

# Genopolitics: The dormant niche in political science curriculum in South African universities



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## Dates:

Received: 12 Sept. 2017

Accepted: 05 Mar. 2018

Published: 26 June 2018

## How to cite this article:

Hlatshwayo, M.N. & Fomunyan, K.G., 2018, 'Genopolitics: The dormant niche in political science curriculum in South African universities', *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 14(1), a470. <https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v14i1.470>

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South African higher education institutions have been grappling with the challenges of transformation and decolonisation as a result of the 2015–2016 student protests calling into focus issue of access (both formal and epistemological), belonging, social justice, transformation and others. One of the key sites for this struggle for transformation has been curriculum and the notion of relevance in responding to the development of social reality. Political Science as a discipline has increasingly been confronted with an 'existential crisis' with scholars in the field asking critical questions on whether the discipline has reached a point of irrelevance to social reality. Three key critiques of political science as a discipline are discussed in this article – firstly, the critique that political science is obsessed with what has been termed 'methodological fetishism' in being unable to embrace new knowledge. Secondly, that political science tends to construct universal theories and concepts that assume global homogeneity and de-emphasise the importance of context and locality in knowledge, knowledge production and its experiences. Thirdly, and the central point of this article, the social disconnection between political science as a field and its [in]ability to make a socio-economic contribution to society. This article suggests that genopolitics allows us to critically reflect on and respond to the above notions of relevance in political science by looking at the role of genes played in political behaviour and genetic dispositions to see and analyses how people, communities and societies behave in the ways that illuminate our understanding of social reality.

## Introduction

The emergence of the #MustFall movements in the beginning of 2015 after nearly 21 years of the post-apartheid democratic order has emerged as a critique at the slow pace of higher education (HE) transformation in moving away from being epicentres of white supremacy to more inclusive and socially justice spaces. These calls for HE transformations have ranged from critiquing the historically white higher education institutions (and slow pace of change; the lack of transformation within the professoriate and other university governance committees; the need for more black female academic staff members; the experiences of first-generation students at university; the *marginalised* experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning and allies (LGBTQ) students, the often ignored experiences of students with disabilities in HE and others who are increasingly being pushed to the periphery of HE transformation discourses; the contested and deeply political role of HE curriculum as an 'institution' that embodies the values, beliefs and thoughts of those who transmit and reproduce it; and others (Badat 2009; 2010; Boughey 2005; Heleta 2016; Ndelu 2017). The field of Political Science has come under scrutiny during these calls for transformation, in how the discipline has been accused of not teaching African or Africana scholars and not speaking to the lived experiences of the students themselves. This article will argue that there is a gap in the South African HE literature on the need of expanding the curriculum in general and the Political Science discipline in particular if transformation is to be achieved in all facets of the society. This article makes a case for the inclusion of genopolitics in the Political Science curriculum in South African HE as well as research in the same to establish grounds for further political will and action in the transformation of the HE landscape and the South African society as a whole.

## The state of South African higher education

Taking stock of HE in the South African landscape, there are 11 traditional universities (Fort Hare, Cape Town, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal [KZN], Limpopo, North-West, Pretoria, Rhodes, Stellenbosch, Western Cape and Witwatersrand), 8 comprehensive universities

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(Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, University of South Africa, Venda, Zululand, Sol Plaatjie and Mpumalanga), 6 universities of technology (Cape Peninsula, Central, Durban, Tshwane, Vaal and Mangosuthu) and one health sciences university (Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences). As of 25 September 2015, there are approximately 124 private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country (CHE 2015).

The increasing numbers of HEIs have coincided with what has been termed as a 'demographic revolution' in the student enrolments in HE (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley 2010). Between 2010 and 2015, this 'demographic revolution' seems to have affected only the African and mixed race student populations, as the enrolment trends seem to be declining for both the Indian and white student populations. This is seen in how between 2010 and 2015 African student enrolment increased from 595 963 to 696 320 (14.4%); mixed race student enrolment increased from 58 219 to 62 186 (6.4%); the Indian student enrolment decreased from 54 537 to about 53 378 (2.2%); and the white student enrolment similarly declined from 178 346 to 161 739 (10.3%) (CHE 2015:3). Although there has been an increase in the formal access to HE, there has been an increase in the calls for shift in moving away from conceptualising HE transformation beyond the domain of the 'demographical revolution' as indicated by the proliferating student enrolment increases amongst the African and mixed race students, to meaningful transformation in relation to university structures, culture, architecture, curriculum, community engagement and the wider society. For this to happen, there need to be engagements with the academic programmes or curriculum (Boughey 2010; Scott 2009), improving academic literacy (McKenna 2004; 2010), improvement on assessment (Shay 2008) and institutional culture (Jansen 2004). However, this article focuses on curriculum and its responsiveness in the society. This is so because HE needs to go beyond the confines of university to the economic, political and social stratosphere in the society.

