of gender have a wide range of meanings in different societies (Moore 1988: 13). In my study, I cover gender in the context of female head of states, thus I view gender to be both social role and a symbolic construction which have their own implications for how female presidents are perceived in media and in a given culture according to their gender.

Moore (2007) has also brought out that gender itself is not a neutral category, due to its close relations to race, ethnicity, religion, and class. In this context, gender discourses are always hierarchically organized, therefore, coexisting discourses are interrelated and their hierarchization is related to inequalities of resources and power (2007: 35). Hence, it can be understood that gender is related to social and cultural values and customs which define significantly what, for example, the feminine and masculine attributes are, and what the socially accepted roles and identities of female and men are. One cannot assume that as a term, gender has similar meanings everywhere in the world, thus one should always take into account the specific cultural and social context when covering gender. One cannot presume that there exist fixed meanings for gender or sex. In my study, too, it is a quite evident that when taking into account gender and all the aspects that are related to it (roles, meanings etc.), I must be aware of cultural and social contexts which have their own influence on how gender is perceived in a given culture. As my study focuses on female heads of state in the context of African and International (Western) media, it is essential to be aware of differences on how female presidents are perceived, therefore gender is also a significant factor which influences the perceptions by media. In the context of the anthropology of gender, there is a specific interest in revealing the reasons for the differences in the men's and women's roles, and also the relationships which provide different access to authority and power in a given society, as anthropologists Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Nancy Johnson Black have pointed out (2000:xii).

As Laura Stark (1998) has pointed out, Anglo-American anthropological research has taken into account the possible dynamics, discussions and structures not only between male and female or men and women, but also between society and gendered individuals. There is a focus on the cultural and social processes which exist within the diversity of categories of 'women' and 'men' that is understood to be valuated and created through discourse. The aim is to both re-examine the categories of male and masculine, and also integrate the information on women into conceptual and theoretical frameworks of such as identity, social structures and relationships (Stark, 1998: 16). The anthropology of gender can thus be understood to study the relations and the contradictions which exist within sex and gender systems that are perceived to be normative, but also to include the variety and vagueness which exist in these sex and gender systems. In my study, I take into account the interrelations between society, media and gendered individuals (the female presidents), and also discourses regarding gender.

Anthropologist Lisa Anderson-Levy (2012) has pointed out that feminist anthropology criticizes male, Euro-centered and biased anthropology, and it has attempted to understand the operation of power in various contexts. Feminist anthropology has co-operated with postcolonial and Third World

feminisms. It can be seen that the key element in feminist anthropology is the role of power in terms of constructing a variety of sexed, gendered, raced and classed identities (Anderson-Levy, 2012). There has also been specific concern in feminist anthropology regarding defining variation in gender roles (Mascia-Lees & Johnson Black, 2000:1). Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that when we discuss different perspectives on gender, there is a danger to overgeneralize gender. Mascia-Lees & Johnson Black (2000) have also pointed out the dangers of essentialism which refers to the claim of all women sharing certain experiences due to biological similarities. Some feminists have also been accused of essentializing gender when they are using the term “woman”. Also other categories of difference such as class, race, sexual preference, and religion need to be taken into account when one is discussing and defining the terms of *gender* and *woman*. (2000:15). It can be understood that when comparing the anthropology of gender and feminist anthropology with each other, the latter is more inclined to have a political agenda which brings out criticisms towards the male-dominated aspects in societies, and also emphasizes social change (fighting against social inequality etc.), whereas the anthropology of gender mainly concentrates on studying gendered relations, categories, and dynamics, but without the political emphasis.

In the realm of kinship, feminist anthropologists have argued that although one might expect to find an emphasis on gender relations, women have been left out and are quite ‘invisible’ in earlier anthropological analyses (Moore, 1988: 132). However, there exist anthropological data on how in pre-colonial times in certain parts of Africa women wielded political power and they were the holders of public offices. There also existed ‘dual-sex’ systems in some societies which meant that women were responsible for women’s affairs and men for men’s affairs (1988: 133). Andrea Cornwall (2005) has pointed out that in the context of precolonial governance, there have been studies of elite women (e.g. Kaplan 1997) which presents their political significance, such as exercising considerable power over both slave and free women, as well maintaining normative institutions. However, it is still unclear the extent to which these women stood for ‘women’s interests’ (Cornwall, 2005: 12). One needs to take into account that the British colonization with their Western influence weakened women’s traditional power and autonomy without giving them modern forms of power and autonomy, as political scientist Judith Van Allen has stated (1972:165). Therefore, it can be understood that Western influence in the context of colonization did not enhance the positions of African women in their societies, and also ignored the traditional political power of African women.

Anthropologist Flora Edouwaye S. Kaplan (1997) discusses women who have been part of elite groups in sub-Saharan Africa. She mentions that elite women are those who have exercised authority, influence or power as perceived not only by themselves, but also by those whom they have privately

or publicly influenced in spiritual and temporal spheres in West African context. Elite women exist both in matrilineal and patrilineal systems as well in “dual sex systems” that accept more variable gender roles. The wide range of forms of leadership includes newly opened roles with a background in western education, traditional queens and also market queens (referring to market women as commodity and association leaders who have informal positions in their society). An interesting notion by Kaplan is that queen mothers who have been prevalent in West Africa have had offices which have been politically important. They had traditionally used noteworthy influence on men’s offices, and for instance in Benin, queen mothers have used their office, ritual power and political influence in order to help their sons, the king. In this context, it can be perceived that the power of queen mother is connected to her gendered role as a mother, but at the same time is represented as a chief, which is a male gender role (Kaplan, 1997: xxix-xxxv). Therefore, the example of queen mother in Benin represents how the gendered roles of mother and a male chief can be interconnected with each other in one individual. Cornwall (2005) also states that there has been an emergence of African feminist perspectives which have challenged the partiality of Western feminism, thus the actual concept of ‘feminism’ has been argued to be misplaced in the context of Africa, and Western feminists are accused by various African feminist writers of having misinterpreted gender relations and gender itself, as well as underrating motherhood and ‘maternal politics’ in Africa. Particularly the significance of ‘maternal politics’ emerges both in forms of political strategies and collective action (Cornwall, 2005:1, 3-4). Maternal politics can be viewed as political mother-centered movements that are connected with women’s roles as protectors and mothers of their children. Women of such movements are fighting for their custodial rights as mothers, and not as for their own personal rights as women. Thus these movements have emerged because many women have viewed that behind political actions, it is precisely their maternal roles that is the driving force of it (Wells 1998: 251, 253).

At this point it is necessary bring out postcolonial feminism and feminist postcolonial theory on gender which indeed point out the different perspectives of Western world and Third World when it comes to analyzing gender related issues. Chris Weedon (2002) who, has worked with cultural theories of class, race and feminism, has stressed that much of the feminist theory and scholarship produced by Third World women remains invisible in the West, although some feminists from the Third World who live in the West are increasingly making their voices heard, and also criticizing the Eurocentrism of Western feminism and its tendency to reproduce colonial modes of representation. She points out that postcolonial feminists are still in the process of contesting the Eurocentric gaze which portrays third world women as victims of restrictive cultures and religions, and privileges Western notions of liberation and progress (Weedon, 2002). When it comes to feminist postcolonial theory, cultural studies scholar Reina Lewis and feminist postcolonial theorist Sara Mills (2003) have pointed

that feminist postcolonial theory has been engaged in a two-fold project: first of all, it aims to racialise mainstream feminist theory, and secondly, to insert feminist concerns into conceptualizations of colonialism and postcolonialism (2003: 3). The second wave of Anglo-American feminist theory (1960s-1990s) assumed that the concerns of Western white women were also the concerns of women around the globe. The essentialising carried out by Western feminism led to a silencing of third world and black women's contributions in early Anglo-American feminist theory. The critique by black and third world feminist theorists has led to a rethinking of the category of gender itself, revealing it to be more nuanced and historicized than previously assumed (2003: 4). Chandra Mohanty, a feminist postcolonial theorist (2003) points out that women as a category of analysis presupposes that all of those of the same gender, across cultures and classes, are a homogenous group identifiable prior to the process of analysis. In the context of women as a category of analysis and how it is used in western feminist discourse on women in developing countries, Mohanty presents six assumptions which construct third-world women as a homogenous powerless group; women as victims of male violence, women as universal dependants, married women as victims of the colonial process, women and religious ideologies, women and the development process, and finally, women and familial systems. The latter assumption is that all women, regardless of cultural and class differences, are equally affected by the system of coherent patriarchal kinship (2003:53-59).

## **2.1 Patriarchy**

According to sociologist Jane Pilcher (2004), the literal meaning of patriarchy is rule by the male head of social unit, such as family, or tribe. As a societal elder, the patriarch has legitimate power over all women, children, as well as younger men in the social unit. Nevertheless, since the early twentieth century the concept has been used by feminist writers referring to the social system of masculine domination over women. Patriarchy has been an essential concept in three important theories: 'radical feminist' analyses (patriarchy as the fundamental and primary social division in society, men's domination is achieved through the institution of the family); 'Marxist feminism' (patriarchy is caused by the workings of the capitalist economic system, and it profits from women's domestic unpaid labour); and 'dual systems theory' ( in many ways this theory represents a synthesis of Marxist and radical feminist accounts of gender relations, because it often views both patriarchy and capitalism as interrelating, mutually matching systems of oppression, which particularly benefit from women's oppression) (2004: 93-95). However, there has been criticism that has focused on interpretations of gender relations which make use of the concept of patriarchy. One criticism is that the concept of patriarchy promotes a limited conceptualization of gender relations, referring only to the relations between men and women, thereby disregarding relationships between women and women,

and men and men. Another criticism which is worth mentioning is that the concept of patriarchy assumes that gender relations have no cultural variations and thus are same worldwide (2004: 93-95). Sociologist Sylvia Walby (1990: 20) has defined patriarchy as a system of social practices and structures in which women are dominated, oppressed and exploited by men. She argues that the concept and theory of patriarchy is essential for an analysis of gender inequality, and therefore highlights the different aspects and forms of gender equality over time, ethnic group and class (1990: 1–2). According to Walby, there are six main structures which contribute to a system of patriarchy: culture, violence, sexuality, paid work, housework, and the state. The interrelations among these six structures give rise to different forms of patriarchy (1990: 16). The state is defined by Walby as a specific set of social institutions with specific functions, and Walby points out that liberal analyses note the relative absence of women from powerful positions in the state and other central decision-making arenas. (1990: 150-152). Patriarchy has two forms: private and public. The former is based upon household production which is seen to be the main site of women's oppression. Public patriarchy, on the other hand, is based in public sites (the state, labour market). Patriarchy has merely changed its form (from private to public), therefore it still exists in the whole society (1990: 24, 201). However, private patriarchy still exist in many places, thus it should be perceived that it has not disappeared from the world.

In the context of black feminism, Walby points out that the assumption that the family is the most central institution in the oppression of women has been proven wrong by black feminist writers, who argue that there exist significant differences in family forms across ethnic groups and that for women of color, the family is a less a source of oppression than it is for white women (1990: 76). In this context, it is also important to bring up criticism by other black feminists regarding the concept of patriarchy. They argue that the analyses of patriarchy that do not fully examine and theorize racism are incomplete. The systems of racism, capitalism and patriarchy must be challenged in order to eliminate women's subordination (Pilcher, 2004: 94–95). When discussing culture in the context of psychoanalytic approaches, Walby has also brought up the object relations theory which Nancy Chodorow (1978) has drawn upon. Chodorow's standpoint is that the main factor in understanding both gender differentiation and the oppression of women is in the reproduction of mothering. Women, unlike men, are brought up to mother, which is a result of early childhood experiences; girls grow up into nurturing adults. Although mothering is an experience like none other, it traps women into a different adult role from that of men, one which is not well-rewarded in contemporary society (Walby 1990: 94). Thus, considering the arguments and criticisms regarding the concept of patriarchy, it is important to acknowledge that patriarchy exists at many levels of society; it still influences the private and public sphere, in the households and the states. Nonetheless, patriarchy does not necessarily exist

or appear in an identical form all over the world, thus cultural and social variations should always be taken into account of when examining patriarchy. I also agree that patriarchy does not refer only to relations between men and women but also to those between women and women, and men and men.

It is also essential to address patriarchy in African society in order to better understand the factors that influence gender inequality in Africa. Social scientist April A. Gordon (1996), has discussed African patriarchy in the context of capitalism and stating that patriarchy indeed existed in Africa before capitalism. During the colonial period when capitalism expanded to Africa, patriarchy and heterogeneous modes of production were united (1996: 28). African patriarchy and limiting women's right are often justified by the appeals to African custom. Women have been marginalized into low-status occupations that have poor profits, and as Gordon points out, it is generally state policy and ideology that help maintain male dominance and control over women, however there has always existed resistance to subordination by women (1996:31). Appeals to African custom can be viewed as a false justification because one can claim that cultural customs are not the main motive for gender inequality, there are always other (hidden) motives behind these appeals. I assert that inequality in all forms always benefits a certain social group in a given society, therefore appeals to cultural customs are not sufficient explanations. The following argument by Gordon proves my point when it comes to gender inequality. She stresses that there are additional benefits for men when women are kept in subsistence farming or low-paying jobs. The benefits of economic development in underdeveloped capitalism will go usually to men when competition from women for scarce resources or better-paying wage jobs has been minimized. According to Gordon, underdeveloped capitalism is an exploitative, unprofitable hybrid which is competent to produce only limited capital accumulation or development (1996:135). Men's economic power perpetuates male dominance over women by strengthening women's dependency on men.

Gordon brings up the fact that African patriarchy has also benefitted Africa's ruling classes, too. Elites in both the private and state sector are the product of underdeveloped capitalism, because in order to produce the surplus they expropriate for their own enrichment and power, they have depended closely on patriarchal family production systems. These elite groups have therefore used the state to provide the policy and legal supports for underdeveloped capitalism and African patriarchy (1996: 31–32). Therefore, African patriarchy can be understood as phenomenon which is heavily influenced by both cultural and economic factors. The ruling classes in African societies maintain African patriarchy for their own benefit. Gender inequality is therefore a structural phenomenon which is maintained by those social groups who have power and dominance over others.



## 2.2 African masculinities

In the context of gender issues and patriarchy in Africa, I claim that it is essential to discuss African masculinities. Sociologists Raewyn Connell, Jeff Hearn, and Michael S. Kimmel address (2005) the concept and a particular worldview called *ubuntu* (“peopleness” that refers to universal brotherhood of Africans and a notion of communal living in society). It can be understood that *ubuntu* views people as a part of collectivity, instead of people being individuals. When discussing gender, Connell et. al. have stated that there is an inherent problem with this kind of worldview; due to mainly concentrating on ethnic and racial oppression as a result of external forces, the internal forces of gender oppression have been ignored or concealed. *Ubuntu* has been used to conceal the exploitation of women in African society in the analyses of the Third World. This leads to reinforcing patriarchal discourses, and for example in South Africa, the *Ubuntu* approach has been employed for such gendered (patriarchal), and political party purposes (2005: 99).

Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane (2005) have argued that the establishment of Liberia in 1847 as a country independent from European rule nourished the emergence of a pan-Africanist movement, and the post-colonial experience in Africa has continued to fuel pan-Africanist discourses. This refers to the modernist hope of economic independence and development which have failed to occur in Africa. In the wake of independence, the increase of material assets which many Africans had briefly owned eventually declined. By the new millennium, many Africans had stopped believing in First World promise regarding economic progress, hence they have concentrated on surviving the effects of structural adjustment such as declining employment opportunities. (Ouzgane, Morrel 2005:3). The concept of structural adjustment emerged in 1980s when African countries launched a re-orientation of economic policies, explicitly in the form of structural adjustment programmes such as promotion of domestic savings in public and private sectors, and increasing trade liberalization have been the objectives of adjustment programmes, These programmes were formulated and implemented by the two powerful institutions - the *IMF* and the *World Bank*. They have had a significant role and widespread influence over policymaking in African countries, and this have caused controversy and debate in policymaking and academic fields over the years (Tarp 2002: 1). Hence the controversy regarding structural adjustment have questioned how suitable these adjustment programmes have been in reality when implemented in African economies. Therefore, the failure of structural adjustment has led to the reinforcement of discourses by African people themselves that present Africans as collective victims of “the West” (Ouzgane, Morrel 2005:3). The term Pan-Africanism itself refers to the idea that

people who are of African descent have mutual interests and thus should be united. Both Pan-Africanism and *ubuntu* can be viewed as arguments for the unity of African people, thus closely related to Afrocentrism.

Morrell and Ouzgane have argued that when defining African masculinities, one should not generalize all men in Africa or masculine behavior (2005:4). In the context of East African masculinities, Margrethe Silberschmidt (2005) has argued that the majority of writings related to gender in the Third World have stressed the power of men and the subordination of women, although many African men are and feel disempowered by economic changes. The challenges for finding employment have reduced men's ability to be breadwinners of their households, therefore a majority of men have not been able to create new roles for themselves, whereas women have succeed to do so. Thus, it can be seen that the stereotypes of men being successful patriarchs and women being passive victims are dangerous due the fact they are often static and do not allow for change (2005: 189–190, 200). Nonetheless, patriarchal control still remains firm in many present-day African societies, as Morrell and Ouzgane have stressed (2005: 5). Hence, it should be underlined, that one should not overgeneralize masculinities in Africa, as if the same situation and roles regarding gender would exist in every part of Africa. One should keep in mind that Africa is the world's second-largest continent, not a country, after all.

### **2.3 Africana womanism**

In this thesis I use the Africana Womanism theory, which has an Afrocentric perspective when it comes to dealing with African women's issues. The reason I have chosen this particular theory is that my interest lies in developing countries, and in highlighting their own standpoint on gender. During my master's studies and also when I participated in the Gender and Development web course offered by the University of Helsinki in spring 2014, I read articles about how the Western perspective has overshadowed and dominated scholarly discourse on issues and people of developing countries. A good example of this is *Can the subaltern speak?* by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) which covers the critique towards western perspectives and representations about people in developing countries. Thus in my master's thesis I wish to bring out the African perspective on gender, although it is understandable and important to acknowledge that my own cultural background is Western. It is essential, however to be aware that both Afrocentric and Eurocentric theories have a very opinionated world view and generalize issues of gender from their own perspective. I must therefore be critical towards both of these perspectives and concentrate on those parts of the Africana womanism model that are relevant to my study, leaving out those parts which are not essential. In the context of media sources concerning the African women presidents, I must be aware of the Afrocentric theory on

women and how it may affect African media sources and their representations of Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

The concept of Africana womanism was developed by Clenora Hudson-Weems in the 1980s. The theory asserts that one needs to understand African culture and history in order to thoroughly understand the nature of the relationship between African men and women. According to Hudson-Weems, feminism can be viewed as fundamentally a European phenomenon, and its focus has been on the complex relationship between genders, as men are viewed as the primary enemies of women. Hudson-Weems argues that African women do not consider African men to be their enemy (Asante, Mazama 2005: 57–58). However, it should be acknowledged that Hudson-Weems' standpoints regarding feminism as only a European phenomenon and her perceptions of feminism as seeing "men as enemies" overgeneralize Western feminism. Nonetheless, the reason I wish to include this theory and the perceptions made by Hudson-Weems in my analysis is that these Afrocentric perceptions on feminism can give readers a better understanding and awareness of African cultural background regarding how the relationship between men and women is perceived, and also what kind of African theoretical counterparts have emerged from Western feminism.

Nah Dove (1998) emphasizes the concept of culture as a tool of analysis for understanding the nature of African women's experiences (1998: 515). Dove has claimed that Africana womanism can be viewed as fundamental to the continuing development of Afrocentric theory, and that this particular theory highlights the role of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to create, reconstruct, and regain cultural integrity (1998: 535). She stresses the role of mothers who are the bringers of life, the center of social organization and also the bearers of culture, and how motherhood itself is presented as the representative of nature of the communal responsibilities which include the caring of others and raising of children (1998: 520–21). In the context of patriarchy, Dove argues quite strongly that the Europeans' conquest of Africa can be viewed as the conquest of matriarchy by patriarchy. Therefore, in Dove's account patriarchal structures are strongly confined to white supremacy (1998: 529). She argues that the concept of matriarchy not only stresses the nonhierarchical nature of the masculine and feminine which exist in all forms of life, but also the complementarity aspect of the female-male relationship. This can be understood as both genders (men and women) working together in all parts of social organization (1998: 520). She also points out that there are many stories of African women's bravery and women's roles have been significant when it has come to taking control of resources and lands from alien occupation, but very often they have never been told. However, this has also been the case in European history, therefore excluding or diminishing the women's roles in this context is not only confined to the continent of Africa. Dove perceives that as a result of Western patriarchy, women have been given less credit whereas men have been represented as the major figures in the

struggles for independence from European domination. Women, for example, in South Africa, Kenya and Mozambique have played significant roles in these independence struggles, and particularly mothers have played essential roles in the resistance movements. Thus, highlighting the leading roles of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to create, reconstruct and regain cultural integrity is the essential task of African womanism (1998: 532–35). Therefore, in the context of my study, I use African womanism to a certain degree in order to highlight particularly gender discourses surrounding Liberian and Malawian women. I want to point out that Dove's arguments on African matriarchy vs. Western patriarchy are contentious, and it is important to acknowledge that, patriarchy does exist in African societies, thus one cannot assume it be only a Western phenomenon, and also claims that matriarchal societies have ever existed has been questioned by most anthropologists. Regardless of Dove's controversial standpoint on matriarchy and patriarchy, however I wish to bring up the Afrocentric standpoint on motherhood, patriarchy, and matriarchy in order to bring awareness to those standpoints that perhaps are not so familiar to readers. I argue that that especially the notions of motherhood within African womanism are useful for my study.

Social anthropologist Andrea Cornwall (2007) has discussed gender myths which in this context refers to female solidarity and female autonomy in the field of gender and development. This refers for example to the automatic assumptions that all women support always each other, and have unified perspectives. These assumptions have generally been useful for feminists. According to Cornwall, myths can be viewed as narratives that are constituted through a series of familiar images. She argues that in gender and development narratives, 'gender relations' are understood as a particular relationship between women and men, but relations between women have been mostly ignored. Relations among women are significant when observing the multiplicities of power and gender. She also discusses feminist rhetoric which has viewed marriage as an oppressive institution which has positioned women into subordination (Cornwall 2007:151, 160–161). When examining the theoretical framework of my study, and taking into account the concepts of patriarchy, matriarchy, motherhood, masculinity, feminism, and gender relations, it comes clear that there exist many of over generalizing standpoints, whether it is Western or African standpoints, that use different myths to their own advantage. In my study I want to be aware and also bring out such myths in the context of female presidents and media.

### **3. Methods**

As methods for analyzing my source data I use rhetorical analysis and thematic analysis. I also touch on critical discourse analysis. However, my main research method is rhetorical analysis. As my study is also related to the narratives of female head of state, I want first to point out what kind of aspects are included in narrative. Narrative can be viewed as the representation of an event or a series, thus there exist the capacity to represent an event. Particularly there is emphasis on “event” or “action” as without them, one would only have “argument” or “description”. When looking at a story, one has to be aware that it is always constructed by narrative discourse, which in itself is very adaptable. Other issue that has to also take into consideration when discussing narrative discourse is audience – readers or viewers who receive story in a particular form. They are also active participants in narrative. Hence it could be understood that narrative discourse includes in audience, the particular action or event, and the context of a story. Narrative is involved in almost everything that humans do, and particularly narrative discourse reconstruct the story (an order of events) and presents how the story is conveyed (Abbot 2008: xv, 10–15, 17, 19). Thus it could be understood that the narrator who presents the story also decides how particular story is told to audience.

