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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Brazilian Journal of African Studies is a biannual publication, in digital and printed format, dedicated to the research, reflection and propagation of original scientific articles and book reviews by PhD researchers and professors, with emphasis on the analysis of International Relations, Organizations and Integration, Security and Defense, Political Systems, History, Geography, Economic Development, Social Structures and their Transformations and Schools of Thought. RBEA is essentially academic, linked to the Brazilian Centre for African Studies (CEBRAFRICA) of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS).

The BJAS has as target audience researches, professors and students interested in the specificities of the African continent and its international insertion. Alongside such perspective, the Journal intends to expand the debate about the Brazilian projection world widely, the Brazilian cooperation efforts (including in the Defense field) with the African countries in the South Atlantic perimeter and the construction of a regional identity in face of a scenario of geopolitical transformations.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Analúcia Danilevicz Pereira

June/2022

The Brazilian Journal of African Studies (BJAS), in this issue, reaffirms its purpose of academic and intellectual cooperation among Africanists around the world and reinforces the perspective of analysis of the Geopolitical South. Thus, we present articles authored by scholars from Brazil, China, Canada, Cuba, South Africa, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, New Zealand and Mexico on different themes that assess the potentialities, but also the challenges produced by international and regional crises.

During the Cold War, Africa was a predominantly European area of influence, with France playing the role of gendarme. With the negotiated settlement of regional conflicts at the turn of the 1980s to the 1990s, ironically, the former African Marxist states, formerly allied with the USSR and enemies of France, turned to the U.S., that opened a space of direct influence on the continent. This attitude revealed the depth of regional rivalries between the Marxist and pro-French regimes.

However, the constitution of African capitalism, in the wake of the collapse of leftist movements and governments, has produced the emergence of new contradictions and political realities, generating conditions for the articulation of new social actors. Thus, the continent began to reassert itself on the international scene at the same time that the world was going through a transition and a structural reorganization. Recently, the resolution condemning the Russian invasion against Ukraine was approved by the United Nations General Assembly. Among the 181 countries that voted at the meeting for or against the measure, a large part of the abstentions were from African countries. One can deduce that, despite strong Western pressure, a significant part of the African states opted for diplomatic autonomy, under the argument that “the resolution did not create an environment conducive to diplomacy, dialogue, and mediation”.

Issue 13 of the BJAS features nine articles. Mamoudou Gazibo analyzes the Belt and Road Initiative, Africa's infrastructure policies, and their impacts in the article entitled "Learning from each other: the *Belt and Road* Initiative and infrastructure policy in Africa". Li Anshan's analysis, meanwhile, deals with China-Africa cooperation in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, proposed by Xi Jinping in 2013, and the Build Back Better World (B3W), proposed by Joe Biden in 2021 in "China-Africa in the context of BRI-B3W."

David Mouzo Williams, in the article "Neoextractivism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. Between neoliberal globalization, regional trends and local particularities", addresses the formation of extractivist enclaves in the Democratic Republic of Congo, making a comparative study with the Republic of Angola, in order to account for the regional trends that make them similar and the local particularities that distinguish the characteristics of neoliberal insertions. Following this, Ibrahim Bangura, Temitope Oriola, and Henry Mbawa deal with "Corruption, Underdevelopment and the Masses in Africa".

The debate on how the civil-military relationship has been constructed in the context of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is presented in the article by Guilherme de Araujo Grigoli. Based on the theoretical construction of civil-military relations, the author discusses the effectiveness of the relationship between military and civil components in all its multiplicity. Yoslán Silverio González, in "Political crisis and terrorism in Somalia: from 'disintegration' to 'institutionalization'", analyzes how a gradual and weak process of restructuring political institutions in Somalia was achieved, based on a relative balance of power and political stabilization, despite security problems such as terrorism and inter-clan contradictions.

The process of the conquest of Cuban and Angolan air supremacy over the South African air force is analyzed by Johny Santana de Araújo in the article "The Cuban air campaign in Angola 1988-1989". According to the author, DAAAFAR, by denying the SAAF's action, took away from the SAAF the historical air superiority enjoyed for years, and states that the action of Cuban air power in conjunction with Angola was a determining condition for the success of the ground offensive of the Angolan and Cuban armies on the border with Namibia.

In the text "COVID-19 and securitization of its threats in sub-Saharan Africa", Francis N. Okpaleke, Al Chukwuma Okoli, and Magnus C. Abraham-Dukuma propose an approach based on the critical exploration of securitization theory in examining SSA responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. We

argue that the securitization of COVID-19 in Africa is overstated, with pessimistic generalizations that do not consider the local conditions and efforts of governments and the African Center for Disease Control in managing the pandemic. Finally, Monika dos Santos analyzes "Climate change and COVID-19 in the Kruger to Canyons biosphere region, South Africa and Amazonas, Brazil". For the author, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many of the economic and social difficulties that South Africa and Brazil already face; in comparison to Brazil, South Africa's overall response to the pandemic can be considered a highlight.

The BJAS publishes a bilingual electronic version (Portuguese and English). Thus, we expect the contribution of colleagues from Brazil and abroad, with whom we intend to establish links for the deepening of knowledge and the construction of a vision of the South about the African continent and its relations with them.

We would like to thank the Editorial Assistant, Mariana Vitola, and the support of Cecília Pereira, Isabela Marcon, Larissa Teixeira, Luiza Flores and Rafaela Serpa. We would also like to thank the CEBRAFRICA team, that worked on the translation of the articles, and Gerson Carlos Soares da Silva Filho, for his collaboration in the translation and revision of the English texts.

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER: THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY IN AFRICA

Mamoudou Gazibo¹



Introduction

In May 2013, on its 50th anniversary, the African Union (AU, formerly the Organization of African Unity) issued a declaration reaffirming its commitment to a “Pan African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena”(Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want 2015, 2). Then, the Commission of the Union and other development agencies were tasked with translating this Vision into a policy. The process led to the drafting of an ambitious document titled “*Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*” in 2015. The document outlines seven “aspirations” (see below) and a fifty-year timeframe in several domains, including peace and security, economic growth and development, and democracy and human rights. To achieve these aspirations, the document promotes a continental approach based on the ideas of unity and “strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics” (*Ibid*). In this perspective, integrating and interconnecting African countries, as well as harmonizing their system of governance, is seen as key.

About the same period, in September 2013, Chinese president Xi Jinping announced two new projects, namely the resuscitation of the ancient Silk Road in the form of a new *Silk Road Economic Belt*; and the building of a new *21st Century Maritime Silk Road*. These two projects merged to become the *One Belt, One Road* (OBOR), and later the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI). Interestingly, the BRI became an official policy in 2015, the same year the

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AU released the Agenda 2063. In addition, the BRI and the Agenda 2063 intersect, given that the former is oriented toward “policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties” (Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland n.d.).

Since their inception, the Agenda 2063 and the BRI have evolved to include several other aspects and new initiatives, such as the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and the Digital Silk Road, respectively. Moreover, well before they became the main official policies in both contexts, other seemingly compatible initiatives existed in Africa and in China, as for example the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD 2001) and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC 2000). Both initiatives put a strong emphasis on cooperation, integration and infrastructures (a source might be useful). Two questions come out of what precedes: is the simultaneity of these initiatives random or coordinated? Given the centrality of infrastructures in Africa’s continental development plans promoted by the African Development Agency (formerly, NEPAD), the Agenda 2063, and the Africa Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), to what extent has the BRI, whose main focus is infrastructure connectivity, inspired (or been inspired by) them?

My hypotheses here are that in many respects, especially regarding infrastructure, the BRI and Africa’s continental initiatives on infrastructure are the product of a co-constructed learning process between Africa and China throughout their interactions since the early 2000s. Furthermore, as a projection of China’s initiatives in Africa on a global scale, the BRI is consistent with Africa’s continental development policies and even probably inspired by them given the anteriority of the latter. In contrast to what most authors think (Gaye 2006; Taylor 2006), this argument stresses Africa’s agency, which changes China as much as China changes Africa (Kuo 2018; Ayers 2013).

To defend this argument, the paper examines the congruence between the BRI and Africa’s infrastructure policies by cross-tracing the ideational process in the two contexts. This is carried out by looking for cross-references in Africa’s main documents (namely the NEPAD, the FOCAC, and the Agenda 2063), on the one hand, and the BRI, on the other. The paper then illustrates this by briefly examining some of the BRI and AU bilateral projects.

Africa's integration through infrastructures policies and the BRI: tracing the ideational process

Africa faces tremendous challenges in terms of infrastructure (under) development. With the highest population growth rate, its population of 1.1 billion is expected to double by 2050 (Muggah and Kilcullen 2016; Shepard 2019). By 2025, more than 100 cities in Africa will contain over one million people (Shepard 2019). Yet, mainly due to the lack of adequate infrastructure and weak intra-regional trade, Africa is still the less electrified continent and one whose cross-continental trade is still fragmented. Indeed, as the World Bank demonstrates, “closing the infrastructure quantity and quality gap relative to the best performers in the world could increase growth of GDP per capita by 2.6% per year” (The World Bank 2017). The chief executive officer of NEPAD, Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, concluded that this situation “cut(s) business productivity by as much as 40%, making Africa – in spite of its enormous mineral and other natural resources – the region with the lowest productivity levels in the world” (Mayaki n.d.).

This infrastructure gap is not new. By the end of the nineties, new approaches to development emerged on the continent, namely the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan, promoted by the former South African President Thabo Mbeki (Mbeki 2001), and the Omega Plan for Africa proposed by his Senegalese counterpart of the day, former President Abdoulaye Wade (Wade 2008). These initiatives, which aimed at laying the foundations for an “African renaissance”, merged to give birth first to the New African Initiative (NIA) and, in October 2001, to the NEPAD. This process took place about the same time that the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) was being transformed into the African Union, whose Constitutive Act was adopted in July 2000 in Lomé, Togo. The Union then endorsed NEPAD – later transformed into the African Union Development Agency- as the new framework guiding African development priorities (Amaïzo 2001).

The Initiative included an ideological element, stemming in particular from the Mbeki proposal, that paved the way for the motto of “African solutions to African problems”. Essentially, it is the insistence on the responsibility of the Africans regarding both the causes and solutions to the African crises. For sure, this plan points out to slavery, colonization, neo-colonialism, and the role of multinationals as some of the structural causes of Africa's miseries. But the responsibility of the African elites is also laid bare. It urges Africans to produce a new discourse and to rethink their place in the world. The Initiative also included an economic priority, mainly

driven by the Omega proposal (of President Wade), in particular regarding the financing of the sectors identified as crucial, among which infrastructure development. NEPAD, “envisaged as a long-term vision of an African-owned and African-led development programme”, has several goals, mainly “to achieve and sustain an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of over 7 percent per annum for the next 15 years” (NEPAD 2001, 14). To achieve these goals, “Africa needs to fill an annual resource gap of 12 percent of its GDP, or US \$64 billion. This will require increased domestic savings, as well as improvements in the public revenue collection systems. However, the bulk of the needed resources will have to be obtained from outside the continent” (NEPAD 2001, 37).

From NEPAD to FOCAC

Of the six sectoral priorities identified in the NEPAD initiative², “bridging the infrastructure gap” in terms of “roads, highways, airports, seaports, railways, waterways, and telecommunications facilities” comes first. Two points made in the document are of crucial importance for our investigation. First, the promoters of the plan regret the fact that “in many African countries, the colonial powers built the infrastructure to facilitate the exportation of raw materials from Africa and the importation of industrial goods into Africa”. As exposed in the table below, they then “recognised that, if infrastructure is to improve in Africa, private foreign finance is essential to complement the two major funding methods, namely credit and aid” (NEPAD 2001, 22).

NEPAD: Filling the Infrastructure Gap

Current Situation	Ambition
Africa: 30% of the world’s mineral resources, but in an energy crisis.	NEPAD ambitions to bring production and consumption areas closer together through a pipeline project.
The electrification rate in Africa is 30% (two times less than the world average). Hydroelectric potential is used only at 6% of its capacity.	NEPAD is setting up two major projects aimed at the rehabilitation of the Inga dam (DRC) and the strengthening of high voltage lines.

² The five others are: human resource development initiative including reversing the brain drain, agriculture, environment, culture, science and technology.

Current Situation	Ambition
It is more expensive to import a product from an African country than from Asia.	NEPAD plans to develop a road network, rehabilitate existing railways and build an 8,000 km trans-African rail in order to facilitate trade between countries and within countries.
95% of African foreign trade is carried out by sea or rivers	NEPAD ambitions to increase and modernize ports and services

Source: Elaborated by the author.

NEPAD issued in 2006 an infrastructure Medium to Long Term Strategic Framework (MLTSF). This framework, along with the AU Infrastructure Master Plan initiatives, was later replaced by the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), to “develop a vision and strategic framework for the development of regional and continental infrastructure (Energy, Transport, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Trans-boundary Water Resources) (African Development Bank n.d)”. The African Development Bank, in coordination with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the NEPAD (now African Union Development Agency) Secretariat, is tasked with the execution of the PIDA initiative (*Ibid*).

While conceiving NEPAD, African countries began to be involved in another collective endeavor by attending the first forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing in October 2000. Since then, FOCAC has become an institutionalized meeting that is held triennially, alternately in China and in an African country. Each summit comes out with a declaration and an Action Plan for the three years ahead and provides the opportunity to assess what has been done since the previous meeting³. Since 2002, FOCAC has had a monitoring mechanism based on meetings between the Chinese Follow-up Committee and African officials (Gazibo and Mbabia 2012).

Most of the objectives pursued by the NEPAD and the Agenda 2063 were progressively taken into account in the FOCAC Action Plans over the years. The 2015 Johannesburg summit, the first to be held since the inception of the Agenda 2063, affirms, in the preamble of its Action Plan (2016-2018), that “The Chinese side appreciates the positive role of the African Union Commission since it became a member of the FOCAC, and will also continue to strengthen cooperation with and support for the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)... The two sides agree to actively implement the Memorandum of Understanding on the Promotion of China-Africa Cooperation

³ See the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Website: <http://www.focac.org/eng/>.

in the Fields of Railway, Highway, Regional Aviation Networks and Industrialization...” (Johannesburg Action Plan 2016-2018, points 2.4.4 and 2.4.5).

The reference to the call made in the NEPAD initiative for “outside investment” in infrastructure seemed clearly echoed in the Action Plan. Indeed, the Johannesburg Action Plan further stated that:

The two sides agree that underdeveloped infrastructure is one of the bottlenecks hindering independent and sustainable development of Africa. The two sides will take concrete measures and give priority to encourage Chinese businesses and financial institutions to expand investment through various means, such as Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT), to support African countries and the African flagship projects, in particular the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative, in their efforts to build railroad, highway, regional aviation, ports, electricity, water supply, information and communication and other infrastructure projects, support African countries in establishing 5 transportation universities and facilitate infrastructure connectivity and economic integration in Africa (Johannesburg Action Plan 2016-2018, 3.3.1).

The document refers only briefly to “the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road” and the willingness of the two parties to “promote mutually beneficial cooperation in the blue economy” (Johannesburg Action Plan 2016-2018, 3.5.1).

The BRI as the new framework for FOCAC and the Agenda 2063

In 2018, following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on the BRI (then called the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road) by many African countries, FOCAC was held in Beijing, which seemed to have been organized to give more visibility to the BRI. For instance, while the Johannesburg Action Plan (2016-2018) made only marginal reference to the BRI, the Beijing Action plan (2019-2021) placed it at the cornerstone of China’s engagement in Africa. The preamble of the declaration insists that:

“the two sides ... decide to... jointly advance Belt and Road cooperation... [They] will take the Belt and Road Initiative as an opportunity to strengthen multi-dimensional, wide-ranging and in-depth cooperation for mutual benefits and common development...Africa is an important partner in Belt and Road cooperation, and [the two sides] pledge to leverage the strengths of the Forum and support China and Africa in jointly building the Belt and Road” (Beijing Action Plan 2019-2021, 1.3; 1.4 and 1.5).

The junction between the BRI philosophy and Africa's integration through infrastructure development elaborated in the PIDA appears clearly in the Beijing 2019-2021 Action Plan. The later states that:

“The two sides will, in view of the cross-border and trans-regional infrastructure development plans of Africa, and by taking into consideration the real needs of African countries and economic and social returns of relevant projects, explore and advance cooperation on projects promoting continental, regional and sub-regional connectivity” (Beijing Action Plan 2019-2021, 3.3.2).

In addition, the joint declaration issued after the summit stated that African leaders “expressed support and appreciation for the Belt and Road Initiative, believing that the joint building of the Belt and Road by Africa and China will speed up African regional integration” (Beijing Declaration 2018). Considering the spirit of the seven Aspirations of the Agenda 2063, one can easily notice its congruence with the BRI framework. Ehizuelen and Abdi (2017, 294) contend that “the BRI could be positive and synchronized with the goals of the Agenda, but it demands commitment, community consultations, respect for peaceful protest, openness to projects repudiation, among others”.

Agenda 2063: the Seven Aspirations

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Aspiration 2: An integrated continent; politically united and based on the ideals of PanAfricanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance.

Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

Aspiration 4: A peaceful and secure Africa.

Aspiration 5: An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.

Aspiration 6: An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

Aspiration 7: Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner

Source: AGENDA 2063, First ten-year implementation plan 2013-2023.

Infrastructure and connectivity since the inception of the Agenda 2063

Africa has been back on the development agenda since 2000, the same year the first FOCAC was organized in Beijing. In 2018, its GDP achieved a 3.5% growth. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was expected to grow by 4.1% in 2020, making the African growth more robust than that of most of other regions (African Economic Outlook 2019, v)⁴. Of course, the pandemic hit African economies hard (IMF 2021)⁵. In the context of the pre-pandemic good economic record, and inspired by China and other emerging countries' experiences, Africa and African states have engaged in ambitious development plans, whether at the national or continental levels. Among other initiatives, the African Union has transformed the former New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) into a development agency in charge of carrying out projects such as the program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). Moreover, the Union has put forward a more comprehensive, yet targeted vision encapsulated in the Agenda 2063. Africa seeks to develop through infrastructure building and free trade on one hand. On the other hand, the Belt and Road Initiative is oriented toward policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure and unimpeded trade. The question here is to what extent the BRI fosters African ambitions in terms of continental approaches to development, especially on infrastructure and commercial development. To answer this question, we explore the issue of infrastructure development where China and Africa seem to share the same vision.

Infrastructure development is crucial if Africa is to develop and China's BRI is of particular importance here, because, well before the BRI was announced, Beijing has been a driving force behind the infrastructure initiatives in Africa, as the Tazara Railway proves (Snow 1988). Today, around 90% of African exports are through ports (Devermont 2019). Improving ports facilities is a priority when it comes to infrastructure investments. Some

4 A closer look indicates that East Africa's growth is the fastest one – 5.9% in 2019 and 6.1% is expected in 2020. Between 2010 and 2018 the region grew by 6% and Djibouti, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania achieved growth above average. Central Africa is recovering after years of instability (African Development Bank 2019).

5 According to the IMF, "sub-Saharan Africa will be the world's slowest growing region in 2021. Estimates now suggest that sub-Saharan Africa contracted by -1.9 percent in 2020. This is better than anticipated last October (-3.0 percent) but is still the worst result on record. Looking ahead, the region will grow by 3.4 percent in 2021, up from 3.1 percent projected in October (...) However, per capita output is not expected to return to 2019 levels until after 2022". (IMF 2021).

studies indicate that to move a single container (or any other unit of volume) is 1.5 to 3.5 times more expensive from Africa than for high-volume trade routes over a comparable distance (PwC 2019). Investment in infrastructure means more access to African goods in the foreign market, more revenues, and better economic performances. Regarding this, Africa's Agenda 2063 embodies most of the objectives outlined earlier in the NEPAD document as explained above.

The Agenda's goal is to define key programmes and initiatives that will accelerate Africa's economic growth and development in the next 50 years. Infrastructure development is on the driver seat in the Agenda, namely "the African Integrated High Speed Network", which "aims at connecting all African capitals and commercial centres through the Africa High Speed Train to facilitate movement of goods, factor services and people and also relieve transport congestion of existing and future systems" (Agenda 2063, 11); "the African Passport and Free Movement of People" to "ensure free movement of all African citizens in all African countries"; and "the Implementation of the Grand Inga Dam Project" to "ensure access of all Africans to clean and affordable electricity" (Agenda 2063, 12). Finally, the Agenda 2063 seeks to implement a "Single African Air Transport Market" "to facilitate air transportation in Africa" (Agenda 2063, 13).

As stated above, the African Development agency and the African Development Bank are responsible for implementing the infrastructure program in coordination with the AU commission. The vision presented is perfectly congruent with the "connectivity" leitmotiv of the BRI. According to PIDA (n.d.) documents, for example:

NEPAD identified infrastructure as one of the main drivers of economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa and understood that the present state of infrastructure, as well as the gap between Africa and most other regions of the world, constituted a serious handicap to the improvement of African economies' productivity and competitiveness. (AU-PIDA, n.d.).

To close Africa's infrastructure gap, PIDA plays a crucial role in the achievement of AU's objectives set by the Agenda 2063 concerning integration and transcontinental facilities. PIDA set a Priority Action Plans (PAP), that establishes specific actions in short and medium term. According to a PIDA report, there are 51 cross-border programmes embodied (AU-PIDA-n.d.). The BRI is involved in some of them as exposed below:

Some of the ongoing projects from NEPAD/PIDA:

Project	Funding from BRI?				
Implementation study for modernization of the trans-Maghreb rail (TRANSPORT)	no				
Ruzizi IV (ENERGY)	no				
ECREEE/Ecowas Feasibility study -Women in a changing energy value chain in west Africa (ENERGY)	no				
North-South Corridor Roads Rehabilitation (TRANSPORT)	no				
330KV Nigeria-Benin Interconnector Reinforcement Project (ENERGY)	no				
Construction Of The Ubangi River Bridge	no				
The Implementation Of The Missing Links In The Bangui-Kisangani-Bujumbura And Kisangani-Kampala Road Corridors, And For Facilitation Of Transport, Trade And Transit Along Both Corridors (TRANSPORT)	no				
Route Multinationale KRIBI-CAMPO-BATA (TRANSPORT)	no				
Central Africa Fibre Optic Backbone Project CAB Gabon (ICT)	no				
Appui CEEAC Mise en Œuvre du PACOB-PP (WATER)	no				
INGA-3 (ENERGY)	no but has China money (75%)				
Multinational Orange-Senou River Basin (WATER)	no				
Feasibility Study Of The Construction And Concession Of Buba Mineral And Commercial Deep Sea Port In Guinea-Bissau (TRANSPORT)	not clear but has bids from China				
Kampala-Juba-Addis Djibouti Road Corridor (TRANSPORT)	no				
Multinational Uganda and Tanzania Roads project (TRANSPORT)	no				
THE REHABILITATION OF SELECTED ROAD SECTION PHASE II: Detailed Architectural and Engineering Design of Manyovu/Mugina One - Stop Border Post (CSBP) & Preparation of Tender Documents (TRANSPORT)	no				
Rehabilitation of Selected Road Sections of the Central Corridor in Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi (TRANSPORT)	no				
Lamu Port development: Transaction advisory services and technical assistance – Phase 1 (TRANSPORT)	no (this phase) because the LAPSET/Lamu port corridor has been under BRI				
Lake Tanganyika Transport Corridor (TRANSPORT)	no				
Kolwezi-Solwezi Power Interconnection (ENERGY)	no				
Feasibility Study Of The Construction Of A Deep Sea Port In The North-West Region Of The Republic Of Guinea (TRANSPORT)	no (but it's possible that this port is going to be build under BRI)				
Public Private Partnership (PPP) Advisory Services for the SONGWE River Basin Development Programme (SRBDP) (WATER)	no				
Mozambique -Zambia 400KV Power interconnection Project (ENERGY)	no				
Angololo Water Resources Development Project – Feasibility Studies, Detailed Design, Preparation Of Tender Documents, Esia And Rap (WATER)	no				

Source: Compiled by the author.

The BRI in motion in Africa since 2018

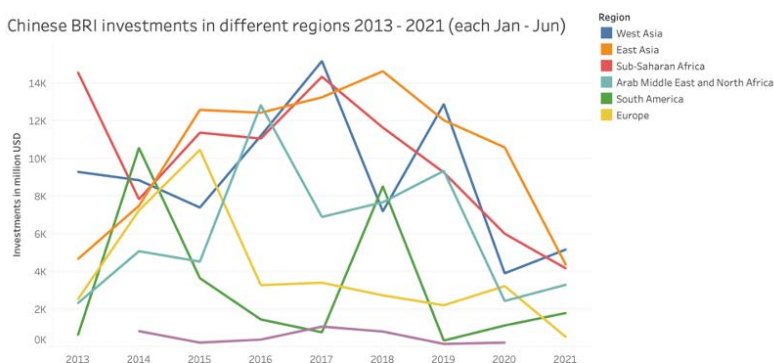
The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is huge. As of 23 June 2021, according to Wikipedia, 206 cooperation documents have been signed with 140 countries and 32 international organizations. The BRI aims to build ports, railways, roads and logistics chains in a space that englobes Asia, Africa and Europe (Chiele et al. 2017). The ambitions of the project are impressive: connect 4.4 billion people (65% world's habitants); one third of worldwide GDP, 29% of global economy and almost a quarter of the entire products and services transported in the world (Ehizuelen and Abdi 2017). Worldwide, China has 3116 projects under the BRI (DW 2019).

In Africa, China's presence is fast changing the face of the continent, especially in terms of infrastructure development projects, as shown by the figure below. Daan Roggeveen, a specialist in African urbanization, told Forbes that right now any building above three floors or any road longer than 3km is most likely to be built and/or financed by China (Shepard 2019). That says a lot about how China is helping African countries. Shepard (2019) cites McKinsley data according to which “around 10.000 Chinese owned firms are operating in the continent and the Chinese government announced that

US\$ 1 billion will be destined to BRI-Africa infrastructure and another US\$ 60 billion will be destined to an African aid package”.

In 2018, the FOCAC Summit was marked by the establishment of the African Union Representative Mission in Beijing, representing a step forward in the China-Africa relations (Serpa and Jung 2019; Beijing Declaration 2018). It is interesting to note that China has signed Memoranda of Understanding with the African Union on cross-continental infrastructures (railways, highways and aviation, as well as on the high-speed train networks, which are also all flagship projects for Africa's Agenda 2063). Also, they have MoU in power generation under NEPAD's guidance (Breuer 2017; Johnston 2016).

Chinese BRI investments in different regions 2013 - 2021 (each Jan - Jun)

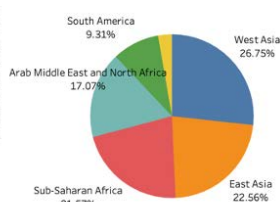


Growth/decline of BRI investments in different regions (comparing to Jan-Jun)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sub-Saharan Africa	45%	-3%	30%	-19%	-20%	-35%	-31%
Arab Middle East and Nor...	-11%	183%	-46%	11%	22%	-74%	35%
West Asia	-16%	51%	35%	-53%	79%	-70%	32%
South America	-65%	-60%	-47%	992%	-96%	235%	58%
East Asia	68%	-1%	7%	10%	-18%	-12%	-59%
Europe	44%	-69%	4%	-20%	-19%	-46%	-84%
North America	-73%	70%	177%	-24%	-80%	44%	-100%

(c) 2021 IIGF Green BRI Center (data based on AEI and others)

Chinese BRI investment 2021 by region



Source: Nedopil Wang (2021).

The 2018 FOCAC Action Plan (2019-2021) witnessed the inclusion of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) in the two parties' cooperation and the reinforcement of the partnerships between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Agenda 2063, with an investment of US\$ 60 billion (Serpa and Jung 2019). The Beijing Declaration, for example, affirms that:

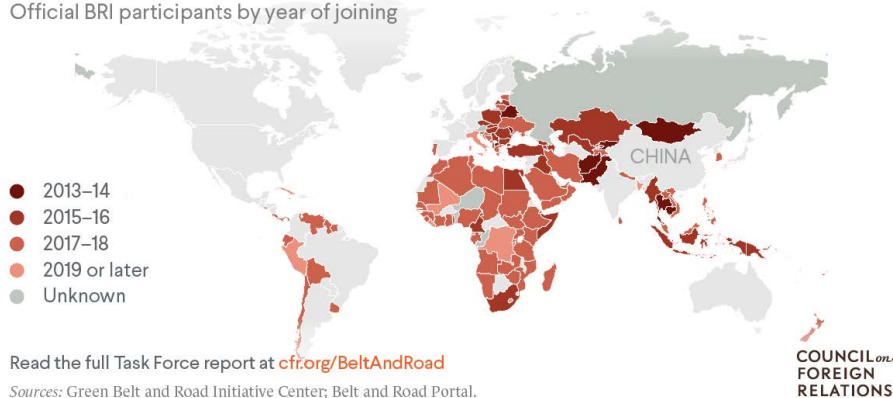
‘Africa appreciates the support that China has rendered to its railway development, particularly the related goals set forth by the AU Agenda 2063 and welcomes China as a strategic partner in its railway development. Africa welcomes more investment from China in its tourism industry and looks to further expand China-Africa aviation cooperation [...]’ (Beijing Declaration, point 13.3)

The 2018 FOCAC Summit also welcomed three more countries (Republic of Gambia, Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe and Burkina Faso). By 2021, 46 African countries have already signed MoUs with China to be part of the BRI. In North Africa, for example, a region with an important role connecting Asia, Africa and Europe, China has now a Memorandum of Understanding with all of the Maghreb countries (Ghafar and Jacobs 2019). The figure below shows countries that have signed the MoU on BRI with China.

BRI countries in Africa *

The Belt and Road Initiative Has Gone Global

Official BRI participants by year of joining



*** In addition:** Burkina Faso (in progress), Rep. of Congo, Gambia, Niger, São Tomé and Príncipe, Togo.

Many African countries have begun the implementation of the projects signed under the BRI framework (Herbing and Li 2019).

Some main BRI projects in Africa

Djibouti	Investment in Djibouti Port (military base); Addis-Ababa-Djibouti Railway and Ethiopia-Djibouti water pipeline.
Egypt	Electric train system for its new capital ; 6,000 megawatt coal-fired electricity-generating plant in Hamra-wein (postponed).
Ethiopia	the Addis-Ababa-Djibouti Railway and Ethiopia-Djibouti water pipeline.
Kenya	Mombasa–Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (partly stopped).
Nigeria	Abuja-Kaduna railway line.
Sierra Leone	Mamamah airport (cancelled).
Uganda	Karuma Hydropower Project and Isimba Hydroelectric Power Station.

Source: Compiled by the author from various sources.

Africa is an important buyer of China's industrial overcapacities – coal, cement, steel, glass, etc – that are used in BRI projects (Nantulya 2019). In this sense, Africa is an ideal partner for Chinese needs and a host of the Chinese industries overseas (Ehizuelen and Abdi 2017). As stated by Lin Songtian (2015), director of the Department of African Affairs at China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Africa-China cooperation is a relationship that is blessed with shared needs, benefits and opportunities, which will make the African continent a significant foothold for the OBOR initiative" (Ehizuelen and Abdi 2017, 295).

Infrastructure projects under the BRI have three components: transport infrastructure, energy infrastructure, and information and communication technology infrastructure. In addition to the transport and energy policies, China has also devised a Digital Silk Road initiative in 2015. For now, the exact number of countries this initiative targets is not clear (Tugendhat and Voo 2021, 4), even though in Africa countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania are part of it. Also, "A 37,000-km-long and 180 TBPS sub-sea cable named '2Africa' connecting Europe and Middle East with 16 African countries has been undertaken by China Mobile International, MTN Global Connect and Vodafone [...]. It is also assisting the African Union in formulating Digital Transformation Strategy with its 'Agenda-2063'" (Roy Chaudhury 2021).

In addition, this digital initiative may easily complement some aspects of the transport component like ports are one of the most important of the Belt and Road Initiative in Africa (Pautasso 2016). It is obvious that some regions do not just have a commercial attraction, but also a strategic importance, like Djibouti, “a BRI hub” that hosts a Chinese military base (Chen 2018, 2). Djibouti and Walvis Bay in Namibia have seen the deployment of the People’s Liberation Army navy and the strengthening of military agreements, thus turning financial investments into strategic returns (Nantulya 2019). According to a CSIS study (Devermont et al. 2019), 41 ports in Africa have Chinese involvement, be it financial, construction or operational and at least 10 ports could have a strategic potential. However, some observers note that China is rebranding the BRI by favoring “green belt and road development [...and] giving importance to green infrastructure, green energy and green finance” (The Hindu Business Line 2021).

One of the main criticisms regarding China-Africa relations and the infrastructure policy is that China is playing debt diplomacy (or a debt trap). But there are some arguments against this idea. First, China needs Africa’s 54 votes in the international arena and their commercial partnership and has no interest in crushing them into debts (DW 2019). Second, as a China Africa Research Initiative’s research shows, China is not the major owner of African countries’ debt (EOM et al. 2018). CARI analyzed 17 countries with debt distress risk. In eight (Burundi, Gambia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Sudan, Chad and Mauritania), the Chinese loans are relatively small, with few constructions surpassing one billion dollars, and have not contributed much to debt problems. Six other countries that have larger loans also have other loans even bigger than those from China. Only three countries, namely Djibouti, Zambia and Republic of Congo, have loans from China that can contribute to a debt distress (Eom et al. 2018).

It might be too early to fully evaluate the BRI impact on Africa’s infrastructure ambitions. However, according to some observers, the result in terms of facilitating and increasing commercial flux is positive. In a 2020 study, Chris Devonshire-Ellis (2021)⁶ found that “in the recent period 2016 to 2019, Belt and Road member states increased, on average their exports by 28.8%”. He acknowledged that “This isn’t just down to the BRI, it is also part to do with an on-going recovery from the Global Financial Crisis that hit in 2007-08”. But “Accusations or concerns that countries would see their

6 Founder of Dezan Shira & Associates and Chairman of the firms International Board of Equity Partners & Directors.

economies swamped by cheap Chinese imports and destroy their domestic exporters have proven to be unfounded. [...] Although it will be true that Covid will dampen figures for 2020, the fundamental drivers are in place” (*Ibid*).

Belt and Road countries export trade development

Country	2016	2019	Change %	Country	2016	2019	Change %
Algeria	33.40	38.37	+14.88	Libya	6.85	33.76	+393
Angola	28.44	41.39	+45.53	Madagascar	3.45	3.73	+8.11
Benin	3.26	4.26	+30.67	Mali	3.29	4.03	+22.49
Burundi	0.196	0.275	+40.30	Mauritania	2.04	3.18	+55.88
Cabo Verde	0.735	1.01	+36.19	Morocco	36.52	46.47	+27.24
Cameroon	6.28	7.47	+18.95	Mozambique	4.00	5.68	+42.00
Chad	2.66	4.16	+56.39	Namibia	3.75	4.43	+18.13
Comoros	0.108	0.156	+44.45	Niger	1.23	1.52	+23.57
Congo, Rep.	8.90	15.17	+70.45	Nigeria	37.30	61.70	+65.42
Côte d'Ivoire	11.80	13.82	+17.12	Rwanda	1.36	1.93	+41.91
Djibouti	2.62	5.13	+95.80	Senegal	4.11	5.37	+30.65
Egypt	34.44	47.45	+37.78	Seychelles	1.15	1.17	+1.73
Equatorial Guinea	5.78	6.08	+5.19	Sierra Leone	0.915	0.713	-22.07
Ethiopia	5.80	7.61	+31.20	South Africa	90.63	104.92	+15.76
Gabon	6.18	8.56	+38.51	Sudan	5.09	2.39	-53.04
Gambia	0.241	0.376	+56.02	Tanzania	8.14	8.07	-0.85
Ghana	17.54	24.10	+37.40	Togo	1.58	1.62	+2.53

Country	2016	2019	Change %	Country	2016	2019	Change %
Guinea	2.51	5.75	+130	Tunisia	16.99	19.33	+13.77
Kenya	9.910	11.49	+15.94	Uganda	3.63	6.66	+83.47
Lesotho	0.967	1.07	+10.65	Zambia	7.40	8.08	+9.2
Liberia	0.702	0.882	+25.61	Zimbabwe	4.10	4.62	+12.68

Source: Devonshire-Ellis (2021).

As a region, Africa's exports saw an average 40.61% growth in the same period. If this trend is to be maintained, the Belt and Road Initiative has the potential to help achieve the objectives of the recent (established in 2018 and in force since January 2021) African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). One of the main objectives of this initiative is to "create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with the Pan African Vision of "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" enshrined in Agenda 2063" (AfCFTA 2018, article 3.a).

Not all countries and observers praise China's mega initiative. They suspect that, through BRI, China intends to internationalize Renminbi and build a new financial architecture (Pautasso 2016; Beijing Declaration 2018; Ghafar and Jacobs 2019). Therefore, the West is trying to counter Beijing with similar initiatives, such as the Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership launched by the G7 under the leadership of US President Joe Biden (The White House 2021); and the European Union "A Globally Connected Europe" initiative (Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada 2021). It is too early to grasp the scope, constraints, and opportunities these rival policies will have with regard to Africa's infrastructure development. But Africa certainly needs more than only BRI investments if the continent is to fill the huge infrastructure gap which hinders its development prospects.

Conclusion

The rise of China as one of the major international players is a challenge and an alternative to the western order in general. In Africa, China is now one of the main economic partners. From 2000 to 2013, China's

engagement in Africa was mainly in the commercial and mining sectors. But since the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, the initial emphasis on transport infrastructures has diversified as China rebranded the BRI to include energy, infrastructure, and information and communication technology infrastructure. Interestingly, the BRI and Africa's Agenda 2063 were conceptualized the same year (2013) and came into force the same year (2015). If the Agenda encompasses more aspects than the BRI, the two emphasize the crucial idea of connectivity or infrastructure development.

Infrastructure development is, on one hand, an old area of cooperation between China and Africa, as the Tanzara railway and other sport and government buildings demonstrate (Snow 1988). On the other hand, infrastructure projects, seen as regional integration tools aiming at boosting trade and connection between countries, go back to at least Africa's 2001 NEPAD. I argued in the previous pages that the BRI penetration on the African continent is not coincidental, but the result of a mutual inspiration process. This congruence explains the enthusiasm with which 42 African states and the African Union have signed a memorandum of understanding to be part of the BRI.

Although the purpose of this article is not to evaluate the successes or failures of BRI projects, the initial lessons seem positive and there is no doubt that infrastructure projects are improving on the continent in the context of the implementation of the African Free Trade Zone. It is important to continue monitoring if BRI will bring a sustainable and healthy growth for Africa.

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ABSTRACT

According to the Chinese government, the Belt and Road Initiative is oriented towards "policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties". This global and multibillion initiative was launched in 2013, in a decade characterized by the renewal of the continental integration efforts in Africa through ambitious continental trade and development policies. The drafting of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the linking of Agenda 2063 to the global Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the transformation of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) into an African Union Development Agency; and the signing of an African Continental Free Trade Agreement demonstrate this new trend in the continental integration policies. Interestingly, like the BRI, these policies aim at connecting African countries in terms of infrastructure, trade and people. This paper examines the congruence (and co-learning) between the BRI and Africa's infrastructure policies by cross-tracing the ideational process in the two contexts before elaborating on some preliminary reflections on the BRI impacts in Africa.

KEYWORDS

BRI. Infrastructures. NEPAD. FOCAC. China. Africa. PIDA. Agenda 2063. African Union.

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CHINA-AFRICA IN THE CONTEXT OF BRI-B3W

Li Anshan¹



Introduction

In 1992, Professor Lester Thurow, a famous American economist of MIT, published a book entitled *Head to Head: The coming economic battle among Japan, Europe, and America*, to analyze the coming competition between economic powers in the 21st century (Thurow 1992). It seems that the author was quite confident in economic giants Japan, Europe and the US in the future and believed that the rich club accepted only one country – Japan in the 20th century –, and it would not be surprising if no country would enter the club in the 21st century. Once published, the book aroused great repercussions in Japan, Europe and the US and became one of the non-literary bestsellers. No matter how brilliant Lester Thurow's academic achievements are, his prediction was not fulfilled this time. He never thought that Europe and the US would experience a financial crisis in the new century and China would become the second world economy in 2010. Nor did he expect that Gallup's survey report on Rating World Leaders (2018) found that people in 134 countries and regions around the world recognized China's leadership by 34%, higher than 31% for the US. This is the second time since 2008 that China's global recognition of leadership has surpassed that of the US, setting a record for China in 10 years (Ray 2019).

Why did Mr. Thurow ignore emerging economies? This seems understandable from a historical perspective. In the early 1990s, Russia was still under the control of the iron curtain, China was recovering from the Cultural Revolution and the events of 1989, India was still haunted by bureaucratic nightmares and Brazil's economy stagnated for a decade. These countries are

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lost in the global market economy, suffering from economic policy mistakes, lack of stock markets, bureaucratic breeding or super turbulence and need to go through a profound pain before they could embark on normal development path (Van Agtmael 2012). This is the time when Mr. Thurow wrote his book and he never thought the situation would change so dramatically. Regarding China-Africa relations, there are always heated debates and various opinions, fabrications and facts. It is a necessity to make a more careful and objective study².

By all accounts, globalization is now sweeping across Africa. Farmers in Ghana are in a precarious position because of the inflow of subsidized cheap rice from the US; American drivers refuel their cars with oil imported from Nigeria; Senegalese are buying clothes made in China and Vietnam; Beijingers drink South African beer while checking newspapers for the stock values of Naspers there; Africans have regular business deals in Yiwu, a booming market in Zhejiang Province in China for international dealers; Ethiopian Mursi's pictures spread to Japan via the internet; the African diaspora forms the sixth part of African people. Globalization penetrates everywhere. For Africans, both positive and negative cases are there. Africa's richest man, Nigerian entrepreneur Dangote, started business with cement production with diversified enterprise, and he is skillful at using international capital. Since 2008, he has started international cooperation with SINOMA, successively built more than ten cement plants in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and other countries. In 2017, he invested \$500 million in cement in Congo (fabric) and invested in African infrastructure. His business is a good example of economic globalization. There are also negative examples. Cashew is one of Mozambique's main exports. In 1995, the World Bank informed the Mozambique Government that it must end protection against the cashew processing industry and allow export for foreign processing or it would not submit the country's assistance strategy. Mozambique had to close all the large cashew processing plants in 2001 and 10,000 jobs disappeared. Economic globalization has become a trend and it is impossible to escape or avoid. The only way to adjust is to hold your own sovereignty, put more emphasis on self-reliance rather than on aid from whatever parties and gradually develop your own capability (Li Anshan 2021, 43-53).