## The field of Political Science

One of the most contested fields that have come under intense scrutiny by the #Mustfall movements (fees must fall and Rhodes must fall) in the call for HE transformation in general and HE curriculum in particular is the field of Political Science. This article will argue that the field of Political Science has not been able to theorise sufficiently or address the political challenges in South Africa to ensure transformation both at the government-societal level and through the HE curricula. Political Science attempts to make sense of the fundamental and ethical questions that face human beings living in societies characterised by scarce resources and unequal power: these questions include 'how do we live as human beings?', 'how is the nation governed?', 'what kind of political and social structures are the most conducive for nation building and national development?', 'what is political obligation?', 'what counts as illegitimacy in political society, and under what conditions can civil

disobedience be justified in politics?' (Vincent 2012). The Greek philosopher Plato could, perhaps, be seen as the first scholar to think systemically about these questions and how the different forms of government often lead to different political outcomes (Hix & Whiting 2012). As Plato began looking at the Greek city-states, many scholars and early theorists such as Aristotle, Cicero, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Madison and others have all looked at questions of governance, democracy, political obligations, legitimacy and the role of the state in creating the conditions of possibility for what would count as the good life. For instance, Hobbes's state of nature begins a seminal intellectual trajectory in introducing the notion of the 'Leviathan' in Political Sciences as a way of looking at the relationship between citizens and the state (Hobbes 2006). According to Hobbes, life in the state of nature is 'short, nasty and brutish' outside of the existence of the state that regulates behaviour and ensures that citizens sacrifice their rights to the state, which, in turn, creates the conditions of possibility for them to be protected. This, for Hobbes, results in the social construction of the 'social contract' between the citizens and the state, in ceding some of their liberties to the state, and the state, in turn, giving citizens some rights. Looking at the South African state, an argument can be made *that* the social contract between the state and the people is increasingly being challenged on its very foundation. This is as a result of underemployment or unemployment, rising poverty, lack of transformation in the South African economy, graduate unemployment, violent service delivery protests as well as the use of violence as a mode of engagement in the country, especially in places like Mpumalanga and KZN. Here political killings have significantly increased in recent times. This could be seen as the state ceding its monopoly on violence and the social contract being constantly challenged, renegotiated and contested regarding what is acceptable and unacceptable in the South African political order. In other words, the Hobbesian Leviathan, that is, the state itself, is responsible for ensuring that the state of nature (anarchy, violence, impunity, etc.) is kept away.

One could similarly counterargue that the Hobbesian state of nature could be employed as a means of reasserting the modern democratic order. For instance, the current protests in Venezuela under the regime of President Nicholas Maduro could be seen as necessary for forcing the regime to reverse some of the dictatorial stances against the opposition and ensuring that Venezuela goes back to its values of the 'Chavismo'. Similarly, another interpretation could be that of the Arab Spring which erupted in the Middle East when Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in the Tunisian streets, set himself on fire in response to his produce being confiscated by the municipal officials. It was seemingly the collapse of the social contract in the Middle East that ensured that the struggles for democracy being profoundly felt in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and Iraq, needed the seeming 'state of nature' that Hobbes warned us about, for modern democratic regimes to be reinforced. While an argument can be made that a large number of

**TABLE 1:** South African higher education institutions that offer Political Science as a discipline or course or module.

