STRATEGIC **REVIEW**

FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

Vol 44 No. 1 2022

ISSN 1013-1108

Strategic Review for Southern Africa

ISSN 1013-1108

Aims and Scope

The Strategic Review for Southern Africa is an accredited on-access journal listed in the IBSS index. It has since 1978 been a platform for strategic and political analyses of themes and socio-political developments that impact on or provide lessons for Southern Africa. As a multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary journal, the Strategic Review facilitates vigorous and enlightened debate among scholars, policy makers, practitioners, students and activists in order to contribute to the wider global discourse on changing strategic and political dynamics within and beyond nation states.

The journal publishes two regular issues a year (May/June and November/December) with a possibility of one additional guest special issue per year as need justifies, subject to editorial group approval. Issues are available mainly as an open access online platform licensed under creative commons. Printed copies can be ordered. All submissions are subject to double-blind peer review by at least two appropriately qualified reviewers.

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conforming to author's guide.

Contents

ISSN 1013-1108

Comments

Research articles

Keynote lecture

Review essay

Editiorial

With issue no. 2/2021, Prof Siphamandla Zondi (who has moved from the University of Pretoria to the University of Johannesburg) paid farewell on behalf of the editorial collective (including him, Everisto Benyera, and Kgothatso Shai). Since no. 2/2018, under his leadership as editor-in-chief, they managed this journal competently and passionately. We thank them for their commitment to further anchoring the journal in the landscape of post-Apartheid South Africa's scholarly community, adding value to academic discourses and policy-related matters in the sub-region and beyond.

As the new editorial collective, we consider this a continued obligation to promote African ownership over African matters, both intellectually and politically. The *Strategic Review* will remain committed to the subject-related orientation as set out in its issue no. 1/2013 ("Southern Africa in the World. The Context for a *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*"). With the continued solid professional backup of Heather Thuynsma and Andrea du Toit in the production process, we are in good hands. We also benefit from the many competent and reliable reviewers who support us in the assessment of submissions. After all, the journal is the result of many people willing to contribute besides the authors and the editorial collective. While we remain loyal to the journal's thematic framework, we are using the shift in editorial responsibilities to present a new visual appearance; we trust this does not come across as a case of "the emperor's new clothes".

For this issue, we decided to respond, at rather short notice, to the war in Ukraine, which erupted after a somewhat long build-up just weeks before we completed the formation and constitution of the new editorial team. We are glad (and to some extent also proud) to offer you a special focus on the likely consequences of this war for Africa, presenting a variety of relevant perspectives. They underline that no states or societies are immune to its consequences, regardless of the position taken by governments. Geopolitics of this nature play out everywhere, no matter the degree to which governments elsewhere are (not) directly involved. It is also a reminder that in fundamental conflicts, even declared neutrality cannot avoid being seen (and may even be intended) as taking sides.

We are grateful to all the contributors to this focus for responding so quickly to our invitations, making this issue a very topical one that we hope offers much food for thought. We invite further engagements with the subject and related matters. Global governance and international relations, as well as geostrategic and worldwide socio-

ISSN 1013-1108

economic shifts, have lasting effects that require and deserve further attention and analysis.

With a research article on China's Belt and Road Initiative, a review essay on Cuba's role in Africa, and a keynote lecture on lessons from COVID-19, this issue complements the focus with an emphasis on how best to cope with challenges beyond the limited domestic state-government dimensions. A research article on mining activities as part of extractive industries reminds us that local governance issues in politics and the economy matter too.

As an open-access journal, we aim to reach out to as many readers interested in the topics presented as possible and hope to be an attractive peer-reviewed accredited journal for many potential contributors. We invite you to join us either as readers or contributors and hope that the *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* remains a relevant contribution to a fruitful exchange and debate over current issues impacting the well-being of people.

The Untamed Impact of a Faraway Shock: Africa and the War in Ukraine

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4073

Abstract

The combinations of multiple disruptors in the world economy have now been reinforced by the return — through the front door — of the warmongering behaviour of the great powers. This is arguably to defend geostrategic interests. The consequences for Africa are brutal. After a decade and a half of considerable progress in its macroeconomic management and social indicators, halted first by the 2008–2009 global financial crisis and now by the impact of the pandemic, the continent was at the limit of its capacity when, in February, Russian troops entered Ukraine. A finer analysis allows us to discern that Africa is simultaneously experiencing a moment of great convergence and one of divergence. The convergence is verifiable at the level of opinions and the construction of defensive positions in relation to global actors, while the divergences are related to the end of a certain notion of globalisation that is likely to deeply affect the continent. Africans' choices in the international arena have become more limited, although that may eventually create the opportunity for a more courageous attitude.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Africa, Geopolitical, War, Economy, Crises.

ISSN 1013-1108

1. Introduction

The war in Ukraine, the sanctions imposed on Russia, and the effect of climate-related stimulus packages from richer countries to pump up their economies are having a devastating impact on a continent dependent on global dynamics, including food imports. Africa, already struggling to overcome the economic and social effects of the pandemic, now has more on its plate. Once again, it finds itself contingent on conflicts and sanctions imposed on others.

The war is already fuelling global inflation. We know that the pandemic has severely compromised global supply chains and led to skyrocketing transportation costs. This will hit African countries harder due to their relatively marginal role in global trade routes. Inflation will be felt particularly in food-related imports, such as wheat and fertilisers.

One must also count on the potential fallout of the sanctions against Russia on the financial markets. For the smaller economies, the more recent past does not necessarily offer a good road map in this regard. While the 2008/09 crisis affected advanced economies from a systemic point of view, this one does not necessarily have the same types of repercussions. We are in the presence of the antithesis of "too big to fail", with the richer Western economies ready for another war, an economic war. We may well witness a "too small fail" spectrum.

Development financing gaps have widened significantly since the outbreak of the pandemic. The annual financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals keeps growing steadily. Responding to costs related to climate vulnerabilities, African countries have already been spending 3–5% of their gross domestic product (GDP). If they are to be included in the climate transition, it would require more than the current unfulfilled promises of climate financing. As they endeavour to move away from a system that relegates them to the role of primary exporters of raw materials with little transformation, as has been the case since colonial times, the headwinds are threatening rather than reassuring.

The current war is, somehow, a consequence of tectonic shifts shaping the future's economy, with all the attendant implications in terms of how to handle fossil fuels, by those who control the stakes. Financing controlling tools play a critical role in such shaping, either by stimulating or curtailing different sets of actors.

By the end of 2021, African sovereign borrowers had raised $20 billion in capital markets, bringing African sovereign issuance to over $175 billion over the past

decade (UNCDF 2021). It must be understood that African economies are thirsty for financing, and the margins for investment in such countries will be deeply affected by the war. They have no option but to tap into available commercial debt issuances, given the limited access to concessional finance, which is expensive and contributes to a debt servicing dilemma. This war cannot be an excuse for a reduction in capital flows. Unfortunately, this may well be the tangible outcome.

To understand the reasons behind such turmoil, a brief historical overview may be necessary. It will allow for a better reading of the reasons for the clash between Russia and the West, the repositioning of the latter's relations with Africa in such an environment, and the reasons behind two paradoxical emerging trends of convergence and divergence in the way Africa places itself in global affairs.

2. Consequences Always Have Causes

It is easy for the non-Western eye to perceive flaws, or even contradictions, in the political arguments that the mainstream and influential media present about the causes of this war. The flat interpretation of an unprecedented invasion of a sovereign democratic country by an irascible and powerful authoritarian neighbour as a manifestation of some lunatic behaviour is over-simplistic. Such an invasion, by all means, is unfortunately not a precedent, and it is almost mandatory to classify an enemy's behaviour as incomprehensible.

The overwhelming news about the human woes of the war, some real, some invented or amplified by the necessity of propaganda, does serve a purpose: to focus public attention on the effects of war, diverting their attention from the causes that gave rise to the conflict. All wars, without exception, are a source of human suffering. What distinguishes them is rather found in their origins, the political reasons that explain them and the complex justifications offered by the protagonists.

On 24 March 2021, Ukrainian President Zelensky issued a presidential decree announcing a campaign to recapture Crimea from Russia (Ukrinform 2021). He then began to move the Ukrainian army to the south and southeast, towards the disputed territory of the Donbas. Thus, about a year ago, a large concentration of Ukrainian troops was on the southern border of Ukraine, ready to challenge Russia. In fact, President Zelensky always maintained that he did not believe the Russians would not attack the rest of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Defence Minister also confirmed this repeatedly just before the invasion. Likewise, the head of the Ukrainian Security

Council declared in December 2021 and January 2022 that there were no signs of a Russian attack on Ukraine despite strong warnings from Washington, DC, and NATO (National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine 2022; *NBC News* 2022).

So, what happened?

If one doesn't understand how war happens, then a solution cannot be found. We are in exactly this situation. Despite the United Nations peacekeeping doctrine, used and repeated many times over by its Security Council, this time around, there is no appetite for any mediation or active negotiation to end this war through third parties intermediation. It is as if winning the war was the only acceptable outcome for each of the contending sides, probably because there are more than two sides to the visual mess.

Some of the supporters of Ukraine's military effort are there, not with soldiers but with heavy weaponry supplies, military intelligence, and political support. At the same time, this terrible conflict is influencing relations in many fields: trade, normal multilateral cooperation for common public goods, energy, and the military balance in the world, especially in Europe. In that wider reading, China's interests loom large.

Before the war, relations between Russia and NATO were cold but stable. Even the discussions about NATO enlargement were not tense to the point of non-return, as is now often stated. Talks about Ukraine's inclusion in Western military alliances were present but not yet so concrete as to constitute a real threat to its powerful neighbour. The fall of Russian-aligned President Victor Yanukovych, who fled Kyiv and later Ukraine in February 2014 — prompting the Rada (Ukraine's parliament) to appoint acting leaders pending early elections — started changing the stalemate. What was to be known as the Maidan revolution set alarm bells ringing in Russia. The election of President Zelensky, an ally of former President Poroshenko, a Russian foe, in April 2019 complicated Russia-Ukraine relations immensely.

Russia's instincts towards Western Europe are usually marked by mistrust. Throughout history, the relationship has been conspicuously apprehensive, with Russia insistently trying to be accepted and reacting strongly when it realised it was not. The Cold War was an intensive demonstration of this pattern.

Without elaborating on the intricacies of the security arguments presented to justify the war, political promises were made to post-USSR Russia that NATO would not threaten its geopolitical interests, rather giving the impression to Russia that it would be fully integrated into the global economy (Wintour 2022). A multitude of multilateral agreements, processes and moves made such promises effective for a while. The US "War on Terror" has contributed to the expansion of NATO while reversing

the perception of the new, fragile balance of power. This made Russia aware of the limitations of its integration into the global economy. The aggressive expansion of NATO and EU membership across Central Europe confirmed the real aspirations of the United States and its European allies. Russia reacted with more strident warnings about its security concerns and eventually considered — as in the past with Napoleon and Hitler — the plains of Ukraine as a geographical security red line.

That is why the moves by President Zelensky in early 2022 caused the largest mobilisation of Russian troops since World War II (*The Economist* 2022). There was ample time to detect, engage and avoid it. But the rest is history, as the saying goes.

3. Russia's Forceful Move

The war changed everything. Since it started, NATO experts have had a golden opportunity to assess all the advantages and disadvantages of the Russian army in real time. Everything was revealed — how some mistakes were made, how military actions were planned and then cancelled, the purpose of the destruction of various targets, how the propaganda works internally, how the Western media is consuming the news, and how the international scene is unfolding. This is obviously not working in favour of a quick outcome for Russia.

What began as aid from NATO members to Ukraine with the aim of slowing down the Russian advance turned into an irresistible temptation to go much further: to convince the Ukrainians that, well-armed by NATO, they could defeat the Russians and, in any case, render the West the inestimable service of deeply wearing down the Russian military apparatus.

It is well known that NATO has had a problem with some countries being unwilling to increase their military budgets and strengthen their armies as part of the Atlantic Alliance forces — a point strongly advocated by US President Donald Trump (*France24* 2019). They simply saw no reason to do so, and it was decided that the money would be better used for other purposes more visible to voters, as any other government would prefer. The war has changed such priorities to the extent that what was unthinkable just a couple of months ago — dramatically reducing fossil fuel dependency from Russia, giving away the costly infrastructure that had been built (particularly by Germany) to receive Russian gas, curtailing the profitable capital flows from Russia to the European financial centres, or further sidelining the multilateral system with unilateral decisions — has become a must.

NATO member states now seem to be concerned about whether they are sufficiently protected, asking the Alliance to develop its capabilities and expand permanent bases to deter future threats. For that, countries must spend more money. If Sweden and Finland joined, it would seal one of the few geographical holes between Russia and Europe. Paradoxically, that would increase the need for Ukraine to be secured strategically by Russia.

The economic situation in Europe, due to the strong sanctions against Russia, will have to go through difficulties, mainly in the energy sector. In the short run, the advantage is for fossil fuel sellers, but in the long term, that will flip consistently as the great energy transition away from fossil fuels kicks in. Sanctions are slow and don't threaten anyone immediately, but in the long run, they can be devastating and produce not only economic difficulties but political problems as well. We are in the presence of new forms of sanctions, too — such as wide cultural and sports boycotts — that produce a level of resentment that will be enduring, provoking both sides to weaponise any multilateral effort.

4. Russian Interests in Africa

Russia's relationship with Africa is marked by the Cold War period, during which the USSR and its allies took a stand in favour of independence movements and the struggle to end apartheid. The colonial heritage of some European countries, followed by a long period of Western European foreign policy hostility towards African nationalist movements, left marks that politically favour Russia. During the post-Cold War period of rapprochement between Russia and the West, Russia revealed a total lack of interest in its former friends on the continent, to the point of causing discomfort and disappointment.

In the last three decades, Russia's presence has been deeply influenced by its desire to integrate into the global economy. It constructed a relationship with Africa based on the expansion of economic interests in its areas of comparative advantage: companies specialised in extraction activities, from mines to fisheries; arms, weaponry, and cereal exports; and strategic coordination on oil prices with African OPEC member states.

As the regime of President Vladimir Putin became more isolated in the international arena, Russia showed a renewed interest in African countries. It tried to approach them first at the political-diplomatic level and then with interventions of various kinds in the military and security domains. Only in the period immediately prior to the war in

Ukraine did Russia try to add the investment dimensions and call for deeper economic cooperation.

Russia is now trying to position itself with Africa as a "world power", knowing its credentials in many domains of global governance remain questionable. It is currently ranked as the 11th largest economy, with a GDP of $1.43 trillion, dwarfed by the US and China and surpassed by all the G7 members as well as India and South Korea. "Despite a few pockets of excellence and an educated workforce, Russia is also outmatched in the technological field; it spends just 1 per cent of its GDP on research and development; its corporations conduct little or no research and the country as a whole trails China, the U.S., Japan, Korea, Germany and India in patent applications. Its technological strength is in near-space exploration, rocket engines and military hardware; however, research suggests that there have been hardly any spillovers from such sectors into the civil sphere," says Yusuf Bangura (*Premium Times* 2022).

Russia's ambitions in Africa may surpass its muscle. African leaders know this and see Russia from the perspective of what it can offer. However, they play the game because they benefit from rivalries between Russia and the West and the constant questioning of the latter's hegemony. African leaders feel less pressurised by Russia in their bilateral engagements as they are highly transactional. They do not go through complex negotiating platforms. Deals are made using political connections. This makes the decision process less transparent, which coincides with the shared desire for discretion or secrecy, not to mention rent-seeking behaviour at both ends.

Russia accounts for less than 1% of total foreign direct investment stock in Africa (Irwin-Hunt 2020). When President Putin received 45 Heads of State of the continent in Sochi for a Russia-Africa Summit in October 2019, there were promises of over $12 billion in additional investments (Foy 2019). It is hard to imagine that happening in the immediate future. Most of the investments were supposed to be in extractives, including fossil fuels. Russia is not competitive even in those areas, despite being rich in natural resources reserves and exports. More recently, several African countries signed deals with Russia to produce nuclear energy. Yet those agreements require significant capital investments that neither a beleaguered Russia nor debt-stressed African countries can implement. It seems, therefore, that the two most promising business opportunities for Russia remain the export of its commodities and military hardware and security-related services.

Of late, a great deal of attention has been given to the food security and food-fuelled inflation resulting from the War in Ukraine. Emphasis has been put on wheat

dependency.

Cereal prices have increased considerably since the beginning of the war, according to the International Trade Centre: as an example, "while a ton of French corn cost $297 on 23 February, its price rose to $401 on 23 May [2022]" (International Trade Centre 2022). From the beginning of 2022 until 27 May, wheat prices jumped an additional 74% (Trading Economics n.d.). Several African countries depend on Russia and Ukraine for wheat imports, some having as much as 100% dependence, like Benin or Somalia (Armstrong 2022). The countries that are the most exposed in terms of absolute value are Egypt, Sudan, and Tunisia. Egypt and Somalia are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Africa is also the largest regional destination of Ukraine's wheat exports. Wheat represents half of Africa's caloric intake of cereals, and almost all of it comes from the two countries in conflict.

The effects of the war are already apparent in terms of supply. Further declines in exports caused by a prolongation of the situation will have devastating effects. Shortages are likely to last at least until 2023, given the planting cycles and the scarcity of fertilisers and other inputs.

It seems unlikely that African countries will be able to replace wheat imports through domestic or sub-regional production. Wheat consumption has grown well above domestic production for over a decade. No African country has an available surplus. Other major exporters such as the United States, Argentina, Australia, and Canada are solicited from everywhere, making it difficult for African countries to jump the queues. It is unlikely that alternative staples can compensate for the shortage of wheat in the short run, and as the share of expenditure devoted to food increases, the impact is much greater in Africa than elsewhere.

Rising costs of urea and phosphates are also cascading into higher fertiliser costs. After an 80% increase in 2021, the war added 30% by the beginning of May 2022 (Baffes and Koh 2022). Gas shortages in Europe are also resulting in cutbacks in ammonia, an important constituent of nitrogen-based fertilisers (Baffes and Koh 2022). Continued price increases for these products will be extremely difficult to absorb within the limited fiscal space of African countries.

Inflated prices for some other food and agriculture-related imports are already felt in most African countries at the household and production levels. Some of the fuel subsidy cuts prized by IMF programmes may be abandoned in the short term, as is the case in Nigeria (Burns 2022). It may not be enough to reduce the pressure. According to African Development Bank, the combined effects of the war could push an additional

1.8 million Africans to extreme poverty in 2022, swelling an additional 2.1 million in 2023 (African Development Bank Group n.d.). Furthermore, we are witnessing the worst run from emerging markets stocks and bonds in decades, deeply affecting Africa's largest economies (Wheately 2022).

The impacts above have overshadowed other important dimensions of the Russia-Africa relationship. Pressure to impose sanctions on Russian fossil fuel exports creates opportunities for African oil and gas exporters, such as Nigeria, Algeria, and Egypt, and benefits other exporters through oil price hikes. New entrants to the gas market, such as Senegal, Mauritania, Mozambique, and Tanzania, are counting on accelerating the implementation of already identified exploration projects. The positions of these countries regarding the Ukraine war in the United Nations and other international settings show they are bargaining their position to protect investment prospects.

The most recently discussed dimensions of the Russian presence in Africa were, nevertheless, geopolitical, almost like a prelude to the larger geopolitical shifts taking place nowadays.

The first images of the invasion reminded Africans of the Cold War spheres of influence theory and how it conceived the distribution of power. It was a period marked by Africans suffering from further marginalisation in global affairs. The recent demonstrations of agency on the part of Africans, particularly during the pandemic, could be shattered by a return of such an atmosphere, obliging countries to pick sides.

The hesitant stance of the African group to position itself clearly in support of Western or Russian positions was on full display in the several voting rounds of the War in Ukraine UN resolutions (*Africa Confidential* 2022). The number of African countries abstaining or absent from the vote increased from the first to the third round, much to the astonishment of some African watchers (Adeoye 2022). Chris Ogunmodede's words ring true: "Put another way, many in Africa and the rest of the Global South do not regard — and never have regarded — the liberal international order as particularly liberal or international" (Ogunmodede 2022). The hegemonic behaviour of deciding on sanctions outside the legal UN shield and wanting others to follow is a reminder of the asymmetric nature of international decisions.

The condemnations of Russia for its hidden support to the Kremlin-connected private military contractor Wagner Group's presence in various African conflicts, such as Libya, Soudan, or Mozambique, and more visibly in the Central African Republic and Mali, has influenced some countries' posture on the war. The African Union and its 2022 rotating Chair, Senegal, have maintained strict neutrality; so did countries like

South Africa, which shares the views of other BRICS countries.

Security considerations explain some of the hesitancy as well. "…African countries desire to broaden their economic, diplomatic and security relations beyond traditional Western powers and bristle at the notion that they must sacrifice their interests on the altar of geopolitical competition. It remains to be seen how effectively African countries can continue to strike this balance and for how long, but for most of them, the old adage rings true: When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers," says Ogunmodede (2022).

Russia is responsible for almost half of Africa's imports of military equipment (49%) (SIPRI n.d.). Even though the African market is small — 7.3% — it is precious for Russian arms dealers. A Rand study for the US Air Force points to the use of military cooperation as a way of ensuring influence useful in the confrontation between Russia and the West (Grissom et al. 2022). According to this study, 19 African countries are targeted by Russia to intensify their presence. Security insecure regimes in Africa are very tempted to protect their countries with such offerings from Russia. It is likely that more will investigate the use of private military contractors from Russia and other security-related options. These deals appear to the Africans as purely transactional, with the same characteristics they eventually envisage or negotiate with other suppliers, particularly Israel. The ultimate selling point for the providers will be the military efficacy of these arrangements.

5. The Unfolding of a New Geopolitical Reality

Despite several pundits' statements about the emergence of a multipolar world since the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed a reaffirmation of the United States' hegemony in many spheres of international life. Globalisation has demonstrated the great resilience of the distribution of power inherited from World War II. The biggest change has been China's great rise, significantly supported by technology and capital investments from the United States and other Western countries, as well as from Japan.

If China reached the top of the world economy, it was partly due to its acceptance of the world economy's governance rules, largely shaped by longstanding Western domination. China has integrated global value chains that concentrate the greatest value on intellectual property, despite long being at a clear disadvantage in this domain. Its adherence to trade rules established by the WTO has certainly been the subject of some misgivings, but it never escalated to confrontation, at least until quite recently. It did not contest the global financial system structures, favouring a centrality of the US

dollar and a regulatory system dominated by the United States. Until recently, China had the same decision-making weight within the IMF as Belgium; recent changes are still a long way from giving it prominence corresponding to the size of its economy. China tacitly agreed also to massively subsidise American consumption by buying up gigantic amounts of US treasury bonds as it accumulated capital from its own economic growth.

China has maintained a policy of looking away during major international decision-making moments in matters as wide-ranging as peace and security, development, human rights and the rule of law. Until President Xi Jinping came to power, the country insisted on its status as a developing country with a Third World economy, a country with significant unresolved poverty challenges. Its respect for a rules-based system and apparent faith in globalisation have undoubtedly contributed to its spectacular rise. The plethora of post-Cold War global compacts had China's support. The country benefited convincingly from them.

This period of enhanced multilateralism is changing, and with this change comes a sharp polarisation between the West and its immediate competitors, led by China. Deep down, BRICS represents a competitive ambition, and so far, its members have managed to maintain a semblance of coordination and unity in the most difficult moments of international relations. They defend the same interests in trade matters and the G20. They almost always vote in the same direction in various international bodies. Slowly, though, the collective leadership of the BRICS bloc is succumbing to another reality where China feels increasingly prepared to assume sole headship of an alternative hegemonic pole.

The war in Ukraine is the visible demonstration of a new geopolitical reality. Russia feels threatened in its role as a superpower, which it is no longer able to invoke convincingly for several reasons. The ageing and shrinking of its population are a warning of a demographic decline. This is even more serious with the almost continental territorial extension it has. Its economy is now dependent on natural resources, removing its industrial prominence in several domains and relegating it to a commodities exporter. Its soft power is waning even in its areas of linguistic influence.

But there is a domain left for Russia to assert itself. It is the country with the most nuclear warheads and continues to do cutting-edge research on unconventional weapons, despite its apparent incompetence in conventional military engagements. This, therefore, seems to be the only way for it to assert and elevate itself as a fundamental actor in the growing polarisation between the United States and China. Russia is pushing a new doctrine for conflict management and promoting itself as an

experienced pacemaker, challenging the quasi-monopoly the Western countries had in the domain (Lewis 2022).

The pandemic was a turning point in a notorious trend toward a confrontation between the West and China that started with trade and regulation of new technologies. China has been preparing for such a scenario. Its behaviour towards Russia seems self-interested but also defining. An alliance between the two exacerbates the confrontation of them with the West. It is as if several proxies explain the moment of the war (Corradini 2022).

The gigantic post-pandemic stimulus of rich countries' central banks to quicken a return to growth used the imperatives of a climate transition urgency as an additional justification for implementing unorthodox macroeconomic policy — an opportunity not to be missed. This, in turn, rang alarm bells for all concerned with strategic shifts in the energy sector, heralding necessary geopolitical realignments.

The United States saw a possible fragility in NATO regarding the great energy transition. The fact that gas is considered the obvious bridge energy — from more pollutant fossil fuels to renewables — did not escape strategists. Europe's extensive gas use could throw it into Russia's lap.

The war began when the pipeline that would bring Russian gas to the largest European economy — Germany — was completed and this key recipient had already opted for the end of its use of nuclear power. The war occurred when the United States had become a net exporter of energy, including LNG (the fact that it is a more polluting gas than Russia's could be mitigated by it being safer). The war has conveniently followed the hype over market positioning between the West and China on new technologies, such as 5G or AI. Showing Russia the red lines through unprecedented sanctions regimes — particularly financial isolation and the possibility of far-reaching punishments — serves as a warning to China. The economic risks of doing it with Russia are lower than confronting China, so it is a good bet to use Russia as an example.

The pandemic seems to have created the perfect storm for a polarisation that announces a different stage of globalisation, one that is likely to be marked by decoupling and divergence. The war in Ukraine serves as a proxy for the confrontation between Russia and the West, and it allows Russia to check the solidity of its alliance with China. At the same time, Russia serves as a proxy between the West and China regarding shaping future global governance.

Most African countries read the above signs with extreme care and concern.

6. African Pragmatism and Renewed Agency

There has been finger-pointing over who is responsible for the unprecedented food crisis ahead. Russia blames the sanctions, while Western countries point to a Russian blockade of the Ukrainian ports and its use of limited food exports as a pressure strategy. This crisis, which Africans want to avoid at all costs, recalls what happened during the pandemic with masks, ventilators and vaccines: a blame game, also known as vaccine diplomacy — a world of promises that did not materialise and left African countries exposed to a lack of solidarity. With the food crisis, the same behaviours are taking place.