2 Recently, a commentary by a Tanzanian caused a sensational response and more than 1.5 million people expressed their opinions afterwards. Quora "Do Westerners who bash China for helping Africa (yes, help) know actually Africans view them and their 'helping'". <https://www.quora.com/Do-Westerners-who-bash-China-for-helping-Africa-yes-helping-know-how-actual-Africans-view-them-and-their-helping>.

The 21st century has witnessed great changes in international affairs. Brexit brings a new situation in Europe and Britain may or may not enjoy its independence, while Germany, France and other EU countries are trying to adjust to the new situation. A racial crisis is spreading all over the US which just withdrew from Afghanistan, where it created many troubles during its stay. The Middle East faces tremendous obstacles in bringing peace to the region. Since 2009, China has surpassed the United States as Africa's largest trading partner. Out of expectation, the surge in the number of African students in China is remarkable. According to Breeze and Moore (2017):

[...] in less than 15 years the number of African students has grown 26-fold, from just under 2000 in 2003 to almost 50,000 in 2015. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the US and UK host around 40,000 African students a year; China surpassed this number in 2014. This dramatic increase in students from Africa can be explained in part by the Chinese government's targeted focus on African human resources and education development (Breeze and Moore 2017, n/p).

The Communist Party of China has just passed its 100th anniversary and continues the struggle for the people's benefit. Most tragically, the globe is suffering from COVID-19, which is killing people and damaging the economy and social life in every corner of the world. African leaders have reached an agreement on an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is designed to unite 1.3 billion people under one market.

There are several important events related to the African continent in 2021. On January 1, AfCFTA, started in March 2018 in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, officially launched with the world's largest free trade area. A single market covering 54 countries with a GDP of \$3 trillion has become a reality. According to relevant agreements and arrangements, from January 1, 2021, members of the AfCFTA will gradually eliminate tariffs on goods according to product categories and their respective conditions. With the opening of official website and supporting data monitoring platform, the AfCFTA Secretariat in Accra, Ghanaian capital city, had been officially handed over and put into operation in August 2020. This is a great startup for offering new hope and continental exhilaration in terms of boosting intra-African trade, and eventually facilitating Africa's development and industrialization.

On June 4-5, 2021, the G7 Summit was held in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, in England, with world leaders deliberating on key world issues. In the summit, the US President Biden proposed strategic plan of Build Back Better World (B3W) and called on strong support to Africa. On October 8, a summit

between France and African countries opened in the southern French city of Montpellier. Amid France's recent serious tensions with Algeria and Mali, French President Emmanuel Macron decided to seek a new breakthrough in the relations between France and Africa through the summit. For the first time since the summit began in 1973, it adopted a new fashion by inviting young African representatives from various fields instead of African heads of state. Young entrepreneurs and artists from Africa attended the event to participate in the discussion of political, economic and cultural issues.

In October 2021, Turkish President Erdogan visited Angola, Nigeria and Togo, and the Third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit was held on December 16-18 in Istanbul. As an emerging economy, Turkey's policy toward Africa has expanded from economy to other areas. The number of Turkish embassies in Africa has risen from 12 in 2002 to 43, while African embassies in Ankara from 10 in 2008 to 37. With the theme "Enhanced Partnership for Development and Prosperity", over 100 ministers and 16 heads of state and government from Africa attended the summit, indicating a new stage in the bilateral relations. The summit concluded with the adoption of an action plan for the next five years. President Erdogan visited more than 30 African nations during his 19-year tenure as Prime Minister or President. Official data indicates the bilateral trade rose from US\$5.4 billion in 2003 to US\$25.3 billion in 2020, and Erdogan announced Turkey would aim to double its trade with Africa to US\$50 billion. Turkish companies have strengthened their presence in Africa, mainly investing in construction, steel, cement, textiles, household goods, and electronic devices. Turkey is also ready to offer support to African states in their fight against terrorism, organized crime and strengthen cooperation in poverty eradication in the continent³.

On November 29-30, the 8th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Ministerial Conference held the opening ceremony in Dakar, Senegal, for the fourth time in Africa and the first time in West Africa. The meeting had global significance against the backdrop of the changes in the global landscape, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the intensifying climate crisis. Officials from 53 African countries and China attended the conference. Before the ministerial conference, Vice Minister of Commerce of PRC Qian Keming met Secretary General of Africa Free Trade Zone and signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of an Economic Cooperation Expert Group on October 22, 2021. The two sides spoke highly of the long-term mutual respect and mutual benefit cooperation between China and Africa,

³ "3rd Turkey-Africa summit commits to boosting cooperation in various fields", Source: Xinhua| 2021-12-18 23:44:12. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-12/18/c_1310381109.htm.

and believed that the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Expert Group would further promote China-Africa economic and trade exchanges⁴.

The achievements of China-Africa cooperation are impressive. Two cases. Makhtar Diop, World Bank Vice President for the Africa Region, pointed out in 2015, “In 2012, one-quarter of Africa’s merchandise exports came to China. On the external front, African growth has been closely linked to the commodities boom-growth in China and the emergence of China as one of Africa’s main trade and investment partners-as well as the surge in cross-border financial flows” (Diop 2015, n/p). On December 10, 2021, just after the 8th FOCAC ministerial conference, the completion ceremony of Mozambique N13 highway project (Cuamba-Muita section) undertaken by China was held. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, attended the event and cut the ribbon. The N13 Highway Project, with a total length of 138 km, is an important part of Mozambique’s national development plan “Nacala Corridor”. After completion, the project will become an international trade corridor connecting Malawi, Zambia and other landlocked African countries, and an important sea passage from Southern Africa to the Indian Ocean⁵.

According to official data, “From 2000 to 2020, China helped African countries build more than 13,000 km of roads and railway and more than 80 large-scale power facilities, and funded over 130 medical facilities, 45 sports venues and over 170 schools. It also trained more than 160,000 personnel for Africa, and built a series of flagship projects including the AU Conference Center. China’s assistance has extended from economy to social life and is widely welcomed and supported by both governments and people in Africa. China has canceled the debt incurred in the form of interest-free Chinese government loans due to mature by the end of 2018, which applied to Africa’s least developed, heavily indebted and poor countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing countries that have diplomatic relations with China. “During the Covid-19 pandemic, China canceled the outstanding debts of 15 African countries in the form of interest-free loans that matured at the end of 2020”⁶.

4 “The Ministry of Commerce and the Secretariat of the African Mainland Free Trade Zone signed a memorandum of understanding on establishing a cooperation expert group online”, October 27, 2021. <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/bnjg/202111/20211103213445.shtml>.

5 “Mozambican President attends N13 highway completion ceremony”, China Railway Group Ltd., December 29, 2021. <http://www.crecg.com/web/10089492/10091154/10187954/index.html>.

6 *China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals*, The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, November 2021. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-11/26/content_5653540.htm.

At the 2021 World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit on September 26, Wu Peng, Director General of the Department of African Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, said: “Under this great change that has not been seen in a century, who can expect that Africa will not become a more important partner of China’s opening up in a few decades? Can’t it be more important for China than Europe? Not necessarily”⁷. There is a point in his statement.

Fabrication and fact

Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000, some people seem to be unhappy with the FOCAC and the practical results of the bilateral cooperation. There are always incorrect descriptions, rumors or fabrications about the China-Africa relations. As an African reporter explained, “The Western media persistently carries out such negative campaigns against China, as a weapon to fight battles in the big trade and economic war between the West and the emerging economies led by China” (Mbanda 2018, n/p). Here are some examples.

In 2014, Howard French proposed in his book *China’s second continent: How a million migrants are building a new empire in Africa* that President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Africa in 1996 was a turning point in China’s Africa policy:

The most definitive commencement date was perhaps the state visit to six African countries by the then head of state, Jiang Zemin, in 1996. In a speech at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Jiang proposed the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. This turned out to be an important first move in a momentous two-step. Upon his return to China, Jiang gave another speech in the city of Tangshan, in which he explicitly directed the country’s firms to ‘go out’, meaning go overseas in search of business. No Chinese leader had ever said anything like that before, and from the very start Africa was clearly a principal target. Six years later, I was working in China when Jiang’s Forum convened triumphantly for the first time, gathering fifty-three African leaders in Beijing. Among China’s many pledges, Jiang promised to double development assistance to the continent, create a \$5 billion African development fund, cancel outstanding debt, build a new African Union headquarters in Ethiopia, create three to five ‘trade and cooperation’ zones around the continent, build

7 “Wu Peng, Director General of the Department of African Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: To tell the Chinese story well, we must do a good job in China,” China News Network, September 26, 2021. <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1711956163086028254&wfr=spider&for=pc>.

thirty hospitals and a hundred rural schools, and train fifteen thousand African professionals (French 2014, 16).

From the perspective of a historian, I found many errors just in this short paragraph: (1) In 1996, there was no African Union. (2) Jiang Zemin did not mention the setting up of FOCAC in his speech in 1996. Instead, it was the former Prime Minister of Madagascar, Lila Ratsifandrihamanana, who made this proposal in 1999 (Li Anshan 2014). (3) The first FOCAC was held on 10-12 October 2000, not six years after 1996. (4) More than 80 ministers from 44 African countries and representatives from 17 international regional organizations attended the first FOCAC, not “fifty-three African leaders”. (5) The China-Africa Development Fund was created at the China-Africa Summit of the 3rd FOCAC in 2006, not at the first FOCAC. (6) All the measures he mentioned were issued at the China-Africa Summit in 2006, not the first FOCAC. (7) President Hu, not President Jiang, chaired the China-Africa Summit in 2006. Although there are many errors in a paragraph, the book was nevertheless recommended by both *The New York Times* and *Financial Times* as one of the 100 best books of the year!

In 2018, French newspaper *Le Monde* published a report alleging that China was spying on the African Union Headquarters in Ethiopia. The China-built African Union Conference Center, a 100-meter-tall building, was completed in Addis Ababa in December 2011, and became the tallest African building. Among African scholars, there are some different opinions about the project, which is natural (Ezeanya 2012; Lokongo 2012). *Le Monde* reported that China had bugged the building it had built and gifted to the AU and had been downloading data from servers in the building (Kadiri and Tilouine 2018). Former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat of the AU Commission and many other African leaders were categorical in dismissing the report as fabricated and an attempt to tarnish China-Africa relations.

Beijing has financed and built more than 6,000 kilometers of roads and over 6,500 km of railways. These include the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway, the Mombasa-Nairobi railway and the Abuja-Kaduna railway in Nigeria, which are operational. As a result, this has catapulted the Asian Tiger into Africa's most important investor in infrastructure development (Njoroge 2018, n/p).

“There’s nothing to be spied [on] because [the] China-Africa relationship is very strategic, comprehensive”, Mr. Hailemariam said on the sidelines

of the 30th AU Summit held at the AU headquarters. Chairperson, Moussa Faki, told a press conference at the end of the summit that he did not find any sign that the AU building was being spied upon⁸. Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who is the current AU Chairman and the leader of AU reforms, also dismissed the allegations by the French newspaper (Mbanda 2018).

As indicated previously, the 8th FOCAC Ministerial Conference was one of the important events in 2021 in terms of both China-Africa relations and international politics. The 8th FOCAC Ministerial Conference was originally planned to be held in Dakar, Senegal. There are quite a lot of strange things and even rumors about China-African cooperation before the conference. Zimbabwean newspaper *The Herald* disclosed that the US even provided money as reward for any article of slander or defamation against China. The US Embassy has even paid as much as \$1,000 for every article that has smeared Chinese companies, indeed shocking for the Zimbabweans⁹. Just before the opening of the 8th FOCAC, there was a wave of slander about China's "debt trap", such as "Uganda Surrenders Airport for China Cash". In reality, Entebbe Airport Expansion and Upgrading Project is a US\$200 million preferential loan project financed by the Export-Import Bank of China and is guaranteed by Uganda's sovereign credit. The two parties signed the loan agreement in March 2015 and began construction in May 2016. Despite the negative impact of COVID-19, China Communications Construction Company Ltd., the contractor, has managed to catch up with the project schedule with firm support from the Ugandan side. Now the project has progressed smoothly to 75.1% and is expected to be completed and delivered in December 2022. The fabrication is groundless and refuted by both Uganda Civil Aviation Authority on November 26, 2021, and the Chinese Embassy in Uganda two days later¹⁰.

On November 24, 2021, just four days before the 8th FOCAC, I received an email from a journalist of Bloomberg's China Government Team in Hong Kong. She was writing a piece about the upcoming FOCAC conference in Senegal. "I'm interested in why the event this year appears to have been downgraded diplomatically". Even before the meeting, the journalist had jumped into a conclusion – "Downgraded diplomatically" –. This wrong

8 "African leaders dismiss French report of China 'spying' on AU headquarters", Xinhua, January 30, 2018.

9 "US plan to discredit Chinese investments unmasked", *The Herald*, September 21, 2021.

10 Uganda Civil Aviation Authority, "Clarification on Enbete International Airport", November 26, 2021; "Remarks by the Spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in Uganda on Some Media Reports Alleging that 'Uganda Surrenders Airport for China Cash' 2021-11-28 18:52. http://ug.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/202111/t20211128_10454456.htm.

judgement seems to be based on the wrong information. First, “So far, no African heads of state have been confirmed”, and second, “Senegal’s Foreign Minister will host it rather than a head of state – by my records, that’s the first time the country’s host hasn’t hosted the event since its inception in 2000”. The fabrication is embodied in her two questions, “Which side do you think initiated the downgrade in diplomatic ties? Why do you think Beijing would let the event diminish in stature?” She was thinking that as “Beijing clashes with the US and other Western powers, it has even more reason to court its 50-odd diplomatic powers on the continent, who after all helped it get back its place on the United Nations in 1971”¹¹. With this unfriendly, if not opposing mindset to China-Africa cooperation, how could the journalist find an objective answer to her questions?

Unfortunately for her yet fortunately for China-Africa cooperation, with the theme of “Uphold the Tradition of Always Standing Together and Jointly Build a China-Africa Community With a Shared Future in the New Era”, the 8th FOCAC Ministerial Conference was held successfully in Dakar on 29-30 November. Senegalese President Macky Sall, the African Co-chair of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, attended and presided over the opening ceremony. President Félix Tshisekedi of Democratic Republic of Congo, President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt, President Azali Assoumani of the Union of Comoros, President Ramaphosa of South Africa, Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat of the African Union Commission and Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres attended the meeting by video. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Foreign Ministers of 53 African countries, ministers or representatives responsible for foreign economic cooperation and representatives of some international and regional organizations attended the meeting.

At the opening ceremony of the 8th FOCAC Ministerial Conference, Chinese President Xi Jinping made a keynote speech. “This year marks the 65th anniversary of the start of diplomatic relations between China and African countries”. He explained why China and Africa have had such a close relationship and so deep a bond of friendship. “The key lies in an everlasting spirit of China-Africa friendship and cooperation forged between the two sides, which features sincere friendship and equality, win-win for mutual benefit and common development, fairness and justice, and progress with the times and openness and inclusiveness”. He stated that both sides have jointly prepared the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 and promised that

¹¹ Email: XXX to Anshan Li, “Bloomberg journalist with questions on FOCAC”, 2021/11/24/18:03:08 (Wednesday).

under the first three-year plan of the Vision, China would work closely with African countries to implement the following nine programs: the medical and health program, the poverty reduction and agricultural development program, the trade promotion program, the investment promotion program, the digital innovation program, the green development program, the capacity building program, the cultural and people-to-people exchange program, the peace and security program¹².

African leaders and most people usually think highly of China's involvement in Africa and have a positive opinion of China's contributions to African development. Just because of this equal and sincere cooperation, China's reputation is durable in Africa. This is indicated by various reports, such as the annual report of "The opinion of China" for more than a decade by Pew Research Center in the US, or McKinsey's survey on Chinese company in Africa in 2017, or Gallup's survey report on Rating World Leaders (2018), or Afrobarometer's 2020 poll. Although African opinions regarding China may differ, Afrobarometer's annual surveys of 2016-2020 speak with the same tone (Sanny and Selormey 2020)¹³.

BRI and B3W

At the end of 2021, Lina Benabdallah of Wake Forest University in the US published an article entitled "China's Soft-Power Advantage in Africa: Beijing Isn't Just Building Roads – It's Making Friends" in *Foreign Affairs*. She points out:

China's evolving presence in Africa, including the BRI, is based as much on investment in building social and human capital as it is on giant infrastructure projects. Since the beginning of this century, Beijing has invested heavily in cultivating political, educational and institutional relationships with leaders and citizens in almost all African countries with which it has diplomatic relations (Benabdallah 2021, n/p).

The description indicates three phenomena. First, Africa has been involved in the BRI. Second, China's investment in Africa covers various

¹² "Keynote speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping at opening ceremony of 8th FOCAC ministerial conference", Source: Xinhua, 2021-12-02. http://www.focac.org/eng/ttxsy/202112/t20211202_10461079.htm.

¹³ See also "Here's what Africans think about China's influence in their countries" 2016/10/28. <http://www.afrobarometer.org/blogs/heres-what-africans-think-about-chinas-influence-their-countries>.

fields, including economic, political, educational, institutional, etc. Third, China is developing relationships in all African countries (except one, e.g., the Kingdom of Eswatini, which has no diplomatic relations with China), not only with leaders but also ordinary citizens. China is building infrastructure as well as social and human capital, and making friends in Africa. The result also explains why China's reputation in Africa is durable, as Olander suggests,

[...] in the five year interim since the respected public opinion research agency Afrobarometer conducted surveys on African citizens' perceptions of China's engagement on the continent, positive views of the Chinese were either stable or edging higher in most countries. Overall, across the 18 countries that Afrobarometer surveyed, 59% of the people think that China's economic and political influence in Africa is mostly positive. That is a remarkable figure, especially in this day and age when China is such a polarizing actor in many other parts of the world (Olander 2020, n/p).

The BRI here means "Belt and Road Initiative", or "OBOR" (One Belt One Road), put forward in 2013 by President Xi Jinping with the significance of international development and cooperation. The BRI is supposed to "create an infrastructure corridor from China to Central Asia and Europe and a 'Maritime Silk Road' that links China to South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa through a series of deep-water ports along the littoral areas of the Indian Ocean – has provoked a great deal of speculation and controversy", and it was termed as "white elephant" projects that are "politically motivated and economically unsustainable" (Bluhm et al. 2021, n/p). Yet a recent collective research finds some grounds for optimism. "Since many of the low-income and middle-income countries included in our analysis suffer from an excessive concentration of economic activity in a small number of congested urban centers, our findings suggest that Chinese government financing for connective infrastructure promotes spatially inclusive economic development" (Bluhm et al. 2021). Now three consensuses have gradually reached. The BRI has risen to the national action of the Chinese government and needs concerted efforts; the BRI is a long-term plan to share the interests of countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road; the BRI is an important strategy to build a community with a shared future for mankind and improve global governance. The BRI has brought about positive effects in the world and has been promoting international trade, especially economic and trade relations between China and Asia, Europe and Africa.

Since its introduction, the BRI has received a positive response from countries along the Belt and Road, and especially African countries. During

his visit to Africa in 2014, the Prime Minister Li Keqiang raised the vision of China-Africa production capacity cooperation. In the 2015 Summit of the FOCAC, the leaders of African countries welcomed China's active participation in the construction of infrastructure, interconnection and other industries in Africa, and transferred high-quality energy to Africa¹⁴. At the end of 2015, scholars from China and Africa held an academic seminar on "Belt and Road and China-Africa Cooperation" in South Africa. They gave positive comments on the opportunities brought by the BRI to China-Africa cooperation, and fully estimated the difficulties in implementing this plan. International scholars offered various views. As an important part of the BRI, Maritime Silk Road has built a bridge for China-Africa cooperation in economic fields as highway, information technology and telecommunications (Pautasso 2016). In the 2016 Conference on One Belt & One Road held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzanian former President Mkapa explored the historical linkage and future perspective with confidence,

[...] the trade relationship between the African continent and China can be traced back to China's Ming Dynasty. At that time, the famous Chinese navigator Zheng He brought a huge fleet to East Africa, and his fleet arrived at African ports such as Mombasa. Since then, there has been good trade between China and Africa. From the 15th century to the 19th century, Africa experienced a process of the gradual establishment of colonial rule. During this period, trade became less frequent. At that time, Africa's foreign trade was mainly controlled by the colonial rulers. Today, the Silk Road Economic Belt can be extended to Africa, which is very popular with us. The 21st century Maritime Silk Road can bring African countries together to pursue common strategic, political and economic interests. Because if this initiative is implemented, it can help achieve common development and prosperity between China and Africa¹⁵.

The production capacity cooperation between China and developing countries was proposed by Professor Lin Yifu. When he was Vice President of the World Bank, he visited Africa many times to explore the way of African development, and introduced China's Huajian Group to Ethiopia, which promoted the development of the local footwear industry. This case has had a wide international impact (The World Bank 2012). On the basis

14 "Xi Jinping meets African leaders of some countries", Xinhuanet, December 4, 2015. http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-12/04/c_1117362544.htm.

15 "Tanzanian Former President: African countries most welcome President Xi Jinping's Belt & Road Initiative", Sina Finance Network, November 14, 2016. <http://finance.sina.com.cn/meeting/2016-11-14/doc-ixxsmif2962174.shtml>.

of this practice, he put forward the relevant argument of industry docking and applied it to new structural economics, and suggesting “One Belt, One Road and One Continent”, meaning OBOR should add the African continent. Because China’s huge labor-intensive industries can be transferred to Africa.

According to the third industrial census, 124 million people are employed in China’s manufacturing industry, which is 12 times that of Japan. Only Africa can undertake such a large-scale transfer of labor-intensive industries. Africa has 1 billion people, a large number of surplus labor force is in rural areas, the proportion of young people is high, and the wage level is only one tenth to one fifth of that of China. In terms of integrated industries to Africa, there have been successful cases such as Huajian group (Lin Yifu 2015, n/p)¹⁶.

This is a bold initiative. The natural link between the Maritime Silk Road and Africa does exist. However, the BRI has aroused attention from foreign media and there are various opinions about the proposal. Joel Wuthnow’s research report on Chinese perspective is suggestive. A PhD in Political Science from Columbia University, Wuthnow was a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses, a post-doctoral fellow in the China and the World Program at Princeton University, and a pre-doctoral fellow at the Brookings Institution, and now a Research Fellow at the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University (NDU). In the report on the Belt and Road Initiative of the Center, he summarizes that the main strategic benefits of the BRI for the Chinese government include bolstering regional stability, improving China’s energy security, and amassing influence in Eurasia. He made the suggestion that it is important for the US to check China’s ambition while maintain the balanced Sino-American relationship. “U.S. strategy should seek to check China’s geopolitical ambitions while advancing mutually beneficial cooperation where possible” (Wuthnow 2017; Wuthnow 2019). This seems to be a strategy of check and balance.

However, there are more radical opinions. Since the initiation of Joe Biden administration, the US has tried its best to counter and rival China on its own by introducing various policies such as the US containment policy of China, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD or Quad), Summit for Democracy and President Biden’s policy of dubbing China as a strategic rival (Jia Qingguo 2021a). The most dangerous challenge comes from his policy

¹⁶ He raised this idea at the “Langrun-Gezheng Forum- ‘Belt and Road Strategy Seminar’ held on January 16 2015 at Peking University. “Justin Yifu Lin, ‘One Belt One Road’ should add ‘One Continent’”, <http://www.21ccom.net/articles/china/ggcx/20150118119130.html>. For a recent study, see (Liu Haifang, He Feng, Wang Jinjie, 2021). This is a collection of field-work reports in Djibouti and Ethiopia in 2019.

toward the Taiwan issue (Jia Qingguo 2021b). All these policies were aimed at countering China, but when it failed or had no results in all strategies at hand, now it wants the other developed nations to side with it for countering Beijing together. In June 2021, the G7 countries announced a new initiative called the “Build Back Better World” (B3W) partnership. The document is found at the White House as a policy statement as following, “Build Back Better World: An Affirmative Initiative for Meeting the Tremendous Infrastructure Needs of Low and Middle-Income Countries”. President Biden and G7 partners agreed to launch the bold new global infrastructure initiative Build Back Better World (B3W),

[...] a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies to help narrow the \$40+ trillion infrastructure need in the developing world, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In announcing this partnership, the United States and its G7 partners are expressing a unified vision for global infrastructure development. As a lead partner in B3W, the United States will seek to mobilize the full potential of our development finance tools, including the Development Finance Corporation, USAID, EXIM, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, and complementary bodies such as the Transaction Advisory Fund. In doing so, the Biden Administration aims to complement domestic infrastructure investments in the American Jobs Plan and create new opportunities to demonstrate U.S. competitiveness abroad and create jobs at home (The White House 2021, n/p)¹⁷.

As a strategic move, Build Back Better World or B3W as its short form, has the following characteristics. First, it is a plan conceived by the United States or directly by President Biden’s advisors as a response to the concerns raised by many U.S. officials, policymakers and experts on China’s loans, investments and infrastructure projects worldwide. Most probably it will be led by the United States if it is going to be implemented, since the announcement made it clear the United States “as a lead partner in B3W”. Moreover, the statement release came on White House-topped paper, not the usual G7 branded document. Second, it is “a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies”. In other words, the B3W is an ideology-oriented project. Third, the initiative is

¹⁷ “FACT SHEET: President Biden and G7 Leaders Launch Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership”, The White House Statements and Releases, June 12, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3w-partnership/>.

to meet the tremendous needs, e.g., “to narrow the \$40+trillion infrastructure need in the developing world”. Fourth, B3W will depend on private-sector. The document clearly indicates “the G7 and other like-minded partners will coordinate in mobilizing private-sector capital” and the term “private” appears six times in the full paper, either “private-sector capital”, “private capital” or “private sector”. Fifth, through B3W, all partner countries will coordinate in four prioritized areas of focus, e.g., climate, health and health security, digital technology, and gender equity and equality with the help of financial institutions. Sixth, in terms of geographical area that B3W is concerned, it will be global in scope, “from Latin America and the Caribbean to Africa to the Indo-Pacific. Different G7 partners will have different geographic orientations”. In addition, the statement made it plain that the Biden administration “aims to complement domestic infrastructure investments in the American Jobs Plan and create new opportunities to demonstrate US competitiveness abroad and create jobs at home”. This plan’s major purpose seems quite clear.

Although “China” appears only once in this document, yet President Joe Biden’s first and foremost reason behind meeting the G7 leaders was “to discuss strategic competition with China and commit to concrete actions to help meet the tremendous infrastructure need in Low and Middle-Income Countries”. Here, the intention of the B3W plan is quite evident, e.g., to compete with Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), thus taking the commitment for concrete actions against Beijing. According to President Joe Biden, the G7 countries’ B3W partnership offers an alternative to China’s BRI, and the B3W plan would be greener and more inclusive. Furthermore, it will endorse a new vision for funding infrastructure projects in developing countries. Most likely, a new frontier of rivalry with Beijing is started by the US through the initiation of the B3W partnership along with six other rich countries of the world (Awan 2021). This posture was termed as “US and Chinese geopolitical rivalry” (Gu, Green and Yu 2021).

However, the B3W as “a global infrastructure program meant to counter China’s influence in the global South”, and “designed to outperform Beijing by offering alternative investment projects intended to entice the countries into choosing the United States over China” indicates Biden administration’s “narrow understanding of China’s global role”, as well as China-Africa cooperation, as Lina Benabdallah points out (Benabdallah 2021). Biden’s ideology is to take China as a rival and use the B3W to compete with the BRI. Yet, not all members of G7 are happy with that since some have close business relations with China. The B3W investments are to come from the private sector, which will seek profits, thus difficult to compete with state-sponsored/supported BRI loans and investments. In addition, the G7

countries' foreign reserves can't compare with China with about \$3.2 trillion foreign reserves. It is pointed out by an analyst that China, not the G7, has the best capability and comparative advantage in infrastructure building (Rana 2021).

Africa's role in BRI

In a China-Africa cooperation conference held in 2016 in the coast city Xiamen, Fujian Province, a number of African businessmen were optimistic about the development opportunities brought by the BRI to Africa, and anticipated it to promote the investment of Chinese enterprises in Africa. Deputy Consul General of Ethiopia in Guangzhou expected that the BRI can help Africa "find potential investment partners, develop cultural and tourism exchanges, promote trade and economic exchanges, establish sister cities, and strengthen mutual visits of high-level officials and infrastructure construction". He told dozens of Chinese entrepreneurs in what fields Ethiopia welcomes investment from Chinese companies, such as food processing, beverage, textile, clothing, paper making/paper product, and pharmaceutical industry, etc. He also listed the convenient airline and sea routes between Ethiopia and China¹⁸.

Africa's role in BRI is obvious, expressed both in history and in the present. This importance is shown in the following five aspects. First, the ports on the east and south coast of Africa form an important part of the Maritime Silk Road to provide a convenient channel for exchange for a long time. Many important ports on the west bank of the Indian Ocean have made great contributions to the prosperity of maritime trade in this region. The port of Alexandria in Egypt is an important hub connecting Africa, the Arab region and Asia. It is no exaggeration to say that the ancient Aksum (located in present Ethiopia) was the first-class trading power in the world trade at that time. It has an advantageous geographical location and controls two famous ports in the Red Sea, Adulis and Assab, both in today's Eritrea (Sellassie 1972, 15-17). Pliny pointed out in A.D. 75 that Adulis port was one of the most important ports in the Red Sea and "a very large centre of Ethiopian trade" (Sellassie 1972, 49). This makes it possible for Aksum to master commodities, information, management and channels in the process of world trade circulation. It is worth noting that it is indicated by the classic

¹⁸ "The African countries are competing for the fulcrum of Belt and Road initiated by China", *Reference News*, June 1, 2016.

Periplus that Adulis was one of the three ports “established by law”, the other two were located in Arabian coast (Mouza) and Persian Gulf (Charax) respectively (Palmer 1951, 156). “Persia, India and China were the main countries that regularly traded with Ethiopia”, and an Ethiopian historian also noticed from both local and Chinese sources that Chinese ships came during the ancient time, and what China imported from the region was what Ethiopia exported at the time (Sellassie 1972, 70). Judging from the extremely rich trade commodities, Aksum had trade exchanges with Eurasian countries at that time. It is not only a consumer of all kinds of goods, but also a broker engaged in changing trade. It got emeralds from Nubia and shipped them to northern India for sale. Some of the goods exported from Adulis were actually produced in inland Africa. The tariff system had been established and began to forge their own currency. Europeans and Asians came to Aksum to engage in trade activities and lived in cities and towns such as Adulis, Aksum, etc., and brought all kinds of exotic weighing instruments and daily necessities. On the East African coast, there are various relics such as porcelain and ancient coins of the exchange from Asia. For example, 176 Chinese coins of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) were found in Kazengwa, Zanzibar in 1945. Professor Marco Viganò of Addis Ababa University also discovered Song coins in the Ethiopian interior in the ruins of the medieval village of Harla, near Dire Dawa, an indication of Chinese trade’s extensive presence in East Africa (Li Anshan 2015; Abram 2015).

It is understood that since the ancient time the Maritime Silk Road has played an important role in trade relations and cultural exchanges between Asia, Africa and Europe. The process was however disrupted by the colonial expansion of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British empire. Today, it is realized that only by sharing the sea route and seeking common development can all the countries along the route become a beneficiary of the Maritime Silk Road. Therefore, China’s efforts to build a peaceful sea route and advocate the development of the BRI are by no means to seize the maritime trade channel, but to provide an opportunity to develop with other partners. Currently, Djibouti is playing an important role as an international port. In addition, Mogadishu, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Beira, Maputo, Durban, Elizabeth and Cape Town in the eastern and southern African coast all constitute important port groups in the western Indian Ocean.

Second, the African Islands (countries) in the western Indian Ocean form the fulcrum of the Maritime Silk Road. Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, Reunion and other important islands (countries) in the western Indian Ocean are important stops or transit ports of the ancient till modern time (Chan Ieng Him 2016, 18). Mauritius has been acting as a transit point

for migration and trade between the two continents of Asia and Africa, with St. Louis as an important port. Mauritius has developed steadily and rapidly since its independence, and its economy has changed from export processing and tourism to diversification. At present, it is undergoing a new economic transformation. Although Comoros and Seychelles experienced turbulence after their independence, they are now developing steadily. The seaports of the two island countries also play an important role. Madagascar is an important port in the western Indian Ocean and has always been regarded as the connecting hub between Africa and Asia. With its citizens as African and Asian descent, Madagascar becomes the natural link connecting the two continents. Although it covers an area of only 590,750 square kilometers, Madagascar has nearly ten ports around it, in the southeast and northwest part of the island.

Third, the maritime safety of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden constitutes an important guarantee for the Maritime Silk Road. In recent years, the safety of the Gulf of Aden has become an important focus of international shipping and world media. Aden Port on the north bank in the west of the Gulf of Aden and Djibouti Port on the south bank are important fuel ports and trade transit ports for routes from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, which have an important strategic position. It can be said that without the security of the Gulf of Aden, there will be no security of the Maritime Silk Road.

Fourth, Africa has become an investment and trade partner of Asian countries, vice versa. The economic and trade relations between Africa and Asia have been developing steadily. In 2000, the trade volume between China and Africa exceeded US\$10 billion for the first time. The bilateral trade volume increased from US\$10.5 billion in 2000 to US\$209 billion in 2019, and US\$186.9 billion in 2020. China has been Africa's largest trading partner for 12 consecutive years. It was reported that the trade volume between China and Africa reached the highest level in the same period (January-September) in history¹⁹. Following China, India in 2019 ranked second as the largest trading partner with Africa among the developing countries outside the continent. As Priyadarshi Dash pointed out in 2014:

19 The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "The trade volume between China and Africa reached the highest level in the same period in history", November 17, 2021. <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1716656470591533044&wfr=spider&for=pc>. For the detail, see The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals*, November 2021. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/32832/Document/1716800/1716800.htm>.

India-Africa trade has gathered pace over the past few years characterized by a remarkable rise in Africa's exports to India...India's trade basket is heavily dominated by mineral products with very little diversification in the recent past. Along with tariff liberalization, India is lowering different forms of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) which would pave the way for higher trade between India and African economies [...] (Dash 2014, 268).

In 2001, the bilateral trade volume was only US\$5.3 billion. In 2010-2011, the volume reached US\$51.7 billion, the volume increased to US\$66.7 billion in 2019-2020, and exceeded US\$117 billion in 2020-2021 (Sun Xiaohan 2021).

In history, the Maritime Silk Road was an important channel to connect Asia and Europe for carrying out international trade through the Western Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean, up to the Atlantic Ocean. Africa in history was an important hub and transit point for maritime exchanges between Asia and Europe, especially the West bank of the Indian Ocean (Chan Ieng Him 2016). However, after the Portuguese's arrival, the predatory development was brought by Western colonialists. The sea road was interrupted, business twisted, prisoners slaughtered, and their mutilated hands, noses and ears were sent back as mockery souvenirs, as American historian R.R. Palmer described vividly in his well-known *A History of the Modern World*. A Brahman in the East African coast survived various humiliations and dragged his mutilated body back to see his compatriots, which became the first understanding of Westerners in India. The cruel image served as a new linkage between Europe and Asia started by the Portuguese monopoly, transferred to the Dutch control, and to the maritime hegemony of Britain and France, armed by Mahan's sea power theory. After African countries' independence, especially with the speedy globalization, the role of transit between Asia and Europe becomes more important with increase of trade owing to the technological development, industrial division of labor, and raise of living standard. The Cape of Good Hope and the Suez Canal are important passages from Asia to Europe. The BRI covers a wide scope and almost all African countries are enthusiastic about it. Some of them can serve as a direct destination of the BRI, some as extension or transit to the destiny of either Africa, Europe or Asia (Liu Weicai 2016, 70-77).

Since the introduction of the BRI in 2013, it has gone through a promotion process from initiative to vision, and then to practice. From 2014 to 2020, China's total non-financial direct investment in other countries along the Belt and Road reached US\$104.72 billion, with the annual average hitting

US\$14.96 billion. In 2020, China's non-financial direct investment in the countries along the Belt and Road reached US\$17.79 billion, up more than 18 percent year-on-year (Hu Biliang 2021). According to the Refinitiv database, in mid-2019, the BRI comprised some 2631 projects valued at US\$3.7 trillion (Rana 2021). The BRI is a proven success story of China and other participating countries, and the success explains why it has aroused positive response around the world. Now, more than 170 countries, including almost all African countries and international organizations, have signed cooperation documents with China. As the first official member of the European Union to join the BRI, Italy's cooperation with China will surely promote the expansion of China-EU relations under the framework. China and countries along the Belt and Road surely hope that it will be a great opportunity for peace and development. Building a fair, just, democratic and free world is the common value foundation of the community of common destiny of mankind.

On the other hand, how about the B3W? First, it was just put forward and we have to wait and see. It is not clear for the time being what the B3W will look like, yet the B3W has its ideological value in choosing its partner. As Augustin Holl said, it is therefore "normal for Western powers to try to launch initiative to counter the rising China power [...]. It is not clear what the B3W will look like, but the oppressed and dominated nations of this world have the right to try alternatives"²⁰. It is not easy to cheat people any more in a more complex world.

Policymakers must take seriously the importance of investing in long-term relations with everyday citizens in countries in Africa and elsewhere, regardless of their governments' ideologies. Divisive events such as the Summit for Democracy, by contrast, can end up pushing excluded countries closer to Beijing (Benabdallah 2021, n/p).

The problem here is that the intention of the B3W Program itself is to fight China, a country with a different ideology and culture. "Democracy" here becomes a self-defined standard to divide the world, the same logic as the old colonialist trick to divide the world by the Eurocentric standard of "civilization".

²⁰ Augustin Ferdinand Charles Holl, "#B3W Initiative-G7, #africa #democracy #china", <https://www.linkedin.com/in/augustin-ferdinand-charles-holl-8293b411/detail/recent-activity/shares/>.

Conclusion

Both China and Africa have a great history and have made a contribution to mankind, yet they were both regarded as “barbaric” by the Europeans during the colonial period, judging from their standard of “civilization”. According to this standard, people on Earth are divided into two categories, e.g., European nations as “civilized”, and all colonized nations as “barbaric” or “uncivilized”. In contemporary times, the US, with its partners, has used the same trick and divided the world into the “modern” and “traditional”, the “democratic” and “autocratic”, etc. The game of the categorization of “we” and “others” can’t play any longer.

It is a warning that there are three paradoxes in the concept and practice of so-called “civilization” (Li Anshan 2021; Li Anshan forthcoming). Paradox one, more civilized nations have produced more waste. It has become a common knowledge that industrialization goes with by-products, e.g. ecological damage, shoddy manufacturing, environmental pollution, etc. North-South imbalance of global wealth distribution has produced great environmental damage to the South. The transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, deforestation, gradual loss of wildlife and biodiversity, the global spread of toxic chemicals and transfer of pollution intensive industries to the South, etc. This indicates the inequality of North-South order in the world²¹. Paradox two, more civilized nations used more terrible weapons to damage the world. In modern time, the “civilized” people have more cruel means to kill each other. In the history, weapons have evolved from spears, bows and swords to today’s nuclear bombs and bacterial weapons. The means of war have been continuously improved, advanced and become more cruel. During the World War I, about 8.5 million soldiers and 13 million civilians died, yet during the World War II, the number of casualties is about 130 million. Paradox three, more civilized nations have more people committing suicide. According to WHO data of age-standardized suicide rate, the more civilized, the higher (WHO 2021, 14-28). Aimé Césaire once pointed out, “A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization. A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization. A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization” (Césaire 1972, 1).

Since there are differences in geographical conditions and natural surroundings, it is quite improper to use physical things to define civilization, e.g. plow/wheel/domestication/weapons /architecture/smelting/city/

21 There are a lot of books on the subject. See also (Felipe Fernández-Armesto 2001, 435-468).

language/religion, etc. (Gong 2002, 77-96). Therefore, it is necessary to redefine the concept of “civilization”. Civilization is the way of human survival and development or the ability to deal with three kinds of contradictions. The first is the method to deal with the contradiction between man and nature. The second is the way to deal with the contradiction between man and man or the capability to coexist with others. The third is the capability to mediate personal contradictions. Civilization is characterized by pluralism & integration, continuity & adjustment, stability & evolution. Mutual learning is the best choice for the peaceful continuation and harmonious coexistence of different civilizations (Li Anshan 2018).

In recent years, China has established dialogue mechanisms on African affairs with other partners such as Britain, France and the EU, and signed agreements on the framework of third-party market cooperation, with progress made in cooperation in the fields such as agriculture, electricity, ports and water projects. In May, 2021, China and Africa jointly launched the Initiative on Partnership for Africa’s Development and called on other countries to provide more support to the African continent in its fight against the pandemic, promote trade and investment, and provide more debt relief. In a video summit with French President Emmanuel Macron and then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Xi Jinping invited the two countries to take part in the initiative. In September 2021, President Xi proposed a Global Development Initiative at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, calling for promoting global development through balanced, coordinated and inclusive growth.

Different countries’ summits with Africa are becoming more international and inclusive. Africa’s summits with the United Kingdom, France and Japan emphasize coordination among the UN bodies, global financial organizations, regional organizations and other key stakeholders, and pay attention to building inclusive dialogue mechanisms with private sectors, media outlets, NGOs, groups of youth and women (Zhou Yuyuan 2021, n/p).