Name of the university	Name of the discipline
University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)	Political Sciences
University of Pretoria (UP)	Political Sciences
Durban University of Technology (DUT)	Political Sciences
Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)	Political Sciences
Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)	Political Sciences
University of Limpopo (UL)	Political Sciences
Vaal University of Technology (VUT)	Political Sciences
University of Zululand	Political Science and Public Administration
North-West University (NWU)	Political Science
Stellenbosch University (SU)	Political Sciences
University of South Africa (UNISA)	Political Sciences
University of Free State (UFS)	Political Studies and Governance
University of Fort Hare (UFH)	Political Science and International Relations
Nelson Mandela University	Political Science and Conflict Transformation and Resolution

Middle Eastern states have not fundamentally changed into democratic and inclusive countries, they have nonetheless renegotiated the social contract between the citizens and the government, with some having been seen to be advancing towards government stability and others seeming to be near-failed states. For instance, authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen were successfully removed, with some government reforms being initiated in Iraq, Jordan and Bahrain, with some promises of changes being echoed from Saudi Arabia and Algeria as well. Tunisia could be seen as the most stable democratic country after the removal of the dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, with some concerns for Libya, Yemen and Iraq that are still crippled by a protracted violence, political instability and socio-economic destabilisations.

Of the 26 HEIs in South Africa, only about 14 universities or universities of technology offer Political Science (see Table 1).

Looking across the different disciplines and universities, the field of Political Science in South Africa is divided according to two major sub-discipline fields and themes – that is, Political Philosophy and International Relations (IRs). The focus on Political Philosophy tends to introduce students and give them a solid grounding in key theoretical and philosophical concepts that underpin the field, in particular, looking at the relationship between the state, government and citizens; how power, violence and marginality in society operate; political participation; freedom, justice and what the good life looks like in society. This tends to include courses or modules on electoral politics, looking at electoral democracy, its contested history as well as the philosophical underpinnings that legitimate it. This is seen with courses such as Nature and Scope of Political Science, Basic Politics, Political Processes and Behaviour, Political Development, Political Theory, Political Thought, Ideology and Political Theory, Selected Issues in Contemporary Politics and other similar courses. Although different in scope of focus and tackling different theoretical areas in the field of Political Sciences, the courses are intended to introduce students to

the field, giving them access to concepts such as liberty or freedom, justice, legitimacy, government, political obligations and other similar conceptual tools of the discipline.

The second sub-discipline focuses on the field of IRs. In this discipline, students begin to move from questions of justice, liberty, legitimacy and others into the domain of the international politics, looking at the various ways in which global politics work through power, trade, negotiations, diplomacy, contestations of power, the global village, unipolar and multi-polarity world and others. This is seen in the social construction of curriculum that seeks to respond to the struggles of unequal power distribution between the developing world and the so-called ‘post-industrial states’. This is seen with courses or modules such as Comparative Politics; Introduction to World Politics and Global Governance; Globalisation and World Politics; World Politics; Politics, Law and International Organisations; Security and Conflict Studies; the Emergence of Modern African States; North Africa and the Middle East Politics; International Conflict and Cooperation and others.

## Genopolitics in Political Science

Political Science has been criticised for lacking relevance in 21st century political society (Jaschik 2010). Scholars in the field have pondered about the role of Political Science in moving beyond the domain of looking at the narrow theoretical and critical role of the government, to engaging with the socio-political issues that concern the average citizen. Questions include the following: ‘what impact has the field had post-20th century?’, ‘how has the field contributed to the reimagining of social policy?’, ‘what role does language play in the manner in which *political scientists* theorise and communicate our knowledge production to the broader society’ and ‘has political science become irrelevant for us and to society?’ (Jaschik 2010). These fundamental questions raise several issues why the field of Political Science in most countries including South Africa has failed to answer. The discipline has been alienated from the society making its impact less profound and meaningful in the governance and administration of the nation. Alluding to this Flinders (2015) argues that if political science is to grow and thrive in the 21st century, it urgently needs to rediscover its political imagination and start articulating vital issues in the society. Rediscovering itself in South Africa would be the practical engagement with the political landscape within the nation and theorising the way forward on a variety of fronts. Trent (2011) articulates this challenge in Political Science most effectively when he states that there are a variety of challenges that Political Science is facing, amongst which are:

the viability of research paradigms; tensions between objective and normative approaches; keeping up with global change; Western and male predominance; making political theory reflect society; the fragmentation of the discipline; tendencies towards excessive *specialisation*; and relevance of politics, the media and the public. (pp. 194–195)

These challenges necessitated this article and created the need for further theorising, as well as the opening up of the curriculum debate on how relevance and practical engagement can be addressed in Political Science. This article therefore articulates the expansion of the Political Science curriculum in South Africa to include the sub-discipline of genopolitics as one way of addressing the socio-political realities and informing political and social policy on contemporary issues.