The discussion of pandemic-related debt relief also exposed the unwillingness of Western countries and China to substantially help African countries. The set of these experiences created great scepticism concerning any promises. For example, during the pandemic, the European Union has only reprogrammed its cooperation budgets to replace development programmes with drug purchases from its pharmaceutical companies at inflated prices. A few days before the war in Ukraine began, the Europe-Africa Summit on 17 and 18 February 2022 in Brussels served as the stage for the announcement of €150 billion for Africa by 2027 (European Commission 2021). This sum contrasts with the European Commission budget, which only foresees around €33 billion for Africa during the same period. Examples of this type of discrepancy abound. The UN talks about an alarming reduction, not an increase in development aid (Deen 2022).

We are just eight years away from the ambitious goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, which include ending extreme poverty (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development n.d.). It seems that in Africa, few still believe in these kinds of aspirations. This realisation created a great convergence of positions and an impetus to count on its own forces. Manifestations of this commitment are the fast-tracking of the African Continental Free Trade Arrangement (AfCFTA) and the African Union's hard-nosed negotiating position on the manufacture of medicines and vaccines. This is harshly demanded by Africans. The overwhelming majority of African countries refuse the complicated platforms of temporary repositioning or restructuring of sovereign debts, which is another demonstration of the agency. They are considered by most to be inefficient and condescending. Ukraine has already received more aid from the West than the entire continent during the two years of the pandemic, illustrating the enormous impact the war will have on the continent.

African countries see the divergence in global affairs as an opportunity to keep their distance from more powerful players. They appear to be building their own defence in the form of a convergence of their usually fragmented positions. This movement is not consolidated yet and will surely be challenged by divisions and remain fragile for a while. But if this pragmatic approach is strengthened, we may witness the birth of a new African attitude. The war will have served as a trigger for Africa not to enter the great period of polarisation that is beginning with the same positions that divided the continent in the Cold War. The dilemma is for Africa to either build its own unified international stature or to transform itself by atomisation into a set of countries that can be used as second-rate proxies.

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Russia and Africa: the Invasion of Ukraine Leads to the Next Major Crisis

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4044

Abstract

Everything that was true until recently is no longer valid. Russia's war against Ukraine has consequences for the entire world. In particular, low-income countries and countries that need to import food and energy have been plunged into crisis. Food, oil and gas exporters, on the other hand, benefit. African countries are experiencing the negative effects even more than other regions of the world. Following the consequences of the pandemic and the climate crisis, Africa is once again being dragged into an externally induced crisis, with hunger and poverty continuing to rise.

Keywords: Food Crisis, Ukraine, Russia, Africa.

ISSN 1013-1108

1. Everything Wastepaper

One of Russia's key foreign policy goals for 2022 was to prioritise relations with Africa. Before the 2019 Sochi summit, President Putin had outlined that Russia was ready "not to redivide the continent's wealth, but to compete and cooperate with Africa. The main point is that competition should be developed in a civilised manner and in accordance with the law. We have something to offer our African friends … Our African agenda has a positive, forward-looking character. We do not align ourselves with one party against another and reject any kind of geopolitical games with Africa".[1]

Now, all that is wastepaper. And whether the planned Russia-Africa summit will take place in the autumn of 2022 is still written in the shadows because Russia has lost a great deal of credit in the UN and has damaged its own economy so badly through its war of destruction against Ukraine that it can no longer make an attractive offer to the African countries. This applies economically but also militarily and politically. And the African countries, which were hesitant in condemning the invasion, must ask themselves what meaning agreements under international law actually hold for them.

2. The Vote at the UN

In the vote on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, 17 African countries abstained, eight did not vote, Eritrea voted against, and 28 condemned Russia's violation of sovereignty. The Russian war on Ukraine has been greeted with conspicuous silence in some countries, and many African states are taking ambivalent positions. Some African countries have also maintained long-standing relations with Russia, dating back to the Cold War era. This can be explained by the fact that the West is less well-liked than before on the continent. The discredited post-colonial behaviour of the West is also reflected in the behaviour of African countries towards Russia. However, it also has something to do with the increasing influence Russia, China, India and many other emerging countries have gained on the continent in recent decades. Many experts, therefore, speak of a new "Scramble for Africa".

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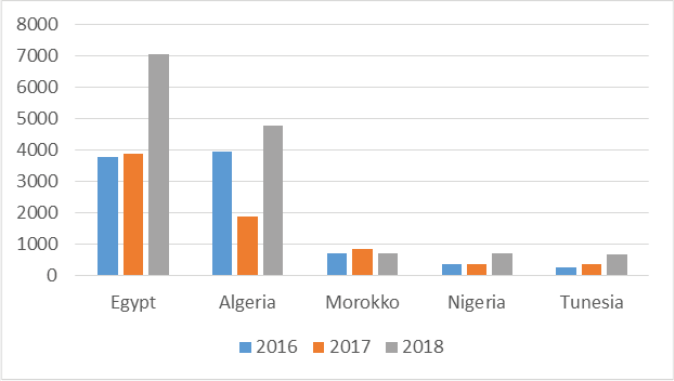
1 *Deutsche Welle*, 23 October 2019. ***https://www.dw.com/de/afrika-gipfel-in-sotschi-russlands-renaissance-in-afrika/a-50955481***

3. Russia's Continental Agenda

The Russian government emphasised four strategic goals for its relations with Africa following the Russia-Africa Summit in 2019 (Shubin 2020).

- First, Russia wants to use African states to expand its power on the global stage. African countries represent the largest voting group in the UN and provide Russia with a pool of allies against the continued dominance of the United States and other Western powers. The voting behaviour of African countries shows that this has succeeded to some extent.
- Secondly, Russia is keen to obtain access to African countries' raw materials and natural resources. Russian mining companies extract diamonds in Angola and platinum in Zimbabwe. The aluminium producer Rusal owns mines in Guinea, which has the largest bauxite deposits in the world. The increasingly close military ties with the Central African Republic (gold, diamonds, uranium) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (diamonds, copper, cobalt and coltan) were meant to secure Russian mining companies access in these two countries. Russia is launching joint economic projects with African countries to secure access to Africa's natural resources. Although Russian-African trade has more than doubled in the last five years, it is quite small at around $20 billion per year—less than a quarter of this trade with sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 1: Russia's Foreign Trade with Africa, USD Million, 2016–2018



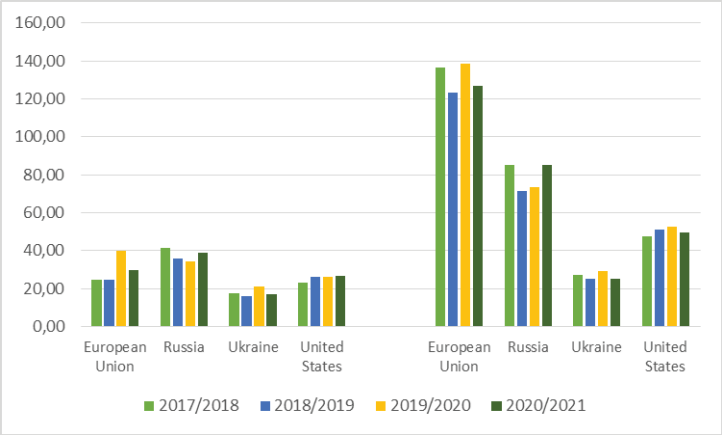
Source: GTAI. 2019. "Russland startet Afrikainitiative." Berlin. https://www.gtai.de/de/trade/russland/wirtschaftsumfeld/russland-startet-afrikainitiative-115384

- Thirdly, Russia is seeking to expand its dominance as a supplier of arms exports and security in Africa. Russia has become Africa's largest arms provider, accounting for 35 per cent of arms exports to the continent. Since 2015, Russia has signed over 20 new bilateral military cooperation agreements with African states. Russia currently has military agreements with a total of 40 African countries. For example, the armed forces of Algeria, Angola and Ethiopia are almost entirely equipped with Russian-made weapons and military instruments. Russian weapons are attractive to African states because they are cheaper than American weapons. In addition, more than 2 500 military personnel from African countries have graduated from Russian military academies in the last five years.
- And fourthly, Russia wants to support the development of energy and electricity supply by Russian companies. Companies such as Gazprom, Lukoil, Rostec and Rosatom have invested on the continent. In 2018, for example, Rosneft signed a contract to supply Ghana with liquefied natural gas. Rosneft also has oil and gas projects in Algeria, Egypt and Mozambique, while Lukoil operates in Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana and Nigeria. There is an opportunity for Russian energy companies to expand production at lower costs than in Russia. One example is the joint venture between Russia and Zimbabwe's Pen East Ltd to develop one of the world's largest platinum metal deposits. The state atomic energy agency Rosatom is building a nuclear power plant in Egypt. It has also signed an agreement to build two more power plants in Nigeria and has nuclear energy agreements with several other African countries, including Ghana and Kenya. According to the African Development Bank, Russian investment in Africa peaked at $20 billion in 2008. Less than 1% of total foreign direct investment came from Russia in 2017. Although this is a small investment compared to France, the UK or China, Russia has secured significant influence over key economic sectors in Africa through its energy and commodity investments, making Russia a geostrategic player. This is also reflected in its significant role in Africa's food markets.

4. Russia and Ukraine as Important Exporters of Wheat and Maize

Both Russia and Ukraine play an important role in global agricultural markets and food supply for Africa:

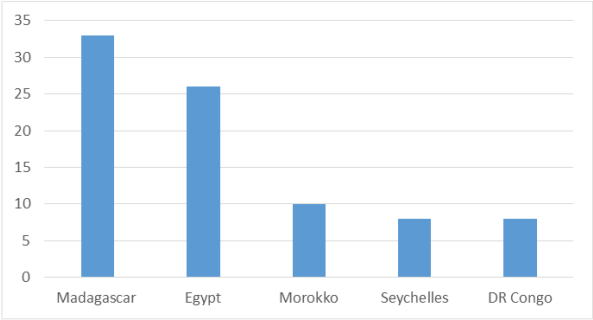
Figure 2: Main Exporters and Producers of Wheat, Million Tons, 2017–2021



Source: US Department of Agriculture. 2022. Grain: World Markets and Trade, Washington, DC. https://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/circulars/grain.pdf

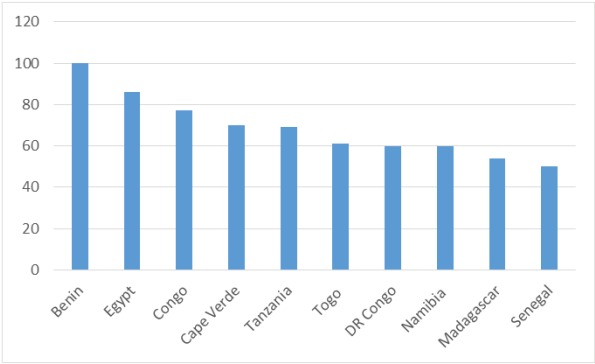
- Russia accounts for 10% and Ukraine for 4% of global wheat production. They are the world's largest grain exporters: together, they supply about 30% of the world's traded wheat. Ukraine is the fourth-largest provider of wheat and maize.
- Africa imported around US$4 billion (2020) of agricultural products from Russia. Wheat accounted for almost 90% of these imports. At the same time, African imports of agricultural products from Ukraine amounted to US$2.9 billion. Of this, 48% was wheat and 31% maize.

Figure 3: Imports of Maize, Dependence on Supply from Russia and Ukraine, % Share, 2020



Source: Based on UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa. 2022. "The Potential Impact of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict on Africa." New York.

Figure 4: Wheat Imports, Dependence on Supply from Ukraine and Russia, % Share,



2020

Source: Based on UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa. 2022. "The Potential Impact of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict on Africa." New York.

- South Africa receives about 30% of its wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine. Dependence on wheat and maize is particularly high in Benin,

Egypt and Congo (see Figures 3 and 4).

- Russia is also one of the world's largest exporters of fertilisers. The war has led to a sharp increase in fertiliser prices and could exacerbate the food crises of some African countries, especially those that rely on agricultural development.
- As Russia is also a major producer of oil, gas, aluminium, palladium and nickel, the war disruption to supply chains has also caused commodity prices to skyrocket. African oil-importing countries have already felt the impact of rising oil prices through significantly higher transport prices. The consequences of that are inflation and lower incomes for their populations. Oil exporters like Nigeria and Angola, on the other hand, have benefited from the commodity price development through higher foreign exchange earnings.
- Wheat and wheat products account for one-third of average national cereal consumption in the East Africa region, with per capita consumption highest in Djibouti, Eritrea and Sudan. Imports meet 84% of wheat demand in the region.
- Given the size of wheat demand and the high dependence on imports from Russia and Ukraine, Sudan has already felt the impact of the ongoing conflict the most, followed by Kenya and Ethiopia. Other countries in the region are also likely to be affected either directly (through higher prices for wheat products) or indirectly (through consumption of substitute products leading to an increase in prices for other cereals).
- In addition, Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan are particularly affected by wheat price shocks as they face climatic crises that have already led to high food prices (Fox and Jayne 2020).
- Regions that have already experienced famine due to the climate crisis and the pandemic are now even more at risk, as international aid agencies are buying up wheat and grain to fight the famine. As a result, food prices have risen, putting extra strain on countries that rely on imports. Countries on the continent that have been classified as starvation zones by the United Nations and need access to aid include Madagascar, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad, Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- The global supply crisis in grains, oilseeds and vegetable oils has been further complicated by China's activities to buy up more than half of the world's

grain stocks, including 51% of the world's wheat reserves. The Chinese State Council fears a "large-scale resurgence of poverty in China",[2] which is why China imported a record 164.5 million tonnes of grain in 2021. The aim is to guarantee the country's food supply, which is why the State Council assesses procurement as a security strategy. Chinese demand on world markets contributed to global grain prices soaring even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The war against Ukraine significantly worsened the situation. The closure of Ukrainian ports caused Ukraine's grain exports to collapse, reducing global supply and pushing up prices.

5. Egypt in Particular Dependence

The Egyptian food security situation is precarious because the agricultural sector is unable to produce enough cereals, especially wheat and oilseeds, to meet even half of the domestic demand. Egypt relies on large quantities of heavily subsidised imports to ensure the supply of bread and vegetable oil for its 105 million citizens. The war is hitting Egypt's supply particularly hard, as 85% of its wheat and 73% of its sunflower oil comes from Russia and Ukraine. In 2020, Egypt imported about 54% of its sunflower oil supply from Ukraine and 19% from Russia.

The US Department of Agriculture estimates that Egyptian wheat production will reach about 9 million tonnes in fiscal year 2021/22, while Egyptian consumption will be 21.3 million tonnes, leaving a deficit of 12.3 million tonnes that will have to be made up by imports. Even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, prices for these imports were at record levels. The price of soft wheat used for bread-making was $271 per tonne at the end of the third quarter of 2021, up 22% from a year earlier. The price continued to rise in the fourth quarter of 2021 as global stocks fell after producers in the US, Canada, Russia, Ukraine and the rest of the Black Sea region suffered crop damage from drought, frost and heavy rains. On 3 March 2022, just seven days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the price of soft wheat on the Chicago Board of Trade was US$389 per tonne.

With Russia imposing tariffs on its wheat exports, the Egyptian population was already facing limited access to food. With access to grain from Ukraine threatened by

2 See China's National Food and Strategic Reserves Administration, 16 April 2022, *http://www.lswz.gov.cn/html/xinwen/2021-04/16/content_265375.shtml.*

the war, Egypt's food security and economic and political stability are at risk.

Egypt's wheat imports are driven by the widespread consumption of the flatbread Eish Baladi, which is the staple food among the poor. Egyptians consume 150–180 kilograms of bread per capita. More than 88% of the Egyptian population depends on the bread ration system. The government allocated US$3.3 billion for bread subsidies last year. Egypt's new wheat purchases and subsidies will now place an even greater financial burden on the national budget.

6. Nigeria's Food Crisis

The situation in Nigeria is quite different. But here, too, the dependence on food imports is very high. Nigerian President Buhari said in 2021: "Nigeria spends over $2 billion annually on wheat imports". And the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele, underlined: "Wheat is the third most widely consumed grain in Nigeria after maize and rice. It is estimated that the country only produces about one per cent (63 000 metric tons) of the 5–6 million metric tons of the commodity consumed annually in Nigeria".[3]

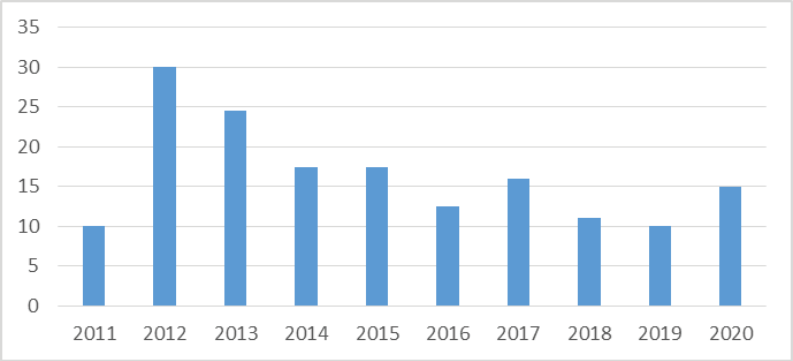
Nigeria has been dependent on $10 billion of food imports to make up for its food and agricultural production deficits. This is especially true for wheat, rice, poultry and fish. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria spent about $46.2 billion on imported food alone in 2019. To protect domestic producers and encourage the growth of Nigeria's agricultural industry, the government has introduced trade barriers on certain agricultural products and offered some economic incentives to investors in the industry, such as import duty exemptions on farm equipment, income tax relief and VAT exemptions. Nevertheless, demand for imported products continued to rise.

A part of the food imports and agricultural products originates from the USA. These averaged US$537 million over the last five years, of which wheat accounted for about 70%. Last year, Nigeria imported over 1.29 million tonnes of wheat from the US. Nigeria also imports American soybeans, vegetable oils and animal fats, processed vegetables, dairy products and fish. The market share of wheat from the US was still over 90% in 2012 but has fallen to less than 40% in 2020 due to strong competition

3 *The Cable*, 10 November 2021, *https://www.thecable.ng/150000-farmers-to-benefit-as-cbn-flags-off-wheat-production-programme*.

from wheat exports from Russia and Ukraine.[4] This very high dependence on imports is now reflected in significant local price increases for food due to supply bottlenecks and the sharp rise in import prices, and it has consequences for the survival of the population.

Figure 5: Nigeria's Food Imports—Share of Merchandise Imports, %



Source: World Bank. 2022. "Nigeria's Food Imports, % of Merchandise Imports." https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/food-imports-percent-of-merchandise-imports-wb-data.html

The Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics report on international trade shows that the main agricultural products imported into Nigeria are durum wheat and seeds. Nigeria's dependence on foreign imports to meet rising wheat consumption could become its biggest challenge yet because of the war between Russia and Ukraine. Bread, noodles, pasta and semolina, which are made from wheat flour in Nigeria, are among the most important food items. These products have experienced a 50% or more increase in price between the end of 2020 and January 2022. Supply pressures will lead to further price increases. Prices of cereals, sweet potatoes, meat, fish and fruits increased across the board (by more than 23 per cent in 2021). For years, the causes of food inflation have included intensifying conflict between local farmers and livestock owners, Boko Haram's terrorism, kidnappings and insurgencies in Nigeria's Middle Belt. Additional

4 International Trade Administration, 13 October 2021, *https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/nigeria-agriculture-sector*.

price pressure comes from the devaluation of the local currency, the Naira, which has been devalued several times since 2021. Higher fuel prices have also contributed to the rise in food prices.

Nigerian-Russian trade is not very large but is important in many ways. The main Russian exports to Nigeria are grain, maize, iron and steel, mineral fuels and fertilisers. The total value of these exports was estimated at about US$423 million in 2020, according to UNCTAD's COMTRADE database.

In summary, this means that Nigeria will not be able to close the wheat gap of over 6 million tonnes via import substitution measures: Nigeria will continue to rely on food imports. Central to this is that, on the one hand, import dependency on Russia and Ukraine is reduced, but at the same time, the long overdue measures to develop agriculture must be tackled—a sector of the economy that has been severely neglected for a long time but in which a large proportion of the people live and work (see You, Takeshima, and Xie 2018).

7. Conclusion

Many African countries have been plunged into economic and social crises by the war brought on by Russia. Especially those countries that are heavily dependent on food imports from Ukraine and Russia are now facing inflation, social hardship, more hunger and more poverty. It will not be long before new poverty revolts or bread-and-wheat riots break out in some countries, especially in fragile states. The supply crisis highlights the need for African states to make much greater efforts to prioritise the development of agriculture and food industries and to ensure sustainable supply security. The global food crisis illustrates the imbalance that many countries have created through their high dependence on food imports, not only in Nigeria and Egypt but in all commodity-producing countries. Farmers and rural populations are suffering because of decades of marginalisation of rural Africa. Poverty and employment crises are widespread here (Kappel 2021). The challenges for most African states are particularly severe because, in addition, food is imported from countries whose agricultural production is far more productive (EU, USA, Ukraine and Russia) and supported by government subsidies, such as those of the European Union and the USA.

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Africa's Food Security under the Shadow of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4083

Abstract

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has emerged as an exogenous shock to global food supply chains, which foreshadows worrying impacts on Africa's food security and nutrition, and threaten to derail national and global efforts to end hunger and poverty and to achieve sustainable development goals on the continent. This article provides an early assessment of the implications of the invasion for Africa's food supply chains and food security. Two particularly aggravating factors, which explain the current and likely future impact of the invasion on Africa's food security are discussed: the timing of the invasion and the two parties involved in the conflict. The article underlines four major channels by which the invasion disrupts African food supply chains: energy markets and shipping routes, availability and prices of agricultural production inputs, domestic food price inflation, and trade sanctions and other financial measures. In addition, the article considers the risk of social and political unrest that disruption to food supply chains and spikes in domestic food prices may inflame. Finally, the paper briefly discusses options for short- and long-term responses by African governments and their development partners to mitigate the repercussions of the conflict on food supply chains, boost food and nutrition security, and build resilience of Africa's food systems.

Keywords: Food Security, Food Supply Chain, Food System, Russia-Ukraine Conflict, Africa..

ISSN 1013-1108

1. Introduction

Contemporary food systems are increasingly globalised, constituting complex networks of multiple actors and multidirectional interlinkages between organisations at local, national, regional and global levels. Food systems are composed of sub-systems, including input supply systems, farming systems, and market systems, and they are not isolated from other systems (e.g., energy systems, trade systems, and health systems). Thus, they are constantly influenced by both internal and external stressors caused by nature-induced changes, socioeconomic shocks, and geopolitical conflicts (Abu Hatab et al. 2019). Accordingly, a structural change in food supply chains (FSCs) might originate from a change in another system. For instance, policies that promote the production of biofuels in the energy system will likely have a significant impact on FSCs. On the one hand, such characteristics of contemporary FSCs challenge the classical understanding of the "linearity" of supply chains, where one actor simply supplies materials or feeds resources into another. On the other hand, they make the task of a conceptual or computational assessment of FSC resilience to systematic shocks and extreme events challenging.

In Africa, food systems are particularly susceptible to the impacts of exogenous shocks, including geopolitical conflicts, due to the inherent physical, socioeconomic, environmental and institutional characteristics of agricultural production and food sectors. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2021) estimates that over 280 million Africans, or 21% of the continent's population, suffer from hunger. This is a higher proportion of people affected by food insecurity than in any other region in the world. Agriculture and food sectors contribute around a quarter of Africa's GDP and provide employment and income for at least 50% of the population. Most of the continent's agricultural output (85%), especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is produced by smallholder farmers. Moreover, African countries rely heavily on the international market to meet the food needs of their ever-growing population, and it is estimated that over 80% of food consumed domestically in recent years was imported from outside the continent, leading to an annual food import bill of around US$40 billion between 2016 and 2019 (UNCTAD 2022). These characteristics of Africa's agricultural and food sectors increase vulnerability to exogenous shocks and compound the consequences on food security and nutrition outcomes.

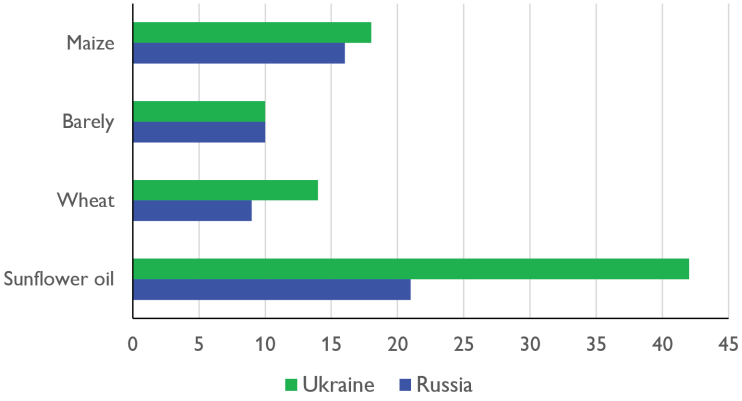
On 24 February, the Russian invasion of Ukraine emerged as an additional shock to Africa's food systems that threatens to disrupt the already-fragile FSCs, exacerbate

food security challenges, and subsequently derail national and global efforts aimed at achieving SDG1 (end hunger) and SDG2 (end poverty). In the following section, I will briefly highlight two dimensions of the ongoing war that explain its worrying effects on Africa's food security and key pathways through which these effects will be transmitted to the continent. Next, I will offer some thoughts on policy strategies to mitigate the war's food insecurity effects on African countries. At the time of writing, the war is in its fourth month, and by necessity, some of what follows is speculative in nature. However, offering these thoughts at this stage, when other research undertakings are being designed or initiated, can identify key research gaps and avenues for future research on this topic.

2. The When and Where Dimensions of the Crisis

In particular, two dimensions explain the worrying impacts of the invasion on Africa's food security: when (the timing) and where (the parties involved). With regard to the timing, global FSCs went through a once-in-a-century crisis caused over the last two years by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted supply chain activities from end to end and posed profound threats to global food security (Laborde et al. 2020). The pandemic had a disproportionate impact on FSCs in African countries, which felt the full brunt of the pandemic due to their resource constraints and limited governance capacity that prevented them from responding adequately to its consequences on hunger, poverty and inequities. The invasion of Ukraine took place at a time when FSCs in Africa were still struggling with or trying to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exerted substantial stress on FSCs in Africa for farm labour and production, processing, transport, and logistics, as well as major shifts in demand and consumption (Abu Hatab, Lagerkvist, and Esmat 2020). As a result, the FAO estimates that the pandemic has resulted in 130 million undernourished people in the world, including more than 40 million in Africa, and an increase in the proportion of Africans who are food-stressed and in food crisis by 30% and 35%, respectively between 2019 and 2020 (FAO 2021). In tandem with the pandemic, the outbreak of a desert locust across several East African countries between the end of 2019 and early 2020 placed particular pressure on already-vulnerable communities who rely on agriculture for their survival and posed a serious risk to food security and livelihoods, with over 13 million people plagued by severe acute food insecurity in the Horn of Africa (Salih et al. 2020).