Regarding the B3W partners, I would like to offer an alternative for the B3W – not to be a rival to the BRI, but a complement to the BRI, thus, to promote the South in their struggle for a better life. The cooperation between China and the US is explained by Jing Gu and her colleagues as “sustain-

able development diplomacy". After the analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, which indicates the interconnection of the world, they consider sustainable development diplomacy is a new approach to prioritize development strategies of different states and work on common shared challenges. "The US-China relationship is the defining geopolitical contest of the twenty-first century. The US-China relationship will play a defining role in tackling these shared challenges. Whether or not the US and China can cooperate with each other is key to tackling the shared crises" (Gu, Green and Yu 2021, 57). The result of the rivalry is unexpected, yet the ideal way is to cooperate with each other in three levels of the international community, e.g. a UN supranational body, the inter-state level and the professional experts/NGOs representing international civil society. "It is believed that if the two superpowers could bury their geopolitical rivalry to make way for a common future of mankind, all else would probably fall into place to ground a new sustainable development diplomacy" (Gu, Green and Yu 2021, 8). In that case, the South, especially Africa, would be beneficiary and the whole world would be more unified. China and the US would contribute a great deal to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Now the COVID-19 pandemic shows that human society is facing a great challenge. There was no parallel in history. Africa is suffering from this unprecedented disaster like other continents. The COVID-19 is the same for everyone, whether poor or rich, it is the same for all countries, whether South or North, and it is the same for all skin groups, whether Black, White, Yellow or Brown. In the face of this common threat, mankind can resist disease only by uniting and working together. Otherwise, no one will be spared. In this way, the "community of human destiny" has changed from a formulation or strategy to an unavoidable realistic choice. The BRI offers a practical way to tackle the poverty and development with joint efforts.

As for China-Africa relations in the future, certainly there will be more problems ahead. Yet my view is unique: the more problems, the better. Why? If there is no contact, there will be no problem. When relations get wider and deeper, more problems would definitely occur. However, with equal relationships and mutual respect, China and Africa can sit down, exchange ideas freely and find a solution. Once the problem is solved, relations become more solid.

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with China-Africa cooperation in the context of BRI-B3W. The first part illustrates the contrast of some predictions about the development of the 21st century and the reality. The second studies the various fabrications and the facts of China-Africa relations. The third examines the BRI (the Belt and Road Initiative) proposed by Xi Jinping in 2013 and the B3W (Build Back Better World) put forward by Joe Biden in 2021. The fourth explores the African role in the BRI. The fifth studies the concept and practice of "civilization" in relation to world development. The author suggests that the BRI and the B3W should cooperate with each other to make the South, especially the African continent, a beneficiary thus contribute a great deal to the whole world.

KEY WORDS

Africa. China. China-Africa relations. BRI. B3W. Civilization.

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NEOEXTRACTIVISM IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO AND ANGOLA. BETWEEN NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION, REGIONAL TRENDS AND LOCAL PARTICULARITIES

David Mouzo Williams¹



Introduction

This article aims to investigate the formation of extractive enclaves in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)², and its possible projections in the rest of Africa, mainly through comparison with another case, that of the Republic of Angola. For this, the African continental insertion within the neoliberal globalization in the period 1970-2000 will be taken into account, particularly the imposition of the Structural Adjustment Programs, by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Understanding that this is part of the same capitalist restructuring, the contributions of extractivism in Latin America will be used as part of the same global South.

Conceiving it as a “neoextractivism” (Svampa 2019), within a “jumping-globe” neoliberal globalization (Ferguson 2007), the transformations of the figures of war conflicts and the privatization of sovereignty will be analyzed, particularly the cases of mercenaries and militias. The interest of a comparative study between the DRC and Angola lies in a series of advantages

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² From now on and in the rest of the article, the DRC abbreviation will be used for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, both for brevity and to continue differentiating it from the state of the Republic of the Congo.

for the broader analysis of this planetary capitalist restructuring, thanks to its distinctive characteristics, but within comparable neo-extractivist models. When considering how both Central African border states were affected by the two oil crises and devaluation of the dollar in the 1970s, with their oscillation in the international prices of raw materials, it will be possible to observe the regional tendencies in which they are inserted, as well as the local peculiarities that differentiate it. The recent Congolese and Angolan history is contextualized in an enormous appreciation of exportable raw materials, or commodities, particularly hydrocarbons and strategic minerals³, whose demand grew between 600 and 2,000% by the industrialized powers; however, new technologies and new less expensive sources have made it possible to make it enormously cheaper for the global North (Tardif 2014, 768-69). In this sense, responding to the particularities of the respective states, there is the reincorporation into the world economy of Angola, previously an exporter of corn and coffee (Ouriques and Nunes de Alvear 2017, 394) and of the DRC, previously an exporter of copper (Gentili 2012, 206) under new roles.

Approaches to neoliberalism and neoextractivism in Central Africa

David Harvey (2007) defined neoliberalism as a theory of political economy that conceives that maximum human well-being can only be achieved through a “liberalization” of individual entrepreneurship, which requires free exchange, free markets and private property. The role of the state would only be equivalent to sustaining or, if necessary, creating these pillars through its traditional mechanisms (armed forces and central bank), but it should not intervene in an already consolidated market. Neoliberal capitalism has developed unevenly across the globe, while neoliberalization since the 1970s has not occurred uniformly, qualitatively or quantitatively. Even more, that very logic of uneven geographical development would fuel neoliberalization through competition (Harvey 2007, 87). In this sense, it has traditionally been thought that *Africa*, as a geographical space, category and “imagined homogeneous space”, has been marginalized or completely outside of that planetary interconnection that neoliberal globalization has meant (Ferguson 2007, 6).

3 Within this terminology minerals such as gold, coltan-tantalite, tungsten and cassiterite-tin are gathered.

The foregoing would be well demonstrated by its invisibility in the bibliography on the matter, whether celebrating or criticizing this new pattern of accumulation; the problems do not seem to surface when talking about the “dangers” that cultural globalization would represent for Africa (Ferguson 2007, 34), but they do when it is framed in economic globalization, mainly because it does not seem to fit the narratives of both defenders and detractors of neoliberal policies (Ferguson 2007, 25-26). In this sense, one of the great narratives typically vociferated by the defenders of neoliberalism is that the economic recipes of the international financial institutions (IFIs) were insufficient and that their “truncation” was a consequence of the African citizens themselves. Provisionally, we could say that the epistemological denial or invisibility of these connections cannot but have consequences, among others: the (re)creation of an imagined otherness, while globalization brings with it an “afterwards” that Africa is not and will never be part, and, linked to the above, that the opacity of the neoliberal reforms in the African space brings with it a denial of its already visible consequences. This would not only revive that image of an isolated continent, but could even enable the deepening of this type of policy.

Taking from previous and more recent contributions, neoliberal globalization would not have a tendency of convergence or homogeneous coverage of the globe under its logic, but rather a behavior of “jumps” from one point to another, leaving vast regions simply ignored. Thus, the fluid movements of capital do not cover the globe, but rather connect points with each other, in what Ferguson (2007, 38) calls *globe-hopping* behavior, and not *globe-covering*. Neoliberalization leads to, following Harvey’s line, the creation of competitive spaces and spatialities (Harvey 2007, 156), or paraphrasing Ferguson (2007, 13-14), to the creation of extractive enclaves, dedicated mainly to the exploitation of commodities, such as precious and strategic minerals and hydrocarbons. Hence the interest of an analysis of the regional trends of the extractive export economy in Central Africa, where Angola has played a leading role from 1980 onwards in its acceleration, but which will not imply an easily transferable “model”, but will require of an analysis of the regional

and local interrelationships that led to the specific implantation of neoliberal neo-extractivism, as well as the differences in other cases⁴.

This will be called “neo-extractivism” in the article, as an installation of extractive enclaves and particularly in its extreme figures (Svampa 2019, 69), thinking of the cases of the Latin American Southern Cone but connecting it with Central Africa, as part of the global South. This neo-extractivism will include an increase in parastatal violence, criminalization of socio-environmental resistance, an accelerated appropriation of resources for export, disintegration of the social fabric due to the accentuation of previous inequalities such as class and gender differences, distinctive spatialization with respect to territories non-extractive, and a proliferation of masculinized violence (Svampa 2019, 71-73).

Africa in neoliberal globalization, 1970-2020

The African continent has sustained an average growth rate of 5% since 2000, falling to 2.5% with the international crisis of 2008, but resuming and even increasing to more than 6%, comparable to the emerging countries of Asia (B. Kabunda 2016, 38). However, these positive indicators are concentrated solely in the GDP and have been achieved through a favorable situation for raw materials, but at the cost of a stagnation in productive diversification, the advance of neoliberal reforms, environmental destruction and the increase in inequality and social injustices, around the redistribution of income and in part due to the similar recipes of the IFIs, especially since the 1980s. It is not only the Western powers that have an unusual presence in the African continent and, even more, its insertion has not been the same in recent decades.

The 1990s and the new millennium brought with them the creation and reformulation of new institutions that facilitated the neoliberalization movements, trying to homogenize those previous tendencies. Firstly, the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, which changed the relationship of authority by establishing a tripartite system between that

⁴ In this sense, Ferguson mentions an “Angola model”, which contrasts with a previous “Zambia model”, and which respectively imply a change in the constitution of the African states in the face of the advance of neoliberal globalization. According to Ferguson, from 1980 onwards there would be an expansion of the characteristics of Angola throughout Central Africa. However, in this work it was decided not to literally use the name of a model centered around Angola, as it is not intended to demonize a state and its population, but to contribute to a comparative study (Ferguson 2007, 201-202).

organization, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). On the other hand, multiple African leaders, in an attempt to make their incorporation into “globalization” effective (or even deeper), promoted the conversion of the Organization of the African Union (OAU) into the African Union (AU) in 2001. In the same year, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) was adopted, with the objectives of reducing poverty and promoting the economy from the African leaders themselves.

Despite the redemptive aspects of these institutions, the transformation towards the AU meant the abandonment of an attempt at a Third World and Afrocentric perspective, while NEPAD has committed a complacent paternalism towards the global North. In this sense, there has been an internalization of the neoliberal guidelines, and particularly of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) – privatization, liberalization and foreign investment regime – that had been inserted with the debt crisis in 1980 (Benavides De La Vega 2007, 40-43). In this sense, neoliberal globalization will not be merely a new partition of Africa, but a capitalist reorganization that projects a reestablishment of the economic-political power of the elites, including those belonging to some African governments. For this purpose, these spare parts of regional and continental organizations in Africa will be used, by force of pressure from African powers, and in accordance with the guidelines of the G8 and “good governance”. On the other hand, one of the opacities derived from the traditional bibliography of neoliberalism and specifically when talking about Africa is the notion that there have not been great changes in its forms of exploitation and commercial partners. On the contrary, this section emphasizes these transformations within neoliberal globalization.

As a counterbalance to the US on the African continent and as a way to circumvent its pressures, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the appeal of its “pragmatic cooperation” have risen. Although the Chinese presence on the African continent has its origins in the founding of the PRC in 1949 and particularly in the Bandung Conference in 1955, supporting the non-aligned countries (Ouriques and Nunes de Alvear 2017, 388), after the 1990s liberalization undertaken by Deng Xiaoping revitalized the PRC’s competition with other powers for natural resources and markets in Africa (Castel 2006, 95-96). Chinese investments in the continent have increased from almost 500 million dollars in 2003 to more than 22.9 billion dollars in 2012 (Ouriques and Nunes de Alvear 2017, 390). The needs for oil supply and commercial transactions also promoted the introduction of India in the African continent, which had a spectacular increase in 1990-2010, although much less than the Chinese insertion (Kumar and Stanzel 2016).

Many have argued that the goal of the PRC, with its resource provisioning, export market expansion, and lending and investment projects, is to create a multipolar world order and diversify the monetary system (B. M. Kabunda 2008a, 7-8). Furthermore, the interests of the African states in establishing relations with China and India, for their part, are explained not only by the need for foreign currency, but also ideologically by the lack of a colonial past and the diplomatic support that these nations had in the African anti-colonial struggle.

Mainly interested in oil and strategic minerals, unlike with other trading partners, China does not seem to put trade barriers for ideological reasons to the African states with which it establishes relations (it does not require compliance with prerequisites of transparency, non-recognition of Taiwan or environmental respect). In this sense, some African governments that have been sanctioned and/or in conflict have been able to avoid blockades, obtaining diplomatic support, investments and arms supplies from China (Castel 2006, 97-98), which may have, as a consequence, financial support for authoritarian regimes, which would otherwise be affected by international blockades. It is not necessary to affirm that the reincorporation of Africa into the world market occurred in terms of the periphery (Ouriques and Nunes de Alvear 2017, 410), but it can be considered that it has constituted a fragile growth, based on exports with a minimum of added value and a volatile vulnerability due to price fluctuations, consolidating a deindustrialization already promoted by the aforementioned SAP (Kabunda 2016, 45). This has been a common denominator with other cases of the global South, which leads us to use the category of “neo-extractivism”, which will be the form of this neoliberal insertion by Africa, and particularly in the cases of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The privatization of sovereignty

Within this neoliberal globalization, a fundamental mechanism of capitalist accumulation will be the advance of the privatization of sovereignty, both by armed groups or militias, and the proliferation of mercenaries or military contractors. In turn, these changes will be related to transformations at the international level.

Firstly, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, from Washington there is simultaneously a change of categorization of political-social instability in Sub-Saharan Africa — as an international problem, part of the “war on

terror”, which required greater interventions by the US and the European Union — and a change in international economic aid — reduction of budget items and greater channeling of that aid in the form of “incentives” for foreign investment — (Reno 2005, 65-66). If the US pyrrhic victory in Somalia (1993) temporarily conditioned reluctance to direct military intervention, the US presence now consists more of a combination of interests — supply of raw materials/energy, geostrategy and security —, and therefore its criticism has focused on those African states with which it has had disputes, such as Sudan and Zimbabwe. Still, they have ignored respect for human rights and democracy in other cases. This change in the figures of the war after 2001 has also implied the proliferation of mercenaries. From a historical perspective, the use of mercenaries in the African continent in the Modern Age dates back to the colonial administration, but in recent history their participation in issues of internal and external sovereignty did not mean a deprivation of the participation of troops belonging to Armed Forces of Western Sovereign States.

However, four processes push back the participation of foreign powers and enable the proliferation of mercenaries or self-styled private military companies (PMC). The first instance was the signing of peace between Angola, Cuba and the Republic of South Africa in 1988, which led to the withdrawal of Cuban and Soviet troops from Angolan territory, and the second occurred with the abolition of South African apartheid in 1994 (Álvarez Cobelas 2001, 37). The others were the already mentioned US political-military disaster in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope (1993) and the genocide of more than 800,000 people, mostly Hutus and moderate Tutsis, in Rwanda (1994), which discouraged the unusual military intervention of non-Africans (Bessis 2004, 93). The ambiguous legislation of the figure of the mercenary/military contractor, as well as a neoliberal discourse that has wanted to attack them as indiscernible private entrepreneurs from the blue helmets (Álvarez Cobelas 2001, 49) has made their use possible not only in situations of armed conflict, but also to protect extractive enclaves and national parks (Ferguson 2007, 46-47).

In this sense, in the context of neo-extractivism, one of the favorite ways to reaffirm a differentiated spatialization has been through the use of privatized forces, and typically foreign or at least foreign to the exploited territory in question. In the African continent, the use of these mercenary forces and the payment for their services based on concessions in productive exploitation (especially in the mining and hydrocarbons sector) have proliferated (Levy Martínez 2010, 95), being the case of Angola a pioneer and paradigmatic in this regard (Ferguson 2007, 199-200). However, this has not been the only way in which the privatization of sovereignty has converged

with neo-extractivism, as in its extreme figures it intersects with the presence of criminal networks (Svampa 2019, 75).

In this sense, when there is no presence of foreign military contractors, the same plundering mechanisms can occur through militias or non-state armed groups, particularly in contexts of multiple governance and the imposition of arbitrary exactions. In a context of de facto regulatory plurality in the mines of eastern Congo, particularly in cases such as mining in South Kivu, there is what Marie Müller-Koné (2015) calls “*débrouillardise*”. That is, a series of informal practices in the context of small-scale artisanal mining and without concessions to industrialized private companies. There is not a single preponderance of non-state and illegal actors, but a coexistence of state institutions, community authorities and different types of military and paramilitary agents. Even more, the formalization of these practices can occur through public recognition by the state apparatus, while the military, officials and militias will use forms of harassment and coercion to impose tax extractions (Müller-Koné 2015, 157-59). The modus operandi of these is given: (1) through the control of the mines themselves and the collection of taxes from transporters and international buyers, and (2) through sporadic attacks on mining villages, as a form of demonstrating their ability to flog communities and coerce the government into negotiating with them (Tardif 2014, 783-84).

The Republic of Angola

The Republic of Angola covers an area of 1,246,700 km² on the western coast of southern Africa, and has borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia and Namibia, as well as access to the Atlantic Ocean. A unitary presidential republic with its capital in Luanda, Angola is divided into 18 provinces and has a population of over 30,175,000 people. It has oil reserves that have made it the second largest oil exporter in sub-Saharan Africa, after Nigeria (Levy Martínez 2010, 91), as well as diamond deposits, great biodiversity and more than 47 hydrographic basins (Marchetti 2016, 101).

Part of the Africa colonized by the Portuguese, Angola achieved its independence in the period 1961-1975, thanks to the armed struggle of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA, in Portuguese), of Marxist-Leninist roots and with the support of the USSR, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA, in Portuguese), with Maoist roots and supported by the PRC, and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA, in Portuguese), supported by the Congolese regime of Mobutu

Sese Seko and the US (Levy Martínez 2010, 86). The call for independence by a government of Portuguese officials in Luanda leads to internal combat between the armed groups: the FNLA is defeated, so UNITA (now backed by the US and apartheid South Africa) confronts the MPLA (with support from Cuba) in the period 1975-2002. The civil war implied the death of more than a million people and the displacement of more than four million inhabitants (Marchetti 2016, 100). The conflict subsides towards 1998 and seems to end with the 2002 armistice, which inaugurates the arrival of the MPLA to the government, the demilitarization and transformation of UNITA into a political party and the beginning of an internationally validated discourse of national normalization (Levy Martínez 2010, 81-82).

Following the lines drawn for the continent, in Angola and despite a double-digit annual GDP growth in the 2010s, the wealth derived from oil and diamond exploitation has been unequally distributed among the population, concentrating around a political class and military leaders, combining mechanisms of corruption and clientelism (Levy Martínez 2010, 92). It should be noted that, throughout this period, from 1975 and until his resignation in 2017, José Eduardo dos Santos ruled the country; his departure and his replacement by João Manuel Lourenço did not imply the loss of preeminence of the MPLA in the government.

Although Angola depended for years on the US as the main buyer to carry out this growth, by 2010 its role was diminishing (Ouriques and Nunes de Alvear 2017, 402), which is related not only to the intensification of fracking for domestic production towards 2012 (Marchetti 2016, 101), but also with the aforementioned Chinese insertion and the Angolan entry to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which give Angola greater negotiating capacity (Levy Martínez 2010, 94). All this is related to the recent changes in the continent already introduced in the previous section, as well as the organization of certain extractivist states under the aegis of regional organizations, which feedback their insertion into neoliberal globalization.

On the other hand, the Angolan case is one of the few where there have been direct investments from the PRC, particularly loans focused on infrastructural reconstruction after the consequences of the civil war (Maribel and Vélez 2011, 590); this has included roads, health centers, irrigation systems, education, telecommunications etc., being able to access credit that had been denied by the IFIs (Ouriques and Nunes de Alvear 2017, 408). In this, Angola has managed to disengage from external indebtedness with the IMF, among others (Levy Martínez 2010, 98).

Beyond the attempts by the national government to diversify the economy towards non-oil sectors (Marchetti 2016, 102), 80% of the Angolan GDP is still based on oil production, and specifically on the export of crude oil, as there is only one refinery in the country (Barciela 2019), which has brought with it extreme vulnerability to price crises such as those of 2008 (Ouriques and Nunes de Alvear 2017, 412) and again around 2014, due to an international supply of crude that exceeded demand (Marchetti 2016, 102).

Oil exploitation in Angola is concentrated on oil platforms (off-shore) far from the coast, and increasingly in deep water; these are worked by temporary wage earners brought from abroad and who live temporarily in gated communities, so that effectively the profit, production and labor of this exploitation does not touch Angolan soil (Ferguson 2005, 378). For all of the above, the case of Angola accounts for the insertion in neo-extractivism under certain characteristics born from the particularities of its oil exploitation and civil war. In this sense, it will be characterized by an intensive use of technology with specialized foreign workers, which implies a divorce of this exploitation from the rest of the economy and society. To consolidate this neo-extractivism, a foreignized and privatized military workforce has been systematically used. Thus, the case of Angola shows a state, based especially on private spheres, mainly on the more than 150 PMC present in the territory, which continue to be used especially in areas rich in diamonds and oil that are still in conflict, such as the province of Cabinda (Levy Martínez 2010, 89).

This phenomenon, which arises in the aforementioned broader context of reimplantation of mercenary forces on the continent, in Angola particularly responds to the 1975-2002 civil war, but goes beyond this period of conflict and is normalized by the state recognition of these forces. Thus, the hiring of the South African Executive Outcomes during the conflict between the MPLA and UNITA was done through the oil company Heritage Oil as an intermediary (Levy Martínez 2010, 93); the success of its military campaigns led the MPLA to entrust them with the training of the national army (Ferguson 2007, 200) and ensure their loyalties through oil and diamond exploitation concessions. At the same time, UNITA maintained illegal routes for these resources, during and after the civil war.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

There, as in the cases of the DRC, attempts have also been made to promote the creation of extractive enclaves, “patches” of extraction. Ferguson

states that “increasing technological sophistication and spatial isolation in mining enclaves have made mining [...] more and more similar to oil extraction” (2007, 378, our translation)⁵. However, what the American anthropologist points out as the actions of private military contractors, in the DRC is explained rather by complicity with illegal armed groups, while in the two Kivu alone there are approximately 130 illegal armed groups (Congo Research Group 2019).

As noted, in Angola a spatial differentiation coincides with an isolated geographical location of the exploited resources, effectively “escaping” in a double sense (Ferguson 2007, 198-200), which has deepened with the aforementioned devices of corruption, forces privatized navies and offshore companies. However, in the case of the DRC, neo-extractivism will be implanted in a differentiated way due to geographical particularities, armed conflicts, small-scale artisanal exploitation and the physiognomy of its extracted resources.

This has been a trend favored by the SAP, as these guidelines have promoted the creation of free zones of exploitation, with exemption from taxes and other advantages for private capital, excluding the majority of the population (Gentili 2012, 498). In this model, it has only been necessary to secure an exploitation space, some extractive enclaves typically reaffirmed by private security and access to the external market, thanks to telecommunications or air transport; they are operations that do not require the provision of national sovereignty or the presence of banking, financial and/or social security structures, but only the contractual legality issued by some eroded African states (Ferguson 2007, 207). This follows the aforementioned idea of capital as a “jumping-globe” (globalization), also proposed by Ferguson (2007), which feeds and feeds back on the weakening of state apparatuses. Contrary to what was announced discursively, in neoliberal globalization the IFIs have weakened the state from above (through international law and the international economy) and even from below (through the promotion of centrifugal cultural and religious movements), with the prejudice that state accumulation was inefficient and/or prone to corruption, and the private sector would be the only source of development and efficiency (Kabunda Badi 2008b, 79), in those spaces where productive capital has not been inserted and the state has regressed, NGOs take a greater role (Ferguson 2007, 379).

The insertion of the DRC in this model of neo-extractivism must be understood within the particularities of its spatial distribution and recent

5 In the original: *“el incremento de la sofisticación tecnológica y aislamiento espacial en enclaves mineros han hecho de la minería [...] cada vez más y más parecida a la extracción petrolera”* (Ferguson, 2007, 378).

history: a greater demographic density in the DRC occurs in the extreme southwest (where the capital Kinshasa and the province of Central Congo are located) and center-east part (where the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Maniema and Tanganyika are located) of the territory. Human agglutination in eastern Congo, in the border area with Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi, coincides with most of the distribution of resources, the DRC being rich in strategic minerals, particularly columbian tantalite or coltan, of which it has 80% of world reserves (Omer and Lugardo 2011, 337). A dictatorial, one-party and neo-patrimonial regime led by General Mobutu Sese Seko for more than thirty years is rising (Lugardo 2012, 68-69).

The decline of its system already began around the seventies, due to the fall in international prices of raw materials in 1973 and the attempt to recover the multiparty system, with the call for legislative elections in 1977 (Lugardo 2005, 690). It will be the combination of these factors with the regionalization of the Tutsi-Hutu conflict, after the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 (Lugardo 2012, 94-95), leading to the First Congo War (1996-1997), in which the ADFLC (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire), led by Laurent Kabila, rapidly advanced across the country and seized the capital of Kinshasa, overthrowing the Mobutist regime and anointing Kabila as president. Subsequently, the “Second Congolese War” or “African World War” (1998-2003) broke out, around the debts of the Congolese government with Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, which supported the campaigns of the ADFLC, the actions of the illegal armed groups on the borders and the interference of the latter in mining production.

With nine African nations involved, more than three million people killed in this period alone (Autesserre 2006, 1-2), and twenty million displaced, accumulating more deaths and the impossibility of education and training for minors (Omer and Lugardo 2011, 343), an armistice is reached with the Pretoria Accord. Laurent Kabila's assassination in 2001 and the subsequent power vacuum was immediately filled by his son, Joseph Kabila. The explosion of the borders of the DRC, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda during these conflicts led to a proliferation of militias, mainly in the east, some of them led by once big-men intermediaries of the Mobutist regime (Lugardo 2012, 57-58). Furthermore, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (AFDRC) are nourished by the normalization of armed groups as traditional soldiers (Lugardo 2012, 189), who have continued to be poorly paid and trained, and have had senior managers with an enormous heterogeneity of training, making it difficult to professionalize and adopt a rights-based perspective (Baaz and Stern 2010).

In relation to this, due to the effect of the SAP, there has been a growing abandonment of national schemes and a greater acceptance of the coexistence between violence and mining production (Ferguson 2005, 379), exploiting the strategic minerals used for the manufacture of weapons, electronics and renewable technology. This production is mostly industrialized, but 90% of the Congolese workers employed in the area work on artisanal farms (Callaway 2018, 10).

Violence by non-state armed groups and associated criminal gangs is not exclusively concentrated in rural areas or mining towns, so there is no mechanical correlation between violence and the presence of minerals (Congo Research Group 2019). However, small artisanal exploitation for the extraction of cobalt and copper is associated with precarious working conditions (including child labor and sexual and gendered violence) as well as the actions of illegal armed groups (Perks 2011, 178-79). For its part, large-scale and industrialized extraction, including state-owned companies, lack transparency and are mostly made up of subcontracted labor (Callaway 2018, 4-5). It should be said that, due to the particularities of these minerals – among them, that they are transported in tons so that their extraction is viable – their monitoring is difficult; through the “Dodd-Frank Law”, promoted and sanctioned by the Obama administration in the United States in 2010, an attempt was made to regulate the supply of 3TG minerals, imposing the use of bags with approval labels and certificates of origin.

However, this did not take into account the possibilities of smuggling and falsification of security strips and rather established a *de facto* ban on all artisanal mining of these resources, collapsing regional economies dependent on it (Stoop, Verpoorten and Van Der Windt 2018, 78; Müller-Koné 2015, 45). Thus, it is not as simple as concentrating only on the regulation of artisanal mining work; both due to the intersection between both systems (purchase of minerals from artisan groups and their sale as part of industrial production, without making it transparent) (Callaway 2018, 12), as well as illegal export through other border states, as has happened with the outflow of gold of Congolese origin across the borders of Uganda and Rwanda (Global Witness 2017, 9-10). As an illustrative example of all of the above, Global Witness (2016) reported the insertion of the Chinese company Kun Hou Mining for the exploitation of gold in eastern Congo. This multinational installed a semi-industrial production in the town of Shabunda, and to ensure the gold deposits in the bed of the Ulindi River, it contracted and supplied weapons to a local armed group, while at the same time enabling illegal levies on the artisanal miners by those same militiamen. Still, benefiting from the lax Congolese tax legislation and the enormous surplus value derived from

parastatal coercion and precarious working conditions, the extracted gold was smuggled to some of the neighboring states, and there will be no large productive investments related to these.

Discussions between the experiences of the DRC and Angola

In the case of Angola, there is a geographical distance from offshore oil exploitation, foreign capital and workers, and mercenaries with regressive redistribution of surplus value, while in the DRC the exploitation is carried out in an artisanal way by local workers, but the coercion and illegal routes through Uganda-Rwanda-Burundi allow mining profits to escape, further entrenched by the presence of non-state armed groups. On the other hand, in Angola the institutionalization of mercenaries will take place after 2002, both their use as private security in neighborhoods of foreign workers and their incorporation and training in the Angolan Armed Forces. In the DRC, there will be the normalization of the militias, many of them controlled by big-men who are intermediaries of Mobutu, as well as the presence in the mining towns of the AFDRC, some of which have not professionalized or broken loyalties with respect to their former commanders in the militias.

Despite the clear differences in their schemes, it is understood that in both cases we are witnessing a neoliberal capitalist reorganization, that allows a neo-extractivist implantation, in accordance with its local particularities, and that obeys this notion of capital as a jumping-globe (globalization). In the DRC, a spatial and qualitative distance does not have to coincide. In other words, a geographical separation, such as the Angolan offshore oil platforms, and the use of human resources and foreign capital, including workers and security forces, which would clearly explain the societal separation of income. On the contrary, the underground strategic minerals that abound in eastern Congolese have been “separated” through a series of mechanisms: the presence of illegal armed groups, government approval, the complicity of foreign governments in the illegal export and the presence of foreign refining companies, which promote this societal separation of income from extractivism with respect to the state and the civilian population.

Conclusion

This comparison work tried to account for a series of regional trends and local particularities that are complemented by a neoliberal globalization and capitalist reorganization still in process. A necessary criticism was made of the traditional literature on neoliberalism in Africa, whose shortsightedness has prevented a reliable analysis of recent changes in the period 1970-2000, particularly on two fronts. Firstly, in how the Western and non-Western powers that have promoted African economies based on the mono-production of commodities for export have changed, especially the Chinese presence in Central Africa. Second, the multiple ways in which sovereignty has gradually been privatized, with the presence of mercenaries in Africa accelerating in recent decades, as well as the proliferation of non-state armed groups; both have been inserted not only in anti-colonial and civil wars, but also in the differentiated territorialization of extractive enclaves. It is understood here that these neoliberalization processes are not purely African phenomena, but can be understood through categories designed for other regions of the global South such as neo-extractivism, as well as that they can contribute to a better understanding of it.

Having made a necessary introduction to the recent histories of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the similarities of their insertion in a globalized world in a neoliberal key were emphasized, but also the particularities that have allowed international capital to operate these leaps and separation of usufruct of profits with respect to their respective states and civilian populations. All this enhanced by economic liberalization and tax relief, the normalization of paramilitary and military-foreign violence has paid for the differentiated spatialization of extractive enclaves as distinctive patches from the rest of society. Such normalization, including privatized violence, does not imply a single use of “legal” mechanisms by governments and capitals, but informal devices such as corruption and smuggling, especially in the DRC, have allowed the foreignization of surplus value, beyond those who actually work the extraction on the land. For all these reasons, a greater dialogue will be required between the analysis of the forms of neo-extractivist exploitation on the African continent, and to face the epistemological challenge of not considering them as totally distinctive phenomena due to their state borders. Even more so, and in the face of increasingly global-jumping capital, the contributions and feedback between studies from the rest of the global South can enrich our understanding of these processes that are still operating.

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ABSTRACT

This article intends an approach to the formation of extractive enclaves in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, making a comparative study with the Republic of Angola, in order to account for the regional trends that make them similar, and the local particularities that distinguish their respective neoliberal insertions. The hypothesis of this work, taking the contributions of authors such as James Ferguson (2007), is that a paradigm has been installed since 1980 onwards in a large part of the African continent, which we call here "neo-extractivism", incorporating Maristella's model Svampa (2019), who thought about it for Latin America. While Ferguson focuses his analysis of neoliberalism in Africa on Angola, where he observes the installation of oil production qualitatively and spatially separated from the rest of society, and Svampa does so in relation to the concessions that both national-popular and neoliberal governments of the Latin American region have done to extractive companies, an additional nuance is proposed here. The Congolese case shows the imposition of a gap that separates the profits from exploitation from the state and its population, as in the Angolan case, but with a series of historical particularities that have combined the actions of militias, illegal routes, liberalization neoliberal and insertion of foreign capital. This syncretism has deprived the profits from strategic minerals from the local workers who exploit them and from the government in whose territory they lie underground. Both cases would be part of a broader capitalist reorganization that has been operating in the African continent from 1970 onwards, and that necessarily requires a comparative study, taking contributions from the analysis of the Latin American region, as part of the global South.

KEYWORDS

African economy. Strategic Minerals. Oil.

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CORRUPTION, UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND THE MASSES IN AFRICA

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Introduction

Two contemporary examples from Nigeria foreground the essence of the argument of this paper. First, in November 2019, a former Nigerian Senator (2010-2015), Babafemi Ojudu, issued a scathing rebuke of his constituents, friends, extended family and political associates in a widely reported “caveat lector”. Senator Ojudu (2019) stated:

Dear compatriots, tell me how many American congressmen and women hired caterers to feed constituents every day he visits his constituency?...Where else in the world are party members paid, fed, clothed and transported to attend party functions? Yet, you talk of corruption. What is the meaning of this corruption? Is it not corruption to demand to be paid before you vote? Don't you think whoever paid you to vote for him will recoup his investment?

Ojudu notes that the title “Senator” was an “albatross” — fellow citizens charged him excessive prices for basic goods and services and made

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requests for assistance regarding their weddings, hospital bills, funerals and children's tuition fees, among other financial demands. Such expectations extend to beliefs of citizens regarding how the senator ought to live. For instance, Ojodu claims that when he shows up in economy class on the plane "everyone begins to look at you as if you have missed your road. That look of what he is doing here with all the money he earns or he has stolen" (Ojodu 2019).

The second example concerns a fraud allegedly perpetrated by Philomina Chieshe, a sales clerk at the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB)⁴ office in Benue State, Nigeria. Chieshe informed a panel of auditors in February 2018 that a snake had swallowed approximately \$100,000 (US) from the organization's sale proceeds in her possession. A report by *Premium Times*, Nigeria's leading online investigative newspaper, notes that Chieshe "confessed that her housemaid connived with another JAMB staff, Joan Asen, to "spiritually" (through a snake) steal the money from the vault in the account office" (Adedigba 2018. Parentheses original).

How do we make sense of these two cases? What do the experiences of the senator and the case of the clerk speak to, regarding the labyrinth of corruption and underdevelopment in Africa? The central argument of this paper is that ignoring the role of the masses makes for an incomplete understanding of the vignettes of corruption and the crisis of development in Africa. The paper argues that corrupt practices by elites and the actions, beliefs, expectations and demands of the masses on the elites are mutually reinforcing, co-referential and ultimately co-constitute the processual production of corruption and consequent underdevelopment in Africa. This is further reinforced in what we have couched as "the irony of the African masses" in the fight against corruption and underdevelopment in Africa. The irony is too compelling to ignore. The African masses demand their share of the national cake through appendages of, or association with political elites who loot the state — one of the major causes of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa.

While we do not attempt to measure culpability — our aims are much more modest — this paper argues that the masses are a significant part of the system that has paralysed human and social development in Africa. Our aim — to the extent that it is accomplished — is conscientiously provocative. The positionality of the masses can no longer be ignored. Much scholarly analyses, with few exceptions, omit succinct engagement with the role of

4 JAMB is responsible for conducting a mandatory national entrance examination into post-secondary institutions in Nigeria.

the masses or non-elites in the fight against graft and underdevelopment in Africa. The interpellation and agency of regular or non-elite citizens is missing in vast volumes of the literature. Without unpacking the role of the masses, academic analyses present a partial and superficial picture of corruption and underdevelopment in Africa. This impoverishes the literature on corruption and underdevelopment.

This is not the first paper to recognize the salience of engaging with the role of individuals in the private sector in corruption by government officials. Nearly 30 years ago, Harsch (1993, 34) argues that the “emphasis is almost entirely on the state sphere, tending to minimise the behaviour of those in the private sector who contribute to the corruption of governmental personnel”. This underscores the role of business executives — contractors, importers/exporters, and other merchants in the private sector. We extend Harsch’s (1993) binoculars to cover the role of the masses — everyday people.

The imbalance in the literature is problematic for several reasons. First, corrupt political elites do not exist in a social vacuum: they are part of the structure of society. In technologically advanced countries, the masses have often taken a greater role in monitoring the management of the public good. Therefore, the question is not merely “who are these elites?”. We also need to grapple with the question “what kind of society produces these elites?”. Second, despite widespread issues in the electoral system, new elites are fabricated regularly. Therefore, stories of previously middle or lower-level employees in various sectors of the economy attaining prestigious positions in the executive or legislative arm of government are not unheard of. However, little positive change occurs in the conditions of living of the masses. A related question therefore concerns why most new elites simply join rather than change the performative and socially consequential fray of corrupt practices. Third, the focus on elites is reasonable but ought to be complemented by succinct exegesis of the role of the masses in the actions of elites. In other words, how are corrupt practices of elites influenced by the masses or constituencies they represent? This recognises the embeddedness of political elites in patronage networks and syndicates as well as the interpellation of their rural and urban constituencies. Fourth, while political or military elites, such as former Angolan president Jose Eduardo dos Santos and ex-Nigerian Head of State, General Sani Abacha and their families and cronies have stashed billions of state funds in Europe and North America, this category of elites arguably represents a relatively small fraction of corrupt elites in Africa. Most corrupt elites do not have access to such gargantuan sums of money. While huge sums of money are stashed overseas, a significant part of stolen state resources circulates within the national system as part of the currency and

mechanism for retaining power, particularly at the local government and regional levels.

Some caveats are necessary at this stage. First, a dynamic perspective on corruption undergirds the paper. This perspective is anchored on the basic realities of corruption — the “intermingling of cause and effect”, which means “some of the factors...identified as causing corruption may also be its effects” (Alam 1989, 447-448). This approach has fundamental implications for the analysis that follows. Corruption is seen from both the demand and supply perspectives. Second, this paper concerns the salience of corruption in class *relations* rather than class *formation*. Our concern is with how elites and non-elites interact with corruption as a *lingua franca*. We do not focus on how corruption fosters or hinders the emergence of a national or local bourgeoisie. This is admittedly a narrower but more succinct focus. Third, references to “elite” in the paper imply political elites unless otherwise indicated. This recognises the centrality of the state (and therefore positions in government bureaucracies) as the epicenter of struggles over power and other socially valuable resources. Thus, the focus is primarily on elites in elective positions and secondarily on others who owe their offices to political calculations. This category includes government ministers and commissioners who may not be elected but must maintain a modicum of socio-political capital and relevance. Bracketing economic and other elites affords us a sharp focus on the objective of the paper — to demonstrate that the masses are agentic entities and major actors in corruption and underdevelopment in Africa rather than monochromatic or monolithic victims of the system. This is not a “blame-the-victim” approach. It merely engages with a largely missing piece in much of contemporary scholarship on the subject given that when the masses fail to support the fight against corruption, it undermines and renders irrelevant anti-corruption efforts. Fourth, our approach risks presenting a pathological picture of the masses in Africa. This is far from our aim as scholars and persons of African origins. No region has a monopoly on the control of corruption. For instance, despite the widespread association of corruption with African countries, corruption in Africa involves smaller sums of money relative to countries like Russia, France, Italy and much of Eastern Europe (Szeftel 2000). Nonetheless, the relevance of our focus is highlighted by empirical evidence demonstrating that corruption in Africa is much more damaging to socio-economic development and political stability than elsewhere in the world (Szeftel 2000). A 1% increase in corruption levels reduces national growth rate by about 0.72% or, expressed differently, a one-unit increase in the corruption index reduces the growth rate by 0.545 percentage points (Pak Hung Mo 2001).

The final caveat concerns recognition of foreign influence on corruption in Africa. For instance, monetary aid for development often ends up in foreign accounts of corrupt government officials. In some instances, western multinationals encourage and channel corruption in Africa to promote competitive advantage. The US passed the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 with a mandate to criminalize certain classes of persons and entities to make payments to foreign government officials to assist in obtaining or retaining business (USDJ). In Kenya, elites stashed overseas \$3 billion dollars from aid funds from 1990 to 2010 (i.e. \$150 million per year) (*The Africa Report* 2020). While organizations such as Transparency International, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other supranational non-governmental organizations (NGOs) spotlight various corrupt practices and their social consequences in Africa, state actors such as Switzerland, France, England and the United States remain recipients of corrupt funds for safe-keeping and investments, like real estate, for which too often their conspicuous reticence arguably reflects a double standard when dealing with the continent of Africa. These activities have not generated as much social activism within and outside Africa. While cognizant of these issues, we privilege endogenous over exogenous factors in understanding corruption in Africa. As Bayart (2009, 260) argues, the African state “rests upon autochthonous foundations and a process of re-appropriation of institutions of colonial origin which give it its own historicity; it can no longer be taken as a purely exogenous structure”. In other words, despite the credulity of claims relating to colonial legacy and ongoing neo-colonial relations of exploitation, the African state is in many ways its own entity. Its manifestations are irreducible to its historical or contemporary foreign-induced encumbrance. The salience of autochthonous factors is evident in activities of transnational corporations that are often allowed to operate with impunity in most sub-Saharan African countries in the absence of or failure to implement regulatory framework. This is significant given nearly 60 years of independence of all but a handful of African states.