#### **3.1 Rhetorical analysis**

Gerard A. Hauser (2002) has pointed out that rhetoric is interested in how people use written or spoken symbols such as language, and how one persuades others to social action. Rhetorical theory has particularly focused on the use of symbolic forms such as persuasive appeals for producing social action (2002: 2–3, 12). Hauser has also argued that rhetorical situations are dynamic and complex, due to their meanings which can be interpreted in different ways. These meanings are the basis for how people interact, and especially the interaction between messenger, audience, message, and context are essential (2002: 51). Joan Leach (2000), who has carried out research on rhetorical theory and rhetoric of science, has pointed out that there is a multiplicity of uses of the word ‘rhetoric’. The first definition refers to the act of persuasion, the second the analysis of acts of persuasion, and the third refers to a worldview regarding the persuasive power of discourse. Thus it could be understood that for example politicians perform ‘acts of rhetoric’ because they organize discourse to be persuasive, as Leach argues (2000: 207–208). Alternatively, scholars of rhetoric adopt the second definition of rhetoric, because they analyse such discourses and try to find the reasons for why they are persuasive (Leach: 2000:208). When it comes to the object of analysis, rhetorical analysis has traditionally critiqued oral discourses in the context of parliament and the political arena, but also diatribes and

acceptance speeches. Rhetorical analysts have usually applied their methods to oral and documentary sources (Leach: 2000: 209). Leach has pointed out that an integral part of rhetorical analysis is the context of the discourse (2000: 211). The general assumption of rhetorical analysis is that a self-aware rhetorician produces rhetoric by ordering his/her discourse in accordance with sets of formalized rules. In this context, the distinct audience is the target group of the rhetoric, and they are to be persuaded by the arguments given. Rhetorical analysis seeks to discover the intentions of the author or speaker, the system of rules which orders the discourse, and also gauges the effectiveness of the intended persuasion due to its effect on the audience (Leach 2000: 210). When taking into account Hauser's and Leach's arguments regarding rhetorical analysis, it can be understood that by using rhetorical analysis in my study, the focus is particularly on the context (cultural, political), messenger (presidents, media), message (of the presidents and media), and audience (readers, viewers). When analyzing my data, I thus take into account the following factors that are related to rhetorical analysis:

- the intentions of the presidents when they represent themselves, and are represented in media;
- what is the message the presidents and media are trying to appeal to the audience
- the specific situation of the presidents' and media's representation
- the social, cultural, and political context; African, Western, gender, and politics
- the audience

In my study, the speakers/authors in my study are the female presidents themselves and the media. I examine what forms of discourse and persuasion the president or media use in their representations, and what I interpret to be the intentions of the presidents and media. It is important to examine the content of their representation, otherwise how they appeal to their audience; what kind of issues they bring out in their representations, and what they leave out. It is also essential to study what kind of specific cultural values and customs emerge from their representations regarding gender and women's political power. I claim that these values and customs exist in the background of any given interaction related to female presidents and media. Consequently, cultural values and customs influence either consciously or unconsciously in the context of discourse. I argue that when there is an interaction between people, in this case the presidents and media, there also emerge symbols and meanings that are significant for my analysis.

### 3.2 Critical discourse analysis

As my research material is mainly based on media sources, I also want to particularly bring out media discourse. Linguist Norman Fairclough (1995) points out that mass media has power to influence beliefs, values, social identities, knowledge and social relations. The power to represent things in particular manner is a part of how language is used (1995: 2). Therefore, it can be seen that critical discourse analysis seeks to investigate the particular power relations and interests that influence how things are represented in language. In this context, the language of public affairs media refers to documentaries, news, social affairs, science, magazine programmes and politics. Fairclough has argued that in any representation, one has to decide, for example, what to exclude and what to include. He also presents three questions about media output which help to analyze the language of media texts.

1. How is the world (relationships, events) represented?
2. What identities are set up for those involved in the story/programme (e.g. audiences, reporters, and 'third parties'), those who interviewed or referred to?
3. What relationships are set up between those involved, such as politician-audience and reporter-audience relationships?

Fairclough makes an important point about texts in general, arguing that all parts of texts are involved in setting up relations and identities and representing them at the same time (1995: 3–5).

He stresses that a close examination of relations, identities, and representations can answer the question of how the mass media affect and are affected by power relations within social groups, such as relations between politicians and the mass of the population, and relations of gender, ethnicity, and class (1995:12). James Paul Gee (2011) has stated that discourse analysis can be understood as the study of language-in-use, and that there exist many approaches to it. Critical discourse analysis is one of these approaches and its aim is to, for example, speak to political or social issues, controversies in the world, and also describe how language works. Gee has stressed that discourse analysis in its all approaches should be critical, due to the political nature of language itself. Therefore, it is inevitable that any full representation of language use must deal with the dynamics of power (2011: 8–9). Thus, it can be understood that critical discourse analysis studies language and how it functions in the world, and as language itself is not neutral, therefore one should be aware what kind of factors have an influence on language. Hence, power and politics have a close link to how one discusses different

issues and people, and also how people represent themselves and others by choosing particular words and standpoints.

When considering all the arguments related to rhetorical analysis and critical discourse analysis, I assert that the relations between discourse and power are essential to include in my study as my research focuses on how presidents and representatives of the media such as journalists convey the image of presidents and their actions. The presidents are part of an elite group due their position as the head of states, thus they have also power and access via interviews and the memoir to represent and reproduce their image and role by using discourse in the media context. I argue that when one is a well-known public figure at the national and international level, there is significance in choosing how one wants to represent oneself to others. I ask: what are the issues the presidents exclude from their representations and what do they include? I assume that the use of language is political in nature, because the way politicians use their rhetoric is always aimed at the public and the media for the purpose of persuasion, to gain broader support for their cause. The aim is to persuade others to be supporters of the president. At the same time, gender equality and women in politics are political issues which provoke many opinions about female heads of states and gender roles in society. Nevertheless, the media also have a major influence on how they represent the presidents and how they depict the gender of the presidents in their broadcasts and publications. Since my aim is also to study the gender-related cultural meanings of media stories, it requires that I have an extensive and diversified amount of research material (African and internal media) which will help me to interpret the meanings. Laura Stark (1998) has discussed contextual frames for analysis of source materials, such as social, cultural and political contexts. When carrying out my rhetorical and critical discourse analysis I must also take into account the social and cultural contexts which exist in my research material, thus I must be aware of how the material in question is related to power, social relations, roles and statuses etc., and also how the recognizable cultural images, values, symbolic representations and other meanings are connected to the material (Stark 1998: 69).

Thematic analysis often concentrates on themes and patterns of discourse that are identifiable from the source materials. Themes are specified as units originating from different patterns, as Jodi Aronson (1995) has pointed out. In my study, thematic analysis concentrates on themes and patterns of discourse by female presidents and the media. During the research process, I went through my data and made observations on recurring issues that were represented in the source materials. I searched keywords and phrases that were related to gender, the female presidents, their roles and images, and also what kind of life stories the presidents represented to media and audiences. I identified particularly the similarities across data materials (the newspaper articles, the documents, the interviews etc.),



and also in what way these data materials contained internal differences. I explore themes from three different perspectives; I take into account the international media and English-language African media (including the Liberian and Malawian media), and how they represent these two female head of states, but also how these two presidents have represented themselves to others through media. The source materials for my study comprise public websites, videos on YouTube, and the published memoir by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf which anyone has an open access to watch and read whenever, thus there is no problem concerning the ethics of using the source materials in my study due to their public access. The data of my study was collected about people who are in a public position (female heads of state), and there are no sensitive materials regarding them, thus there is no need for confidential agreements.

#### 4. Data

During my exchange studies in Malawi from October 2012 to February 2013, I became interested in the female president of Malawi, Joyce Banda. As I had already written my Bachelor's Thesis on immigrant women as political actors in Finnish society in the context of Parliament elections in 2011, my growing interest was on the political empowerment of women in developing countries. I started to collect local English-language newspapers which I had bought from local shops and streets of the town called Zomba, which is also the former capital of Malawi. I was living in Zomba during my exchange period. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2012, I was by chance in Cape Maclear, a town on the southern shore of Lake Malawi, where President Banda was also visiting at the same time. Therefore, I experienced the welcoming ceremony of the President with the local people of Cape Maclear. That was my first time ever to attend a presidential ceremony in a foreign country with the local people, which was a very fascinating experience for me. The local people of Cape Maclear had gathered together on the playing field to welcome Joyce Banda. The playing field was full of people who either sat down under the marquees or were standing in lines. The local women were singing and dancing in honor of Joyce Banda, and many women wore a traditional Chitenga fabric as a skirt, which had Banda's face and the name of her political party printed all over the fabric. At the ceremony, President Banda gave a speech and thus I can say that I have first-hand experience of President Banda.

Before my trip to Malawi, I had also started to read a memoir by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – the president of Liberia, in Finnish, which was available at the Jyväskylä City Library. However, when I began to plan my Master's Thesis, I realized that I needed to read the memoir in English. The memoir was not found in English in libraries, and on Google Books there were some parts available for reading, but not the whole book. Therefore, I ordered the English version of the book from the online bookstore of *Suomalainen Kirjakauppa*. When I began to collect the material for my thesis, I searched from Google using the search names of Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. There I found the required amount of data and source materials for my thesis. As I collected my research material from the Internet, I realized that it would be better if I gathered the African, in this case, mostly Liberian and Malawian media material, but also international media material which in this context is mostly American and British. This helped me to find a more significant amount of information about the presidents and have a wider perspective on my thesis topic, than I would if I had just collected the material from African media, or simply from Western media. The period of data collection began in 2012 while I was in Malawi, and continued to summer 2014, therefore it can be understood that identifying and selecting the essential data has taken its own time. During this period of time, from 2012 to 2014,

many things have changed, for example the ruling president of Malawi is different, as previously stated.

I went through altogether over 70 news articles regarding Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and in my analysis I used altogether 27 news articles and 14 videos that covered Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as well as I used one memoir by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and one website of the *Joyce Banda's Foundation*. In the context of Malawi, I analyze Malawian magazine and newspaper articles and columns concerning the president of Malawi. From the articles and videos I found, I searched for and then wrote down the essential parts containing themes related to, for example, gender and leadership. I also used the same approach in the context of Liberia. At this point it is important to acknowledge that while I searched the online articles from Liberian media, at that time (in spring and summer 2014), I just found one Liberian (English language) news website which was extensive and had enough substantial articles concerning Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in the context of gender and leadership. Therefore, my source materials concerning Liberian media are limited in this regard. My Master's thesis does not aim at being a comprehensive study about gender representation in the Liberian media, not to mention other media (international, Malawian etc.). Due to my limited scope of my thesis, my research question and focus are also accordingly limited. I also examine interviews and the documents from YouTube which are related to the presidents, as well as African and international online-articles and documents, because it is important to compare the representations of the female presidents carried by Western media with the representations carried by African media. I analyze representation of the two female presidents in the context of the media; how the women presidents themselves have represented their gender in media, and how the media itself represents the female presidents.

#### **4.1 Media coverage**

As I searched the articles concerning the two presidents from the Internet, I also found a few other articles that were quite interesting. These were not from news websites, but were the online articles of development and education organizations. I decided I could use them because they also present gender and leadership in the context of African woman presidents, thus they are valuable data and source material. Therefore, in this context, media coverage can be understood both as news websites, but also as the websites of development organizations, and the published memoir of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The following list below presents briefly my data which I have divided into the international, African, and the local (Liberian and Malawian) media. The reason for this is that I hope in this way that it will help the reader to gain a better understanding of the data and source materials. I have

gathered information from fourteen different international media sources which have covered Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Joyce Banda in their publications, which in this context means web-based news stories and publications. Eight of these are American websites: *Africa Agenda*; *Atlanta Black Star*; *CNN*; *Forbes*; *The Huffington Post*; *NY Times*; *Time*; *Washington Post*. They are news websites, and some of them also comprise blog communities, and particularly **Forbes** is a business magazine which covers business news. **TIME** is a news magazine which has an annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world, which I will use in my source material. *The Huffington Post* is also a news website, but also comprises different blog communities. It includes the website of The Aspen Institute that I also use in my thesis. The Aspen Institute is a nonprofit educational and policy studies organization which is based in the United States, and its focus areas are for instance security, philanthropy and global affairs. Most of the above-mentioned sources are quite well-known, but I would assume that for example *Africa Agenda* is not familiar to many readers. It is also a news website, but at the same time, it provides an information portal and is an education organization. *The Atlanta Black Star* is an African –American website which is aimed at people who are of African descent or self-identify as African Americans.

Three of my media sources are British; *BBC*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent*. The first one (BBC) is a legendary British Broadcasting Corporation which also covers international news. *The Guardian* is a website of the daily newspaper of the same name, and the *Independent* is a news website. The other three media sources are *Al Jazeera English* which is an international news channel and has global coverage, and was the first independent news channel in the Arab world. *Daily Life* is an Australian website which is, according to its website, aimed at Australian women, and it comprises news, relationships, style, and health etc. *Gender Concerns International* is the Netherland-based international development organization which is formed by experts in the field of gender and development.

I also use Malawian newspapers which I collected while I was in Malawi, and also the websites of Malawian newspapers. The newspapers and the websites which I have collected and included here are all in English, because Malawi is a former British colony, and although in some newspapers there were small sections of news in Chichewa (one of the local languages in Malawi), I will use only the sources which were written in English as my knowledge of Chichewa is minimal. I have also included the website of Joyce Banda's Foundation (*Joyce Banda Foundation*) in this section. I use nine Malawian media sources; *The Big Issue Malawi Edition*, *The Daily Times*, *The Nation*, *Weekend Nation*, *Nation on Sunday*, *Nyasa Times*, *Malawiana*, *Malawi Voice*, *the Joyce Banda Foundation*. One of these (The Big Issue Malawi Edition) is a general interest (a street paper) magazine which

means that it is sold by homeless people on the streets. It is a non-profit public benefit project which by organizing a vendor sales operation creates jobs for homeless and unemployed adults. There are two daily newspapers on the list; The Daily Times and The Nation, which has also two weekend editions that are published on Saturdays (Weekend Nation), and Sundays (Nation on Sunday). Three other Malawian media sources are online news websites: Nyasa Times, Malawiana, and Malawi Voice. As I mentioned earlier, I will also include Joyce Banda's own website, *Joyce Banda Foundation* in my Malawian media coverage. The website presents her and the activities of her foundation.

When it comes to Liberian media coverage, I use The New Dawn Liberia which is a bilingual (English and French) Liberian news website which is a daily newspaper, and it has also a website which I will use as my source material. The website covers news concerning politics, health, rural, and NGOs. In the context of Liberia, I will also use Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's memoir *This Child Will Be Great* as a data source. In the context of African media coverage, there are two African websites that are part of my source materials; *allAfrica* is a news website which publishes diverse African news reports from over 100 news organizations. Most of the stories you read on this site come from newspapers, news agencies and publications all over the African continent. We aggregate and distribute the reporting of more than 130 media organizations. The website covers the news of all African countries. *ThinkAfricaPress* is an online magazine which also covers African news and has writers from across Africa with international experts. I also use thirteen YouTube videos regarding Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Joyce Banda as my source material. There are five YouTube videos about Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and seven about Joyce Banda, and also one which covers both presidents. These YouTube videos consist of documentaries, interviews and the speeches of both female presidents. The YouTube videos are produced by African and international media alike.

The videos regarding Ellen Johnson Sirleaf are *Africa's first elected female president lifts Liberia* which is an interview with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf by American newscast Worldfocus, which had international news coverage and was partners with international news organizations. The interview was published in 2009. *Faces of Africa – Ellen Sirleaf: Mother of Liberia* is an interview and documentary of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf by CCTV Africa which is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, and focuses on African news. It was published in 2013. *Iron Ladies of Liberia* is a documentary of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf directed by independent filmmakers American Daniel Junge and Liberian Siatta Scott Johnson. It was released in 2007. It follows President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's first year in government, but also other Liberian "iron ladies" such as Beatrice Munah Sieh who was the national chief of police, and Antoinette Sayeh, the Minister of Finance. The documentary was shown on the Public Broad-

casting Station (PBS) channel in the program called Independent Lens. *Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on women in politics: 'We have a story to tell'* is a speech by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and it was produced by Guardian, and published in 2012. *One on One – Ellen Johnson Sirleaf* is an interview of her by Al Jazeera English and it was published in 2010. *Women Rising: Political leadership in Africa* is a documentary which includes the interviews of both Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The documentary is part of a series on *Women in Development in Africa*, and it is produced by InCa. The documentary has been commissioned jointly by FEMNET (The African Women's Development and Communication Network) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). It was published in 2013.

In the context of Joyce Banda I have used following videos as my data source. *Joyce Banda on gender equality in Malawi*, and *President Banda Joyce on women of Africa* are two videos recorded at the same event and published in 2013 by the same YouTube channel. These videos are part of the 14th session of The Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Lecture series which cover the issues related to human development and society. They were published by *Uncensored* which presents itself as a channel which follows controversial issues and personalities, and focuses on wide-ranging socio-political events and activities in Nigeria and beyond. *President Joyce Banda's Story* is an interview of Banda published in 2013 by CSIS Smart Global Health, Center For Strategic & International Studies. CSIS is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization and an international policy institution that is headquartered in Washington, D.C. It focuses on global development and economic integration. *Madam President: Meeting Malawi's Joyce Banda* is a documentary of Joyce Banda by the Guardian and it was published in 2012. *The MBCTV Documentary on Joyce Banda's Ascension to Malawi Presidency* is a documentary which presents a speech by Joyce Banda and it was published in 2013 by MBC (Malawi Broadcasting Corporation). *Overheard with Evan Smith - President Joyce Banda of Malawi* is an interview of Joyce Banda. It was published by the American program "Overheard" produced by KLRU-TV, Austin PBS in 2013. *Talk Africa: Live interview with Dr. Joyce Banda* by CCTV Africa in 2013.

## 5. Liberia

### 5.1 Liberia: facts and history

Liberia, whose official name is the Republic of Liberia, is located in West Africa and is also bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. Its neighboring countries are Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. The country has an estimated population (2014) of 4,4 million people<sup>5</sup> and Monrovia is the capital of the country, and was named in honor of U.S President James Monroe. This example reveals the close connection that has existed between Liberia and the United States of America in the past. When it comes to economy, most of the country's income is generated by maritime registry which is the second largest in the world, and rubber exports. Particularly rubber production has been a foundation of the country's economy since 1926, when a well-known American rubber and tyre company called Firestone opened a rubber plantation there.<sup>6</sup> When it comes to lack of literacy and formal-sector unemployment, unfortunately these are significant problems in Liberia, and especially unemployment in the formal sector is 85% (in 2014). International sanctions and political instability have wrecked many businesses, and driven out many foreign investors.<sup>7</sup>

Liberia is a unique country on the continent of Africa in the sense that it was never formally colonized by an European power as were other African countries. The United States is viewed as its "pseudo colonial mother country" as Mary H. Moran states (2006:2). Moran points out that Liberia was literally a philanthropic project of a private, benevolent organization called the American Colonization Society, founded in 1816. This meant that the establishment of Liberia in 1822 was in fact an American outpost which was viewed as a sanctuary for free people of color which referred to descendants of Africans who by birth, luck or their own efforts were not legally enslaved anymore (freed slaves). There were multiple interests behind this so-called philanthropic project, as slave owners viewed this kind of repatriation as a way of removing independent, self-supporting free blacks from the view of their slaves, because they were regarded as "unwelcome examples". Also some of the white abolitionists were uncomfortable with an idea of living in a multiracial society, although they viewed slavery as an unjust institution. Third group which had its own agenda regarding the freed slaves was Evangelical Christians who had "a divine plan to save African pagans" through the example of black

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<sup>5</sup> <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/liberia-population>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13732188>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/liberia>

missionaries and Christian communities. During the years of 1822–1867, over 12 000 colonists settled in Liberia. Roughly 4,500 of these settlers had been born free, and the others were emancipated from slavery when they emigrated to Africa. Roughly 6,000 “receptive” Africans who had been taken from impounded slave ships and also a few hundred immigrants from Barbados also arrived in Liberia. All these groups eventually formed the national elite called as “Settlers”, Americo-Liberians, and “Congoes” (Moran 2006: 2). The African American settlers declared their independence from the American Colonization Society in 1847, and at the same time confirmed their commitment to a constitution which was American-style. For the next one hundred and thirty-three years, elections were held on a regular basis for both local positions such as town chief, as well for national offices such as the presidency (Moran 2006: 4).

The early settlers of Liberia attempted to re-create the only political and social order that they have known - of the antebellum South, and they viewed themselves as the master class in Liberia. They adopted the symbols of America, which can be seen in the red-white-and blue flag and in the Liberian dollar, and they also built buildings in the style of plantation mansions. The natives of Liberia were predominantly ignored by the Liberian constitution, and they were viewed as objects of paternalist protection by the settlers. (Ciment 2013) As political scientist Anne Theobald (2012) points out, the Americo-Liberian settler minority founded a one-party system which was oligarchic. This meant that they ruled Liberia in a nepotistic and corrupt way, and oppressed the indigenous people of Liberia, and it was only in 1904 that native people were allowed to obtain full citizenship (2012:32). Members of the settler group upheld a monopoly on state institutions, and it was not until the 1960s that the indigenous people were totally enfranchised (Moran 2006:4). Hence, there have been tensions between these two groups, and for example there was an uprising by indigenous people against Americo-Liberians in 1915. It is significant to acknowledge that the first president of Liberia was also an American-born freed man called Joseph J. Roberts in 1847.<sup>8</sup> In 1951, there was a turning point in the country’s history when women and indigenous property owners voted for the first time in the presidential election.

The extremely turbulent times began when in 1980 there occurred a military coup by a native Liberian, Samuel Doe, who was Master Sergeant in the Liberian army. This led to the public executions of a prevailing President of Liberia - William Tolbert and his aides. The coup d’état by Doe ended the political and economic domination of Americo-Liberian settler minority, and eventually led to the civil war in Liberia which lasted from 1989 to 1996 (Moran 2006:5). In 1989, a group called the

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.africanhistory.about.com/od/Liberia/1/bl-Liberia-Timeline2.htm>.



*National Patriotic Front of Liberia* (NPFL) emerged as a significant player in the civil war, and eventually other rebel groups also joined in the war, and started to fight each other. They spread terror throughout the country, and political leaders who had their own interests in fighting over the ownership of areas that were mineral rich, became warlords (Utas 2005: 411). An ethnic coalition of two groups -the *Krahn* and the *Mandingo* – (which by the way made up only twelve per cent of the indigenous population), was the basis of the power of Samuel Doe, who eventually became the following President of Liberia. His corrupt and autocratic government killed and oppressed members of the opposition, and also caused more ethnic divisions in the country. Doe was very unpopular among the Liberian people, and although the elite of the Americo-Liberian settlers were no longer in government, they still had political influence and had better social positions when compared to the indigenous Liberians (Theobald 2012:33).

However, in 1989 Charles Taylor, who was a leader of the *National Patriotic Front of Liberia* (NPFL) led a mutiny against the government, and a year later, a splinter group of the NPFL executed Doe.<sup>9</sup> This led to chaotic years of fighting, and from 150,000 to 200,000 people were killed during seven years of civil war. In 1997, peace talks were held, and Charles Taylor and his party called the *National Patriotic Party* won the elections. However, Charles Taylor's government did not have a good governance or reputation due to their senseless violence towards dissenters and harassment of civilians (Utas 2005:411–412). In the following years, the stability of the country remained unattainable; Taylor was punished (reimposing an arms embargo) by UN Security Council for trading weapons for diamonds with Sierra Leonean rebels, and rebels fought for control of Monrovia, leading to the deaths of several hundreds of people. In 2003, Taylor left the country, and the same year the UN launched a major peacekeeping mission. In 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the president of Liberia, and in 2011 she was also re-elected for president. The former president Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in jail as he was found guilty of war crimes. In 2014, Liberia faced more challenges when there emerged an outbreak of Ebola virus which quickly turned into an international public health emergency.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13732188>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13732188>.

## 5.2 Society and ethnicity

Liberia is inhabited by approximately thirty ethnic groups, and the *Kpelle* is the largest ethnic group in the country. They inhabit eastern areas of Liberia, whereas African Americans have colonized Liberia's coastal region (Haviland et. al. 2015:296). The languages of Liberia are English and twenty-nine African languages which belong to the *Kwa, Mel, or Mande* linguistic groups. The religions of Liberia are Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs. Ninety-five per cent of the population is covered by these indigenous groups (e.g. the *Gio, Mano, Bassa, Kpelle, Gola, Congo people*, and the *Americo-Liberians* etc.) Americo-Liberians comprise two and half per cent of the population and they are descendants of West Indian and African American slaves. The descendants of domiciled Congo and Afro-Caribbean slaves (The Congo people) comprise the same percentage. Indians, Lebanese, and West African nationals also comprise a large part of the population in Liberia too.<sup>11</sup>

In the context of different social and ethnic groups in Liberia, it should be acknowledged that there exist variations among different groups, as Mary H. Moran (2002) has pointed out; in the early 1980s, Moran conducted ethnographic research on prestige and gender hierarchies in Liberia, and also collected national newspaper accounts regarding Liberian women (2002: 114). She describes how in Liberia, “native” and “civilized” men and women have had different positions as citizens, and how the term “civilized” refers in this context, to well-employed, educated and/or Westernized people of all backgrounds. This kind of “civilization” in Liberia is related to American settlement and early independence, and it originally referred to the cultural differences between indigenous people and African-American settlers. However, “civilized” Liberians are not viewed as a class or an ethnic category, and each indigenous ethnic group has its own sector of “civilized” members and they have varied connections to “non-civilized” friends and kin (2002: 113,119). In the context of Liberia, the colonizers were African-American settlers, and through adoption, patronage or marriage, many individuals were able to pass into the elite group (the settlers). Nevertheless, most people maintained an affiliation which was geographically defined. Moran argues that these affiliations were more likely local identities, rather than ethnic groups or “tribes”. They were either multilingual and multi-ethnic chiefdoms in the northern and western parts of the country, or small groups of towns with farmlands in the southern and eastern part of Liberia (2002:118).