Figure 1. Share of Russia & Ukraine in Global Food Exports (%), 2019–2020



Source: By author, plotted using data from World Integrated Trade Solution database (WITS): https://wits.worldbank.org/

The second dimension is related to "where", that is, the two parties involved in this conflict, i.e., Russia and Ukraine, are key players in the international market for food and agricultural commodities, and their exports collectively account for around 12% of globally traded calories. The two countries are the source of nearly two-thirds of traded sunflower oil, and they jointly account for around one-quarter of global wheat exports and around one-fifth of global maize and barley (Figure 1). The majority of African countries are heavily dependent on food imports, especially wheat, from Russia and Ukraine to meet the demand of domestic markets. For instance, both Benin and Somalia obtain all of their wheat from Ukraine and Russia (WITS 2022). In 2019 and 2020, the dependency of Egypt, Sudan, Kongo, Senegal and Tanzania on Russian and Ukrainian wheat imports stood at 82%, 75%, 69%, 66% and 64%, respectively. Therefore, both the timing and geographic location of the conflict distinguish this crisis from previous food crises and explain why it especially threatens to endanger FSCs and crucial wheat supplies, as well as exacerbating food insecurity challenges in many of the African countries.

3. Pathways Through Which the Russia–Ukraine Crisis Threatens Africa's Food Security

There are four major channels through which the Russian military action against Ukraine threatens to have direct and indirect negative impacts on FSCs and subsequently on food security in Africa: (i) energy markets and shipping routes, (ii) availability and prices of agricultural production inputs, (iii) domestic food price inflation, and (iv) trade sanctions and other financial measures.

With regard to energy markets and shipping routes, Russia is a key player in the global energy market and is ranked the second-largest oil exporter worldwide. The ongoing military action significantly hampered Russia's ability to export oil and other energy products. In response, global oil prices have been soaring since the beginning of the military operation and exceeded the threshold of US$100 a barrel for the first time since 2014. In addition, because 70% of Ukraine's food exports are distributed via ship and many parts of the Black Sea are now dangerous or unpassable, logistics firms have had to suspend services, and prices skyrocketed in the last two months. Indeed, this translated into higher ocean shipping charges for food and agricultural commodities and sharply increased charges for alternative modes of transportation, including air and rail freight, which in turn reinforced the already burdensome inflation in domestic food prices in African countries that jumped in many countries in recent months by more than 20% above their level a year ago (FAO 2022).

Regarding agricultural production inputs, the global fertiliser market is particularly susceptible to severe supply disruptions. Russia is the world's top producer of natural gas, which represents a main ingredient of the fertiliser industry, particularly the production of nitrogenous fertilisers such as ammonia and urea. Before the conflict, fertiliser markets were already under severe supply stress due to the sanctions that the EU and the US imposed on Belarus in 2021, as well as the sharp spikes in natural gas prices in 2021. Following the invasion, the Russian Industry Ministry established a temporary embargo on fertiliser exports to guarantee supplies to domestic farmers. Likewise, China has recently suspended urea and phosphate exports to ensure adequate supplies for domestic food production. Fertiliser consumption as a share of production in Africa ranges, according to 2018 data, between 20% and around 80%, implying the vulnerability of agricultural production to energy price fluctuation (World Bank 2019). Shortages in fertilisers or unaffordable fertiliser prices can reduce agricultural production and yields in times of declining global stocks and surging global food prices.

In connection with the previous impact pathways, the third channel through which the Russian invasion of Ukraine threatens food security in Africa is domestic food and non-food price inflation. This is attributable to the facts that African countries—as mentioned earlier—rely heavily on the international food market to meet the needs of their rapidly increasing population and that food represents a large share of African households' expenditure (e.g., 45% in Egypt, 54% in Nigeria). Increasing global food prices and shortages in the food supply in African markets stimulate inflation in domestic food prices—the FAO food price index stood at 200% in the first quarter of 2022—and sharply decrease the purchasing power of poor households. In addition, inflation in food prices in African countries customarily leads to enduring effects on headline inflation through inflationary expectations and workers' demands for higher wages (Abu Hatab and Hess 2021). During such acute crisis, domestic food price shocks are likely to exacerbate the pre-existing risks of food insecurity in the continent, especially for the most vulnerable populations.

Another impact pathway originates from the financial measures and trade sanctions imposed on and by Russia. As of June 2022, the EU Sanction Map (2022) shows that Russia is now the world's most sanctioned country, with over 9 000 different targeted sanctions. In response, Russia hit back at Western sanctions by imposing significant countersanctions against the US, EU member states, and several other countries, including the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland. These countersanctions involved export bans on a string of products until the end of 2022, including agricultural commodities and some forestry products such as timber. On the import side, a disruption in global agricultural and food trade due to these sanctions and countersanctions is likely to adversely affect Africa's food security through accessibility and availability. For instance, the sanction imposed by the West targeted not only the Russian trade and financial systems but also the shipping industry, and the war has led to the closure of most Ukrainian ports. The intensification and prolongation of the conflict would create significant shortages in food supply in African markets, stimulate further spikes in food prices, and deteriorate food and nutrition security for consumers. What could make things worse is that the Russia-Ukraine war comes at a time when the drought and volatile climate conditions in several food-exporting countries are putting pressure on FSCs and global food prices.

On the export side, the import demand for food commodities (especially fresh fruit and vegetables) by Russia, and to a lesser extent in Ukraine, has been growing over the past two decades, fuelled by increases in real disposable incomes and the growing

tendency among domestic consumers to maintain healthier diets (Abu Hatab 2016). This offered export opportunities to small producers and exporters in many African countries (e.g., Egypt, Morocco and Kenya) to increase their market share in the Russian and Ukrainian markets for imported horticultural commodities. The closure of ports will lead to a sharp decline in demand for certain perishable foods that Russia and Ukraine import from African countries. For instance, South Africa's agricultural exports—mainly oranges, mandarins, lemons, pears, apples, fresh grapes, and wine—to Ukraine and Russia were valued at US$260 million (around ZAR4 billion) in 2020, most of which were produced by smallholder farmers and exported by small- and medium-sized enterprises (WITS 2022). African producers and exporters without adequate storage facilities and with limited abilities to perform market shifts now find themselves with commodities that they cannot export, which is likely to have adverse effects on their livelihoods and food security that directly or indirectly depend on earnings from export food commodities to the two countries.

4. Conclusion and Policy Implications

For all the factors and their consequences presented above, the ongoing Russian-Ukraine conflict poses serious threats to FSCs and food security in Africa. In many African countries, sociopolitical unrest has traditionally coincided with periods of high and volatile food prices. Evidence shows that disruptions to FSCs and spikes in domestic food prices severely deteriorate the social and economic well-being of the vulnerable population groups and could result in dramatic rioting, often termed "food riots". These have often been associated with an increased probability of social and political unrest (e.g., Bellemare 2015; Abu Hatab and Hess 2021). Thus, the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on food supply and food price inflation could inflame conflict, destabilise governments, and cause violence to spill over borders. This scenario should not be taken lightly. It has been barely seven years since the rise in food insecurity across sub-Saharan Africa was attributed to violent conflict, and it has been nearly a decade since food price inflation played a major role in triggering the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East (Abu Hatab and Hess 2021).

Therefore, the efforts of the African governments and their development partners and donors should respond to the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by deploying short- and long-term responses to boost food and nutrition security, reduce risks, and strengthen food systems. In the short term, it is crucial to strengthen social

protection systems for nutrition and food, and nutrition assistance needs to be at the heart of the social protection programmes to protect food access for the most vulnerable by increasing their purchasing power or by directly providing food through government or community-based programmes. To accomplish this, there is a need to tailor nutrition-sensitive protection programmes and consider the potential benefits of different transfer modalities (e.g., in-kind, cash, or vouchers). In addition, African countries should take full advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area to increase intra-African agri-food trade and reduce their reliance on the international markets during times of exogenous shock. Especially important is that the global response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine should take into consideration the food security dimension so that measures and sanctions imposed on Russia do not have a "third-party" effect that penalises African populations who are already food-insecure and rely on food supplies from Russia and Ukraine. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that export-restricting policies by food exporting nations, like those that were implemented at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, are avoided because they can add further pressures on the capacity of FSCs in Africa and cascading effects on food systems and consumers' food security and nutrition.

The current geopolitical and strategic confrontation, and the shifts it causes, also require that Africa plays an active role on the world stage in terms of policy and diplomacy. African leaders are, however, divided with respect to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The dependency of African countries on wheat and agricultural imports from Russia and the ongoing efforts by African governments to navigate the conflict's economic, political and food security consequences further explain the dividedness in the positions of African leaders. Their positions also reflect their frustration with how Western powers engage with issues related to fighting hunger and alleviating poverty on the continent and other social and economic development issues. Thus, while it seems impossible to speak with one voice, given the differences in foreign policy affiliations among the governments, it is important that, through the African Union, the continent seeks to limit the damage in direct engagement with both Russia and Ukraine. Securing food production and supply at relatively affordable prices for the people is a common interest shared by all African states. Hence, the efforts by the continental body to find ears on both sides of the war and support for potential solutions to ease the war-related impact on food security are appropriate means to limit the damages.

In the long run, stronger international cooperation is needed to build productive

capacities of African food systems and enhance the resilience and preparedness to deal with future shocks. While projections indicate that exogenous shocks will be more frequent in the future, it is crucial not only to reduce the effects and vulnerability of food systems in Africa but also to foster their preparedness and adaptive capacity to future pandemics and potential risks, particularly the barriers and enablers that determine their ability to adapt and recover from such events. To this end, accelerated investment in sustainable agriculture needs to be leveraged to deliver on that longer-term goal of a more inclusive, environmentally sustainable and resilient African food system. In this respect, integrated resilience-based approaches are crucial to take effective preventive measures before supply chain disruption and recovery measures occur, to recognise the complex nature of global FSCs, and to address the multifaceted and widespread effects of global crises and shocks channelled through FSCs to food security in Africa.

Acknowledgement

The author thanks Professor Henning Melber for his comments and suggestions, which helped improve and clarify this article.

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Russia Resurgent? Untangling the Role and Meaning of Moscow's Proxies in West Africa and the Sahel

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4058

Abstract

Growing international concern over Russia's military and political resurgence in Africa and the possibility of creating a renewed Cold War has been rekindled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the outbreak of war in Europe in February 2022. Russia's growing influence in Africa through the re-establishment of old ties and the creation of new ones has been perceived as a quest to re-establish the geopolitical gains that the Soviet Union achieved before its collapse in 1989. Increasing demand for Russian weaponry and equipment, support for unpopular, illegitimate, or unconstitutionally elected leaders, and the targeting and interest in mining concessions and natural resources are considered by the West to be a threat to democratic gains and stability in an already fragile continent. Several questions arise as a result of the deepfake propaganda around occurrences on the continent. How has Russia's resurgence or reemergence manifested on the African continent? What instruments does Russia utilise to exert its influence in Africa? What are the potential opportunities and threats of Russian presence in West Africa and the Sahel? And how will other global actors be affected?

This debate article seeks to examine a particular aspect of Russia's resurgence on the

ISSN 1013-1108

African continent, namely, the presence of Russian proxies in West Africa and the Sahel. It examines the multiple dynamics created by their presence, the potential threats that their proliferation and activities generate in an already fragile sub-region, and how such activities, if unconstrained, can impose other potential dangers on the continent and the globe.

Keywords: Russia's Proxies, West Africa, Sahel.

1. Introduction

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent outbreak of war in February 2022 has brought back old threats and is re-shaping the international order in ways unseen since the end of the Second World War. There are several fascinating facets of this war, not least are its wider geopolitical ramifications on other parts of the world. In one particular instance relating to Africa, when the existing post-1945 world order was created, all African states except Liberia and Ethiopia were colonies of European metropoles, meaning they had no say and limited agency over the decisions taken on their behalf. The Russo-Ukrainian war is beginning to tinker with the existing geopolitical setup in ways that were inconceivable just 18 months ago—notably in the way African states are acting on the world stage. This is epitomised by their voting patterns in the UN Security Council (UNSC), the General Assembly (UNGA) and its specialised agencies, especially the Human Rights Council, and it has led to a renewed global attention on two synergistic developments. The first is the demonstration of Africa's agency on the international stage in terms of its voting patterns in the UN General Assembly and other agencies, and the second relates to the role of a resurgent Russia in Africa on multiple fronts. Although Russia's political, military, and economic influence in sub-Saharan Africa is negligible compared to other global actors, it is considered one of the fastest-growing trade partners (Mureithi 2022, 1; Faleg and Secrieru 2020, 1). But herein lies what we see as a puzzle that needs untangling and explanation.

This debate article seeks to examine a particular aspect of Russia's resurgence on the African continent, namely, the presence of Russian proxies in West Africa and the Sahel. Furthermore, it examines the multiple dynamics created by their presence and the potential threats that their proliferation and activities generate in an already fragile sub-region. Finally, we analyse how such activities, if unconstrained, can impose other potential dangers on the continent and the globe.

2. Background

Russia has reemerged in Africa after a long absence following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. By the mid-2000s, however, Russian military, technological and economic strength were on the rise. Russia had been admitted into multiple international communities where, prior to the end of the Cold War, it did not have access to the Group of 7 (G7) states. In recognition of the

political and economic reforms it had undertaken, the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, and Italy added Russia to their group in 1998, transforming the previous G7 into the G8. However, all was to change, probably as a prelude to what was to follow, when in March 2014, Russia sparked an international crisis when it conquered and occupied Crimea, previously an autonomous republic of Ukraine. In response to this flagrant breach of international law, the original G7 responded by indefinitely suspending Russia's membership in the group, effectively dissolving the larger G8. Russia's annexation of Crimea and rustication from the G8 led to a series of diplomatic missteps resulting in isolation from the US and Europe, mainly due to the Kremlin's interventions in Ukraine, Libya, and Syria.

Due to its increasing isolation among the powers of the Western world and cognisant of a loss of influence elsewhere, Russia recognised the importance of creating new allies and rekindling relationships with old ones in Africa to promote its agenda as a relevant global actor and get access to the rich natural resources in Africa. We argue that Russia's re-emergence in Africa is a natural consequence of its historical ties to a continent that it once perceived as its *chasse gardée*.

Russia leverages its humanitarian and soft-power initiatives to promote itself as a constructive player in global affairs (Ramani 2022). This was demonstrated in its endeavours to support African countries with Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccines while other developed countries were focusing on their populations. This complemented the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) system and other states that also provided free vaccines to Africans.

Although Russia's return and presence in West Africa and the Sahel is not new and represents the reopening of otherwise old and dormant ties, this has been present in almost dire apocalyptic terms. Siegle (2022) argues that:

> Russia has been aggressively pursuing its strategic objectives in Africa in recent years—securing a foothold in the eastern Mediterranean, gaining naval port access in the Red Sea, expanding natural resource extraction opportunities, displacing Western influence, and promoting alternatives to democracy as a regional norm. Africa, thus, is a "theater" for Russia's geostrategic interests rather than a destination itself—a perspective reflected in the means that Russia employs. Unlike most major external partners, Russia is not investing significantly in conventional statecraft in Africa—e.g., economic investment, trade, and security assistance. Rather, Russia relies on a series of asymmetric (and often extralegal) measures for influence —

mercenaries, arms-for-resource deals, opaque contracts, election interference, and disinformation (Siegle 2022).

Though the argument above and several others paint a one-sided picture of a big bad Russian bear devouring African states through evil intentions and actions, we have argued elsewhere that the very nature of how knowledge is generated, packaged and transferred reflects global and power asymmetries (Danso and Aning 2022; Edle et al. 2022). Yet again, the presentation of African states' positioning on the Russo-Ukrainian war is not analysed on the basis of the individual states' calculus of their national interests but rather seen through the lens of external actors' assessments of how African states *ought to act* and what is good for them were they to choose particular sides. Therein lie the fallacies and weaknesses in understanding what drives these states and how best to engage them in fruitful dialogue.

How has what we term either resurgence or reemergence manifested on the continent as a whole? As mentioned by Siegle above, Russia's presence on the continent has been manifested through its bilateral agreements based on arms sales and investments in energy and mineral resources (Siegle 2022). But what has really drawn global attention to Russian activities in the sub-region relates to two mutually reinforcing dynamics. The first is Russia's grand entry into Mali and the popular protests by Malians in favour of breaking ties with its former colonial ruler and post-independence manipulator of domestic politics par excellence, France, to be replaced by Russia. The second relates to the growing international concerns about Russian proxy military presence in fragile West African and Sahel states. Such concerns are based on earlier experiences gathered from countries like the Central African Republic (CAR) and Sudan, where Russia's proxies have acted in violation of international norms, influenced elections, and protected unconstitutional regimes. This is, however, not to exclude other actors like the French, who have also committed such acts in Africa.

Proxy forces or actors and their role in international conflicts, although not a new phenomenon, have increased in the 21st century due to their advantages of not directly implicating the states involved and also reducing the political and financial cost of war (Aning 2021). However, for Africa, the use of proxies has blighted its post-colonial experiences resulting in its continental organisation passing multiple resolutions and a convention against their presence (Organisation of African Unity 1977), which came into force in 1985. Despite this convention, mercenaries and proxies have continued to be a consistent threat against states. Therefore, the presence of "new proxies"

on the African continent is nothing new or surprising. What is critical in the new discourse about the use of proxies by other powers must be examined in a critical and dispassionate manner. For example, a new military entrant, the Wagner Group, which is a proxy group by Russia, has been justified by authors like Stronski (2020) as a versatile, cheap and, deniably, a perfect instrument for a declining superpower eager to assert itself without taking too many risks. The critical question, of course, becomes at what cost to the states and people in which they operate.

3. Russia's Re-emergence in Africa: A Historical Approach

In this section, we take a historical perspective to understanding Russia's re-emergence in Africa. Russia's return to Africa's political, social and economic scene commenced through its earlier engagement in the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) multilateral engagement formed in 2001 (Tett 2010; Ayres 2017). However, it was the election of Vladimir Putin as President of Russia on 26 March 2000, and his quest to progressively broaden Moscow's cooperative engagements with Africa, further highlighted by the 2019 Russia-Africa Peace, Security and Development Summit held in Sochi with 43 African heads of state in attendance that announced Russia's intentions in a defined manner. Instructive for the arguments in this paper and the discussions being made, the 2019 Sochi programme already provides a striking indication of Russia's grand intentions for the continent. Intelligence and risk analysts did not pay attention to what happened in Sochi, and thus the vociferous opprobrium about Russia's behaviour on the continent. In the programme document, under the subtitle, 'A Safe Africa', conference organisers recognised the security challenges faced by the continent and posed several rhetorical questions. According to the organisers:

> Illegal migration, contraband, and criminal activity are … problems facing the African continent. The biggest threat of all though is terrorism. Experts agree that to ensure a country's national security, a set of measures needs to be taken, along with preventative action to combat possible threats. The biggest vulnerabilities in this regard include weak border control, unprotected industrial facilities, and large urban areas where it becomes easy to disappear into a crowd. *An effective set of measures has been developed in Russia to counter terrorism*, *curtail illegal activity, and provide dependable protection for citizens.* Russian organizations and companies are ready and able to share their experience with African partners. What can be done in the

> current climate to make Africa safe? How can state borders be made secure, and what measures should be taken to protect major sites and facilities of strategic importance? What can be done to stop illicit substances from being brought into a country and distributed? How can offenders be quickly identified, and what steps can help optimize the smooth running of urban infrastructure? What can be done to stop the illegal use of drones, which today can be bought in any store? (Russia-Africa Summit 2019)

Understanding the role of Russia and its proxies in West Africa and the Sahel requires examining the history of a resurgent Russia from the end of the Soviet Union era until its retreat from Africa after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990. The justification for Russia's increasing presence in sub-Saharan Africa through its historical relationships with the continent was clearly stated in Putin's opening speech during the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit. He argued that,

> Russia and Africa are bound by traditionally friendly ties. Our country has consistently supported the national liberation movements of the peoples of Africa, we have made a significant contribution to the formation of young states and the development of their economies, as well as building up combat-ready armed forces. Our cooperation, rooted in the period of the joint fight against colonialism, is strategic and long-standing. Of course, there are significant opportunities for intensifying Russian-African cooperation in various fields (Putin 2019; Van Uden 2020).

For a short historical introspection that is often forgotten in the debates, the collapsed Soviet Union provided support to national liberation struggles in African countries, including South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, during the Cold War. However, the fall of the Soviet Union led to a remarkable reduction and eventual withdrawal of Russian activities in Africa. Domestic imperatives, driven mainly by the urgency to rebuild the new Russian Federation, led to the closure of nine Russian embassies, three consulates and multiple cultural centres in Africa (Natufe 2011).

The return of Russia is, therefore, reminiscent of the Cold War, except this time in a new, multipolar world order; this return is less about promoting ideologies and more about seeking reliable partners in resource extraction and consumer markets to sell to (Matisek 2020). As such, the re-emergence of Russia in Africa follows a time-

tested exploitative approach that manifests in a desire to keep investments low but returns high (Faleg and Secrieru 2020). Faleg and Secrieru, for example, argue that Russia's re-emergence in Africa is to undo the substantial geopolitical gains that the Soviets experienced before retreating. This is reflected in Russia's deliberate targeting and interest in mining concessions and natural resources in Africa.

4. Identifying Russia's Proxies in West Africa and the Sahel

In understanding Russia's new aggressive re-entry into Africa, several terminologies have been applied. An enduring one is the word "proxy". Andrew Mumford defines proxy wars as "the indirect engagement in a conflict by third parties wishing to influence its strategic outcome" (Mumford 2013, 1). A critical question that arises relates to what instruments Russia utilises to exert its influence in Africa. From the extant literature, Russia is believed to use ostensibly private but, in fact, state-linked actors to project its influence and interests. This in itself is not a new approach in statecraft. However, the private security/military company (PS/MC) known as the Wagner Group is perceived to be the main actor through which Russia is exporting its version of military cooperation and partnership. Wagner's activities are gaining visibility in West Africa and the Sahel, although they have had more influence in countries such as the CAR and Sudan. Strategies adopted by the Russian contractors are to enable them to also serve as a source of intelligence for the Kremlin.

While there is growing international concern over the infiltration of the Wagner Group in conflict-ridden Mali, the Malian population seem to be receptive to the presence of their newly found ally. This domestic support and the apparent loss of French influence in this geopolitical game is lost on Parens, who argues that "…In 2021, Wagner Group became involved in Mali as France began withdrawing its forces from the Sahel. If Russia successfully replaces France as the principal security partner in Mali, this could be the first shift in a West African cascade toward Russia" (Parens 2022). The historical sequencing in Paren's argument is wrong. Russia's gravitation to Bamako began long before the regime verbalised its desire for France to leave its territory. Once more, there is an implicit assumption of a lack of African agency in deciding what is good for individual states and how to manage its statecraft. What is presented as a "West African *cascade* toward Russia" seeks to present West African states as devoid of the ability to choose what is perceived to be in their national interest. Such arguments are reminiscent of the positions taken by France when its Defence Minister, Florence

Parly, argued that the Mali junta was being "provocative", leading to her being schooled in 19th-century literature by French poet Alfred de Vigny's verses on the "greatness of silence." Minister Parly referred to Vigny's poem, "La Mort du Loup" (The Death of the Wolf), and the sentence: "Only silence is great; all the rest is weakness."

What seems to irk several observers about the Malian geopolitical chess game is the apparent victory of Russia in the interim in getting the military junta in Mali to expulse the French forces and replace them with the Wagner Group. The subsequent actions of the Malian junta in pushing out Danish troops, a reduction in the European Union presence, and withdrawal from the G5 Sahel initiative all point to a loss of Western influence in Mali, at least for the moment. The Wagner Group's presence in Mali has spawned a veritable industry about their motives and modus operandi. For example, General Stephen Townsend, the head of US Africa Command, confirmed that "several hundred" Russian mercenaries are in the country (Babb 2022). Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also confirmed that Mali had "turned to a private military company from Russia" to help fight jihadist groups (Seldin 2021). According to a SOFREP report, Mali is hiring 1 000 Wagner Group mercenaries to help fight ISIS jihadists in the Greater Sahara, which is believed to have at least several hundred fighters in the region (Balestrieri 2021). This report also states that Wagner will fight against al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Nusrat al-Islam, officially known as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wal al-Muslimin (JNIM), and Mali will pay the company $10.8 million a month (Balestrieri 2021).

The use of private military contractors (PMC) is not the only tool used by Russia for its expansion in Africa. It also uses diplomatic means as a strategic tool across Africa and the West African sub-region. The reinforcement of its diplomatic relations is aimed at exploring the growing frustration against the French and American anti-terrorism strategies in the Sahel and the West African sub-region. This diplomatic tool includes the role of Russia as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to block sanctions from being imposed on their allies (Larsen and Hansen 2022) and also enjoy support against the West from the three rotating non-permanent African seats (Olivier 2020). In January 2022, for example, Russia defended Mali and blocked the imposition of new sanctions on the military leaders who forcefully took over power from a corrupt, abusive and incompetent regime, noting that "we have always been guided by the principle of African solutions to African problems" (Larsen and Hansen 2022). *Al Jazeera* reported on 12 January 2022 (*Al Jazeera* 2022) that,

> Russia and China have blocked the United Nations Security Council from supporting a decision by the West African economic bloc ECOWAS to impose new sanctions on Mali, after its military leaders proposed staying in power for up to five years before staging elections. A French-drafted council statement endorsing the sanctions failed to be approved in closed-door consultations on Tuesday, prompting three African council members—Kenya, Ghana and Gabon—to speak to reporters to back the regional bloc's position.

Unfettered application of sanctions raises critical ethical questions about whether democratic regimes are not subject to the same rules and regulations that create the foundations for violence and unconstitutional overthrow of regimes.

The use of disinformation agents and strategies is another way Russia is gaining ground in West Africa and the Sahel. Russia adopts a communication strategy that seeks to promote its actions in Africa while discrediting other global actors. Both traditional and social media is employed to propagate the creditable influence of Russia in different African countries and expose the weaknesses of other Western countries. According to Ramani (2020), Kremlin-aligned research institutes and media outlets have consistently framed France's counterterrorism operations in Niger and Mali as a façade for the extraction of the Sahel's uranium resources and even considered the presence of the French forces as a catalyst for the jihadist violence. Russian media outlets have strengthened neocolonial discontent in Mali toward France and portrayed French counterterrorism policy as driven by resource extraction rather than security imperatives (Ramani 2020).

Russia provides military training to a number of African countries in Russia, while their proxy companies also provide scholarships and other training opportunities for the local communities where they are established. The Rusal company in Guinea-Bissau, for example, includes such a programme in their activities, which has resulted in talented youngsters being sent to Russian universities (Makarychev and Simão 2014). As a result, the Russians are not only training their potential workforce (El-Badawy 2022) but also developing a very substantial relationship with the local communities and future leaders so they can easily influence them in the future.