This paper contributes to the empirical literature on corruption and underdevelopment in Africa. It complements the tenor of available literature. The paper argues that non-elite citizens are non-passive and often enthusiastic recipients of the proceeds of bureaucratic corruption. Corruption by political elites is influenced partly by the demands on and expectations of regular citizens vis-à-vis political elites. These demands and expectations are not an insignificant part of the corruption of the elite. This is neither a pro-elite paper nor one suggesting a teleological or deterministic standpoint. Rather than a pro-elite or rigid unilinear standpoint, the paper attempts to offer a nuanced

and dynamic analysis of how elite behavior mirrors the rest of society and how actions and inaction of citizens affect the conduct of governing elites.

The remainder of the paper is divided into seven parts. The first part discusses the data and methods. The second part engages with the theoretical and empirical literature on corruption and underdevelopment in Africa. The paper does not cover the entire vast material on corruption, but a purposive selection is employed which focuses on evidence-based research on corruption. The third part presents the empirical findings with contemporary evidence to demonstrate the nexus between elite corruption and the complicity of the masses. This is followed by a presentation of the ethno-clientelist influence on corruption and the agency of youth in dealing with corruption in parts four and five. Part six analyses the implications and continuing consequences of current actions on corruption in Africa. The final section presents conclusions on the involvement of the masses in corruption and consequent underdevelopment in Africa.

Data and Methods

This paper uses a qualitative approach. Four hundred and sixty-seven in-depth interviews were conducted with four sets of actors. These are government officials including parliamentarians, academics, civil society actors and regular citizens. The study involved participants from eight African countries: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Kenya, Mali, Niger, South Sudan and Ghana. These countries were selected as they were among countries with continuously low ranking in the last ten years on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Snowball sampling was used to identify and engage participants. However, some participants were selected based on their knowledge of and contributions to discussions related to corruption and governance in Africa. The research also targeted participants among everyday citizens to explore their perspectives on corruption in their societies and how it could be addressed. The contacts of the authors in the countries targeted, most of whom two of the researchers had worked with in previous assignments, were instrumental in setting up interviews in the respective countries. Sixty-three percent of the interviewees were males, while 33 percent were females. Additionally, 79 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 70, while 21 percent were between the ages of 18 and 29. Young people were engaged to have their perspectives on corruption and assess the agency of youth and their interaction with elites in their respective communities. Interviewees were conducted from March to June 2020 using

Skype, WhatsApp and telephone as field interviews could not be conducted due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Interviews were transcribed, coded and thematically analyzed.

Corruption and underdevelopment in Africa

The paper adopts a minimalist conceptualization of *corruption*. Harsch's (1993, 33) distillation of a United Nations definition is apt: corruption encompasses "outright theft, embezzlement of funds or other appropriation of state property, nepotism and the granting of favors to personal acquaintances, and the abuse of public authority and position to exact payments and privileges". The approach recognizes that in most developing countries little boundary exists in practice between private property and state resources as well as civil society and the state. Rotberg (2017) makes a similar characterization of corruption, centered on greed and self-interest as its principal drivers:

Greed and taking advantage-self-interest are hardwired into the human condition. Corrupt acts flow from a natural (rational) desire to improve one's position and one's earning potential. Both the giver and the taker of corrupt exchanges fundamentally attempt to better their position/situation/claim, calculating the extent to which direct or indirect responsibilities and results will flow from an exchange of gratuities, an acknowledgment of influence, and the creation of obligation (Rotberg 2017, 16).

The literature on corruption in developing countries is multifaceted, and scholarly engagement with the causal factors and consequences of corruption is diverse. First, there are scholars who adopt a modernisationist approach. Corruption is viewed as an unavoidable phenomenon immanent in preliminary stages of capitalist development (Huntington 1968). Therefore, corruption should decline as the society develops. This is congruent with the experiences of several European countries (Scott 1969; Harsch 1993). This approach represents an organismic perspective of corruption — capitalist development should herald decline in corruption. The second perspective presents a Fanonian orientation towards the national elite of former colonies. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon criticizes the national elites in the postcolony for their primary preoccupation with replacing colonialists and appropriating for themselves privileges and consumption patterns of the metropole

rather than instituting a social system that is fair to all. This perspective is expounded by writers, such as Khalil Timamy (2005), who argues that:

The experience of colonialism led the African masses to correctly view colonial state institutions as forces of usurpation of African resources. It generated the mentality that the state, and all the material resources at its disposal, belonged to ‘another’, and it was in this context that systemic corruption began (Khalil Timamy 2005, 385).

The principal argument among theorists such as Timamy is that the adoption of the colonial mentality of maximizing the loot of the colony to satisfy the interest of the imperialists stimulated in African elites an exploitative drive towards self-enrichment at the expense of the masses. What these writers arguably fail to appreciate is the fact that the practice of corruption, after over 50 years of independence in most states on the continent, has developed its own autochthonous form albeit shaped by historical configurations and contemporary interactions with foreign interests. These issues point to the fact that contextualisation rather than reductionism may enhance understanding of the manifestations and effects of corruption.

The third current in the literature on corruption focuses on the role of the “primordial public” (Harsch 1993, 34) and the pressure it exerts on bureaucrats as a cause of corruption. This speaks to obligations to kith and kin and the atmosphere of impunity heralded by the lack of normative sanctions against using state resources for private purposes so long as such largesse are distributed to people from an official’s local community. Therefore, corruption functions as a tool for political mobilization and maintenance of public support (Szeftel 2000). In some cases, political elites extend resources from the largesse to opponents, with the aim of silencing or winning them over. The expectations of the public and kith and kin as expressed by Ojodu present layers of pressure that stimulate corruption. Hough (2017) argues:

Corruption is on occasion, not the problem per se; it is a response to a problem, and may act as a — perhaps unwelcome, perhaps uneasy — solution. This point is important in understanding not just why corruption happens, but also why generating solutions to corruption problems requires a clear understanding of the context in which the activity is taking place (Hough 2017, 87).

This argument is similar to those used by participants in this study in justifying corruption among poorly paid and ill-motivated security actors

and civil servants, who they claim solicit bribes to complement their meager salaries⁵.

A fourth perspective considers corruption a basic manifestation of market activity (Harsch 1993). This is a consequence of the overweening influence of the state on activities in the formal economy. Corruption is considered a routine practice that serves certain functions such as obtaining licenses and shaping policy. This functionalist approach holds that corruption helps to ensure allocative efficiency, capital formation and promotion of integration among ethno-religiously and linguistically divided third world elites and populations. This approach is non-static rather than dynamic, underestimates the systemic implications of corruption (Alam 1989) and embodies a teleological orientation.

The Masses and their complicity in corruption and underdevelopment in Africa

As indicated in the introductory section, the interpellation and agency of regular or non-elite citizens is missing in vast volumes of the literature on graft and underdevelopment in Africa. The existing gap has limited the narratives, understating of and the approach to addressing corruption and underdevelopment on the continent. The subsections below explore public perceptions of who corrupt political elites are within the African context and how the relationship and mode of interaction between the elites and the masses stimulate and facilitate corruption and underdevelopment. The analyses also interrogate the ethnic and clientelist texture of corruption in Africa.

Perspectives on corrupt political elites

There are divergent strands of perspectives on how participants define a 'corrupt political elite'. The construction of a corrupt political elite largely depends on one of two factors — the relationship between the masses and the political elite and the ability of the masses to directly benefit from the largesse of the elite. The characterisation of being either a good or corrupt elite by the masses is not just perceptive but depends largely on the kind and level of relationships formed between the elite and the masses. This distinction needs to be explored through the prism of the masses. A Guinean political

⁵ Based on interviews conducted in April and May 2020.

scientist attempts to explain the distinction between good and corrupt political elites within the Guinean context and offers an interesting perspective:

Politicians who are regarded as generous and kind and try to address the almost daily demands from their constituents and families are never regarded as corrupt. They are seen as heroes in Africa. No one questions how they get the money they dish out. All people want is to get more from them. They are regarded as their access to the national cake, as they cannot access the resources directly. These politicians are prayed for by imams and pastors and musicians sing songs praising them and even cry when they call their names, they are the adored and favored politicians. It is obvious that the elites and the masses need each other for corruption to thrive⁶.

The quote above can be cross-articulated with Rotberg's (2017, 16) argument mentioned above, that "greed and self-interest are hardwired into the human condition". These narratives provide an understanding that, in some contexts, social construction regarding the corrupt elite is not necessarily based on the actual definitions or characteristics of corruption used by policy makers and academics. Rather, it is moored to the opinion of the elite or politician being either "greedy/self-serving" or "generous — the People's Man" and how they address the needs of those around them and/or their community members. To the mason interviewed in Sierra Leone, being considered generous excuses the politician from being blanketed with the 'corrupt others' and places them in the good books and protection of their kin. Such understandings open a wider debate on whether corruption can be seen through a binary of functionality or dysfunctionality (Walton 2012).

The problematic then is that political elites must maintain the mode on which their relationship with the masses is defined and built. The resultant effects on the actions of the elite on local development become secondary to the desire of building a patronage system that enhances their relevance and value to their constituents and kin. As a result of the access to the largesse of the elites, some people may only want corruption to end when they are not directly benefiting from the loot. Elites do not have to necessarily provide direct access to their largesse; they could nepotically direct privileges, contracts and jobs to their relatives and friends who may not be qualified for such opportunities. Failure to provide such opportunities leads to elites being designated greedy and self-centered. Thus, as indicated in the quote

⁶ Interviewee 11, Political Scientist in Guinea, interview conducted via Skype on 22 May 2020.

above, the elites and the masses need each other for corruption to thrive in any setting. A sociologist in Northeast Nigeria⁷ argues:

One of the core reasons people rally behind politicians and public officials in Africa is to get favors from them. The failure by governments to deliver essential services over time has led to people believing that accessing resources in a state depends largely on whom you know and not what you know or what you do. People rally behind their kinsmen and those they know, with the aim of getting jobs, contracts, and other favors at the end. Even at the very top, support for politicians is mostly based on what you can gain when the person is in office. Even when politicians give their relatives and friends contracts, it ends in a give and take relationship, with kickbacks of about 10 to 20% expected by the politician, with the other tribesmen also expecting to benefit from the contract, thereby leaving the resources plundered and the service either ill or undelivered, contributing to underdevelopment.

The relationship described above is largely marshaled by a predatory approach to governance, which benefits the few against the majority. Oshewolo & Durowaiye (2013, 2) argue that this “disposition has not only popularized the phenomenon of elite capture and corruption, but it has also produced development disjointedness in Africa.”

A corrupt elite who misappropriates public funds for personal aggrandizement is mostly praised for his or her “focus” and “determination to defeat the evil of poverty and destitution⁸. Funds that would have improved service delivery are routed into the personal wallets of the few, who then become ‘philanthropists’ providing hand-outs with the tacit approval of the poor recipients who know the illicit origins of these funds but only focus on what they can directly get from the public official. This was evident during this study, when a group of community people who had just received groceries, including oil and rice from a local politician, were interviewed in Freetown in May 2020. They commented that the politician was ‘generous’, ‘kindhearted’ and ‘caring’⁹. None of them questioned the source of funds for the groceries.

Some societies take a deem view, and are sometimes subject to ridicule, non-corrupt, or ‘not-so-corrupt’ elites who have no material benefit to show for years of public service. Based on salaries vis-à-vis the cost of living, most public officers may never be able to legitimately own a house in countries like Sierra Leone. Family members shame bureaucrats and politicians

⁷ Interviewee 4, Sociologist in Nigeria, interview conducted via Skype on 28 May 2020.

⁸ Based on interviews conducted in May 2020.

⁹ Interviews conducted in May 2020.

because the neighbor, who earns a lower wage, has built houses and possesses fleets of cars whilst their relative keeps talking about integrity, accountability and patriotism. The scenario described above is aptly presented in Ayi Kwei Armah's book *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) on corruption in post-independence Ghana. Armah embodied the non-corrupt African bureaucrat in the story of 'The Man', a character despised and scorned by his family and society for maintaining his integrity and professionalism. His colleagues and friends were admired for the wealth acquired through corrupt means. The spouse of the Man tried to get him to understand the difference between those who become rich and those who remain poor because they are afraid to dip their hands in public funds. The Man recounted his conversation with his spouse:

Teacher, my wife explained to me, step by step, that life was like a lot of roads: long roads, short roads, wide and narrow, steep, and level, all sorts of roads. Next, she let me know that human beings were like so many people driving their cars on all these roads. This was the point at which she told me that those who wanted to get far had to learn to drive fast. And then she asked me what name I would give to people who were afraid to drive fast, or to drive at all. I had no name to give her, but she had not finished. Accidents would happen, she told me, but fear of accidents would never keep men from driving, and Joe Koomson had learned to drive (Armah 1968, 33).

The reference to Joe Koomson, a former classmate of The Man, now a Minister who had "learned to drive and to drive fast" i.e. exploit public funds, is an explanation of the difference between Koomson and The Man, who refused to learn to drive and remained poor and unappreciated by his spouse and relatives. The quote defines the expectations and pressure on public officials, especially by relatives, who regard those who are not corrupt as slow and unable to match their colleagues, who are admired for what they make from the government. The Man was left lonely and despised by his wife and relatives. To them, Koomson was the 'Big Man', which is defined in most African contexts by wealth and influence, while The Man was a small man, who had nothing that society could admire. Not being corrupt seemed like a cardinal sin against society, a sin The Man was reminded of daily.

The pressure from the wider society for handouts can be attributed to the fact that the masses believe politicians have access to resources that they are free to mismanage and deploy for personal purposes, while the masses remain trapped in poverty. Therefore, for the masses, there is the perception that getting money or any form of assistance from public officials amounts

to receiving what is rightfully due them via other means. Politicians who fail to comply are voted out of office by the masses while those who play ball are maintained in office. They are perceived as out of tune with society and frowned upon by their people because of their approach to corruption. Whatever iota of integrity or principles such politicians attempt to cling to are discountenanced. They are condemned as greedy and selfish.

Ethnic texture of corruption in Africa

Ethno-regionalisation of politics in Africa is a critical component shaping the interaction between public officials, the masses and corruption. People support elites from their ethnic groups and regions and defend them when the need arises. Corruption thrives in such settings and going after a corrupt government official could mean inadvertent declaration of bureaucratic war with an entire ethnic group or region of origin of the official. Public officials could also claim that an anti-corruption effort is a mere witch-hunt against them and their ethnic-regional alliances. Elite manipulate the psyche of their supporters and kin. They seek their protection under such circumstances. It then becomes the responsibility of the beneficiaries of the generosity of the public official to protect and defend their benefactor. A Kenyan psychologist argues that¹⁰:

The patronage system built over time provides politicians with the socio-political capital they will require when they are accused of corruption. They quickly conscientise their kinsmen that they are targets of 'witch-hunt' and this sells more in fragmented and socially divisive societies. People rally behind 'theirs' and the tension that mounts shifts the focus from the act of corruption to the division and fragility in the society. Most politicians understand the psyche of their people and how to hide behind them when the need arises. This is truly a socio-political malfunction, a disease that has crept into our society and destroyed its moral fabrics.

Much as some public officials try to understand and play on the psyche of the masses as expressed in the quote above, the masses also understand how to socialize with and exploit public officials, especially when they lack confidence and trust in the system. The relationship is shaped around exploitation on both sides, with the corrupt officials using part of the resources they steal to be on the good books of the masses. Hence the categorisation

¹⁰ Interviewee 57, Psychologist in Kenya, interview conducted via Skype on 23 May 2020.

of a good and a bad politician as articulated by some participants. The good politician according to an interviewee in South Sudan is “the politician that takes care of his or her people and is not greedy”.¹¹ For this interviewee, generosity defines being good or bad and the focus is not on whether the person is corrupt. The corrupt politician for him is the greedy one. Lack of access to a public official and the inability to acquire money from that politician places the politician in the bad books of their kin or constituents. A public official considered greedy may not necessarily have the protection of their kin when that protection is needed.

“Big man politics” (Soderberg, Kovacs and Bjarnesen 2018; Utas 2012; Sahllins 1963) is a typical form of politics in Africa that encourages and feeds corruption and the participation of the masses. Big man politics is characterized by the pervasiveness of patronage politics and networks, which combines the “institutions of a modern bureaucratic state, including competitive elections with the informal reality of personalized, unaccountable power of patron-client relations” (Soderberg Kovacs and Bjarnesen 2018, 11). Several African leaders have survived for decades in power because of the structures and relationships that they have carved out with their clientele — the non-elite — dependent on that informal relationship for their survival. Writing on the syndrome of big man politics and corruption in Africa, Houeland and Jacobs (2016) questioned why African leaders such as Paul Kagame, Yoweri Museveni (and until recently Robert Mugabe) continue to cling on to power and resist the calls to leave. They concluded by linking power to control of state resources. They wrote:

[...] the Presidency is a family business and there is no future or monetary gain outside politics. Accumulating wealth and business opportunities are tied to controlling the state. So are the economic fortunes of your allies, party officials and, crucially, the President’s family. Once you are out of office, you lose your ability to steer contracts or get a cut from profits. After tenure, the then former President—or, even more so, his allies—also risk prosecution either for embezzlement or human rights abuses¹².

Patron-client relations are usually built along ethno-regional lines, with the grip on the state ensuring automatic control to status and wealth. It becomes the business of the kin of the elites to keep them in power, as losing

¹¹ Interviewee 26, a local leader in South Sudan, interview conducted via WhatsApp on 23 May 2020.

¹² See: <https://africasacountry.com/2016/03/the-big-man-syndrome-in-africa> (Accessed on 28 May 2020).

power may have repercussions in terms of prosecution and completely losing access to state resources. As such, former African leaders such as Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Yaya Jammeh in the Gambia, José Eduardo dos Santos in Angola clung on to power for decades until they were forcefully removed. In Algeria, although for almost a decade Abdelaziz Bouteflika was incapacitated and unfit to rule, his family and those close to him kept him in power. Their principal interest was to maintain the status quo until they could install someone that could represent their interest at the expense of what the vacuum might do to the country. Bouteflika's case accentuates the significance of the role of kith and kin of leaders in corruption and politics in Africa. The consequences of losing power fuel the zero-sum orientation toward politics rendering it toxic. This has resulted in several civil wars in the last four decades and continues to contribute to electoral violence in Africa. Segments of the masses participate in executing and sustaining violence although much scholarly analyses ignore or underestimate the interpellation of the masses in electoral violence.

Participants note that factors such as illiteracy, unemployment and poverty contribute to collusion with corrupt elites. However, some interviewees argue that some educated people patronize and corrupt the system. Besides, the lack of formal education does not suggest ignorance — people are aware of what they are getting involved vis-à-vis transactional relationships with political elites. The collusion of the masses with the elites has immense implications.

Agency of youth and corruption in Africa

The relationship between the masses and political elites also undermines the agency of young people. Young people are mobilized to defend corrupt elites and actively participate in elections to maintain the grip of such elites on power and resources. The re-emergence, as indicated earlier, of the elites after several wars and military coups in Africa has created an impression that corrupt elites cannot be replaced. One Malian youth argues “they are here to stay, so better play ball with them”¹³. As such, there is a ubiquitous patron-client relationship with some young people serving as the thugs of politicians and political parties. Therefore, while denied the socio-economic empowerment they require, some young people believe that access to the

13 Interviewee 62, Malian Youth, interview conducted via WhatsApp on 3 June 2020.

big man will provide them with favors that they may not get from the state. A Nigerian youth notes:

Young people are not fools; we know what is happening. We know these people are destroying our future, we have done all we possibly could but they are still in control, so we have to learn to find a way of getting what we can from them, otherwise we lose everything, including our state of mind¹⁴.

The quote above suggests a sense of hopelessness among some young people. Survival is viewed as dependent on being in the good books of the elites. This fatalistic orientation appears common among youth in sub-Saharan Africa (Bangura 2016; 2018). Young people in countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone have participated in very violent civil conflicts with the aim of changing political systems and getting rid of elites (Gberie 2005; Youboty 1993). Writing on Sierra Leone, Bangura (2016) states:

Two distinct strands of analyses have been used to explain both the causes and longevity of the conflict in Sierra Leone, both of which are of relevance to the country's young people. Poor governance and corruption have been widely argued to be the main factors responsible for the conflict, while the marginalization of youth and the influence of natural resources are thought to have fueled the extent of the conflict and the severity of its impact (Bangura 2016, 39).

Despite the severity of the conflict and its extensive consequences, it became evident a few years after the end of the conflict that the status quo had not changed and that the elites were still in control. This contextual reality is common in several countries in the region. Thus, the agency of youth is shaped to engage the realities of their social situation and is framed to ensure that they access the largesse of elites, who pass them handouts. The lack of employment opportunities and education among young people in Africa has led to re-engineering of social spaces by some of the youth. In the last decade and half, the continent has experienced the emergence of gangs and cliques and local coffee booths where young people meet to express their grievances and frustrations against the state and political elites (Bangura 2016; Bergère 2016; Philipps 2013; Shepler 2010). Some have taken to arts, using music, comedy, and graffiti to express their views on society and their conditioning to be silent by elites (Adedeji 2013; Weis 2009).

14 Interviewee 50, Nigerien Youth, interview conducted via WhatsApp on 3 June 2020.

Implications and continuing consequences of current actions on corruption in Africa

Elite corruption and the complicity of the masses continue to shape the trajectory of the fight against corruption and the overall level of socio-economic development in Africa¹⁵. While the focus on corruption has too often been centered on the role of the elite and grand corruption, this approach does not help to understand the extent to which structural forces play a part in shaping either the preponderance of or the fight against corruption. Corruption should convey a negative connotation across most cultures, but how a hatred for corruption and a general acceptance of it cohere in one society complicates any attempt to provide axiomatic explanations of the correlation between corruption and underdevelopment. In other words, how does a society entertain a certain clientelist and patronage political system, but concurrently claim to fight against it is at best baffling and at worst limiting for scholars, who tend to view corruption from its supply side. This paper attempts to fill the gap by focusing on the demand side of corruption in Africa.

In trying to identify the reasons for elite corruption and the participation of the masses in the process and the implications for the continent, some interviewees argue that the model of socialization and exchange of resources crafted over time between political elites and the masses continues to have significant implications for development and stability in Africa. Sierra Leone has for decades suffered from a challenging history. Corruption, unemployment, marginalization and poverty were responsible for its collapse into a violent civil war between 1991 and 2002 (Bangura 2016). Despite the civil war and its root causes, Sierra Leone remains trapped in divisiveness based on ethno-regional politics, mistrust, and tension. These issues serve as a shade for corrupt politicians to hide. Corruption in Sierra Leone is about identity and what the identity group can get from 'theirs'. Identity politics dilutes the fight against corruption, as it becomes laced with suspicions over the integrity of the process and the unwillingness of ethnic blocs to support any fight that targets their kin. A sociologist in Niger¹⁶ states that "Regularly, governments in Africa go after their opponents in the name of fighting corruption. However, when their party members and tribesmen are accused of corruption, their ethnic networks resurface to put pressure on party bosses to let them off". This undermines accountability and leads to a perpetual

¹⁵ Based on interviews conducted.

¹⁶ Interviewee 61, Lecturer, Sociologist in Niger, interview conducted via Skype on 21 June 2020.

cycle of intergenerational poverty and dependence on donors for support. Even countries with huge resources end up depending on donor support because of bad governance and corruption. A development expert in Niger articulates her experience:

You go to a community; there is no clean water, no electricity, and little food to eat. You see mud and thatched houses all over and there is one big and nice house owned by a politician, with nice cars and money. The people worship him and sing his name and he gives them little money here and there and the community remains poor. However, the elders and youth who feed from him like him and yet there is no hospital, no good road and little food. He feeds on fat, they go thin, but they prefer him. He is one of theirs, if he can give handouts, he will remain one of them. What disturbs me most is that the people are not stupid or ignorant, they know what is happening, but they allow it to thrive and this is the case all over Niger¹⁷.

The quote above points at the longer-term challenges to development, as people are aware of what is happening but, in most cases, do not question the status quo. Rather, they promote the interest of elites. Fundamental questions may be asked especially in relation to countries that have experienced violence in the past. Has fatigue or ambivalence set in? Do the masses believe nothing will change even if they stand up to the elites as some did between the 1980s and 2000s, but the elites succeeded in re-emerging?

Whatever the reasons may be, the consequences of the complicity of the masses in corruption and underdevelopment in the continent are grave. The outbreak of diseases such as Ebola and COVID-19 in Africa further expose the level of underdevelopment and poverty. The lack of basic human security conditions that should enhance the dignity and quality of life of citizens intensifies the exposure to diseases and the potential of dying from them if the World Health Organization (WHO) or humanitarian agencies do not intervene.

Participants in this study provide several recommendations on how to overcome the challenges presented by the complicity between the masses and elites in societies across Africa. The recommendations include intensifying public education and awareness. These include civic education with modules on preventing and addressing corruption in the curricula of schools, colleges and universities. Other recommendations include establishing systems and structures that may reduce direct access to state resources, strengthening

¹⁷ Interviewee 39, Development Expert in Niger, interview conducted via Skype on 1 June 2020.

democracy, good governance and the rule of law, investing in accountability institutions and promoting an inclusive approach to public education and the fight against corruption through constructively engaging and working with community and religious leaders, and civil society and the media. A Ghanaian peace and security expert argues that times are changing and the understanding of who constitutes a corrupt African public official is becoming clearer in most countries in Africa:

African societies are becoming much more enlightened on corruption and corrupt practices. This may be because of the education on the fight against corruption in the continent. Many people now know that when the bureaucrat is not accountable and transparent and gives contracts to relatives and friends that is corruption, when the parliamentarian or councilor siphons funds meant for community development that is corruption, when contracts are given with kickbacks are received by government officials, that is corruption. The establishment of systems and structures and the enforcement of laws and policies to mitigate corrupt practices, alongside public education activities will help to change the current approach to corruption in the continent¹⁸.

Conclusion

The main tenor of the current argument in relation to corruption and development is that the nature of politics and corruption in Africa is the outcome of societal norms, understandings, and culture. As pointed above, perceptions of corruption are influenced not necessarily as a function of societal norms, but as political engineering by elites whose preoccupation for the maintenance of political power promotes in them certain behaviors inimical to good governance and economic development. The behaviors of political elites are too often constructed by the way society functions and this influences the way the public interacts with the elites. This is a dialogic and co-referential relationship.

The common pattern across the continent is the reification of certain social behaviors including corruption to make it appear as the norm. African societies are not socially rooted in cultural and customary practices that promote corruption but continue to be shaped by political elites limi-

¹⁸ Interviewee 28, Ghanaian Peace and Security Expert, interview conducted via Skype on 23 May 2020.

ted in their willingness to promote good governance. What has happened overtime is that the masses — the victims of corruption — have also re-engineered their relationship with the elites. The African masses deploy their agency to navigate patronage networks and ethno-regional sentiments, which strengthens the patron-client relationship. Scholars often ignore this reality. This socio-political malfunction has further enhanced corruption and the impunity that has surrounded it for decades. The existing relationship is now in most cases wrapped in ethno-regional politics where the masses defend ‘theirs’ regardless of their action. As such, although the burden of corruption cannot be shifted to the masses, the argument in this paper is that the masses are not as ignorant or innocent as they are presented. The inability/unwillingness on the part of the elites to change the status quo has led to the masses strategically positioning themselves to derive benefits from the prevailing system. Thus, the agency of the youth has been significantly undermined, as young people in most of the settings studied also engage in corrupt practices, as a means of surviving from the largesse of elites. Elites who fail to give handouts are the ones that are referred to as corrupt, while those who give handouts are considered good politicians.

Regardless of what the challenges are, the ability of politicians to establish transparent systems that depersonalize the public good is critical in shaping popular imaginations of the role of the elites and the function of the state. Corruption is less a function of societal norms, but a product of political systems that have failed to promote accountability. The strengthening of systems that mitigate corruption is fundamental to the achievement of changes in relation to corruption in Africa. Principally, efforts should focus on re-establishing the trust and confidence of the masses in the elites, with the means of democratic distribution of resources and opportunities enhanced in the states. This paper contributes to the argument that the masses may not be as innocent as they are perceived, as some are complicit and enhance corruption in their localities.

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ABSTRACT

Much contemporary scholarship on corruption and underdevelopment in Africa focuses on the role of the elite with scant consideration for the interpellation and agency of non-elite citizens. The paper complements the tenor of available literature. Drawing on a dynamic perspective on corruption, the paper argues that political elites are influenced in part by demands and expectations from regular citizens. These demands and expectations are a major motivation that fuels and validates certain practices which are widely regarded as corrupt. This is not a pro-elite paper. Rather than a pro-elite standpoint, the paper offers a nuanced analysis of how the actions and inaction of citizens affect the conduct of governing elites. Ignoring the role of the masses makes for an incomplete understanding of the vignettes of corruption and crisis of development in Africa. While the paper focuses on Africa, the findings are applicable to other regions of the global south.

KEYWORDS

Corruption. Underdevelopment. Africa. Patronage. Elites.

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THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE IN THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SOUTH SUDAN (UNMISS)

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Introduction

After nearly 20 years of civil war, in 2001, a peace agreement began to be negotiated between the central government of Sudan and the southern region. On January 9, 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was ratified ending the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) (Oliveira and Silva 2011) and stipulating a referendum to determine the status of the Southern Sudan region. According to the UN, 98.83% of South Sudanese voters were in favor of independence in January 2011 (Salman 2011; UNMISS 2022).

On July 8, 2011, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted the resolution 1996 (UNSC 2011), creating the UNMISS. The objective was to consolidate peace and security and help create the necessary conditions for the development of the Republic of South Sudan, a country that was born with the worst social indicators in the world (Oliveira and Silva 2011). The mission aimed to help South Sudan to develop and build its democratic institutions to support the political-administrative structure of a new country.

Although conceived under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which regulates the use of force at the international level to maintain or restore peace and the conditions for the adoption of armed actions to restore peace and international security (Melo 2010, 82; ONU 1945, 30), UNMISS was

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established with a focus on *peacebuilding*² (UNSC 2011). However, inserted in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment, it did not take long for its initial paradigm to be fragmented and its mandate changed to a *robust peacekeeping*³ bias (UNSC 2013), which demanded a profound change in the relationship structure of mission components.

Hilde F. Johnson, Special Representative of UN Secretary-General in South Sudan (SRSG), begins her story with a quote from President Salva Kiir Mayardit:

Our detractors already eliminated us even before our independence. They say we will descend into civil war as soon as our flag is raised. They justify this by saying that we are incapable of solving our problems through dialogue. They say we quickly resort to violence. They claim that our concept of democracy and freedom is flawed. It is incumbent on us to prove them wrong! (Johnson 2016, 21, our translation)⁴.

Detractors were right: less than three years after independence on July 9, 2011, South Sudan plunged into civil war on December 15, 2013. Since then, the country has seen clashes between its two main political and military forces: the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) and also various groups that constitute local forces in the country.

Due to the level of violence against the civilian population, the Mission was forced to open the doors of its bases in *Tong Ping* and at the *UN House* (both located in Juba, the capital of South Sudan) to the thousands of people in need of shelter. Approximately 16,000 people sought shelter at the bases, mostly women with their babies, the elderly with their canes (...); children clinging to their parents, crying; teenagers with fear in their eyes (Johnson 2016, 188).

2 The term Peacebuilding is used by the UN in post-conflict situations when violent hostilities have ceased. It is a comprehensive strategy to prevent the recurrence of violence and establish peaceful relationships within and between different sectors of society at the local, national and regional levels (Mische and Harris 2008, 6).

3 Robust peacekeeping involves the use of force at the tactical level with the authorization of the UNSC and the consent of the host nation and/or the main parties to the conflict (UNDPKO 2008).

4 In the original: "Nossos detratores já nos eliminaram antes mesmo da nossa independência. Eles dizem que mergulharemos em uma guerra civil assim que nossa bandeira seja hasteada. Eles justificam isso dizendo que somos incapazes de resolver nossos problemas através do diálogo. Eles dizem que rapidamente recorreremos à violência. Eles alegam que nosso conceito de democracia e liberdade é defeituoso. É incumbente que nós provemos que eles estão errados!" (Johnson 2016, 21).

The calamitous situation forced UNMISS to perform the function normally carried out by humanitarians to meet the needs of the civilian population. UNMISS personnel undertook actions such as inspections to prevent the introduction of guns in protection of civilian sites (PoC Sites), organizing water and sanitation facilities and treating injured people and pregnant women. At that moment, when UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs were unable to articulate their actions, everything was done by the Mission. This is one of the factors that makes the study of the civil-military relations at UNMISS something peculiar and subject to study.

The events in Juba led to a domino effect across the rest of the country. “Bor, the capital of Jonglei, had already fallen to opposition forces on December 18; in Bentiu, capital of Macha’s home state of Unity, they took control on the 21st. The Government lost Malakal, capital of Upper Nile State, on the 24th, although fighting continued for days thereafter” (Johnson 2016, 199, our translation)⁵.

Two peace agreements were signed with the aim of resolving the ongoing conflict: the first in 2015 (Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan - ARCRSS) and the second in 2018 (Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan - R-ARCRSS). Under this last agreement, a Transitional Government of National Unity was to be installed and Riek Machar (the first deposed vice president) should be reappointed to the position of first vice president (IGAD 2018; Pettersson, Högladh and Öberg 2019) within eight months counting from the date of signature.

Despite the formation of a government of national unity in February 2020, with the return of Riek Machar, the country remains in crisis, with more than 1,000 people killed in violent conflicts between rival communities in the second half of 2020 alone. In 2001, there was an intensification of attacks against the civilian population by armed groups and militias organized and mobilized along ethnic lines, often with the support of the State and opposition armed forces (UNGA 2021).

5 In the original: “Bor, a capital de Jonglei, caiu na mão da oposição em 18 de dezembro; Bentiu, capital do estado de Unity, teve seu controle tomado no dia 21. O governo perdeu o controle de Malakal, capital do Estado de Upper Nile, no dia 24, mas o conflito [ai] continuou por diversos dias” (Johnson 2016, 199).

Methodology

This work studies the dynamics expressed within the context of the construction of the perception of civilian and military components' relationships in UN peace missions in South Sudan, especially the empirical construction of actions that fundamentally demand the resolution of practical questions in a framework of humanitarian crisis and conflict, seeking to understand the degree of evolution of these interactions and, also, how the perception of each group was constructed. Methodologically, this research used a qualitative approach to build a holistic picture of the situation, deepening the investigation (Bui 2014, 15). The methods used were essential to understand how UN's theory and norms are perceived and applied in the peace mission in South Sudan. The qualitative method used was that of a case study, from the perspective of Yin (2018), through a unique-case analysis, due to the peculiarity of the humanitarian crisis faced and, also, the various reports critical of UNMISS' performance and effectiveness. Through inductive reasoning, patterns will be sought in order to build a conclusion.

Two data generation techniques were used: document research and structured participant observation. For the former, the primary sources used were UN documents such as manuals, protocols, memos, directives and reports, as well as UNMISS documents collected by the author. Secondary sources used were books and articles from academic journals focusing on literature that deals with the civil-military relationship, focusing on South Sudan whenever possible. Articles used were preferably recent, in English, Spanish and Portuguese, published from 2015 to the current days.

On the other hand, the case study was carried out with the help of unstructured and participatory observation by the author, which took place in 2015 and 2016, when he held the role of deputy head of operations at UNMISS, actively participating in the coordination of the military component in support of demands from the civilian component and other civilian organizations. In this sense, the author's professional status and position favored the collection of data and the understanding of the phenomenon, not only through his perception but also through interviews with other actors, contributing to the improvement of the interpretation of the results.

Thus, this article investigates the main obstacles to the interaction between civilians and military in South Sudan, trying to understand the internal and external causes for the low synergy between them. Thus, this

article's key question is: "what are the main problems in the synergy between civilians and military in South Sudan and what can be done to mitigate this situation?"

Finally, in addition to the introduction and these methodological considerations, this article is divided into four other sections. Below is a literature review focused on the main concepts linked to the theory of civil-military interactions in peace operations. In the fourth section, the functioning of the system under debate at UNMISS is addressed and, in the fifth section, the lessons learned are addressed, as a result of the central analysis proposed in the debate of this article. In the sixth section, some suggestions are presented to mitigate some of the mentioned effects and difficulties.

Civil-military relations – doctrine and theory

The doctrine on civil-military relations is relatively new, having emerged in the mid-1990s. Responses to disasters and armed conflicts have forced the various actors involved to work together. As such, civilian and military actors have worked side by side and the processes developed by them have become intertwined (Bollen and Rietjens 2008). However, these interactions are characterized by occurring in environments considered chaotic, unstable and conflictive, in contexts in which the lack of resources and infrastructure is the rule.

States and international organizations, adapting their doctrines of responses to humanitarian crises and to the need of interaction within multifunctional, joint, international and multilateral environments typical of peacekeeping operations (Boileau and Garon 2005; Franke 2006), have been adopting new strategies to improve the synergy and effectiveness of operations involving military and civilian components. However, the techniques, tactics and procedures of these interactions are still being studied and experimented, seeking validation through the analysis of lessons learned.

The complexity of the actors and the environment where this type of interaction takes place often brings uncertainties in terms of how to plan the actions of a contingent, along with the various civilian institutions present in a crisis (Da Cruz 2010). Peace missions are potential fields of study, but they are not the only humanitarian crises which can contribute to the validation of a theoretical body that helps in the efficiency of the response.

Due to the lack of structure and temporality, civil-military interactions have been criticized by both civilians and the military.

[...] formal mechanisms for coordination have been established at most levels between relevant [civilian and military] actors, but that outcomes in terms of tangible synergetic effects are often elusive. This is particularly true for civil-military interfaces, where an apparent 'difference in mindset' between military and civilian actors is still regularly perceived as obstructive to effective synergies (Zartsdahl and Doki 2018, 6, our translation)⁶.

The very term that defines the interactions between the components has already been the target of countless criticisms and multiple adaptations. Such differentiations often relate to semantic questions rather than reflect changes in the paradigms of fieldwork or of the relationship between the military and civilians. The choice of the term 'relations' for this section seeks to escape the dialectical discussion of terms currently in use, such as coordination, cooperation, coexistence, synergy, interaction, among others.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) conceptualized UN Civil Military interactions with the term UN-CMCoord and the following definition:

UN-CMCoord is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from **cooperation** to **co-existence**. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training (UNOCHA 2018, 7, our translation)⁷.

It should be noted that what they present as coordination ranges from cooperation to coexistence, and that the UN-CMCoord is understood as a tool within the relationship between civilians and the military, being an instrument in the promotion of humanitarian principles and standards. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO, formerly DPKO) adopts,

6 In the original: "*Mecanismos formais de coordenação foram estabelecidos na maioria dos níveis de relações entre atores relevantes [civis e militares], mas os resultados em termos de efeitos sinérgicos tangíveis são frequentemente elusivos. Isso é especialmente relevante para interfaces civis-militares, em que uma aparente "diferença de mentalidade" entre atores militares e civis ainda é regularmente percebida como uma obstrução para sinergias eficazes*" (Zartsdahl e Doki 2018, 6).

7 In the original: "*O UN-CMCoord é o diálogo e a interação essenciais entre atores civis e militares em emergências humanitárias, necessários para proteger e promover princípios humanitários, evitar a concorrência, minimizar a inconsistência e, quando apropriado, buscar objetivos comuns. As estratégias básicas variam da **cooperação** à **coexistência**. A coordenação é uma responsabilidade compartilhada facilitada pelo contato e treinamento comum*" (UNOCHA 2018, 7).

in most of its documents, including the Capstone Doctrine, the term CIMIC, which in the same document is referred to as *Civil Military Cooperation* at one point. and *Civil Military Coordination* in another. The term's most common definition, however, is the one used by the military and corroborated by several troop-contributing countries, as follows:

In a UN peacekeeping context, this coordination is called “UN-CIMIC”, which is a military staff function that contributes to facilitating the interface between the military and civilian components of an integrated mission, as well as with humanitarian and development actors in the mission area in order to support the UN mission objectives (UNDPKO 2010, 2, our translation)⁸.

In search for dialogue and interaction between civilian and military sectors, as it deems the dialogue necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition and pursue common goals (Da Cruz 2010), the DPO/UN also adopts the term – Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord), and defines it as follows:

UN Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) on the other hand refers to the humanitarian civil-military coordination function that provides the necessary interface between humanitarian and military actors to protect and promote the humanitarian principles and achieve the humanitarian objectives in complex emergencies and natural disaster situations (UNDPKO 2010, 2, our translation)⁹.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in an expansion of the concept, presents the relations between civilians and military under the concept of CMI – Civil Military Interaction – in an attempt to encompass the various nuances and relationships that can be established according to the scenario. Such an approach gains projection by allowing military objectives to guide the level of interaction, responsibility and subordination, increasing

8 In the original: “em um contexto de manutenção da paz da ONU, esta coordenação é chamada de “UN-CIMIC”, que é uma função de estado-maior militar que contribui para facilitar a interface entre os componentes militares e civis de uma missão integrada, bem como com os atores humanitários e de desenvolvimento na missão área, a fim de apoiar os objetivos da missão da ONU” (UNDPKO 2010, 2).

9 In the original: “em um contexto de manutenção da paz da ONU, esta coordenação é chamada de “UN-CIMIC”, que é uma função de estado-maior militar que contribui para facilitar a interface entre os componentes militares e civis de uma missão integrada, bem como com os atores humanitários e de desenvolvimento na missão área, a fim de apoiar os objetivos da missão da ONU” (UNDPKO 2010, 2).

the efficiency and effectiveness of actions in crisis responses. Thus, NATO defines five levels of interaction, namely: cooperation, coordination, conflict, consultation and coexistence (NATO 2018b).

On this discussion of terminologies and perceptions, De Coning had already made an interesting and vital point to broaden understanding and reduce the conceptual confusion that befalls them, explaining in the following terms:

From a UN perspective, coordination refers to a spectrum of relations that range from coexistence to cooperation. This UN coordination concept has been developed in the context of humanitarian civil-military coordination, where coexistence refers to a situation where the minimum necessary information is being shared between the humanitarian community and a military combatant force. [...] Cooperation refers to a maximum state of civil-military coordination where there is a range of cooperative relations between the humanitarian community and a military force [...] The UN and NATO understanding of cooperation and coordination seem to be reversed, because in the NATO context, cooperation is understood to imply a less binding relationship than coordination, and NATO argues that the humanitarian community will be willing to cooperate, but not coordinate, and therefore they use cooperation (De Coning 2007, 7, our translation)¹⁰.