Biuso (2008) argues that the term 'genopolitics' was originally coined by James Fowler in 2005 to describe how genetics shape political behaviour. However, this area of inquiry started in 1974 according to Fomunyam (2017) who argues that genopolitics as an area of inquiry emerged in the limelight within the framework of scientific research with the publication of Eaves and Eysenck's (1974) article on how genetics influences social attitude and political behaviour. This idea was further expanded upon by Martin et al. (1986) who argues that social attitudes are transmitted from one person to another genetically. Eaves, Eysenck and Martin (1989) further enhanced this discourse on how genetics enhance political behaviour. Murray (2017) argues that genopolitics rests at the intersection of political science, molecular biology, genetics, psychology and statistics. It yields or offers a theory of political behaviour that can help explain the contemporary happenings in the society by generating testable hypotheses that are generally assessed with specialised genetic techniques. Genopolitics is premised on behavioural genetics, which looks at the potential for causal relations between genes and behaviour. This therefore means that the study of genopolitics within the disciplines of Political Science will help explain why African politicians behave the way they do, thereby ensuring that policies are enacted in ways that correspond to political behaviour.

Hatemi and McDermott (2012b) further argue that genetics does not only shape political behaviour, it also shapes or determines violence in politics. This is buttressed by Hatemi and McDermott (2012a) who argue that research in genopolitics indicated that:

... genetic influences could be statistically equated across populations and measures. This suggests that the relative importance of genetic influences remains common across cultures, but the relative influence of family and personal environments varies greatly across societies, time, and measures in explaining the variance in attitudes. (p. 526)

For Political Science to enhance relevance, the predisposition of political behaviour needs to be studied so that citizens can understand the kind of leaders they are voting into power, as well as helping politicians understand the citizens better so as to empower them for better leadership.

Furthermore, a critical look at this suggests that genes do not directly affect specific attitudes, but rather that genetic propensity influences the disposition and operation of an emotive condition, which then manifests towards many

targets, including strangers and out-groups, when elicited. Alford, Funk and Hibbing (2005:153) and Smith et al. (2011) articulate a variety of ways by which genetics could ultimately connect to political attitudes and argue that central to this connection are chronic dispositional preferences for mass-scale social rules, order and conduct which they label as political ideology. To this end, the heritability of specific issue propensities could also be the result of the heritability of general orientations towards bedrock principles. This means that there is a link between genetics and ideology as well as the ideological dispositions of young adults and their parents (Fomunyam 2017). The idea that ideology and political behaviour is further expanded on in a study conducted by Hatemi et al. (2014) which involved more than 12 000 participants from five countries in Europe bringing together nine different studies, conducted in five democracies, and sampled over the course of four decades. The findings of this study emphatically show that genetic factors play a role in the formation of political ideology, regardless of how ideology is constructed or measured, the place, era or the population sampled. The study, amongst other things, presents the findings of the first genome-wide association studies on political ideology using data from three samples: a 1990 Australian sample involving 6894 individuals from 3516 families, a 2008 Australian sample of 1160 related individuals from 635 families and a 2010 Swedish sample involving 3334 individuals from 2607 families. These results indicate that political ideology and behaviour constitutes a fundamental aspect of one's genetically informed psychological disposition.

## Genopolitics and the curriculum discourse in Political Science

Segura (2016) argues that there are three key challenges that confront Political Science that are at the heart of the questions on relevance. These are methodological fetishism, the over concentration on the demographic homogeneity and the disconnection of political science from important social and political problems. For Segura (2016), the preoccupation with methodology in political science over substantive, real-world research and its ability to contribute not only to knowledge production but also to the advancement of society has ensured that the discipline appears trapped within the methodological realm. This means that rather than attempting to come up with innovative and ground-breaking research on political behaviour and theorising on what this means for society, Political Science appears trapped in focusing on methodology and limiting the critical imagination of young and emerging political scientists in pushing the disciplinary boundaries of the field, in helping to think about society and its people differently, and possibly, counter-hegemonically to the 'methodological fetishism'. In the South African context, this means inducting new scholars into the already-mentioned Political Sciences conceptualisation of justice, liberty, autonomy, equality and others without applying them in relation to the current political context that is characterised by the increasing decline of the governing African National Congress (ANC), rapid rise of

unemployment within the youth, historical racial inequality all intersecting with state and private sector corruption that continue to shape and influence political behaviour within the population. Political Science will need to critically unpack these complex relationships while providing some theoretical and practical solutions on what is to be done to reimagine some of these challenges, as well as the possible solutions required by them.