5. The Dark Sides of Russia's Activities for West Africa and the Sahel

African leaders like Algeria's Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and South Africa's Jacob Zuma have all been eager to roll out the red carpet for their Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin (Hoste and Koch 2015). Partnering with Putin, they insist, diversifies their political and economic alliances and sources of foreign investment (Hoste and Koch 2015). As indicated by Joseph Siegle, Russia's recent Africa-focused initiatives are typically concentrated on propping up an embattled incumbent or close ally: Khalifa Haftar in Libya, Faustin Archange Touadéra in the CAR, and coup leaders Colonel Assimi Goïta in Mali and Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Sudan, among others (Siegle 2022). It is also important to note that Russia leverages humanitarian and soft-power initiatives to promote itself as a constructive player in global affairs (Ramani 2022).

This relationship, however, does not come without dire consequences for vulnerable and conflict-ridden countries. The increase in demand for Russian weapons and equipment derives partly from the fact that they are relatively cheap, reliable and easy to operate (Van Uden 2020).

In 2020, Russia's state arms vendor Rosoboronexport was believed to have signed $1.5 billion in contracts with ten African countries, and the next year, it secured an additional $1.7 billion in new deals at a summit in Côte d'Ivoire. These countries include Nigeria, Tanzania, Cameroon, Angola, and the CAR, although Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Morocco, and Uganda are the largest regular buyers of Rosoboronexport's products (*TRT World News* 2022). The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that Africa accounted for 18% of Russian arms exports between 2016 and 2020. In the early 2000s, 16 African countries were recipients of Russian arms. Between 2010 and 2019, the figure went up to 21. Selling ammunition and weapon systems to African countries props up the Russian economy and industrial base (Klomegah 2019) and potentially increases the risks of armed conflicts in an already volatile sub-region.

While deals with other global actors like the United States and the European Union (EU) come with a range of conditions based on human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law, Russia offers deals to African leaders with no such constricting conditions. Russian deals with African leaders are believed to be heavily tilted in favour of Moscow to secure control of priced energy assets or natural resources and are often

not publicised (Hoste and Koch 2015). Hoste and Koch give an example of the "pre-bid" agreement signed between South Africa and Russia on 21 September 2014 at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference in Vienna. After several denied requests to make the contract public, South Africa finally published the deal, which includes unprecedented clauses in the history of nuclear industry.

> The first states that Russia will hold a binding veto over South Africa's capacity to do business with any other nuclear vendor for up to 20 years—unprecedented in the history of the nuclear industry. The second clause stipulates that South Africa cannot export the nuclear technology it develops, like its passively safe core "pebble-bed" reactor. This condition could become a major obstacle to Pretoria's goal of developing a national globally competitive nuclear industry.

The use of Russian proxies in West Africa and the Sahel promotes the lack of accountability and denial of responsibility for the illegalities and brutalities associated with the activities of proxy actors. The Wagner Group, for example, has been accused of several human rights abuses committed in different African countries, but being a "semi-state" actor does not directly implicate the Russian state to be held accountable for such actions. Russia's denial of the Wagner Group's existence and status also increases the difficulty in determining the laws and regulations that should govern the group's actions (Larsen and Hansen 2022).

Russia's particular interest in conflict zones or fragile states will facilitate its engagement in West Africa and the Sahel. The growing threats and attacks from violent extremist groups and the apparent ineffective solutions by other global actors to eradicate the menace has left many states in the sub-region eager for alternative options. Russia offers that alternative but with consequences that will be detrimental to the quest to promote democracy, peace, and security in Africa. In the absence of evidence to link Russia to the military coups in Mali, it is interesting to note that two of the coup plotters, Malick Diaw and Sadio Camara, had returned to Mali days earlier from a training programme at the Higher Military College in Moscow. Allegations have also been raised concerning the involvement of Wagner in training a mercenary rebel group that killed the Chadian president, Idriss Deby (Munasinghe 2022). Russia's inability or unwillingness to also account for the activities of these proxies creates a greater risk for its activities in West Africa and the Sahel. Wagner is sometimes used in the same ways that other rational states use private military contractors, but the corrupt informal

networks tied to the Russian regime also use it in ways that are not typical of other strong states and that potentially undermine Russian security interests and, much more, that of the host states.

6. Potential Impacts of Russia's West Africa Engagements on Other Global Actors

The expansion of Russian military influence in West Africa and the Sahel will result in a setback for other global actors. The evident resentment for France in countries like Mali, Chad, and Burkina-Faso through mass protests calling for the exit of France will not only affect France's influence in these countries but the general influence of the European Union, the US, and other world powers. France, perceived as the voice of Europe in the former French colonies, will lose its power in these countries.

While US engagements have not sufficiently kept pace with the changing landscape in Africa (Zimmerman 2020), Russia's renewed interest in Africa can play an important role in its political ambition to build strategic control over energy networks and resources (Hoste and Koch 2015).

The role of Russia's proxies in West Africa and the Sahel can lead to an increase in anti-Western sentiments in the sub-region. The open and growing resentment against France in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad (Sofuoglu 2022) may be a demonstration of the influence of Russia's disinformation campaigns. In Mali, protesters in favour of the coup orchestrated by Col Assimi Goïta on 18 August 2021 led to mass protests in favour of the coups, and protesters chanted not only in support of the coup but also called for the departure of France and a new friendship with Russia, which seems to project some hope for the deteriorating security situation in Mali.

Russia's return to Africa also creates the possibility of turning Africa into an arena for great-power competition. While Russia is broadening its reach in Africa, other global actors are monitoring, and a new Cold War era could begin.

7. What Must Be Done? Way Forward

The growing security threats in West Africa and the Sahel, deteriorating living standards, hard-felt effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and other challenges facing the continent must not blindfold and determine decisions that can further worsen the situation in the

sub-region. The direct and indirect interventions of Russia through its proxies must be well examined to ensure the interest of African states are prioritised. Russia's deliberate target of unpopular, illegitimate, or unconstitutionally elected leaders who need external support to rule further threatens the peace and security of stagnating democratic states.

The impact of Russian activities in Africa does not only affect the continent; other global interests are also affected. Therefore, the international community needs to review the laws on the use of private military agents, the links with their states and the responsibilities and accountability of such states under international laws.

8. Conclusion

The call for Western countries to reconsider their engagements in Africa cannot be over-emphasised. The deteriorating relationship between France and its colonies in Africa, and the subsequent call for Russian support in what is considered as the failure of France in the fight against jihadist threats in the region, demonstrates the growing influence of Russia in Africa. While Mali is considered to be the spotlight and entry point of the Russian Wagner Group in West Africa and the Sahel, there is the need to understand the critical repercussions of this move for the other, equally vulnerable countries in the sub-region and the African continent in general. While considering the investments and positive results from the re-emergence of Russia in Africa, it is also important to examine the factors that facilitate the intervention of Russia's proxies in the sub-region.

The African Union, ECOWAS, and other regional bodies must not limit their actions to condemning undemocratic regime changes and authoritarian or repressive regimes but contribute to reinforcing democratic values to prevent the progressive dependence on Russia.

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The Failure of the United Nations Security Council in Creating the Framework Conditions for Mediation in the Russia-Ukraine Crisis

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4082

Abstract

This article argues that during the 2022 Russian Federation invasion of Ukraine, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) failed to create the framework conditions to facilitate the mediation of the crisis due to the systemic constraints created by the veto powers of the Permanent Five (P5) members of the Council. Specifically, the institutional gap created by a dysfunctional UNSC, efforts to mediate ongoing and future crises in which one or more members of the P5 are involved are confronted by the same systemic failure. Given the reality of the UNSC's paralysis and the indefinite postponement of UN reform, this article argues for the need for radical transformation of the international system and the articulation of a new global democratic architecture, which includes a new global infrastructure for mediation. The article concludes with a discussion of how a UN Charter review process can lay the foundation for the establishment of this new global democratic dispensation, which includes a new global infrastructure for mediation.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Mediation, United Nations Security Council (UNSC), War.

ISSN 1013-1108

1. Introduction

This article will argue that during the 2022 Russian Federation invasion of Ukraine, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) failed to create the framework conditions to facilitate the mediation of the crisis due to the systemic constraints created by the veto powers of the Permanent Five (P5) members of the Council. The images of millions of Ukrainians and citizens of other countries, including African countries, fleeing the Russian assault evokes memories of the millions who also fled as refugees from the violence of the First and Second World Wars. The brutality of the Russian attack on Ukraine cannot be questioned, and the urgency of a mediation process is self-evident. This article will argue that due to the institutional gap created by a dysfunctional UNSC, efforts to mediate ongoing and future crises in which one or more members of P5 are involved will be confronted by the same systemic failure. The UNSC's inability to intervene through mediation and preventive diplomacy has led to the resurgence of power politics and the proliferation of authoritarian regimes that are prepared to defy the will of the international system of rules and regulations governing conduct between states.

Through an engagement with the founding principles of the UN as the world's self-designated purveyor of international peace and security, this article will argue that the persistence of a paralysed Security Council, which was already a feature of the Cold War, has rendered it ineffectual in preventing and resolving violent conflict. Furthermore, the self-interested agendas and cynical actions of the P5 members of the UNSC, such as the Russian Federation, China, the US, and France, have transformed the Council into a net contributor to global insecurity, as evidenced by the worldwide impact of the Russian-fuelled crisis in Ukraine. The article argues that the systemic failure of the UNSC suggests the need for an urgent transformation of the international system. After close to three decades of rhetoric of restructuring, the fallacy of UN reform has become a self-evident truth. Powerful countries within the UN system, particularly the P5 members, continue to dangle the perpetual promise of reform, which they have no intention of honouring. Given the reality of the UNSC's paralysis and the indefinite postponement of UN reform, this article will argue for the need for radical transformation of the international system and the articulation of a new global democratic architecture, which will include a new global infrastructure for mediation. The article will conclude with a discussion of how a UN Charter review process can lay the foundation for the establishment of this new global democratic dispensation, which

will include a new global infrastructure for mediation (Murithi, 2003).

2. Mediation in Context

Marieke Kleiboer (1998, 6) notes that "there are many forms of third-party intervention, so many, in fact, that it is often confusing to try to figure out which is which". When two or more actors are involved in a dispute, and they are willing but unable to resolve their problem by themselves, there are forms of third-party intervention that can be used to provide them with assistance to address and resolve their differences (Deutsch and Coleman 2000; Fisher 1978). Mediation is one among several forms of third-party intervention that seek to assist disputing parties in finding a mutually acceptable settlement (Moore 2003). When two or more parties are in disagreement and their relationship has deteriorated to the point of breaking down, or a deadlock in negotiations arises, it may be useful to refer the matter to a third-party mediator if they genuinely want to address their differences. Mediation can best be thought of as a dynamic and ongoing process that begins with a pre-mediation process and continues up to the post-mediation implementation and monitoring phase.

According to Moore (2003), there are primarily three types of mediators:

- *Social network mediators* tend to have a relationship with the parties through a social network. They are perceived to be fair and concerned with promoting a good future relationship between parties.
- *Authoritative mediators* tend to have a current relationship with the parties. They also tend to have an interest in the outcome of the dispute. They may be impartial but may also possess the authority to advise, suggest or decide on a particular issue. In the case of a managerial mediator, he or she may have the resources to help in the monitoring and implementation of an agreement. In the case of a power mediator or vested interest mediator, he or she may even seek a solution that meets his or her own interests, as well as those of the parties, and may occasionally use strong leverage or coercion to enforce an agreement.
- *Independent mediators* tend to be impartial. They generally have no prior relationship with the parties and are brought in to find an acceptable solution, largely developed by the parties. The independent mediator has

no authority to enforce an agreement and may or may not be involved in implementation.

There are a number of other descriptive ways to define what mediators do in practice. The intention here is to illustrate that there is a broad array of ways of understanding mediation practice.

2.1 Creating Framework Conditions for Effective Mediation Processes

In terms of creating framework conditions for effective processes, successful mediation is more likely to occur when:

1. all parties are receptive to the mediation process and the framework conditions are conducive to a positive outcome;
2. parties are prepared to brainstorm and accept trade-offs in cases where one issue may be more important to a particular party than another;
3. parties are prepared to consider creative ways of meeting their interests without undermining the interests of the other parties involved; and
4. the mediators refrain from manipulating interventions to their advantage.

The mediator's role is to help the parties find a way to overcome the deadlocked situation, to re-establish channels of communication if they have broken down, and to work towards rebuilding the relationship by promoting more constructive dialogue (Beer and Stief 1997). The mediator also assists the parties in clarifying and discussing the key issues and their interests with regard to each issue and helps them to explore innovative options for addressing their interests. An important function of the mediator is to ensure that all parties to the mediation do not feel that their dignity is undermined. On this basis, the ideal mediator needs to be impartial and committed to the principles of fairness and justice for all sides. The mediator works with the parties to forge a consensus on potential solutions to a problem.

2.2 Addressing the Asymmetry of Power in International Mediation: The Case of Russia and Ukraine

Often, one party in an international mediation process is much weaker than the

other, as illustrated in the initial efforts by Turkey to mediate the Russia-Ukraine crisis initiated in March 2022. Several rounds of talks between the Foreign Ministers, Sergey Lavrov of Russia and Dmytro Kuleba of Ukraine, in Antalya, Turkey, to discuss a peaceful resolution to the conflict faltered in the face of the intransigence of the Russian Federation. In addition, Turkey, as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance, is unlikely to be seen as an impartial mediator because NATO countries are supplying arms to the Ukrainian defence forces and are therefore indirectly implicated in the conflict. The notion of NATO providing protective cover against the Russian Federation was further reinforced by Sweden and Finland's efforts to launch procedures to join the military alliance. The Turkish initiative to mediate this crisis was fraught with obstacles and challenges from the outset, not least because Turkey does not fulfil the criteria of a social network, authoritative or independent mediator because of its membership in NATO. In effect, any mediation initiative will need to treat NATO as a party to the Russian-Ukraine conflict in a three-way negotiation process between it, the Ukrainian authorities and the Russian Federation in order to de-escalate the tension and identify the pathway to reduce and eliminate the conflict. Therefore, the idea of a NATO member such as Turkey playing a "mediating" role is an anathema to the principles of peacemaking and makes a mockery of the long-established norms and practices of international mediation.

In a situation where one party has more power than the other, the mediator will need to provide support to the weaker party in order to balance the parties and make the negotiations more equal. If the UNSC were not compromised and captured by the power of the P5, it would be in an ideal position to play this equalising role between parties. As an illustration of this, prior initiatives to mediate between Russia and Ukraine were convened outside the framework of the UNSC, even though the UN played a nominal supportive role in these efforts. The series of mediated agreements between Russia and Ukraine, known as the Minsk Agreements, which were negotiated in 2014 and 2015, sought to end the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine. The Minsk Agreements outlined a number of measures, including a ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons, prisoner release and constitutional reform in Ukraine granting some degree of autonomy to the Donbas region of the country. The fighting never really ended, as was starkly demonstrated in February 2022, when Moscow declared Ukraine a "non-country" and proceeded to invade its territory, thus negating and declaring the Minsk Agreements formally terminated.

It is important to note that power differentials can also be a matter of perception

where one side views the other as somehow having an unfair advantage in terms of resources or influence. Part of the mediator's task in this instance is to try and address the concerns brought about by this perception and convince the party that this fact will not undermine the process of achieving an agreement that everyone can live with. In effect, the mediator, which, according to the UN Charter, is the responsibility of the UNSC working with other institutions, has a responsibility to create the framework conditions which will enable an effective intervention to proceed. On this basis, the UNSC spectacularly failed to live up to this responsibility, as was starkly illustrated when the Presidency of the Russian Federation at the Council as Moscow began its military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. A belligerent member of the P5 was chairing the UNSC as it began so-called "special military operations" or, more accurately, its invasion of an independent member of the organisation.

3. Power Politics and the Challenge of International Mediation

A historical contextualisation of international relations reveals that during the Cold War, power politics and self-interested mediators infiltrated the mechanisms of global conflict resolution. More specifically, power politics or realpolitik, as an ideology of inter-state relations, co-opted the UN and, in effect, instrumentalised the world body. The legacy of this era, to a large extent, retains its currency in contemporary international relations. Stephen Chan and Vivienne Jabri (1993, xiv) argue that "some researchers emphasise the vital role played by coercive or leveraged mediation and suggest that this form of mediation is the most suited to the Hobbesian international system" (Chan and Jabri 1993, xiv). They further note that "advocates of this approach adopt a realist interpretation of the international system and suggest that outcomes to mediated conflicts are solely amenable to interpretation using a power-political framework" (Chan and Jabri 1993, xiv). The realist approach contends that the intervening third party needs "power in order to bring the disputants to the point where they will accept mediation" (Smith 1994, 148).

William Zartman (1989) argues that mediators can manoeuvre the disputants into perceiving that a moment is "ripe" for engaging in an attempt at resolution. However, he points to the necessity of having the second characteristic mentioned above, "leverage" or power as a mediator, in order to bring about this state of affairs. Zartman (1989) partly derived his theoretical prescription from an archetypal realist statesman, Henry Kissinger, who proclaimed that "never treat crises when they're cold, only when they're

hot" (Zartman 1989, 220). Thus, a key assumption about conflict management within a power political framework is that power can be applied to re-orient the behaviour of the disputants. In a study of Kissinger's contribution to the Arab-Israel peace process, Brian Mandell and Brian Tomlin (1991, 46) concluded that a third party could employ "substantial incentives, or punishments, to encourage behavioural change in the antagonists sufficient in degree and nature to support the transition to cooperative norms". For this approach, certain preconditions must be met before a dispute can be viewed as feasible for resolution. Either the parties are coerced into accepting a settlement process, or they reach a point at which they consider themselves to be locked into what Touval and Zartman (1985) have described as a "mutually hurting stalemate". The problematic nature of such a stalemate in terms of who is supposed to recognise it and whether it self-evidently presents itself or if it can be "created" continues to be debated among analysts and practitioners of peacemaking (Kleiboer 1994, 109). What emerges from this discussion is a sense in which political realism in theory and practice conceptualises conflict resolution as a realm in which power politics is fundamental, if not all-encompassing, where mediation processes are concerned. In effect, realism contends that "third parties themselves are often motivated to intervene because their own interests are threatened by the continuation of the dispute" (Smith 1994, 149).

A central tenet of realism is that the primary actors in the international system, nation-states, are, first and foremost, self-interested rational actors. Power political third parties "are often allies of one of or both disputants, and the dispute may threaten to undermine such third parties interests, or may threaten the entire system of alliances" (Inbar 1991, 72). The Cold War emphasised the maintenance of a balance of power regime, as witnessed in the Middle East conflict in 1973, and the efforts to contain it emerged out of concern that it could spill over and ignite a global confrontation (Touval 1992). Realists consider that a conflict between two weaker entities could potentially "threaten" the interests of the powerful third party. The process of conflict resolution is "important" to the mediator primarily because it has an interest in securing a particular outcome. Therefore, little or no attention is paid to the moral interests of the disputants or the creation of the appropriate framework conditions to generate an outcome that will be owned and internalised by the parties. This philosophical approach to third-party intervention exposes its fundamental limitation in that the mediator is an interested party in a negotiation process. In this context, mediators can and do undermine the chances of resolving the conflict to the satisfaction of the parties by failing to create the necessary framework conditions for a successful outcome.

4. The Role of the United Nations in Mediation

Following the subjugation of the fascist and totalitarian powers at the end of the Second World War, the wartime allies decided to construct a new framework for the post-war world order. The United Nations organisation was the progeny of this endeavour, and its primary purpose was to ensure that there was an institutional mechanism that would encourage its members to "settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that the international peace and security, and justice are not endangered" (United Nations 1945). Through the mechanisms of the Security Council and the General Assembly, the UN was provided with the ability to oversee the peaceful settlement of disputes. Specifically, Article 33 of Chapter VI of the UN Charter (1945) states that "the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement". In order to operationalise these interventions, the broad range of institutions within the UN system could be utilised. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that the UN is the composite formation of its Secretariat, the member states and its numerous agencies. However, the UNSC is the most powerful of these institutions, and it has a primary responsibility to create and establish the framework conditions for other branches and institutions of the UN system to contribute towards the peaceful resolution of disputes.

What seemed initially to be a resourceful array of mechanisms and processes to resolve conflict were soon confronted by structural limitations and the egotistical imperatives of the superpowers that dominated the Cold War era. The superpowers (the USA and USSR) and their client states within the UN framework formed de-facto alliances along ideological lines and institutionalised an oligarchy of power. This appropriation of global power manifested itself through the dominance of the Security Council in all major decisions and meant that the UN's ability to resolve conflicts and build peace became structurally paralysed. Rarely, if at all, did the interests of the USA or the USSR converge. The greatest threat to international peace and security, therefore, arose from the conflict between the UNSC's most powerful members. The Cold War witnessed over 150 armed conflicts, which claimed approximately 25 to 30 million lives. In this climate of East-West competition, the mechanisms and strategies to manage and resolve conflicts relied on coercive political negotiations in the context of the prevailing superpower rivalry. In effect, the involvement of other collective security organisations and third parties was restrained and possible only in conflicts in which

the great powers did not have a direct stake or in which they had shared interests. So even though the UN established what could have served as institutions capable of creating the framework conditions for peacemaking, it was severely undermined by the exigencies of Machiavellian superpower politics during the Cold War.

5. Efforts to Revive the UN's Role in Peacemaking

Given the corruption of the UN's conflict management and resolution institutions and processes during the Cold War. There was an attempt to revitalise the norms that initially animated the UN. In 1992, then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali published *An Agenda for Peace*, which argued for proactive peacemaking and humanitarian intervention. It outlined suggestions for enabling the UN to respond quickly and effectively to threats to international peace and security in the post-Cold War era. In particular, four major areas of activity were identified, namely: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peace-building.

Preventive diplomacy is "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur" (United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1992). Peacemaking is "action to bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations" (United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1992). Peacemaking, therefore, includes using mediation to persuade parties in a conflict to cease hostilities and negotiate a peaceful settlement to their dispute. Generally, preventive diplomacy, which also includes the use of mediation, seeks to resolve disputes before they become violent. Peacemaking is employed to stop ongoing conflicts and find solutions that can preserve peace.

5.1 The UN Department for Political Affairs: A Mandate to Mediate

The UN Department for Political Affairs (DPA) is responsible, within the UN Secretariat, for conducting peacemaking and preventive diplomacy and has an in-house repository of mediation expertise. As the Cold War came to a close, new opportunities emerged for negotiating peace agreements. A number of conflicts were brought to an end, either through direct UN mediation or by the efforts of other third parties acting with the support of the UN. This includes disputes in Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Guatemala, Namibia, Cambodia, Kosovo, Mozambique, Nepal, Tajikistan, Sri Lanka,

Bougainville, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, and the North-South conflict in Sudan. In addition, an undetermined number of potential disputes have been diffused through preventive diplomacy and other forms of conflict prevention.

The end of the Cold War brought about a shift in the geo-strategic imperatives of the superpowers, and many governments were faced with challenges from within their states. Today, the legacy of this era still persists, and many countries are having to deal with sub-national armed resistance movements. The most difficult situations include internal disputes in the Darfur region of Sudan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Israel and Palestine, Somalia, and Western Sahara, to name a few. In addition, there are also inter-state conflicts still between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. As a result, the demands placed on the UN have increased. The UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004) noted that the demand for the UN's "good offices", and mediation in particular, had "skyrocketed".

5.2 The UN Secretary-General's Good Offices

The UN Secretary-General has a significant amount of leeway to convene mediation interventions. The Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General have become a common feature of the UN system. To complement these actors, the UN system can, on occasion, establish a Contact Group or Friends Group to support the mediation. The mediator can approach certain actors and invite them to play a formal supportive role in the mediation process. Third parties that have some form of influence on one or both of the parties in dispute can be invited to assist. Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General sometimes use Friends Groups or Contact Groups to provide technical, financial and social support to the mediation process. It is always important, however, to ensure that the Friends Group works closely with the mediator and does not try to carry out its own separate initiatives.

5.3 Regional Organisations

Regional organisations such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also have an important role to play in driving mediation interventions. Specifically, Article 52 of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter states that "the Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such

regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiative of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council" (United Nations 1945). However, when the conditions on the ground are not conducive to the operationalisation of peacemaking—for example, in situations where armed militia are still projecting violence—then regional organisations generally have to defer to the UNSC, which has the power to authorise robust engagement with armed groups if necessary.

6. The Responsibility of the UNSC for Creating Framework Conditions for Mediation

The existence of this broad range of potential mediation actors does not absolve the UN system from its primary responsibility, which is stipulated in its founding Charter. The central task of peacemaking processes, which should be a core objective of the UNSC, is to draw the attention of the disputants, such as Russia, Ukraine and, to a certain extent, NATO, to the importance of reconceptualising their positions in relation to each other. One can argue that this requires a third party, such as the UNSC, to create the necessary framework conditions to achieve the expected outcome between warring parties, such as Russia and Ukraine. The Charter of the UN has appropriated and designated the world body with the responsibility to promote international peace and security. As the central institution empowered to promote peace, the UNSC therefore has a responsibility to create the framework conditions for effective mediation processes to proceed.

As noted above, the UN system, and its partner institutions, have achieved a few notable "success stories" in the aftermath of authoritarian rule and violent conflict in, for example, Cambodia, Namibia, and Timor Leste. In 2008, the UN supported the mediation efforts that were convened under the auspices of the African Union to facilitate dialogue in Kenya following the post-electoral violence that besieged the country. However, there is increasingly a precipitous decline in the ability to achieve such outcomes in the second decade of the 21st century. Lakhdar Brahimi and Salman Ahmed (2008, 11) have observed that "the current geopolitical landscape is far more fragmented than in the immediate post-Cold War 'honeymoon' period … as a result, recent operations have deployed not only without the benefit of a comprehensive peace agreement in place but also without the necessary leverage in hand to overcome political deadlock during the implementation phase". In effect, the framework conditions necessary to facilitate peace processes are not being sufficiently created to

enable successful mediation outcomes. The responsibility to create these framework conditions resides in the most powerful institution within the UN system, the Security Council, working in partnership with other bodies and actors.

7. A Return to Ad Hocery: Stagnant Crisis and the Impervious Nature of Conflict

The period prior to the emergence of the League of Nations was defined by an ad hoc approach to resolving international crises (Walters 1952). A century later, this phenomenon of ad hocery is increasingly returning to define the international relations landscape. For example, the joint Norwegian and Cuban third-party intervention in Colombia to mediate between the government and the FARC armed militia is an indication of the increasing phenomenon of "forum shopping". It is still too early to assess whether the Norwegian-Cuban intervention will bear fruit in Colombia, but it is an indictment of the failure of the UN system and the regional organisation, the OAS, to achieve a successful outcome. There are also stalled crises in Cyprus, which has proven resistant to UN intervention.