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<sup>11</sup> <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/liberia-population/>

Anthropologist Veronika Fuest (2008) argues that there exist three factors of complexities in the context of social differences and divisions in Liberian society. Firstly, Fuest points out that especially the people who live in the northern, centre and western parts of Liberia can be differentiated as being ecologically, linguistically, socio-politically, agriculturally and demographically different from the people who are living in the southeast. The northwest and centre of Liberia form the so-called Mande-speaking 'Poro complex' of secret societies, and the region is known for a distinct socio-political system of ranked lineages with influential chiefs and elders, and also mutually exclusive, gendered secret societies. *Poro* is the name of the male society and *Sande* the female society. The southeastern groups on the other hand, that is the *Kruan*-speaking people, are known for having communities which do not have rulers or leaders, they have less significant secret societies and they have traditional governments in which women's participation has been institutionalized.

Second, the unique history of 'black colonialism' in Liberia which refers to the fighting, exploitation, suppression, trading and mixing with many African groups by the 'Congos' and 'Americo-Liberians' who formed the ruling elite in Liberia, has in its own way affected social differences in the country. In the twentieth century, political and social antagonisms between Afro-Liberians and Americo-Liberians were echoed in the social distinctions which generated different social labels such as 'civilized' encompassing both moral and religious meanings. These social labels marked people in the society by dividing the population into elite ('civilized' and educated Americo-Liberians) and to indigenous people ('country', 'native', or 'traditional'). Whereas Americo-Liberians were viewed as part of elite class, indigenous Africans had limited access to certain positions in the elite class by assimilating into the Christian settler community and having formal education. These measures could help them to acquire an identity which was 'civilized'. It was not until a coup d'état in 1980 when Afro-Liberians had a greater access to power. Third, the civil war caused an emphasis on ethnic polarization and religious antagonisms between the Muslim and Christian parts of the population. The two major fighting sections were formed by an ethnic group with a primarily Muslim identity (2008:116-118).

### 5.3 Liberian women and politics

Moran (2002) has pointed out that cultural constructions of femininity among indigenous peoples of Liberia have cast “native” women as breadwinners. Women work under a “female farming” regime of shifting dry rice cultivation, although the land is patrilineally owned by their fathers or husbands. An individual woman can achieve some kind of independence, but it is preferred that a woman’s financial independence is mainly aimed at supporting her children, and not used for her own good. Women’s financial independence is therefore obligated to household and kin. Alternatively, “civilized” women are mainly dependent housewives, thus they do not work in farm labor. There is, however, a danger that civilized women can lose their social status if they do the “wrong” type of work (public marketing, subsistence farming) which are viewed as “native” women’s work (2002: 120–121). In rural areas, women are viewed as civilized as long as they are economically dependent upon a man (2002:120–121). Thus it can be viewed that there have existed cultural and social rules that have categorized women into two different groups: “civilized” and “natives”, and the main purpose for these gendered regulations seem to be to tie women to their households and kin by forcing women to be economically dependent upon their households and kin. Political scientist Anne Theobald (2012) has discussed women’s socio-cultural position in pre-conflict Liberia. The conflict era of Liberia refers to the two civil wars that lasted altogether from 1989 to 2003. She pointed out that Liberian society is strongly affected by gender inequality due to patriarchal, patrilineal and patrimonial (a form of governance based on personal rule and influenced by male-dominated economic and political patron-clients relations) traditions. Liberian women are subordinated to men (husbands, elders), and a woman is also viewed as the property of her husband due to the fact that before marriage, the husband must pay a high bride price to the bride’s family, according to customary law (2012:39, 35). Very young girls are forced to marry much older men, and they also have to live in households which are polygamous. Theobald has pointed out that there exist tensions between younger women and older women due to the youngster women’s subordination to elders (2012:36, 38).

A significant factor is also the different social positions of native and Americo-Liberian women, as Moran (2002) also earlier pointed out. Americo-Liberian women had a better education than the female native majority, thus they were able to attend universities, and also to the detriment of Afro-Liberian men, the women gradually began to occupy political and professional positions in Liberian society. This had a major impact on the Liberian peace movement, because the women who had significant roles in the movement had high educational and social status, such as education in the USA or Europe (2012:38). Veronika Fuest (2008) has also brought out the higher social position of

settler women (Americo-Liberians) in Liberia. She argues that in the nineteenth century, they already had enjoyed economic and social rights and privileges which were unheard of in the western world at that time. Since the middle of the twentieth century, there has been an impressive representation of women in public office in Liberia. President Tubman developed a new constituency among women from the 1950s onwards, and thereby appointed some of the women to positions of authority, whereas the supporters of President Tubman organized women's social and political movements. Thus, despite the dominant patriarchal ideology, there was a quite vast population of professional, educated women during the civil war. According to Fuest, this can be explained due to matrifocality, which is a concept referring to a household of one or more adult women and their children without fathers, for instance single-parent households by women in the former slave families from the United States (2008:123). Hence, when considering the arguments by Moran and Theobald regarding the different social positions and status of Americo-Liberian and native women, it can be understood that there exist significant differences within the category of "women" in the context of Liberia. The exact classifications of Liberian women in Liberian society regarding what is considered to be the "right" kind of work for native women, and also "civilized"/Americo-Liberian women's better access for education, highlight the fact that gender roles are bound to local contexts. Also age can be viewed as a significant factor for differences within gender, as elders have more power in society and younger women are subordinate to them.

When examining the political and socioeconomic roles of Liberian women, Fuest (2008) has argued that it should be noted that they vary in many ways, taking into account such dimensions as generation, lineage status in the northwestern parts of the country, ethnic membership, as well as age-group identity in the southeast regions of Liberia. Women's agency and their collective actions have been perceived as separate from the realm of men in Liberian society. In different contexts, Liberian women have organized many collective activities in the past, and one significant traditional organization which comprised trans-ethnic inclusive activities was the *Sande* in the northwest. The *Sande* network has also had a significant influence in recent years when, in the run-up to the 2005 elections, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf courted them as one of her constituencies. In the southeastern part of the country, women have organized themselves in a traditional context, and have also given support for councils of female elders and female chiefs. These councils can be viewed as parallel institutions to the structures in local politics which are male dominated. There is a lack of institutions such as female chiefs and council of female elders in the north and west, where societies are more hierarchically organized. When viewing the perceptions regarding women's position, for instance among the *Kpelle*, they consider women to be inferior to men. However, women in the southeast view women and men

as complementary and different, but do not perceive women to be inferior. In that context, the 'cultural' idea of woman is that of mother and hardworking wife who is the provider for her household. Fuest (2008: 121–122, 134) also points out that Liberian history has contained powerful women in both 'modern' and 'traditional' contexts in spite of ideologies of male dominance and corresponding institutions of social control. She also argues that there did not exist the colonial 'disempowerment' in Liberia when compared to most other African countries, thus in local public realms, female power had been a traditional feature in spite of structural constraints regarding women. Therefore, it is clear that within the country there exist differences regarding how women and their position is perceived in society, hence one cannot generalize gender roles in Liberia into one category.

In the context of politics, Alexander Holmgren (2013) has discussed Liberian women's access to formal political influence and representation in the bicameral legislature. He argues that although women are powerful and visible in Liberian politics, their participation in politics is not dependent on the will of the voters but on government appointments. Holmgren points out that during the presidency of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, women's visibility in Liberian politics has increased substantially; many women were appointed to high-profile positions in her first Cabinet, and also women have been appointed to official positions that were usually reserved for men. Nevertheless, these government appointments have not been chosen by the people of Liberia, and although democracy has improved during Johnson Sirleaf's presidency, women's representation in the bicameral legislature has diminished. A revealing example of this is the decreasing amount of women lawmakers; after the election in 2006, women held 17 seats out of total of 94 seats, whereas after the 2011 election there were only 13 seats out of 94 seats. The legislature is elected directly by the Liberian people, and the current political structure in the country is considered to be a significant barrier to women's access to formal governance institutions. As Holmgren points out, the majority of female candidates for legislative positions have lost against their male opponents. Liberian politics has been male-dominated, and the history of the country has been full of instability and conflict which has partly created a hostile environment for women (Holmgren 2013).

During the civil war, Liberian women established special negotiation relations with commanders, who according to Veronika Fuest (2008) perceived the women to be less threatening than men (2008:125). At the end of civil war in Liberia, there emerged an effective and active women's movement (the activities of the movement included organizing peace campaigns etc.) which helped to launch women into the positions of formal governance with actual political influence. The women of

the Liberian peace movement not only encouraged all parties to recognize the legitimate and significant role of women in the context of peace building and politics, but also challenged patriarchal power relations. In the end, women's peace activism not only had an impact on the peace process, but also on women's political participation in Liberia. The Accra Peace Agreement in 2003 was enabled by women's peacemaking actions, initiatives and advocacy. Their work also continued in post-conflict peace building, for example, by campaigning for women's representation in politics (Holmgren 2013). As Fuest (2008) states, years before Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected, there was already a large degree of militancy and determination in the peace movement by Liberia's women, which was not the case when compared to other countries. According to Fuest, there seems to be an increasing acceptance by men in Liberia regarding the legitimacy of women's political participation and their political ambitions at national and local level (2008:116, 125). Nevertheless, there is no established legal basis for parliamentary quota mechanisms or seat reservation under the current Constitution in Liberia. Male-dominated political parties and a lack of political will are the factors which cause resistance towards gender-equal participation in the governance process. For example, in the 2011 election, the two largest parties in Liberia (*Congress for Democratic Change* and the *Unity Party*) failed to support female political candidates due to the lack of active promotion of the women candidates. The parties only formally registered their female candidates, but the influential male candidates received more campaign funds and support (Holmgren 2013). Therefore, if one takes into account the arguments made above by Fuest (2008:116, 125) that the acceptance regarding the legitimacy of women's political participation has increased by the male sector of Liberia's population and comparing it to Holmgren's argument, it can be perceived in this context that the structural resistance against women's political participation is quite strong in the political sphere when comparing it to the local level of Liberian society.

#### **5.4 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was born in 1938 in Monrovia, where she also attended high school. Her paternal grandfather was a *Gola* traditional chief of renown in western Liberia and her maternal grandmother was a market woman. Ellen's father was a lawyer and also the first indigenous man to be elected to the Liberian House of Representatives. Ellen's mother was a traveling pastor which was also a rarity in those days, and she had German roots due to her father who was a German trader. Germany was one of the major trading partners with Liberia in the early part of the twentieth century, therefore there were many German expatriates in the country during that time. Due to her impoverished childhood (Ellen's grandmother was an illiterate and poor who struggled to feed her child), Ellen's mother lived as a foster child in a wealthy and old Liberian family which enabled her to

receive the best education in the country, and also study abroad for a year. This type of living arrangement system refers to the ward system which was common in early Liberia. Settlers had an urgent need for cheap labor, and most of settler families did not have enough children themselves, thus they needed help with the heavy housework (cooking, cleaning, tending crops etc.) (Johnson Sirleaf 2010: 8–12, 16–17). Native communities and parents sent their children to live with settler families, and the adopted children were expected to obey their guardians (settler families), and perform chores in return for accommodation and food. Settler families had to provide their dependants with education and clothing. (Ciment 2013)

When it comes to Liberian ethnicity and the historical background of the country, I assert that it is relevant to brought up the following matter. According to Ellen, she does not have any American lineage, therefore she is not an Americo-Liberian, although during her campaign for the presidency in 2005, there were rumors about her ethnicity which implied that Ellen was actually an Americo-Liberian. In other words, she would have been a member of the elite class which had been ruling Liberia for a very long period, as she puts it. There has been a long-term polarization between indigenous populations and the elite settler, thus many Liberians have not wanted another Americo-Liberian president (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, 2010: 8). Theobald (2012) has also brought up Ellen's origins by pointing out Johnson Sirleaf's claims of having mainly indigenous origins, coming from the Kru, Gola, and German groups. However, Theobald argues that due to education and work, Ellen's family were able to move up the social ladder of Liberian society, therefore the president is regularly viewed as a member of Americo-Liberian elite that is regarded for being responsible for political and economic mismanagement in Liberia (2012:62, 65). Thus, Ellen's reputation particularly in her home country has been controversial and problematic due to her association with the Americo-Liberian elite and her alleged Americo-Liberian heritage.

Sirleaf also lived with her then-husband (whom she later divorced due to his abusive behavior towards her) in the United States where she earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in 1971. A year later she entered politics when she gave a speech in which she criticized the government. In 1979 she became the Minister of Finance in Liberia, and Sirleaf was President of the Liberian Bank for Development and Investment after the military coup in 1980. However, she soon fled Liberia to Kenya due to the oppressive military government of Liberia. Her international career continued when she moved back to the United States and served as a Senior Loan Officer at the World Bank. In 1992, Sirleaf served as Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau of Africa at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Five years later, Sirleaf returned to Liberia to contest the presidential election, but was ranked second (her opponent was Charles Taylor). After the election she went into a voluntary exile



to Côte d'Ivoire where she eventually founded a Liberian community development NGO (Measuagoon), as well as a venture capital vehicle for African entrepreneurs (the Kormah and Investment Corporation).<sup>12</sup> Ellen served on many advisory boards before her presidency, for example, Women Waging Peace, and the International Crisis Group. She collaborated with Elisabeth Rehn (the first female Minister of Defence in Finland) in a UNIFEM investigative report concerning women and peace building. During her presidency, she has received many awards and accolades; Newsweek magazine listed her as one of the best leaders in the world in 2010, and she also received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 for her non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work.<sup>13</sup> In the same year she also received the African Gender Award<sup>14</sup>, and Forbes Africa magazine honored Johnson Sirleaf by naming her the most powerful woman in Africa.<sup>15</sup> She has four sons and has not remarried after her divorce.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.emansion.gov.lr/2content.php?sub=121&related=19&third=121&pg=sp>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.emansion.gov.lr/2content.php?sub=121&related=19&third=121&pg=sp>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.emansion.gov.lr/2press.php?news\\_id=1919&related=7&pg=sp](http://www.emansion.gov.lr/2press.php?news_id=1919&related=7&pg=sp)

<sup>15</sup> [http://emansion.gov.lr/2press.php?news\\_id=2008&related=7&pg=sp](http://emansion.gov.lr/2press.php?news_id=2008&related=7&pg=sp)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.emansion.gov.lr/2content.php?sub=121&related=19&third=121&pg=sp>.

## 6. Malawi

### 6.1 Malawi: facts and history

Malawi is in southeastern Africa, and its neighboring countries are Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia. The estimated population of Malawi is over 17 million, and the country has a colonial past due to its being a former British colony, and it declared independence from Great Britain in 1964. In 1975, Lilongwe replaced Zomba as the capital of Malawi. 57 per cent of the population speak Chichewa which is the official language of Malawi, however, a large percentage of people speak also English, Chinyanja and other native languages. When it comes to religion, it is Christianity (68%) and Islam (25%) which are the main religions of the country. In the context of the household, it is women who are in charge of most of the household and agricultural duties, whereas men have responsibility for earning money (<sup>17</sup>; Gilman 2009:8–15). Malawi is dependent on outside aid, and it is one of the least developed countries worldwide. Twelve per cent of the population is HIV/AIDS infected, and there is a high infant mortality rate and a low life expectancy.<sup>18</sup> The staple food of the country is maize, and when it comes to Malawi's economy it is heavily dependent on small-scale subsistence and rain-fed agricultural production, thus the population of the country is mostly rural. Nevertheless, also small businesses, fishing, and wage labor often supplement agriculture. Tobacco is the most significant provider of country's export revenue (up to 70 per cent), whereas 20 per cent comes from coffee, tea and sugar cane (Kelly 2014:116).

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Bantu tribes had united many smaller political states to establish the Maravi Confederacy which included not only the modern state of Malawi, but also large parts of present-day Mozambique and Zambia. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Portuguese explorers arrived to Malawi from present-day Mozambique, and during the period 1790–1860, there was a dramatic increase in the slave trade. The famous Scottish missionary David Livingstone explored the region in 1850 which paved the way for European adventurers, traders, and missionaries. A significant turning point was in 1891, when Britain established the Nyasaland (the former name of Malawi until 1964) and District Protectorate, which by 1893 had changed to the name of the British Central African Protectorate.<sup>19</sup> From the beginning of colonial rule, Malawi's history has been defined by inequality and poverty, and it had not

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<sup>17</sup> <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/malawi-population/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/malawi-population/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13881367>

have any significant investments in infrastructure and industry (Englund 2006:14). During the colonial period, European settlers had been offered land at very low prices for coffee plantations, and Africans were forced to work on the plantations in difficult conditions for long periods. The British Central African Protectorate became Nyasaland in 1907, however there emerged an uprising against British rule, and in 1915 Reverend John Chilembwe who was the leader of the uprising was killed by police. Chilembwe is still considered to be a national hero in Malawi, and there is a national holiday every year (15<sup>th</sup> of January) which is named after him (John Chilembwe Day)<sup>20</sup>.

Another significant turning point happened on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1964, when Malawi was granted independence from British Colonial rule. Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda (who is not related to Joyce Banda) became the president of the Republic of Malawi in 1966, and Malawi became a one-party state. It should be noted that the presidency of Kamuzu Banda was defined by a specific title when he was also formally declared as Life President (as a president-for-life) by the 1966 constitution. One party (*Malawi Congress Party*), one leader (Life President Kamuzu Banda), one language (Chichewa), and one nation (Malawi) – these values of singularity and unity were the main factors in the authoritarian regime of Kamuzu Banda, as Clement Ng'ongl'ola states (2002: 63, 140). During that time, there emerged the suppression of opposition movements and the detention of their leaders. Potential candidates had to belong to the *Malawi Congress Party* and therefore they had to be approved by Banda himself.<sup>21</sup> Hence, taking into account the political climate at that time, one can conclude that Malawi was not a proper democratic state which would have allowed a multivocal society. There had emerged the systematic challenge to Banda's regime in the late 1980s, first as hidden mobilization and discussion, and then in 1992 there emerged public pastoral letters of Malawi's Catholic bishops which criticized the ruling politicians in so called democratic Malawi. As institutions, churches had the role of being watchdogs of democracy, and particularly Christian organizations had a major role in the process of democratization. There had emerged a political division in the country as the supporters of "Life President" Banda (the conservatives), who viewed multipartyism as an insult to the authority of Banda and national unity, whereas the opposition group (the democrats), who were influenced by aid donors' demands of good governance and human rights, formed pressure groups. In the following year there was a referendum and the people chose a government which had multiparty system. Pressure groups became political parties such as the *United Democratic Front* (UDF) and the *Alliance for Democracy* (AFORD) (Englund 2006:44; 2002:11). In 1994, a leader of the UDF– Bakili Muluzi – was elected for president, and at once re-established freedom of speech and freed political prisoners. However, it should be noted that Muluzi also blatantly abused public and personal resources (Englund

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13881367>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13881367>

2006:45). In the same year, Malawi adopted a multi-party constitution which brought multi-party politics to the country. Before the multi-party constitution, there had been only one legally recognised political party – the *Malawi Congress Party* (MCP); all opposition had been banned.<sup>22</sup> Bingu wa Mutharika was the president after Muluzi, and he was elected in 2004.<sup>23</sup> However, Mutharika eventually became the subject of increasing criticism in Malawi as the country became internationally and regionally isolated.<sup>24</sup>

In recent years, there have been some turbulent times in the context of foreign donor aid, when, for instance in 2002, the government of Denmark ended its development aid to Malawi. The reason for this drastic action was the corruption and political intolerance of the government of Malawi (Englund 2002:15). In 2011, Britain pulled out all aid to Malawi due to the violence of anti-government protests in Malawi which left about twenty people dead. Britain accused the government of Malawi of failure to maintain human rights and mishandling the economy of the country. A year later, Mutharika suddenly died, and the vice-president Joyce Banda succeeded him, thereby becoming the second female president in Africa. Within a short period of time, in order to satisfy the *IMF* (International Monetary Fund) and its requirements to restore funding, Banda devalued the kwacha currency by a third. This caused a panic of buying basic goods among Malawians. The former foreign minister Peter Mutharika, the brother of former president Bingu wa Mutharika, and a dozen of high-profile figures were accused of treason in 2013. There were accusations that they tried to prevent Joyce Banda to become the successor of Mutharika. In 2013, the political turmoil continued when there occurred allegations of prevalent corruption which led to the firing of President Banda's entire cabinet. The political circumstance grew even worse in 2014 when there emerged the so-called *Cashgate* affair which is viewed as the biggest corruption scandal of Malawi. About 70 people (including government officials) were arrested due to suspicious construction deals, and they were accused of stealing \$32 million of government money. Even though not officially implicated, a number of lead suspects of the scandal have made allegations involving Joyce Banda, accusing her ordering cabinet ministers to solicit money for the election campaign in 2014, as well as being the mastermind behind *Cashgate*.<sup>25</sup> In May 2014, the brother of late former president Bingu wa Mutharika, Peter Mutharika, was elected president.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> [www.africaresearchinstitute.org/blog/malawi-elections-2014/](http://www.africaresearchinstitute.org/blog/malawi-elections-2014/)

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13881367>

<sup>24</sup> [www.africaresearchinstitute.org/blog/malawi-elections-2014](http://www.africaresearchinstitute.org/blog/malawi-elections-2014)

<sup>25</sup> <http://malawivoice.com/malawi-why-wont-joyce-banda-come-home-security-or-cashgate/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13881367gi>

## 6.2 Society and ethnicity

The country has a number of ethnic groups such as *Chewa, Nyanja, Yao, and Tumbuka*.<sup>27</sup> However, as folklorist Lisa Gilman has pointed out (2009) that when discussing the term ethnic group, it should be acknowledged that there exist complicated relationships among cultural groupings in Malawi as in many other African countries. As contemporary categories of ethnicity are partly due the groupings that have been politically motivated during many phases of the country's history, ethnic categories often have little reference to Malawians' own cultural identification. In Malawi, some ethnic groups are patrilineal (descent or kinship through the male line), while others are matrilineal (descent or kinship traced solely through the female line). Gilman (2009) argues that women have significant power of positions within matrilineal systems, and regarding the matrilineal and patrilineal contexts in Malawi, women indeed hold positions of chieftaincy. Nevertheless, even within matrilineal systems, power is usually bestowed upon males (maternal brothers and uncles), and in patrilineal systems it is often husbands and fathers who have power (Gilman 2009:24–25). As legal anthropologist Gerhard Anders (2002) has stated, it is understood that in the northern region, kinship organization is generally patrilineal, whereas in the central and the southern parts of the country, matrilineal kinship organizations are predominant (2002: 50).

As Edrinnie Kayambazinthu and Fulata Moyo have stated (2002) regionalism and tribalism have been vital factors during the colonial and postcolonial periods in the history of Malawi. In the context of ethnicity in Malawi, the country has been divided into three regions: the southern, central and northern regions, and it should be highlighted that the regional divisions have caused ethnic divisions and political polarization which emerged after the 1991 and 1994 general elections when people voted for political parties along regional and ethnic lines. When Kamuzu Banda ruled the country, these divisions were arbitrarily promoted or suppressed by him, (2002: 91, 90). One has to examine the colonial and postcolonial period in the context of ethnicity and regional divisions to understand what kind of factors have influenced Malawi's society. First of all, it should be acknowledged that only a small percentage of people work in the non-agricultural sector in Malawi, as Anders (2002) has pointed out. Especially during colonial rule, it was the people from the northern region who had easier access to superior missionary education, and who had a dominant role in the civil service. Colonial civil service which included professions such as police, teachers, soldiers, was characterised by the strict division between Africans and European expatriates, and it was the people from the northern region

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<sup>27</sup> <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/malawi-population/>

who played a major part in representing Africans in the civil service. After independence, the structure of the British colonial civil service was retained in Malawi, but Kamuzu Banda favoured expatriates to Malawians due to their position outside the Malawian society and their skills. He was also distrustful of the people from the northern regions, and Banda wanted the Chewa identity to be national identity. (Anders 2002:44-45). The northern region is one of the most ethnically diverse regions which has roughly eight ethnic identities, whereas the southern region has only three ethnic identities: Chewa, Yao, and Lomwe. The most linguistically homogenous region in the country is the central region. The northern part of Malawi has been treated as one block which has had its political consequences regarding political party leanings, schooling and employment since people have labelled each other by the regions they are coming from. When examining the political dynamics of the regions in Malawi, one has to take into account the segmentation of the political parties; the *Alliance for Democracy Party* (AFORD) has been viewed as a Northerners' party, whereas the *United Democratic Front* (UDF) is seen as a Southerners' party, and *Malawi Congress Party* (MCP) as a Central Region party (Kayambazinthu, Moyo 2002: 91). Therefore, it seems that the political parties have been categorised and divided into the different regions in Malawi, and it can be understood that these regional differences have had a significant influence on Malawian society in general.