Fomunyan (2017) further argues that the criticisms of genopolitics have mainly been methodological, whereby some political scientists focus on criticising the limitations of the methodology used, hence the discourse of methodological fetishism, rather than explore how to enhance this field of inquiry. This focus on seemingly methodological flaws downplays the central idea of the field on inquiry and the explanations it seeks to offer in the drive to enhance the relevance of Political Science. Expanding the Political Science curriculum in South African HEIs to include genopolitics would be creating a leeway for *knowledge construction* on some of the socio-political happenings in the nation, as well as better understanding in the enactment of policy. This is supported by Alford et al. (2005) who in their study articulate that political attitudes and behaviours are the results of genetic factors. They continue that:

genetics plays an important role in shaping political attitudes and ideologies but a more modest role in forming party identification; as such, they call for finer distinctions in theorizing about the sources of political attitudes. (p. 153)

They conclude that political *scientists* need to 'incorporate genetic influences, specifically interactions between genetic heritability and social environment, into models of political attitude formation'. If political science is going to provide guidance on vital political issues within the nation, like voter apathy, political rigidity, state capture, political loyalty, voter behaviour and policy imperatives, amongst others, then there is a need for greater exploration within the framework of genopolitics to know and understand the predispositions of both politicians and those they are leading to ensure that political action is not misguided but targeted. Rothstein (2015) argues that the causal link between how a state is governed and the well-being of citizens in most countries like South Africa, China and United States of America has been neglected because of the failure of political science to succinctly engage the state's administrative capacity and the quality of government and government officials in ferrying the nation to greener pastures. This can be exemplified with the current political landscape in South Africa. The Democratic Alliance and other opposition parties have been moving several motions of no confidence against the President of South Africa to no avail and have since then been making demands for early elections. The failures of such motions, as can be argued, do not reside on the merits of the motions (for even the Constitutional Court has ruled that the president violated his oath of office), but largely on the political behaviour of most ANC parliamentarians and politicians, as well as some opposition party leaders.

Genopolitics offers a lens through which political behaviour can be studied and understood, amongst others. It offers an opportunity for the construction of new meaning on a variety of issues in political science and an alternative lens through which these issues or challenges can be better understood and theorised to enhance the discourse of relevance and impact.

Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) argue that political scientists have focused on 'clientelism' or various forms of vote buying and have neglected what necessitates such behaviour or the mechanisms that have ensured that these challenges continue. This is supported by Rothstein (2015) who states that political *scientists* have neglected the 'detrimental effects of bad governance upon political legitimacy, prosperity and human well-being'. He adds that:

most political scientists are uninterested in explaining what the 'political machine' can do for improving human well-being ... and the lack of understanding that a very large part of human misery in today's world is caused by the fact that a majority of the world's population live under deeply dysfunctional government institutions. (p. 98)

This lack of interest is because of the preoccupation on methodological fetishism and how such topical issues can be engaged. Genopolitics is the gateway to such challenges but through teaching and learning and research as political *scientists* advance the discipline forward in South Africa.

Segura (2016) further argues that the attempt by Political Science to socially construct universal theories and concepts that transcend time and space (although welcomed in advancing critical thought) has nonetheless wrongly assumed some level of global homogeneity and has tended to silence the differences in the lived experiences of citizens across the world. This has made the discipline to lose national and contextual relevance in most nations. Peters, Pierre and Stoker (2015) argue that political science feels discomfort about the topic of relevance and this is because the Political Science profession is a fragmented one which brings to the fore a different set of divisions with competing sub-disciplinary foci and methodological preferences. This fragmentation, as well as the methodological preferences and sub-disciplinary foci, is different for each society. Therefore, developing and applying universal theories to contextual challenges is what creates the challenge of relevance.