The 2011 Syrian crisis, which has morphed into an internecine war-of-all-against-all, has proven particularly resistant to the interventions of the UN system. Meetings of the UNSC on Syria consistently degenerate into ineffectual gatherings due to the juvenile brinksmanship of the P5 members of the body. The P5 remained divided on how to address the Syrian crisis, with the P3 (the US, the UK and France) broadly insisting on Bashar Al Assad's withdrawal from the leadership of the fragmented state, while the P2 (Russia and China) remain defiant in guaranteeing him support. Consequently, the real victims of this UNSC paralysis are the innocent children, women and men of Syria. To add fuel to the fire, the insidious ISIS militia is already operational in Syria, and the prospects for finding a sustainable solution receded as the members of the UNSC's P5 vacillated and postured.

The return of ad hocery in international mediation is a cause for concern, as illustrated by the global effects of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, particularly on oil price increases and the reduction of wheat exports, which were contributing to food security across the world, including in Africa. It suggests that far from upholding its original purpose of maintaining "international peace and security" and taking "effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace" (United Nations 1945, Article 1), the UN has now become an obstacle to creating the conditions

and convening the necessary platforms to resolve global crises.

8. The Precipitous Increase in Wars of Aggression

A more worrying phenomenon is that the UN's erstwhile commitment to engage in efforts to promote the framework conditions for peace has been replaced by a precipitous withdrawal and ambivalence towards volatile conflict situations, from the ISIS insurrection in Iraq and Syria to the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian crisis, as well as Saudi Arabia's cavalier invasion of Yemen. More specifically, Robert Gates (2014, 168), the former US Secretary of Defense and former Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), observed that when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, "the Russians were also sending a warning to other governments in Central Asia (and Ukraine) about the risks of trying to integrate with NATO". Gates, a cabinet official who served both President Bush and President Obama, was aware that Russia, a P5 member of the UNSC, was consistent in reasserting its willingness to act when faced with an encroachment in its "traditional sphere of influence, including the Caucasus" (Gates 2014, 168). In effect, following Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, the US and fellow P5 members were aware that Ukraine's overtures to NATO would be met with Russian aggression, which is, in fact, what subsequently materialised in 2014. The German and French mediation between Russia and Ukraine with regard to the incipient and escalating crisis is resistant to UN intervention because of Russia's prominent position as a member of the P5, which empowers it with a veto to restrict UNSC action.

The Israel-Palestine crisis has been immune to UN engagement due to the consistent bias that successive US governments have demonstrated towards Israeli interests. US administrations have regularly utilised their veto power within the UNSC to prevent any substantive sanctioning of Israeli actions against Palestine, most notably the 2008 Israeli attack on Gaza.

9. The Failure of the UN Security Council: A Retrospective

The most compelling failure of the UNSC to prevent and manage a crisis was the Rwandan genocide of April 1994. The UNSC was in a position to intervene through a range of instruments to prevent the Rwandan crisis from escalating to genocide, given the fact that the governments of the P5 were informed, on 12 January 1994, by General Romeo Dallaire, the Force Commander of the UN Assistance Mission

in Rwanda (UNAMIR), of the plans that were underway to register Tutsi for their extermination across Rwanda. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (2013, 56) argued in his memoir, *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*, that "there was the later claim that members of the Security Council were unaware of the warning conveyed by Dallaire's informant. Given that permanent Council members, particularly the United States and France, had far more advance and established intelligence-gathering capabilities in Rwanda than UNAMIR, this could not have been true". In effect, Annan is accusing the US and France, members of the P5, of having lied about knowing that the Rwandan genocide was imminent prior to the event. In effect, the body tasked with preventing crisis was actively eschewing its responsibilities in favour of the short-term self-interest of its powerful members. Rwanda was thrown under the proverbial bus in terms of the refusal of the P5 to intervene, whether through mediation or otherwise, to prevent the tragedy that has left a debilitating scar on the conscience of Rwanda, Africa and the world. Shortly after the Rwandan tragedy, Bosnian Muslims were massacred in the genocide of Srebrenica, which implicated Dutch peacekeepers who were supposed to be manning the so-called "UN safe havens" where the embattled Bosnians were holed up.

The evolving theme relating to the callous disregard for the UN system's responsibilities in general, and the Security Council in particular, can also be traced to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. The US and its client state, the United Kingdom, were not willing to allow diplomacy and mediation to resolve the Iraq crisis. The sentiments in Washington, DC, and London were that no amount of talking would reassure them of the intentions of the late Saddam Hussein, the erstwhile dictator of Iraq. On this basis, there was clearly no intention on the part of the US and UK, as two members of the UNSC, to create the framework conditions to pursue and achieve a mediated settlement in the case of Iraq. The precedent that was set for dealing with those designated as "dictators" by the self-appointed Washington-London oligarchy of power would have serious implications for how conflicts are prevented, managed and resolved in the future. Reflecting on that period, Annan (2013, 364) noted that "the Iraq War was neither in accordance with the Charter nor legitimate". The illegality of the US-led invasion of Iraq would expose the UNSC's purporting to uphold the maintenance of international peace and security. In the face of the naked aggression of one of its own P5, the UNSC was impotent and rendered irrelevant. Annan (2013, 366) concludes that "by behaving the way it did, the United States invited the perception among many in the world—including many long-time allies—that it was becoming a

greater threat to global security". When the United States, the most powerful country in the world in terms of political and military capability, willingly and with malice of forethought disregards the principles and laws of the international system that it helped to create, it is time to redesign the global order. Such behaviour exposes the design flaw in the current UNSC that has empowered and emboldened the P5 to act with impunity. Cynically, each P5 member utilises the UNSC to advance its own self-interests. Linda Polman (2003, 1) endorses this view when she laments that "the world's most powerful countries manipulate the United Nations to fulfil their own national interests". In effect, the UNSC is, in some instances, functioning as an interesting spoiler in peacemaking efforts. The UNSC is clearly no longer serving the interests of humanity in terms of a genuine commitment to prevent conflicts prior to their overt and damaging escalation.

As a consequence, the UNSC cannot inspire any confidence that it can, or will, create the necessary framework conditions for international mediation to flourish. Indeed, the opposite is more likely, that the self-interest and predatory behaviour of its P5 has rendered the UNSC a clear and present danger to international peace and security. It should more aptly be re-branded as the UN "insecurity council".

10. The Fallacy of UN Reform

A number of member states have openly voiced their concerns about the continuing relevance of an institutional architecture that was established in 1945 to, in effect, constrain the excesses of global powers. As of 1992 and the end of the Cold War, these criticisms have precipitated the numerous UN reform initiatives that have plagued the organisation for more than three decades. On 14 July 2010, Inga-Britt Ahlenius, the outgoing UN Under-Secretary-General for the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), issued a scathing End-of-Assignment Report in which she stated that the UN was "in a process of decline and reduced relevance". Ahlenius was even more damning when she concluded that the UN seems "to be seen less and less as a relevant partner in the resolution of world problems … this is as sad as it is serious" (Ahlenius 2010, 3).

The UN system still grants governments a monopoly on the representation of their societies, and so it should—this is precisely what its Charter was designed to do when it was adopted over 70 years ago, despite the document's preamble, which waxes lyrical about "we the peoples". In this regard, so long as efforts to bring about change continue to be pursued within the pre-established discourse of UN reform, governments will remain the gatekeepers of any proposed institutional models.

Similarly, when it comes to the specific issue of UNSC reform, the P5 members of the body will continue to assert and exert a gatekeeper role through their vetoes in terms of the degree and extent of change that will be permitted. In this regard, the notion of UN reform is a self-evident fallacy, which will be detrimental and inimical to the future well-being and security of middle-level and smaller countries. As discussed above, this was manifest in the dramatic tragedies experienced in the genocides in Rwanda in 1994 and in Srebrenica in 1995, as well as the Iraq invasion of 2003.

States do not have a legitimate claim to be the sole representatives of their societies apart from the legitimacy with which they have imbued themselves. Similarly, the P5 members of the UNSC do not have any legitimate claim to retaining their status apart from a twist of historical fate which saw them effectively "muscle" their way into membership of this group by virtue of their historically perceived military might.

The suggestion that tinkering with the number of members of the UNSC and extending the veto provision to emerging regional economic power-houses, such as Germany, Japan, India and Brasil (G4), will increase the legitimacy of the body and allegedly "democratise" the institution through regional representativity is another illusion—a key region such as Africa being completely external to this discourse on UN "democratisation". Critiques of the Uniting for Consensus group (which question the basis upon which the G4 have been selected) are therefore valid and illustrate the self-evident fallacy of UN reform on this premise.

The discourse on UN reform also ignores the issue of whether the wider UN system needs to be transformed. The issue of increasing the UN's funding to adequately address the range of challenges facing societies around the world has also not been sufficiently addressed in the so-called reform processes. This masks the interest of the powerful UNSC members in maintaining the status quo.

Ahlenius (2010, 2), commenting on UN reform, observed that "disintegrated and ill-thought through 'reforms' are launched without adequate analysis and with a lack of understanding". She added that this "translates into a weakening of the overall position of the United Nations, and a reduced relevance of the organization". Among the negative consequences of this drift by the organisation is its reduced "capacity to protect the civilians in conflict and distress" (Ahlenius 2010, 2).

The net result of the proposed convoluted system of compromises, as far as UN reform is concerned, has not and probably will not address the deep and structural crisis of international legitimacy that the decision-making structures of the universal body face. Ahlenius (2010, 1) concluded that, as far as UN reform is concerned, "there

is no transparency, there is a lack of accountability", and she was emphatic that she did "not see any signs of reform in the organization". What this suggests is that notions of participatory democracy need to be relocated at a global level (Archibugi 2000).

11. Proposals and Efforts to Reform the UN Security Council

In the early decades of the UN, there was an asymmetrical partnership between the body and parts of the world that were still under the colonial yoke—notably, Asia and Africa. Newly independent Asian and African states were just beginning to establish their political, social, and economic footing. As a collective, Asian and African countries were not in a position to influence policy at the UN. In most instances, post-colonial Asian and African states were beholden (and still are, at least economically) to their former colonial powers. These colonial powers maintained an attitude of paternalism towards their post-colonies, which was a logical progression from the era of colonialism. It is, therefore, not surprising that the UN system, particularly in its attitudes, would adopt a similar stance, given that it was and still is politically, economically, and financially dominated by former colonial powers and Cold War superpowers. Given the asymmetrical relationship that the UN had with Asia and Africa, particularly in the early years, a culture of paternalism developed between the organisation and the continents. Since then, Asia and Africa have been trying to challenge and dispense with paternalistic attitudes from and within the UN system.

11.1 African Union Proposals to Reform the UN Security Council

According to former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs James Jonah, "over 60 percent of the Security Council's agenda relates to African problems, and about 80 percent of the 85,000 UN peacekeepers deployed around the globe ... were in Africa, at an annual cost of close to U.S. $5 billion." (Jonah, 2009, 65). It is on this basis that the African Union has proposed a number of reforms to the UN Security Council. In February 2005, the AU convened a committee of 15 foreign ministers in Mbabane, Swaziland, to craft a common African response to the UN High-Level Panel report of 2004. In March 2005, the AU issued a declaration known as The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: The Ezulwini Consensus (African Union 2005), which was a statement in response to the Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and was issued in December 2004. In

this Common African Position, the AU highlighted issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS, security, poverty, debt, environmental degradation, trade negotiations, the responsibility to protect, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. In addition, the AU issued a position on the reform of the UN and, in particular, the Security Council by noting that "in 1945, when the UN was formed, most of Africa was not represented and that in 1963, when the first reform took place, Africa was represented but was not in a particularly strong position." The AU goes on to state that "Africa is now in a position to influence the proposed UN reforms by maintaining her unity of purpose". Furthermore, it notes that "Africa's goal is to be fully represented in all the decision-making organs of the UN, particularly in the Security Council." The Common Position enumerates what "full representation" of Africa in the Security Council means by demanding "not less than two permanent seats with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership including the right to veto" and "five non-permanent seats." This decision subsequently locked the AU into trying to maintain this position in the face of tremendous pressure from other members of the international community, notably the Group of Four (G4) (Brazil, Germany, Japan, and India) and the Uniting for Consensus coalition. This was a bold move for the AU to have taken and was informed more by principle than by *realpolitik,* as indicated in the Ezulwini Consensus document, which states that "even though Africa is opposed in principle to the veto, it is of the view that so long as it exists, and as a matter of common justice, it should be made available to all permanent members of the Security Council." At least on paper, the AU was endeavouring to establish and maintain a common position. However, due to internal dissension, some African countries, particularly Egypt and South Africa, effectively broke rank with the Ezulwini Consensus and sought ways to individually ascend to become permanent members of the Security Council, which undermined efforts to demonstrate African "unity of purpose". This is further reinforced by the fact that, time and again, African countries have shown that they are unlikely to vote as a collective on matters before, or pertaining to, the Security Council. Governments generally adopt positions that best serve their interests or enable them to receive certain benefits from more powerful countries that pick and choose which African countries they want to work with. Therefore, as discussed earlier in the paper, the logic of "national self-interest" and political realism still prevails among African countries and other member states at the UN.

Following the meeting, the AU issued a report that advanced the Ezulwini Consensus, which called for "an expansion of the Security Council from fifteen to

twenty-six members, with two permanent seats holding veto power from Africa, as well as two additional rotating seats to add to Africa's existing three rotating seats." However, subsequently, disputes "emerged in Africa as to which countries would fill the permanent African seats. Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa all declared their candidacies. Kenya, Libya, and Senegal also expressed interest." Ultimately, this disunited approach weakened Africa's hand in advocating for Security Council reform. Therefore, it is evident that the problems and competing state interests within the Africa group pose a fundamental challenge as far as efforts to forge a common identity are concerned. As the competition relating to Security Council reform demonstrates, the Africa group is yet to function with a continental identity when the national interests triumph over maintaining a principled and unified stance at the UN. If the UNSC is no longer fit for purpose, it is necessary to dismantle it with a view to transforming the international system.

12. Towards a New International Mediation, Peace and Security Architecture

Kofi Annan (2013, 366) argues that if the UN "does not stand up for the principles of its Charter, it not only places itself outside the law but also loses its legitimacy around the world". Indeed, the UN has lost credibility, and its legitimacy is routinely questioned. This has created a dangerous vacuum in terms of the prevention of violent conflict and delegitimised the existing infrastructure for mediation and preventive diplomacy, which it had assiduously built over seven decades. The only appropriate course of action for the UN Security Council is a dignified burial in a metaphorical graveyard of noble but out-of-date institutions.

In terms of geopolitics, the US government and its counterparts and rivals in the P5 have no intention of remaking the UNSC to reflect the global shift in terms of the emergence of new powers—notably the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Successive US administrations and other P5 members have paid lip-service to the arguments put forward by countries such as India, which is the largest democracy in the world with over one billion citizens. Asia, Latin America and Africa also demand that their influence on the global stage be respected.

If the geopolitical order has corroded, the only option is to dismantle it and reconstruct it anew. The platitudes about UNSC reform, which have been dangled like juicy slices of raw beef at the salivating canine middle-power countries, have been

exposed for what they are: empty promises. Like an excited teenager all dolled up to go out on a date, the middle power countries have realised that the P5 will not turn up to the party or take part in the much-anticipated jovial celebration that was to be the "reform" of the UN Security Council. Still reeling from the rejection, middle-power countries have not been able to gather their collective wits and strategise for an alternative way forward. Consequently, an imaginative turn is required in order to transform and create a new reality in the geopolitical landscape.

Annan (2013, 369) suggests that "we as a global community should learn the hard-won lessons of the past, and seek to prevent injustices and inequities from taking root before they lead to crisis and conflict". As discussed above, the UN system and its Security Council have abdicated from undertaking this fundamental task, which is key to human survival. Consequently, in terms of advancing the interests of humanity in effective international mediation, the UNSC has become a mangled relic of a by-gone era. The Charter of San Francisco has, in fact, run its course; even ardent supporters of the UN recognise that the institution can no longer serve a 21st-century global body politic.

We are in an era that is reminiscent of the twilight years before the demise of the League of Nations, when the body was overrun by the excesses of the emergent totalitarian regimes in Germany and Japan (Walters 1952). The excesses of the P5 members of the UNSC have pushed the world over the precipice, and the world is in an extended descent into the abyss of cyclical and never-ending violence. While some might relish and benefit from this state of affairs, the prognosis suggests that humanity will not survive if the endemic crises it faces worldwide cannot be addressed by a paralytic and decrepit UN system.

The primary challenge of deepening global democracy is how to combine structures of international authority with mechanisms of citizen representation and participation. This paper has sought to establish the principle that radical transformation is required to achieve global democracy. UN reform will not significantly alter the power imbalances, nor will it empower the citizens of the world to assert their right to hold global institutions accountable for their actions. Furthermore, radical transformation is also necessary to empower world citizens, through their own agency, to be in a position to actively define a future organisation that will address their interests in terms of reducing the socio-economic inequalities that plague the majority of humanity. The UN has become the anachronistic caterpillar that has ossified and is now ready to shed its depleted edifice through a process of metamorphosis, which will allow a new global

body politic to emerge with the necessary institutional architecture to effectively pursue international mediation, peace and security.

13. World Federation of Nations

Based on ideas that have been promoted by the World Federalist Movement for close to half a century, perhaps the time has come to think about creating a new structure for global governance. This would require reactivating humanity's political imagination. It is evident that a new Global Democratic Architecture (GDA) is required, which will have at its core a new institutional architecture for mediation, peace and security. The GDA would be premised on a fundamental shift away from privileging the nation-state in global affairs. A World Federation of Nations would feasibly include the following organs: World Parliament, Council of Supra-nations, Assembly of Nation-states, Committee of Sub-national Groups, Global Forum of NGOs, Global Committee of Unions and Transnational Corporations. Any progress towards practical implementation will, of course, require much more deliberation about the purpose and functions of the various organs. The objective of setting out these organs here in this fashion is to provide food for thought and stimulate deeper reflection.

13.1 WFN Council of Supra-nations

This would be a grouping of existing and emerging supra-national entities like the European Union and the African Union. This council would have deliberative and decision-making capacity, as well as the ability to sanction other actors for failing to uphold the implementation of international law developed by the Assembly of Nation-States, the Committee of Sub-national Groups, and the WFN Parliament.

13.2 A New Global Infrastructure for Mediation

The WFN Council of Supra-nations would include a new Global Infrastructure for Mediation, which would build upon the embryonic structures of the currently existing good offices of the UN Secretary-General, notably the Special Representatives and regional offices. A key difference would be in the scaling up of the mediation infrastructure through its direct linkage to regional and sub-regional organisations. This would ensure the increased prominence of mediation-oriented institutions around the

world. A global fund generated through international taxation would be established to ensure that there is a substantial budget to conduct worldwide third-party interventions to prevent the emergence and escalation of crises.

13.3 WFN Assembly of Nation-states

The grouping of nation-states would have the ability to continue to develop international law on a broad range of issues.

13.4 WFN Committee of Sub-national Groups

The grouping of sub-national groups would be representative and have democratic oversight of international legislation being developed by the Assembly of Nation-States. This Committee of Sub-national Groups would also be empowered to petition the WFN Parliament, the WFN Assembly of Nation-States, or the WFN Council of Supra-nations. The criteria for being considered a sub-national group would have to be determined through a global consultation process. The modalities for representation would need to be determined through global consultation.

13.5 WFN World Parliament

As a practical objective, the idea of a world parliament or some other democratically constituted global assembly is slowly gaining currency (Monbiot 2003). A WFN World Parliament would be able to formulate international law on a par with the Assembly of Nation-States. In addition, it would have an oversight function of the implementation or non-implementation of international law and the ability to sanction the non-compliant actors. The role of the World Parliament would be to make global decision-making and the implementation of laws a more inclusive process. Members of the World Parliament would be elected through universal suffrage conducted within nation-states and sub-national groups. The World Parliament would therefore require states to be more accountable to a global polity with regard to their actions and allocation of resources. This is one basis upon which humanity as a whole can begin to prevent unilateralism from undermining collective and collaborative problem-solving. In terms of the potential routes to a global assembly, Andrew Strauss (2005, 1) suggests "a popularly elected representative body that will begin very modestly with largely advisory

powers, and that following the trajectory of the European Parliament, would only gain powers slowly over time".

The normative proposal for a new GDA would have to be elaborated through a comprehensive and widespread process of global consultation.

13.6 Transformation of UN ECOSOC: WFN Global Forum of NGOs and Civil Society Groups

An institutional framework for the representation of non-governmental organisations, civil society groups, ecumenical groups and other associations. This group would have a largely consultative function with regard to the other branches of the Global Democratic Architecture. The standards and criteria for membership and codes of conduct and ethics would be established through a global consultation process.

13.7 WFN Global Committee of Unions and Transnational Corporations

This would be an institutional framework for the incorporation of unions and transnational corporations as the inauguration of formal global union citizenship and global corporate citizenship. This group would have a largely consultative function with regard to the other branches of the GDA. The standards and criteria for membership and codes of conduct and ethics would be established through a global consultation process.

All these institutions would fall under the umbrella of a World Federation of Nations. Other programmes and specialised agencies, autonomous organisations, committees, and ad hoc and related bodies within the current United Nations system would also need to adjust their statutes and mandates in order to correspond to the transformed WFN system.

There is a danger of internalising the impossibility of the emergence of this new architecture due to the challenges of operationalising the political processes required. This would be a betrayal of human imagination, particularly since the United Nations itself began as an imagined organisation with only 51 members and currently has 193 members, but it excludes a number of territories. A new international organisation can also be launched with a small group of willing members. The same pathway can be followed to advance the emergence of the WFN.

14. Practical Steps to the WFN through a UN Charter Review Conference

The founders of the UN recognised that the moment would arrive when it became imperative to transform the organisation and included a practical mechanism to review the body's Charter. Specifically, Article 109 of the UN Charter provides for a "General Conference of the Members for the purpose of reviewing the present Charter". This Charter Review Conference could be convened at a specific date and place if it is approved by "a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Assembly and by a vote of any nine members of the Security Council" (United Nations 1945, Article 109, 1). Therefore, in practice, there are no major obstacles to convening a Charter Review Conference apart from securing the necessary percentages described above. In addition, the decision-making process at such a Charter Review Conference would be relatively democratic because "each member of the United Nations shall have one vote in the conference". This Charter Review Conference could be initiated through a process of mobilising the will of two-thirds of the General Assembly and nine members of the Security Council. The latter provision means that the P5 cannot veto any proposed UN Charter Review Conference. Such a Charter Review Conference could adopt a recommendation to substantially alter the UN Charter and introduce completely new provisions, including a change in the name of the institution to, for example, the World Federation of Nations. The adoption of these new recommendations could be on the basis of a two-thirds vote of the conference, and each member of the UN General Assembly would have one vote.

The major challenge will arise when it comes to ratifying any revised or new charter. Article 109 further stipulates that any alteration of the UN Charter can only take effect "when ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional processes by two thirds of the members of the United Nations including all the permanent members of the Security Council". In essence, if a UN Charter Review Conference makes recommendations, these have to be further ratified by the governments of member states, including all P5 members. Therefore, the final ratification of a new Charter could potentially be held hostage by a veto from any of the P5, in what is, in effect, an undemocratic provision inserted by the founders of the UN, undoubtedly to serve their own interests of ensuring that any provisions meet with their approval.

There are precedents for Charter Review processes leading to the establishment of new international organisations, notably the Organization of African Unity's

transformation into the African Union, initiated by a meeting of Heads of State and Government in 1999. Therefore, a UN Charter Review Conference could lead to the formation of the WFN through broad-based and inclusive consultations that include governments, civil society, businesses, trade unions, and academics. Despite the potential veto of P5 members at the ratification stage, the General Assembly can take the initiative and convene a UN Charter Review Conference. The recommendations adopted at a UN Charter Review Conference would be imbued with a degree of moral legitimacy, and therefore, any efforts to sabotage the full adoption of such recommendations by the P5 would further expose the injustice entrenched in the international system.

In the absence of the political will within the UN to convene a Charter Review Conference, an alternate strategy would be to establish the WFN through the convening of a new and separate treaty which could be approved and adopted by "whichever internationally progressive countries were willing to be pioneers" (Strauss 2005, 9). With reference to a global parliamentary assembly, or as this proposal suggests, the WFN Parliament, "even twenty to thirty economically and geographically diverse countries would be enough to found the parliament" and "the treaty agreed to by these countries would establish the legal structure for elections to be held within their territories including a voting system and electoral districts" (Strauss 2005, 9). There is no reason why these pioneering countries would have to give up their membership in the UN whilst forming the World Federation of Nations since almost all countries belong to more than one international organisation simultaneously. In fact, there could be an advantage for the pioneer members of the WFN to retain their membership in the UN and actively use their positions to advocate for the new Global Democratic Architecture and convince an ever-increasing number of countries to join them in the new formation. The constitution of the WFN could be framed in such a way that any country could join the formation so long as it is willing to meet its obligations under the WFN treaty. If the WFN treaty begins to gain momentum, "other less proactive countries would have an incentive to take part rather than be sidelined in the creation of an important new international organization" (Strauss 2005, 10). When membership of the WFN reaches an optimal number of countries, one could begin to see the gradual withering away of the relevance of the UN until it undergoes the same demise as the League of Nations. In fact, the UN itself was established by a pioneering group of countries, so it has already provided an example of how to successfully achieve the establishment of the WFN. In terms of the way forward, what is required is for a group of progressive states to begin drafting a General Assembly resolution to put the

UN Charter Review Conference on the agenda and, in parallel, to begin to finance the drafting of the treaty and constitutional framework of the WFN.

15. Conclusion

This article advanced the argument that the failure of the UNSC to create the framework conditions to mediate the Russia-Ukraine crisis of 2022 revealed that there are profound systemic constraints created by the veto power of the P5, which renders the institution anachronistic in the 21st century and a source of global insecurity. The core business of mediation is the search for peaceful and sustainable solutions to address inter-state and group concerns and grievances. Mediation is also about building positive relationships with other human beings through constructive dialogue, tolerance, respect and understanding. The UNSC is endowed by the founding Charter as the institution responsible for establishing the framework conditions for international mediation, peace and security. As such, the UNSC is humanity's best expression of our aspiration and desire for a framework for promoting our collective security. A historical retrospective reveals that the UNSC prevaricated during the genocide in Rwanda. The UNSC created the not-so-safe havens in Srebrenica that enabled pogroms against Bosnian Muslims. In addition, the juvenile brinksmanship among the P5 of the UNSC has allowed the Syrian crisis to deprive innocent children, women and men of their human dignity due to the war crimes they have endured. This trajectory of the UNSC's dysfunctionality and systemic failure created the conditions that rendered it ineffective in the face of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine crisis. Therefore, this crisis strengthens the case for the dismantling and radical overhaul of the UN Security Council as an institutional framework.