### **6.3 Malawian women and politics**

During the rule of Kamuzu Banda, the people of Malawi were subject to the severe *Decency in Dress Act* that viewed Western fashion trends as “corrupting” Malawian youth. The act banned women from wearing trousers. When Kamuzu Banda's rule came to an end in 1994, it was also a turning point for Malawian women who began to go out, and people felt more liberated in general. Nevertheless, political discourses in Malawi have prohibited girls and women from claiming any rights by positioning women as the preservers of “culture” and by declaring human rights to be the adversary of “culture”, as anthropologist Nicole Hayes (2013) points out. Hayes conducted a survey in the southern region in which compared to men, women are less wealthy and for example they are less literate than men (Hayes 2013:352, 349, 350). Anthropologist Ulrika Ribohn (2002) has also discussed gender in the political and cultural context of Malawi. She states that both women and men in Malawi argue that women should preserve “culture” (which is locally regarded as synonymous with rural community life in villages) as women are the keepers of “culture” due their close relation to community life. Ribohn argues that in contemporary Malawi, both men and women have expressed unease about public discourse which stresses women's rights, and when there emerges discussion regarding women's role in society, it is usually referred to using the concepts of “culture”, human rights or change (2002:167, 171, 169). Malawian official agencies, such as governmental organisations have

described “traditions” and “culture” to be obstacles to human rights, whereas the governments of Malawi (both the MCP and UDF) have dichotomized human rights and “culture” in various ways. When looking at the rhetoric of the MCP, women were viewed to be in a dominant status due to their relationships to President Kamuzu Banda who created “mbumba culture” which refers to the traditional relationship between women (a sorority). He declared himself as their male guardian – *nkhoswe*, (a brother or an uncle from the mother’s side), and represented himself as a community provider who provided special benefits to his active supporters such as building houses for some members of the women’s league. Banda aimed his policies at improving the position of Malawian women, however for this favor women were obliged to wear political party uniforms with the portrait of Banda, dance and sing praise songs at political party meetings. Thus, for the political party, women being ‘praise performers’ was a significant base of political support. (Semu 2002:82). Their task is to glorify mostly male political leaders, although women’s performances are also a way of expressing activism and socially sanctioned commentary. Kamuzu Banda demanded that all Malawian women, despite of their occupation, age or health should take part in political events as performers on a regular basis, and sometimes also all boys and men were obliged to perform in these events, but very often the males were merely the audience. Banda’s government generated fear among Malawians, thus there was no public debate about the usage of women as “cheerleaders” by president (Gilman 2009:4–5, 19). During the 1990s, there was a shift in the system of government, when the citizenry voted for change from single party to multiparty rule. This led to the emergence of political activists who established parties and President Bakili Muluzi, who was the first to be elected democratically in Malawi, also emphasized not using women as symbols of the party or the president (2009:6). However, it should be acknowledged that still there exists a culture of women performers in political events, based on my experience of the welcoming ceremony of Joyce Banda in Cape Maclear in 2012 where the local women were dancing and singing for President Banda.

Social anthropologist Harri Englund (2004) points out that in post-colonial Malawi, there has emerged official rhetoric on changing gender relations, meaning that the concepts such as ‘gender equality’, and ‘empowerment’ have very often been expressed publicly. Notwithstanding, official rhetoric on gender equality might not be the reality and could be viewed as a façade. In fact, it has been in stark contrast with the real intentions that exist behind the rhetoric of gender equality in a state level. Studies from other African countries which have undergone democratization have implied that nevertheless the official concern regarding gender relations is nothing more than a new kind of rhetoric. Thus, there would not be an actual transformation that would go through the whole society, but instead just a state-level feminism. This term refers to a token minister of women’s affairs who just mimics the rhetoric, whereas few others than elite women have increased opportunities regarding

an improvement of their lives (2004: 154-157). Women's organizations and movements have had a short history in Malawi due to President Hastings Banda's regime which effectively diminished politically significant associations in the country. As Englund points out, it has been external donors, not Malawians themselves who have pressured the political elite of Malawi to adapt feminist rhetoric. Thus, it can be viewed that state feminism has been used only as a tool for meeting the demands of development aid. Taking into consideration the particular issues of the Malawian cultural and social context has not been the main purpose of state feminism (2004:168).

A few previous studies on Malawian women in politics can give some background to cultural attitudes regarding female politicians in Malawi. It should be acknowledged that the following studies were conducted before the presidency of Joyce Banda, but nevertheless I argue that they illuminate very well Malawian culture in varied contexts. Rebecca Tiessen (2008) who has done research on gender and development, conducted a study on women in politics in Malawi in 2005, she points out the factors that contribute to Malawi's weak performance in efforts to promote women to leadership positions. Tiessen brings out in her study how the number of women in Parliament began to rise at the end of the 1990s in Malawi. However, compared to other African countries, Malawi has not done well with respect to promoting women in leadership positions, due to failure to adopt quota systems. Women have been regarded as illiterate and subservient throughout Malawi's history, thus when taking into account this particular viewpoint it is no surprise that gender inequality has existed in Malawi (2008:199, 201). Malawian women have played political roles in the past, but it has mainly been in the roles of singers and dancers (praise performers) at political rallies. Tiessen (2008) has also pointed out that a political history of patriarchy and neopatrimonialism have been the reasons for women's under-representation in political positions in Malawi. In the context of Malawi, Tiessen has explained the term neopatrimonialism to be associated with the centralization of power in the hands of a few, thus there exist the purpose of maintaining dominance, such as purchasing of political loyalty with money, or sexual exploitation of women (women are expected to provide sexual favors) (2008: 212).

In general, neopatrimonialism can be seen as a system where state resources are being used for personal profits by rulers, and there appears the management of official authority for private purposes, and there exist nepotism when it comes to selecting officials and recruiting civil servants. Thus, neopatrimonialism generates such as poor leadership, and it is not institutionalized relations that predominates but personal loyalties instead. Nevertheless, these kind of practices exist all over the world, but the African neopatrimonial state has indeed become a model of the anti-developmental state worldwide (Gazibo 2012: 3). African political systems have frequently been characterized as "neopatrimonial" by Western scholars, due to many African leaders and the bureaucrats who serve them have



deliberately misrepresented history due to entitle dictatorial rule on local and national levels (Pitcher, Moran, Johnston, 2009:129–130,149). Since the 1994 constitution, gender policies have been a significant part of economic, political and social development in Malawi. In spite of the shift to a democratic government, neopatrimonialism has been a widespread phenomenon in Malawi, therefore inhibiting possibilities for gender equality and civil society reforms (Thiessen 2008: 212, 202–203). It was pointed out that Malawian cultural beliefs assumed that women's public activities will lead to depraved behavior such as women cheating on their husbands, prostitution, or in case of winning the elections, women would no longer respect the men anymore (Thiessen 2008:205). One of the factors in women's limited representation in leadership positions was the role of media which reproduced stereotypes of women such as them being inefficient leaders. The media was considered to be hostile towards them, and also those women politicians who made mistakes were singled out by the media and were used as a reason for not allowing women into politics. Especially in Malawi, research uncovered an impression of women as second-class citizens (Thiessen 2008: 206–207).

Sociologist Alinane Priscilla Kamlongera (2008) conducted qualitative research with Malawian female politicians. The research studied the reasons and the factors that hindered Malawian women's full participation in national-level, formal state politics. The findings of the study highlighted the constraints such as gender stereotypes, limited education and income inhibiting women's involvement in politics. Malawian women are socialized to be followers instead of leaders, as it is true in most of the world. Thus, socialization processes are a key constraint on women's participation in politics, meaning that from early on girls are treated differently from boys, and the focus of girls' upbringing is on domestic tasks (Kamlongera 2008: 471,474–476). Kamlongera's study also argued that traits seen to characterize males (strength, fighting, and deceit) are culturally associated with politics. However, it was also pointed out in the study that women's own attitudes were also significant; some female politicians believed that women are incapable of evaluating political issues. Some of the Malawian female politicians in the study believed that the reason for this was that generally women are emotional and sensitive. Although they were proud of themselves, they still were somewhat apologetic, and also grateful to the men for bringing women into politics. It was also pointed out that married female politicians were better listened to, and were taken much more seriously, than those who were single. Therefore, being married was viewed as a significant factor in women's political success. Lack of mutual support among women was also another reason for the lack of women politicians, according to the women of the study. Women were jealous of other women, and they were perceived to be difficult to work with when compared to men. It was acknowledged that there were some men in politics who attempted to drive women out of politics by using 'dirty tricks' against

women, such as expecting sexual favors from the women, or not giving them the respect they deserved (Kamlongera 2008: 475–476). Socialization processes were also manifested in the way female ministers have been allocated to so-called ‘private ministries’ such as the ministries of health, gender, education, and information, whereas the male ministers have been represented in the key ministries, such as defence and justice ministries (Kamlongera, 2008: 476). This kind of allocation by gender is nothing new or specifically located in a certain country, on the contrary it can be viewed as a universal phenomenon. A good example of this is Finnish political scientist Jaana Kuusipalo’s research (2011) where Kuusipalo argues that political representation in parliamentary politics is gendered when only one gender (men) holds the majority of the seats in the government and parliament, or the men and women are presumed to represent different issues in politics. She also points out that maternalist politics which concentrates on the welfares of mothers, children and the disadvantaged in Finland have been women’s major pathway to politics (Kuusipalo 2011: 5–6).

Malawian gender activists expressed their disappointment in 2014 when President Peter Mutharika appointed only three female ministers to his 20-member cabinet. It is quite revealing that the three female ministers were allocated to the following ministries: Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare; Ministry of Health; and Ministry of Sports and Youth Development. Whereas male ministers were allocated, for example, into the following ministries: Minister of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Finance, Economic planning and Development.<sup>28</sup> When observing the current political situation in Malawi and situating the arguments of Kuusipalo’s research in this context, it is evident that gendered political representation is a resilient phenomenon worldwide. Thus, it could be understood that when taking into account the arguments by Thiessen and Kamlongera, and comparing them to Malawian politics, yet again women have been sidelined. After the presidency of Joyce Banda, neopatrimonialism seems to still be an obstinate heritage in Malawi, when one keeps in mind that the current president of Malawi is the brother of the late president Bingu wa Mutharika, predecessor of Joyce Banda. This indicates that political power remains in the hands of a few (men) in Malawi.

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<sup>28</sup> [www.capitalradiomalawi.com/index.php/component/k2/item/1557-malawi-president-names-full-cabinet](http://www.capitalradiomalawi.com/index.php/component/k2/item/1557-malawi-president-names-full-cabinet).

## 6.4 Joyce Banda

Joyce Banda (née Mtila) was born in 1950 near the southern town of Zomba in the village of Malemia. In the context of ethnicity, Banda is Yao which is one of the ethnic groups in the southern Region (Kayambazinthu & Moyo, 2002: 91).<sup>29</sup> She was the eldest child in a family of five children, and Banda's father was the leader of the police brass band of Malawi, whereas her sister formerly run Madonna's charity foundation, Raising Malawi.<sup>30</sup> In her youth, Banda was a secretary, and during the dictatorial era of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, she also became a well-known figure. Joyce Banda has three children, and in 1981, Joyce Banda left her abusive husband. At the moment she lives with her new husband Richard Banda who is the former Chief Justice of Malawi.<sup>31</sup> Since the 1980s, Joyce Banda has established and managed many organizations and businesses such as Ndekani Garments and Akajuwe Enterprises, but has also carried out philanthropy and community work in the context of grassroots gender rights activism. In 1989, she founded the National Association of Business Women, which made her popular among the rural poor of Malawi, since it lent start-up cash to small-scale traders. Banda has also set up *the Joyce Banda Foundation* which is a charity that aims to aid Malawian orphans and children by educating them.<sup>32</sup> Joyce Banda has a Diploma in Management, and she has obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education.<sup>33</sup>

At the end of the 1990s, Joyce Banda, who was by that time almost 50 years old, started her formal political career. She won a parliamentary seat through the former ruling party of retired president Bakili Muluzi. In addition to being a member of parliament, Joyce Banda served as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2006 to 2009, and also served as Minister for Gender, Children's Affairs and Community Services. Her career reached new heights in 2009 when she was elected as vice-president of Malawi (Dickovick, 2014:294). However, there emerged difficulties concerning the relationship between the contemporary President Bingu wa Mutharika and Banda due to the fact that Joyce Banda did not support the president's brother (Peter Mutharika) as the next presidential candidate. Thus President Bingu wa Mutharika tried to impeach her as vice-president. Eventually, he expelled Banda from the *Democratic Progressive Party* (DDP), and she formed a new political party called the *People's Party* in 2011. Juliet Kamwendo and Gregory Kamwendo have stated (2015:81) that in the context of a global discourse favouring the empowerment of women in leadership, the choice of Joyce

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/19/on-the-eve-of-malawis-election/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17662916>

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id\\_nr=3108](http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id_nr=3108)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17662916>

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id\\_nr=3108](http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id_nr=3108)

Banda for presidential running mate in 2009 was just a well-calculated political manoeuvre by Bingu wa Mutharika who wanted to win the votes. Therefore, the whole occurrence would have been just a political game and manipulation, and not a genuine attempt to empower women politically in Malawi. However, in the end, Mutharika did not succeed in removing Banda from her position as a vice-president, and eventually Joyce Banda was elected as president of Malawi in 2012 after the death of Bingu wa Mutharika. She was the head of state until 2014 when she lost the presidential elections.<sup>34</sup> After her short period of presidency, Banda has continued her development work with her foundation, *the Joyce Banda Foundation*.

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<sup>34</sup> [http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id\\_nr=3108](http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id_nr=3108)

## **7. Analysis: media representations of female presidents of Liberia and Malawi**

As I use rhetorical analysis, as well critical discourse analysis in my study, thus I take into account the intentions of the presidents when they are representing themselves, and are represented in media, as well the particular message they (the presidents and media) use in trying to appeal to the audience, the specific situation of the representations, as well various cultural, social and political contexts. I also take into account how the events and relationships are represented and what kind of identities emerge from data. It is important to be aware that there exist power relations and interests in the representations and self-representations of the presidents. Hence when reading and interpreting the media articles, I also acknowledge that there are certain things that both the presidents and the media emphasize, exclude and include in their representations.

### **7.1 International media on Joyce Banda**

In reading through the media sources on Joyce Banda from international media coverage, I was able to identify a few common themes, and those were *women and leadership*; *Banda's life story*; *African womanhood*; and *motherhood*. I first examine the theme of *women and leadership*.

Banda is represented as “the most powerful black woman outside of United States” in an interview by *Austin PBS – Public Broadcasting Service* called “Overheard with Evan Smith - President Joyce Banda of Malawi”. “Overheard with Evan Smith” is a series of in-depth interviews with public figures, and in this particular interview an American host discusses with Banda her power regarding human and women’s rights such as advocating on behalf of younger women. She is also viewed as “extraordinary figure” in terms of gender and race. The interview took place in the United States of America in 2013, and considering how complex is the U.S history regarding racism, the host places great emphasis on the significance of a black woman in a leadership position. Banda represents two minority categories that have faced challenges and discrimination by others: “blacks”, which in this context can refer to an African American or an African person, and being a woman. In terms of leadership qualities, in the same interview Banda describes her quality of leadership by referring to her wishes prior to her presidency:

*”If I only can become president, I will transform Malawi, I will transform communities...I will ensure a girl child is protected and has an opportunity to go the school.”* (2.10.2013 KLRU online)

Banda represents herself as a potential president who has an agenda and the power to transform the country and communities by particularly focusing on girls' rights for education. However, when observing Banda's leadership qualities, there exists a dichotomy regarding how Banda's leadership qualities are evaluated by other people. One can find, for instance, an interview with a local Malawian woman by the British news website *Guardian* entitled "Madam President: Meeting Malawi's Joyce Banda", in which she points out the reasons for giving her vote to Banda:

*"If we see changes in the coming months then we will give her our vote, but if there will be no changes we will not vote for her. We would rather vote for someone else who can change things."* (20.12.2012 The Guardian online)

According to the female voter above, the gender of the president is not relevant in this context, but instead the ability of the president to change the economic situation in the country for the better. One particular matter comes up in the interview, and that is when the female voter represents her arguments as collective opinions by using the plural *we*. Therefore, she presents herself as stating not only her own opinions but also her fellow countrymen's when it comes to Banda. Based on her arguments above, it is understood that if positive changes do not happen in the future, then it will also influence the voting process. Therefore, being a woman president is not the most significant qualification for being head of state, but one's ability to improve the country's economy.

The website *Atlanta Black Star*, which emphasizes presenting news and empowering narratives concerning African American people, published an article in 2012 entitled "Meet Joyce Banda, Malawi's First Female President". In the article, Banda is once again hailed as a champion for women's rights in Malawi. It is mentioned how while some Malawians argue that due to her gender Banda will fail in her presidency, nevertheless many Malawians are encouraged by the fact Banda is a woman, thus "there is power in the dress", and that "something refreshingly new is taking place in Malawi" (2012 *Atlanta Black Star* online).

When talking about women's support, Banda expresses the complicated relationship between women who operate at the same political level. The following extract is taken from the interview by *Al Jazeera English* entitled "South 2 North: Africa's Women of Power – Can Females in Leadership Positions Make a Lasting Difference for the Continent's Future":

"The majority of women are grass-roots based. And that's where I have worked. I have worked with women in the formal sector... So those are the women that have stood by me through thick and thin... The problem comes when it is now the women that are higher up. Women that are your level that usually won't stand with you, that usually won't support you. But what I have also learnt during this trying period of three, four years was that men came out more than those women,

in that category. There were more men than women supporting me and fighting for me.”(18.5.2013 Al Jazeera English online)

This is a quite interesting and significant comment made by Banda as she clearly demonstrates how the mutual support of women does not exist at all political levels. She argues that the women in the formal sector and at the grass-roots level have supported her, but not the women who operate at the highest level. Thus, it can be understood that she refers to the women with whom she had worked fighting against maternal mortality, and gender biased-violence at grass-roots level, and it has been those women who have supported her. Whereas the women at the highest level have not supported Banda. In this context, it can be seen that Banda refers to the women in the politics such as female ministers. Surprisingly, Banda brings up that it has been men who have supported her more than women. This argument brings a whole new dimension to the discussion of gender and leadership, and the general perception of how Malawnei has male-dominated culture which usually does not encourage women in leadership. I argue that Banda’s statement about the lack of women’s mutual support refers to gender myths such as female solidarity. As Cornwall (2007) has pointed out, gender myths can be perceived to refer to female solidarity and female autonomy. In this context, there exist general assumptions on how all women have unified perspectives and support always each other. Particularly in gender and development narratives, ‘gender relations’ are understood as a particular relationship between women and men, but relations between women have been mostly ignored. Thus, relations among women are significant when observing the multiplicities of power and gender (Cornwall 2007:151, 160–161). Hence I argue that in this context, when taking into account the lack of female solidarity, as well as what kind of power issues exist within gender relations (relations between women), one has to consider patriarchal structures. In reality, the lack of female solidarity at certain political levels can imply patriarchy as well. As Walby (1990) has stressed, patriarchy can be defined as a system of social practices and structures in which women are oppressed and dominated by men. In the context of the state, which is one of the main structures that contribute to a system of patriarchy, one has to take into account the relative absence of women from powerful positions in the state (1990:20, 16, 150–152). Thus, I stress that patriarchy does not only include relations between men and women, but also relations between women and women, hence when examining the reasons for a lack of support among women, or in this case women politicians, one needs to ask why women are not supporting each other in a sphere which is male-dominated. Is it because there are only few women at higher political sphere, and thus those few women politicians then must compete with each other about the limited amount of state offices? Hence I argue that patriarchal structures in the politics influence on the lack of female solidarity at higher political sphere as well.

Another theme in interview with Joyce Banda was her life story. On many occasions Banda talks about her childhood friend who was forced to drop out of school, because her parents could not raise enough money for the school fees. She discusses how angry she felt due to her failure to help childhood friend, and how this particular life event motivated her to send girls to school. In an interview “President Joyce Banda’s story” by *CSIS Smart Global Health*, which is an American bipartisan, nonprofit organization and international policy institution of global development, Banda tells her story regarding her childhood which had an impact on her career:

*“I have been angry all my life about how I failed to help her (her childhood friend), and so I made up mind that when I grow up, I’ll send as many girls as possible to school.”* (22.5.2013 CSIS Smart Global Health online)

It can be understood that at the same time she presents her life story, she expresses her agenda and motivation as a leader. Using her childhood friend as an example for the importance of girls’ education, Banda represents the story above for explaining her own activism regarding girls’ schooling in Malawi. Thus, by narratively describing what happened to her childhood friend, Banda represents this incident as a catalyst for her life’s work with women’s empowerment in Malawi. In the other media representation by the *Guardian* – “Madam President: Meeting Malawi’s Joyce Banda”, (20.12.2012 *Guardian* online), Banda also brings up many times her previous abusive marriage, and her strong grandmother who had an influence on her life. Hence it can be seen that she presents her previous marriage as shaping her perspective on women’s empowerment and her own attributes as a woman.

The attributes of African woman in the context of her abusive marriage is one of the common themes in Joyce Banda’s own media discourses. In the following extract from the same interview by *CSIS Smart Global Health* as above, she describes the attributes of the African woman, and the general attitude of African culture regarding marriage:

*“But that was the time you didn’t walk out of marriage. You are an African woman. Nothing is more painful that you can’t stand. So you have to stay. It was almost kill my mom. I said no-no if that is an African woman, then I’m not African woman, and I’m going. So I moved out, but I also made up my mind that point, that for as long as I live I shall never tolerate abuse for a woman, especially from my husband. And the way you do it in Africa, because socially you have to remain married. Not many people take the route I took. They’ll stay. And when I became to wonder what was happening to fellow women, I decided to very best thing I can do is to empower them.... When Richard Banda came to marry me, it was on my terms. ..There are thousands of women in this country that tell you I’m here because Joyce Banda intervened.”* (22.5.2013 CSIS Smart Global Health online)



This extract above is a good example on how Banda represents herself as a courageous African woman who walked out of an abusive marriage, although in many places in Africa, it was and still is not socially accepted for a woman do such thing. She also refers to, or rather questions the concept of African womanhood which in this context indicates that African woman is supposed to stay in the abusive marriage no matter what, because it is her duty as a wife. Banda also brings up how she wants to, and already has empowered other women. Therefore, she uses her life story and the perspectives on what it is to be African woman in order to explain her impact on other Malawian women. On many occasions, Banda has highlighted the attributes of African women such as their ability to carry heavy loads, as she points out in the *Guardian's* video:

*“It’s heavy on me, because my feeling is that we have wasted 50 years. There’s been a very little progress in changing the status of people at grassroots. It’s heavy, but I’m able to carry it. Why? Because I’m an African woman. And an African woman carries heavy loads. Anyway that’s how we are trained, we are brought up. Nothing is unbearable...”* (20.12.2012 The Guardian online)

Banda emphasizes that she is an African woman, thus according to her she has the ability to carry heavy loads and there are no limits to these heavy loads, referring to the challenges and responsibilities of a presidency. Therefore, when observing these remarks made by Banda concerning the specific attributes of African woman, one can notice that she proudly expresses the notion of African womanhood to be quite unique, in that carrying “heavy loads”, facing obstacles and being strong would be characteristics specific only to African women. She leaves aside the question of Asian, Latin American or European women and their daily challenges, or their struggles for gender equality. Hence, I argue that due to emphasizing her African and gendered identity, Banda’s representation in this matter can be perceived to be Afrocentric to a certain degree. Therefore it is essential to bring up again Africana womanism and its view on African women. According to Africana womanism, being an African woman is something that only those who understand African culture and its history can comprehend. Hence, in these media articles, African woman is somehow generalized, and therefore put into a certain category in which African womanhood has certain attributes (strong, long-suffering, but still able to take care of her family and household etc.) In the media, Banda represents herself proudly as an African woman, however it should be mentioned that she also represents herself being a new kind of African woman, one not conforming to African social norms, for instance by not staying in an abusive marriage. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that staying in a marriage no matter what has not only been a traditional custom in Africa, but in other patriarchal societies all over the world as well.