Ollman (2015) adding to this argues that Political Science as a discipline is:

governed by five key myths: (1) that it studies politics; (2) that it is scientific; (3) that it is possible to study politics separated off from economics, sociology, psychology and history; (4) that the state in our democratic capitalist society is politically neutral, i.e. available as a set of institutions and mechanisms to whatever group wins the election; and (5) that political science, as a discipline, advances the cause of democracy. (p. 553)

These myths are what brings to the forefront the questions of relevance and this can be addressed by the enhancement of

the curriculum with genopolitics. Ollman (2015) citing a 1964 study of 500 political scientists further argues:

that two out of three of the political scientists who participated in the study 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that much scholarship in the discipline is 'superficial and trivial', and that concept formation and development is little more than hair splitting and jargon. (p. 553)

Genopolitics is one way of addressing these challenges because it engages the individuality of political behaviour, and how such behaviour is inherited by one generation from another.

Settle et al. (2017:3) support this by arguing that genopolitics and the growing body of research in this field of inquiry have shown that innate, individual differences affect the way *people* think and behave politically. So, universal political theories are worthless in this case. They continue that the role of personality in political behaviour and political participation broadly and voting specifically is heavily contextual and hereditary, making this process or phenomenon too complex to be understood from a universal perspective. Researching and exploring this issue from a genopolitical perspective would shed more light on the political realities in South Africa. *To this end*, 'other behaviours and attitudes correlated with voting also have heritable components, such as strength of partisanship, a sense of civic duty, and political interest' (Settle et al. 2017). Ksiazkiewicz, Ludeke and Krueger (2016) add that there is growing interest in how genes affect political beliefs, and for this to be understood, the role of genes in politics, the relationship between cognitive style (this is a set of personality traits that encompasses individual differences and this is often studied through need for cognition and need for cognitive closure) and various measures of political attitudes (issue-based ideology, identity-based ideology, social ideology, economic ideology, authoritarianism and egalitarianism) needs to be understood as hereditary. They add that the need for cognition and the need for cognitive closure are heritable and are linked to political ideology primarily, perhaps solely, because of shared genetic influences; and these links are stronger for social than for economic ideology.

Furthermore, findings provide a clearer understanding of the role of genes in politics. For example, in Southern Africa, the phenomenon of liberation movements or liberation parties staying in power after independence is under-theorised and not critically unpacked on what causes this phenomenon, its effects on society as well as some of the conceptual and practical tools required to begin to think beyond them. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (hereafter Zanu-PF), which assumed power since 1980 after taking over from the Ian Smith government of 1963, has maintained a firm grip on power and authority. Zanu-PF, led by Robert Mugabe, has political, economic and military control of the country, with a fragmented and divided opposition challenging their hegemony over the Zimbabwean political landscape. Similarly, in Angola, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has been in

power since independence from Portugal in 1975. The country's President José Eduardo dos Santos has been in power since 1979, and only stepped down on 23 August 2017 after a carefully orchestrated transition to his former defence minister Joao Lourenco. In Mozambique, the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) has been in power since independence from Portugal in June 1975. After a protracted civil society between FRELIMO and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), a multiparty system was enacted in 1994, and FRELIMO has continued its electoral dominance and power to this date. In South Africa, the ANC has been in power since the 1994 coalition government between the liberation movements and the then apartheid National Party. Although highly contested, the ANC still enjoys mass appeal and support from the country, with emerging opposition parties, grass roots movements, civil society and other public interest groups beginning to challenge the hegemonic influence of the party over the South African political landscape. Thus, political science needs to take cognisance of the above similarities in the liberation parties' patterns in Southern Africa while noting the nuanced and at times complex differences seen through colonial histories, contemporary challenges and others. This continuous dominance can only be understood from a genopolitical perspective where the hereditary nature of these traits can be studied and explained. Universal political theories cannot address this phenomenon which is unique within the Southern African region. Dulesh (2014) argues that the:

central idea of genopolitics then is that there are genes (DNA) directly shaping our innate moral foundations (intuitions), based on both individual and group levels of evolution, thus predestining our inherent socio-political preferences and moral capital. (p. 21)

The history of Southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular has ensured that some or most citizens have a genetic predisposition which goes with the desire to be free. Curriculum review is therefore vital to ensure that genopolitics is imbedded in the curriculum and African politics or South African politics is understood from a South African perspective.