The current global system is defined by the selective respect for international law and a self-evident global democratic deficit. If the status quo is permitted to persist, this model of elite global governance—for example, manifest through the P5 of the UN Security Council—will not reform itself but merely replicate and reproduce existing forms of exclusivity by co-opting a few more members. Consequently, this article has argued for the radical transformation of the international system and the creation of a new global democratic architecture, within which a new global infrastructure for mediation can be established. The UN began with only 51 members and now includes 193 countries. In a similar fashion, a new global democratic system can begin with a small coalition of like-minded states, and as the UN system withers away, an institution

fit for purpose will emerge to address the challenges that humanity faces in the 21st century. Among these challenges, international mediation persists as a debilitating handicap of the global system, as demonstrated by the worldwide impact of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, and the persistence of cyclical and endemic violence remains a threat to the survival of humanity.

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The War in Ukraine: Implications for the Africa–Europe Peace and Security Partnership

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4071

Abstract

This paper discusses the war in Ukraine and what the EU's increasing preoccupation with it means for the EU-Africa peace and security partnership. It does this from the angle of a new EU funding mechanism, the European Peace Facility (EPF), which is a €5.6 billion fund that came into effect in March 2021 to support conflict management and international security during the EU's seven-year budget period (2021 to 2027). The facility funds a variety of activities globally and—for the first time in the EU's history—provides a legal basis for the EU to provide not only technical and material support but also lethal weapons to partner countries. As of May 2022, the EU has pledged to provide €2 billion to support Ukraine's armed forces aside from the unprecedented economic sanctions the EU has imposed on Russia.

The creation of the EPF is inspired by the EU's ambitious Global Strategy of 2016 (EEAS 2016) and the preceding policy discourse between the EU and its member states on making the EU a "global player" and not just a "global payer". This shift is partly a response to the emerging international geopolitical order in which the EU feels the need to assert itself and defend its interests globally. This marks a radical paradigm shift in EU foreign policy.

The paper argues that the EU's evolving foreign policy and its unforeseen use of EPF funds in Ukraine have at least two implications for Africa. First, the use of

ISSN 1013-1108

the EPF in Ukraine raises questions about the availability of funds for African peace support operations, which the EU has been supporting for some years. It raises also questions about the way Europe and Africa will decide about funding African security priorities. The EPF allows the transferring of funds and equipment to partner countries or regional coalitions directly, without the need to go through established regional organisations like the AU. Second, the EU's changing security interests and geopolitical ambitions as well as Africa's aspirations to find its place in the new global order could alter the dynamics of the EU-Africa peace and security partnership. While the EU remains an important economic and security actor in Africa—at the bilateral and continental levels—the EU-Africa partnership struggles to thrive and go beyond money to live up to its full potential.

To meet their own aspirations, the paper argues that the AU and its member states will have to work harder to reduce their financial, security and economic dependence on non-African states. The AU and its member states will also have to avoid getting trapped in geopolitical confrontations between "the east" and "the west". At the same time, they need to summon the political leadership the continent needs to prevent and manage internal political crises and conflicts on the continent while reducing interference from different international partners.

Keywords: European Union, Russia, War in Ukraine, Political Implications.

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) has acted swiftly and vigorously to denounce Russia's invasion of Ukraine and support Ukrainian resistance. Aside from the unprecedented economic sanctions the EU has imposed on Russia, it has also pledged to provide €2 billion to support Ukraine's armed forces.[1] The EU could possibly increase its financial support to Ukraine. But the EU's swift and unparalleled actions thus far demonstrate that the EU is no longer solely a soft power actor but also one that deploys hard power to defend its interests.

The EU will channel the €2 billion to EU member states, which will procure protective gear, fuel, and military equipment—including lethal weapons—to pass on to Ukraine. The EU will use the European Peace Facility (EPF), which is a €5.6 billion fund that came into effect in March 2021 for this purpose. The facility funds a variety of conflict management activities and—for the first time in the EU's history—provides a legal basis for the EU to provide not only technical and material support but also lethal weapons to partner countries. This marks a radical paradigm shift in EU foreign policy.

This paper discusses the war in Ukraine and what the EU's increasing preoccupation with it means for the EU-Africa peace and security partnership. It builds on the European Centre for Development Policy Management's (ECDPM) previous work on the EU-Africa peace and security relations, the European Peace Facility and the EU's use of the EPF for Ukraine (Deneckere 2019; Hauck 2020; Hauck and Shiferaw 2020; Hauck 2022). It argues that the EU's evolving foreign policy and its unforeseen use of EPF funds in Ukraine have at least two implications for Africa. First, the use of the EPF in Ukraine raises questions about the availability of funds for African peace support operations, which the EU has been supporting for some years. Second, the EU's changing security interests and geopolitical ambitions could alter the dynamics of the EU-Africa peace and security partnership.

2. The War in Ukraine: The Use of the European Peace Facility

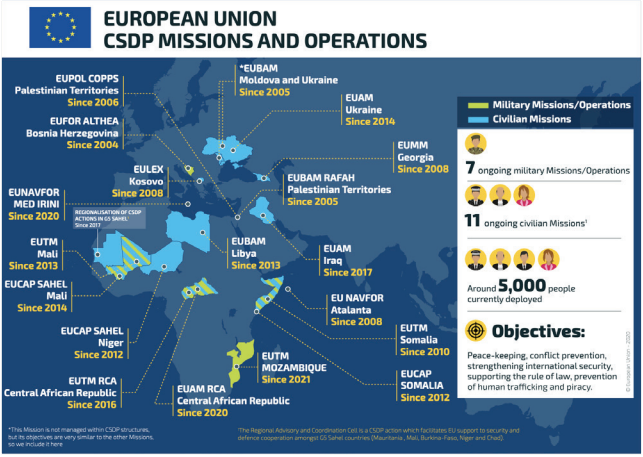
On Sunday, 27 February 2022, four days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and Joseph Borrell, EU foreign policy

1 As of 13 May 2022

chief and head of the European External Action Service (EEAS), announced sanctions on Russia. They also pledged an emergency package of €500 million in support of the Ukrainian armed forces, including for the procurement of lethal weapons. A few weeks later, the European Council doubled this amount and authorised a total of €1 billion to be provided to Ukraine (Council of the EU 2022). On 13 April, the EU tripled this pledge, committing to give a total of 1.5 billion to Ukraine to strengthen the country's defensive capabilities against Russia's aggression (Council of the EU 2022). On 13 May 2022, during the G7 meeting, Borrell made yet another proposal to provide €500 million in military support to Ukraine, pushing the total pledge to Ukraine at the time of writing to €2 billion (EEAS 2022).

This money to support Ukraine's defence forces comes from the European Peace Facility (EPF). The EPF is a separate €5.6 billion fund set up to support conflict management and international security during the EU's seven-year budget period (2021 to 2027). It was formally established in March 2021 by the EU's Foreign Affairs Council. The fund is different, or "off-budget" in EU jargon, because some legal provisions prohibit the use of the regular EU multiannual budget for activities of a military nature. The EPF—set up as a separate fund—provides the legal basis for the EU to supply technical and military support to partner countries globally and to finance the EU's military and civil peace missions, the so-called CSDP missions (see graph below). The EPF will also be used to support regional organisations and their forces, such as the former African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (now the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)), which is one of the biggest African peace support operations.

While €5.6 billion seems like a lot of money, given the many engagements that need to be funded through the EPF, and considering the price of (sophisticated) lethal weapons, the scope of activities resourced via the EPF is limited (Hauck 2020).



Source: EEAS 2021

Two developments inspire the EPF. First, it results from the EU's ambitious Global Strategy of 2016 (EEAS 2016) and the preceding policy discourse between the EU and its member states on making the EU a "global player" and not just a "global payer". This shift is partly a response to the emerging international geopolitical order in which the EU feels the need to assert itself and defend its interests globally.

Second, the EPF builds on the EU's experiences with the African Peace Facility (APF), through which the EU provided financial support to the peace and security activities of the African Union (AU). This ranged from institutional support to the AU's African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), financing preventive diplomacy and mediation, and supporting the deployment of peace support operations (PSOs) such as the AMISOM and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Between 2004 and 2020, the EU provided a total of €2.7 billion to the APF to fund the aforementioned activities and especially AMISOM stipends, which took the lion's share of the APF funds (EC 2019a).

While the EPF builds on the APF, it is different from the APF in three ways: (i) the EPF is a global instrument and hence not geographically limited to Africa; (ii) it permits the transfer of military equipment, including lethal weapons; and (iii) the EU can transfer funds and equipment to partner countries or regional coalitions directly, without the need to go through established regional organisations like the AU.

With these arrangements, the EPF provides flexibility to the EU and enables it to support operations at both bilateral and regional levels without intermediaries such as

the AU (Frisell and Sjökvist 2021). This in turn enhances the political weight of the EU, even if the EU's military role in international affairs remains limited so far. The EPF, therefore, signals an end to the era in which the EU saw itself primarily as a global soft power actor.

In addition to these political and strategic rationales for establishing the EPF, the EPF also adds operational and bureaucratic value. For example, financial and technical assistance provided to African PSOs via the APF strengthened their functional capacity and sustained them for years (AMISOM ran for more than a decade). However, there was a sense that because African PSOs have combat-oriented mandates, they would need "force multipliers" such as modern artillery to be effective (Mr Mulongo in an interview by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2018). The EPF is meant to fill in this gap.

3. Political and Financial Implications of the War in Ukraine for EU-Africa Peace and Security Partnership

The EU is one of the AU's major peace and security partners and the most significant financial contributor to the APSA and the African Union Commission (AUC) (Pharatlhatlhe and Vanheukelom 2019). As mentioned above, African PSO operations like AMISOM (now ATMIS) have financially relied on EU funding and were funded through the APF. When the APF was dissolved upon the introduction of the EPF, the EU had, in principle, committed to continuing its financial support to the AU and African PSOs but without earmarking funds for Africa.

As the EPF is a global instrument, the lack of designated funding for Africa had already raised concerns, as had the fact that the EU can support the military of partner countries and their PSOs in Africa directly, without any political engagement by the AU (Hauck and Shiferaw 2021). In the last EU-AU summit in February 2022, the two institutions renewed their peace and security partnership and promised to maintain a consultative partnership based on the AU-EU MoU of Peace, Security and Governance (2018). But they fell short of introducing formal mechanisms to ensure predictable financing for African PSOs and a role for the AU in deciding or monitoring the use of the EPF in Africa.

Before the war in Ukraine, the EU had made specific pledges to the AU Mission

in Somalia (AMISOM, now ATMIS), the military component of the G5 Sahel Force;[2] the PSO in Gambia (ECOMIG); and the MNJTF of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (which supports the fight against Boko Haram in Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger). All of these were to be financed by the EPF.

The EPF was scheduled to disburse its funds incrementally from €420 million in 2021 to 1.3 billion in 2027 (EP 2022). The EU's decision to provide €2 billion to Ukraine constitutes approximately 35% of the seven-year EPF budget. It is almost four times more than the EU intended to spend in 2022. The EPF's disbursement schedule does indeed need to be flexible, but the current situation begs not only a revision of the EPF's disbursement plan but also calls into question the EPF's capacity to finance African peace and security efforts at the same scale throughout the ongoing EU funding period, which ends in 2027.

Amidst these concerns, in April 2022, the EU allocated €600 million to support the African Union and its peace and security objectives for a period of three years. This is a substantial contribution and can be taken as an affirmation of the EU's commitment to continue supporting peace and security in Africa. This decision is, however, a far cry from earmarking a portion of the EPF for Africa throughout the seven-year budget. It also contrasts with the €2 million allocated to the Ukraine war within three months.

Predictable financing has been on the AU's agenda for some years and is among the core objectives of the AU institutional reform process chartered in 2018. Through this institutional reform, the AU devised a formula according to which member states would raise enough funds to reduce the organisation's financial dependence on partners. The formula, known as the Kaberuka plan—named after the AU's High Representative for Financing the African Union and the Peace Fund, Dr Donald Kaberuka—proposed that member states introduce a 0.2% levy on eligible imports to meet their financial obligations to the AU (Apiko and Miyandazi 2019). According to this formula, the proceeds collected from this levy would amount to $1.2 billion, covering 100% of the AU's operational costs, 75% of its programmatic costs, and 25% of the AU's peace and security expenses in 2020.

The reform process also included a revitalisation of the African Peace Fund, which was set up in 1993 to fund the peace and security activities of the AU's predecessor—the Organisation for African Unity. While the Fund was to be replenished from the AU's regular budget, as well as contributions from civil society and the private sector,

2 Covering Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger

it never, since its establishment, had the necessary funds. With the AU reform process, member states are to make a regular contribution to the fund, either from the 0.2% levy they introduce or voluntary contributions, to finance some of the AU's preventive diplomacy and mediation work.

By February 2022, member states had contributed $252 million to the Peace Fund against the planned $400 million by 2020 (AU 2022). This is encouraging yet insufficient to meet the financial needs of the AU by its own standards. Moreover, even if the African Peace Fund met its financial objectives in the Kaberuka plan, the amount would be nowhere near that needed to run PSOs. Much of the fund's resources would therefore be limited to funding preventive diplomacy and limited aspects of force deployment (ISS 2021; ISS 2022). Therefore, the AU will continue to rely on international partnerships for some time.

In due recognition of this fact, in 2018, the AU started negotiations with the United Nations (UN) to secure 75% of the funding for AU-mandated PSOs from UN-assessed contributions. The AU reasoned that maintaining global peace and security is the primary mandate of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and that when the AU deploys PSOs, it does so on behalf of the UNSC. The AU hoped to get a commitment from the UN that AU-mandated PSOs would, in principle, receive substantial UN finances even if the particular PSOs that would be funded from UN-assessed contributions would be determined on a case-by-case basis. The AU's proposal was met with several questions: who would have force command (the AU or the UN), how could the AU cover the remainder of the costs (25%), and were the AU's human rights compliance measures up to standard (Shiferaw 2021)? The negotiation was suspended after a draft UNSC resolution proposed by the AU in December 2018 failed to be endorsed by some members of the UNSC—notably the US. The AU is yet to reformulate its position and re-engage with the UNSC in the hope that the current Biden-led government in the United States (US) might be amenable to its proposal.

While the EU's increasing political and financial attention on Ukraine deepens the financial precarity of securing funding for African PSOs, the AU's concern over developments in Europe is not solely financial. With a rapidly and dramatically changing security landscape at its borders, the EU's security priorities and global ambitions are changing. The speed at which EU member states came together to unanimously agree on tough sanctions against Russia and the fact that the EU decided to use the EPF to pay for the procurement of military supplies—beyond the military equipment that various EU and Western countries have sent to Ukraine bilaterally—are political acts

that demonstrate the impact of this war on the EU's foreign and security policy.

4. It Is Not Just about Money: Political Implications of the War on the EU-Africa Partnership

The EU's ambition to "play hardball" to secure its political and strategic interests was captured in the statements from the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the EU Commission (HR/VP) Borrell (2022), who opined that the war in Ukraine "has given birth to a geopolitical Europe". But this ambition precedes the war in Ukraine. The 2016 Global Strategy mentioned above was set to transform the EU into a global player and not just a payer. Echoing this objective in one of her first speeches as President of the EU, Von der Leyen spoke of her vision to lead the "geopolitical commission", which "Europe urgently needs" (EC 2019b). Similarly, the EU's recent investments in enhancing defence innovation and logistics in the Union and grand infrastructure projects such as the Global Gateway, which resembles China's Belt and Road project, demonstrate the new role the EU is carving out for itself (Bilal et al 2021; Csernatoni 2021).

How the EU will go about realising these ambitions will be challenged within the Union. The final decision on foreign policy issues in Europe lies with the 27 EU member states, and depending on the topic, EU member states might have diverging policy priorities. But the steps taken at the overall Union level promote more harmonisation among EU member states on foreign policy and will inevitably translate into the EU's peace and security interests in Africa.

As global power shifts in favour of new actors, including China, Russia, Turkey and the Gulf states, Western actors increasingly face tough competition for global influence, including in Africa. Europe's partnership with Africa and influence there is important not just for the security and prosperity of Europe but also for Europe's global positioning. Against this backdrop, a geopolitical EU, together with the more dominant EU member states, will likely pursue their security and economic interests in Africa more vigorously. This could go in two directions. On the one hand, it could be the "boost" that would transform the EU-Africa partnership from a donor-recipient relationship to an interest-based partnership. But on the other hand, the EU's geopolitical interests may not always align with Africa's. The latest changes to the EU's financial instruments and the set-up of the EPF, in particular, raise two critical issues in this regard.

First, the EPF allows the EU to finance the provision of equipment, including

lethal weapons, to countries in Africa. This marks the first time the EU can do this, ending an era in which the EU saw itself primarily as a soft power actor in the world. While decisions regarding the EPF will be made through consultation among EU member states, there is a risk of its instrumentalisation by some of the heavyweights within the EU—for instance, France—even if some EU member states are wary of the use of the EPF. Further, the EU's military assistance and support in procuring lethal weapons could entangle the EU in partner countries' internal politics, especially in contexts where the military or the incumbent lack popular and political legitimacy. Recent military takeovers in Mali,[3] Chad and Burkina Faso—which constitute three of the five G5 Sahel forces—have made this concern more palpable.

Second, the EU's ability to decide on the use of the EPF in Africa without formal and political consultation with the AU risks sidelining the AU, which is the ultimate peace and security coordinator on the continent. It also takes away from the two decades of investments that were put into building and operationalising the APSA—including by the EU. The fact that the EU can bypass the AU doesn't mean it will, and the EU has stated its intentions to continue working closely with the AU. Yet, without a formal role for the AU, there is no guarantee that the EU's actions will always align with the AU's objectives.

These challenges should be juxtaposed with the AU's reactions. The lack of a strong objection from the AU or its member states during or before the last EU-AU summit in Brussels (17–18 February 2022) indicates that there appears to be a divergence between continental interests and national interests of AU member states. Some of the AU's member states stand to benefit from the EPF and the financing, training, equipment and weapons that can be mobilised from it. Therefore, they are likely to overlook how the EPF can enhance the EU's peace and security role in Africa—possibly at the cost of the AU.

This exemplifies one of the structural predicaments of the AU as an intergovernmental organisation—its decisions do not supersede those of its member states. Therefore, when there is tension between continental and national interests, member states prioritise their national interests. Member states, and not the AU Commission, are the most important decision-makers in the AU's partnerships with external actors. Decision-making at the AU—be it at the level of the AU Peace and Security Council or the AU General Assembly of Heads of States and Governments,

3 At the time of writing this article, the Government of Mali declared that it was stepping out of the G5 Sahel Force and leaving all of the G5 Sahel organs (https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118582).

which are the two most prominent political bodies of the AU—is based on consensus. This process, therefore, allows member states to create alliances among themselves over shared agendas. It also allows some of the more prominent or more politically influential members of the Union to steer discussions in one way or another. While it is hard to pinpoint which of the AU's member states or political heavyweights stand to benefit from the new arrangements of the EPF, it is worth noting that the growing number of states on the continent facing terrorism and serious challenges to state security might have made the EU's offer more interesting.

The implications of the EU's global geopolitical positioning and its current absorption in the war in Ukraine do not begin and end with the EPF. Africa's aspirations to find its place in the new global order and strike partnerships with a multiplicity of new and old actors might impact the nature of the EU-Africa partnership. While the EU remains an important economic and security actor in Africa—at the bilateral and continental levels—it is not the only one. It is also not necessarily the most preferred one. The EU's financial support to the AU is unmatched, yet the EU-Africa partnership struggles to thrive and go beyond money to live up to its full potential (Shiferaw 2022).

The EU has been increasingly trying to double down its efforts in the EU-Africa partnership to compete with the multiplicity of global players in the past 20 years. But neither the EU nor its member states are at peace with Africa's diversification of partners. Europe has qualms with China's growing interests not only in commerce but also in peace and security in Africa. China's military base in Djibouti—one of the most strategic locations in the world—diversifies the type and number of actors that claim relevance in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden. But its presence causes unease in the US, which also has its own navy base in Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. This discomfort with China's growing global influence and partnerships in Africa is no longer limited to political elites in the US or European capitals. Media and political narratives in Europe are often replete with simplistic narratives about "China's new scramble for Africa" while portraying the EU as a values-based actor which stands on the higher moral ground (Karkare et al. 2020; Soulé 2020).

Similarly, the EU carefully watches Russia's security partnerships with countries like the Central African Republic (CAR) and has criticised Russia's presence in Mali. The diplomatic fallout between Mali and France, for example, has partly to do with France's accusations of Mali's military junta's partnership with Russian private security company Wagner Group (Surk 2021). While the military coups in Mali, first in 2020 and then again in 2021, were popularly backed, they had aggravated Mali's African (ECOWAS,

AU) and European partners. Yet the accusation of Mali's collaboration with the Wagner Group escalated things with Mali's European partners. The Malian government denies the allegations and insists the security partnership is with the Russian state and that it is within the privileges of its sovereignty to choose its partners (Perelman and Boisbouvier 2022). France has since announced it will withdraw its forces from Mali (VOA 2022). The EU has frozen its military training programme for Mali's army (VOA 2022) based on the argument that it was not prepared to train Mali's soldiers, who would then operate under Malian/Russian command. On 23 March 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that the killing of 300 civilians in the Malian town of Moura was allegedly committed by Malian and Russian soldiers (Human Rights Watch 2022).

In Europe (and the US), the abstention or absence of 25 African countries on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution denouncing Russia's invasion of Ukraine was interpreted, by and large, as alignment with Russia and as evidence of Russia's growing influence in Africa (Murphy 2022; Walsh and Eligon 2022). This is despite 28 countries, or 51% of African countries, voting for the resolution and only one country (Eritrea) voting against the resolution. The reasons for Africa's vote are far more complex and multi-layered (Gbadomosi 2022; Ogunmodede 2022; Luce 2022; Kifukwe and Lebovich 2022). The very expectation that African countries ought to vote, not based on their *realpolitik* but in alignment with the West, is one of the fundamental problems characterising Europe-Africa relations.

The continuation of the devastating war in Ukraine and the intensification of confrontations between Russia and the West have left many African countries worrying about being pulled into one camp against another. As Western economic and political sanctions against Russia mount, there is incredible pressure on African states to distance themselves from Russia (Gramer 2022; Du Plessis 2022; Eguegu 2022; Chanson 2022). The US, for example, recently passed the Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act, which tasks the Secretary of State with devising a plan to "counter such influence and activities effectively, including through appropriate United States foreign assistance programs" (Fabricius 2022; Senate of the United States 2022). The continent, however, aims to diversity its partners and benefit from the differentiated comparative advantage each provides.

5. Conclusion

Going forward, the EU-Africa partnership will need a lot of diplomatic efforts, a change of expectations and respect for diverging positions to rebalance existing disharmonies. The EU would need to accept that African countries will diversify their partners and might choose to work with those that the EU is in competition with or doesn't approve of. The EU can, in turn, decide on the intensity and scope of its cooperation with such countries. But the AU and African countries will increasingly push back on European bids—perceived or real—to dictate who can and cannot partner with Africa.

In the EPF, the EU has created an instrument that allows it to choose the type and depth of its partnership with African countries based on its own criteria without being tied to the AU. To counter this and meet their own aspirations, the AU and its member states will have to work harder to reduce their financial reliance on the EU and other donors. This would require mobilising member states to pay their membership dues to the AU by providing them with the assistance they need and applying diplomatic pressure and sanctions when deemed necessary. Recently, the AU sanctioned South Sudan and Tunisia and suspended their right to speak at the AU for failing to pay their membership dues (Mono Danga 2020; *North Africa Post* 2020). This is one of the ways in which the AU is building its enforcement mechanisms. But the economic impact of COVID-19 and rising oil and food prices due to the war in Ukraine are likely to present deeper financial challenges to those AU member states which depend on oil and grain imports.

The AU and its member states will also have to avoid getting trapped in geopolitical confrontations between "the east" and "the west". At the same time, they need to summon the political leadership the continent needs to prevent and manage internal political crises and conflicts on the continent while reducing interference from different international partners. But this is easier said than done. The interests of political actors within member states, across countries in the regional blocks, or across the continent vary. This opens up opportunities for alliances where political actors in a country work with external actors—within the region or internationally—that share their interests. The situations in Libya and Somalia are examples in this regard. The political role of transcontinental political actors in Libya, for example, has not only sidelined the AU but has also made it incredibly difficult to arrive at political settlements arranged at regional or continental levels.

Therefore, the AU and EU should re-examine the nature of their partnerships

to ensure their shared objectives align. Each partner should also be aware of the geopolitical interests of the other. Furthermore, both parties should note that regardless of how they wish to frame it, the EU-Africa partnership cannot remain unaffected by geopolitical developments—including the changing positions of Europe and Africa in the world.

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Security Logics of Africa's Divided Position on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4054

Abstract

This article examines African states' security interests concerning Russia in order to explain those states' voting behaviour on a UN resolution condemning the invasion of Ukraine. African states do not form a bloc ready to support action taken by 'the West'. Many African states are themselves authoritarian and harbour longstanding suspicion of European and North American powers. Russia has also built close security relations with many African governments as an arms supplier, provider of military assistance, and source of private military companies. Overall, African states may prefer to maintain relations with both Russia and its opponents rather than choosing between rival blocs.

ISSN 1013-1108

Half of the nation states who chose not to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine at the United Nations General Assembly's extraordinary session on 2 March were member states of the African Union (AU). At the event, 25 of the AU's 55 member states either abstained, did not vote, or voted against the resolution (*Al Jazeera* 2022). This apparent split within the AU votes raises an intriguing question: Why did the block fail to unite in condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

Voting in the UN is generally motivated by perceived national interests (Voeten 2013). In this perspective blog, we will use a security standpoint to try to explain what those perceived interests may be. Overall, we shouldn't think of African states as a bloc that will naturally step in line with entreaties from Western countries.

As of 2020, 64% of AU member states were classified as not fully democratic, 38% as authoritarian, and 26% as a combination of democratic and authoritarian regimes (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2021). In such a predominantly undemocratic political landscape, aligning with democratic Western nations may appear to many states as a strategically less safe move. Countries may be concerned about whether they will be guaranteed protection against any Russian retaliation that may destabilise their states, such as supporting one side of a civil war, as it is doing at present in Libya, or a future interstate war.

Africa's ties with the West have always been tainted with suspicion and mistrust due to the dark history of the slave trade and oppressive colonial regimes. The negative pre-independence experiences have been sustained by Western nations' contradictory and inconsistent foreign policy when dealing with international crises and human rights violations. When the victims of violence are non-Western and the perpetrators are Western states (or a Western state), the West is often accused of having a double standard. Thus, it is arguable that many African states, even those with strong social and economic ties with Western nations, may view the West with scepticism when making decisions that may have immediate or long-term security implications.

A more prosaic reason for supporting Russia may be that many African states, especially states in sub-Saharan Africa, continue to have a close security relationship with Russia. Of the 25 African states that abstained, did not vote, or voted against the resolution, Russia has important military relationships with all but three (Eritrea, Namibia and Senegal). The security dilemma inherent in Russia's continued strong influence in the security sphere of African states might have influenced AU member states not to shun Russia for fear of being seen as an enemy.