When it comes to motherhood, Joyce Banda points out in the *Guardian's* video that it is Malawians' responsibility to love their mothers due to the fact that particularly women in Africa are the ones that contribute a lot in raising children (20.12.2012 online). The following extract, which also deals with motherhood, is taken from the article "Malawi's Joyce Banda and the rise of women in African politics" published by *Gender Concerns International* which is an international development organization focused on gender and development:

*"Motherly and resplendent in rich African colours, Joyce Hilda Banda came across as the perfect embodiment of African feminine grace when the international media focused on her swearing-in as Malawi's fourth president... Ms Banda's placid demeanour aside, her combative personal and political history indicates that the lady president's serene motherly looks can be deceptive. Having just celebrated her 62nd birthday...she has a well-earned reputation as a hard nut to crack when it comes to politics..."*  
(20.6.2014 Gender Concerns International online)

The extract above points out that Banda's motherly appearances and "*the perfect embodiment of African feminine grace*" which nevertheless cannot hide her reputation for being "*a hard nut to crack*" in the political context. Thus, in the article there seems to be an awareness of the two different sides regarding Banda's representation as a female president. At the same news story she is viewed as a motherly, and having attributes related to her ethnicity and gender ("*African feminine grace*"), but also as having a combative nature and being tough which is needed for succeeding in the political sphere. In general, Banda is represented as a role model, a champion of gender equality, and very often she is mentioned as the second woman president of Africa in international media, thus she is regarded as something of a rarity and a renegade due to her gender. In many international media articles, Banda herself also brings up many times her life story and her previous, abusive marriage, and also highlights her work with issues of women's empowerment. Although there has been an emphasis on her gender in the international media, and thus it was perceived that she was being a different kind of a president in Malawi and in Africa, in some articles there were also references to the criticism of Joyce Banda in her home country.

## 7.2 Malawian media on Joyce Banda

Before I discuss Malawian media's presentation on Joyce Banda, first I have to discuss media freedom in Malawi. When Joyce Banda took office as president in April 2012, the media environment had improved in Malawi although various problems remained. Previous to this, public outlets had been accused of serving as tool of official propaganda by the government, therefore making the Malawian press strongly biased in favor of the government. Although the Joyce Banda government pledged to reform the Malawian press, one can perceive that the situation did not entirely change. While the constitution has included guarantees for freedom of the press, however, many laws such as the *1967 Protected Flag, Emblems, and Names Act* limits this freedom in practice. It should be noted that the Joyce Banda government introduced a bill entitled "E-Bill" setting out a legal framework for regulating communication technologies and information. This bill was met with criticism as it was regarded as limiting online freedom of expression and allowing the "cyber inspectors" appointed by the government to monitor websites. In 2013, Joyce Banda was not content with criticism of her administration by the Malawian press. This was followed by her decision to reject calls from activists who have been promoting freedom of the Malawian press for her to become the third head of state in Africa to support the *Declaration of Table Mountain* that demands African governments to annul criminal defamation laws. In the same year, a journalist from Galaxy FM Radio was arrested (and eventually freed on bail) due to his broadcasting the names of companies and individuals that had allegedly profited from the *Cashgate* scandal which was a long-running 20 billion kwacha (\$49 million) government corruption scheme.<sup>35</sup> In this context, it also should be pointed out that Joyce Banda has been linked to the *Cashgate* scandal as well.

In reading through the Malawian media coverage, I identified five themes from the Malawian media: *women and leadership; motherhood; and globally revered vs. internal criticism*. First, I focus on the theme of *women and leadership* and discuss the articles which covered this topic. At this point I must stress that I have written these excerpts in the exact way they have been written in the original media articles. As I have noted, there occasionally exist some misspelling in the Malawian media articles due to what I perceive to be some kind of 'African English slang'. Therefore, I have not changed anything, as I wish to be faithful to the writings of the media sources.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2014/malawi>

When it comes to representation of Joyce Banda as a female president, she is viewed as an inspiration to all girls in the following article “Hopeless strides towards girl empowerment” regarding gender empowerment which featured on gender section of the *Big Issue Magazine*:

*“On the other hand, Ombudsman Tujilane Chizumila said lack of role models among young women and child marriages have contributed much to school drop outs amongst young girls..We are privileged to have a female president who is an inspiration to all girls in Malawi”, said Chizumila. (Captain, The Big issue Magazine 2012)*

In this brief excerpt, the female head of state is viewed as having an influence over all young girls in the country, and in this context, having a female in a high political position is presented as a something rare and special whom people of Malawi are honored to have exclusively in their country. Another significant point made by the excerpt above is the absence of roles models for Malawian girls that has affected them in terms of lack of education. However, there seems to be no particular bias regarding how Banda is represented in the *Big Issue* magazine, because there also is a different perspective on her in a previous edition of the same magazine. Another article, *Women’s take on JB’s regime*, discusses how people’s views on the female president and her performance in government sectors such as economy, national security, and politics have changed during Joyce Banda’s presidency. In this particular article, the emphasis is on Malawian women’s view on Banda:

*“..A woman is too weak to man this country. She is just accepting any advice from donors for the sake of donor aid and I can’t see any economic progress.” Talks of this kind nowadays are common. These talks have not spared any gender group. They are everywhere in town and amongst all genders. Women in the country make up 52 percent of the Malawi’s population. For so long, however, their participation in politics has been in the sidelines – dancing at the rallies of mostly their male counterparts [this refers to women being praise performers at the political rallies]. (Tsonga, The Big Issue Magazine 2012)*

The extract points out the fact people’s view on her have changed negatively in Malawi. She is viewed as being under the influence of foreign donors. Banda as a woman is accused of being too weak to “man” the country. This can be understood as a reference to the stereotypical characteristics of women being unreliable. The article seeks to highlight that these kinds of criticisms are not only linked to one gender, but to “any gender group”. This indicates that the criticism is not only based on men’s versus women’s opinions, and thus it can be perceived that gender of a president is not relevant in this discussion. When it comes to Malawian women’s political participation, the article also mentions that they have had a minor role as praise performers (see Semu 2002). However, with the emergence of a female president, women have joined in the fray of the political debates.

There are also harsh criticisms concerning women and leadership in the context of Joyce Banda, as the following article by Muthi Nhlema points out. The article was published in the last days of Banda's presidency in May 2014 on a news website called *Malawiana*. I wish bring up this particular article, since it expresses how women were perceived in leadership positions in Malawi. The author, who was a male blogger for the *Malawian Voice* and the *Nation* newspapers, mentions many times Malawian stereotypes regarding women in leadership. In the article "Maybe Women Just Can't Lead (?)", Nhlema argues that in the past two years Malawians have not been convinced of women's value in a leadership position. Nhlema stresses that in the beginning of her presidency, Banda was regarded as a symbol of possibility and hope for African women, and "*being a game-changer*" by the nation and the world. However, he claims that Banda turned the positive energy and national goodwill which characterized her ascending to presidency into a national joke. The author presents his own position by pointing out that he has a few years' working experience with gender activists, thus it seems that Nhlema wants to represent himself as a person who is entitled to express his thoughts on this matter due to his understanding and acknowledge of gender issues. He also emphasizes that he does not claim that Banda represents all women. Nhlema thus positions himself as a person who is not a stranger to the women's empowerment movement, on the contrary he represents himself as a person who has an understanding of gender issues in general:

*"Joyce Banda's 2 years at the stirring wheel of this crazy little southern African country will raise all kinds of questions about whether her leadership has hurt or bolstered the factoids that have placed women as better caretakers of homes and communities (and therefore countries) than their male counterparts" ... But we can't ignore the fact that she has only confirmed the many stereotypes that Malawians, including women themselves, have had about women in leadership and that is: women just can't lead!"* (Nhlema, 24.5.2014, *Malawiana* online)

Here he discuss the stereotypes about women in leadership in the context of Malawi (and Malawian women themselves) which in his mind indicate that women are not capable for leadership, and also that Malawian women themselves agree that women are not good in leadership positions. In his article, Nhlema points out the *factoids* which, according to Oxford English Dictionary, refer to an item of information accepted as a fact, although not true. It can also refer to a reported and repeated speculation or assumption that has popularly considered to be true.<sup>36</sup> In this context the *factoids* which Nhlema brings up refer to Joyce Banda's leadership. Therefore, like the previously discussed article, Nhlema stresses that the negative perspective regarding gender stereotypes (in this context, women's leadership abilities) are coming from both genders, and not only from men. Nhlema indeed points out

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/67511?redirectedFrom=factoid#eid>

the stereotypes regarding women being better caretakers of communities and homes than men, and in the same context he connects the caretaking of these private and social spheres (home, community) to a wider scale such as taking care of a country. In this context, the traditions of Malawian society and culture should be taken into account. As Ribohn (2002) has pointed out, both genders in Malawi had argued that women are regarded as preservers of “culture”, which refers closely to community life (Ribohn 2002: 167). Thus women are viewed as nurturing caretakers who are responsible for maintaining traditions (culture), and are not destined to be in a public leadership position. In this context, Nhlema presents gender as a social role, referring to women being caretakers in the private sphere (home and community). He also brings up the dichotomy between a woman in leadership and a woman leader. Here he clarifies the distinction between these two concepts:

*“A woman in leadership can have title or designation and be high up in the echelons of power and not actually be a leader. She can so easily be a mere chair-warming figurehead and not a strategic thinker, decision-maker or go-getter. A woman leader, on the other hand, is different – a woman leader may not have title, but she is motivated and driven to get things done in her family, community or country!”* (Nhlema 24.5.2014, Malawiana online)

Nhlema argues that to many Malawians, the gender of their leader was not the issue, but instead her being a *leader*. It can therefore be understood that in the end he criticizes the content of the leadership skills of Banda, the lack of substance, although he represents Banda’s leadership in quite a crude way, and highlights her being an example of a stereotype of a woman in leadership: *“a very loud mouth, but saying nothing worthwhile”*.

In many articles in the Malawian media, Banda is celebrated for instance for her introduction of the safe motherhood project in Malawi, yet there is major concern regarding the poor economy of Malawi which seems to be the priority to Malawians rather than the gender of the president. However, there is also the expectation that a female head should promote girls’ education. Thus, being a female president can be viewed as automatically linked to supporting women’s issues such as girls’ education. The following extract from Pius Nyondo’s column “Malawi ‘big four’ vie for presidency: Telling the tales of the May 20 polls” was published on the news website *Nyasa Times* just days ahead of presidential elections in Malawi in 2014. The column describes a background information regarding Joyce Banda and three male presidential candidates of presidential elections:

*“A strong woman with a very strong character, Banda – once a Mandasi [fritters] seller – has risen through the ranks of life to become one of the celebrated women of her time world over.”* (Nyondo, 19.5.2014, Nyasa Times online)

In the column, Banda is represented as a strong woman who has closely been linked to women's rights activism, and who has in the past been a mandasi seller. A mandasi or mandazi is a local doughnut and the sale of these doughnuts is a small-scale business in Malawi (Anders 2002:54). A mandasi seller can be understood to refer her past work as a trader in small-scale business, and also with other grassroots economic empowerment initiatives such as NGOs. Her life is described as a success story in which Banda has successfully climbed social ladders from a seller to a woman praised throughout the world.

The second topic identifiable from my source materials was motherhood. On many occasions, particularly in the newspaper columns of the *Nation magazine* such as "If I were Joyce Banda" by Garry Chirwa (19.2.2014 *The Nation*), Banda is referred as "good ole mum", or "the good old lady" which in their own way can be viewed as a reference to her age (Banda was over 60 years old), and especially "good ole mum" can be viewed as a reference to her being a mother. The following article emphasizes the perspectives of Malawian women regarding Joyce Banda's leadership. Clara Chihana, a local grocer from Kanjedza township who was interviewed for the article "Women's take on JB's regime" of the *Big Issue Magazine* is quoted as saying:

*"Malawi is in the safe hands of a woman president who has the loving heart of a mother."*  
(Tsonga, *The Big Issue Magazine* 2012)

This last quote above suggests that the country is in a safe place due to its woman president, who is like a caring mother to her country and her people. Being a loving mother to her country in this context implies that Banda is not able to jeopardize her country and her citizens due to her motherhood. Motherhood is a one of the significant themes which exist in the representations regarding Joyce Banda. In this context I argue that it is particularly important to bring up Africana womanism and its view on motherhood in African context. As Nah Dove (1998) has claimed, Africana womanism stresses the role of African mothers being leaders in the struggle to create, reconstruct, and also regain cultural (African) integrity. African mothers are the bringers of life, the bearers of culture, and the center of social organization. Motherhood is perceived to represent the nature of communal responsibilities such as the raising of children and caring for others (1998: 520–521, 535).

Thus, the manner in which Joyce Banda is linked to motherhood at a national level as well as at a personal level (biological mother to her own children) in these media representations depicts its own story of how integral motherhood is to African and Malawian societies. Motherhood is also one of the gendered and social roles which has its own fixed attributes (loving, caring, nurturing etc.) that are universally referred to only women. In the context of Joyce Banda and her presidency, I assert

that motherhood is not only related to gender and social roles but is linked to the symbolic construction, of attributes associated particularly with women. These gender symbols are maintained and reasserted in representations and narratives by both Banda and media. Therefore, Joyce Banda and all the references to her being a mother can be viewed to contain symbolic meaning which then reasserts her gender role and stereotypes as a woman president and her ability to be a leader of the country.

The third theme, globally vs internal criticism, can be understood in this context as a reference to the juxtaposition between the western perspective and the Malawian perspective on the leadership of Joyce Banda. The following extracts from the *Big Issue* magazine and the news website *Malawi Voice* represent a different perception of Banda when compared to western point of view. Here she is not viewed as a role model for Malawian girls, but as a corrupted politician and the writers of the articles are questioning her motives. The first extract from the article “Political prostitutes: The sad tale of Malawian politicians” below was published in 2012 when Banda was in power, and as one reads the title of the article, one sees how Malawian politicians and particularly Banda are represented negatively:

*“There are increasing concerns as of citizens that President Joyce Banda is slowly but gradually degenerating into yet another typical security vanish regime...”*  
(Makhole, The Big Issue Magazine 2012)

The extract presents Banda as *another typical security vanish regime* which is quite a difficult term to grasp as it does not clearly describe its meaning, particularly if one does not understand the political context of the article. The article argues that during her time in the office, there has been a gradual but marked weakening of other institutions of governance such as the legislature, judiciary, and defence. It is pointed out as well that most Malawians have concerns related to the politicians, who were involved in human body parts business<sup>37</sup> during the administration of Bakili Muluzi (previous President of Malawi), and were now working with Joyce Banda. Thus, in this context, one can perceive the whole term (*security vanish regime*) to refer to a regime which lacks of an adequate security, in which its leader (Joyce Banda) is regarded as to be another typical Malawian politician who is self-serving. The other two articles by *Malawi Voice* were published at the end of her presidency in 2014, and one can see the progress of an increasingly harsh criticism towards her in these articles. The following extract is taken from the article “Joyce Banda: Sinner, Saviour or Something in between?” which was published in the news website *Malawi Voice* after the presidential elections which Joyce

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<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that in the article, it is not clarified if the business was related to organ trafficking, or particularly related to selling murdered albinos’ body parts that have been used in witchcraft in Malawi.



Banda lost in 2014. It represents Banda as a kind of ambiguous figure whose political motives are vague to general public:

*“In a shock move, Malawi’s President Joyce Banda tried to annul her country’s elections this weekend, saying they were too flawed to be allowed to stand. Some saw this as the act of a wannabe tyrant...It’s hard to know what to make of this. Is Banda a greedy politician trying to stay in power, consequences be damned? Or is she a noble leader sacrificing her ambition for the sake of her people? The answer, as far as we can make out, is somewhere in the middle...”* (Allison, 26.5.2014 Malawi Voice online)

The extract below is from the article *Joyce Banda becoming Malawi’s worst president* and it criticizes Banda’s leadership:

*“For the record, Joyce Banda has been immensely humiliated because she chose to be like most African leaders who are self-interested under-achievers who practice politics of the stomach and pocket and not for the good of the nation”* (Maele-Magombe 29.5.2014 Malawi Voice online)

These extracts above are good examples of how the president was not criticized based on her gender, but instead the general concern in Malawi was that her leadership was turning into corruption. Therefore there existed a general fear of her being just another degenerate head of state who is self-serving and greedy, hence Banda is put into the same category with other self-serving African leaders in these articles. In this context, one can perceive that according to these media articles above, Joyce Banda’s leadership is represented as connected to neopatrimonialism (poor leadership, a system using state resources for personal profits, and the management of official authority for private purposes). The following extract is taken from the column “Don’t use NSO as scapegoat” by Ephraim Munthali that was published in the *Weekend Nation* magazine in the middle of Joyce Banda’s presidency. The column expresses criticism of her being the creation of, or being under the heavy influence of the West, which in this context refers to the foreign donors and international economic regime and organizations such as *IMF* (International Monetary Fund):

*“As for President Banda, I wish she would learn to keep silent on matters that are beyond her comprehension instead of parroting talking points that she cannot explain on her own...Is this the kind of leadership that foreign donors are praising? Oh yeah, I know why the West, including the face of the Washington Consensus herself – IMF managing director Christine Lagarde – is in Mrs. Banda’s tank. Banda is their creation and they desperately want her to succeed because if she fails, the Washington Consensus have failed...To the West, Joyce Banda is their hope for the revival and continued relevance of the IMF and whatever is left of the Bretton Woods Accord...”* (Munthali Weekend Nation 12.1.2013)

The column above criticizes Banda being the creation of the West, particularly the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and thus conveys the criticism that the western donors and international economic

regime are dominating the political affairs of Malawi in the background. It is represented in the column that the *IMF* and other Western economic and political regimes are using Banda only for their own purposes for maintaining the function of the *IMF* and other dominating global economic regimes which have been criticized for using developing countries for their own agenda. In this context, it is essential to bring up the prevailing economic situation in Malawi during which the column was published. Joyce Banda had met donor requests to devalue the Kwacha (the currency of Malawi), which led to over 30 per cent inflation. She had restored diplomatic relations with key donors such as the *World Bank*, and particularly *the IMF* have had a significant influence on Malawian economic policy due to its budgetary support that is linked with the *IMF*-mandated reforms. Unfortunately, these reforms ripped the Malawian economy apart, as the Kwacha became the third worst-performing African currency in 2013, thus Malawians faced economic difficulties with food shortages and increasing prices (see Kelly 2014). Therefore, when taking into account the difficult economic situation in the country, one can understand better the situation from which the criticism in the column is coming. Banda is seen as linked to the *IMF*, thus being part of the system destroying Malawi's economy. Another column, "Economic tanking as JB talks and talks", by the same writer continues the harsh criticism of Joyce Banda:

*"Banda's love of the camera. Every day, the President looks like someone groping in the dark, looking for the keys to leadership that she cannot locate. Frustrated, she has started screaming at the media and her critics...She claims that while the international community is behind her and is impressed with her performance, journalists and some local critics are blind to this reality..."*

(Munthali Weekend Nation 10.11.2012)

Here again Banda is viewed as favouring her international supporters, and being an incompetent, attention-seeking leader who accuses Malawian media and her critics not being supportive of her. There exists a dichotomy between Western and Malawian perception on Banda that is presented in these articles, and this dichotomy has also represented in this column. There are also arguments made by Malawian media that the reason for Banda becoming a president in a first place was indeed accidental as the following extract taken from the article "On presidential gaffes" by *Nation Online* reports:

*"She was not voted into the position. She came to power by accident...But one thing remains clear: the President's continued political gaffes are defining her leadership."*

(Nyondo 5.6.2013 Nation Online)

This argument refers to the political circumstances in 2012 when the Banda's predecessor, president Bingu wa Mutharika suddenly died, whereupon Banda as a vice-president at that time became a president. The article indicates that Banda indeed was not chosen voluntarily into the presidency, thus if circumstances had been different, she would not have had any chance to be a president. However, she is not in this context defined by her gender, but by her political mistakes that are perceived to be many, therefore affecting her leadership skills. When taking into account media freedom in Malawi, and its past as well as present-day limitations, I argue that I did not find such restricted liberties from my Malawian media data. The media sources were straightforward in their criticism of Joyce Banda. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that as I only focused on English-language articles from newspapers and the Internet, I did not include radio, and I only included one video by the state-owned Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) which have a strong bias in favour of the government. However, the video covered only a speech by Joyce Banda. Nevertheless, it appears that to a certain extent, Malawi press freedom is at least partly free.

### **7.3 African media on Joyce Banda**

In this chapter, I analyse the representations of Joyce Banda by African media. In this context, I identified two particular themes: women and leadership; and globally revered vs. internal criticism. First I cover the theme of women and leadership.

In the context of Malawi's tripartite elections in 2014, the article "JB urges female journalists to promote women aspirants" by a Malawian journalist Josephine Chinele which was published at the *All Africa* news website covers Joyce Banda and her appeal to female reporters for writing positive stories regarding women's leadership. The article in its own way represents how woman leadership is perceived, and also how it should be perceived according to Banda herself. She mentions that female leadership is subject to lack of respect and all kinds of ridicule, thus female journalists should be in the centre role for not spreading humiliating stories but instead of writing in a positive way regarding woman leadership:

*"Imagine a country which has the mindset that when a female leader attends a state funeral she has gone there to cook cabbage. Female journalists should be on the forefront not to spread such humiliation but rather write something positive," she said.*  
(Chinele 14.2.2014 All Africa online)

I argue that the message of the article above represents two different issues, which not only reveal something about Banda herself, but also what kind of gender stereotypes exist in Malawian society.

First of all, the message of the article can be understood as implying the gender myths of female solidarity, thus if one belongs to same gender (in this context female president and female journalists), one is obligated to support one's own gender. In this article, it is pointed out that Banda is not pleased with the representation of herself by female journalists. Thus it can be understood that there exists a lack of female solidarity in Malawian media by some female journalists. The other issue is that Banda's perspective on the country's mindset reveals the existing presumptions regarding female leaders in Malawi, thus her example above concerning the role of a female leader in a state funeral refers to a traditional, male-dominated culture which prefers women in private sphere (household chores, e.g. cooking) rather than in public sphere. In the same article, Banda also is quoted to have said that all Malawian women should learn to support each other:

*“She has noticed that it is women who seem to be in the forefront to scandalize other women's issues and comment negatively on this. She pointed out that during election season, women would say sentiments like: “What does she want to be? What will she achieve?” saying this has to change if we are to attain 50 percent women representation in decision making positions.”* (Chinele 14.2.2014 All Africa online)

In this context, it is noticed that the mindset regarding women in leadership in Malawi is not only negative, but also it can be understood that there exist a lack of support among other women. This is quite an interesting notion, and I argue that patriarchal structures and standpoints are not only included for men, but women as well can perceive negatively those few women who are in a leadership position in Africa. Therefore, as I earlier mentioned in the chapter regarding patriarchy, the relationship between women and their lack of support for other women also demonstrate how patriarchy can have an effect on the relationship between women, thus patriarchy can present itself as women's questioning the qualities of other women's leadership in politics based solely on gender. In the video “Joyce Banda on gender equality in Malawi” (Uncensored online 2.12.2013), which was taped in Lagos, Nigeria in 2013 at The Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Lecture series concerning democracy and leadership, Banda was a keynote speaker. At the event, she gave a speech where she discussed her political merits, and women's leadership in general. Banda talks about how she has been Minister of Gender, Foreign Minister, Vice President, and President, but nevertheless she has realized that women are expected to deliver ten times more than their male counterparts in terms of accomplishments. Then she talks about the cartoons which have ridiculed her, and mentions how there have been more personal attacks on her, but it is not clear whether those ridiculing cartoons are based on her gender, or in general based only on her leadership abilities. She represents herself once again as promoting female leadership. However, in another video, “President Banda Joyce on women of Africa”, which also presents the same speech at the same event as above, Banda brings up

her “sister president” Ellen, and how she and Ellen are just the “two of us” when it comes to female presidents. What is particularly interesting is that she highlights the support of African men:

*“Africa has met great triumphs on gender equality, and I wish to applaud the African male for supporting the cause of women in parliament and creating space for women for participating in leadership. However, our societies remain very traditional. Not all have embraced women in positions of power.” (2.12.2013 Uncensored online)*

Therefore, Banda expresses the view that African men have supported women in parliament, and emphasizes how African men have created space for African women for participating in leadership. It should be pointed out that Banda especially represents men as having the power to create (political) space for women, thus it is not the women who have had power to create their own space, instead, they have been dependent on men’s political support. Nevertheless, as Banda points out in the last sentence, not everyone has supported women’s positions of power, and societies on the African continent are still very traditional. Thus, the support of the African male regarding women in politics is not very common, yet. In the interview “Talk Africa: Live interview with Dr. Joyce Banda” by CCTV Africa, Banda discusses the status of African women’s leadership, and once again brings up the support of the African male:

*“That our men in the continent of Africa have decided to create a space for women to participate in leadership, side by side. And genially too... And I just thank God that our African men have realized that in order for us to make progress to succeed, we’ll need to move side by side. I have been president, I have been Minister of Gender, been Foreign Minister, I have been vice-president, and I have been president for now two years. I don’t remember any single day when I sat, I noticed anything negative from my brothers as I work with them. Both here in Malawi and in whole continent of Africa. I’ve felt very very proud indeed.” (28.8.2013 CCTV Africa online)*

In the context of the African male and his support regarding women’s political power, Banda once again argues that African men have decided to create a space for women, but she also highlights how she herself has not noticed anything negative from her “brothers” which can be understood here as a term that refers to her African male political colleagues. Therefore, it could be seen that here she represents her political sphere as the space which is not affected by gender inequality, and therefore patriarchal structures are not influencing her political career. However, in the extract above she does not mention how other African or Malawian women have behaved towards her, hence in this context it is only African and Malawian men who are pointed out when discussing women’s participation in leadership.