Finally, Segura (2016) ponders on the need for political science to address the social and political problems confronting humanity in the present day. The political squabbles, economic inequality, gender-based violence, corruption, embezzlement, crime, state capture, political bastardisation and racial and identity politics warning on the South African landscape are not explicitly addressed by Political Science. Its failure to effectively address these issues has brought to the limelight the question of relevance of political science within the nation. Flinders (2015) argues that this lack of relevance is caused by three key issues: (1) a lack of focus on the bridging role of Political Science between politics 'as theory' and politics 'as practice'; (2) the inability to write and speak about political science in a way that conveys the raw dimensions of the political phenomenon in terms of power, emotion and meaning; and (3) a lack of

willingness to demonstrate the existence of a moral compass that may on some occasions demand that political scientists should play an active role in political debates or activities. To Flinders (2015:2), Political Science therefore is a discipline in search of a soul because as a discipline, 'it has lost its self-confidence and has, as a result become almost irrelevant and undoubtedly isolated from the day-to-day life it professes to study'. Rothstein (2015) concurs to this as he uses the example of clientelism as symptomatic of structural corruption that cripples the functioning of the state, and comments on how studies within this field have only provided comparative analysis between different countries on the social formations and operations of clientelism in the society, without moving to the domain of asking how other countries have actually confronted such a phenomenon and moved past it. This shift, from diagnostic to offering solutions, would have re-introduced the analysis into contemporary society and allowed Political Sciences to be applicable to the lived experiences of people. Seguro's argument for the closer alignment between Political Science and society is at the heart of this article.

Fraga, Givens and Pinderhughes (2011) add to this report that:

Political Science is often ill-equipped to address in a sustained way why many of the most marginal members of political communities around the world are often unable to have their needs effectively addressed by governments. Just as importantly, political science is also ill-equipped to develop explanations for the social, political, and economic processes that lead to groups' marginalization. This limits the extent to which political science is relevant to broader social and political discourse. (pp. 1-2)

Political Science as a field has been unable to offer solutions to contemporary political societies on challenges that citizens are facing. This article attempts to fill this gap through the introduction of genopolitics in the Political Sciences curriculum in South African universities. Genopolitics offers us the tools that *political scientists* need not only to theoretically and conceptually discuss the challenges that plague society – it also allows us to move to the domain of the actual, that is, it allows us to begin to offer some critical reflections on and solutions to some of the challenges that states and societies continue to grapple with. Putnam (2003) argues that attending to the concerns of the people and the society is not only an optional add-on for Political Science, but also an obligation that is fundamental in the pursuit of scientific truth. Dealing with local challenges and addressing them is one way of taking on this obligation in advancing the society forward. The inclusion of genopolitics in the Political Science curriculum would be one way of making it more responsive to the society. For example, Fomunyan (2017) uses genopolitics as a lens to understand the culture of violence in student protest in African universities. The lens provides fresh insight into an endearing problem and one way of tackling it. Similarly, the study of genopolitics would give political scientists the opportunity of understanding different societal challenges and crafting policy differently to address it.

Hatemi et al. (2014) aver that political ideology constitutes a fundamental aspect of one's genetically informed psychological disposition, although genetic influences on complex traits will be composed of thousands of markers of very small effects and will require extremely large samples to have enough power in order to identify specific polymorphisms related to complex social traits. Understanding the complex social traits in the South African society, as well as the traits exhibited by the people within the society, research and teaching in the field needs to encompass genopolitics to ensure that everything within this complex field is studied. Hatemi (2013) adds that the role of 'genes' on political attitudes has gained attention across disciplines, but person-specific experiences have yet to be incorporated into models that consider genetic influences. Furthermore, life events, such as losing one's job or suffering a financial loss, influence economic policy attitudes. This therefore means that genetics and environmental variance go a long way to influence support for unions, immigration, capitalism, socialism and property tax as moderated by financial risks. Researching how genes influence political behaviour as well as how the environment in which individuals find themselves like KZN or Western Cape in South Africa influences and shapes their genetic predispositions and to what extent does this happen is vital for the transformation of the society. It is therefore not surprising that KZN and Western Cape have been dominated politically over the years by the ANC and the Democratic Alliance, respectively. Studying such dynamics from a genetic perspective would not only enlighten the politicians in particular and the society in general and what kind of policies to develop to ensure the discontinuity of such propensities, but also how to better govern such places. To this end, genetic influences add stability, while environment cues change, and both of them need to be studied to produce better understanding.