Analysts have identified bilateral military cooperation agreements covering things

like training and supply of equipment between Russia and 14 of the African states that did not support the resolution (Burkina Faso, Burundi Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) (Hedenskog 2018). An example of the close cooperation that these agreements can entail is that a Russian citizen has been appointed National Security Advisor to the President of the Central African Republic (CAR). Russia has supplied the CAR with arms and military training, and Russian private military companies have operated there (Márquez 2021).

Arms sales are a physical manifestation of security ties between the supplier and the purchaser. According to data collected by SIPRI (n.d.), Russia was the largest supplier of major conventional weapons such as tanks or fighter aircraft to sub-Saharan Africa from 2016 to 2020. This recent pre-eminence is built upon a decades-long history of being a significant arms supplier and security partner to the region that dates back to the Cold War.

Specifically, from 2016 to 2020, Russia was the largest supplier of major weapons to eight states that did not support the UN resolution (Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Mali and South Sudan). Russia was also the largest supplier to two more over a longer period (South Africa after 2013 and Uganda after 2010), and from 2016 to 2020, it was the second largest supplier to a further four states (Burundi, the CAR, Mozambique and Sudan).

Another manifestation of close security links is the deployment of Russian private military companies such as the Wagner Group, which have close links to the Russian state (Jones et al. 2021). Such companies have been identified as having operated in seven states that didn't support the UN resolution (the CAR, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Sudan and Zimbabwe). For example, a few months after a 2021 coup d'état in Mali, the Russian Wagner Group began a large-scale operation there whose aim was reported to be to train Malian forces and provide security to senior Malian officials (Thompson, Doxsee and Bermudez 2022). When security for the leadership is provided by a Russian company, it is easy to assume that is why Mali didn't vote to condemn Russia in the United Nations.

Russia is a preferred arms supplier for many states as it has a reputation for being willing to supply arms or other military services without concern for democracy or human rights, which are sometimes championed by Western states. In more general terms, many African states are in an advantageous position as China, Russia, the US and European states compete for influence on the continent by offering arms and security

partnerships. If there is a long-term geopolitical realignment by the West against Russia, African governments may find it difficult if they are expected to align themselves with one bloc or another. Abstaining at the UN perhaps represented a desire by many to remain 'non-aligned', but they may not be able to continue with that stance indefinitely.

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The Russian Invasion of Ukraine and the Future of Democracy in South Africa

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4100

Abstract

The South African government and the ruling African National Congress shared the ambivalent responses of many African countries to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Analysing the South African response to the invasion, in the United Nations General Assembly debate and elsewhere, this paper suggests that the country's professed "non-alignment" or neutrality was misleading, for South Africa was more critical of Western countries (and Ukraine) than of Russia. The support for an imperially minded, undemocratic Russia cast doubt on South Africa's commitment to liberal democracy. Statements by government officials and members of civil society after the invasion suggested that liberal democracy was tainted by its association with the West. The future of democracy in South Africa is likely to be further weakened by implicit or explicit alignment in the post-invasion world with Russia against the West, for the West is unlikely to strengthen its commitment to democracy in Africa in the face of the challenges posed by Russia and China, countries that have no interest in democracy. While surveys suggest that a majority of South African citizens want their democratic system to continue, the governing elite's alignment with Russia is likely to weaken the country's pro-democratic forces.

ISSN 1013-1108

1. Introduction

Among the many causes of Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine was his fear that Ukraine was consolidating itself as a liberal democratic state. For Putin, the democratic window that had been opened by Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s had weakened Russia. Putin sought to "save" Russia—including, it turned out, Ukraine—from what he regarded as the degeneracy of liberal democracy. Addressing the spring conference of the Conservative Party on 19 March, Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, saw the Russian invasion as a clash between authoritarianism and liberal democracy; while speaking in Warsaw on 26 March, President Joe Biden of the United States expressed similar sentiments. While they and other critics of the invasion framed it in terms of autocracy versus democracy, the way in which other states and commentators responded to it also reflected their attitudes to democracy. The responses of many African governments, political parties and even sections of civil society suggested a worrying indifference not only to self-determination and national sovereignty but also to democracy and human rights elsewhere in the world. Almost half of the African states chose *not* to vote for a United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution condemning the invasion. Whilst most of these countries had authoritarian regimes, their position on Ukraine was articulated primarily by one of Africa's most democratic countries, South Africa. South Africa and its ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), not only defended what they termed a "non-aligned" position in the vote at the UN, but South Africa proposed a resolution on the humanitarian crisis caused by the invasion that was implicitly pro-Russian.

A special session of the UN General Assembly was held over three days, from 28 February to 2 March, to debate a draft resolution on "Aggression against Ukraine" (United Nations 2022a). This draft resolution deplored the Russian aggression (and the complicity of Belarus), demanded that Russia withdraw immediately from Ukraine, deplored the Russian recognition of the independence of the secessionist Donetsk and Luhansk, and called on Russia to retract that recognition. It went on to call for humanitarian corridors and assistance. In the debate, only one representative from an African country sought to justify abstaining from the draft resolution, and she was from a country with what many accepted was the most effective liberal democratic constitution on the continent, South Africa. Mathu Joyini expressed her country's "deep concern" over the "escalation of the conflict" and called for dialogue and compromise. She did not raise a single criticism of Russia, declined to refer to the conflict as a war

or an invasion, and appeared to endorse Russia's "security concerns". She criticised the UN for its alleged failure to pay similar attention to other "situations of conflict" and Ukraine and other European countries for their alleged ill-treatment of African refugees from the conflict. After abstaining, the South African representative criticised the resolution because, she said, it would "not lead to an environment conducive to mediation and could lead to a deeper rift between the parties". She preferred a more "open and transparent process in the negotiations"—presumably meaning one that accommodated Russia's imperial ambitions and exonerated Russian aggression (United Nations 2022b).

When the UN General Assembly met again to discuss two draft resolutions on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, South Africa again abstained on a resolution condemning Russia's invasion for creating a "dire" humanitarian situation, demanding that a humanitarian corridor be opened, and calling for an end to the fighting and the withdrawal of Russian troops. A second draft resolution proposed by South Africa (with China) avoided any mention of Russia. It did call for an "immediate cessation of hostilities" but not for a Russian withdrawal, and it made no mention of the Russian invasion. Unsurprisingly, Russia supported this resolution strongly, with the Russian representative saying that the South African draft was very similar to one that Russia had proposed in the Security Council. The draft resolution was immediately criticised by, among others, the UK and Ukraine, not least for South Africa's failure to consult Ukraine on the draft. A majority in the UN General Assembly voted not to put the resolution to the vote, effectively rejecting it (United Nations 2002c; Fabricius 2002; Gerber 2022). Using V-Dem's liberal democracy measure for 2021, the most democratic of the countries that did not support the resolution were South Africa and Armenia, both of which fall into the 8th decile of V-Dem's categorisation of countries (with the 10th or top decile comprising the most democratic and the 1st or bottom decile the least democratic) (Varieties of Democracy 2022). A simple regression model shows the predicted probability of voting for the resolution among, first, the countries that did not do so and, second, the countries that did so. South Africa, followed by Namibia, stands out as the country that the model predicted would be most likely to vote for the resolution but did not do so.

The South African government's position on Ukraine has been aptly described by Dent as "contrived neutrality", which she calls "a betrayal of the country's commitment to human rights in favour of a political and economic calculus to not upset Russia". She points out that it had "become the tactic of South Africa to voice hollow

commitments, as in its statement on the Ukraine matter, to 'international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as the principles of the UN Charter, including sovereignty and territorial integrity', but then to raise technical objections when resolutions are proposed" (Dent 2022).

2. The South African Government's Evolving Response

South Africa stood out not only because it is a reasonably strong democracy that declined to criticise the Russian invasion but also because it took the lead in Africa in articulating an ostensibly "non-aligned" position that avoided any such criticism of Russia whilst criticising the "west". In its statements and votes, South Africa appeared indifferent to Russia's imperialist invasion of a moderately democratic, sovereign neighbour. The South African position was especially surprising given some of South Africa's prior pronouncements on issues of imperialism and self-determination, such as those supporting the self-determination of the Western Sahara.

Like others, the South African government was surprised by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. An initial statement issued by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) on 24 February, the day of the invasion, which had presumably been drafted, or at least approved, by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Naledi Pandor, expressed "dismay at the escalation of the conflict", called on Russia "to immediately withdraw its forces from Ukraine in line with the United Nations Charter", and reiterated South Africa's "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states" and support for diplomatic solutions (DIRCO 2022a). That evening, South African Defence Minister Thandi Modise attended a cocktail party at the Russian ambassador's residence celebrating Russia's Defender of the Fatherland Day, a celebration of the Russian military. The opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) later compared this to "raising a glass to the might of the German army at the German embassy on the day that Hitler invaded Poland" in 1939. Three days later, senior ANC officials in the Western Cape attended a function at the Russian consulate in Cape Town to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations during South Africa's transition to democracy (Richards 2022).

President Cyril Ramaphosa soon made clear his unhappiness with the criticism of Russia in DIRCO's statement. In a series of comments and statements, he called for a diplomatic solution without calling on Russia to withdraw or criticising the Russian invasion in any way. He repeatedly blamed the "conflict" on NATO's expansion and

rejected calls to condemn what he referred to, using Putin's terminology, as Russia's "special military operation" (Khoza and Madisa 2022, Ramaphosa 2022b). In a statement explaining its representative's abstention in the vote on 2 March in the UN General Assembly, DIRCO referred to the "situation" not as an invasion but as a case of "two members of the United Nations" involved "in an armed conflict". South Africa had abstained, the statement said, because the proposed resolution did "not create an environment conducive for diplomacy, dialogue, and mediation" and did not address Russia's "security concerns", which were a root cause of the conflict. The statement did not demand that Russia withdraw or even call for a ceasefire (DIRCO 2022b).

Hostility to the USA and NATO was evident in comments made by DIRCO's Head of Public Diplomacy (and Deputy Director-General), Clayson Monyela. He defended the South African government's position in a tweet on 3 March, saying: "Let's not forget the People of Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Somalia". He even added #whataboutism to his tweet. In an op-ed on 11 March, he unambiguously blamed NATO for the conflict: "Had NATO given Russia the security assurances they required and been promised since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the region would not likely find itself in the situation it is currently in." Monyela also criticised the sanctions that Western countries were proposing to adopt against Russia. Whilst he did call for an "immediate ceasefire", he emphasised that the primary cause of the conflict was "the security concerns of all parties", although by this he clearly meant Russia's security concerns, not Ukraine's or those of East European countries that had escaped the Soviet yoke between 1989 and 1991. Monyela seemed unable to distinguish between NATO and the USA and ignored the security concerns of the European members of NATO or the European Union (EU) (Monyela 2022).

Ramaphosa also suggested that South Africa might play a mediating role. On 10 March, he phoned Putin "to gain an understanding of the situation that was unfolding between Russia and Ukraine". He then tweeted his thanks to Putin, adding that:

> President Putin appreciated our balanced approach. We believe this position enables both parties to subject the conflict to mediation & negotiation. Based on our relations with the Russian Federation & as member of BRICS, SA has been approached to play a mediation role (Ramaphosa 2022a).

The South African President did not identify who had suggested that South Africa mediate. For weeks, he made no attempt to speak to the Ukrainian president. Only on

22 March did DIRCO request that the Ukrainian ambassador in South Africa arrange a teleconference between Ramaphosa and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and it was over a month after he spoke to Putin that Ramaphosa finally spoke to the Ukrainian President.

South Africa's ruling party, the ANC, issued its first statement on Ukraine on 27 February. The statement was clearly pro-Russian, expressing the ANC's "deep concern about the rapid escalation of conflict between Russia and Ukraine especially against the backdrop of eight years persistent shelling of Donetsk and Lugansk" (sic). Although the statement did not name the USA or NATO, it clearly criticised them, not only for their supposed responsibility for the Russian invasion but also for their "hypocrisy" in themselves invading and occupying other countries and ignoring Ukrainian shelling of the Donbas area. It referred to "brazen propaganda" and "unprecedented disinformation" and implied that the ANC endorsed the secession of Donetsk and Luhansk from Ukraine (African National Congress 2022).

Most observers attributed the indifference of the South African government and the ANC to the Russian invasion as "misguided nostalgia" rather than "*realpolitik*". As Eusebius McKaiser and Sasha Polakow-Suransky put it:

> South Africa today appears to be driven by a fetish for nonalignment and negotiation—even in the face of naked aggression—and nostalgia for the Cold War when Moscow offered stalwart support for the liberation movement, rather than a clear-eyed assessment of contemporary Russia and a consistent commitment to its self-proclaimed moral foreign policy. Instead, its leaders are parroting Russian security arguments identical to those once used by the apartheid regime to justify its violence against neighbouring countries. ... [Their] loyalties and perceived historical debts have blinded South Africa's leaders to the reality of what contemporary Russia has become. Pretoria has failed to recognise that Putin's Russia is not the anti-imperialist patron of liberation movements that it once adored; it is an overtly imperialist state trying to reconstitute its old empire and has become the leading global patron of far-right white nationalist parties (McKaiser and Polakow-Suransky 2022).

As McKaiser and Polakow-Suransky went on to point out, the reluctance by the ANC and the South African government to criticise the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was perverse given the ANC's outrage when the apartheid state in South Africa invaded

Angola in 1975 (and again repeatedly thereafter) and conducted military operations in other neighbouring countries to try to stem the tide of majority rule and prevent it reaching South Africa itself. Though those invasions were justified by the South African government on the basis of a fear of communism and of Soviet-related military threats—the Cuban military forces in Angola—the real reason was, as McKaiser and Polakow-Suransky say, "the spectre of postcolonial winds blowing south and bringing democratic rule to Pretoria". In the same way, write McKaiser and Polakow-Suransky,

> Putin today is seeking to preserve his undemocratic regime amid a sea of emerging democracies. His approach of terrorising Ukraine to prevent the encroachment of liberal ideas at home is anathema to everything that the ANC stands for and the ideals on which a democratic South Africa was founded (McKaiser and Polakow-Suransky 2022).

The ANC had long had ties with Moscow. In 1927, an ANC president called the Soviet Union "the new Jerusalem" because of its anti-colonial stance and socialist principles. The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), founded in 1921, developed ties with the ANC because both organisations opposed the racial segregationist policies of the South African government. Links were strengthened after the CPSA dissolved itself in the face of repression in 1950 and was continued as the underground South African Communist Party (SACP). From the early 1960s, the SACP and ANC were both given essential aid by Moscow, aid that permitted the armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), to engage in armed struggle against the apartheid regime. From the early 1960s to the late 1980s, the Soviet Union had not only been the main supplier of arms and military training to MK but had also assisted the ANC with educational facilities and diplomatic support, as well as money for publications, travel, and more.

Though the ANC's close friendship with Moscow ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, leading figures in the ANC continued to see Russia as the successor to the Soviet Union and welcomed its anti-West attitude. They tended to forget that Ukraine had played a separate role in assisting the anti-apartheid struggle: many ANC members had studied in Ukraine, while most MK soldiers who trained in the Soviet Union had received their training in Ukraine (either near Odesa or, especially after 1969, in the Crimea) (Lynd 2022). The ANC's historic ties to Moscow were strengthened when Jacob Zuma was President of South Africa from 2009. South Africa joined Russia in the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) association of major emerging economies

in 2010 (turning BRIC into BRICS). During his presidency, Zuma pushed for a massive deal to be signed with Russia for the building of new nuclear power stations. Despite having been involved in the negotiations leading to the drawing up of South Africa's democratic constitution, Zuma clearly sympathised with Putin's mafia-style authoritarian style of rule. Like other leading ANC figures, including David Mabuza, who became Deputy President in 2019, Zuma went to Moscow for medical treatment. In early 2022, Lindiwe Zulu, who chaired the ANC's Subcommittee on International Relations and had herself attended the Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow, cited the "relationship we have always had" as a reason why the ANC was "not about to denounce" the Russian government. Zulu and Supra Mahumapelo—another Zuma supporter who heads the parliamentary subcommittee on international relations—as well as ex-MK senior officers in the military and military intelligence, were reportedly the leading critics of the initial Pandor/DIRCO criticism of Russia (*Africa Confidential* 2022a; *Africa Confidential* 2022b).

Mills and Hartley, sceptical that the ANC government's position could be explained in terms of misguided nostalgia, assessed that it had deeper roots:

> The kindest interpretation of its foreign policy is that the ANC is misguided and useless, an echo chamber of radical slogans and posturing of the 1960s, girding up only to tilt at ideological windmills, rather than to encourage the investment and skills that will fix services, create jobs and build a better South Africa. The less kind version is that it is a party of self-interest and sleaze with a moral standing to match. Its stance on Ukraine may just be the moment this reality was exposed to the world (Mills and Hartley 2022).

The ANC's loyalty to Russia might reflect the generous financial support shown by Russian oligarchs to the ANC (indirectly, via the ANC's investment arm) (Cowan 2022). In addition, the ANC and government have long shown indifference to human rights abuses committed in non-Western countries, whether by Omar Al-Bashir in Darfur or by Robert Mugabe and Emmerson Mnangagwa in Zimbabwe. Since the years of the Mandela presidency, South Africa had not supported democracy and human rights in international fora, except for a brief moment in 2019 after Ramaphosa had become President, when it voted against Myanmar in the UN Human Rights Council (Jordaan 2019, and cf Gottschalk 2022). South African actions in the UN in March 2022 thus represented the continuation of previous policy. South Africa's BRICS

membership seemed to outweigh any consideration of supporting democracy against authoritarianism.

The ANC's position was influenced by the approach of its long-term partner, the SACP, which has its own structures but contested elections as part of the ANC-led alliance. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the SACP immediately expressed strong support for the Russian Federation on the grounds that Russia was simply defending its own sovereignty and integrity in the face of US-led imperialism. The SACP's first deputy secretary-general, Solly Mapaila, described Putin as standing up against "the big boys of the US and European Union who are intimidating the whole world … Although an impression is created that Russia is the aggressor, in this case, the aggressor is US imperialism that has aggressively tried to encircle Russia, and Russia has to defend itself." There was no consideration of the fact that the people of Ukraine might have democratically wanted to join NATO and the EU. Mapaila condemned the economic sanctions imposed on Russia as an "evil instrument … used by the imperialist forces" (Lekabe 2022). The SACP joined other communist parties in other parts of the world in denouncing "developments in Ukraine" as the consequence of the expansion of Western "monopoly capitalism". Whilst critical of Russia's denunciation of Leninism, these parties were far more critical of the "predatory" and "deeply reactionary" EU and NATO and of the "fascist and nationalist forces in Ukraine" (Ndaba 2022). The SACP's national spokesperson, Alex Mashilo, explained in a subsequent interview that the SACP had condemned what he called the "coup" in 2014 that had, in his view, resulted in democratisation in Ukraine. Mashilo repeatedly declined to condemn the Russian invasion, instead reiterating condemnation of "NATO's expansion". The SACP was, he limply added, opposed to all war, and he called on all sides (including Russia) to stop fighting. The SACP was clearly irked by the Ukrainian government's alleged banning of the Communist Party of Ukraine (Barron 2022). Mapaila reiterated that Russia had been "provoked", while reports that the Russian military had wrought destruction in Ukraine were, in his view, Western propaganda. The SACP, he said, applauded Putin for standing up to Western imperialism (*Umsebenzi* 2022).

3. Other South African Responses to the Invasion

Fundamental differences between South Africa's political parties were revealed starkly when the South African parliament debated the issue of Ukraine on 15 March. Most ANC MPs were reported to have "studiously sidestepped any combination of words

that would amount to saying, 'the Russian invasion of Ukraine"'. They referred rather to the "Russia-Ukraine matter" or "developments in Ukraine" (Merten 2022). The populist, proto-fascist opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), also demonstrated unflagging support for Russia. The EFF's chief whip (and de facto deputy leader), Floyd Shivambu, declared that "There is nothing wrong with the Russian Federation preventing the military expansion of NATO, which is trying to expand its presence to the borders of the Russian Federation". He added that South Africa and Russia should strengthen their relationship "because it is based on common prosperity and anti-imperialism". After EFF leader Julius Malema met with the Russian Ambassador, the party reiterated that "there is absolutely nothing wrong with the Russian Federation averting what is a patent and clear security threat to Russian territory and people by NATO forces, and particularly the US". The EFF also denounced the sanctions imposed by Western countries on Russia (Merten 2022; Zeeman 2022).

In contrast, the DA, dominated by white liberals, described the Russian invasion as "an act of war for which there is no justification" and over which there could be "no moral ambiguity". The party lambasted Ramaphosa and his government for declaring that South Africa should not "pick sides" whilst "going on to do just that by blaming NATO and the West for Ukraine's devastation". John Steenhuisen, the DA leader, told US embassy personnel:

> No one believes that the ANC has not already picked their side. No one has fallen for their ruse of 'neutrality'. President Ramaphosa might have chosen his words carefully to avoid stating outright his support for the Russian cause, but his ANC comrades were not always so careful. When the Defence Minister and the chief of the [South African] Defence Force attend a cocktail event in honour of the Russian military on the very day of the invasion, you know which side they've chosen. When the ANC in the Western Cape attend a Russian consulate function celebrating 30 years of diplomatic relations between the countries immediately after the start of the invasion, you know which side they've chosen. And when Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu proudly states that 'Russia is our friend, through and through,' as Russian bombs rain down on apartment buildings and hospitals in Kharkiv and Mariupol, you know which side they've chosen (Steenhuisen 2022).

The DA-controlled provincial government of the Western Cape condemned the

invasion, banned Russian officials from its functions, and expressed its support to the ambassador of Ukraine (Craig 2022). Perhaps because it was conscious of the flaws in Ukrainian democracy, the DA did not stress that it shared democratic values with Ukraine.

The divisions between political parties were also reflected within civil society. Whilst most commentators in the media denounced the Russian invasion—and South African "moral cowardice" (McKaiser and Polakow-Suransky 2022)—a series of civil society organisations effectively endorsed the South African government's position. The Nelson Mandela Foundation published a statement on 5 March in which it, like the government, expressed concern over the Russian invasion (using that word) and called for a ceasefire but stopped short of condemning the invasion outright. Like the government, the Foundation proceeded to list the faults of the USA and its allies in the "west". Its statement also pointed to the "neo-colonisation" of Africa by the imperialist West through new forms of invasion—"technologies, data, markets, idioms, languages and other apparatuses of power"—besides military force. It also cited racism within Europe (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2022). In response to the Foundation's statement, journalist Adrian Basson asked what Mandela himself would have said had he been alive.

> Would he not have condemned Putin's aggression in no uncertain terms? Would he not have supported the sanctions of the West against Russia, like he and the ANC supported sanctions against apartheid South Africa? Would Madiba [Mandela's clan name] not have stood with the journalists and human rights activists in Russia, who are being jailed, sometimes killed, for criticising Putin and, since last week, using the word "war"? I think so (Basson 2022).

After a story began to be circulated on the internet that the government had instructed scientists not to say anything about the Russian invasion, the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) wrote to its members explaining that it would not issue a statement on the "Ukraine-Russia situation" because it had previously decided not to issue statements unless "science and the work of scientists" were affected. ASSAf ignored the ample evidence that the Russian invasion has indeed affected scientists in Ukraine directly and elsewhere (including in Russia) indirectly. ASSAf's stance contrasted with the positions taken by leading academies of science and universities around the world (Seekings and Nattrass 2022). The South African Council of Churches—previously a

strong advocate of human rights—published a weak statement (on 1 March) that called for an immediate ceasefire but did not refer to the "invasion" or the "war" (South African Council of Churches 2022). Such statements cast doubt on the independence of the organisations that issued them and the role they were supposed to play in underpinning South Africa's multi-party democracy.

A common refrain on social media and elsewhere was that South African non-alignment was justified by the alleged racism in Ukraine and elsewhere towards black South Africans and other non-European refugees from the invasion. This was mentioned by the Nelson Mandela Foundation in its statement and was a major concern of some officials within DIRCO. It was articulated forcefully by Makhudu Sefara, the deputy editor of the (South African) *Sunday Times*, in an article that began by criticising the South African government's fence-sitting. He concluded, nonetheless, that European self-interest and racism mean that this was "Europe's war", of no concern to "Africa" (Sefara 2022). Sefara's argument had at least three flaws. First, as his own newspaper had reported, non-Ukrainians of black African and Asian origin had very mixed experiences in escaping the Russian invasion. Whilst some had experienced some racism, others had experienced repeated assistance. Secondly, it was not clear why Sefara's "Africanness" excused indifference to non-Africans any more than "Europeanness" might excuse indifference to non-Europeans. Thirdly, and most importantly, Sefara seemed indifferent to the fact that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was not simply a war between European states. It was an invasion by a largely authoritarian regime, prepared to use repression against its own population against a broadly (if imperfectly) democratic regime. In Sefara's moral universe, instances of alleged racism outweighed imperial aggression against a democracy, however flawed (Sefara 2022).

These responses in civil society suggest that the South African government's implicit alignment with Russia cannot simply be explained in terms of misguided nostalgia. Rather, it reflected a deep ambivalence about the "west", including and especially the USA but also, to a lesser extent, Europe. Attributing the war to the faults of the West and drawing parallels with "Western" invasions and occupations of other countries (even when these were sanctioned by the UN itself) was a way of countering perceived judgementalism about violence and state failure across Africa. It is almost as if South African leaders welcomed the opportunity to point out that "Western" governments or societies were capable of as much, if not more, barbarism than African governments and societies. In South Africa, this view of the world seems

to have become accentuated under the influence of new American ideologies of race that view the world in fundamentalist and essentialist ways. One consequence of this is deepening indifference to democracy.

4. Concluding Reflections

The ambivalent responses of many African countries to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, articulated most clearly by the South African government and ruling ANC, underscores the regression of democracy on the continent. The professed "non-alignment" or neutrality of countries like South Africa is not only misleading, in that these countries have clearly been more critical of Western countries (and Ukraine) than of Russia, but it is also deeply worrying because of the implicit ambivalence it suggests about respective political systems. Democratic South Africa appeared supportive of the imperial, undemocratic Russia over the democratic West. Statements by governments and sympathisers in civil society have suggested that liberal democracy is tainted by its association with the West.

Implicit or explicit alignment with Russia against the West is likely to erode democracy in South Africa. Like other African countries, South Africa has aligned itself with what Yusuf Bangura sees as "a beleaguered, authoritarian, economically weak, rent-seeking capitalistic Russia" that will be "highly transactional, aggressive and opportunistic" in its future engagement with Africa (Bangura 2022). Russia is likely to pursue contracts, corruptly if necessary, for the extraction of minerals, the construction of nuclear power stations, and arms sales. As Bangura also notes, the West is unlikely to "firm up its already questionable commitment to democracy" in Africa "when faced with challenges from Russia and China, which have no interest in democracy" (ibid). South African citizens may want democracy, but the governing elite appears less and less inclined to provide it. Alignment with Russia is likely to empower the elite further and weaken pro-democratic forces.