In the different articles that I examined, I was able to once again perceive a dichotomy between Western and African perspectives regarding how Banda was perceived in the media. Joyce Banda was considered to have a different reputation in the West than in Malawi. In the West, she was viewed as a new kind of African leader, but in Malawi her unpopularity was shown at the polls of the 2014 presidential election, when she lost the election. The following extract is taken from the article “Malawi: Joyce Banda never existed” by *Think Africa Press* which was published after Banda’s defeat in the election:

*“So how did Banda go from being the apparently beloved Madam President to not just losing the election, but coming third? ... On the one hand, the answer comes down to the fact that Banda’s reputation in Malawi is quite different to her image in the West. Far from being the breath of fresh air many international figures assumed her to be, Banda consistently acted just like any other Malawian politician in her position”.*  
(Gabay 3.6.2014 Think Africa Press online)

The article represents Banda as a Malawian politician who acted like any other politician in her political position, meaning that at the beginning of her presidency she made grand promises about how she would perform differently than the other politicians, but in the end, however, she failed to do so. Banda has been viewed as a new type of a leader in the West, and it can be understood that this refers to her being a woman president, which is a rarity in Africa. But in Malawi, although Banda was a woman in a high political position, she was nonetheless perceived to be no different than the other Malawian politicians that were regarded as greedy and motivated by self-interest. It should be pointed out that Banda has been accused of being the mastermind of the corruption scandal *Cashgate*, and when taking into account neopatrimonialism which refers to poor leadership, and is perceived to be a system where state resources are used for personal profits by rulers (Gazibo 2012: 3), therefore, one can perceive that the influence of neopatrimonialism rather than gender is regarded to be the main problem of Joyce Banda’s leadership in these African media representations.

#### **7.4 Joyce Banda’s portrayal of herself**

When exploring Banda’s portrayal of herself, one can see clearly that there is a particular emphasis on gender, and on her being an African woman in a leadership position. The following extracts of her speech and interviews highlight Joyce Banda’s role as a female African leader and her rhetorical skills in linking this attribute (being African woman) to her leadership skills:

*“As an African woman leader, I want to firstly to look at the energy challenges through the eyes of women because I relate to the challenges that deficits in energy sources*

*places on them...” (The Nation 25.10.2012, Special Report Business Review-section: President Banda’s speech at 2012 World Energy Forum)*

This extract is taken from a speech by Joyce Banda and it was published in the Malawian magazine *The Nation*. She gave the speech at the World Energy Forum in Dubai in 2012 in which also other world leaders participated. Banda underlines her gender and her ethnicity by describing herself as an African woman leader in her speech in the international context. In her narrative, Banda relates to other African women, and represents other African women by stressing the fact that she is an African woman leader who wants to focus on the challenges African women face at the local level.

*“It’s heavy; but I am able to carry it,” she told UK’s Guardian newspapers in December last year. And she accepted the challenge: “I’m an African woman. An African woman carries heavy loads, anyway. That’s how we are trained; we are brought up that nothing is unbearable. I use that now, positively. I use that now to have the thick skin that I have, and not fear, and move forward, and push; and push forward.”*  
(27.2.2013 Nation Online)

In this excerpt taken from the article *Trial of Malawi’s leadership* published by *Nation Online* (which also refers to the Guardian’s previous interview with Banda), she highlights herself as an African woman, thus she refers to herself as strong and able to carry heavy loads which can mean both physical and psychological loads (stress and challenges related to political and leadership issues), and she also points out that these traits are taught by older generations. Banda presents herself by using the notion of the power and persistence of African women to her own advantage in the political sphere. It is important to acknowledge that she does not refer herself to being just a woman, but especially an African woman, thus the cultural conceptions, characteristics, and meanings related to African womanhood play a very important role when Banda represents herself in the media. When examining Banda’s self-representation in the context of African womanhood, I argue once again that it is essential to take into account African womanism as it stresses the unique quality of African women and African culture, and various struggles African woman faces during her life. As in general, African womanism is represented as giving African women the means not only to name their own reality but also to define an agenda for themselves and their ethnicity (Mazama 2005: 58). In this context, Banda defines her political agenda by emphasizing her ethnicity and gender in her speeches and interviews. Thus according to Banda, because she is an African woman she is able to handle the criticism and challenges concerning her presidency. I argue that as Banda discusses being an African woman, at the same time she maintains and reconstructs a certain image of African womanhood which comprises the ability to handle life’s tough challenges whether they are physical or psychological.

In speaking of women and leadership, in her website which presents the activities of her own foundation - *Joyce Banda Foundation*, (<http://joycebandafoundation.com/>), Banda narrates being comfortable among presidents and kings in New York, but also at the same time being very comfortable sitting on the floor in a Malawian village. Therefore, she represents herself as a leader to whom many different kinds of people can relate, and who is capable of acting in different forums as far apart as villages and international meetings with other head of states. Hence, it can be understood that she represents herself as a person who is connected to two different worlds: traditional Malawian society and the international world occupied by other world leaders. The image of Banda in this particular website can be seen to be an outspoken champion for the rights of women, children and the impoverished. Her leadership is described as fearless, and her international merits are also highlighted such as being the most powerful African in 2012 by Forbes. All in all, one should take into account that the website of Joyce Banda presents a careful, well-thought-out positive picture to the public. Such a website is a perfect medium in which Banda can represent herself and her message to her audience in a way which is most suitable for her, since she can control what kind of image and representations she wants to highlight. The following extract from her website stresses gender as being a significant issue in terms of the political voting process:

*“And president Bingu wa Mutharika knew that he was going to choose a woman who’s going to bring the women’s vote. Before that he had already told me that it was his wish to hand over to a woman.”* (Joyce Banda Foundation online)

Banda brings out how her predecessor – Bingu wa Mutharika – was determined to choose a woman for his vice president, whereupon it can be understood that being a woman was a necessary and useful for political purposes. Therefore, one can question whether there was any real intent by Mutharika to let women into political participation or was this just another example of state feminism, in which a supposed awareness of gender issues is used as a façade (see Englund 2004). The extract above also brings out Banda’s representation of herself as a logical and certain successor of Malawi’s head of state.

When representing her personal life story, there emerge certain issues that recur on many occasions when Banda discusses her life: her abusive marriage, particularly her own courageousness concerning marital abuse, and her establishment of her own association to assist other women:

*“Then having liberated myself, when that marriage fell, so I decided that I was not going to allow myself to be vulnerable again. I found myself a good husband” ....*



*“That again opened my eyes to other women. I started asking questions what about those who are not brave as I was to walk out of abusive marriage...I left work, and concentrated on my business, but also formed an association to assist those women that were not as courageous as me to walk out of abusive marriage situation.”* (Joyce Banda Foundation online)

Banda represents herself being brave, and at the same time depicts herself as being different than other women who have experienced same kind of abuse, in that those other women do not have same attributes as she does. One could perceive that in her narrative, Banda is using her difficult background as a tool to represent herself as a person of courage, and therefore Banda is using her story regarding her former husband for political purposes. By including certain events and persons (her childhood friend, abusive marriage, and her assistance for other Malawian women) in the life story she presents to the public, Banda clearly constructs her image and identity in a manner that makes a favourable impression on her audience.

Motherhood is also one of the elements which is common in Banda’s representation. When discussing her upbringing, she represents herself as being a caregiver from a very young age:

*“I was born in the village...I come from a family of five siblings. So from age 7 I was a little mother at home, because my mother worked...”* (Joyce Banda Foundation online.)

She represents herself as having duties related to motherhood when she was a child, thus she has been a substitute mother to her other siblings, thus symbolizing having had heavy responsibilities all of her life. Through this image, Banda assures her audience of her rural Malawian roots in the village, and also represents herself as a responsible woman and a mother who is used to taking care of others. In her narrative, Banda points out her close connection to the private sphere, since in her childhood she had household related duties. The role of a nurturing mother can be perceived to be very familiar in this context when considering how, particularly in Africa, motherhood has been an important concept in society as it has been perceived to be a critical factor in maintaining traditional African culture. Particularly when taking into account Africana womanism, and its take on African mothers in the context of Joyce Banda’s representation, African mothers have had a significant role on a leadership of creating, reconstructing and regaining cultural integrity, and mothers are perceived to be the bringers of life as well the bearers of culture (Dove 1998:535, 520–21).

When considering what kind of discourses have emerged from the media articles regarding Joyce Banda, I argue that it is important bring up Drude Dahlerup's (2006:6-8) arguments regarding different discourses on gender and political representation. *The gender-blind discourse* which views gender as irrelevant in the context of political representation, meaning that no action should be taken on this matter, is quite common when observing different stories in the Malawian media regarding Joyce Banda. In some news items it is pointed out that being a woman is indeed not a relevant issue concerning the criticism of leadership skills of Banda. She was considered to not be a very good leader, but the reason for this was not related to her gender, according to Malawian media articles. In this context, one could perceive the reason for the criticism to be based on the difficult economic situation in Malawi at that time. However, in some articles regarding Joyce Banda, *the politics-is-a-men's-business-discourse* was strongly present, with some presuming that women are unqualified and unsuitable for political position.

When it comes to representations in African media, there were some examples of *gender-blind discourse*, when, for instance Banda herself expressed that political sphere is not influenced by gender inequality, since her male political colleagues had been supportive of her. However, it was the women at the highest levels of the political sphere whom Banda accused of not being supportive of each other. Nevertheless, Malawian society itself was represented as male-oriented and traditional in terms of gender stereotypes. The *gender-blind discourse* emerged again when articles in the African media pointed out that between the West and Malawi there existed different perceptions regarding gender and political representation. As Western media emphasized the gender of Joyce Banda in terms of her special leadership skills, in Malawian as well in African media it was pointed out that in the end, Banda as a woman president was not so different from other (male) African politicians and represented a stereotypical African self-serving politician. Thus, being a female president did not make any difference in this regard. In the international media, gender was mostly viewed as a significant factor in representations of Banda, and she was portrayed as a champion of gender equality in Africa. In Joyce Banda's representations of herself, gender was given a special emphasis, since on many occasions she depicted herself as an *African woman* in a leadership position, thus very often she defined her political agenda by emphasizing her gender and ethnicity.

## 7.5 International media on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

In reading through the media sources on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf from the international media, I identified the themes of *women and leadership*; *motherhood*; *characteristics: the nicknames of female presidents*; and *life story*.

I occasionally discuss the themes of *women and leadership*, and *motherhood* in the same context due to their close association with each other. In an interview “Questions for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – Madame President” by an American daily newspaper *New York Times*, there is a question about women running the world, and would there still be wars in the world if women were in a leadership position. Here is how Johnson Sirleaf answers to the questions:

*“No. It would be a better, safer and more productive world. A woman would bring an extra dimension to that task — and that’s a sensitivity to humankind. It comes from being a mother. But if women had power, they would be more likely to acquire the negative traits that power breeds, like selfishness and territorialism. It would take a very long term of women absolutely in power to get to the place where they became men.”* (Solomon 18.8.2009 *New York Times Magazine* online)

In her representation, being a woman leader is linked to sensitivity to humankind, thus, according to her, world would be safer and better. Once again, motherhood is closely associated with making the world better. Nevertheless, it is quite interesting that Johnson Sirleaf brings up another dimension to the representation of women and leadership that is not so common when observing the media articles regarding representation of female presidents. She argues that if women had (political) power they would not be immune to the negative aspects of power (territorialism, selfishness). However, according to her it would take a long time for women to be affected by these negative traits of power that are so often associated with male politicians and leaders. It is quite interesting that Johnson Sirleaf specifies that women in power would not be immune to the negative traits of power such as neopatrimonialism, but that it would take a longer time for it to influence them. In this context, as on other occasions, there seems to exist a strong connection between good leadership and motherhood, not only within the media, but in the statements made by the presidents themselves as well, and occasionally also by local women in Malawi and Liberia who were interviewed about Banda and Johnson Sirleaf. Therefore, I argue that very often in the representation of women and leadership (regarding both Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf) there exists a certain idealistic image of a woman president who is not only a mother herself, but also regarded as a symbol of national motherhood regarding her country.

In *Al Jazeera English* interview “One on One – Ellen Johnson Sirleaf”, the host and Johnson Sirleaf discuss how long it took for the African continent to put a woman at the head of the country, when taking into account of African women and their well-known strength. She points out that male domination has been a part of a global phenomenon, and although there have been exceptional women in Liberia’s history, there have not been women in the leadership positions:

*”But when it came to the top leadership, like in a chieftaincy was always a man who is predominant. And I think women, too, either did not pursue those non-traditional roles that will equip them to compete in politics, so women... stay in background, women took care children, took care home. So it took us for a while to get there. I’m just glad that I’m one of those...”* (18.12.2010 *Al Jazeera English* online)

As she argues, women and men have had traditional roles in Liberia, therefore women have been in the private sphere (home), and men have had more access to public sphere (politics). On many occasions, Johnson Sirleaf also brings up the support of Liberian women and how they helped to put her in office, thus she has a responsibility to Liberian women. In the following interview “Africa’s first elected female president lifts Liberia” by *Worldfocus*, a host mentions that during Johnson Sirleaf’s 2005 presidential campaign it was reported that Liberian women had said to Johnson Sirleaf that “men have failed us”. She makes this point about male leaders:

*“We’ve been ruled by men all along at the top level. The fact we had wars, again it comes from a leadership. So what the women were saying is now it was time for a change...”* I have gone through the tough times, I’ve been in prison, and I’ve been tortured. I’ve taken it all like any man.” (31.3.2009 *Worldfocus* online)

She argues that the male leadership has caused wars in Liberia, and how women were supporting change in the country. There is pointed out the female solidarity which has previously been mentioned in the media articles of Joyce Banda, too. However in this context, unlike in Banda’s case, Johnson Sirleaf praises the support of Liberian women. She also represents herself as *taking it all like any man* which refers to her past experiences on being in prison, and the torture she experienced there in the 1980s due to her speaking out against Master Sergeant Samuel Doe’s military regime. It can be seen that her representation of her characteristics; taking it like a man and experiencing tough times, is meant to prove to audience that she is capable for leadership as a woman due to her tough past, and her endurance equals to men’s. In the same interview, she also argues that for attempting to lift her country to a new self-sufficiency, and that achieving that goal may depend partly on her gender. Johnson Sirleaf continues that she has accomplished more in life by “being a woman than if she’d been born a man.” Therefore, she perceives her gender as an asset in the end due to the fact it has

enabled her to accomplish more in her life than if she had been a man. Although Liberia and its political sphere are viewed as a male-dominated, Johnson Sirleaf argues that as a woman she has the skills to enhance Liberia into a better future.

While I am on the theme of motherhood, I would like to point out that Johnson Sirleaf has often been referred as *Old Ma*, and her motherly attributes have been brought up in the media. In the document “Iron Ladies of Liberia”, Johnson Sirleaf has pointed out her “old ma approach” as a president when dealing with other political actors (ministers, political opponents etc.) on political issues:

” I must listen to them, in a way that says I wanna hear you, I understand your plight. And that's the old ma approach and it usually brings a positive reaction because I'm coming as a mother to listen to them.”... On the other hand, when people act out of order, you know I can have an effective response that will keep them in order.” (15.11.2008 PBS online )

In terms of rhetorical skills and being capable of using suitable language in a specific context, the extract above is a good example of how consciously she operates in situations which demand a leadership role. Thus, it can be understood that she uses intentionally her motherly image for political purposes, whereby she acts like a strict parent when dealing with people, by assuring them that she listens them but at the same time she has power to keep them in order. In the interview by *Worldfocus*, she also brings up motherhood:

”*Maybe it becomes for being a mother. There is some value I think to that. There is some extra dimension that spilled into us.*” (31.3.2009 Worldfocus online)

In this context, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf represents motherhood as providing extra experience, not only for her leadership and her accomplishments in Liberia, but also for all women who are mothers. Hence it can be understood that she represents motherhood as a significant value to women, consequently being a mother is allowing her to set certain goals for her leadership.

Next I cover the nicknames of female presidents. There are certain similarities between African and international media article when considering how Johnson Sirleaf is referred to. When reading through the articles of international media, on many occasions there emerge nicknames such as *Iron lady* (as it was also used in African media), and *Ma Ellen* which have been regularly been used when referring to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Particularly the nickname *Iron Lady* is often linked to Johnson Sirleaf's strength in difficult situations. The interview “Lessons in Courage from Africa's First Female President” is part of the interview video series of *Candid Conversations on How Successful Women Do All That They Do* by Moira Forbes. Forbes is a publisher of *Forbes Woman* – a multimedia

platform regarding successful women in leadership and business. Particularly in this context, there is a particular emphasis on gender and women in leadership positions, and Johnson Sirleaf points out that when it comes to the particular nickname (*Iron lady*), it started with her being able to work in a male-dominated environment:

*“They hint at the immeasurable amount of strength, charisma, and conviction it required for her to win the 2005 election (and re-election in 2011), where she not only beat despotic leaders who used violence against her and the voters, but also convinced a nation that a woman could serve in the role. When she took office, Johnson-Sirleaf became a figure of hope and inspiration for a broken country – and for the rest of the world.”* (21.11.2013 Forbes online)

By referring to these nicknames, the extract above represents Johnson Sirleaf as being a charismatic, strong person who was not only able to persuade Liberian people to elect a female president, but as well was able to overcome her violent political opponents. It is also pointed out that Johnson Sirleaf has been a symbol of hope for Liberia and the whole world. In another interview – “One on One – Ellen Johnson Sirleaf” by *Al Jazeera English* (18.12.2010 Al Jazeera English online), she and the host discuss the nickname *Iron Lady*, and she highlights that it refers to a person who believes in discipline and sternness. In the same context, Johnson Sirleaf argues that she represents the aspirations and expectations of African women, and maybe women elsewhere, thus those expectations put a lot of pressure on her. (18.12.2010 Al Jazeera English online). Thus, one can view that she is a well aware of what kinds of meanings the nicknames associated with her have, as well what kind of issues she herself advocates.

In reading through the sources on Johnson Sirleaf from the international media, I also identified the theme of *life story*. When examining how Ellen Johnson Sirleaf represents her life story in the media, there emerges one particular topic: *being a tomboy* as a child is a common motif that occurs in many articles regarding Johnson Sirleaf. In the following interview by Forbes it is pointed out that as a great leader, she has thrived even in the most difficult situations from her childhood. It can be viewed that being a tomboy has been one of the attributes that have helped Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in her political career. She points out:

*“I played football when girls were not supposed to play football”, says Johnson Sirleaf, recounting that the strength and determination she called on to run around with the boys are the same qualities she has harnessed innumerable times in career.”* (21.11.2013 Forbes online)

Therefore, it can be seen that being a tomboy is a symbol for not living according to the stereotypical gender roles in society. By highlighting the fact that doing things that were not typically allowed for

girls in Liberian society, she is represented as a unique woman who has been determined to work in a male-dominated society and political culture.

## 7.6 Liberian media on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Before I discuss the Liberian media's presentation of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, I briefly discuss the extent to which the press in Liberia is free. Freedoms of speech and the press are provided by Liberia's constitution, however, in practice these rights are often limited. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was the second African head of state to support the *Declaration of Table Mountain*, which urges African governments to annul criminal defamation laws. Liberia's media is not heavily polarized, however, various outlets are often loyal to political parties, particularly during elections.<sup>38</sup>

In the media coverage within Liberia of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, I was able to identify two main themes, the first of which was *women and leadership*.

The following article "Leave Madam President Alone" which was published on the Liberian news website *New Dawn Liberia* covers a gender parity bill which was expected to be passed into law by the Liberian Legislature in 2014. The bill would ensure 30 per cent representation of women in the Legislature. The article mentions that women were demanding passage of the bill, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was also supporting the campaign. When reading the article, it is interesting how it brings up stereotypes regarding gender attributes such as the sentimentality of most women advocating gender equality, thus their decision-making can be understood to be based solely on emotions:

*"In support of the campaign, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf continues to emphasize solidarity towards this effort, but from a different perspective – one based on principles and not sentiments as harbored by most of the 'advocates' of this gender parity. Of late, (a senator) Jewel Howard Taylor of Bong County has taken to the airways on the issue, but from a sentimental perspective."*  
(20.6.2014 The New Dawn Liberia online)

According to the article, sentimentality is perceived to be the opposite of common sense or rationality, and the article praises the female president for supporting the campaign from a perspective which is based on principles instead of sentiment. I argue that the purpose of the writers in this article raises questions regarding how they represent sentimentality and principles as being opposites, as if the advocates of gender parity, which in this context are women, would not be rational in terms of their

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<sup>38</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/liberia>

thinking. This kind of emotionalism is very often considered to be a typical attribute of women, and it can be understood to be one of the traditional gender characteristics. In the same article, there is also a reference to relationships between women in politics. According to the article, Senator Jewel Howard Taylor has warned Johnson Sirleaf not to give her support only to the female candidates of a one political party – the *Unity Party*, which by the way is the party of Johnson Sirleaf herself, Taylor has stressed that support should be “*across-the-broad for all female candidates*”. This suggests that there existed also tensions between women in politics, hinting that the president favoured only the female candidates of her own political party. Hence, in this context it could be understood that although there exists support among female politicians in Liberia, it is only manifested within but not across political parties, thus excluding other female politicians of different political parties. Therefore, I argue that again the gender myth (see Cornwall 2007) concerning female solidarity, or rather a lack of it, is represented in the Liberian media representation of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. However, in the context of women and leadership there are also articles in the Liberian media that emphasize how Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has helped Liberian women. In the article “Pres. Sirleaf challenges Liberian women”, she is represented as motivating the rural women to empower themselves, but she has also been applauded for leading the way to promote female advocacy in Liberia by creating women’s advocacy centres:

*“President Sirleaf said she was happy for the level of involvement of Liberian women in decision-making and leadership which has come as the result of changing times and gender equality...her involvement in the establishment of the Centers have further motivated women to get involved in leadership roles, decision-making, advocacy, and physical work though most of them are either half lettered or completely illiterate”* (ND Reporter 11.6 2014 The New Dawn Liberia online)

Therefore, in Liberian media she is also acknowledged for her work in women’s empowerment. Johnson Sirleaf is viewed as supporting other Liberian women, particularly rural women, and helping them to take on decision-making and leadership roles, thus encouraging them to find other than just traditional gender roles.

The second theme which I identified from the media coverage of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was *globally revered vs. internal criticism*. Nevertheless, there is also some harsh criticism on Johnson Sirleaf’s leadership as in the article “Simeon Freeman criticizes Ellen’s speech”, which for instance portrays her as accused of inventing stories. The article also criticizes Sirleaf Johnson for having a lack of intellectual competence in the context of enhancing the quality of education in Liberia:



“We can therefore safely conclude that after eight years in power, Madam Sirleaf lacks the intellectual competence to, firstly design an effective educational agenda and secondly, execute a program for the tons of Liberians requiring education”, he added.  
(Genoway, Jr. 3.6.2014 The New Dawn Liberia online)

It should be noted that Simeon Freeman, who is quoted in the article above, is a Liberian political leader of the *Movement for Progressive Change* (MPC) and has been at the forefront of criticizing and calling for the resignation of Johnson Sirleaf. It also should be pointed out that Freeman has previously accused her of bribing lawmakers, too.<sup>39</sup> The extract above argues that the president has failed to design and execute an education-related program, thus the criticism points out that she is not a competent president, even though Johnson Sirleaf has been in power for eight years. I argue that it is necessary to bring up neopatrimonialism regarding the leadership of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in this connection. Neopatrimonialism is closely associated for instance with purchasing of political loyalty with money (corruption), and nepotism (Tiessen 2008: 212). Freeman’s previous allegations points out the corruption related to Johnson Sirleaf’s leadership, and accuse Johnson Sirleaf of misusing her political power. Therefore, it can be viewed that occasionally Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is regarded as a self-serving politician who has her own political interests at stake, and thus it is not her gender that is focus of the criticism.

Nevertheless, these kinds of harsh representations of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf are not uncommon in her home country, and when compared to the representations of Joyce Banda, neither they are exclusive, as such issues and criticism also have emerged in Malawi regarding Banda. As Johnson Sirleaf is very often hailed abroad as a renegade and trailblazer in terms of women’s empowerment of Africa, the same cannot be said when it comes to the Liberian media. Therefore, it is quite common that presidents are criticized sometimes in a ruthless manner by the local media. For instance in Malawi, Banda’s successor President Peter Mutharika has been accused of nepotism and being unable to govern, as well as being deceitful. When taking into account one of the Liberia’s neighboring countries, Sierra Leone, its president Ernest Bai Koroma has been criticized for a lack of accountability, as well as his slow response to the Ebola virus outbreak. However, it should be noted that in Sierra Leone, one of the journalists had been imprisoned after criticizing president’s handling of the Ebola crisis. Thus, it must be acknowledged that the freedom of the press in many African countries is often only partly free (Malawi and Liberia included), although the increasing role of social media enables more open criticism towards head of states of Africa. Although there exist similar types of criticism towards African male heads of states (allegations of nepotism and corruption etc.), I argue that gender (being

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.frontpageafricaonline.com/old/interviews/58-interview/7217-she-has-to-go-simeon-freeman-on-giving-pres-ellen-johnson-sirleaf-the-boot.html>.

a male president) is indeed not one of those attributes that are being criticized within the local media in Africa.