In addition, it is interesting to understand how the EU conceptualizes the CIMIC activity, so that it can be seen that, even though the concepts have similarities, the fact that they present points of divergence is not a mere coincidence, but fundamental points whose institutionality, the characteristic of its components and its objectives greatly influence its results.

¹⁰ In the original: “do ponto de vista da ONU, coordenação refere-se a um espectro de relações que vai da coexistência à cooperação. Foi desenvolvido no contexto da coordenação civil-militar humanitária, em que a coexistência se refere a uma situação em que a informação mínima necessária está sendo compartilhada entre a comunidade humanitária e uma força militar combatente. [...] Cooperação refere-se a um estado máximo de coordenação civil-militar onde existe uma gama de relações cooperativas entre a comunidade humanitária e uma força militar. [...] O entendimento da ONU e da OTAN de cooperação e coordenação parece estar invertido, porque, no contexto da OTAN, a cooperação é entendida como implicando uma relação menos vinculativa do que a coordenação, e a OTAN argumenta que a comunidade humanitária estará disposta a cooperar, mas não coordenar, e, portanto, eles usam cooperação” (De Coning 2007, 7).

Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) is coordination and cooperation at all levels between military components of EU-led military operations and civilian actors outside the EU, including local people and authorities, as well as international organizations, national and non-governmental agencies - in support of carrying out the military mission alongside all other military functions (CEU 2009, 8, our translation)¹¹.

The literature points out three fundamental problems to this debate and to the way in which the concepts of this relationship are constructed and used and, therefore, its effects in the practical field. The first one is linked to organizational cultures, as Aguilar points out:

Organizations, institutions and agencies have their own cultures, specific operating rules and procedures, and their own interests, and some are averse to coordinating with the operation's command. Strange as it may seem, the UN has difficulty coordinating peace operation activities with its own agencies, funds and programs (Aguilar 2016, 28, our translation)¹².

The second one approaches the issue of identification between civilian and military personnel, marked by impressions and prejudices that make an adequate response difficult, and even on certain occasions impossible, as pointed out by Jackson and Haysom:

In recent years, civil-military coordination has faced a number of important and often interconnected challenges, including expanded international intervention in fragile and conflict-affected states, increasing frequency and scale of climate change-related natural disasters, and the rapid proliferation of humanitarian actors. Faced with these multiple challenges, it is essential to increase interaction and dialogue between military and humanitarian actors. However, the two sides have failed to reach a common understanding of the role each plays, the challenges they face and, critically, the priority needs of affected

11 In the original: “A Cooperação Civil-Militar (CIMIC) é a coordenação e cooperação a todos os níveis – entre componentes militares de operações militares lideradas pela UE e agentes civis externos à UE, incluindo a população local e as autoridades, bem como internacionais, organizações e agências nacionais e não governamentais –, em apoio à realização da missão militar juntamente com todas as outras funções militares” (CEU 2009, 8).

12 In the original: “as organizações, instituições e agências têm culturas próprias, normas e procedimentos operacionais específicos e interesses próprios e algumas são avessas a se coordenarem com o comando da operação. Por mais estranho que possa parecer, a ONU tem dificuldade de coordenar atividades das operações de paz com suas próprias agências, fundos e programas” (Aguilar 2016, 28).

populations and how these can or should be addressed (Jackson and Haysom 2013, 7, our translation)¹³.

The third one is about the constant inability to understand the operating environment and make principles or precepts more flexible in order to maximize results. Despite the constant debate on the insertion of collaborative approaches by various international institutions such as the UN, NATO and the EU and the adoption of terms such as the *Comprehensive Approach*¹⁴, there is still some resistance from both groups to adopt a more flexible position in relation to their norms and performance. Furthermore, the humanitarian response system lacks guidelines that can really support the different actors working with responses. These guidelines are often seen as being divorced from reality. “For example, there is no current policy to guide the interaction between humanitarians and the military in the migration crisis [in Europe], nor is there a framework to help them navigate the fluid space of conflict and post-conflict, proxy wars or extremist violence” (Colona 2018, 124, our translation)¹⁵.

The civil-military coordination system at UNMISS

According to UNMISS’ internal document on CIMIC, the essential objective of CIMIC is to link the civilian and military components of the Mission, and to connect the Mission with the humanitarian community and development actors.

13 In the original: “nos últimos anos, a coordenação civil-militar enfrentou vários desafios importantes e, muitas vezes, interconectados, incluindo a intervenção internacional expandida em Estados fragilizados e afetados por conflitos, o aumento da frequência e escala dos desastres naturais relacionados à mudança climática e a rápida proliferação de atores humanitários. Diante desses múltiplos desafios, é essencial incrementar a interação e o diálogo entre os atores militares e humanitários. Entretanto, os dois lados têm falhado em atingir um entendimento comum do papel que cada um desempenha, dos desafios que enfrentam e, criticamente, das necessidades prioritárias das populações afetadas e como estas podem ou devem ser abordadas” (Jackson e Haysom 2013, 7).

14 The doctrine of the *Comprehensive Approach* was defended by NATO, the EU and the UN to face the conflicts of the 21st century more effectively and with longer-term results, within the framework of the new international geopolitical scenario.

15 In the original: “Por exemplo, não há nenhuma política atual para guiar a interação entre humanitários e militares na crise de migração [na Europa], nem há estrutura para ajudá-los a navegar no espaço fluido dos conflitos e pós-conflitos, guerras de proxy ou cenários de violência extrema” (Colona 2018, 124).

CIMIC is an integral part of operations conducted across the full spectrum of military operations and in all environments. All activities conducted must support the objectives and mandate of UNMISS. The objective of UN-CIMIC activities conducted by the military component of the mission is to influence behavior and attitude in order to support the global process and not to win the hearts and minds of the population (UNMISS 2018b, 4, our translation)¹⁶.

The UNMISS CIMIC structure is made up of actors at different levels that articulate in their spheres of competence. Table 1 facilitates the understanding of this structure and the relationship it establishes with the military component, the civilian component, humanitarians and the South Sudanese population. The blue arrows signify the articulation movement carried out by CIMIC specialists.

Table 1: Relations between the actors and the CIMIC articulation in South Sudan

ARTICULATION	MILITARY COMPONENT	CIVILIAN COMPONENT	CIMIC SPECIALISTS			HUMANITARIAN	SOUTH SUDANESE
NATIONAL	U2 / U3 / U5 / U7 UNMISS DCMLO	JOC / JMAC DAC / DPC / DDH / DRRC UNPOL	↔	UNMISS CIMIC CELL – U9	↔	OCHA PROTECTION CLUSTER NGO FORUM	
SECTOR	G2 / G3 / G5 / G7 SMLO – G9	SOC SAC / SPC / SDH / SRRCP UNPOL	↔	SECTOR CIMIC CELL – G9	↔	FIELD OCHA REPRESENTATIVE NGOS	SECTOR KEY LEADERSHIP
STATE	S2 / S3 / S5 / S7 MLO – G9	COP SAC / SPC / SDH / SRRCP UNPOL	↔	BATTALION CIMIC CELL – S9	↔	NGOS	LOCAL KEY LEADERSHIP
CONDADOS / PAYAMS				COY OR PLATOON COMMANDERS			POPULATION

Source: Created by the author based on UNMISS internal regulations.

The U9 is the central cell of CIMIC within the military component at the national level. It is responsible for collecting, analyzing and reporting all activities and information generated by the CIMIC cells at the sectoral level

¹⁶ In the original: “CIMIC é uma parte integrante das operações conduzidas através do espectro integral das operações militares e em todos os ambientes. Todas as atividades conduzidas devem sustentar os objetivos e o mandato da UNMISS. O objetivo das atividades de UN-CIMIC conduzidas pelo componente militar da missão é influenciar o comportamento e a atitude, a fim de apoiar o processo global e, não, para conquistar os corações e mentes da população” (UNMISS 2018, 4).

(G9) and by the Military Liaison Officers (MLO-G9). The G9, located in the sectors, collect information to fulfill the mandate, supporting the analysis related to civil considerations, and carry out, within their area of coverage, the coordination and achievement of actions in support of humanitarians, without, however, allowing them to create false expectations in the civilian environment (UNMISS 2018b). Based on the information received, the Military Component maintains a dynamic national view of the needs of each state.

G9 CIMIC officials report on: gaps in civilian capabilities; social problems; interethnic violence; access to roads; key leadership information; sexual and gender violence; problems related to the protection of minors; trends in refugees and internally displaced persons; community support activities and projects; military actions in support of humanitarians; and they act as liaison officers of the military component with humanitarians, civil society and the civilian component of the mission (UNMISS 2018b).

The coordination with various stakeholders must be planned to ensure that there is regular, impartial and efficient liaison, enabling the coordination of UNMISS activities. The CIMIC officials, internally, must keep in touch with the civilian component and with the UN police (UNPOL). Besides, CIMIC officials must, along with the MLOs, contribute to the integration of the civilian component of the Mission and of humanitarians in the planning process (UNMISS 2018b).

The coordination of the *clusters*, in South Sudan, is UNOCHA's responsibility, in terms of compiling the demands of the humanitarians inserted in the activated *clusters*. It is responsible for presenting these demands to the CIMIC cell, and to say that it is the main partner of the CIMIC structure is not an overstatement. Although UNOCHA acts as a focal point for the military and as coordinator of humanitarian actions, the cluster system is not hierarchical. Thus, after coordination, it is up to each responsible cluster to operationalize the demand.

Main obstacles to civil-military coordination at UNMISS

Despite what was described in the previous section on the relationship of actors in the context of UNMISS, regulation is still far from practice. Civilian and military personnel must be aware of the practical complexity involved in cooperating with each other and the "obligation" to cooperate in order to improve conditions for the affected population. This joint work is called shared responsibility, which can range from mere coexistence to

effective cooperation (Gonzalo 2015). In many cases, CIMIC within UNMISS and with humanitarians is merely a coexistence strategy.

As is the case in various sectors of the UNMISS, cooperation is rarely effective, and the good functioning of CIMIC depends a lot on the agent who is invested with the CIMIC function and on the people who represent humanitarians and civilians within the Mission. Cooperation often does not occur due to the lack of knowledge of mission functions by humanitarians and the unpreparedness of the military to work with civilian actors.

Humanitarians work under the global guiding and normative principles and standards of their institutions. The military, on the other hand, are guided by the regulations of the DPO in their interaction with humanitarians. While most humanitarians have never heard of the IASC's or DPO's key reference documents for CIMIC, the military claim to be more familiar with the global guidance documents. However, both criticize the access and dissemination of these standards (CMAG 2012).

A survey conducted by the Civil Military Advisor Group¹⁷ (CMAG) showed that 60% of humanitarians felt that UNMISS military personnel had a low awareness of humanitarian principles and 46% found it difficult to find an appropriate interlocutor. Additionally, 75% of the military interviewed had the perception that humanitarians have a low awareness of how the military work, which part of them attributed to the "misalignment" of their respective mandates, and 25% reported finding it difficult to access an appropriate interlocutor among the military (UNMISS CMAG 2012). The interviews carried out in the context of this research reinforced that both humanitarians and military personnel are unaware of the work of their counterparts, which makes coordination and cooperation between them difficult.

Another problem pointed out is the turnover of personnel within the military component. Many of the countries that contribute with troops and officers to the mission do so for a limited time, in accordance with the Memoranda of Understanding agreed between the UN and the permanent missions of the signatory countries. U9 officers (the CIMIC cell) stay on the mission between six months and a year and are then replaced. This makes the U9/G9/S9 lack solid institutional knowledge, given the constant change of personnel.

¹⁷ CMAG is a component group of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs responsible for facilitating the adoption of measures to enhance dialogue between humanitarians and the military, in order to ensure a coherent response to emergencies.

The first test of the UNMISS military contingent's ability to fulfill its mandate to protect civilians in South Sudan took place between early 2011 and mid-2012, when allegations of serious human rights violations committed by the SPLA arose, particularly in areas of Murle ethnicity in Jonglei State. At that time, the close relationship between the UNMISS and the GRSS meant that the government's failures were also perceived as UNMISS' failures, tarnishing the mission's legitimacy and credibility, both in the eyes of South Sudanese and of other international organizations operating in the country (De Coning and Da Costa 2015). Within UNMISS, the failure was automatically attributed to the military contingent, since it has control of the force and, supposedly, would not have acted effectively to prevent the escalation of violence, compromising the internal relationship between civilians and the military.

Subsequently, in 2013, the (un)success of UNMISS was related to the protection of civilians from SPLA and SPLA-IO violence, particularly those who fled in large numbers to the Mission's compounds. While the loss of life avoided by these refugees was significant, the interpretation of the civilian protection mandate was reactive rather than proactive. Again, the military component was blamed for the inability to fulfill its mandate, since, despite protecting the population in the *PoC Sites*, it did not project power over other areas, allowing the increase of violence in the rest of the country (De Coning and Da Costa 2015).

One of the problems faced by the civilian component of UNMISS is the direct identification of UNMISS with its military component. The UNMISS Human Rights Division, part of the civilian component, is, among other things, responsible for monitoring and collecting data on violations in South Sudan. Often, its personnel cannot operate efficiently because humanitarians associate them with the military. One of the cases reported in the Protection Cluster was about how human rights officers had been prevented from entering a Doctors Without Borders hospital to collect data on rape cases, because the entry of UNMISS personnel would represent a breach of the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

This type of problem was found in several of the South Sudanese states. However, between 2015 and 2016, UNMISS had not thought of a strategy for interacting with humanitarians in terms of monitoring human rights violations. It should be noted here that the data collected by human rights officers can be used in an eventual trial (by an international court or by the hybrid court provided for in the Peace Agreement – ARCRSS) of those accused of war crimes. It is crucial that UNMISS and its Human Rights Division draw up action plans for interacting with humanitarians.

Moreover, the Civil Affairs Division finds it difficult to carry out its activities because they are directly associated with the military component. This is what happens, for example, during Integrated Patrols (patrols whose composition involves the three components of the Mission: military, police and civilian). Again, the responsibility for the use of force in this scenario becomes dichotomous, since, without the military component, there is no feasibility for patrolling, while the presence of the military inhibits the effectiveness of the results sought by the civilian component.

Another issue refers to the CIMIC cell, which should be seen as the main aggregator and arbitrator of humanitarian demands and military capabilities. However, due to the impasse of organizational cultures, the cell, on several occasions, is observed with some suspicion by military and civilians. Humanitarians perceive it as part of the military component, given its structure and the fact that it is composed only of military personnel; the military considers the CIMIC cells as uniformed spokespersons for the humanitarians.

Within this perspective, the mission of the CIMIC cell is covered by several complicating factors, coming to exist in a gray area between the humanitarian and the military. Ug often fails to satisfy the demands of either side. The imperative need versus capacity, which permeates the discourse of humanitarians and military personnel, seems to point to the CIMIC cells as those responsible for the non-solution of this problem when, in fact, there is a culture of non-understanding of the CIMIC work by the military and humanitarian.

The lack of a clear and unified humanitarian voice further undermines efforts for effective dialogue between humanitarians and UNMISS. Some of this, predictably, arises from competition for resources and competing agendas from the various mandates and objectives of the actors involved in aid (Jackson and Haysom 2013). An example is what has been happening with WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) work. As explained, after a crisis, like the one in South Sudan, the UN system is divided into *clusters*; one of these *clusters* is WASH. WASH services become not only a development issue, but also (and primarily) a humanitarian aid issue. In certain cases, the construction of water points and cisterns requires coordination with the UNMISS military component. Hence, in a volatile, complex and violent environment, there are three groups of actors that “dispute” the best way to help the local population.

The political instability of South Sudan and the general lack of security reduce international funding, leading to the compartmentalization of NGOs involved in the management of development programs and humanitar-

ian aid programmes. Development programs are long term and do not allow adaptations for quick responses. Humanitarian aid programs are short in nature, must respond to momentary demands, and have short-term funding. This situation generates competition for resources between NGOs, disputes for specialized support from the military component, ineffective actions in both fields, with direct impacts on the level of trust between UN agencies and NGOs. Many of the problems of humanitarian cooperation with UNMISS occur exactly in the execution phase. The military criticizes humanitarians for lack of coordination and non-compliance with what is agreed in planning meetings; criticism is even extended to UNOCHA for its inability to correct the actions of *clusters* when they negatively impact the progress of humanitarian operations.

The main activities coordinated by UNOCHA along with the military component of UNMISS are the use of military and civil defense assets (UNOCHA 2003) and escorts (IASC 2013) also detailed in the Guidelines for the coordination between Humanitarians and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS CMAG and UNMISS HCT 2013), widely known and disseminated regulations. Despite these, many of the coordination meetings between UNMISS and UNOCHA addressed problems such as the lack of correct identification of humanitarian vehicles to be escorted and the drivers of these vehicles, as well as cargo documentation. In the eyes of humanitarians, these demands were often perceived as mere formality. However, such “formalities” implied delays, detentions, escalation of crisis between the military component and the parties to the conflict and, at times, violence against humanitarian subcontractors. The refusal to start humanitarian convoys that did not comply with these rules created in the humanitarians an idea that the military had a lenient behavior when it came to providing humanitarian aid, while the military were deeply critical of the lack of attention of the humanitarians in taking the necessary measures for planning and preparation in view of safety constraints.

Since its inception, UNMISS’s lack of neutrality has been constantly raised as a problem by humanitarians, who see it as playing a partisan political role. The *Black UN* (reference to UN mission vehicles whose UN symbol is engraved in black, as in the case of UNMISS) threatens the perception of neutrality of *Blue UN* agencies (reference to humanitarian agency vehicles whose UN symbol is engraved in blue, such as WFP, IOM, UNICEF, etc.) with a humanitarian mandate or role (Jackson and Haysom 2013). This conflict extends beyond the humanitarians’ relationship with UNMISS; it becomes the perception of the general population. Several Military Liaison Officers report in their patrols an unwillingness of the population to receive

the UNMISS teams, which do not take anything material to the local population. Unlike humanitarian aid (*Blue UN*), which takes the form of food, water and shelter. The main function of UNMISS is to report and protect, which reflects in security, a concept that does not materialize for the local population.

Yet another point of friction between humanitarians and the military (UNMISS) is the issue of information. These agents must share relevant information with each other in a timely and efficient manner in order to coordinate their respective activities. There are situations, however, where both have confidential information that cannot be shared without compromising the identity of the source or exposing an individual (or a group of individuals) to potential risk. In such cases, it is understood that such information will not be shared between UNMISS and the humanitarian community (UNMISS CMAG and UNMISS HCT 2013). Humanitarian agencies and NGOs are believed to have similar policies. This principle is particularly important in protecting the impacts that sharing may have on the local population. However, it has been used to deny information between humanitarians and the Mission, mainly with regard to the military component; UN agencies, UNMISS and humanitarians have different ways and perceptions on how to manage the information collected.

At UNMISS, the Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC), composed of military and civilian personnel, is responsible for executing the information cycle contained in the DPO-DFS (Department of Peace Operations-Department of Field Service) Policy. This Center is responsible for producing balanced information, timely with the task, systematically treated according to criteria of data and source veracity and reliability and for the shared disclosure of information, according to each of the involved agent's need to support the ongoing operations and decision-making of the Mission's and other UN Agencies' senior management (Shetler-Jones 2008; UNDPKO 2006, 2017a, 2017b).

In other UN agencies, different structures for processing and sharing information can be observed; there is no linearity, since each agency is free to establish its operating structure. UNHCR, for example, has Information Management cells in its structure. These have trained personnel to work with the data received, not only in the context of the agency's mission, but mainly with regard to the issue of the information cycle (UNHCR 2019). However, this is not a reality for all agencies, nor for all agency units that

have Information Management Officer (IMO)¹⁸ positions in their structure. Often, due to the difficulty of hiring qualified personnel willing to work in conflict zones, these structures are not activated or do not even exist in the agency, making it extremely difficult to deal with information and, especially, the dissemination cycle.

Among the NGOs working in South Sudan, there was no unified regulation of information management. Thus, it is believed that each of them treats the sharing of information according to their perspective and within their capacity. Effectively, in many NGOs, information sharing is not the focus of actions, so that they see no reason to divert or employ people in this process. Thus, it is believed that the decision to share does not go through an analytical process, it just becomes the personal inference of whoever holds the data. The lack of data sharing prevents more accurate scenarios from being built, which directly implies the incorrect application of efforts, not only for humanitarian aid, but also for the protection of civilians.

In several situations where interaction between civilians and military is required, the use of different “languages” and terminologies, allied to different institutional cultures and the dispute for space, in a literal or metaphorical sense, lead to difficulties in understanding the common objectives between these actors (Balcik et al. 2010; Heaslip, Sharif and Althonayan 2012; Rietjens, Voordijk and De Boer 2007), which is another factor that hinders cooperation between UNMISS and humanitarians. However, it is questionable whether the various actors have common goals; perhaps it is more accurate to say that each organization has its own goals, but that everyone should work towards a common goal or vision.

According to Benett (2013), humanitarians should take a closer look at their real and perceived neutrality to explore opportunities to strengthen their operational independence. Coordination with other political and military entities (including UNMISS) should take place in line with agreed policies and principles. Humanitarian agencies must work to reduce their current over-reliance on UNMISS assets and must protect themselves more against the politicization or militarization of their work. Bennett’s perception, although theoretically aligned with global humanitarian principles, suggests a separation that often implies duplication of efforts on the ground and reinforces an alleged distance of objectives between humanitarians and the

¹⁸ Information Management Officers. For more information, the Terms of Reference for IMO positions can be consulted on the UNHCR website via the link <https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49515/Information+Management+Officer+Terms+of+Reference/19c63f5a-a229-42c4-8962-49135adb9eb8>.

Mission. In real terms, the approach of UNMISS with humanitarians becomes increasingly challenging and complex, since this type of approach does not institute the conditions for establishing the independence of humanitarians and does not observe the real dynamics of the actions of both humanitarians and military at the operational level, harming the chain as a whole, reducing effectiveness and reinforcing a condition of dispute and non-cooperation.

Another problem observed within UNMISS is the focus on the military component for the functioning of CIMIC. If civilians and military are to work together and military are to contribute to the work of civilians, it is crucial that civilian personnel also learn what CIMIC is all about. Training of civilians for mission deployment and understanding of UNMISS work (one week in Brindisi – *Civilian Pre-deployment Training* (UNGSC 2019); three days in Entebbe – Regional Services Center; and two days of training within UNMISS) does not include a module on CIMIC and the work of the military.

Conclusion

Although there are several norms and guidelines on CIMIC, it seems that in South Sudan their implementation is not effective. However, looking at the literature on CIMIC, this does not seem to be a problem for UNMISS alone. A better work by CIMIC would require, among other measures, an improvement in the procedures of the *clusters*. Even though we can already see an improvement in the coordination of humanitarian work since the adoption of the cluster system in 2005, this coordination can be made more effective by designing a better accountability system for the agencies and institutions responsible for each cluster. A system that demanded coordinated actions from clusters could result in more effective and less problematic responses for affected populations.

One of the principles of coexistence is the separation between the military (included in the UNMISS military component) and humanitarians. In order for the differences between the humanitarian community and UNMISS (with its military component) to be clear, both must ensure that their activities are distinguished at all levels. It is important, for example, that humanitarian and military personnel are properly identified, in order to distinguish personnel and material structure; all public statements must make clear the strategies and mandates of each actor with a focus on reinforcing the distinction between them (Gonzalo 2015).

The use of armed escort or military resources (vessels, aircraft and vehicles) for humanitarian operations should only be used as a last resort. In the specific case of armed escort, UNMISS, in response to requests from humanitarians, studies case by case, always keeping in mind available means, priorities, costs and capabilities. All requests for the use of UNMISS resources or armed escorts must be channeled through UNOCHA and the Joint Operations Center (JOC) (Gonzalo 2015). The JOC is an information center staffed by civilian and military personnel to ensure mission-wide situational awareness of ongoing operations and daily reports on the state of the country (UNDPKO 2014, 2016). Humanitarians should attend UNOCHA meetings to determine whether requests are of last resort (Gonzalo 2015).

The most important aspect of CIMIC in the context of South Sudan and UNMISS is the protection of the civilian population. Coordination linked to the protection of civilians should include regular consultations on UNMISS and humanitarian action strategies. UNMISS should participate in the Protection Cluster and work to ensure that the priorities of protecting civilians are included in the priorities of the Mission (UNMISS CMAG; UNMISS HCT 2013). On a theoretical level, it is observed that NGOs feel uncomfortable with their relationship with the military. However, in the field, effective cooperation is not uncommon (Heaslip and Barber 2014; Rutner, Aviles and Cox 2012; Listou 2011), because in South Sudan, without UNMISS assistance, the required assistance would often not reach the affected population. The logistical transport of supplies across the Nile River to the cities of Leer, Malakal and Melut (in Unity and Upper Nile states) – facilitated by the UNMISS military and the installation of a temporary military base, following the attack on the Doctors Without borders in Leer (which enabled this NGO to function effectively) are examples of successful civil-military cooperation and collaboration. In the case of Doctors Without Borders, despite the principles of neutrality and impartiality, there was a time when violence directed at the NGO demanded a practical approach between it and the UNMISS.

Another initiative that could help the work of coordination between civilians and the military is joint training. Initially, for the improvement of work and cooperation between civilians and military, it would be necessary for the training to also include aspects of CIMIC and institutional knowledge of the existing actors in the operation. In a second phase, simulated cooperation exercises in training for civilians and military personnel could present the most common problems encountered in CIMIC to both groups of actors. Training of this type could also help to create bonds between individuals from different groups; personal contacts can help improve responses and share information.

For the military, it is essential to familiarize them with the global humanitarian principles and procedures of the main agencies and actors in CIMIC; the mere insertion of these in training before the deployment of troops has proved to be insufficient. UNOCHA documents, for example, could be worked with all military personnel (not just those of CIMIC) before they were sent to a UN peacekeeping mission.

Despite DPO documents and Humanitarian Principles being different, it is necessary to work to find points of synergy between these norms and regulations. Military and humanitarians need to work within their own norms, but at the same time looking for ways to collaborate and cooperate with each other, so that aid reaches affected populations and so that work is not duplicated.

Another way to work towards improving coordination is to start it in the planning phase. An effective approach between humanitarians and the military when planning responses can avoid many problems at the time of implementation. It is necessary to think of strategies to increase the trust of humanitarians in UNMISS (and in the military in general) so that the effective protection of civilians and humanitarian response can happen efficiently.

As has become clear, the two sides (military and civilian) have failed to reach a common understanding of each other's role, the challenges they face and, critically, the needs of the affected populations (who suffer from problems of violence and lack of basic resources such as water, sanitation, shelter and food). It is important that the differences between the ways in which civil and military actors work are not an obstacle to the protection of the affected populations, but that both humanitarian and military actors find points of convergence in their work.

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ABSTRACT

International theories that address civil-military relations have increasingly been the subject of new approaches. The scenario where these are developed gains specific nuances and priority in the discussion about the effectiveness of joint work and the limits of each of these groups. This article discusses how the civil-military relation has been built in the UNMISS context. Based on the theoretical construction of civil-military relations, more specifically, those applied to the context of peace operations and their practice, the effectiveness of the relationship between the military components and the civilian components in all their multiplicity is discussed. We challenge the efficiency of the integrated response that is sought through the deepening of civil-military relations. The central question addressed, specifically, seeks to understand the main problems in the synergy between civilians and military in South Sudan and what can be done to mitigate this situation. As a result, we've mapped the main problems presented by both components and later confronted them through interviews with military and civilians in leadership positions, the theoretical confrontation with the with the main concepts of the **CIMIC doctrine** and discussed the process, projecting in this work some perspectives that can help to mitigate the problems found.

KEYWORDS

South Sudan. UN. CIMIC UN-Coord. CMI

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POLITICAL CRISIS AND TERRORISM IN SOMALIA: FROM “DISINTEGRATION” TO “INSTITUTIONALIZATION”

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Introduction

One of the most widely discussed topics in African studies has been the debate on ethnic identities, clans, sub-clans and their relationship to political power and armed conflicts. Most approaches in this regard refer to the tribal question or tribalism in the region, referring to ethnic groups as tribes and conflicts as tribal conflicts, which is a conceptual error because it is not correct to refer to African peoples as tribes. This was a tendency in much of the work developed by anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century, as well as in the decades following African independence.

With regard to the studies carried out on the ethnic question in Africa, two tendencies within anthropology can be highlighted: the “primordialist” and the “instrumentalist” currents that tried to explain the forms of organization of African societies. The first approach focuses on the fact that ethnicity originates from the similarities or differences between individuals and that it does not arise naturally and therefore focuses on “tribal” studies.

On the other hand, instrumentalists consider that groups create their own ethnic identities based on economic and political interests (From Tribe to Ethnicity: Kinship and Social Organization, 68-69). Both approaches are reductionist because they do not take into account the socio-historical complexities involved in the processes of differentiation of ethnic identities and the fact that these identities emerged long before the arrival of Europeans in

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the region. These tendencies stem from the need of anthropologists of the time to understand the emergence of the identities of these peoples.

The researcher Evans-Pritchard (2010) was an example of these anthropological currents, whose analyses were based on field studies for the observation of different African communities, trying to understand their social structure and political organization. According to Evans-Pritchard (2010), with the clan structure, individuals try to demonstrate that they descend from a common ancestor. The lineage segmenting into clan groups acts as a balance of power without a defined center. The system of opposition and alliances can change according to the social context, hence the importance of space and time in social organization (Evans-Pritchard 2010, 71-82).

Therefore, he addresses the relationship between kinship structures in this type of society and political organization, but in terms of the role played by lineage and descendants, i.e. membership in a particular lineage. These lineage relationships acted as a balance of power structure and these relationships could be modified in terms of space and time. With this theoretical approach, it is possible to approach the way in which Somali society is organized, from an ethnic point of view, but with its particularities based on clan and sub-clan alliances.

The studies of the anthropologist Aidan Southall (1970), allow us to dismantle the approaches that could refer to Somali society as tribal problems or tribalism. In this sense it would be important to rescue some of his ideas expressed in his essay “The illusion of tribe”. Here Southall (1970) opposes the use of the term “tribe” as a category that distinguishes societies on the basis of authority structures and does not agree with the idea of hierarchizing them. He argues that this vision of the tribe was a creation of colonialism to divide spaces according to supposed local ethnic, language or territorial differences. In this regard, he states that a unidimensional classification is not possible because kinship relations, religion, identity systems, political and economic systems always carry a plurality of analysis according to contexts (Southall 1970, 28). This was the basis of colonial territorial divisions and in turn of human groups. This phenomenon was also evident in the case of the Somali ethnic group, which was divided among four countries of the African Horn: Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

The Somali ethnic group is divided into several clans, of which four are the most important: the Darood, the Issaqs, the Hawiye and the Rahanween. Each of these in turn is divided into five or six other sub-clans, for example, the dir clan is a minority clan in Somalia. These clans are present both in Djibouti and in some regions of Ethiopia – on the border with Djibouti

– as well as in southern Somalia and on the border with Kenya. These clans are often confused with an ethnic group, hence the need to reaffirm Somali ethnic unity – same culture, language and Islamic religion – but fragmented into clans and sub-clans. Most of them are directly related to a spatial distribution where they exercise political, economic and military control of that territory, so they often adopt antagonistic relationships.

There is an extensive bibliography on the causes and origins of African conflicts, with adjectives such as ethnic conflicts, tribal, savage, barbaric etc. The origin of these conflicts – separatist wars, coups d'état, political crises etc. – has been marked by dissimilar motives. According to the Cuban Africanist Armando Entralgo (2005), the first visible cause is the factor of *ethnicity*; but there can be ethnicity and not necessarily war or conflict, that is to say that, in general, ethnic problems are used for economic or political purposes by the elites in alliance with regional and/or international foreign powers. In other words, since independence, ethnic issues began to be manipulated both by local and regional elites and by international actors for economic, political and geopolitical purposes.

Another factor related to the ethnic issue was the *border* issue, which has generated border wars that have their origin in the arbitrariness of colonialism and the subsequent formation of such “independent” administrative entities, in addition to the fact that several groups were divided into different countries (Entralgo 2005, 9-10), as evidenced in the Somali case. These points can be taken up again to analyze the situation in Somalia, but instead of a confrontation of an ethnic nature, this would be tinged by inter-clan contradictions, in addition to border problems and the distribution of power quotas, further complicated by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism turned into terrorism.

With regard to terrorism, it should be recalled that in the East African subregion, the attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) took place in 1998. A year after these events, the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the Convention on Preventing and Combating Terrorism at its 35th Summit (Algiers, July 1999). This document was a milestone, as it was the first legislative instrument drawn up to combat terrorism. The 1999 Convention was followed by the OAU Protocol to Prevent and Combat Terrorism (2014).

These steps demonstrate Africa's commitment to the fight against terrorism: Dakar Summit (Senegal, October 2001) at which the Dakar Declaration against terrorism was adopted. Then the Plan of Action for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism was adopted at an Intergovernmental

Summit held in Algeria in September 2002 (*Protocol of the OAU Convention on the prevention and combating terrorism* 2014, 2). All these instruments demonstrate how the African Union (AU) was a pioneer in the implementation of legal mechanisms to combat terrorism.

For the purposes of this article, it was decided to subscribe to the concept defended by the OAU/AU in the aforementioned 1999 Convention on Preventing and Combating Terrorism, whose main contributions were, first, a broad definition of terrorism without the label Islamic and, second, the differentiation between terrorist acts and the struggle for self-determination. Here it was established as terrorism:

[...] any act that [...] may endanger the life or physical integrity and cause serious injury or death of any person or group of persons. It is also defined as any act which may damage private or public property, natural resources, cultural heritage and which is intended to intimidate, spread fear, put pressure on a government and affect public services (OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating Terrorism 1999, 3-4, our translation)².

All these elements allow us to approach the analysis of the internal political dynamics in Somalia, taking into account the relationship between the clans, their spatial distribution, their relationship with the parties that make up the political system and the dynamics of terrorism in the country. In this way, we intend to conclude whether in Somalia we can speak of a return to a certain level of stabilization after decades of internal conflict, governance crisis and the continuity of terrorist actions.

Al Shabaab: from “nationalist” to terrorist movement

The 1990s marked the beginning of the long period of instability in Somalia. From the internal point of view, the fall of Siad Barre generated the outbreak of a strong civil war of inter-clanic character for political power that caused the disarticulation of the state and the emergence of several armed groups. Another element to take into account is the Islamic character of its

2 In the original: “cualquier acto que [...] pueda hacer peligrar la vida o la integridad física y causar heridas serias o la muerte, de cualquier persona o grupo de personas. Se define también como cualquier acto que pueda dañar la propiedad privada o pública, los recursos naturales, el patrimonio cultural y que tengan premeditadamente la intención de intimidar, sembrar el miedo, presionar a un gobierno y afectar los servicios públicos” (OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating Terrorism 1999, 3-4.)

population, since Islam will become a factor of homogenization in a given context. The influence of the radical variants of Islam was very strong in the region and took hold in Somalia, since the religious factor was thus an element used to “unify” in a context of total crisis of the state. It was in this context that the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) emerged in 2004. Its main leader was Hassan Dahir Aweys. The UIC became the most important actor as opposed to the so-called Transitional Federal Government (TFG), a body that became the “defender” of Somali institutionality backed by regional actors.

The UIC was able to impose some order and administer justice in the chaotic scenario then prevailing in Somalia. Between June and December 2006, they seized power in Mogadishu and their forces spread rapidly during 2006 to bring large parts of the south of the country under their domination. This raised regional and international alarms, as a strong religious core was “forming” in the country. It was at this point that the military intervention by Ethiopia took place. This action – December 2006 to January 2009 – together with the subsequent signing of an agreement with the TFG, led to the radicalization of the youth wing of the UIC which continued the war now under the name of *Al Shabaab* and the leadership of Aden Hashi Ayro. As a result of the Ethiopian invasion and the flight of those moderate leaders, such as Aweys himself, *Al Shabaab* experienced a rapid radicalization in a double nationalist and religious aspect.

The internal political situation in Somalia after the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops in 2009 remained unstable despite regional support for the TFG led by Sharif Shaykh Ahmed. These would be the years of greatest splendor for the armed opposition represented in the *Al Shabaab* organization. With the change in the correlation of forces within the country and certain “guarantees” in terms of security due to the setback that this group would begin to experience, which would later become a terrorist organization, a positive step was taken in terms of governmental institutionality.

With the group’s military advance during 2010, *Al Shabaab* came to control almost all of southern Somalia and a significant part of central Somalia, with Kismayo as its first urban enclave. In these territories it established its own governance structures, tax collection and went so far as to provide even social services. These elements were important due to the generalized chaos in Somalia and the lack of management by a central government, by then non-existent. One of the priorities at the time was the final conquest of Mogadishu. Therefore, it was strong in both urban and rural areas. The northern areas – such as Puntland and Somaliland itself – were not within

its geographical areas of operations, although it did not stop trying to reach or influence the north of the country.

At its peak, *Al Shabaab* had a membership of between 7,000 and 9,000 militants, most of them coming from different Somali clans. This is one of its characteristics: it crosses inter-clan lines. Hundreds of foreign militants have also been identified, coming from East Africa (Kenya and other countries of the Swahili coast and Sudan) as well as from the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen and Saudi Arabia). The case of Kenya, a country with a Christian majority, is particularly relevant as it could have contributed up to 25% of the total militancy. A larger number of expatriates would be added, members of the Somali diaspora mainly in the United States (with a high proportion of cases related to the large Somali community based in the State of Minnesota), to a lesser extent in Canada and in several European countries such as the United Kingdom, Denmark or Sweden (Wise 2011, 9). The number of its members declined in 2012 to about 3 thousand to 5 thousand active members and this downward trend has continued.

The nationalist projection that characterized *Al Shabaab* in its initial years began to change as its ideological conceptions became more radical. One of the factors was related to the military defeats they began to suffer at the hands of African Union and UN troops: AMISOM. This led them to resort to less conventional methods of struggle both against the Ugandan, Ethiopian and Kenyan troops present in the country and against the Somali sectors that did not support them. To this was added the progressive loss of their popular support when, following a severe drought and famine that hit the country from 2010 to 2012, they began to prohibit, in the areas under their control, the presence of humanitarian organizations and agencies.

This process also had to do with the change of leadership within the organization. In May 2008, Aden Hashi Ayro was killed by a U.S. missile strike (Sengupta 2008, 1) and was succeeded in the leadership of the group by Ahmed Abdi Godane of the Dir clan. A further reinforcement came at the hands of Hassan Dahir Aweys who returned to Somalia in 2009 to form a group called *Hizbul Islam*, which after clashes with *Al Shabaab*, ended up merging with this group in 2010, reinforcing the Islamist tendency within the country. Aweys was arrested by Somali authorities in 2013 and in 2014 was placed under house arrest (Page 2010).

Godane turned out to be a remarkable leader, with great charisma, fluent in Arabic and Somali and with poetic qualities. His non-membership of the clans in the south of the country enabled him to present himself as a factor of “unity” over inter-clan rivalries with a unifying Islamic discourse.

These powers enabled him to lead *Al Shabaab* to its stage of maximum territorial expansion until around 2011. It was precisely under Godane's mandate that the turn towards a closer relationship with central Al Qaeda and the assumption of the "global jihad" criterion took place. This process of linkage between the two organizations was to be slow and would not be officially recognized by the Al Qaeda leadership until February 2012. It was here that the change in the methods of struggle took place, when suicide attacks and car bombs began to be used against local authorities and the civilian population opposed to their principles.

According to some analyses, in 2011 *Al Shabaab* was a militia divided into three factions, with Godane at the head of the most powerful one, the Lebanese Berjawi in another and the Kenyan Iman Ali in the third. It is for this reason that the oath of allegiance to Al Qaeda expressed by Godane in February 2012 was interpreted by his rivals and detractors as an attempt to reinforce his authority and power, as well as to internationalize the militia.

A further change in leadership occurred in 2014 when, as a result of another U.S. airstrike – a trend that can be identified in the U.S. response to this problem in Somalia: targeted attacks using drones – Godane was killed on September 1, 2014 in the *Lower Shabelle* region in the south of the country (Chothia 2014). Godane was succeeded by Ahmad Umar³ also from the dir clan and who remains the leader of the group to this day⁴. Before reaching this position, Ahmad Umar had been the leader of *Amniyat*, an elite unit of *Al Shabaab* in charge of the execution of assassinations, attacks and security and intelligence work. It is precisely their size in the intelligence sector that has allowed them to infiltrate the structures of the eroded Somali state and armed forces. In this regard, several Somali officials have been accused of collaborating with or favoring *Al Shabaab*.

A change in the organization's fighting methods came when they began to carry out cross-border actions in "retaliation" to the regional military presence in the country. The first in this series of attacks occurred in July 2010 when a group of suicide bombers detonated several bombs in a market in Uganda, killing 78 people who were gathered watching the World Cup

3 He joined the group in 2006 and since then began to hold important positions in the leadership as governor of Lower Juba (2008) and Bay and Bakool (2009) regions. He is also known as Ahmed Diriye or Abu Ubaidah. In April 2015, he was placed on the U.S. State Department's *Specially Designated Global Terrorist list* (U.S. State Department, Office of the Spokesperson. 2015).

4 He is posited to be around 40 years of age and hails from the southern part of the country, from the port of Kismayo. He was a figure very close to Godane and had participated in the elimination of his rivals in 2013 (Iaccino, L. 2014).

in South Africa. The second significant episode was the attack executed in September 2013 at the *Westgate Mall* in Kenya, as a result of which some 68 people were killed. The third and deadliest was the assault on Garissa University College, also in Kenya, in April 2015 where 147 students were killed. These events already speak of an eminently terrorist vocation of the group, by attacking vulnerable civilian targets with the aim of a political-military purpose. In all three cases, the aim was to “pressure” the authorities of both Uganda and Kenya to withdraw their military troops present in Somalia as part of the troops deployed by the AU in the country.