Ojeda (2016) confirms this by arguing that prior research on the antecedents of political trust often focused on its relationship with other attitudes, but goes further to demonstrate that trust in government is partially heritable. As such if one's predecessors trust the political philosophy of a particular party, their offspring have the propensity to do the same. This suggests that in countries like South Africa where political trust is gradually dissipating because of gross misappropriation of power and state capture, studies are needed in this area to better understand the populace and how to improve their well-being. What better way to do this than to include genopolitics into the Political Science curriculum? Ojeda (2016:86) adds that heritability is dynamic and the influence of genes on attitudes is not static, but 'can estimate change ... and this is particularly true in political science, where gene-environment interactions have been limited to proximate life events or social interactions'. Therefore, macro-level genetic interaction studies in South Africa would be very useful for political scientists and the nation as a whole because they will 'demonstrate how genetic underpinnings of behaviours change in response to political events or policy outputs' (Ojeda 2016). Making genopolitics part of the Political Science curriculum therefore would be a

step in the right direction in ensuring societal relevance and improving understanding and the transformation of the society.

## Conclusion

Genopolitics studies the genetic basis of political behaviour and attitudes, which, in turn, informs government policy and actions of a nation. Political behaviours and attitudes form the crust of politics because it informs what politicians do, how they do it and why they do it the way they do. Understanding political behaviour in South Africa from a genetic perspective would provide an added impetus and resonance on how to forge a new path for the nation. To this end, four key considerations can be drawn from this article to make three key recommendations for the advancement of scholarship in this area. Firstly, genopolitics offers the discipline of Political Science in South Africa the opportunity to breath new meaning and understanding unto an otherwise relatively 'dormant' (in terms of relevance) discipline in South African HE. Secondly, genopolitics offers the discipline of Political Science to decolonise the discipline through rigorous research and teaching in this area to ensure that the genetic propensities of the citizenry are understood and taken into consideration when talking about social policy. As genetic predisposition can only be understood from a contextual perspective, Eurocentric views and understandings cannot be enforced on African students to keep them colonised. Genopolitics offers an opportunity for the decolonising of the discipline.

Thirdly, Political Science curriculum can no longer afford to remain unresponsive to the society as well as remain obsessed with methodological fetishism, over concentration on the demographic homogeneity and the disconnection of Political Science from important social and political problems. Reviewing the curriculum to include genopolitics would be the first step to ensuring that these obsessions become a thing of the past. Fourthly, a genetic understanding of political behavioural patterns and genetic predispositions of individuals to perform certain actions like violence would not only be useful but also critical in shaping the existing political landscape of the nation, and providing foresight on future directions for the society as well as the actions and reactions of the people under certain circumstances.

In the light of the above discussion, this article makes three key recommendations for action and scholarship in the discipline of Political Science. Firstly, genopolitics is *relatively* a new area of inquiry and offers an opportunity for South African universities and research institutions to tap into it, and not only shape the debate going forward but also to understand its people better. Secondly, the South African political landscape is plagued by a myriad of challenges, which has defiled other educational panacea. *Political scientists* should explore these challenges using this lens to provide insights on glaring political issues and policies that remain largely non-transformational. More research is

needed to expand the field, methodological rigour and relevance in the South African society within the discipline. Lastly, universities such as the University of Exeter, University of New York, University of California, University of Oxford, Duke University, Harvard University, McGill University, University of Toronto and University of Wisconsin, just to name a few, have already included genopolitics as part of the Political Science curriculum and are enhancing the discourse and discipline forward. Political scientists in South Africa should therefore pick up the challenge and expand their discipline so as not only to converge the curriculum but also to ensure curriculum divergence as well as the complete decolonisation of the discipline in the years ahead.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Authors' contributions

M.N.H. has taught Political Science for a number of years and brings to the research project disciplinary knowledge and understanding of the field. M.N.H. focused on the conceptual understanding of Political Science and the historical and contemporary challenges that confront the discipline. K.G.F. has published on *Geopolitics*, and brought to the critical analysis a disciplinary understanding of genopolitics, and how it could be incorporated in the South African higher education landscape in responding to some of the critiques levelled at Political Science.

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