## 7.7 African media on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

In reading through the media sources on Johnson Sirleaf from Africa (outside Liberia) I identified themes regarding *globally revered vs internal criticism, motherhood, women and leadership*, as well as characteristics concerning *the nicknames* of female presidents.

As mentioned in the context of Liberian media, there seem to be similarities between Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf when it comes to the fact that they tend to receive criticism in their home country, but are celebrated internationally. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has been criticized due to her appointing only those people whom she feels comfortable with, and her failure to create more inclusive government and fight against corruption. The following three extracts are from the African news websites *Think Africa Press (the first two articles)*, and *All Africa (the third article)*, and they, too, criticize Johnson Sirleaf for the same issues that have emerged from the Liberian media.

The first extract is from the article “Johnson Sirleaf Plays Musical Chairs: Liberia's Superficial Re-shuffle?” and addresses the poor performance of Johnson Sirleaf’s cabinet, as well as implications of corruption scandals by many ministers in her cabinet, many of whom eventually survived the cabinet reshuffle. The article states that the cabinet reshuffle led many Liberians to question not only her commitment to real government reform, but also her fight against corruption:

*“During her second term, Sirleaf Johnson has also faced heavy criticism for appointing her family members to government positions and for failing to address government corruption. At a reception at the University of Liberia last year, former political supporter and human rights lawyer, Counsellor Tiawan Gongloe criticised Johnson Sirleaf for having become an “imperial president”, referring to the appointment of her three sons to key economic and security positions.”* (Macdougall, Williams 5.4.2013 Think Africa Press online)

The second extract is taken from the article “Liberian Women Share Nobel Prize” which deals with the Nobel Peace Prize that was jointly awarded to Johnson Sirleaf, activists Leymah Gbowee, and Tawakkul Karman for their “non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women’s rights to full participation in peace-building work”. However, this award sparked controversy due to its coming only days ahead of the presidential election in 2011. The article asks to what extent Johnson Sirleaf really deserved the Nobel Peace Prize:

*“Johnson Sirleaf, the first and currently only elected female head of state in Africa, won the Liberian presidency in 2005 and is much revered globally, although she has faced criticism at home”* (Dearn 10.10.2011 Think Africa Press online)

The third extract is taken from the article *Liberia: 'My Mother Didn't Listen...'* which covers one of her sons, Robert Sirleaf and his resignation as a senior adviser to her mother and chairman of the state oil company in 2013:

*“President Sirleaf, in power since 2006, had three sons serving in top government posts prior to the resignation of Robert Sirleaf, who doubled as a senior presidential adviser. She has repeatedly denied allegations of nepotism, describing her sons as qualified.”* (19.9.2013 All Africa online)

Thus, in these articles Johnson Sirleaf is not only accused of nepotism, but also failing to fight against corruption, and being *“an imperial president”* (Macdougall, Williams 5.4.2013 Think Africa Press online) in her home country. Therefore, one can observe that criticism is also expressed in the articles of African media. In this context, it can be perceived that the criticism of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf suggests that she is like other African self-serving leaders who are surrounded by corruption, and that power is centered on a few chosen ones; on the president and her circle of acquaintances. I argue that the criticism of both Johnson Sirleaf’s and Banda’s alleged corrupted leadership is related to neopatrimonialism (see Tiessen 2008), since the term is related to the centralization of power in the hands of a few. In this context, when taking into account the allegations of corruption and nepotism related to the female presidents, neopatrimonialism can be referred to their leadership skills such as misusing their political power. Thus, female presidents are not excluded from the accusations of corruption and neopatrimonialism, particularly in the African media.

Next I bring up two themes that I identified from the media sources on Johnson Sirleaf in the African media: *women and leadership*, and *motherhood*. I discuss these two themes in the same context due to their close association with each other. In the documentary on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, “Faces of Africa – Ellen Sirleaf: Mother of Liberia” by *CCTV Africa*, the title itself also refers to motherhood, branding Ellen as the mother of her country. The documentary comprises the interviews of a few Liberian women who give their standpoint on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the following excerpt points out:

*” President Ellen Sirleaf has proven that women can do it.... Madam Sirleaf has made all of us brave. She can stand up in a terrain of so-called men, and be tough enough, and speak the political language...and she's competent, and she has compassion...She's no tyrannical leader. She won't take us back to war, because she is a mother.”* (22.10.2013 CCTV Africa online)

In this context, motherhood is given as a significant factor that prevents Johnson Sirleaf from taking the country back to war, according to the women in the documentary. Due to her being a mother, and thus having compassion, she is viewed as not being a tyrannical leader. Johnson Sirleaf is perceived as an example of a woman capable of the presidency. However, when observing representations of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf by the women in the interview, there also exist another dimension: Johnson Sirleaf is “tough enough”, and qualified to work in a men’s world by using a proper and specific (“*speak the political language*”) discourse. As power (relations) and politics are essential in critical discourse analysis, as well as the capability to exclude and include certain issues in one’s representation (see Gee 2011; Fairclough 1995), it should be acknowledged that Johnson Sirleaf is represented as a capable person to use the right manner of speaking in a political sphere, and she is aware how to speak effectively to her audience. When taking into account how skillful Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is using language in a specific context, I argue that she possesses a great deal of power, and she uses her rhetorical skills quite masterfully on many occasions. The excerpt points out that Johnson Sirleaf has two sides: a compassionate mother (of her country), and a tough player operating in a male-dominated sphere.

In the same documentary by *CCTV Africa*, there is an interview of Johnson Sirleaf’s brother, too, who discusses their family’s standpoint on Johnson Sirleaf in terms of gender roles and gender attributes in Liberian society. He tells that, in the past, her family gave advise to her on how to act in a manner that was perceived to be appropriate to her gender:

*”We would always try to tell her, moderate your views, because you know, many Liberian, you know it was very difficult for them to accept the quality which women, or having outspoken women, because women, at the time, were very shy. They were expected to stay in their place as mothers.”* (22.10.2013 CCTV Africa online)

The excerpt presents in a quite revealing way the perceptions of Liberian society on the characteristics of women. In other words, there is a great emphasis on the “traditional” standpoint on how women should behave and act in Liberia. As Ellen’s brother points out, her family had tried to advise her to suppress her views due to the fact that women in Liberian society have not been expected to be outspoken in the past. In this context, the emphasis on preferring shy women is related to the position of

mothers. Therefore, being a mother (at least in the past) has been represented as a part of the private sphere, women were expected to have moderate views and be “shy”.

Next I cover the theme of *the nicknames of female presidents*. When it comes to Johnson Sirleaf, the nickname *Iron Lady* is presented on many occasions in the African media. In the same documentary mentioned above there is an interview with Philip Wesseh, who is the managing editor of *The Inquirer* magazine, and he discusses the turbulent times in Liberia’s history, and Johnson Sirleaf’s return from abroad to her home country:

*”Many persons were not too sure that Madame Sirleaf would return to Liberia for security reasons because she and Taylor couldn’t see eye to eye. They were at loggerheads, but she braved the storm, and she came to Monrovia and for that reason, she was referred to as the Iron Lady.”* (22.10.2013 CCTV Africa online).

The excerpt not only refers to the conflicted relationship between the former president of Liberia Charles Taylor and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, but also how courageous enough she was to come back to Liberia although she put herself in danger. Therefore, the nickname *Iron Lady* has been used to refer to her willingness to face the difficulties in her home country. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the nickname *Iron Lady* is not really that special as it already had been used for the late Prime Minister of Great Britain – Margaret Thatcher.

## **7.8 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s portrayal of herself**

With her memoir *This Child Will Be Great* (2010), Johnson Sirleaf has a medium to present her story to readers. Besides telling about her life, she also has an opportunity to represent her role, image and leadership qualities in her own way. I argue that this is a special kind of forum for representation, as one can entirely control what kind of topics are discussed, and how. One can represent oneself and the events of one’s life in more diverse manner, since the book offers for its author more time to represent her story. In interviews, articles, or documents, there are always other actors editing or controlling the representations, whereas in the memoir there is only an audience (readers) and an author (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, or a potential ghost writer, which is very often used when writing books, but who nevertheless represents Johnson Sirleaf’s perspective). It is her voice that the reader can hear in the book, thus the narrative of the memoir is completely dominated by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Narrative is a representation of a series of events, and the particular story in this context is the life of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Thus she is able to reconstruct her life events and her role in society

and in politics more profoundly when compared to short interviews or articles. It should be acknowledged that Johnson Sirleaf not only reconstructs her life events and herself in her memoir, but also other people who are part of her life (such as her family members, political opponents etc.), and presents them to her audience in a manner which is most advantageous for her.

In the first pages of her book she presents her life story and a particular incident which inspired the title of the book “*This Child Will Be Great*”. The title refers to the prophecy of a wise old man who predicted Ellen’s future leadership when she was a just little girl. This representation of her childhood can arouse many questions such as what is the purpose of pointing out this childhood incident to her readers. It can be understood that she wants to represent her leadership as if it were her ‘destiny’, although it took her many years to achieve the leadership position in Liberia. Therefore, this particular example from her childhood in the beginning of the book highlights particularly well Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s rhetorical skills to persuade her audience in believing her extraordinary life experiences and her being “the chosen one” for changing the history of Liberia. In reading through the memoir, I identified the following themes: *motherhood; life story; characteristics: significant nicknames; women and leadership; and African womanhood.*

First I cover the theme of *motherhood*. In her memoir, Johnson Sirleaf mentions many times the importance of her mother, for instance how she was a very strong mother who prayed for her daughter, and Johnson Sirleaf states that she believes she got her strength from her mother (2010: 11). Her mother is not the only one who has inspired her, Johnson Sirleaf also points out the importance of her grandmothers:

*“They inspired me then, and their memory motivates me now to serve my people, to sacrifice for the world and honestly serve humanity. I cannot and will not betray their trust.” (2010:22)*

Therefore, it can be understood that due to her grandmothers, she has a motivation to serve the people of Liberia, to sacrifice herself (this can be regarded as a kind of theatrical expression) for the world, and to be a servant for humanity. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf states that she will not betray her grandmothers’ trust. In this context, past generations (the grandmothers, the mother) are represented as being an influential force which has had an impact on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s life, as well as on her leadership. Therefore, one can perceive that the women of past generations have influenced both Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s private (as a granddaughter and a daughter) life and public life (as a president). She continues discussing her roots, how she has a foot in two different worlds, as well as how she represents both the ‘disadvantaged’ and the ‘advantaged’ members of Liberian society:

*“I represent both those who were given opportunities and advantages because of their background and those who were denied those very things because of who they were and from whence they came. My feet are in two worlds – the world of poor rural women with no respite from hardship and the world of accomplished Liberian professionals, for whom the United States is a second and beloved home. I draw strength from both.”* (2010:22)

The two worlds – the ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘advantaged’ sides of her society are explained as the hardships of the rural women, and the accomplished Liberian professionals who have had an opportunity to live in the United States. Thus, in this context, the rural world of Liberia and the privileged life in the United States are two different worlds that are part of her life, and she regards herself as representing these two worlds. It can be understood that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf acknowledges her roots (the rural grandmothers who had obstacles in their lives, and did not have same opportunities as she has had). Therefore, she represents herself as a kind of mixture of rural and urban, the South (Liberia) and the West (the United States). In her book (2010), Johnson Sirleaf does not only refer to her own mother and grandmothers, but also presents herself as a mother to Liberia. Therefore, I argue that the gender symbolism which in this context is a motherhood of her country, is once again presented in the narrative by the president. In the following excerpt, she states that during her presidential campaign there were some people arguing that Liberia needed a young president, whereas Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is born in 1938, was considered to be too old and frail to be president. Her sister Jennie points out an interesting metaphor on how the country is like a child, and the president is the experienced, nurturing mother for the country:

*“Jennie, in campaigning for me, would put it this way: “Suppose you have a baby,” she said. “And you have to go out to work or whatnot and you need someone to care for the child. Would you give that baby to an older person who has taken care of children, who knows how to nurture the child? Or would you give it to a young person who has not done it before and does not know what to do? Well, this country is a child, a sick child, and it is hurting. You need somebody who can nurture it”. It was a simple but powerful message. I think it certainly helped.”* (2010: 260)

The excerpt clearly presents how the image of motherhood is taken into account in the presidential campaign, thus Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has taken advantage of this representation, and was made more appealing to Liberian voters this way. It is clearly stated that she acknowledges how significant the image of motherhood (a nurturing mother) really is in Liberian politics, as it can be seen that motherhood itself with its symbolic meanings is a fixed and significant part of Liberian (and African) society.

Next I cover the theme of *life story* that I also identified from the memoir. When taking into account Johnson Sirleaf's life story, there once again comes up one particular topic, and that is Ellen Johnson Sirleaf having been a tomboy. In her memoir, she presents herself as having been a tomboy in her childhood:

*"I was also something of a tomboy and loved playing sports of all kinds. Sometimes I even played football with the boys, not a thing normally done by young ladies...I was a serious and assertive player."* (2010:27)

Thus, she highlights her attributes as being assertive, and not doing things that were normally done by young ladies in Liberia, and therefore not adapting herself to traditional gender roles. Thus, since her childhood she has continued to act and behave in a non-traditional manner when it comes to gender. Hence I argue that the example above can be also interpreted as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf wanting to point out to her audience that she has been a trailblazer from the beginning, and the attributes used in football games such as skill and assertiveness have also been useful in politics, which can be also viewed as a certain type of game. When taking into account how brutal Liberian politics has been in the past (murders, violence), a political player has had to be particularly assertive and tough in this context. The other issue about which she often writes in her memoir is her previous marriage, and her abusive, alcoholic ex-husband. She states:

*"Looking back, it's difficult to say whether this was simply his character or whether he believed he was acting in the way a good African man supposed to, being in control, keeping a firm hand on his wife...But living with a person like that also strengthened me"* (2010: 36).

The extract presents Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's representation of her marriage and how living with an abusive husband made her stronger. At the same time, her thoughts about her ex-husband also points to the idea of "*a good African man*" as she states, which in this context indicates to a man having a firm control of his wife. Therefore, it is quite clear that in Johnson Sirleaf's narrative, gender inequality and patriarchy are strongly present when discussing the traditional relationship between an African husband and his wife. As in her narrative, Johnson Sirleaf points out that an African manhood, or the traditional ideal of it, is perceived as being the head of the family and having a control over it. However, she questions whether her ex-husband's abusive behavior was the product of a traditional, patriarchal Liberian society and its gender roles, or was his behavior based solely on his own abusive character.



I identified certain significant *nicknames* from the memoir of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as well. Her famous nickname *Iron Lady* is brought up in her memoir, and in this context, it refers to Johnson Sirleaf's physical and spiritual strength during her hectic presidential campaign, referred to by one reporter:

*"I always thought the nickname 'Iron Lady' referred to her indomitable state of mind. I had no idea that it also referred to her physical toughness. She never stops to eat or drink."* (2010: 265)

In Johnson Sirleaf's memoir, there are sometimes quotes about her by other people who have known her. By choosing these quotes to be represented in the book, I argue that Johnson Sirleaf emphasizes the characteristics that prove her capability to act in politics, and be a competent leader of her country. By giving explanation and background information concerning how Johnson Sirleaf got her nickname, it gives her audience more assurance that she indeed has a certain toughness that enables her to work in the political sphere. Toughness, in this context, is referred to both physical as well psychological attributes of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

I also identified the theme of *women and leadership* when reading through the memoir. On many occasions, Johnson Sirleaf discusses women in leadership positions and gender equality in Liberian society, particularly how these issues were regarded in the past:

*"Like nearly everywhere else in the world at the time, Liberia was very much a male-dominated society. Though Liberian women had long worked outside the home and even held positions of prominence in the government, and although African women in general are honored as mothers and aunts, women were not regarded as equals"*. (2010: 41)

In her narrative, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf brings up a traditional, male-dominated Liberian society which did not consider women to be equals with men, although women were working outside of private sphere and even had positions of prominence in the government. However, it can be seen that there were and still are certain gender roles that are perceived to be more acceptable and respected for women in Liberia such as the role of aunt and mother. Mothers and aunts are the roles which are linked to the private sphere (family, kin, household etc.), and the tasks therein (household chores, taking care of children etc.) As there exists a dichotomy between the private and public spheres, and social and cultural restrictions regarding who are included in which sphere, it can be understood that patriarchal structures have been predominant in Liberian society. Liberian society has been affected by patriarchal traditions which have been part of male-dominated economic, and patriarchal family production systems (see Gordon 1996; see Theobald 2012). One can notice that in her representation,

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf reinforces the image of Liberia being a traditional, male-dominated country that has not valued women's participation in public sphere. In the context of gender and career, Johnson Sirleaf brings up that often people, (particularly women) have asked her if during her political career she has faced resistance due to her being both a woman and an African. She stresses her answer by saying that she “*was usually too busy to worry about*” those who resented her having the political positions, or suspected her of merely being a token female politician (2010:77). Thus, she acknowledges that there has been resistance, and there are people who resent her political position and her being a female leader. In this way, she seems to seek to indicate a certain nonchalance in terms of being woman who has a political career.

In her memoir, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf discusses the idea of a female president, and also the differences between male and female concerning when it comes to leadership qualities. She argues that during her presidential campaign, there were some people who could not accept the idea of a woman president in Liberia, nevertheless there were a large amount of people who responded positively to the idea:

*“But many more people were not only willing but eager to give a woman a chance. Men have failed us, people said over and over again. Men are too violent, too prone to make war. Women are less corrupt, less likely to be focused on getting fancy cars and fancy home for themselves... We also pointed out that the country had been led by men for 150 years – and look where that had gotten us.”* (2010: 250, 261)

The excerpt strongly emphasizes the idea that women's leadership leads to less corruption, violence, and greed. Thus the differences between male and female leadership are represented here in a stark contrast. Women are represented as making the world more peaceful and just, whereas men are mostly corrupted and violent. Therefore, this indicates traditional gender standpoints on women being more pro-peace and working for the common good than men. In other words, women are perceived as being nurturers and maintaining the society and the whole country. Hence there is once again generalization regarding women being ‘good, nurturing caretakers’ who are not eager to selfishly use their power, but instead to use it wisely for the whole society and country. In the context of women's access to and participation in decision-making processes, Johnson Sirleaf points out how in Liberia there have been appointments of women to leading key agencies and ministries such as the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Gender and Development (2010: 302). Thus, women have had access to politics in Liberia to a certain degree. In the following excerpt, gender is once again on display on when Johnson Sirleaf argues that if she had born a man she would had accomplished far less, stating that she would have been just another man:

*“I think that as a woman I was an exception, and being an exception gave me both the visibility and the drive to succeed. I was ahead of my time, but I am no longer alone. We are breaking barriers daily; in another decade there will be hundreds of women in real positions of leadership all over Africa and all over the world. I take pride in having helped trample down those barricades. I have been one of the lucky ones.”*  
(2010: 315).

Hence, Johnson Sirleaf represents herself as having an awareness of gender issues, and particularly how being a woman has been an advantage for her in the end due to her being rarity and an exception in politics. It can be viewed that she had been driven to succeed and gain access to visibility by her gender. She also presents herself as being ahead of her time, thus she regards herself as being a significant part of breaking the barriers regarding women in politics and leadership.

African womanhood was also one of the themes that I identified from the memoir, and the next extract which I present could also be related to the themes of *motherhood*, or *women and leadership*, as these themes are related to each other in this context. In the following excerpt Johnson Sirleaf compares herself to other Liberian women, and states that she did not want the life of many Liberian women (mothers, housewives, market women) whose lives were full of hard work from day to day:

*“I saw was that their lives were drudgery, a simple trudging from day to day to day. I did not want that; that was not the life for me... One thing I had always believed in was my own potential, and I knew it did not lie in filing papers and collecting payments as the secretary in an auto garage. Nor, as much as I loved my children, did it lie in simply raising them.”* (2010: 33).

She represents herself as believing in her own potential, and not seeing herself as only a mother raising her children, or as a secretary. Therefore, it can be understood that in her narrative she intentionally separates herself from other Liberian women to emphasize her own uniqueness as a woman who decided to take a different path when it comes to her career and working in public sphere. On the other hand, she stresses the importance of the women of Liberia, and particularly the special relationship between her and her fellow countrywomen (women’s groups) who have supported her over the years, and how she herself has supported them, too. Johnson Sirleaf points out that Liberian women had a huge impact on her presidential campaign, and at the same time, also brings up tribalism and ethnicity in Liberian society:

*“We re-mobilized our secret weapon – the women of Liberia –and sent them out campaigning. These indomitable women were the real force behind this election, the fuel on which we ran. Singly, in pairs, and in groups they went village to village, door to door, street to street encouraging people to put aside ethnic and tribal allegiances and vote for one Liberia. They held rallies and distributed T-shirts. They walked and danced and marched. More than anything, it was the women of Liberia who turned this election, for me and for themselves... Women, my strong constituency, told me they wanted the same*

*chances that men have. They wanted to be literate. They wanted their work recognized. They wanted protection against rape... These women had not only supported me consistently in my climb to the presidency, but, far more important, they had worked tirelessly during the war to bring the various factions to the negotiating table. The women of Liberia were and remain the country's core, and I have made it a priority to include them in its reconstruction.*" (2010: 264, 277).

This excerpt presents the significant influence of Liberian women, not only during Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's presidential campaign, but also on the negotiating process during the war years. Liberian women are represented in this context as a powerful force which has worked hard, and had an impact on the grassroots level of Liberian society. Women are represented as the essence of the country who want their work to be recognized, and to have equal rights and chances with men, as well as unify the Liberian people regardless of their ethnic or tribal loyalties. In her presentation there exists solidarity between her and Liberian women as they have supported her by doing campaign work in local villages around Liberia. She also highlights herself as having the power to mobilize Liberian women to participate in the reconstruction work of the country.

In the following excerpt, Johnson Sirleaf discusses her campaign strategy during the presidential election campaign. Here she brings up the idea of a modern African woman which was used in her campaign photos with the help of American Larry Gibson, who has previously assisted many successful political campaigns such as Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign:

*"Larry who also strongly suggested that I appear in my official campaign photo bare-headed, without the traditional Liberian head wrap. He thought it was important for me to signal that I was a modern African woman, connected to the past and tradition but not bound by them. Larry said, "African male politicians exercise the freedom to wear either African or Western clothes at their discretion. I thought it was important to signal that you intended to exercise the same prerogatives as the men."* (2010, 252)

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf points out that not everyone on her campaign agreed with the idea of a modern African woman, nevertheless she herself thought it was a good idea. Hence, by not wearing the traditional Liberian head wrap, it set her apart from the only other woman candidate who was in the campaign. Therefore, it can be viewed that the idea of a modern African woman was symbolized by a photo of bareheaded Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. I argue that in this context the traditional Liberian head wrap can be perceived as a symbol for existing gender roles (such as the expectations regarding how a woman is supposed to be dressed) in Liberia, and that Johnson Sirleaf was redefining her gender role by choosing what not to wear. I argue that this would not be so essential in another context, but here it was, since at the time, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was a presidential candidate and promoting herself

through her campaign photos to potential voters. Her decision to leave out the traditional women's headdress implied her intention to change the perception of an African woman. I assert that this gesture indicates that at the same time she wanted to represent herself and reconstruct her identity as a new kind of African woman who is connected to the tradition to a certain degree. However, she wanted to prove that she is capable of acting in the same manner as her African male counterparts. Therefore, the absence of a head wrap becomes a certain kind of symbol for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as using the same privileges as her male counterparts in politics. In general, when reading through her memoir it is clear that as a leader of her country, Johnson Sirleaf is well aware of the importance of drawing people to herself, and throughout her memoir it is evident that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's rhetorical skills are outstanding.