Regional and international actors: their presence in Somalia

From the very beginning of the Somali conflict, countries in the region have been involved in different ways, from Sudan to Kenya and Uganda have played a role in the Somali scenario. Chief among them has been Ethiopia, which shares a long and porous border with Somalia, as well as maintaining populations of the same Somali origin on both sides of the Ogaden region. Developments in Somalia are therefore a national security issue for the government in Addis Ababa. Similarly, Kenya has a similar situation, but along the southern border, in addition to the presence of tens of thousands of Somali refugees on its territory. This also determines the military incursions of the Kenyan army into Somali territory.

In Kenya there are about half a million Somali refugees settled there since the very beginning of the civil war that caused the increase of tensions in the regions where they settled because they changed the ethnic balance of the area, where Somali clans of Kenyan origin also live. The main Somali refugee camp in the country is called Dabaab. In order to “prevent” the spread of *Al Shabaab*’s actions, the *Kenya Defense Forces* (KDF) intervened in Somalia in October 2011. This operation was called *Linda Nchi* and its pretext was the kidnapping of three Spanish aid workers from the Dabaab camp. The result has been a process of radicalization by some Kenyan Somalis in support of *Al Shabaab*.

Despite individual military initiatives taken by Ethiopia and Kenya, this military presence was institutionalized through a mandate of the African Union together with the UN, which established AMISOM in 2007. At the beginning, most of the soldiers were from Uganda and Burundi, but after

successive stages it reached 17,000 troops⁵. It currently has 22,000 men on the ground (AMISOM). The change in the correlation of forces that its presence in the country implied and the offensive against *Al Shabaab* cells in union with the so-called Somali⁶ *National Army* (*Somalia National Force*, SNF), resulted in a series of defeats for the group. In response, the organization has concentrated all its military power against AMISOM troops, the only ones that “guarantee” certain levels of security in the country and support the weak management of the government installed in Mogadishu since September 2012.

The deployment of AMISOM has been the most direct example of the UN’s presence as a key player in the mediation process within the Somali conflict, as is the AU. However, in May 2013, the UN Security Council approved the establishment of the Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM), with a mandate to facilitate policy advice to the federal government and AMISOM at the levels of peace and state building, governance, security sector reform, and coordination of international donor support. The UN Security Council pays particular attention to the evolving political situation inside Somalia, which is an example of the impact of this conflict on international relations.

For their part, the United States and its European allies have also had a direct impact on the Somali conflict. U.S. troops from their base in Djibouti territory have continued to carry out selective drone attacks against targets belonging to *Al Shabaab*, which has become a regular method used by U.S. troops. Prominent leaders of the group have been eliminated in these attacks. For example, in December 2014, the group’s intelligence chief Tahlil Abdishaku was eliminated. In February 2015, in another attack in the south of the country, the group’s head of external operations Yusuf Dheeque was reportedly eliminated. In other words, the military response continues to predominate and the foreign military presence continues to be legitimized. The collateral “damages” of these indiscriminate attacks do not count either, which do not receive international criticism and have been established as the main method of eliminating terrorist leaders, although it implies a constant violation of the sovereignty of the states.

With respect to this type of actions carried out by the United States and in spite of the official military “collaboration”, the attacks with drones have provoked complaints from the Somali authorities. For example, in the region of Galmudug an attack of this type affected the armed forces of this

5 Uganda (with 6,233 troops), Burundi (5,432), Ethiopia (4,395), Kenya (3,644), Djibouti (1,000) and Sierra Leone (850).

6 The Somali National Army has a command and control structure based on the clan system.

state mistaken for presumed terrorists. Washington claimed that it was a “self-defense” attack and that they had indeed eliminated nine members of *Al Shabaab*, but other reports indicated collateral casualties. As confirmed by Somali General Ali Bashi, *Al Shabaab* was not operating in the area (Reuters 2016). Social protests – anti-U.S. – were activated in the state capital Galkayo, where protesters burned U.S. flags. The Somali government demanded an explanation from U.S. authorities in this regard (Al Jazeera 2016), a sign that Somali institutions are not always taken into account in carrying out these targeted attacks.

They have also contributed to the rearmament of the Somali Armed Forces with the supply of military equipment using State Department contractors: *Bancroft Global Development* (BGD) and *Dyn Corporation*, which are also indirectly involved in military technical assistance to AMISOM troops (Orzáez 2015, 145). Another of its functions has been military training to Somali soldiers with the support, for example, of the Ugandan Popular Defense Forces. In January 2013, the US government recognized the Somali government and nominated the first ambassador to this country since the beginning of the war in 1991: Ms. Katherine Dhanani, although her office was located in the US embassy in Nairobi (Jonathan Masters and Aly Sergie 2015).

Meanwhile, the European Union deployed its training mission *EUTM-Somalia* with the objective of “supporting” the security sector reform process in the country through military assistance to the SNF in collaboration with the U.S. This European mission has been extended since 2010 and has trained 3,300 military personnel (1,200 command staff and 120 instructors) (Orzáez 2015, 145 and 149), consolidating the military response and approach that the Western powers are seeking as a solution to the conflict in Somalia.

Kenya’s military presence in the southern part of Somalia constitutes a “priority” for its national security, since from these areas the group carries out military incursions into its national territory. The Kenyan region of *North Eastern Province* has been the most affected by *Al Shabaab* attacks and is also where most of the Somalis in refugee camps, as well as Somalis of Kenyan nationality, are located. Since Nairobi’s military presence in Somalia began in 2011, there have been, according to Kenyan counter-terrorism police, more than 135 minor attacks in this province at a cost of more than 500 civilian casualties. The possibility of building a wall along part of the 680 km Somali-Kenyan border was even raised: “*Somalia Border Control Project*”.

Due to the military actions of AMISOM international forces, *Al Shabaab* has lost much of the territories they controlled. This process in the group’s systematic retreat, started in 2011, has been sustained. This is what

makes it possible to explain their “need” for a change in fighting tactics: the increase in irregular operations, not only against AMISOM troops, but also in attacks against civilian populations and Somali authorities.

Among the major milestones of this military regression was their expulsion in 2011 from the capital by AMISOM forces, although they kept doing operations in Mogadishu. Another significant moment was the loss of the port of Kismayo in 2012 which was very important for them as a source of income and that of the port of Barawe in 2014 through which they smuggled charcoal, one of their sources of financing (Díez Alcalde 2015). Through this port, which had been for six years under their control, the group carried out part of the import of smuggled weaponry and the movement of their militants (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies 2015, 169). Therefore, it would be even more difficult for this type of activity.

One of the last AMISOM operations was named *Operation Juba Corridor*, with the objective of capturing its main points in the regions of Gedo, Bakool and Bay. The Ethiopian *National Defence Forces* (ENDF) and Kenyan forces (KDF) were involved in this campaign in support of the SNA. The result was the liberation of several villages in these regions⁷. These victories alone are no guarantee that the “liberated” areas will fall back under the group’s influence. This indicated the firepower they still have and the effectiveness of their punctual tactics against specific military targets.

These attacks continue to pose a dilemma for AMISOM which is torn between being able to ensure security in the “liberated” areas or to eliminate the presence of *Al Shabaab* from the other regions. In this regard, the dilemma of the reorganization of AMISOM troops to ensure control over 80% of south-central Somalia was presented (Institute for Security Studies 2015b, 6) and discusses the consequences that the eventual withdrawal of AMISOM forces could generate for the “achieved” stabilization of the country and an eventual increase in ALS (*Al Shabaab*) actions.

All these developments – advances and setbacks of *Al Shabaab*, the military presence of international actors in the conflict and the high levels of insecurity due to terrorist actions, determined the internal Somali context, in the midst of which it was intended to promote a change in the political-institutional structure. This speaks of the complexities faced by the Somali authorities in order to achieve higher levels of “stabilization” in a completely

7 In the Bakool region, the villages of Buur-dhuhunle, Kulun-jareer, Moragabey, Legaly and Gelewoyni were recovered, while in the Bay region, Ufurow, Eesow, Hasanow-Mumin, Llidaale, Makoon, Dhargo and Manaas were recovered.

adverse context. From the 2012 elections and those of 2016, a new phase began, which has not been without the same security challenges.

Somali-“style” presidential election: a new government in Mogadishu

A fundamental element for concluding the transitional governments and advancing in the establishment of a federal system was the holding of presidential elections. To this end, between July and August 2012, several measures were taken to complete the transition period. Among them was the establishment of an assembly of clan leaders to elect the country’s authorities. Thus, in September 2012, a *sui generis* electoral process was held – betting for the first time on the Somali African reality and not following Western patterns in this regard – which ensured the election of a “legitimate” federal government in Somalia (*Federal Government of Somalia*, FGS).

On this occasion, the president was elected by the Somali Parliament instituted for this purpose. The parliamentarians were suggested by 135 leaders of different clans and sub-clans in response to the Somali reality. Of the more than 200 proposals, some 70 people were finally rejected because they did not meet the requirements, one of which was that they should not have been involved in the conflict, such as the so-called “warlords”. A total of 22 candidates were nominated, including Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, but he was defeated by Hassan Sheikh Mohamud⁸ of the Peace and Development Party (PDP).

This government was committed to the real construction of a federal system through the organization of regional authorities. In this sense, positive steps were taken, but political rivalries hindered its further implementation. The adoption of the federal system has still been quite controversial because of the way it should be implemented at both the state and regional levels. For example, one of the main contradictions emerged when, at a conference held in Kismayo on May 15, 2013, the southern state of Jubaland was established, against which a Raas Kamboni militia leader, Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed Islam aka Madobe, was elected as president, a position that was claimed by five other contenders (Solomon 2014, 28-29). At the government level there were also

⁸ Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was a university professor. He worked for the Ministry of Education in the government of Siad Barré in the 1980s. After the fall of Barré, he started collaborating with several international organizations such as Unicef and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

three changes of the Prime Minister⁹ as a result of contradictions between them and the president, weakening the continuity of the political process in a context in which the main threat remained *Al Shabaab*.

Related to the Somali political landscape, one should note the preparation process for the 2016 presidential elections as envisaged in the road-map adopted in 2012 and the “Vision 2016” strategy. This comprised three essential elements: the drafting of a new Constitution, the demarcation of the borders between the states that make up the federation and electoral reform. Progress in this regard was made in the establishment of regional authorities and the Constitution (Institute for Security Studies 2015b, 5). The most problematic point centered on the development of the elections.

For this important stage, efforts were made to strengthen the functioning of the political structures implemented since then. In this regard, the cabinet was re-established, in January 2015, with the figure of Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke after he was appointed Prime Minister in December 2014¹⁰. Despite internal pressures, inter-clan and regional differences, the federal political system has remained functioning, which gives the measure of the country’s institutional progress, necessary to be able to cohere federal policies, including against *Al Shabaab*.

Serious challenges remained, for example, in the establishment of state authority in the areas liberated by AMISOM and Somali army troops, which was essential in order to consolidate local authorities in these regions as well. For its part, the government of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud maintained its policy of amnesty for all fighters affiliated with *Al Shabaab* who renounced violence. This was an additional element that also favored defections within the group and a factor in its weakening.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has been one of the subregional actors with the greatest impact on events in Somalia. Through this mechanism for political coordination, the main initiatives for the solution of the crisis in the country have been articulated. An important milestone in this regard was the holding in January 2015 of the 53rd Extraordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers in Mogadishu, the first to be

9 In two years, Abdiweli Mohamed Ali (from August to October 2012), Abdi Farah Shirdon Saaid (from October 2012 to December 2013) and Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed (from December 2013 to December 2014) succeeded each other in the post.

10 At the time of his appointment Ali Sharmarke was serving as Somalia’s Ambassador to the United States. His father was the second president of the country between 1967 and 1969 when he was removed by Siad Barre’s coup d’état. He comes from the majerten daarood clan of the Puntland region. He had been Prime Minister during the TFG of Sharif Sheikh Ahmed between 2009 and 2010 (EFE 2014).

held in the country since 1985. At the meeting, the commitment to continue with the process of federalism was raised and in this sense the formation of the federated states in the south of the country was supported, as well as the military advance over the terrorist group was recognized. Other significant moments were given by the meeting of Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud with the then Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in Addis Ababa and the visit of Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Gelle to Mogadishu in February 2015 (Institute for Security Studies 2015a, 12). All these elements pointed to the recognition of the Somali government's work and the strengthening of IGAD's regional role vis-à-vis the crisis in Somalia and the confrontation with terrorism.

An essential event for the strengthening of the country's institutions was the holding of the 2016 presidential elections. Initially, they were scheduled for October 30 after the renewal of the parliament, which is in turn the entity in charge of electing the president. For this opportunity, the same election principle was followed, but expanding the levels of participation with respect to the 2012 elections, since the election of the 275 members of Parliament would be carried out by 13,750 leaders of the country, taking into account the distribution of power among the different clans and sub-clans. In 2012, only 135 leaders did so (EFE 2016).

The *National Leaders Forum* (NLF) held in January 2016 was attended by federal authorities, as well as the presidents of the states of Puntland: Abdiweli Ali Gaas, Jubaland: Ahmed Mohamed Islam, South-West: Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan and Galmudug: Abdikarim Hussein Guled. Its purpose was the discussion of the 2016 election process and its form of implementation. The result was the approval of an *Upper House of Parliament* with 54 seats distributed among the six states and elected by the regional assemblies. In other words, eight seats will be allocated per state for a total of 48, while the remaining six seats will be distributed equally between Somaliland and Puntland, with these two states having 11 representatives¹¹.

For its part, the 275 seats in the *Lower House* would be distributed taking into account the “4x5” formula that guarantees the distribution of power among the four main clans of the country and their respective clans and allied sub-clans. Taking into account this distribution formula in the Lower House of Parliament, there would be a proportion of 61 seats for each of the four main clans (daarood, hawiye, dir and rahamweyn or digil-mirifle) for a total of 244. The remaining 31 seats would be allocated equally proportionally

¹¹ Somaliland (11), Puntland (11) and the rest of the states with a total of 8 seats each (Koonfur, Galbeed, Jubaland, Galmudug and Shabelle-Hiiraan) (Somalinet 2016).

among the representatives of the respective minority clans and sub-clans. It is posited that 30% of the seats would be reserved for women (Europa Press 2016), which is indicative of the growing role of women's political participation. Despite this, there is still a long way to go in terms of gender equity issues in Somalia.

The electoral calendar suffered delays due to the slowness with which the election of the Parliament took place, a process that was to take place between September 24 and October 10 in order to make way for the presidential elections. This is due to the complexities of the Somali political system, taking into account the social structures and inter-clan divisions. With the implementation of this typical formula for the Somali case, the construction of a consensus political system that responds to the specificities of this country has undoubtedly been strengthened.

The big challenge of these elections remained the still active presence of *Al Shabaab*, the main actor opposing the government. Among the main candidates were President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud himself and Prime Minister Ali Sharmarke as well as former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. At the end of the process, Ali Sharmarke was elected as the new Somali president. In terms of female representation only 23% of those elected was reached for a total of 85 out of 276 parliamentarians (Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy 2016). These presidential elections, following the particularities of Somali society, meant a primary breakthrough in the establishment of federal institutions. One issue that remained outstanding was the incorporation of the Somaliland region into that process. Although this region has "representatives" in the federal parliament, they were elected *de facto*, because the authorities of the "State" of Somaliland have not accepted its incorporation into the Federation, so it continues to be a stumbling block for the complete unification of the former Somali territory.

Conclusion

Against this backdrop, it can be said that a gradual and weak process of restructuring the political institutionality in Somalia has been achieved, based on a relative balance of power and political stabilization, despite security problems such as terrorism and inter-clan contradictions. From the economic point of view, extreme poverty remains, which makes successful recruitment by ALS possible.

On the military level, they still depend on foreign military presence to ensure the country's security and the government's ability to function. AMISOM's capabilities have been limited to eradicate *Al Shabaab* and a new scenario is opening up with its gradual withdrawal from Somalia. This means that the Somali national army will have to ensure internal security on its own and fight the group on the ground, regardless of its logistical and manpower limitations.

In the political-institutional sphere, the impossibility of bringing together interclan interests in the government system and the maintenance of antagonistic forces endanger the functioning of the political system. Similarly, the existence of strong internal tensions in the government: disputes between federal authorities and regional and local entities, is another of the challenges they face.

Therefore, the internal situation in Somalia is still characterized by a deep political crisis and high levels of insecurity despite the institutional advances achieved with the strengthening of the federal system, although the incorporation of Somaliland into this process is not in sight. The objective factors that favor the continuity of *Al Shabaab*'s terrorist actions are still present in Somalia, as well as the persistent interclanic contradictions. All this makes it impossible to make further progress in terms of achieving security and, eventually, affecting the institutionality achieved in the country since the federal elections of 2012 and those of 2016.

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ABSTRACT

The conflict in Somalia has been one of the most complex to analyze because of the particularities of clan and inter-clan relations within its society. The country has experienced a long period of political instability as a result of the intensification of

the civil war that had its expression in such clan differences, which led to the balkanization or “disintegration” of Somalia following the emergence of autonomous “states”. In this context, Al Shabaab came to play a crucial role. This terrorist organization has been active since 2010 and operates in the rural areas of south-central Somalia. Since 2012, there has been a gradual return to institutionality, with the holding of two elections that have taken into account these particularities of Somali society. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how a gradual and weak process of restructuring of political institutionality has been achieved in Somalia, based on a relative balance of power and political stabilization, despite security problems such as terrorism and inter-clan contradictions.

KEYWORDS

Somalia. Somaliland. Al Shabaab. Clans. Sub-clans. Terrorism. Presidential elections.

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THE CUBAN AIR CAMPAIGN IN ANGOLA 1988-1989

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Introduction

All of the Cuban military intervention campaign in Angola in 1988 has been the result of intense debate on the field of military history and international relations. The fierce operations to defend Cuito Cuanavale, and the troops displacement along Mavinga, beyond the war on land, the air campaign became an element of major importance that is highlighted as an object of deeper analysis. The air war waged on the skies of Southern Africa represented a turning point and convergence of Cuban military force projection on the region, and overall represented a rupture of South African preponderance over the region's skies.

The air campaign developed alongside the Cuban Revolutionary Air and Air Defense Force (DAAFAR) and the People's Air Force of Angola (FAPA) was also an object of analysis, many times conflicting and diverging. This article does not intend to analyze such debates, but rather to present a contribution towards understanding Cuban and Angolan success by exploring from a supporting historiography and recently declassified documentation what elements were vital and decisive to the victory of the Cuban/Angolan air component over the South African regime's air force.

The Cuban air campaign would be marked by three very clear results, first that the support guarantee given to the FAPLA was plainly secured and contributed to keep Cuito Cuanavale on Angolan control, second as an intimidating element of the South Africa Air Force (SAAF) stopping them from supporting their forces close to Cuito Cuanavale, and finally the reversion on the supremacy and control of the airspace over Angola taking that prerogative

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from South Africans, reversing a historical condition of the SAAF by the time that DAAFAR was able to project its fighter aviation against Namibia and, beyond that, into South African airspace. This story's narrative is the object of study and will be told along this article.

The background on Cuba's support to Angola

In March 1961, a national liberation war erupted in Angola. It was led by several organizations: People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA, in Portuguese), National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA, in Portuguese), National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA, in Portuguese) and Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) (George 2005, 1-10). However, the mismatch of objectives, the different social and ethnic bases from each movement and other factors that divided these organizations, many times caused armed clashes between them, preventing the unification of anti colonial forces.

The most progressive movement, that, unlike others, reflected national goals, was the MPLA, which defended the independence and the territorial integrity of the country, and the transparency of its riches to national control (Venter 2013, 82-317). The USSR, as well as China and Cuba, started to support the MPLA, given its marxist orientation, in 1958. The first Cuban experts in two units arrived in Angola on November 7, 1961, and immediately began to train partisan detachments. At the time, the Cubans were already in Algeria, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.

Many Angolan rebels received military training both on socialist European countries, such as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and African states, among which Algeria. The guerilla fight consisted mainly in organizing ambushes on roads and attacks against Portuguese garrisons (George 2005, 10-161).

China supported the MPLA with the supply of weapons, equipment and advisors, and together with military experts from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, began training FNLA rebel units starting in 1973. Between 1958 and 1974, the USSR also helped the MPLA's armed formations, whose main purpose was to supply weapons and equipment such as rifles, light mortars, and cannons.

The MPLA, together with the FNLA and UNITA, had won the colonial war of independence. However, after Portugal signed an agreement on the recognition of Angola's independence in January 1975, almost immediately

- starting in March - clashes between representatives of the three Angolan rebel groups began, transforming Angola's war of independence into a civil war (Saún et al. 1989).

Southern Angola was UNITA's operation site, and the South Africa's government nurtured a strategic concern which translated on securing the continuity of UNITA's control over the regions bordering Southwestern Africa, so as to prevent that South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrilla fighters – a guerrilla movement which fought to liberate Namibia – received Angolan support and got a trampoline on Angola's South to launch attacks against Southwestern Africa. Its security strategy was shaped by preventive interventionism and counter revolutionary war doctrines, even with the participation of dissidents from the FNLA (Weigert 2011, 65).

In order to guarantee the Namibia-Angola border security, the South Africans launched a major military operation called *Protea* and, after its conclusion in August 1981, the South African Defense Force (SADF) temporarily occupied 50,000 square kilometers of the Cunene province. Right after, UNITA took over effective administrative control of most of the region in January 1982 (George 2005, 140-141).

The permanence of UNITA in the region was a great nuisance to the MPLA government, and their expulsion from the province became a matter of honor. Throughout the 1980s, the Angolan government tried to maintain total control of the south of the country, which was permanently in the hands of UNITA and its leader, Jonas Savimbi.

Luanda's government never managed to obtain command over the entire country, because UNITA controlled most of Southeastern Angola. Every time it was threatened by the central Angolan government, South Africa intervened in its favor. In the president of Angola's words, José Eduardo dos Santos, "As a military man, it really is a hard pill to swallow to admit that the enemy occupies a territory which we have to defend and cannot expel them" (Gleijeses 2016, 225, our translation)². South Africa kept all of the Southern Angola border and the Cunene province occupied and, from there, drove invasions and attacks to the State.

2 In the original: "*Como militar, é realmente uma pílula amarga admitir que o inimigo ocupa um território que devemos defender e não podemos expulsá-lo*" (Gleijeses 2016, 225).

The operation *Saudando Outubro* and its failure

In 1987, as part of the campaign against UNITA for control of South-eastern Angola, the Angolan army launched, with the support of Russian military advisors, a major military campaign called operation *Saudando Outubro*, with the objective to expel the forces of UNITA from its strongholds on the cities of Mavinga, a former Portuguese army base, and Jamba, on the country's Southeast, on North of Caprivi Strip (George 2005, 200). The strategic goal of the FAPLA was to destroy UNITA's operation base and to put an end to the civil war, taking complete control of the entire country. To this end, FAPLA troops advanced to the Southeast of Cuito Cuanavale to attack UNITA in Mavinga. The campaign's leadership and planning were taken over by Soviet officials who also held command of the higher echelons in front-line units. The command of the entire operation and the Angolan forces during the offensive was in charge of Major General Ivan Fyodorovich Ryabchenko (Jaster 1990, 17).

The Cuban forces stationed in Angola did not take part in the offensive. At first, they did not engage in combat and acted in support tasks and, allegedly, discouraged the Soviet command to go ahead with the operation (Gleijeses 2016, 393). The Soviets rejected the Cuban advice, as well as on former campaigns, when they warned that an operation would create yet another opportunity for a South African intervention (Vanneman 1990, 76).

The operation employed at least 10,000 soldiers and there was an additional cost of 1.5 billion USD in Soviet military equipment, among which 150 T-55 and T-62 tanks, "Hind" Mi-24 updated helicopters, and M-46 and D-30 cannons. The offensive sought to, once again, capture UNITA's advanced base in Mavinga before the final attack on Jamba (George 2005, 200). It was decided that the offensive would be initiated from Cuito Cuanavale.

In subsequent developments of the campaign, during the involvement of aviation and pilots, Cubans and Angolans would engage South African fighters in air combat, shooting them down for the first time. In any case, Soviet planes crewed by Soviets, Cubans and Angolans would constantly bomb and shoot UNITA's position in Mavinga (Vanneman 1990, 76).

South Africa learned of the huge military build-up and warned UNITA about the mobilization. Operation *Saudando Outubro* began in July 1987, being, at first, successful. There was a certain progression on its development with the FAPLA, obtaining considerable gains in Southeastern Angola. The South African government noted that UNITA was not able to resist the attack and intervened (George 2005, 201).

On August 4, 1987, SADF launched Operation *Moduler*, which should stop the Angolan advance in Mavinga to avoid an UNITA loss. On August 28, FAPLA had hit the Lomba river's bank further North, close to Mavinga, when it was secured by SADF forces. South Africans began a violent clash on September 9 which continued until October 7, 1987, preventing FAPLA from crossing the river and forcing them to interrupt the Angolan troops' offensive.

FAPLA suffered heavy losses and the Soviets withdrew their advisors from the operation, leaving FAPLA with no senior leadership. It was up to FAPLA to prepare a rescue of its troops, whose safety depended on the air capacity they could afford. At that point, they began to count on the support of DAAFAR from Cuba, which worked in collaboration with FAPA. According to the lieutenant Anatoly Eduardovich Alekseevsky's memories, one of the senior Russian officials who served as a military advisor at the time, he recalls that the SAAF sent its fighters, because

[...] SAAF Mirages appeared quite frequently. But in this region we had the opportunity to call on the Cubans. I mean their MiG-21s. There was no MiG-23 in our district. The Cuban MiG-21s operated successfully, the South African Mirages fled them all the time. We called the Cuban fighters a couple of times and by what they did mid-air it was clear who they were. They executed incredible things mid-air. When Cubans found the Mirages, they almost entered in air combat, but the South Africans simply went away, fled (Shubin 2007, 31, our translation)³.

On September 29, SADF launched an offensive aimed at destroying all FAPLA forces East to Cuito river. On October 3, 1987, SADF attacked FAPLA troops on the South bank of Lomba river and, two days later, FAPLA began to retreat to Cuito Cuanavale, that had as a resistance point the Cuito Cuanavale locality, exactly from where the offensive had begun, and from where they resisted until mid-1988.

In the field of diplomatic negotiation, Fidel Castro noticed the opportunity to reposition the focus of the military crisis from Southeast to South-

3 In the original: "*Apareciam Mirages da SAAF com bastante frequência. Mas nesta região tínhamos a oportunidade de convocar os cubanos. Quero dizer seus MiG-21s. Não havia nenhum MiG-23 em nosso distrito. Os MiG-21 cubanos operaram com sucesso, os Mirages sul-africanos fugiam deles o tempo todo. Chamávamos os caças cubanos algumas vezes e pelas coisas que fizeram no ar ficou claro quem eram. Eles executavam coisas incríveis no ar. Quando os cubanos encontravam os Mirages, eles quase entravam em combate aéreo, mas os sul-africanos simplesmente iam embora, fugiam*" (Shubin 2007, 31).

west Angola, setting up an alternative scenario to the US intermediated exit based on a strategy that accommodated the diplomatic and military requirements from Havana and Pretoria. In other words, the participation of Cuba in the negotiations was essential. In the meantime, Fidel Castro would respond to Angola's request for help. In the military field, the Cuban military had nullified the Angolan decision from late-1987 to abandon Cuito Cuanavale and withdraw to Menongue, and, under direct supervision from Fidel Castro, took command of the defense of Cuito Cuanavale in late January 1988.

From November to March, Cuito Cuanavale remained in control of FAPLA, being under intermittent attack and siege. FAPLA, strengthened by Cuban troops, stubbornly maintained their positions on the East bank of the Cuito River. Due to the continuous air and land threat, FAPLA redistributed the Cuito aircrafts to a safer site, the air base in Menongue. The tactical command station was also relocated about 19 kilometers Northwest of Cuito.

On this device, the Cuban air force role would be decisive: with regard to air defense capabilities, in ensuring air supremacy and to provide air assets necessary to launch support attacks on the besieged Angolan and Cuban forces in Cuito Cuanavale. A more ambitious development, as a result of Cuban strategy to debilitate South African forces, was the implementation of the Cahama air base, which gave Cuban Revolutionary Air (FAR) the capacity to project air strikes inside Namibia and, even further, take from South Africa their ability to react. This maneuver aimed to involve South Africans in another front and alleviate the Angolan combatants' situation on Cuito Cuanavale. This is what we will talk about further on.

Operation *Maniobra XXXI Aniversario* and the Cuban/Angolan air action

After a series of severe losses with the failure of operation *Saudando Outubro*, the Angolan government, in November 1987, asked for help from the Cuban government. Fidel Castro promised to help president José Eduardo dos Santos, and soon Cuban MiG fighters, specially MiG-23, were sent to Angola. Their debut in operations was during the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. In action, the Cuban air force tried to retain the possibility of an advance by UNITA and SADF troops, attacking them.

In Cuito Cuanavale, the first major loss to South Africans in almost three months of combat occurred on February 19, 1988, and arose from the strong defense device established by FAPLA with the help of the Cuban army.

The attack began with heavy shelling and advancing armored vehicles that ended up entering minefields. The total failure of the SADF onslaught was due to the intense shelling of heavy artillery from FAPLA and MiG fighter action from DAAFAR, that did more than thirty airstrikes against South Africans, forcing them to withdraw without having been able to achieve FAPLA advanced posts. It was a discouraging outcome to South Africans, that made them reflect on the possibility of having much bigger casualties in the long run to complete the mission before the end of the month (George 2005, 225).

On February 25, 1988, the South Africans launched yet another attack, but in the days before it, South African casualties began to increase while the Cuban MiGs intensified their operations. The first win from the Cuban air defense happened on February 20, when a SAAF Mirage F1 was taken down (George 2005, 225), and, two days later, the MiG-23s bombed a South African column East to Cuito river, killing three South Africans and wounding another (Battersby 1988, 8).

The FAR and FAPA projection

The Cuban air force was structurally modeled on the Soviet Air Force itself, specifically the *Voyeno Vozdushinie Silly* (VVS), the Russian frontline air force, being able to project to Africa, during the Cold War.

In Angola, the Cuban aviators were led by Brigadier General Rubén Martínez Puente, but were aggregated to the 25th Regiment of Air Combat of the FAPA. The majority of which flew in MiG-23ML fighters, being considered as some of the best combat pilots of Cuba, the main fighter unit of the 25th Regiment of which they were a part was the 12th Fighter Squadron (Polack 2013 44, 261).

The main fighter aircrafts used by Cubans were MiG-21 and MiG-23 fighters, which represented a respectable force. On MiG command were Cubans brought from Havana, which represented a critical development in the conflict, because the Cuban fighter pilots were elite.

In that context, the loss of the military domain from South Africans would reflect favorably in the arena of air power to Cuba and Angola. The Cuban air power increased quantitatively to around 150 aircrafts. From these, 126 were fighters and fighter-bombers: 51 MiG-23s and 75 MiG-21s. Disposed against the Cubans, the South Africans had around 100 Mirage fighters (Campos Perales 2006, 150), of which the main model was the Mirage F1CZ.

The first squadron of MiG-23, under command of Colonel Armando Gonzalez, started operations from the runway at Menongue air base where MiG-21 fighters were already based. The objective of the Cuban pilots was to interrupt the SADF offensives and support the FAPLA. The air defense was composed by a sophisticated net of radars and ground-to-air missiles, from Russian origin.

Although there was a strong air force in Angola, it concentrated mainly on operations against UNITA, rarely challenging the South African forces. This only changed after 1987, when the recently delivered MiG-23s started to contest the South African air superiority, because their Mirage F1CZs did not have the range to take on Cuban and Angolan fighters on the battle area East to Cuito Cuanavale (Heitman 2006, 105).

The FAPA/DAA (People's Air Force of Angola/Air and Antiaircraft Defense) was under command of General Alberto Correia Neto, who was also Vice Minister of Defense (Polack 2013, 83-84). There was in his inventory MiG-21 fighters, Su-22 fighter-bombers and Su-25 attack aircrafts for interdiction and ground attack missions, and Pilatus PC-7 armed trainers, besides "Hind" Mi-24 and Mi-25 attack helicopters for close air support. Mi-8 and Mi-17 armed transport helicopters were also used for this matter, as well as their main roles of transport and air assault. Transport aircrafts, including Antonov-12 and Ilyushin-76, as well as Lockheed L-100 transport planes, who performed supply missions to remote bases in areas dominated or besieged by UNITA (Heitman 2006, 106).

The Angolan pilots were formed by Soviet instructors in Lubango, and continuously demonstrated ability to challenge the South African air superiority. Along with the Cubans, they had already started to fly the first missions in late-1987, just as Soviet pilots had also participated in some combats (Vanneman 1990, 76). In terms of air combat, this would be the first time South Africa admitted defeat against Angolan forces.

A more concentrated effort was made during the combats of 1987 and 1988 East to Cuito Cuanavale. In this airspace, The MiGS had double radar control advantage and the fact that they were close to their bases, giving them more operation time, while the SAAF Mirage F1 was too far North to have radar support, giving them only a few minutes of combat time. The Angolan Air Force MiG-23 had more power and speed than the Mirage F1 and, just like the FAR fighters, were armed with R60 missiles guided by radar, which was a big advantage against the F1CZ, which had only infrared guided missiles (Heitman 2006, 106). During late-1987 until mid-1988 – time of the Cuito Cuanavale battles – the MiG-23ML started to be used also as an interceptor

against the South African Air Force. With the intensification of the conflict at the end of 1987, some air combat with the MiG-23s happened.

In the SADF and SAAF operations there was no real opposition, but, throughout 1987 and 1988, the fight moved North and the South African Mirages had fuel for only some combat minutes. The Cuban/Angolan MiG-23 opponents operated from air bases relatively close and had radar guidance, support and fuel enough to maintain their patrols. They also had a missile with the ability to strike frontal targets (Heitman 2006, 102).

Supported by ground radars, the Angolan and Cuban MiG-23s have proven to be superior to SAAF aircrafts. With its air force grounded and its tanks stopped by mines in difficult terrains, the South African besieging force was conditioned to bomb Cuito Cuanavale from long distance, what was done for three months. So, the South Africans were unable to carry out the major land battles that took place in January, February and March (Campbell 2013). Instead, they began to have their artillery positions subject to FAPA and FAR air strikes.

One of the major successes from the South Africans throughout the air campaign might have been the ability to neutralize with the long range artillery the airfield located in Cuito Cuanavale, during operation *Hooper*, because “The powerful artillery threat to Cuito Cuanavale forced aircraft piloted by Cubans and Angolans to abandon the local air base and relocate to Menongue, significantly diminishing the capacity of the Angolan Air Force in that moment to detain the counter offensive from SADF/UNITA” (Weigert 2011, 87, our translation)⁴. On the other hand, almost half of the South African fleet needed repairs, being unable to fly.

The impossibility of South Africans to maintain air dominance against Cuban-Angolan aviation was recognised by South Africa’s politicians, mainly by those of the opposition, like Ronnie Kasrils, one of the African National Congress (ANC) leaders, who wrote about the latter war phase and attested that “The Soviet MiG-23s demonstrated their superiority over the old South African Mirage fighters, and now that they had command of the skies at the SADF network bases in Northern Namibia, they were at their mercy”

4 In the original: “A potente ameaça de artilharia a Cuito Cuanavale forçou aeronaves pilotadas por cubanos e angolanos a abandonarem a base aérea local e se realocarem em Menongue, diminuindo significativamente a capacidade da Força Aérea Angolana naquele momento de deter a contra ofensiva da SADF/UNITA” (Weigert 2011, 87).

(Scholtz 2016, 84, our translation)⁵. This was a reality that would completely reverse the direction of the war in favor of Angola.

The first Cuban and Angolan air successes in Cuito Cuanavale airspace

On November 27, 1987, a pair of MiG-23ML took off to provide cover for a helicopter rescue mission in the area of Cuito Cuanavale. They received a ground-based radar alert about two South African SAAF 3th squadron F1CZ Mirage fighters that had crossed the Angolan airspace northward. The MiG-23MLs followed the radar instructions to intercept the Mirage and approached them head-on.

The two pairs of fighters crossed each other and maneuvered to try and stay behind each other. The MiG-23MLs, however, had a clear maneuver advantage over the Mirage F1. Within a few seconds, one of the pilots managed to get behind one of the SAAF Mirage F1CZs and fired at a distance of 300m an infrared R-60MK guided air-to-air missile that exploded in the Mirage's tail (Polack 2013, 211).

The other Mirage, seeing the fate of his partner, immediately dived and left the combat, flying low towards Namibia. The MiG-23ML Cuban pilots considered that the first Mirage was shot down and tried to pursue the other fleeting fighter, but they had already hit the fuel limit and had to go back to base. Considering that South African planes were shot down, it can be said that air superiority had become pending to one of the sides (Vanneman 1990, 76).

On January 2, 1988, the operation named *Hooper* by the South Africans began, with artillery bombing and South African aviation air strikes and a UNITA infantry attack that ended up failing, receiving heavy casualties among their troops close to Cuatir river. The sole South African success was the destruction of a bridge – that was rebuilt by the Cubans – by an intelligent bomb (George 2005, 216).

On January 13, an UNITA and SADF forces attack was repelled with a counter attack from the Cuban forces in defense of FAPLA units. The Cuban forces were supported by their air force MiG-21BIS and MiG-23ML planes, who dropped at least one ton of bombs in South African positions.

⁵ In the original: “MiG-23s soviéticos demonstraram sua superioridade sobre os velhos caças Mirage da África do Sul, e agora que comandavam os céus a rede de bases da SADF no norte da Namíbia, estavam à mercê deles.” (Scholtz 2016, 84).

On January 16, two MiG-23ML spotter planes discovered a group of tanks and infantry, attacking them after being strengthened to six more MiG-23MLs, causing great damage to the South Africans (Blanch 2015, 61). The FAR MiG fighters carried out 22 more combat missions in the course of that phase of the fight.

The Cuban FAPA and FAR operations limited, but did not hinder the SADF artillery operation and the movement of its troops, but caused them to expend much greater effort to conceal themselves in order to avoid MiG attacks. Besides the Cuito Cuanavale perimeter stalemate, the Cuban air dominance was one of the most significant considerations for the possible withdraw of South African forces to the South in 1988 (Polack 2013, 46).

On land, the situation in Cuito Cuanavale got worse around February 14, 1988, because the evolution of the South Africans offensive made the combats more and more intense with “the heavy artillery fire preceding the advancing of South African forces against the 59th FAPLA Brigade, whose troops, in a bloody and mismatched clash, saw their front line penetrated” (Hernández 2018, 1, our translation)⁶. The Cuban forces reacted.

However, the Cuban and Angolan aviation constant bombings forced the South Africans to interrupt their operations and take cover. Mike Muller, the commanding officer of the 61st, stated that “the enemy aircrafts were permanently on air, dropping thousands of tons of bombs all over the theater [...] throughout hundreds of attacks” (Bridgland 2017, 201, our translation)⁷.

For part of February 14, the SADF managed to avoid attacks and, therefore, avoid casualties. However, the South Africans did not escape unharmed. Mid-morning, the Cuban MiG-23s, based in Menongue, began a series of attacks (Puente 1989, 168). And, for the rest of February, the Angolan MiG fighters bombed the areas of Gimbe and Bambi three or four times a day (Bridgland 2017, 207). The unfoldings followed with the failed attacks from the South Africans because they were “determined to have their goals [achieved] until the end, [...] the [South African] enemy repeated the attacks on February 19th and 20th, this time with a ground offensive, [...] that had as a main goal the FAPLA 25th Brigade” (Hernández 2018, 1, our translation)⁸.

6 In the original: “Os disparos de artilharia pesada precedendo o avanço das forças sul-africanas contra a 59ª Brigada das FAPLA, cujas tropas, em um confronto sangrento e desigual, viram sua linha de frente ser penetrada” (Hernández 2018).

7 In the original: “os aviões inimigos estavam permanentemente no ar, lançando milhares de toneladas de bombas por todo o teatro [...] ao decorrer de centenas de ataques” (Bridgland 2017, 201).

8 In the original: “Determinados a ter seus objetivos [alcançados] até o fim, [...] o inimigo [sul-africano] repetiu os ataques nos dias 19 e 20 de fevereiro, desta vez com uma ofensiva terrestre, [...] que tinha como alvo principal a 25ª Brigada das FAPLA” (Hernández 2018, 1).

The air support provided by the Cuban DAAFAR restated that the presence of their air force was starting to make a difference, because “[...] they received a smashing answer: while the multiple attacks were repelled by the trenches, from the air the MiG-23 aircrafts were doing their jobs, reducing several South African tanks and armored personnel transport vehicles to scrap” (Hernández 2018, 1, our translation)⁹. In the sequence, the South Africans started the operation *Packer*, which was a development to the previous operation. The SADF’s objective was still to eliminate Angolan forces on the Eastern bank of the river, in order to ensure that they would no longer be a threat to UNITA in the Southeast. As to the objective of the Cubans and Angolans, it was still to protect the city of Cuito Cuanavale from being captured West of the river. Once again, the air factor weighed in favor of the Cubans, because on March 9 the DAAFAR MiG fighters had bombed the SADF fueling lines around Lomba river with the objective to neutralize them (George 2005, 232). The Cubans had, hence, managed to establish an air superiority over the area with the modern arsenal of aircrafts, and the troops on the ground had managed to secure a bridgehead East of the city, with the help of extensive minefields.

The offensive in Southwest Angola and the Cuban and Angolan air victory

In the beginning of February 1988, around 3,500 Cuban soldiers had moved to the Cunene province. Additional forces arrived throughout the next three months, and, at the end of May, between 11,000 and 12,000 Cuban combatants were deployed along a front of four hundred kilometers in several positions located close to the border of Namibia.

In order for the strategy to work, it was essential that the Cuban air power, which had proved so effective East to Cuito river, was extended until the border with Namibia. Thus, on March 22, Castro ordered General Ochoa to expand the runway at the Cahama airfield to receive fighter aircrafts, all of which should also operate from Lubango and Matala, 185 kilometers to the North (George 2005, 236).