If taking into account the types of discourse regarding gender and political representation (see Dahlerup 2006), I argue that the criticism of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's leadership in the Liberian media has featured mostly *gender-blind discourse*. There has not been a particular emphasis on her gender as a reason for a lack of leadership, but instead the criticism has focused on her alleged bribery and other behavior related to her leadership seen to be undesirable. Nevertheless, there was an awareness of existing differences between the international and Liberian media when it came to representation of Johnson Sirleaf, since abroad she was regarded as a renegade and a trailblazer in terms of her gender. In the Liberian media there emerged certain stereotypes regarding gender attributes when for instance Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's decision-making was hailed for using rational principles instead of sentimentality in the context of gender parity. There existed arguments that women's decision-making was in general based on solely on emotions, and that Johnson Sirleaf was an exception in this matter. There also appeared some issues regarding female solidarity, or rather the lack of it, as it was perceived that in the political sphere female solidarity did not encompass all political parties, but only certain political parties supported by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Nevertheless, she was also represented as motivating Liberian women, and particularly encouraging rural women to empower themselves. In the African media, it was also presented that Johnson Sirleaf had failed to fight against corruption, and was misusing her political power through nepotism. Therefore, neopatrimonialism can be perceived to be associated with the representation of her leadership. Motherhood was emphasized in the representation of Johnson Sirleaf, in both the African and international media. Liberian society was represented as a traditional and male-dominated, whereas a female leader was regarded as an asset. When it came to Johnson Sirleaf's portrayal of herself, she represented herself by emphasizing particularly her motherhood, as well as stressing that she had been strongly supported by Liberian women.

In the context of the media and my study, I want to refer to a few previous studies of the media representation of women politicians as their findings confirm certain issues that I identified from my study as well. In their article “ Powerful women in powerless language: Media misrepresentation of African women in politics (the case of Liberia)”, Jemima Asabea Anderson, Grace Diabah, and Patience Afrakoma hMensa (2011), examine how gender biases are reflected in news reports that emerge from African and international media. They compared the media reports of two presidential candidates: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her opponent George Oppon Weah. In their findings, it came up that the international media gave greater attention to Sirleaf’s appearance (such as clothing) than did the African media. Nevertheless, both media focused on Sirleaf’s maternal and marital roles. African media, however, made less explicit and fewer gender-biased references than did the international media (Anderson et. al. 2011: 2516). I find it interesting that it was precisely African media that made fewer gender-biased references related to Sirleaf compared to international media. I argue that this also was the case in my study, as compared to international media, African media represented Sirleaf and her leadership in terms of her leadership skills (as well as the criticism regarding it), rather than emphasizing her gender on this matter. In the article “Who is the Lady in the Window?” Tania H. Cantrell and Ingrid Bachmann (2008) discuss their comparative study regarding female head of states (in Germany, Chile, and Liberia) that examines how international and national newspapers portrayed new female government heads during their first 200 days in office. Their study argued that the local media in these countries focused more on the females’ first performance and record in office, whereas the international media concentrated on the first lady and the international context in which she performed, but not the country itself. The leadership of these three women was also evaluated in a more positive way at the international level than within the national media (2008: 440). I argue that this was also the case regarding the media articles of Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as it was the international media which emphasized more positively their gender in the context of leadership, whereas there appeared more criticism within African, Malawian, and Liberian media.

## 8. Conclusions

The topic of my Master's Thesis is the media representations of two female heads of state in Africa – President of Liberia (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf), and former President of Malawi (Joyce Banda). In my study, I not only took into account how various media sources from Malawian, Liberian, as well as African and international media had represented Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, but also how the female presidents had represented themselves in media. My research questions focused on gender and leadership as I searched answers to these specific questions: 1.) How has gender defined the political leadership of African female presidents: Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, according to English-language media sources? 2.) How has gender defined the presentation of these presidents in the media? I analyzed the media articles concerning Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf by using critical discourse analysis and rhetorical analysis, as well as taking into consideration the narratives of the presidents. In my study, I identified various themes regarding the representation of the female presidents from Malawian, Liberian, African and international media, as well as from the representations of female presidents themselves. The themes that I identified from my data are:

- *women and leadership*
- *motherhood*
- *African womanhood*
- *Life story*
- *the nicknames of female presidents*
- *globally revered vs. internal criticism*

I assert that particularly the themes of *women and leadership*; *African womanhood*; and *motherhood* can also be perceived as cultural concepts which can have various meanings in a given culture and society. They are related to gendered relationships which in this context I perceive to be related to gender roles and a given society's expectations on how women and men are supposed to behave and act, thus these social norms are also influencing the relations between genders. I state that the life stories of female presidents, which include topics such as their childhood, their personal characteristics, the challenges they have faced during their life etc., are the personal narratives that the presidents represents to others as their constructed identities. I assert that in their representations in the media, and therefore to their audience, the female presidents reconstruct and maintain their identities by using narratives that represent their life events in a certain manner which is particularly useful for

them. It is important to acknowledge that these themes are related to each other to a certain extent, for instance the theme of *women and leadership* is intertwined with the theme of *motherhood* and vice versa.

When taking into account Dahlerup's (2006) arguments on discourses in political settings, I particularly want to highlight that in certain African and Malawian media articles there existed *gender-blind discourse* (gender is perceived to be irrelevant in terms of political representation) that was related to the media's view on how it was more important to focus on Malawi's poor economic situation, and not the gender of the president. However, in Malawian media, there also appeared the discourse related to assumptions of women being unsuitable and unqualified for political positions (*the politics-is-a-men's-business-discourse*). When taking into account rhetorical analysis and its emphasis on the specific messages and intentions of the presidents and media, I argue that in the representations there always exist intentions for emphasizing certain aspects, and in my study for instance these aspects are related to gender (particularly motherhood) which both the presidents themselves and media were using to a certain degree to persuade the audience.

As critical discourse analysis focuses on how the world (relationships, events) is represented, I argue that in my study, representations of Joyce Banda's and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's leadership are influenced by local political and cultural settings which take into account gender roles, as well as the relationship between Africa and Western world. It should be acknowledged that in the context of African, Malawian, and Liberian media, the Western world was mostly perceived to be closely related to western donors and international institutions such as the *IMF* and *World Bank*. When taking into account the identities that are set up for female presidents and for those who are writing about them, one should be aware what kind of political and cultural factors exist in the background such as the symbolic significance of motherhood, as well as the economic situation of the country. When examining the relationships between the female presidents and media audiences (whether readers or viewers), I argue that gender has an influence to a certain degree on how these relationships are maintained in public representation.

When analysing the articles and videos in the international media regarding Joyce Banda, there often appeared references to her previous abusive marriage, her being a fighter and a champion of women's rights. She was hailed as a new kind of leader, or the face of a new Africa. On a few occasions, Banda was also described as Malawi's Iron Lady, or Malawi's Lady of Steel, and referring to her overall strength. In the media articles, there appeared two types of representation of Banda; on the one hand she was represented as carrying a heavy load on behalf of other women, and on the other it was



pointed out that in her home country she was criticized as not being a serious politician, and that it appeared that Malawi was not ready for a female president. Only in the international media, were there observations regarding her outward appearances and her dress sense. In the context of motherhood, there were references to Banda's strong grandmother, and Banda being motherly (having motherly looks), as well as being at the same time both a mother and a leader of her country. When it came to African women, there were references to their ability to carry heavy loads, and Banda being living proof of African women's strength in politics. On one occasion she was hailed by an American interviewee as being the most powerful black woman outside of the United States.

In the African media, Banda was described as a promoter of fellow women's leaderships. It was also mentioned that she was supported by African male colleagues, and thus African men appeared to have a positive attitude towards Joyce Banda's leadership. However, it was also clear that journalists were aware of Banda's different reputation in the West when compared to Malawi, and highlighted that Banda had become a president of necessity (referring to the sudden death of the Banda's predecessor, president Bingu wa Mutharika whereupon Banda as a vice-president at that time became president). In the context of the Malawian media, a different perspective on Banda was taken when compared to the Western media. In the Malawian media, Banda was presented as an inspiration to all Malawian girls, and was for instance applauded for intensifying the freedom of the press in Malawi and for improving maternal health. She was hailed as having the loving heart of a mother, and being the people's woman, as well as being a strong woman who was one of the celebrated women of her time the world over. However, criticism of Banda was very strong in the Malawian media, and the majority of the media articles criticized her by calling her a wannabe tyrant and a greedy politician who was just like most self-interested African leaders. I argue that at this point one has to take into account Banda's connection to the *Cashgate* affair that was regarded as the largest corruption scandal in Malawian history. Banda was thus associated with what might be called neopatrimonialism, a concept referring to a system using state resources for personal profits, and the management of official authority for private purposes. It was seen that the reality did not live up to the great expectations regarding Banda being the first woman president of Malawi. She was accused of being a creation the West, and that her image was different for international community than it was in her home country. In the context of gender, there were also straightforward critique by some Malawian women regarding Banda: as a woman she was seen to be too weak to aid the economy of Malawi. One author in the Malawian media contributors accused that being a woman in leadership position is not regarded as good as a male counterpart, thus women cannot lead the country. Thus, the existing stereotypes concerning women's inability to be in a leadership position were regarded as strong and truthful, according to the author. This was one text exemplifying the *politics-is-a-men's-business*-discourse.

What about the depiction of Joyce Banda by Banda herself? The majority of her own self-representations concentrated on the themes of *life story*; *African womanhood*; *motherhood*; as well as *gender and leadership*. In general, gender played a significant role in Banda's self-representation. She particularly emphasized the story of her abusive marriage, and also emphasized having the support of rural Malawian women, although she also pointed out the lack of support of her female colleagues in the political arena. Somewhat surprisingly, she argued instead that it had been men who had been most supportive of her in the political context. This can be seen as a contradictory issue, since there has been research by Thiessen (2008) and Kamlongera (2008) (see the chapter of *Malawian women and politics*) who both have pointed out the difficulties that Malawian female politicians have faced in politics (such as gender stereotypes, some male colleagues in politics had attempted to drive women out of the politics, as well as Malawian cultural beliefs regarding women who participate in the public sphere as being sexually promiscuous etc. ), which have all implied there is no general encouragement for women to pursue political positions, and in general can be seen related to patriarchal society. These issues lead to many questions, for instance: do such arguments regarding patriarchal society only represent over-generalizing Western perspectives which assume that most men in African society want to keep women "in their place" in the domestic sphere? Is the perspective of Africana womanism regarding Western's feminism in fact correct? According to Africana womanism, Western feminists' perception of women's role and position in African society is based on a "black- and- white world view" which assumes that all African women are nothing but victims of gender oppression by African men. On many occasions in the media, Banda spoke of having the support of African male colleagues, but at the same time pointed out that there existed a lack of female solidarity at the highest level of the political sphere.

Therefore, when observing the media articles regarding Joyce Banda, I argue that in this context gender was strongly affiliated to motherhood (as being a loving mother to her country), as well as Banda being a role model and champion of gender equality to Malawian girls and women. Thus, motherhood and being a role model for gender empowerment were strongly related to her political leadership. I assert that the gender symbol, which in this context is being as a mother of her country, is represented in the narrative by Joyce Banda. Thus, the manner which Joyce Banda is associated with motherhood at national level (a mother of Malawi), as well as at personal level (a biological mother to her own children) in these media representations depicts its own story how an integral part motherhood is in African and Malawian societies. I want to point out that a mother is also one of the gender and social roles which has its own fixed attributes (loving, caring, nurturing etc.) that are universally referred to only women. I argue that in these media articles the attributes such as *good ole*

*mum, the loving heart of a mother* are related to motherhood, and they can be viewed as a kind of gender symbols as well as they contain various meanings. Thus, in the context of Joyce Banda and her presidency, I assert that motherhood is not only gender and social role but it is linked with symbolic construction, too, as the role (mother) creates certain symbols (a caring nurturer etc.) to be associated particularly with women. These gender symbols are maintained and reasserted in the representations and the narratives by both Banda and the media. Therefore, Joyce Banda and all the references to her being a mother can be perceived to contain symbolic meaning that reasserts her gender role and stereotypes as a woman president and her ability to be a leader of the country. Nevertheless, in media there emerged a less positive aspect concerning gender and that was the existing stereotypes of women's lack of abilities to be in a leadership position, as well a lack of female solidarity among Malawian female politicians at higher levels by Banda's representation.

What about Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her representation in the media? The source material regarding the Liberian media was limited in my study, nevertheless, I identified significant issues from the media articles. On the one hand, she was presented as a leader who challenged and motivated Liberian women to empower themselves. On the other hand, Johnson Sirleaf was seen as a person who lacked intellectual competence. In the African media, there was an awareness that she faced criticism in her home country but was at the same time globally revered. This contradiction was presented in a manner that represented Johnson Sirleaf as a president who was spending more time getting feted internationally than tackling the important issues in Liberia. Thus, in this context, it is significant to take into account neopatrimonialism - closely associated with corruption, nepotism and other forms of abuse of power - which I assert was associated with the media representations of both Johnson Sirleaf's and Banda's leadership (see Tiessen 2008; Gazibo 2012). There were strong accusations that Johnson Sirleaf was ruling her country in a nepotistic and corrupted way.

Yet Johnson Sirleaf had a complex relationship with Liberian media. The nicknames *Ma Ellen*, and *Iron Lady* were also pointed out on many occasions, as well as her being a mother. It was argued that due to her experience as a mother, Johnson Sirleaf would not take her country back to war. Johnson Sirleaf stressed the significant impact of her own mother by pointing out her being an inspiration to her. In the African media, she and Banda were hailed as trailblazers regarding women's empowerment in Africa, and it was perceived that it was a new era especially for children and women with her being a president. Johnson Sirleaf was viewed having the support of Liberian women.

In the international media, there was an emphasis on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf representing a feminist ideal by being the first female president in Africa who was voted in by Liberian women, and she was

seen as being the heir to a long line of African women who were strong, but yet long-suffering. African women were portrayed as victims of patriarchal rule, thus it was understood that African women were bystanders in African society while African men were fighting against each other in countless wars. Johnson Sirleaf was also represented as a woman who was a practical leader, and who was firm when dealing with *maniacs* (this term referred to the past encounters with violent political leaders and rebels in Liberia's political history). Women and leadership were perceived as something that was closely linked to motherhood, as it was argued that women as mothers were inclined to make the world more peaceful due to their nurturing and caring characteristics which could also affect their leadership abilities. I argue that all the references to Johnson Sirleaf's being a mother can be perceived to contain symbolic meanings that reasserts her gender role and stereotypes as a female president and her ability to be a leader of the country. Hence female leaders were seen differently than their male counterparts, and in the media articles there emerged traditional gender characteristics such as women as caring nurturers whereas men were portrayed as violent and causing wars. The nickname *Iron Lady* also was presented in various articles, and it was referred to as representing the aspirations and expectations of all African women, as well as to Johnson Sirleaf picking up accolades in Western media. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was represented as a role model for people outside of Liberia and being a figure of inspiration and hope. Her childhood characteristics such as being tomboy and the story from her childhood (an old man predicting her great future) whom she also refers in her memoir, was also pointed out in the international media.

In her memoir, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf presented her private life, but at the same time also brought up Liberian society and its conceptions on gender. In Johnson Sirleaf's narrative her private life was comprised of her childhood (the prophecy of an old man who predicted her great future, and her being tomboy); the importance of her mother and grandmothers, as well as her previous abusive marriage. She represents herself as a survivor of a destructive marriage who is capable of moving up the ladder of success, and, at the same time, is a model and icon to her children. Liberian society is portrayed as a traditional, male-oriented sphere which has not valued women's role and input outside of the roles of mothers and aunts. Thus, gender equality has not existed in Liberian society, and Johnson Sirleaf also points out her special relationship with Liberian women (market women, women's groups) who have supported her during the years, and who were a significant force behind her during the presidential election, too. She also brings up her prison experience, which according to her, was an important lesson in leadership that helped her to understand better the people of Liberia and their hardships. It can be seen that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf seems to be aware of having good rhetoric skills which help her pull people to her side. The memoir represents Johnson Sirleaf's life as full of hardships, but also her being a woman of great resilience and fearlessness in the most difficult situations in her life.

The roles of mothers, grandmothers, and the support of Liberian women have a significant role in her narrative. It also can be seen that in her narrative, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's portrayal of herself as being a mother of Liberia is always influencing in the background.

Thus, African womanism and its view on the importance of motherhood in African society, can be glimpsed from the representations of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. In her narrative, Johnson Sirleaf acknowledges that due to her gender, she has been an exception and rarity in the political context, and according to her it also has been the reason for her accomplishing more in life compared to if she had been born a man. Therefore, it can be understood that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf viewed gender as a benefit and important factor in her career in politics. At the same time, she represented herself as a mother figure of her home country, but also being a modern African woman who is a highly educated career woman. Thus, it can be perceived that she wanted to represent herself as a kind of mixture of modern and traditional African woman who also has connections to the Western world due to her previous jobs and studies abroad.

The media representation regarding both Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf contained a strong emphasis on gender in the context of leadership, and motherhood. The differences between the international and African (Malawian, Liberian) media pertained to criticism of their leadership. The international media also placed more emphasis on their gender, whereas local media were more critical of their leadership skills, and perceived them as typical self-serving, greedy African politicians. From the representations there also emerged a strong emphasis on African womanhood, and particularly the grass-roots level support for Liberian and Malawian women to the female presidents. When examining the data regarding both Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, one can ask whether they would have been elected as presidents if they had been younger, or not been mothers themselves? Would the criticism by the media have been even harsher if they have been for instance in their early forties, and had never been married or have given birth to a child?

It is important to acknowledge that my study cannot be viewed as a final conclusion on female presidents in Africa in the context of media, but I do hope that it can give a glimpse, or an introduction to the different perspectives on gender relations and women's leadership in Africa. However, as there is a danger to over generalize issues such as women's position in African society, thus one cannot assume that there exist one particular "truth" or standpoint on these matters. In many ways Liberia and Malawi have been, and still are, patriarchal societies that have maintained and emphasized traditional gender roles, as women are regarded as upholding "traditional culture", which refers to rural community life, and women staying in private sphere and doing household chores instead of being in

public leadership position. If women have participated in politics, it has been particularly in Malawi, in the form of being dancers (praise performers) at the political rallies. Nevertheless, one cannot disagree with the fact that these two African countries – Liberia and Malawi – having had female presidents is itself a remarkable achievement, particularly in countries which are in many ways very traditional and patriarchal societies.

## 9. Appendix of media sources

Below is a list of all my media sources that I analyzed in my study.

### **African media coverage:**

**All Africa** (<http://allafrica.com/>)

An African news website which publishes African news from over 100 news organizations.

**Think Africa Press** (<http://thinkafricapress.com/>)

An online magazine which covers African news, the website presents that it looks beyond the surface of global African news coverage. The online magazine has writers from across Africa with international experts, and it covers a wide range of topics – from politics to development to culture.

### **International media coverage:**

**Africa Agenda** <http://africaagenda.org/>

A website which advertise itself as promoting positive African news – for social change. Africa Agenda is not just only an information portal, but also a news media and education organization which through engagement with mass media outlets, the community, leaders and lay people promotes positive African news. It is headquartered in the U.S.A.

**Al Jazeera English** <http://www.aljazeera.com/> is international news channel which has over sixty bureaus around the world that span six different continents. It has global coverage, especially from underreported regions. Al Jazeera started out as the first independent news channel in the Arab world dedicated to covering and uncovering stories in the region.

**Atlanta Black Star** *Empowering Narratives to Change the World*

<http://atlantablackstar.com/> Atlanta Blackstar presents itself as following: *was created to publish empowering narratives for all people of African descent and everyone who adheres to our culture.* It is an African-American website which covers politics, world news, and entertainment.

**BBC** <http://www.bbc.com/>

A British Broadcasting Corporation which covers e.g. international news.

**CNN** <http://www.cnn.com>

An American cable news network that delivers breaking news on the latest top stories that varies from politics to entertainment.

**Daily life** <http://www.dailylife.com.au/>

Daily Life is an Australian website which presents itself as the *best online source of news and lifestyle content for busy Australian women*. The website has news, opinion, food, celebrity, style, beauty, health and relationships, and advertises itself as a place for women to engage with each other and discuss the hot topics of the day.

### **Forbes**

[www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

An American business magazine which covers business news and financial information.

The interview *Lessons in Courage from Africa's First Female President* is part of the interview video series of *Candid Conversations on How Successful Women Do All That They Do*.

**Gender concerns International** <http://www.genderconcerns.org/>

Gender Concerns International is an international development organization based in the Netherlands, and it is formed by a group of experts with extensive professional experience in the field of gender and development in 2004.

**Guardian** <http://www.theguardian.com/uk>

A website of the British daily newspaper the Guardian

**The Huffington Post** <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/>

An American news website and a blog community. The Aspen Institute section in the website is collaboration between The Huffington Post and the Aspen Institute. The institute is an educational and policy studies organization. The cooperation between these two aims to highlight the most pressing issues of our time, and its focus is on a range of themes originating from the work of the Institute all year-round, including global health and development, national security, arts and culture, and the economy.

**The Independent** <http://www.independent.co.uk/>

A British news website which has UK and international news.

**The New York Times** <http://www.nytimes.com/>



An American daily newspaper which has a website that covers also world news.

**TIME** <http://time100.com>

An American news magazine, which has an annual list of 100 most influential people in the world.

**Washington Post** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

An American daily newspaper which covers politics, sports, and world news etc.

### **Malawian media coverage:**

**The Big Issue Malawi Edition** is a general interest magazine that is, at the same time, a non-profit public benefit project which creates jobs by organizing a vendor sales operation consisting of unemployed and homeless adults. It advertises itself as Malawi's only street magazine. The magazine is a member of the International Network of Street Papers (INSP).

**The Daily Times** is another daily newspaper which advertises itself as Malawi's Premier Daily, and its slogan is For News You Can Trust. It has been established in 1895.

**The Nation** is a daily newspaper which advertises itself with a slogan *Making freedom of expression a reality*. **Weekend Nation** is *the Nation's* weekend edition that has been published on Saturdays, and **Nation on Sunday** is the newspaper's Sunday edition. The newspaper has also its own news website: [www.mwnation.com](http://www.mwnation.com).

**Nyasa Times** describes itself as Malawi *breaking online news source*.

[www.nyasatimes.com](http://www.nyasatimes.com)

**Malawiana** [www.malawiana.net](http://www.malawiana.net) is a news portal with entertainment, forum, and features.

**Malawi Voice** [www.malawivoice.com](http://www.malawivoice.com) *Giving you true online news from Malawi*

**Joyce Banda Foundation** <http://joycebandafoundation.com/>

Joyce Banda's own website which presents Banda and her foundation's activities

### **Liberian media coverage:**

**The New Dawn Liberia** <http://www.thenewdawnliberia.com>

A bilingual (English and French) Liberian news website which advertises itself as a truly independent daily newspaper. The website covers news concerning politics, health, rural, and NGOs etc.

### ***Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's memoir:***

***This child will be great. Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa's First Woman President.***

First Harper Perennial Edition. 2010.

### **The YouTube video coverage:**

#### **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf:**

#### ***Africa's first elected female president lifts Liberia***

Interview of Sirleaf by Worldfocus. An American newscast Worldfocus which had international news coverage and was partners with international news organizations (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIWVba871yY>)

#### ***Faces of Africa – Ellen Sirleaf: Mother of Liberia***

Interview and documentary of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. CCTV Africa is part of CCTV News. It is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. CCTV Africa presents itself as new voice for Africa, and it focuses on African news, perspectives and personalities on the continent. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tU-TTweFKY>)

#### ***Iron Ladies of Liberia***

Documentary of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Independent lenses, PBS channel. ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7\\_sPNLFGz2g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_sPNLFGz2g))

***Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on women in politics: 'We have a story to tell'***. The video-clip is produced by Guardian, and it shows the speech by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGFEEh9xqI4>)

***One on One – Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.*** Interview of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Al Jazeera English. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUcvSDK-UYs>)

**Joyce Banda:**

The following two videos below are from the same event and published by the same YouTube channel:

***Joyce Banda on gender equality in Malawi*** was published by Nigerian online-channel *Uncensored* which focus on socio-political issues of Africa. The video was taped in Lagos, Nigeria in 2013 at The Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Lecture series concerning democracy and leadership where Banda was a keynote speaker. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XH0G16TirSc>)

***President Banda Joyce on women of Africa:*** The video is part of the 14th session of The Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Lecture series which cover the issues related to human development and society. Published by *Uncensored* which presents itself as a channel which trails controversial issues and personalities, and focuses on socio-political events and activities in Nigerian and beyond. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfijQAU1VX8>)

***President Joyce Banda's Story:*** An interview of Banda. Published by CSIS Smart Global Health, Center For Strategic & International Studies. CSIS is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization and international policy institution that is headquartered in Washington, D.C. It focuses on e.g. global development and economic integration. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQKyhyI72h0>)

***Madam President: Meeting Malawi's Joyce Banda*** A documentary of Joyce Banda by the Guardian. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBmaeOM1omY>)

***MBCTV Documentary on Joyce Banda's Ascension to Malawi Presidency.*** A speech by Joyce Banda. MBC (Malawi Broadcasting Corporation). (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYZTArHmMPs>)

***Women Rising: Political leadership in Africa.*** The documentary is part of a series on *Women in Development in Africa*, and it is produced by InCa. The documentary has been commissioned jointly by FEMNET (The African Women's Development and Communication Network) and UNDP. The documentary includes the interviews of Banda and Sirleaf. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCIXif1T9dA>)

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