A considerable number of Cuban combatants was brought, besides a building brigade to erect the airfield at Cahama. This was done to launch air strikes with MiG-23ML bomber-fighters against targets in Namibia. In the

9 In the original: “[...] eles receberam uma resposta esmagadora: enquanto os múltiplos ataques eram repelidos das trincheiras, do ar as aeronaves MiG-23 faziam seu trabalho, reduzindo vários tanques sul-africanos e veículos blindados de transporte de pessoal à sucata” (Hernández 2018, 1).

beginning, they prepared an area three kilometers wide, leveled and covered with concrete (Shubin and Tokarev 2011, 186).

Cuban engineering units modernized the Angolan airfield of Xangongo, allowing them to support the MiG-23s and attack helicopters. Two hundred tanks and additional artillery batteries also increased Havana's front-line forces in the Southwest (Weigert 2011, 89).

A wide radar network covering all of South Angola was also installed, linking 150 batteries of SAM-8 missiles, which effectively put an end to the South African air superiority. With the air bases of Cahama and Xangongo built, the Cuban air power could be projected inside of Namibia. Just before the beginning of the advance into Southwestern Angola, president Fidel Castro ordered general Ochoa to prepare an air strike against SAAF bases in Namibia, in case the Cuban forces suffered a surprise attack (George 2005, 237). The air bases were finished in time to support the Cuban plan of crossing the border with Namibia via flank attacks in clamps, and, later, proceed to Windhoek and even further South to South Africa.

The MiG-23s could then take off from the air base until more than half of Namibia's territory to provide air cover for the Cuban forces. To launch an attack straight to the South Africans, the Cubans mounted an offensive with T-54 and T-55 tanks. There was also a relatively small number of T-62 tanks; altogether the Cubans would have at least 600 tanks ready to enter Namibia (Shubin and Tokarev 2011, 186). In March 1988, DAAFAR's air activity had increased with the MiG-21s and MiG-23s flying freely by South Africa's airspace, aware that the Pretoria's defense forces did not have the necessary radar or air defense missiles to intercept their high-altitude incursions (Debay 1995, 20-23, 41).

Even the Americans were surprised by the size and nature of the Cuban development. In a meeting of South African officials in Cairo in late June 1988, the advisor of the National Security Council of the United States, James Woods, said menacingly in the meeting – on the presence of the South African generals Magnus Malan and Jannie Geldenhuys – that:

[These] were the best units Cuba had, armed with advanced equipment, were much more resistant and with a bigger caliber than any other Angolan troops seen before. The troops involved in the movement to the South were prepared to assume advanced combat positions and were building aviation camps in Cahama and other places. The main threat

in Southwest Angola was the complete MiG-23 squadron, which had an aggressive posture and ability (Scholtz 2011, 90, our translation)¹⁰.

Woods said that the Cuban units carried 800 heavy tanks, 400 light tanks, 300 pieces of artillery and rocket launchers, 250 area defense weapons, 80 missile launchers, 60-70 fixed-wing aircrafts and 20-30 combat helicopters. “What were your intentions?” asked Woods, and then gave his assessment:

It did not seem to be only a block force to stop the movement of South African troops in Angola. Initially, the United States had estimated that this was a political buildup to improve the conversational posture in the negotiations. However, the force had become too large for that to be the only reason and now it seemed to be an offensive force looking for a fight (Scholtz 2011, 90, our translation)¹¹.

Thus, on June 7, 1988, Castro indicated to the Cuban command in Angola that, according to the intelligence, SAAF was planning a surprise attack and ordered that the MiG-23s were prepared to bomb South African bases in Namibia and other goals in case such an attack occurs. On March 10, 1988, the defense of Cuito Cuanavale, after three failed SADF attacks, was safe. While the negotiations happened, FAPLA and SWAPO Cuban units under the command of general Cintras Frías, opened a second front West to Lubango with a force of 40,000 Cuban soldiers and 30,000 Angolans (Gleijeses 2007), who advanced from Lubango to Southwest with the support of MiG-23 bomber-fighters. Several fights happened in the next three months, starting close to Calueque on March 15, 1988.

This was the first South African resistance found by Cubans and Angolans, who went on to fight bloody battles while their troops advanced

10 In the original: “[*estes*] eram as melhores unidades que Cuba tinha, estavam armadas com equipamento avançado, eram muito mais resistentes e de maior calibre do que quaisquer tropas vistas em Angola antes. As tropas envolvidas no movimento para o sul estavam preparadas para assumir posições de combate avançadas e estavam construindo campos de aviação em Cahama e em outros lugares. A principal ameaça no sudoeste de Angola era o esquadrão completo de Mig-23, que tinha uma postura agressiva e capacidade” (Scholtz 2011, 90).

11 In the original: “Não parecia ser apenas uma força de bloqueio para impedir o movimento de tropas sul-africanas em Angola. Inicialmente, os Estados Unidos haviam estimado que se tratava de um acúmulo político para melhorar a postura de conversação nas negociações. No entanto, a força havia se tornado muito grande para que esse fosse o único motivo e agora parecia ser uma força ofensiva procurando uma luta” (Scholtz 2011, 90).

towards the border with Namibia. In late May, Cuba had two divisions on Southwest Angola (George 2005, 236-237).

The forces of Cuba prepared to advance against Calueque from Xangongo and Tchipa and, on June 24, 1988, the joint force clashed with the SADF on its way to Cuamato. The SADF troops were expelled, but the FAPLA and FAR forces did not pursue and retreated to their territory in Angola.

On June 26, South African troops regrouped and counter-attacked close to Tchipa. The fight lasted more than an hour, but with the news that a large Cuban tank force was on its way to Tchipa, the South Africans decided to retreat before they were crushed. Their troops immediately withdrew towards Calueque under Cuban MiG-23 bombing and, at the end of the afternoon, their artillery and tanks crossed Cunene to Namibia (George 2005, 244). On the same day, June 26, the Cuban FAR MiG-23s were operating over Namibia's airspace, with the air supremacy in the hands of Cuba. The advance until Calueque was guaranteed.

On June 27, eleven Cuban MiG-23MLs with demolition bombs attacked the hydroelectric dam of Ruacana-Calueque, on Namibia, that was protected by the South African Army and provided electricity to most of Namibia and South Africa. The air strike was also projected against South African positions in Calueque. For this operation, a more advanced MiG-23 force of the BN model arrived in Cuba, on June 22. They could carry heavier bombs and were equipped with more precise targeting instruments (Gomez 2009, 790).

At 12:30pm, six MiG-23s from Lubango and two from Cahama took off with the mission to bomb the Calueque Dam. The eight aircrafts separated into two groups, to avoid detection by the South African radar. Major Jorge Rodriguez Marquetti, one of the pilots, said that the MiG-23s flew less than 30 meters above tree level (Gomez 2009, 791).

Just before 1pm, they were spotted by a South African patrol on the hills above Ruacaná, but, due to the speed of the attack, it was not possible to warn Calueque in time. The first wave of attacks headed for the dam, with a pair of MiG providing cover for the second (George 2005, 245).

Ten tons of bombs would be dropped, specifically projected to demolition and fragmentation (Gomez 2009, 792). At 1pm, the first squad destroyed the section of the bridge near the dam gates, the SADF engine room and a crane. This was followed by the attack of the second squad, who dropped six bombs delayed by parachute, severely damaging the bridge and the dam gates near. A second pair bombed the power plant and the engine room, while a seventh MiG avoided the main group and launched eight bombs on a pipeline, exploding it to pieces and setting fire to the adjacent power plant. The last

bomb fell between parked army vehicles (George 2005, 245), inflicting more damages. With the hydroelectric installations involved in fires and smoke, all of the Cuban MiG-23 returned to base with no loss¹².

The attack was an absolute success, the South Africans abandoned the complex, the surprise was general. When the Cuban troops arrived, several days later, they found all the signs of a disaster: fired armored vehicles, equipment and central installations destroyed or damaged. The SADF officials described the Cuban attack as “very well planned” (Bridgland 2017, 268).

There were always difficulties in coordinating operations, many of them lived by the Cuban combat pilots. In their memories, Eduardo Sarria, fighter pilot, remembered that his “[...] squadron was formed by MiG-23ML planes, [...]” and even “[...] far from home, we accomplished the mission, proud of the squadron, it was the best of the MiG-23 that was in Angola” (Blanco 2018, 1, our translation)¹³. The attack on Calueque was an example of efficient coordination.

During the Cuban intervention, their actions in the air crystallized in the memory of Russian personnel on ground, who largely relied on the military capabilities of their colleagues. The ability with which they used the equipment and the high degree of professionalism were noted during the campaign in Cuito Cuanavale and in the movement that had been started in the South to expel UNITA and involve SADF.

According to a Russian official, “the South African Air Force did not manage to overcome our – more precisely the Cuban – reinforced anti-air defense. The Cubans also started to use MiG-23 and SU-22 fighters, last generation aircrafts for these conditions” (Shubin and Tokarev 2011, 152, our translation)¹⁴. Humberto Trujillo Hernández, fighter pilot who took part in the Cuban air campaign in Angola, takes into consideration that the outcome of the air campaign around the battle of Cuito Cuanavale had been decisive because of the loss of the South African air power (Hernández 2005).

There are some controversies created by the South Africans that try to minimize the idea that the advance of Cuba, in the beginning of 1988 on Southwest Angola – represented a bold movement which gave Havana air

12 Some authors state that at least one of the MiG-23s was hit by anti-aircraft fire.

13 In the original: “[...] esquadrão era formado por aviões MIG-23 ML, [...]” e que mesmo “[...] longe da pátria, cumpriamos a missão, orgulhosos daquele esquadrão, era o melhor do MIG-23 que estava em Angola” (González Sarria 2003).

14 In the original: “A Força Aérea da África do Sul não conseguiu superar nossas – mais precisamente as cubanas – de defesa antiaérea reforçada. Os cubanos também começaram a usar caças MiG-23 e SU-22, aeronaves de última geração para essas condições” (Shubin and Tokarev 2011, 152).

superiority throughout the border. Reportedly, the combat planes piloted by Cubans and Angolans did brief missions, generally from a high altitude, on the airspace of Namibia on Southwest Africa, and that the SADF personnel was not equipped with ground-to-air missiles capable of stopping these flights. In the end, the South Africans confirmed that their Mirages could be intercepted by the MiG-23s.

SAAF planners also tried to offer a different interpretation of cross-border overflights by highlighting the importance of the improved Angolan/Cuban air defense network. A SAAF study from the end of 1988 tried to distinguish the “freedom in the airspace”, which they thought they still had, from “dominance of the airspace”, over Southern Angola, which in fact they did not have anymore (Weigert 2011, 91). Passed on to defend the idea that when needed, their planes supported their troops, without necessarily dominating the airspace or engaging in air combat to do so.

The SAAF high command claimed that their aircrafts had the freedom they needed to operate against all of the important military targets inside of Angola. The size of the country, however, always made it impractical to consider total dominance. Since the beginning of the 1980s, SAAF officials had concentrated on planning missions that would minimize the possibility of contact with hostile aircrafts and air defenses (Weigert 2011, 91). However, this evasive behavior before the combat did not avoid aircraft losses suffered by the SAAF during the campaign of 1987-88. These included three Mirage F-1s and a Bosbok light attack and observation aircraft, as well as a Mirage F-1 damaged in air combat that attempted to return to its base and crashed. Regarding the air defenses, reportedly, the ground forces based in Angola fired III confirmed ground-to-air missiles against SAAF aircrafts (Weigert 2011, 91).

One can understand that the South Africans always declined the combat when it in fact represented a challenge or a bigger risk to their pilots, most likely to their strategists. Relativizing the meaning of having freedom to act in the airspace, contrary to dominate it, seemed to be a plausible justification to its real inability to confront Cuban aviation.

In the course of the conflict, in July 1988, MiG-23BN fighter-bombers with more fuel capacity and range were sent from Cuba to Angola on board of the Cuban ship *Las Coloradas*. The fighters took off from Menongue and took part in an incursion against the SAAF base in Grootfontein, in Namibia, most likely this represented a decisive impact factor on future peace negotiations. These long-range aircrafts were sent to the operation theater after the soviets refused to supply a batch of auxiliary fuel tanks for the MiGs already in Angola (Polack 2013, 46).

The Cuban MiG-23 fleet suffered losses, the majority of which due to ground-to-air Stinger missiles (SAM) shoulder-fired that were provided to the insurgents by the USA. UNITA shot down a MiG-23ML and a MiG-23UB, the latter on December 9, 1985. Well before the operation *Saudando Outubro*, three MiG-23 were lost during combat in Angola.

Only from January to March of 1988, the MiG-21 and MiG-23 fighters accomplished 1,283 flight missions over Cuito Cuanavale, realizing 722 bombing missions and 561 air cover missions, dropping 358 tons of bombs and 4,000 C-5 rockets, as well as other ammunition (Hernández 2005, 102-105). When the Cuban forces withdrew, in 1989, the MiG-23MLs that had taken part in the campaign were incorporated into FAR's 23rd Regimiento de Caza at San Julián.

Conclusion

The campaign waged by Angolans and Cubans against South Africans, from late-1987 to mid-1988, revealed, beyond the results, the enhanced capacity with which they made use of their air power. At the time, the MiG-21 was FAPA's most advanced aircraft. The arrival of the MiG-23s increased significantly the air power organized against the SADF, capacity that would be expanded with the arrival of the same fighter models in service of Cuba, since they were superior to the Mirage F1CZ, considered the South African Air Force's most advanced war planes.

The former supremacy that the South African air force enjoyed for so long had been lost in the face of the expansion of the Angolan-Cuban military capacity, that was attested not only by the best equipment and best ability from the pilots, but also by the implementation of a sophisticated radar system and ground-to-air missiles, that made the Cuito Cuanavale defense strategy possible and the expulsion of the South Africans from Southern Angola. Overall, the outcome of the land battle on the banks of the Cuito river and the developments Southwest of the border between Angola and Namibia had medium and long-term military implications, and beyond the theater where they took place, reverberating as far as Washington. The triumph of joint Angolan and Cuban forces forced South Africa and the United States to sign the New York tripartite agreements in 1988, which led to the independence of Namibia. Such agreements can be considered positive, as they provided a solution to a long-standing regional conflict. In this story, the air component organized by Cuba and Angola proved to be of fundamental importance, if not decisive. The

confrontations on the ground can be seen as vital, but the air action represented a high point of a dispute that decisively influenced the course of the conflict.

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ABSTRACT

In mid 1988, FAPLA launched a major offensive to destabilize UNITA in the border region between Angola and Namibia, supported by Russian advisors and military equipment. When the operation *Saudando Outubro* was launched, FAPLA were not able to achieve success, leading to its collapse and a counter offensive by UNITA supported by the SADF. Since 1975, Cuba always kept military advisors in the country and intervened in 1988 in defense of the Cuito Cuanavale region, by the time that the offensive to expel SADF and UNITA from Southern Angola started. In this campaign, the Cuban and Angolan aviation's action was decisive for South Africa's defeat. The present article intends to analyze how the process of the conquest of Cuban and Angolan air supremacy against the South African air force took place. It is understood that the DAAFAR, by denying SAAF's action, deprived the latter of the historic air superiority enjoyed for years, and that the action of Cuban air power combined with Angola was a decisive condition for the success of the ground offensive by Angolan and Cuban armies on the border with Namibia.

KEYWORDS

Air War. Cold War on Africa. Fuerza Aérea Cubana. Angolan Air Force. South African Air Force.

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COVID-19 AND SECURITIZATION OF ITS THREATS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Introduction

The most recent coronavirus disease (COVID-19), caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, can cause severe acute respiratory complications in infected humans. As of 29 November 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports over 260 million confirmed cases worldwide with over 5.2 million deaths (WHO 2021). The WHO predicts the number of confirmed cases and fatalities will continue to rise as countries relax COVID-19 containment measures and allow everyday normalcy to resume (WHO 2021). There have been more than 4.9 million COVID-19 confirmed cases in Africa since the virus broke out in December 2019, with South Africa being the worst hit with over 2.9 million cases (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center 2021). This figure is comparatively low – over 49.3 million in the United States alone as of 29 November 2021 (WHO 2021).

The precarious state of Africa's economy, rampant poverty, and fragile healthcare systems have made the spread of COVID-19 an enormous source of concern for the continent. From an economic perspective, a recent Organi-

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zation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report contains dim predictions for Africa's economic growth due to the global pandemic based on three considerations. First, the volume of trade and foreign investments is expected to drop mid-term, with China - a significant stakeholder in bankrolling infrastructural projects in Africa - scaling down its investments. Second is the economic shock arising from a shortfall in Africa's exports due to sagging demand. Several African economies depend on exports to fund their national budget, which is bound to increase foreign borrowing and the continent's indebtedness to creditor nations. Third and relatedly, the global drop in supply due to protracted lockdowns means many African countries will struggle to feed their population or get vital imports for their manufacturing industries (OECD 2020).

From a health perspective, the WHO further painted a bleak picture of the impact of COVID-19 in Africa, projecting the virus to result in 300,000 case fatalities and push 30 million into abject poverty (WHO 2020). As of July 18, 2021, total COVID-19 deaths in Africa were less than 150,000, with more than fifty percent of these casualties from South Africa. Tunisia follows this with 11 percent and Egypt accounting for 9 percent (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center 2021). These predictions are not outlandish considering the inadequate health care systems, general levels of poverty and malnourishment, and Africa's troubles in managing several endemic and zoonotic diseases such as malaria and the Ebola virus. The World Bank estimates that 43 percent of the over 1 billion people in SSA live below the poverty line - less than \$2 per day (World Bank 2018). Not much has changed in its updated 2021 report. A report by the Economic Research Service on International Food Security Assessment for 2020-2030 estimates 921 million worldwide to be food insecure in 2020. SSA contributes more than 335 million people to this number (United States Department of Agriculture 2021). Furthermore, many African hospitals are underfunded and overcrowded and lack ventilators, COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPEs), and other safety equipment, and there is a severe shortage of qualified healthcare practitioners (Africa Center for Disease Control 2020).

Academic literature examining the nexus between poverty and health supports the idea that countries with prevalent economic inequities, weak healthcare systems, and socially marginalized populations have a higher susceptibility to diseases (Patrick 1988; Hooper et al. 2020). In these countries, complex changes in the patterns of health and diseases are discernible from the interaction between the demographic, economic, and sociological factors in society (Laurencin & McClinton 2020). The preponderance of COVID-19 related hospitalizations, morbidities, and mortalities among African-Ameri-

cans and other racial minorities in the United States and Brazil lends credence to this (Hooper et al. 2020). There is consensus in the report published by the Brazilian Health Ministry and the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) confirming poor living conditions, high housing density, poor access to health care, and socio-economic inequities as contributory risk factors accounting for high COVID-19 mortality among African-Americans (CDC 2020; Brazilian Health Ministry 2020).

Theoretical explanations on why Africa ought to expect disproportionately high COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations are common. One of these theories is the African gene theory - which opines that the genetic markers in Africans increase their predisposition to chronic diseases that increase the complications and comorbidities of COVID-19 (Maraboto & Ferdinand 2020). This theory makes Africans more likely to suffer from hypertension, diabetes, and chronic kidney diseases than Caucasian counterparts (Kaufman & Hall 2003). These three diseases were identified as the primary underlying conditions predisposing to COVID-19 related deaths among African-Americans in Louisiana. Of the total case fatalities, 59 percent had hypertension, 38.1 percent diabetes, and 22.5 percent chronic kidney disease (Deslatte 2020; CDC 2020). However, there is limited pathophysiological and anthropological evidence to confirm the veracity of the genetic-based explanation for health disparities between African Americans and Caucasians.

The African hypertension hypothesis is analogous to the above. It attributes the prevalence of hypertensive disorders among Africans to high sodium retention and evolutionary history of dry conditions (Curtis 1992). Contemporary studies suggest the high hypertension rate in Africa is connected to the increased consumption of imported processed foods with plenty of added salt (Ogah and Reyner 2013; Reardon et al. 2021). Shockingly, this view has been shared by leading health authorities such as the American Heart Association (AHA) and the CDC. The CDC, for example, in a recent report, stated that “COVID-19 is lethal to African Americans because it is a pandemic jumping on top existing multiple pre-existing epidemics prevalent in the black community like hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and asthma” (CDC 2020). Likewise, the AHA believes “salt-sensitivity in Africans accounts for health disparities in hypertensive disorders” (AHA 2015). This is because hypertension is a leading cause of cardiovascular disease death in Africa - resulting in 900,000 deaths in 2016 alone (Bosu et al. 2019). Currently, Africa has the world’s highest hypertension prevalence (27%) (WHO 2019). In SSA alone, 30.0 - 31.1 percent of the population are hypertensive (Bosu et al. 2019). It is noteworthy that these are often “diseases of civilization”

(Clatici et al. 2018), that may be uncommon in people who live under more traditional conditions, who live below the poverty line, and are food-deprived.

This paper proceeds as follows. In the first part, the theory of securitization and its core elements are examined. Next, we unpack the securitization narratives of COVID-19 threats in SSA. In the third part, contributory factors necessitating these framings are analysed. This is followed by an assessment of the measures taken by SSA in mitigating COVID-19. In this part, we critically parse the plausibility of COVID-19 securitization in SSA. The paper closes by suggesting a way forward for dealing with the threat posed by COVID-19 in SSA.

Theoretical framework: securitization theory

The Copenhagen School of International Relations has developed securitization theory. The theory advances an explanation on why some issues are securitized, and others are not. Securitization is defined as “an act in which an issue is deemed an existential threat to a referent object and requires emergency measures in response” (Buzan and Waever 2003, 113). The Copenhagen school argues that what is deemed a security issue is framed through the speeches and representations made by relevant political actors (Buzan 1998). This view is reflected in the definition of securitization as “a successful speech act through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Stritzle 2007, 5). Hence, nothing constitutes a security issue by itself until it is labelled as such (Waever 1995). That is, it is a rhetorical device that uses fearmongering to scare people into action by presenting risks and dangers in an objective, dispassionate way and evaluating proposed actions based on a balanced consideration of anticipated positive and negative consequences (Balzacq 2011).

The Copenhagen school recognizes two critical stages of the securitization process. The first is the speech act - which is the process of convincing an audience that an issue is an existential threat and requires urgent measures (Collins 2019). This tends to elicit a psychological response in people akin to one when faced with mortal danger. The second is the securitizing actor; the person or entity (state or non-state actor) responsible for deciding whether an issue is deemed an existential threat (Buzan et al. 1998). This is by, and large refers to the institutional side of securitization: Institutions, and

individuals within these institutions, who have to attract funding for their organizations and who stand to gain by presenting themselves as saviours (Balzacq 2011). The danger is that, first, securitization is often achieved by presenting biased or untrue information as its cataclysmic framings are only intended to elicit attention. This, however, does not translate into practical action, particularly when the securitized issue does not match reality. Also, there is an antagonism between reason and emotion, engendered by whipping up people's emotions, which often generates emotion-driven demand for actions without considering all consequences. An alternative to securitization as Charett (2009) suggests, would be actions that are sensitive and self-reflective of possible normative consequences of a situation beyond calamitous framings. This means deconstructing the institutional powers of security actors and incorporating different security possibilities that are considerate of other factors.

Applied to the purpose of this paper, securitization theory enables an understanding of speeches, reports, and publications by leading health authorities regarding the potential impact of COVID-19 in SSA as securitizing acts. In this regard, it could be argued that the way COVID-19 impacts are portrayed by experts, politicians, and the media, particularly in Africa, establishes an immanent securitization framing. This is because this rhetoric evokes fear and exigencies and beckons critical audiences and stakeholders with the exhortation that "only a willingness to act can forestall grave catastrophic consequences" (Charett 2009, 34). The idea is, if people or the targeted audience are sufficiently touched by the urgency and cataclysmic framings of an issue, it will incentivize actions (D'Arcangelis 2017). This is parallel to what Paglia Eric termed as "crisification" to explain how the rhetoric of crisis, emergencies, and calamitous situations can be used to prompt urgent actions that bypass conventional political processes (Paglia 2018). Succinctly put, security threats, whether real or imagined, would always inflame strong emotions, and prompt the need for extraordinary measures to curb them. In the next section, the emerging securitization dilemma of the global pandemic in SSA is analysed.

The securitization of COVID-19 threats in SSA

There has been a trend of securitization in international circles predicting a cataclysmic picture for COVID-19 in SSA. In a Twitter post, Melinda Gates of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation stated, "COVID-19 will be particularly horrible for the developing world of Africa... I see many dead

bodies in the streets of Africa like the situation in Ecuador” (Melinda on Twitter 2020). Likewise, in a press conference, the Director-General of the WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, said, “Africa may be the epicenter of the Coronavirus...” (Tedros 2020). The WHO Regional Office for Africa projections as of 7 May 2020 was that 29 to 44 million African confirmed cases are anticipated in the first year of the pandemic in Africa. Of these figures, 3.6 million to 5.5 million would require hospitalization, with more than 90,000 requiring oxygen and more than 105,000 critical cases requiring ventilators (WHO 2020). This has, however, not been the case. As of 29 November 2021, there are about 8.7 million confirmed cases and 223,000 deaths of COVID-19 disease in Africa (WHO 2021). This number is significantly lower compared to India which has more than 34 million cases, as of November 2021 (WHO 2021). Evidence has shown that less urbanized parts of Africa have reported far fewer cases than very urbanized parts. A modelling study of Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal by Diop and colleagues (2020) revealed that with rural areas, COVID-19 infection may be lowered to 65%–73% (Ghana), 48%–71% (Kenya) and 61%–69% (Senegal) of the baseline infections.

Furthermore, several leading medical and health journals, such as *Lancet Journal of Infectious Diseases* and *Nature*, had several publications that applied the age-structured epidemic (ASE) model and susceptible-infected-removed (SIR) epidemic model, predicting a grim picture for COVID-19 in Africa (Sinkala et al. 2020; Wells et al. 2020; Gilbert et al. 2020). These predictions established a securitization framing of the potential threats of the global pandemic for SSA. The alarmist framings securitizing COVID-19 in Africa on the surface appear justifiable, mainly when the social, economic, and political situation in SSA is put into consideration. Presently, 70 percent of the world’s poor people live in SSA. This figure is expected to increase to 87 percent by 2030 (Hamel, Tong and Hofer 2019). Africa’s combined Gross Domestic Product is hardly one-third of the United States. Although the African Development Bank (AfDB) projects a 4.1 percent per capita GDP growth in Africa’s economic outlook (AfDB 2020), this is looking very bleak amidst the pandemic.

Africa has more than 1.3 billion people and 54 sovereign countries, with many classified as low-income (World Bank 2021). Evidence shows that low-income countries tend to have higher median age and younger populations due to high fertility rates than high-income countries of the West. According to the World Bank (2020) data, the median age in Africa is 19.7 years, compared to 43.7 years in the European Union. This means half of the population for both continents were older or younger at these respective

ages. The age structure of a country's population is a crucial determinant of economic growth, literacy levels, labour force, and healthcare services.

Earlier predictions of COVID-19 impact in Africa were expected to lead to severe hospitalization levels due to the higher risk of spread envisaged in low-income countries. As Simon (2020, 7) posits, "In low and lower-middle-income countries, they often constitute the urban majority inhabiting areas of sub-standard and irregular housing, and are exposed to absolute poverty, which increases their susceptibility to highly contagious diseases". One prediction is that case numbers and fatalities are declining in the rich countries with first access to vaccines, but cases in Africa will rise when highly contagious virus variants spread there while most people are still unvaccinated (Ghisolfi et al. 2020). Other predictions based on local and regional patterns foresee the concentration of COVID-19 in some parts of SSA as evidence of a third wave that would increase active cases number and casualty figures in coming years (Mbow et al. 2020). However, there is still no empirical scientific evidence to verify these predictions. As Simon and colleagues note,

[...] concerns about higher morbidity and mortality rates among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups in the UK and Europe, African-Americans and BIPOCs (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) in the USA and other minorities and marginalized groups elsewhere were well-founded. However, rather than resulting from any genetic predisposition, the sources of vulnerability were largely contextual, environmental, social, and behavioral (Simon et al. 2020, 5).

In other words, these predictions foresaw minorities and marginalized groups as high-risk groups due to prevalent social, economic, and environmental, and health inequities, which purportedly increased Africa's susceptibilities. Many African countries had poor waste and sanitation systems, lacked adequate public open spaces in urban settlements, and had more inadequate amenities and public utilities than the West. While these predictions were based on the prevalent structural fault lines in the continent, contrary studies suggest the current age structure and favourable weather in Africa as possible explanations for the low confirmed cases and casualties from COVID-19 (Njenga et al. 2020). Though this may change in the coming years with the emergence of new variants of COVID-19, it is unlikely, based on the current pattern, that morbidity and mortality figures from the disease will be proportionately higher in Africa than the global North. Furthermore, the lack of exhaustive scientific evidence on why COVID-19 casualty rates are higher in Tunisia, South Africa, and Egypt and not in more populated

cities of Africa such as Lagos, Nigeria negates the nexus linking the level of urbanization to COVID-19 infections.

Several factors have been emphasized in the securitization framing of COVID-19 in SSA. Some are examined in more detail below.

The practicability of COVID-19 mitigation strategies

Public policy measures were implemented in several countries in SSA to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the local population. These included lockdowns, curfews, closing markets and churches, and limiting public gatherings to 1-10 persons. Most of these measures were adapted from other countries also containing the virus spread. However, these measures raise questions about the feasibility of their implementation in SSA. First, these measures exacerbate pre-existing socio-economic inequities due to the reliance of many Africans on daily wages. Secondly, poor housing conditions in SSA mean many people live in poorly lit and too closely spaced make-shift houses, which makes the idea of working remotely or maintaining social distancing utopian (Nyenyezi 2020).

Third, lockdown measures in many parts of SSA were rarely implemented with social safety nets for feeding and sustenance comparable to high-income countries. Though several governments implemented palliative measures such as free online education for school students, food packages, and cash disbursements, the impracticability of sustained lockdowns led to their halt. This made some governments such as Ghana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Liberia, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ethiopia impose limited or adapted lockdown measures instead (Wallace et al. 2020). Furthermore, issues of reliable power supply, internet affordability, and speed made online education unworkable. In high-income countries such as Italy, Spain, China, and New Zealand, these measures effectively slowed down the COVID-19 curve. Obstacles to implementing the same measures in SSA contribute to the securitization framing of the pandemic's purported threats in the region.

Exacerbated inequalities

A significant contributor to the securitization predictions for COVID-19 in SSA is the preponderance of exacerbated inequalities that have persisted since colonial times. This casts a cloak of uncertainty in assessing the effectiveness of interventions geared to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and further perpetuates the securitization framing of its purported threats. Studies have determined that a deeply entrenched post-colonial pattern of

control and direct access to the needed resources are monopolized mainly by political elites and disenfranchises the poor (Palermo 2020; Nyenyezi 2020). This points to the close connection between leadership and the perpetuation of socially determined vulnerabilities and other health inequities related to COVID-19 (Bertram et al. 2020). Furthermore, the incidence of COVID-19 in Africa has shown the mismatch between expert predictions and ongoing realities. Some of these predictions were based on economic, social, and health inequities in the continent, which were projected to increase health crisis, hospitalizations, poverty levels, and ultimately casualties from the disease. However, some of these assumptions have been wrong as they failed to consider other dynamics such as age, urbanization, and other markers that would prevent account for the epidemiology of the disease. For instance, there have been less than 2200 COVID-19 deaths in Lagos State, Nigeria, which has a population of over 15 million people and a very crowded urban settlement compared to Cape Town, which has been one of the epicenters of the COVID-19 outbreak in South Africa (Statisca 2021).

There is an opportunity to encourage indigenized approaches for evaluating COVID-19 in Africa. This means allowing African-based researchers more space to contribute to the research and provide their input into policies for the region. This is premised on the notion that foreign initiatives mainly from the West do not consider local peculiarities and socio-cultural contexts. Experts and researchers based in Africa can contribute more robust social and scientific understandings of the ideas, conditions, and social relations in the places where COVID-19 control measures are implemented. This further implies recognizing and funding local expertise and knowledge and changing the institutional arrangements that lead African researchers to experience unearned disadvantage (Plamondon and Bisung 2019). Ideally, African researchers could get more funding if they present COVID-19 as a terrible threat that only scientists can vanquish. That is what scientists do elsewhere in the world, and that is what securitization is all about (Ilesanmi et al. 2020). The point here is that the securitization of a particular threat based on perceived inequalities without recognizing local contexts may not bring about holistic intervention measures.

Logistical factors

The logistics of coordinating COVID-19 response strategies have been viewed as contributory factors projecting the securitization narrative of its threats. In some countries, including Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, and Cameroon, the centralized coordination of the national COVID-19 response was

thought to contribute to challenges with procurement and distribution of already available supplies (Palermo 2020). In addition, the dearth of mental health support for healthcare workers who work in proximity of COVID-19 patients has also been identified as a source of challenge towards ensuring effective preventive measures (Osseni 2020). In countries like Tanzania, Nigeria, and Cameroun, reports on the shortage of PPEs, isolation equipment, treatment centers, testing centers, oxygen tanks, ventilators, and infectious disease specialists raised concerns predicting a significant spate of COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths (Bertram et al. 2020).

Public perception

Public perception plays a crucial role in the transmission of COVID-19. This is because people's beliefs amplify mistrust or confer legitimacy to government efforts. A study published by The Lancet Global Health reveals a direct correlation between individual perception of the COVID-19 virus and willingness to comply with government directives (The Lancet Global Health 2020). In SSA, previous experiences with the government's ability to manage earlier health crises, such as Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Guinea and Lassa Fever in Nigeria, have caused mistrust and fostered securitization of COVID-19. The ramification of this can impact adversely on government's measures at containing transmission due to mistrust, mainly when people doubt the quality of healthcare and the genuineness of government intervention strategy.

The indefensibility of securitization in SSA

Despite its utility in galvanizing needed action for an issue framed as an existential threat, securitization does not always translate to effective measures to address this threat (Weaver 1993; Kelle 2007). This draws a parallel to climate change rhetoric, which has also been construed as an essential threat to emotion without providing a practical guide to effective action (Okpaleke and Abraham-Dukuma 2020). Hence, framing COVID-19 as an existential threat with a cataclysmic impact for Africa may not catalyse needed actions to address the socio-economic and health inequities that increase the spread of COVID-19. Three factors may account for this. First, rather than prompt needed actions, securitization of COVID-19 may elicit obverse and mundane reactions within domestic audiences. This is because the portrayal of the disease as catastrophic may come across as premeditated and strategic by politicians to arouse action,

raising initial skepticism or outright rejection. For instance, in countries where scaremongering during an election is commonplace, people are likely to react less differently to a securitized referent (Paglia 2018).

Second, securitization is often premised on “what might happen” rather than “what is happening”. Hence, raising uncertainty over the materialization of its threats and how the projected grim visions would resonate with key audiences. This, however, does not elicit needed actions as people have learned to trust their eyes more than the words of their politicians and the media. This is because securitizing an issue is often enshrouded in uncertainty due to the burden of proof required to legitimize framings. As with COVID-19, those leading health experts may consider its pathology sufficiently proven; anticipated catastrophes’ sources are not easily predictable. The more crucial point is that people cannot evaluate the sources of information about purported existential threats. They have to trust the sources of the information, which they often do not do. For example, as WHO data on COVID-19 related hospitalizations, confirmed cases, and fatalities have shown, Africa has reported far fewer deaths than other world regions (WHO 2021).

According to WHO Coronavirus dashboard, as of 6 June 2021, there were less than 1.4 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Africa; this figure was about the same number of fatalities in the United States, India, and Brazil. Comparatively, the COVID-19 deaths in the United States (over 800,000 as at November 2021) are higher than the total in Africa (223,000 of the same period) (WHO 2021). The incidence of the virus in Africa so far has defied most predictions (see table 1 below). The current estimated fatality rate of 0.66 percent of confirmed cases that has died is far lower than the projected fatality rate of 3.1 percent (Africa CDC 2020). This makes some of the fatalistic predictions for SSA overly pessimistic, particularly as it failed to recognize the deterministic effect of local realities and socio-cultural peculiarities in affecting the spread of the virus.

Table 1: Continental comparisons in COVID-19 active cases and deaths from July 2020-2021

		COVID-19 in July 2020		COVID-19 in July 2021	
		Active Cases	No of Deaths	Active Cases	No of Deaths
Africa	Population 1.3 billion	874,000	18,498	7 million	177,000
Europe	748 million	3.2 million	205,000	53 million	1.1 million

	COVID-19 in July 2020			COVID-19 in July 2021	
	Population	Active Cases	No of Deaths	Active Cases	No of Deaths
North America	371 million	13million	380,000	44 million	958,000
World	7.9 billion	67 million	1.2 million	206 million	4.35 million

Source: Data compiled from World Health Organization, Worldometer, and Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center.

Recent medical research offers two hypotheses that may explain Africa's low death toll. The first postulates an evolutionary adaptation to the scourge of Malaria in Africa that may have been selected for improved immunity to COVID-19 as a side effect; the second proposes malaria chemoprophylaxis with hydroxychloroquine, and similar drugs may lower mortality and hospitalizations (Kearney 2020). Though research investigating the possible immunomodulating effect of antimalarial medications on Africans against COVID-19 is still ongoing, the limited impact of the virus in the region has so far negated the securitization framing of its threat in the SSA region. There is, however, a caveat. It is still too early to tell if COVID-19 would worsen or recede in the coming months in SSA, especially considering the emergence of more contagious virus variants. Most modeling of the virus in Africa predicts a surge before it flattens out sometime in 2021 (Sinkala et al. 2020; Wells et al. 2020; Yancy 2020; Gilbert 2020). Also, contra studies posit that limited testing, poor data management, and discrepancies in reporting protocols may lead to an underestimation of deaths in Africa (Gilbert et al. 2020). Furthermore, there is still the risk that a new mutated variant of the virus would lead to a spike in hospitalizations, reported cases and deaths in SSA due to COVID-19. In the next section, we examine efforts made by governments in Africa and the African Center for Disease Control in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 in SSA and, as a consequence, reversed the securitization framing of its threats for the region.

Africa's response to the pandemic

The Ebola health crisis of 2014-2015 in West Africa nearly resulted in a global pandemic save for the efforts of international and national government and donor agencies and partners that worked with African leaders to control the threat. COVID-19 prevention measures in SSA started with countries

containing threats by controlling their borders. Ivory Coast was the first to implement enhanced surveillance and screening protocols for all passengers with a travel history to China. On 2 January 2020, more than a month before the first index case was reported in Egypt on 14 February 2020 (Muagerita et al. 2020). Most European countries only started closing their borders by March 2020. According to the African Center for Disease Control (Africa CDC), most African countries adopted both containment and mitigation strategies to stem the surge of the virus. These included: the imposition of travel bans on European and Asian countries, instituting mandatory quarantine, setting up isolation facilities, temporary closing of land borders and for incoming flights, restricting public movements, announcing nationwide lockdown measures, and restricting public gatherings (Africa CDC 2020). As of July 2020, more than 50 countries in Africa had closed their borders. These measures arguably played a valuable role in early efforts that prevented the surge of the virus in the region. As of 27 September 2020, the number of active cases in SSA was still under 250,000 (precisely, 1,148,548 recovered cases) (Africa CDC 2020).

From a technical standpoint, the Africa CDC has also played a crucial role in reversing the securitization framing of the virus on the continent. The agency in charge of the continent's health security and disease prevention matters held weekly coordination meetings with national, regional, and collaborating health ministries and agencies. As of 27 January 2020, it activated its Emergency Operations Centre that published weekly reports on the transmission and pathology of the virus (Africa CDC 2020). This ensured that regular, up-to-date, and verifiable information on alerts and surveillance reports were provided to member states in real-time (Nebe & Jalloh 2020).

Furthermore, the late reporting of COVID-19 cases in SSA compared to other regions meant Africa was afforded ample time to prepare an effective mitigation response. This was reflected in the African Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 - which was unanimously adopted in February 2020 by Heads of States and Government of member states and reflected Africa's united front to forging an efficacious pandemic response strategy. The continental strategy, among other things, comprised partnerships with health agencies at the national and regional levels dedicated to disease control (Cornish 2020). To ensure its effective implementation, the strategy received funding from several donors, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Jack Ma Foundation, the Ethiopian government, European Union, the United States government, and the African Union COVID-19 Response Fund. These funds were committed to strengthening emergency operations, ensuring effective surveillance, contact tracing, setting up quarantine centers, and providing needed medical supplies and healthcare and PPE (Muagerita et al. 2020).

The African Task Force for Coronavirus, which was saddled with the sole responsibility of implementing the continental strategy, was also set up. Its technical function encompassed ensuring the working of the respective working groups, increasing surveillance at borders, facilitating risk control and communication, and supporting states in the national implementation of lockdowns and preparedness against the public-health COVID-19 crisis.

It is however imperative to determine the efficacy of the measures adopted in SSA to prevent the securitization framing of the virus in the region. First, from the prevention side, the region's Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (the 'PACT initiative') ensured that testing, contact tracing, isolation, and treatment of cases were put in place in all member states. The PACT's goal was to ensure a fast-track testing of 10 million Africans within six months. This also engendered research on novel diagnostic testing kits (Thebault 2020). For example, the Pasteur Institute in Dakar, Senegal, has been undertaking clinical trials of its virus diagnostic Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test kits, which boast of producing results faster than the kits currently used in the West.

Second, the technical know-how from dealing with previous disease outbreaks and emergencies such as Lassa Fever, Ebola virus, Measles, Polio, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) meant Africa had a repository of tools and knowledge for dealing with health emergencies. Arguably, this helped facilitate the mobilization of health resources in dealing with the virus in Africa. Third, allowing home-grown initiatives such as local face masks, face shields, hand sanitizers, ventilators, support triage, contact tracing applications, and other health products helped boost the capacity to deal with the virus and prevent shortages of some of these items (Osseni 2020).

In sum, Africa's response demonstrated the futility of the securitization framing of the COVID-19 threats for the region. It can be argued that the securitization of COVID-19 was the reason Africa responded so early and successfully. First, measures were already taken before this was elevated to an existential threat by political rhetoric and the media, and everyone panicked. Rather than elevating the pandemic to an existential threat, African countries treated it as yet another health challenge, like Lassa, Ebola, and HIV, met pragmatically with appropriate measures.

It is worth emphasizing that efforts had already been underway in SSA countries as far back as January 2020, before the rhetoric about the catastrophic impact of the pandemic was fully formed. However, one can argue that COVID-19 threats were generally securitized globally by leading health authorities such as the WHO and the CDC, anticipating that Africa

would have been even worse off based on the impact of the virus in Europe, Asia, and North America. As the preceding has shown, SSA's preparedness, though not wholly perfect, helped reverse the securitization logic of the purported threats of the virus.

Strengthening Africa's COVID-19 response

There is a need to strengthen the ongoing efforts in SSA to stem the tide of COVID-19 in the region. This entails improving in the short term the availability of PPEs, opening well-equipped and staffed laboratories, quarantine, and isolation centers in all countries and municipalities. Critical medical equipment such as ventilators, triage, oxygen, and beds should also be provided to treat COVID-19 patients. This is still a burgeoning concern in many countries in SSA despite the high recovery rate and low case fatalities. In addition, relevant healthcare training needs to be provided, including mental health and psychosocial support for healthcare and essential workers. Furthermore, due to limited resources, vaccinations should be focused on health personnel and risk groups, especially old and chronically ill people. There is near certainty of possibly achieving 100 percent vaccination in SSA everyone before spreading the more contagious new virus variants, so a pragmatic approach is needed where prevention is focused on those who most need it.

Risk communication strategies that consider local social and cultural values need to be embraced in citizen engagement. Apart from winning the hearts and minds of the people to embrace government mitigation strategies for the virus, it builds trust and allows for better integration in dealing with the pandemic. Community outreach will engage vulnerable populations, encourage health-seeking behaviour, and change preconceived beliefs about the virus (Verity 2020). Further barriers to access to COVID-19 care services in remote areas can be alleviated with dedicated mobile treatment units, especially in those hard-to-reach areas and communities that the virus has reached despite their remoteness. Osseni (2020, 8) notes, 'these supports must be informed by a transparent approach that builds trust and recognizes local know-how and existing health system capacity...'

In the medium-term, African governments and stakeholders need to support and partner home-grown or African-led initiatives. This allows for the indigenization of global health and COVID-19 response. It allows for the expansion of capacity at the domestic and regional level to provide the technical know-how, skillset, resources, and region-specific knowledge

that would drive research and formulate policies that are African-led and African-focused. This has long-term benefits for the health sector and future public health response planning. From an economic perspective, policy measures need to address the extreme socio-economic health inequalities in most countries in SSA. This entails making policies that reduce Africa's mounting debts, structural dependency, and over-reliance on external financial flows to a more competitive, diversified, and effective service sector-driven economy that prioritizes employment and human capacity development. This way, Africa can fight the pandemic without aggravating existing socio-economic inequalities, debt burden, unemployment, etc. One of the ways to do this is to effectively implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will strengthen the region's value chains, mitigate against vulnerabilities to economic shocks, allow for better technology and skill transfer and ensure the resilience of African economies to changes in the global market. This, in the long term, creates the needed resources to fight threats like COVID-19 in the continent.

There is also the need to implement the goals of Africa's continental strategy. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa estimates that every lockdown period set back Africa's GDP by 2.5 percent. The implication is that African economies may continue to suffer and take a long time to recover post-COVID. This will also mean that socio-economic inequities may worsen as governments find it increasingly challenging to support social welfare programmes and invest in capital expenditures. By sticking to the continental strategy, Africa stands a chance. The strategy works in synergy with international funding agencies and critical development banks to ensure that necessary palliatives are put in place to cushion social inequalities. Also, pooled procurement mechanisms will contribute to safeguarding equitable access to new COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines in record time and at scale. As Wallace et al. (2020, 6) note:

[...] while these COVID-19 mitigation funds will undoubtedly help, it is crucial that African countries come together as one and make their voices heard to inform the choice of priorities to ensure maximum impact. Failure to cooperate globally and act decisively in Africa will translate into the sustained transmission and pose a risk to all (Wallace et al. 2020, 6).

However, while it may appear that African bureaucrats and leaders have so far exceeded expectations, there are still future challenges ahead, especially with the new variants of the COVID-19 virus and the economic impossibility to continue to impose lockdown measures and closing borders forever.

Conclusion

In this paper, the issue of securitization related to the threats of COVID-19 in SSA has been examined. The motivation of the study was based on the reports, speech acts, and publications that predicted a cataclysmic impact of the global pandemic on Africa due to its weak healthcare systems, prevailing socio-economic inequities, and poverty dynamics. Deductively, the preceding arguments portray a massive negative impact for COVID-19 in Africa. As this paper argues, this has engendered over-securitization of its purported threats. The essence of securitization is to sell or label COVID-19 as top security and humanitarian concern to arouse needed national and international action to this existential threat. However, as our assessment shows, the framing is overly exaggerated and pessimistic about Africa's pandemic mitigation strategies. It underplays the role of Africa's age structure, urbanization level, and how home-grown initiatives have been used to stem the tide of COVID-19 in SSA, even if most of these measures are adapted from overseas. There are key findings from our study.

First, implementing the Africa CDC continental strategy to cushion the effect of COVID-19 in the region unexpectedly demonstrated good preparedness for a pandemic. This shows that the securitization framing is not justified. The pandemic should instead be treated as a practical challenge and not as an existential threat. The relative success of SSA, compared to Western countries, for instance, showed that the securitization rhetoric that is standard in the West did not lead to effective containment measures there and that a more pragmatic, down-to-earth approach like the one adopted in most of Africa is needed. This is not unconnected to the politics in the West that has morphed more into an ideology-driven lifestyle politics that is not outcome-oriented but appeals more to people's emotions. This underscored the pragmatic versus the emotional nature of the response in the West different from the realities that were obtainable in Africa. The angry mass demonstrations against perfectly reasonable COVID-19 restrictions in many parts of Europe and the UK highlighted this and further contributed to the spread of the disease by bringing big crowds together. This emphasizes that politicians and the media fearmongering over COVID-19 threats is bound to produce a widespread backlash; therefore, measures to protect the risk groups may be sufficient.

Second, the logic behind the securitization of COVID-19 in SSA is faulty, considering that despite the predictions by leading health authorities, the continent still has a comparatively low case fatality ratio and a total

number of cases than other regions of the world. This is because, with the youthful age structure of Africa populations compared to the West, COVID-19 has not posed a severe threat to SSA, besides some of the home-grown measures instituted by bureaucrats.

Third, most of the COVID-19 predictions for Africa are overly exaggerated and pessimistic of the region's capacity to self-help and devise home-grown measures to mitigate the spread of the disease. Moreover, while it can be argued that the infection rate in SSA appears lower than it is because of underreporting, other measures, such as relatively less urbanization than in most other parts of the world, certainly plays a role and should be put into consideration.

Fourthly, though there exist some caveats regarding the progression of COVID-19 in SSA, current data on the morbidity and mortality of the virus do not justify apocalyptic visions of its impact. If at all, they do not consider the deterministic effect of local realities and socio-cultural context in altering the spread of the virus. There is saliency to strengthen local and home-grown measures in ensuring efforts to prevent the further spread of the virus. This ideally means a greater need for synergistic collaborations with health and partner agencies at all levels in flattening the curve, making alarming projections and rampant securitization of the problem an inadequate response.

A holistic response agenda to COVID-19 by African leaders would no doubt boost the continents' chances of preventing a full blown and uncontrollable health crisis in SSA. While securitization may engender apocalyptic framing of purported threats, SSA leaders should see these framings as a call to improve health care systems, social housing, social infrastructures, and vaccine research programmes. It is too early in the day to scientifically determine what the long term of COVID-19 would be considering the rise of new mutated strains. What remains key is ensuring that proper mechanisms are put in place to safeguard SSA from the debilitating impact of the pandemic.

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ABSTRACT

The rapid spread of the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a significant global health and economic concern. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), there is an emerging securitization of its perceived threats due to socio-economic inequities, inadequate healthcare systems, and the prevalence of diseases in the region. In other words, it is presented to the public as an existential threat with its attendant framings projecting a grim picture for COVID-19 hospitalization, mortality, morbidity, and pandemic response in SSA. We adopt a desk-based approach predicated on a critical exploration of securitization theory in examining SSA responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. We argue that COVID-19 securitization in Africa is exaggerated, with pessimistic generalizations that do not consider the local conditions and efforts by governments and the African Center for Disease Control in managing the pandemic. Rather than over-securitizing COVID-19 threats in SSA, we suggest that the region's local realities, age structure, level of urbanization, self-help capabilities, socio-political contexts, and available resources be considered in any pandemic mitigation strategy.

KEYWORDS

COVID-19. Securitization. Sub-Saharan Africa. Pandemic Response. Inequities.

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CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19 IN THE KRUGER TO CANYONS BIOSPHERE REGION, SOUTH AFRICA AND AMAZONAS, BRAZIL

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Introduction

Anthropogenically induced climate change and global warming is now endangering the sustainability of humankind's growth on earth as it jeopardizes the environmental support systems on which it relies, as well as human health and security – the ongoing enhancement of which ought to be the very objective of the growth progression itself (McMichael 2009; Harry and Morad 2005; Kagawa and Selby 2015). Chomsky and Pollin (2020) note that humankind is in deep trouble with regards to the climate crises, and that it is time to panic.

Emerging nations are especially susceptible – climate change effects will not be evenly distributed among nations. Their vulnerability is due to multiple factors, which can impede their means of preventing and responding to climate change (Martens 1998; dos Santos 2020). In short, King (1990) emphasizes that many emerging nations are demographically constricted, in that indigenous populations have exceeded – or are anticipated to exceed – the carrying ability of their local ecosystems, their ability to migrate, and the capability of markets to yield commodities and services in exchange for food and other supplies. These obstacles to sustainability are demonstrated by the health relationships related to contagious infections and famine. It is estimated that climate change will add extra stresses on already exploited ecosystems and burdened healthcare infrastructures (Adejuwon et al. 2008). Existing legislation and actions to aid the most vulnerable communities have

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been limited in terms of both range and reach (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2001).

The coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic spread swiftly around the world during the duration of 2020 and continues into 2021 – with new variants most notably in South Africa, Brazil and the United Kingdom – on a magnitude and with a magnitude not witnessed since the devastating Spanish flu of 1918–1920². Humankind currently finds itself in an economic, ecological and social catastrophe (Michie and Sheehan 2021).

Everybody speculates about how the COVID-19 pandemic will alter our planet, our ethics, our predilections, in short, our lives – and if it will signify a stimulus to revolutionize existing models of sustainable development in broad, and in the healthcare sector specifically. However, the answers to these uncertainties depend on many factors, including the response of political powers to the ongoing crisis (Lucia and De Stasio 2020).

In spite of the worldwide economic recession as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, deforestation in the Amazon in Brazil, for example, is intensifying exponentially, having increased for 13 successive months relative to year-earlier figures and reaching the peak level since monthly data started being released publicly in 2007, according to the nation's national space research institute, *Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais* (INPE) (Earth.org n.d.). Nowadays, it is well recognized that many emerging communicable diseases, potentially including the novel COVID-19 virus, initiate from animals. The destruction of habitats, aggravated further by climate change and driven by economic advancement, is consequently furnishing the perfect circumstances for new disease emergence (Nonopen 2020; Rainforest Alliance 2020). At this point in time, however, climate has not yet surfaced as an identified driver of COVID-19, and the mechanistic understanding of the virus' climatic sensitivities remain limited. Nevertheless, there are phases in the zoonotic spillover progression at which climate forcing is to be expected. Zoonotic spillover refers to the multilevel process by which pathogens (for example: COVID-19, the Ebola virus, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and avian influenza viruses) succeed in overcoming a sequence of naturally occurring barriers and infect other animal species. The zoonotic spillover theory, taking into account the complex adaptive systems processes, identifies the kinds of barriers that have to be surmounted in each situation.

2 The Spanish flu was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic caused by the H1N1 influenza virus, it infected approximately a third of the world's population – or an estimated 500 million people – in four successive waves. Its death toll is thought to be somewhere between 20-50 million people – though other estimates range from 17 million to as high as a potential 100 million (History.com 2020).

Identifying and grasping which of these barriers can be impacted by climate – by either being suppressed or heightened, thereby either facilitating or buffering spillover, respectively – is critical in predicting how climate change can affect cross-species pathogen transmissions. More directly, climate can act as a conduit to pathogen development, dissemination and survival. Indirectly, the effects of climate are far more complex and much wider. Generally, however, climate should be regarded as a necessary, though not sufficient factor, which interjects with disease emergence (Rodó et al. 2021).

The Evandro Chagas Institute, a public health research institution in the city of Belém, Brazil, has classified approximately 220 distinct categories of viruses in the Amazon alone, 37 of which can cause infections in humans and 15 of which have the capacity to cause epidemics. They include a series of diverse encephalitis variations as well as West Nile fever and Rocio, a Brazilian virus from the same class which produces yellow fever and West Nile. Arboviruses, which can be transmitted by insects such as the mosquitoes that carry dengue fever and Zika, also present as a risk (Zucker 2020). Within the South African context most of the key challenges, such as – the upsurge of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 cases, the impact of economic globalization, natural catastrophes such as droughts, economic and geopolitical stresses – converge with issues of climate change (McMichael 2009; Fields 2005).

Overall, climate change is multiplying many of the established sources of health inequalities, undercutting coping mechanisms that are customarily used to oversee extreme events such as pandemics, and disordering food systems and local diets. Dealing with primarily inequalities and reinforcing indigenous knowledge systems, which advocate more holistic approaches, advance prospects for fostering resilience to compound socioecological shocks, including climate effects and pandemics (Zavaleta-Cortijo et al. 2020).

Objective and approach

This paper interrogates, and is focused, on the Kruger to Canyons biosphere region in South Africa and the Amazonas state in Brazil as comparative geographic case studies in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and aspects related to climate change. These two locations have been chosen for the following reasons: these two biomes are important because greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are predicted to significantly increase in these two areas in the future, which will result in widespread environmental degradation (Nash et al. 2019). These two locations have also been chosen due to the respective colonial discriminatory historical similarities and legacies between the two

countries, to the international environmental and tourism significance of the two biomes, as well as to the ongoing sustainability-related issues in both areas relating to poverty and the overall vulnerability of the respective indigenous communities and their subsequent unequal access to healthcare. I have also personally spent time in both biomes and countries (in 2015, 2018 and 2021) and have subsequently become acquainted with their respective localized idiosyncrasies. The first part of the paper is focused on the Kruger to Canyons biosphere region in South Africa and discusses its historical, demographic, climate change, COVID-19 and healthcare infrastructural dynamics, this is followed similar discussion regarding the Amazonas state in Brazil in the second part of the paper. The discussion and conclusion that follows offers a critique and comparison between the regions, ending with a summative conclusion.

A PubMed literature search was conducted on the 22 March 2021 and again on the 9 June 2021, using the following MeSH codes: “Agincourt” [Mesh Terms] AND “COVID-19” [All Fields] OR “SARS-CoV-2” [All Fields] OR “health” [All Fields] AND “climate change” [Mesh Terms]; as well as: “Manaus” [Mesh Terms] AND “COVID-19” [All Fields] OR “SARS-CoV-2” [All Fields] OR “health” [All Fields] AND “climate change” [Mesh Terms], which resulted in no synthesized focal area outputs as yet in terms of modelling studies, narrative and systematic reviews, case studies, case series or qualitative research related to integrated outputs regarding climate change and COVID-19 in these two biomes specifically. While information is thus scattered and fragmented in terms of either climate change or COVID-19 in isolation, both across these two areas and countries, it has been possible to source and combined more localized information (both gray literature, technical reports and academic articles) regarding climate change, healthcare infrastructures and COVID-19 in the two biomes.

South Africa and the Kruger to Canyons biosphere region: history, demographics, climate change, COVID-19 and the healthcare infrastructure

Historical background, topography and demographics

In 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)³ formed the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region as

³ UNESCO (2021) seeks to build peace and is a specialized agency of the United Nations, aimed at advancing world peace and security through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture.

an International Man and Biosphere Reserve, providing an outline for investigating community solutions to difficulties by conventionalizing biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, synthesizing economic, social and environmental facets and acknowledging their critical roles within specified education settings next to the Protected Areas, it includes the Bushbuckridge municipality and Agincourt sub-district (Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region 2021). The location in the north-eastern part of South Africa also contains the Kruger National Park and the Blyde River Canyon, two significant tourist attractions. The current demarcation expands north from the Letaba River to the Sabie River in the south, and west to the Blyde Escarpment, and then to the Mozambique border in the east. Extensive parts of the biosphere are protected areas. The savannah in the Great Escarpment Mountains (Drakensberg) and afro-montane jungles look out onto the grassland Bushveld of the Lowveld, while the water catchment collects higher rainfall in the Great Escarpment Mountains and links the three biomes by rivers flowing to the Indian Ocean (refer to Map 1 & 2 below).

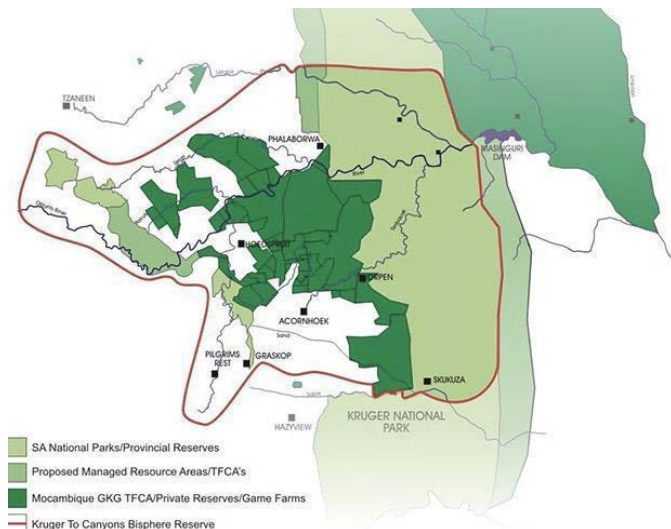
Map 1: The Kruger to Canyons Biosphere location in South Africa



Source: Google Maps (2021)*

*<https://www.google.co.za/maps/search/kruger+to+canyons+biosphere/@-25.7054565,17.9526543,5.11z>.

Map 2: Kruger to Canyons Biosphere



Source: Mpumalanga (2013)*

*<http://www.mpumalanga-info.co.za/provinces/article/181/kruger-national-park-biosphere-reserve>.

There are more than 420 documented archaeological locations in the Kruger National Park, attesting to its habitation prior to modern times. Most locations, however, had comparatively brief occupation phases, as the incidence of predators and the tsetse fly inhibit cattle farming. At Masorini hill, alongside the H9 road in the Kruger Park, iron casting was traditionally exercised up until the Mfecane period. The restored Thulamela on a hilltop south of the Levuvhu River was inhabited from the 13th to 16th centuries and had associations with merchants from the African east coast. Numerous kraals⁴ along the Sabie River and further north beyond the Letaba River could be observed, however, the north was sparingly inhabited in comparison compared to the south. Prior to the Second Anglo-Boer War⁵, what is now the Kruger National Park was first an isolated division of the eastern South African Republic's final wild frontier. President Paul Kruger of the South African Republic declared the area, which was then occupied by the indigenous Tsonga people, a reserve for the guarding of its wildlife at the time (Carruthers 1995). Jacob Dlamini's (2020) book entitled *Safari Nation*:

4 A 'kraal' is a traditional African village of huts.

5 The Second-Anglo Boer War, which took place from 1899-1831, was fought between the British Empire and the two independent Boer states, the Republic of the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State, over the Empire's influence in South Africa (Britanica 2021).

A Social History of the Kruger National Park traces the early history of the Kruger National Park, including its contentious land-grabbing policies and bureaucratic dehumanization of Africans. Even though black rangers were employed early on, they were not allowed to carry weapons to fight poachers, for example, and were frequently not even accorded the dignity of their full names. In 1930, the National Parks Board also protested, unsuccessfully, the Native Affairs Department acquiring land near the town of Acornhoek, adjacent to the southwestern section of the park, for black African settlement. The National Parks Board did not want black Africans near the park, believing that they were responsible for depredations against game. In the same year, John S Allison, who was the secretary for native affairs pointed out the board's hypocrisy in trying to use its power as a government agency to undermine a law that was, from the point of view of Africans and their legal guardians in the Native Affairs Department, already bad enough. This was neither the first nor the last time that the Native Affairs Department would clash with the National Parks Board over land for Africans.

The Kruger to Canyons biosphere region has a present-day population of approximately 541,248, of which 99.35% are black African. Most of the people live in poverty, with inadequate housing and no access to private medical care (Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region 2021). The primary municipality in the area is Bushbuckridge, situated in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa, and it is a good example of a socioecological system. It is distinguished by a cultural setting where the symbiosis of community and the biophysical habitat is apparent. The forced relocation of black Africans from the 1950s to the 1980s under the apartheid administration, which implied separate development and a framework of social and economic inequality and deprivation, coupled with the appearance of Mozambican migrants during the 1990s fleeing the armed conflict in their homeland, has sustained a growing population concentration in the vicinity. It was only in 2000 that the South African government granted these Mozambican refugees residence permits (Brites and Padilha 2019). Bushbuckridge faces many of the same trials which are rampant throughout South Africa, such as a high HIV/AIDS rate, destitution, and poor organizational governance capacity (Erasmus et al. 2011; Brites and Padilha 2019). Only 5.7% of the Bushbuckridge community aged 20 years and older holds a higher education, while a low 6.2% of the community has access to flush toilets linked to a sewerage system. Most households, 96.6%, have electricity for lighting, though electricity percentage use for heating remains unknown (Bushbuckridge Local Municipality 2016).

Political milieu, climate change, COVID-19 and the healthcare infrastructure

From the start of the COVID-19 epidemic in South Africa in March 2020, all South African national parks, including Kruger National Park, were locked down to new guests. International visitors in the national parks from high-risk countries were placed into isolation within the parks. Conservation continued as normal, with distancing and isolation practices used to reduce risk. A gradual and phased reopening of the parks was declared in August 2020, with Skukuza and Lower Sabie gates entrances to the Kruger National Park functioning at a lower capacity and the Biyamiti, Maroela and Orpen gates remaining closed. Additional reopening was announced and took place between October and December 2020 (Latest Sightings 2020).

In a previous explorative study undertaken by the author relating to climate change and healthcare sustainability in the Agincourt sub-district of the Kruger to Canyons biosphere, the public and community healthcare facility and workforce assessment outcomes of eight (out of the 10) healthcare facilities in Agincourt indicated that the greatest need across the healthcare facilities related to adequate access to medical doctors and pharmacists, for example, three facilities had no access to a medical doctor, and seven of the facilities had no access to qualified pharmacy staff. Furthermore, only three of the facilities were accessible via a good road infrastructure and none had planned patient transport in place, patient had to rely on the informal taxi sector (dos Santos et al. 2019). ‘Transport poverty’ remains a very real under-acknowledged reality for many of the poor in South Africa, who generally remain geospatially segregated as a result of apartheid’s past political discriminations (dos Santos 2020). One facility also had no running water (or operating toilets) at the time of the study, which posed a serious health risk (dos Santos et al. 2019).

The Agincourt health and sociodemographic surveillance system (HDSS), comprising an expanse of 420km² in Bushbuckridge, was founded in 1992, in order to bolster the development of district health systems as instructed by the post-apartheid health ministry, and furnishes verbal autopsy data. Verbal autopsy can be defined as a systematic means for determining mortality causes in communities where no routine medical death certification exists (World Health Organization 2016). The HDSS is the single accessible source of historical district mortality data in South Africa, it forms the foundation for the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa and Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit of the Medical Research Council (MRC) (the MRC/Wits-Agincourt Unit). The HDSS (which samples

over 90 000 individuals) focuses on an annual appraisal of occupant status and other significant events, backing earlier investigations into the source and result of complex health, population and community progressions (Kahn et al. 2012).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown in terms of the declared National State of Disaster in South Africa on 15 March 2020, Wits Agincourt was obligated to reinvent the manner in which primary-data directed research is conducted, particularly where data is primarily sourced by means of face-to-face consultations and interviews. To circumvent the likely gap in data as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, the MRC/Wits-Agincourt Research Unit effected telephonic data collection by making use of the newly instituted call center at the main office in Agincourt. As an outcome, there are currently three synthesized projects currently in progress in South Africa, namely the South African Population Research Infrastructure Network (SAPRIN) census (Agincourt being one of the rural nodes of SAPRIN), COVID-19 Intensive Surveillance (Agincourt is one of the 3 rural-based surveillance locations), and the Telephonic Verbal Autopsy (teleVA) (MRC/Wits-Agincourt Unit: Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Unit 2021).

The 2020 SAPRIN census is novel in comparison to previous years in two manners: it is now completely telephonically operated, and it also now includes a COVID-19 Screening Module. This screening module includes all people presently living in the study location and documents the household socioeconomic effects of COVID-19, as well as COVID-19's impacts on the mental health of participants as well as their overall psychological well being. Furthermore, the module also incorporates a screening tool for potential COVID-19 symptoms. The COVID-19 Intensive Surveillance, which commenced with 1159 participating households, chose households regarded to be more at-risk to COVID-19, taking into consideration projections of potential widespread diffusion of the virus nationally, threat of substantial morbidity and mortality in at-risk communities, and estimated strain on both the healthcare system and economy. The project collects data from the sampled households and individuals at 10-14-day intervals. Furthermore, the individual-level screening part pinpoints study participants who present with potential COVID-19 related symptoms, who are then referred by dedicated project medical staff for further screening and testing. The Telephonic Verbal Autopsy (teleVA) is a subdivision of the yearly population surveillance and strives to gather comprehensive evidence concerning the sociodemographic and disease profile of the deaths gathered from the census. From 2020 the instrument includes a COVID-19 section which is directed at establishing

potential COVID-19 effects on mortality, which has shown to be significant in recognizing mortality cases ascribed to COVID-19 (MRC/Wits-Agincourt Unit: Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Unit 2021).

Brazil and the Amazonas: history, topography, demographics, climate change, COVID-19 and the healthcare infrastructure

Historical background, topography and demographics

Very little is known about the history of Brazil before 1500, when Europeans first travelled there. Archaeological remains, which consist mainly of pottery, suggest a number of complex societies that were in existence long before the colonialists arrived. After more than 300 years of Portuguese colonization, Brazil became a republic in 1889. Long periods of totalitarian rule finally led to the return of democracy in 1989. Democracy, however, has always been hard to maintain, and Brazil's history has been pervaded by *coups d'état* and dictatorships (Ghose 2018).

Amazonas, named after the Amazon river, is a federal state of Brazil situated in the north-western section of the nation (see Map 3). It is the biggest Brazilian state by region and the 9th greatest national subdivision on the planet. The state is mostly tropical rainforest with cities clustered beside traversable waterways which are reachable only by boat or airplane (Governo do Estado do Amazonas 2021). The state remained relatively undisturbed until the rubber boom in the 19th century. An estimated 240 indigenous groups live in the Amazonas, most are semi-nomadic, and subsist by means of hunting, gathering, fishing and migratory farming. These indigenous communities reside in intimate harmony with the rhythms of the rainforest, and conservation and sustainability are regarded as integral to their existence. Contact with and exposure to Western civilization fluctuates significantly amongst the indigenous tribes, for example the Maku tribe are extremely isolated, with others, such as the literate Ticuna are extremely dependent on modern Brazilian society (Ghose 2018).

Map 3: Amazonas state location.



Source: Encyclopedia Britannica (2021).*

*<https://www.britannica.com/place/Amazonas-state-Brazil>

Political milieu, climate change, COVID-19 and the healthcare infrastructure

From the time of his appointment as Brazilian president in 2019, Jair Bolsonaro has been lobbying for an increased industrial development in the Amazon rainforest, which captures two billion tons of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) every year⁶. Since Bolsonaro took office, immeasurable expanses of the rainforest have been annihilated and indigenous peoples' livelihoods endangered. Deforestation in the Amazon has escalated by nearly 50% within a 2-year period, reaching its highest level since 2008. The infiltration of indigenous regions escalated by 135% in 2019, and at least 18 people were killed in territory disputes last year. In spite of this, penalties for ecological violations fell

⁶ The Amazon rainforest is regarded to be the world's largest carbon dioxide sink, capturing 25% of global carbon dioxide emissions. The Amazon rainforest thus plays a very significant role in mitigating global climate change (Pannett 2021).

by 42% in the Amazon basin in 2019, and the federal administration slashed cut the budget for law enforcement by 27.4% this year (Werneck et al. 2021).

Experts have cautioned that Bolsonaro's detrimental regulations has the ability to drive the Amazon rainforest to an irreversible juncture, transforming strips of the rainforest into grassland, and thus making it impossible to control, halt or reverse global climate change. Indigenous heads and human rights lobbyists denounce Bolsonaro for crimes against humanity and the environment, and the Brazilian president is facing charges in the International Criminal Court (ICC) for ecocide and genocide, terms defined as instigating severe and lasting harm to the environment and people (Al Jazeera 2021; Milhorance 2021).

Now, as Brazil – which was hit by COVID-19 as well as its P.1 variant though the death rate is finally easing due to the intensifying of vaccination – concentrated on containing the virus, illicit loggers and mineworkers are gaining from the state of affairs by cutting down extensive sections of the Amazon. From January and April 2021, 464 square miles of the rainforest was razed to the round, that is 55% more of what was destroyed in the same period in 2019. The apparent intention is that the cleared land will be burned rendering it fit for cattle grazing, this in turn substantially increases the likelihood of wildfires; in 2019 wildfires burnt out of control and destroyed an estimated 3,500 square miles of rainforest, blinding large cities such as São Paulo with smoke (Japanese Times 2020; Tedesco 2020; Beck, Mestre, and Wanzeller 2021).

The capital and largest city in the state of Amazonas, Manaus (refer to Map 4), is located in the center of the Amazon forest. The city is regarded to be the gateway to the Amazon rainforest, and its primary link to the remainder of the world is by airplane or boat. The town is situated sits at the confluence of the Solimões and the Rio Negro rivers (which are the names of the Amazon river in the respective sections). Manaus was one of the centers of the globe hardest hit COVID-19 outbreaks in April and May 2020. COVID-19 hospitalizations in Manaus remained stable and fairly low for 7 months from May to November 2020, despite the relaxation of COVID-19 control measures during the period. When the healthcare system collapsed in Manaus, photographs and videos of thousands of freshly dug graves became illustrative of Brazil's coronavirus calamity, its mortality counts second only to that of the United States. Scientists and epidemiologists have established that a new coronavirus variant, called P.1 (and first identified in Manaus), is most likely propelling the new round of devastation that's befallen Manaus as it is more infectious and more lethal. However, it seems as though the current COVID-19 vaccines

can still offer protection against the pattern of mutations observed in the new variant – though more research is needed (Rivers 2021).

Map 4: Manaus' locality in Amazonas state



Source: Amazonas Brazil Travel (2021).*

*<https://www.v-brazil.com/tourism/amazonas/map-amazonas.html>.

As a consequence of COVID-19, for frontline medical staff, it resulted in frenzied 36-hour hospital shifts. Cemeteries in Manaus are increasingly overcrowded. Manaus has approximately 30 public and private hospitals, offering services to a number of secluded indigenous and small communities in the vicinity. However, the logistics of getting there and equipping those clinics and hospitals – can be difficult as road connections are few, thus most approaches to the town have to be via the river or by air.

COVID-19 first ripped through Manaus like a blaze in April 2020, resulting in such an extensive increase in cases that scientists hypothesized that it might result in herd immunity. Legislators and politicians took hold of this notion, hoping that they would be able to circumvent future economically damaging lockdowns. However, in September 2020, the Oswaldo

Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), an esteemed Brazilian research institute for public health, advised Manaus to impose lockdown restrictions once again as the city started to experience a second wave of the virus. Notwithstanding, both the local and national government used the theory of herd immunity to justify their continued relaxed measures. After months, towards the end of December 2020, an undeniable surge in documented COVID-19 cases was evident in Amazonas. State governor, Wilson Lima, eventually consented to expert counsel, declaring new lockdown regulations. However, these measures were aggressively decried by protesters who aligned with Bolsonaro's stance on keeping the country's economy going. By early January 2021, it became evident that Manaus was close to running out of the required amount of oxygen needed for severe COVID-19 patients. Lack of preparedness and political unrest have been cited for the situation in Manaus. A distinct disengagement between the local and state administration has also resulted in chaos since the start of the pandemic last year. The Amazonas state government, in turn, has cited the logistical barriers to quickly resupplying this hard to reach town (Gallón and Reverdosa 2021).

Discussion

As opposed to other pandemics and famines, COVID-19 has hit all nations, irrespective of economic, political and social leanings, making it in many instances a 'leveler', but also at the same time highlighting the disparities and inequalities across these systems, which can clearly be seen in these two biomes, as well as within the borders of South Africa and Brazil in general. It is evident that parallels exist between the external relationships established by historical colonial powers over colonized peoples and the relationship of economic, educational, social, and racial groups within some Latin American societies, such as Brazil, and within South Africa, resulting in 'internal colonialism' in these societies, despite post- and decolonization initiatives (Wolpe 1975; Crush 2012; Ribeiro 2011). On a global scale, government reactions to the pandemic also exemplify broadening and intensifying worldwide political polarization (Michie and Sheehan 2021).

Furthermore, It is evident that climate change can both facilitate zoonotic spillovers and have an effect on transmission change. It is also clear that these effects, together with human behavior and awareness, need to be integrated into pandemic forecasting models (Rodó et al. 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened many of the economic and social difficulties that Brazil and South Africa are already facing.

The scale of the climate and COVID-19 crisis necessitates very atypical and unique types of government strategies in comparison to the *laissez faire* outlooks endorsed since the 1980s. Michie and Sheenan (2021) comment on the 2007–2008 global financial crisis and the subsequent international recession of 2009, bequeathing mostly an unreformed system of global financial speculation, underlying inequalities as a result of colonialism (and apartheid in the case of South Africa), and industrial or state level tax fraud and corruption. From that time, in many nations a decade of austerity and inequality has left critical public institutions under-funded and insufficiently or not optimally prepared to deal with the COVID-19 crisis due to healthcare capacity shortfalls, this was clearly witnessed in Manaus, and to a lesser extent in the Kruger to Canyons biosphere, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the indigenous communities of both South Africa and Brazil suffer from economic ‘unfreedom’, in the form of extreme poverty, which has overall been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic (dos Santos 2019).

According to the World Bank, South Africa remains the world’s most unequal country, with 1% of the country owning 70.9% of the wealth and has had to also deal with more recent corruption and state capture⁷ ramifications which occurred under the presidency of Jacob Zuma (The World Bank 2021; Sulla and Zikhali 2018; Shubin 2019; Greenwood 2018). Some of the challenges that South Africa faces can be traced back to the country’s apartheid legacy, with significantly contribute to racial disparities in terms of access-related aspects such as living far away from a clinic, and lack of private medical cover. Two thirds of the country’s 3 300 ventilators, for example, can only be found in private hospitals in South Africa. Challenges in delivering health services before the pandemic, which are now out in the open as a result of the pandemic, provides an opportunity to move forward. By strengthening the National Health Insurance (NHI) introduced by the government, and thus achieve universal access to quality healthcare services (Devermont and Mukulu 2020).

Within the Brazilian context, economic recession coupled with sharp social tensions and biased politics during the COVID-19 pandemic has stalled

7 State capture is a type of systemic political corruption in which private interests significantly influence a state’s decision-making process to their own advantage. Reports compiled by the South African Council of Churches and South African academics and researchers in 2017 estimates approximately R40 billion (equivalent to US\$3 billion) was illegally smuggled out of South Africa to Dubai by the Gupta family, in collusion with President Jacob Zuma, and their associates between 2011–2017 (Mpumlwana 2017, Centre for Complex Systems in Transition, Public Affairs Research Institute, Development Policy Research Institute, SAR-CHi Chair African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, University of Johannesburg, University of Stellenbosch, 2017).

attempts at cooperating with science-based directives for the greater benefit of Brazil (da Silva Bastos 2020; Lopes 2021). President Bolsonaro has essentially downplayed the severity of the epidemic, and eschewed public health containment actions. Instead, he has endorsed pharmacological treatments which hold no scientific credibility, leaving Brazil's committed medical staff to cope the most ill for in intensive care units and forced to improvise solutions when hospital beds are unavailable – this has led to the near collapse of Brazil's health system, and virtual complete collapse in Manaus (Kmietowicz 2021). Furthermore, the Brazilian government has disrupted environmental protection agencies, permitting the upsurge of illicit deforestation – which in turn accelerates climate change and the emergence of new zoonotic diseases. Indigenous populations in the Amazon have the highest risk of poor health and social outcomes (Lopes 2021). Together with his supporters, Bolsonaro has essentially defended the government's response to resist containment measures as a means of protecting the economy. Despite, for example, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) calling on Brazilian authorities to admit to the intensity and severity of the crisis, after more than 12 months into the COVID emergency, Brazil still has no, or at least a limited, effective, coordinated or centralized public health response or intervention program (Kmietowicz 2021).

In comparison to Brazil, South Africa's overall response to the pandemic can be regarded as a standout in the region and in the world. President Cyril Ramaphosa and the government borrowed best practices from prior public health responses to health emergencies, such as the tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS crises and thus have the infrastructure and knowledge base of how to conduct mass testing, particularly with key populations. Unlike Brazil, the South African government also moved quickly to close borders and restrict movement, and reopening occurred and is still occurring, in a phased approach based on scientific guidance (Devermont and Topaz 2020). The South African government also promoted a science-based approach to the pandemic, and a greater compliance to public health campaigns was ensured by working together with religious and non-traditional leaders and unifying the political class.

Notwithstanding these positive aspects, South Africa's resilience has been tested once again, the COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be another challenge in South Africa's complex history, which is characterized by apartheid and its long-term ramifications, the AIDS pandemic, and ongoing social trauma. South Africa was fortunate in that the virus arrived here later than in the other parts of the world, offering some respite to an already burdened health systems. The pandemic has, however, exacerbated social and economic

challenges and increased mental health risks (Naidu 2020). The Agincourt HDSS in the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region is demonstrating its adaptability to respond to Covid-19 emergency. In March 2020, South Africa had no data on the potential rural impacts of the pandemic. The MRC/Wits-Agincourt Research Unit answered to this concerning void by collaborating with the state-run Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and SAPRIN. Benefitting from its existing infrastructure and knowledge of telephonic surveillance, an investigation was finalized with more than 1300 respondents randomly selected from the existing HDSS database; the study investigated respondent cognizance of COVID-19 symptoms and preventive measures, as well as the impact of the national lockdown in South Africa (MRC/Wits-Agincourt Unit: Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Unit 2021).

Conclusion

It is widely agreed amongst researchers and scholars that the annihilation of biodiversity sets the scene for the emergence of new diseases and virus as a result of animals losing their natural habitats, and as a consequence, crowding together and thus increasing the chance of them interacting with humans. It is also equally important to take cognizance of climate change, as it can modify the distribution of diseases. Unfortunately, worldwide resources for ecological conservation has been diluted as a result of governmental endorsement of activities which are detrimental to the environment, this in particular, is relevant to the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, which has experienced rapid rainforest depletion, intensifying considerably at an alarming rate each year, and experiences high social inequalities (Lorenz, Oliveira Lage, and Chiaravalotti-Neto 2021).

Pandemics have been anticipated and predicted by scientists for a long time, particularly since, for example, the 2003 SARS pandemics, which was also caused by a similar type of coronavirus as to that of COVID-19. It is also predicted that there will be further and likely worse pandemics in the future. If it is hoped to prevent any further ones, it will be necessary to ask on a global scale how this happened and change what went wrong (Polychroniou 2020). Both South Africa and Brazil, to greater and lesser extent, experience 'thin equality' and 'emancipated democracies', resulting from the historical brutal exploitation of indigenous communities (dos Santos 2019). Furthermore, extractive systems, and extensive land use on a large scale, have resulted in deforestation, loss of biodiversity, carbon emission and water

contamination, heightened temperatures, indigenous land dispossession, violence, discrimination and cross border and rural-urban migration.

The COVID-19 pandemic has evidenced how viruses and pathogens move quicker and further than before, which implies that countries also need to respond quickly, displaying political will, financing and, more overtly, changes in human behavioral patterns (Lorenz, Oliveira Lage, and Chiaravalotti-Neto 2021). Collective action offers a means of moving forward, both Brazil and South Africa will need to find ways of building back better; politically, socially, economically and from an infrastructural standpoint, which all needs to lead to the transformation toward the sustainable use of the available resources.

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is predicted to exert further stress on already exploited ecologies and healthcare systems, added to this, the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) has signified a stimulus to revolutionize existing models of sustainable development in broad, and sustainable supply chains in the healthcare sector in particular. The Kruger to Canyons biosphere region in South Africa and the Amazonas state in Brazil serve as geographic case studies for this paper. The impact of economic globalization, natural catastrophes such as droughts, economic and geopolitical stresses, deforestation, economic and healthcare access inequalities in these two biomes converge with issues of climate change, and undercut coping mechanisms that are customarily used to oversee extreme events such as pandemics. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened many of the economic and social difficulties which South Africa and Brazil are already facing. In comparison to Brazil, South Africa's overall response to the pandemic can be regarded as a standout. By borrowing from best practices from prior public health responses to health emergencies in South Africa, such as the tuberculosis and the HIV/AIDS crisis, South Africa has demonstrated its comparatively successful means of dealing with COVID-19.

KEYWORDS

Climate Change. COVID-19. Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region. Amazonas. Healthcare Systems. Human Resources In Health. Ecocide. Genocide. Inequality. Brazil. South Africa.

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