April 2022

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The Russians Are Here

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4167

Abstract

Russia's war on Ukraine inaugurated the new Cold War most feared, and some wanted. It demanded that countries pick sides. African countries and their elites have been reluctant to do so, not least because for some their food or energy supplies will be affected, while for others Putin's authoritarian governance model is seductive. Other countries and movements are reluctant to weigh in for fear of being swept up in an elite-serving great power conflict using Ukraine as its proxy and that the invasion exposes hypocrisies. More than anything, peace and a more humane future - another kind of world, underlined not by great power competition, but solidarity binding ordinary people across borders - is even more elusive.

ISSN 1013-1108

More than four months into Russia's war with and occupation of Ukraine, the global geopolitical fissures are clear. Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, announced that the country would stage an "anti-fascist" conference in August, with the list of planned invitees so far including China, the UAE, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia. Russia has continued its propaganda that it is rooting Nazis and racists in Ukraine. African countries did not follow Abiy Ahmed's increasingly despotic regime into joining this coalition of "anti-fascist" (read anti-liberal) states. Africa's voting patterns on UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1—one against, 17 abstentions, and eight absentees—gave us a better idea of how close African countries were playing their cards to their chests. Indeed, Russia's aggression has since been cast—after an obligatory mention of the Ukrainians—as a challenge to the liberal international order.

These are the terms on which this war is now framed. The great confrontation of the 20th century was between capitalism and communism, the one before us, so we are being told, between liberalism and illiberalism. Receding into the background are the Ukrainians themselves, and further still, the notion that both the West and Russia bear responsibility for this situation. As *Jacobin* staff writer Branko Marcetic (2022) summarised it at the start of the war: "The latest escalation in the Ukraine crisis requires us to hold two ideas at the same time: that Vladimir Putin bears much responsibility for the immediate crisis, and that the long-standing US refusal to accept limits to NATO expansion helped bring it about." Anatol Lieven, senior research fellow on Russia and Europe at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and the author of *Ukraine and Russia: A Fraternal Rivalry*, made the same point in an interview with *The American Prospect* (Meyerson and Cooper 2022).

Yet this nuance evades most mainstream coverage and commentary. American liberals—the most powerful of that orientation globally—are now warmongers. They want a deathmatch with Putin, who, to be sure, is deplorable. But for them, this is about reinforcing America's great power status as Russia and especially China threaten to bring about a properly multi-polar world. Observing the latter is not an endorsement, just a statement of fact. There is no reason for NATO to exist, nor is there any reason for it to expand. Still, and at the encouragement of mainly the US and UK, Ukraine was encouraged to join NATO even though there had never been a sincere intention to mobilise NATO's defensive capacities to Ukraine's aid were it to come under attack (Meyerson and Cooper 2022). As a matter of political realism, top foreign policy thinkers have been warning for years about how this would end (Bertrand 2022). The deafening silence to Zelensky's pleas for more Western support is the surest proof. The

West sold Ukraine a dream. Anatol Lieven again:

> We never had the slightest intention of defending Ukraine, not the slightest. Even though Britain and America and the NATO secretariat to the Bucharest Conference in 2008 came out for NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia (the NATO HQ was completely behind it on American orders), no contingency plans were drawn up, not the most remote or contingent ones, for how NATO could defend Ukraine and Georgia. There was no intention of ever doing that at all (Meyerson and Cooper 2022).

Even so, while sharply criticising the West's role in creating the conditions for conflict is one thing, it is another to exonerate Russia completely and claim its posture is defensive. So goes the bizarre line being peddled by tankies and Russophiles eager to construe Russia's aggression as an anti-imperialist advance. According to this thinking, the United States is the one true evil, and anyone standing up to Uncle Sam is a hero. Nationalists (and nationalists parading as leftists) in Africa justify solidarity for Putin's invasion by referencing the close ties between the Soviet Union (of which, lest we forget, Ukraine was a part and played a larger role than Moscow) and various anti-colonial movements during the Cold War (Lynd 2022). This is true, but assuming ideological continuity between the former Soviet Union and Putin's regime betrays both ahistorical fantasy and wilful stupidity. Putin himself attributes Russia's seemingly inferior position in world politics to the communists of yesteryear while being viciously anti-communist today (Milanovic 2022).

It's no surprise, then, that upon further scrutiny, those pro-Russia types are the same characters prone to glorify authoritarianism elsewhere—be it Paul Kagame in Rwanda or Narendra Modi in India. For them—like for those populist sympathisers of former South African president Jacob Zuma (Reddy 2022)—the Bonapartism embodied by Putin makes for a seductive model of governance. As resonant is Putin's anti-West, supposedly nationalist worldview, which, reading Tom Parfitt's (2014) interview with ex-Kremlin adviser Geb Pavlovsky in *The New Left Review*, dovetails with the ambitions of Zuma's "radical economic transformation" and sets the standard for state capture:

> [Putin's] thinking was that in the Soviet Union, we were idiots; we had tried to build a fair society when we should have been making money. If we had made more money than the western capitalists, we could have just bought them up, or we

> could have created a weapon which they didn't have. That's all there is to it. It was a game and we lost, because we didn't do several simple things: we didn't create our own class of capitalists, we didn't give the capitalist predators on our side a chance to develop and devour the capitalist predators on theirs (Parfitt 2014).

Putin and his apologists are anti-West simply because they long to be in its commanding place. Not against schoolyard bullies, but irritated that they aren't the biggest ones. Nationalism, as authors like Adom Getachew (2019) carefully show, was a positive force in the 20th century. Anti-colonial nationalists sought not only independence for themselves but also the reconstruction of the international state system along egalitarian lines. Now, nationalism is a spent force, made redundant by irreversible globalisation. Putin's to-do about Russia's glorious past and his role in preserving it serves mostly to legitimise the billionaire class that his regime spurred (Khachaturian 2022). And, like nationalisms elsewhere, it mystifies class cleavages in society and the economic stagnation wrought by it. Often overlooked in the analysis of the crisis is its political economy, as a clash motivated less by national feeling of the many, but monied avarice of the few. As pointed out by Sam Greene (2022) before the invasion—and before Russia would find out that invasion would prove a grave economic miscalculation (Leusder 2022):

> The expansion of EU influence puts insurmountable pressure on the Russian political economy to move from a rent-based, patronal model of wealth creation and power relations, to a system of institutionalized competition. Having satellite states that are governed in the same patronalist mode as Russia gives Moscow geo-economic breathing space, adding years or decades to the system's viability. Losing those satellites removes those years and decades (Leusder 2022).

The anti-imperialist stance is not on the side of the West nor with Russia (and, by extension, China) (Spectre Editorial Board 2022). It is refusing to pick a side in an elite-serving great power conflict using Ukraine as its proxy. The anti-imperialist position is non-alignment from below and encourages our states to follow such a foreign policy. The African proverb that history's great purveyor of non-alignment, Kwame Nkrumah, was often wont to recite goes: "When the bull and elephant fight, the grass is trampled down." Non-alignment, then, does not mean indifference—it means solidarity with those who stand to suffer from war most, and against war because it causes suffering for

most. Therefore, we must be unequivocally anti-war and unconditionally in solidarity with ordinary Ukrainians—and ordinary Russians who did not sanction this war and will endure greater repression as they take to the streets to oppose it (Socialists Against the War Coalition 2022).

The best advice for the rest of this is from Gregory Afinogenov (2022), an assistant professor of Russian history at Georgetown University, in *Dissent Magazine*:

> Those in the West who sympathize with the plight of Ukraine have no choice but to trust in Ukrainian and Russian resistance to Putin's war. Thousands of Russians have already been arrested for protesting against the war, a number that is sure to grow significantly as the war expands. Millions of Ukrainians don't want to die in bombings, live under imperial rule, or be forced into emigration; millions of Russians don't want to be immiserated by sanctions or be conscripted into an invasion that gains them nothing. In our response to the war, we should be careful not to simply echo Russia's nationalist elites—they think blaming NATO will shift attention away from their increasingly repressive, kleptocratic, and militarist rule at home. Our loyalties must lie with the people of both Ukraine and Russia, and with the cause of peace.

The well-documented racism and xenophobia against Africans fleeing Ukraine, whether by Ukrainian border guards or their Polish counterparts or by ordinary Poles, has made some Africans tune out or be ambivalent. But why are we surprised? Once again, we must resist the instinct to see the unfolding catastrophe through the prism of culture war. We can both admit the horrendous treatment of Africans and stand with the Ukrainian people and Russians bravely opposing Putin's war from within (Progressive International 2022). Nor should the occurrence of the latter be license to spitefully side with the Russian state—as if Russia is an anti-racist paradise! Some corners of what is dubbed "Black Twitter" online, mainly influenced by American cultural and race politics, have done so over the last few days.

More dangerous is to treat the war as if it had no bearing on Africa. Immediate concerns surround the dependence of some African countries on Ukrainian and Russian imports (Resnick 2022), and given Russia's ramped-up presence on the continent (Jacobs 2022), the implications beyond the short term will be profound (Shoki 2022). In itself, the financial war playing out will have reverberations beyond Europe and North America (Tooze 2022), and if the possibility of nuclear escalation becomes less remote,

well, the global fallout from that should be clear.

There is truth to the Western prognosis that Russia's aggression is a challenge to the post-Cold War, liberal international order. The deeper truth is that it has been crumbling for longer than they cared to realise (Cunliffe 2020). The hypocrisy being called out now on the West's actions in Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Yemen, Kashmir, the Sahel, and especially Palestine tells us that the "rules-based" international system was a fiction from the start, in place to consolidate Western dominance. Putin is not the first to fight a hugely unpopular war. Furthermore, although the West will inflict as much economic pain on Russia as it can, it will preserve its material interests and will not go as far as prohibiting the trade of Russian oil and natural gas on which its economies are dependent. We must take advantage of this moment and call out the West on its double standards. Why are Ukrainians "freedom fighters" when they pick up arms, but a young Palestinian throwing a stone at an Israeli tank is a "terrorist"?

Outside of the media, the space where we have seen Western double standards on full display the most is sports, especially football. In the last week, FIFA and UEFA, which control global and continental football in Europe, respectively, went from hedging about the war (Russia's national team could still play fixtures but *sans* national colours, anthems, and flags) to an outright suspension of all Russian national and club teams from its competitions. Anyone familiar with FIFA, or any of the other global sports bodies known for their reticence to punish Russia, was surprised. Just last month, the IOC, which organises the Olympics, allowed Russia to compete despite its national teams openly using banned substances to increase their chances of winning. Also, with the exception of the sports boycott against Apartheid South Africa, FIFA has rarely acted against rogue states, especially ones who illegally occupy and oppress others: Saudi-Arabia in Yemen, the US and its various invasions and occupations in the past, Morocco in Western Sahara, India in Kashmir, and Israel over the Palestinians (Africa Is a Country 2022), just to name a few. In Israel's case, it is one that hits closer to home for European football: Israel is a member of UEFA (Jacobs and Bloomfield 2016). Similarly, some of Europe's top clubs, most notably Chelsea (Lawton, McDonald and Hardy 2022), Everton (Agini and Ralph 2022), Schalke (Reuters 2022), and UEFA itself (UEFA 2022), have cut ties with Russia's oligarchs.

Perhaps, after Russia and Ukraine inevitably sit around a table to negotiate a new relationship, another consequence may be ushered in—one in which global hypocrisy and obfuscation (Rawoot 2022), whether by the world's governments, media or public, about the suffering of others that don't look like us, have to face up to their own

light, in which we can together imagine another kind of world, underlined not by great power competition but solidarity binding ordinary people across borders. As Kwame Nkrumah put it, facing neither East nor West but forward.

Probably not. Still, we dream.

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Entering the Dragon's Den: Contemporary Risks and Opportunities of China's Belt and Road Initiative in Africa

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4090

Abstract

This article attempts to identify the opportunities and risks associated with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Africa. Given the global scope and depth of the BRI, it is of considerable importance to understand how this initiative applies to developing economies in the African context. The article provides a brief historical context of the BRI, followed by a short theoretical framework, specifically in the scholarly field of International Relations. The article then expounds on the opportunities the BRI could create for Africa, such as improving infrastructure, assisting in African industrialisation and economic advancement, as well as introducing beneficial diplomatic initiatives. The article also examines the strategic risks associated with the BRI, such as unsustainable debt concerns, concerns regarding the effect of an increasing trade deficit on domestic markets, as well as risks pertaining to large-scale infrastructure development.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, China in Africa, Health Silk Road, Digital Silk Road, Debt-trap Diplomacy, Political Economy.

ISSN 1013-1108

1. Introduction

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an ambitious macro plan aimed at developing two new trade routes connecting China with the rest of the world. More specifically, the BRI is a strategy employed by Beijing, which aims to connect Asia with Europe and Africa through maritime and land networks as a way of improving regional integration, stimulating economic growth and increasing trade (Dossani, Bouey and Zhu 2020, 1). It is, however, important to note that Africa sits at the periphery of the BRI. The BRI has six economic corridors, all in the Eurasian area, which constitute the core of the initiative. However, Africa is still of significant diplomatic and political importance to Beijing (Nantulya 2019). Despite public finance in the European Union (EU) and the Group of 7 (G7) aiming to compete with China in funding through A Globally Connected Europe (see Council of the European Union 2021) and the Build Back Better World initiative (B3W) (see The White House 2021), observers such as Wang (2021, 3) reason that the BRI continues to offer developmental opportunities for cooperation and financing between Beijing and African partner countries.

At least two issues are of major significance when studying the BRI as China's global infrastructure plan. Firstly, China sees itself as deserving of being a superpower (Schuman 2020). A few decades ago, China had poor infrastructure, low income levels, and a largely agrarian economy. Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, China started to embrace economic reforms that would allow the country to reach its desired international status (Morag n.d., 8).

Secondly, the BRI plays an important role in Africa's economic development. There are currently 490 million people in Africa living in extreme poverty, an estimated 37 million more than what was projected without the COVID-19 pandemic (UNCTAD 2021). Many emerging economies that were already heavily indebted prior to the pandemic were forced to take on additional debt to support firms and households. In 2020, this resulted in an increase in the total debt burden for low- to middle-income countries of nine percentage points of GDP (World Bank 2022, 203). The BRI's prevalence in Africa means that it will inevitably influence the manner in which the continent's economy develops. Low-income countries tend to have small FDI inflows, low trade, and marginal participation in global value chains since their economies are poorly integrated into global and regional markets (World Bank 2019, 4). The emphasis placed by the BRI on increased governmental cooperation, better trade routes, and improvement of local infrastructure could help solve this dilemma (Ruta 2018, 3).

However, the BRI's lack of transparency and due diligence could increase corrupt practices and create future fiscal insecurity (Chen 2022).

Furthermore, the BRI could offer significant social and economic opportunities to Africa. The BRI is focused on infrastructure development, which has the potential to improve connectivity and enhance intra-African trade in the countries that have signed up. Free trade and related economic cooperation throughout the continent are currently among the highest priorities of the African Union. Although policy impediments such as customs delays, bureaucracy, and corruption are serious stumbling blocks (Dollar 2020), physical infrastructure deficiencies pertaining to roads, railways, ports and border posts, as well as other production-related infrastructure gaps, are also concerns. Other pertinent shortcomings are in the fields of information and communications technology, electricity, water and sewerage. Overall, it is estimated that at least US$68 billion, but as much as US$108 billion, is required to address the weak African infrastructure and related financing challenges. Against this background, the BRI presents an opportunity to African states relating to infrastructure development and associated financing that could significantly enhance connectivity across Africa and boost intra-African trade (Phiri and Mungomba 2019, 2).

The BRI, however, poses some significant risks for Africa and the relevant BRI partner states. African countries run the risk of being exposed to excessive debt burdens due to unfavourable loan agreements and a lack of transparency. It is important to note that the association between Chinese investments and large debts only applies to a handful of African countries. Chinese financing is merely adding to existing debt. It is in countries with already high non-Chinese debt that the additional debt becomes a burden. For example, among 17 African debt-distressed countries, Chinese loans are small in eight, substantial in six and dominant in only three (namely Djibouti, the Republic of the Congo and Zambia) (Tjønneland 2020, 6). According to Stein and Uddhammar (2021, 18), Chinese lenders often utilise collateral arrangements, such as lender-controlled revenue accounts and debt-for-equity swaps, in conjunction with acceleration, stabilisation and cancellation clauses in contracts to allow creditors to influence debtors' domestic and foreign policies. Furthermore, investment in BRI infrastructure is frequently cited as a risk, as large infrastructure projects often pose environmental, social and corruption risks (Ruta 2018, 4). Although the BRI is not limited to infrastructure projects, it does form a large part of the initiative and is therefore of major importance.

Given the above, this article attempts to discuss and answer the following research

question: What are the opportunities and risks associated with the BRI? Structurally, the first part of this article provides a cursory historical overview of China's BRI, followed by theoretical reflections, specifically in the scholarly field of international relations. The article then concentrates on the opportunities the BRI could create for Africa but also examines the strategic risks associated with it.

2. Historical Overview of the BRI

The BRI was introduced in 2013 by President Xi Jinping and has expanded significantly since then (Wang 2016, 1). The BRI is a strategy for developing powerful new trade routes between China and other countries. Ultimately, this will increase trade, services, and capital flows between China and the rest of the world (Cai 2017, 4). In essence, the BRI is a global development project driven by President Xi Jinping and Beijing in the form of two economic belts: a northern economic land-based belt called the Silk Road Economic Belt and a southern maritime belt called the Maritime Silk Road. These two economic belts are aimed at the promotion of cooperation in several regions across the globe and the connection of major markets in the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Africa with China (Dollar 2019, 1). Chinese leaders describe the BRI as a national strategy that has diplomatic, economic, military and political elements (Nantulya 2019). It directly supports China's national security strategy to such an extent that it was included in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) constitution in 2017 (Russel and Berger 2020, 7).

Africa forms an important part of China's BRI strategy, specifically the Silk Road Economic Belt. As the Chinese economy began to bloom and capitalist values started to influence its citizens, an insatiable domestic market began to develop (Cai 2017, 2). In order to sustain its growth and provide for its growing middle-class, China needed to procure natural resources. Although natural resources were readily available on the international market, China's distrust of the West, coupled with its dedication to being self-sufficient, caused Beijing to turn to Africa (Jian 2019, 3). Africa has an abundance of natural resources, with limited potential business partners, making African partner states a good match for China's needs. Under the BRI, China has made BRI-related investments in 52 of the 54 African countries (Lokanathan 2020, 3). The BRI in Africa is very diverse in terms of projects and types of investments, but there are certain overarching trends. Firstly, China is heavily focused on investing in ports and port areas stretching from the east coast of Africa to the Gulf of Aden through the Suez Canal towards the Mediterranean Sea. China claims to have signed memorandums of

understanding with nearly 70% of African countries along the coast of Africa. Secondly, the BRI is focusing significant resources on connectivity initiatives to connect its industrial and energy projects in the hinterland of Africa. Thirdly, the most significant number of BRI projects is in the infrastructure sector (Lokanathan 2020, 4).

China stands to benefit significantly from the BRI. As much as infrastructure needs are most pressing in Africa and China intends to address some of the needs on the continent, Chinese companies operating in industries like steel and cement are significantly benefiting from these projects (Lokanathan 2020, 3). In this context, many observers view the BRI as a tool for a newly powerful China to expand its global influence and diversify its trade opportunities, which is evident from the following. Firstly, the BRI aims to facilitate connectivity. The ultimate goal is to improve interconnectivity and infrastructure access between BRI countries. This will remove bottleneck points and barriers in core international transportation passages (Wang 2016, 3). Secondly, financial integration is a key strategic objective of China. China uses the BRI to enhance capital mobility across borders by creating institutions like the Silk Road Fund and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Cai 2017, 4). Another motivation is the internationalisation of the Chinese currency. As China's involvement increases in the financing of BRI projects, so will the use of the renminbi, the official currency of the People's Republic of China, increase. Lastly, the creation of trade routes via the BRI could grant China access to large international markets (Dollar 2019, 3–4).

In light of the above, several questions have been raised regarding China's strategic motivations. Critics believe the BRI is not merely an economic construct but rather a geopolitical tool to enhance China's international influence. Furthermore, concerns have been raised as to whether the initiative really benefits partner countries (Lokanathan 2020, 1). Some of this mistrust is rooted in China's broader strategy. The country's global and hegemonic intentions have made other countries wary. The United States, specifically, has accused China of forcing other nations into suboptimal security decisions by leveraging its overseas investment. Similarly, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his concern that the increased connectivity created by the BRI was undermining the sovereignty of weaker states (Russel and Berger 2020, 8). China's choice to use the term "Silk Road" references China's imperial glory. Consequently, there is a clear connection between the contemporary BRI and China's intentions to re-establish itself as a global superpower (Cai 2017, 5). These matters will be further discussed in the sections below.

3. The BRI in Africa: Relevant Theoretical Tools

Since its inception in 2013, the BRI has been the subject of intense theoretical reflections and scholarly debates. Approaches from International Relations theory, among others, have been applied to make sense of the BRI as the world's largest global financial programme. However, given the complexity of the BRI, this article argues that there is no singular theory that can properly or accurately serve as a framework for explaining and understanding this macro initiative, and therefore, multiple theories of international relations should rather be used to examine and understand the BRI. Many observers take a realist stance by perceiving China as an emerging superpower that is pursuing power through self-interested and aggressive means (Herman 2020). This view is often justified with references to the recent establishment of China's military base in Djibouti as an integral part of the BRI. Moreover, China is often viewed as a rising global power, with its relatively new military base in Djibouti the epitomising symbol of China's assertiveness—even aggression—in international politics along the Belt and Road (Risberg 2019, 44).

Liberal scholarship in international relations, which places emphasis on harmony, tends to view the BRI as a platform to enhance international cooperation (Herman 2020). From this perspective, the BRI is framed and understood as a win-win initiative or a mutually beneficial relationship, linked to the core aim of the BRI as a development strategy that aims to build connectivity and cooperation across six main economic corridors, including Africa. In fact, Beijing is often seen as promoting this narrative of the BRI and downplaying the initiative's geostrategic objectives (Jones 2019, 2). Prominent Chinese academics also tend to put the crux of the BRI on cooperation, stating, for instance, that "the basic logic of BRI is to build back partnerships between countries, continents, and civilizations" (Thiwari 2021).

A structuralist Marxist-based perspective, such as Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory, for instance, which posits that there is a world economic system in which some "core" countries benefit while "peripheral" countries are exploited, is also of relevance. It can provide insight into the potential of China to exploit weaker states in a similar fashion to how the Global North has exploited the Global South, given the North's capitalist drive for accumulation of wealth (Balaam and Dillman 2016, 132). A prominent narrative in the literature is that China "provides infrastructure funding to developing economies under opaque loan terms, only to strategically leverage the recipient country's indebtedness to China for economic, military, or political favour"

(Risberg 2019, 43). As such, Structuralist theories, such as the World Systems Theory, may hold explanatory value for a better understanding of evolving relationships between China and its periphery (Lubieniecka 2014), including debt distress in BRI partner countries.

Over and above, given the nuanced and complex nature of the BRI, this article does not side or identify with any particular theoretical paradigm in International Relations in the study of this macro plan but rather suggests the need for incorporating elements from various theoretical approaches in understanding and explaining the BRI and its unfolding on the African continent. In other words, an eclectic approach that embraces theoretical pluralism is suggested because, on the one hand, it would be wrong and even dangerous to claim that all of China's engagement along the BRI is detrimental to Africa. Yet, to ignore China's interest-driven economic practices, military expansion, and assertive—even aggressive—political and ideological approach in Africa would be equally wrong. These matters will be further explored in the sections below.

It is important to note that the BRI exhibits a top-down development strategy, given its focus on larger macro-economic factors instead of the specific needs of individual countries. This could result in significant unmet needs in partner countries despite large monetary investment, given that it does not consider the nuances implicit in individual cases (Skidmore 2022). Given that the BRI is intended to promote Chinese interests, it is unlikely that it will be developed to focus on the needs of individual partner countries. Therefore, it could be beneficial for partner countries to reconcile top-down and bottom-up development policies (see Crescenzi and Rodríguez-Pose 2011). This implies employing more situation-specific bottom-up development approaches that complement a top-down initiative such as the BRI.

4. Opportunities Associated with the Belt and Road Initiative

The BRI has provided certain opportunities for Africa and will continue to do so in the years to come (Adeniran et al. 2021, 6). The discussion below focuses on some of the opportunities the BRI could offer Africa. It does not aim to discuss all opportunities but rather those that could assist in addressing some of Africa's more prominent needs.

4.1 Improving Infrastructure in Africa

Africa is faced with a significant infrastructure gap. It is estimated that bridging this gap

would require between $130 billion and $170 billion of financing per year (Adeniran et al. 2021, 7). In 2019, the World Bank estimated that the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita growth of sub-Saharan Africa could increase by 1.7% relative to the developing world median if the infrastructure gap could be closed (Edinger and Labuschagne 2019, 3). When financing constraints permit, meticulously designed fiscal policies, such as public infrastructure investments in strategic sectors, could be used to accelerate recovery by lifting aggregate demand (AfDB 2021, 34). However, Africa's track record for moving projects to financial closure is incredibly poor, with an estimated 80% of infrastructure projects failing at the business plan and feasibility stage (Ruta 2018).

The public sector is the main source of infrastructure financing in Africa. A 2018 report by the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA) found that 42% of infrastructure funding in Africa was done by governments (Lakmeeharan et al. 2020). Although governments have an array of sources to fund these infrastructure investments—such as issuing Eurobonds, issuing their own infrastructure bonds and financing through International Financial Institutions—these sources have been heavily exploited in the last decade to finance infrastructure investments and contributed to current debt distress in a number of African countries. This is problematic, given that governments simply do not have the resources and capacity to develop infrastructure at the rate needed with the resources at their disposal. A major challenge relates to the fact that, in recent years, multilateral investment has been shifted towards humanitarian aid and social priorities and that private investment on the continent has been hampered by elevated investment risk (Adeniran et al. 2021, 7). Infrastructure investment is of considerable importance given that it increases FDI in other sectors, as well as increasing business confidence. Furthermore, infrastructure investment fosters productivity and innovation while lowering trade costs (Edinger and Labuschagne 2019, 3).

Another prominent developmental issue for Africa is weak intraregional trade. It is estimated that intraregional trade accounts for 17% of Africa's exports compared to 69% in Europe and 59% in Asia (Ghandi 2019). The BRI could help in this regard by providing finance for large-scale and, in some cases, cross-country infrastructure investment projects (Coetzee 2021, 2). Examples of this are major railway projects in Gabon, Mauritania and Nigeria, and hydropower schemes in Ethiopia, Sudan and Ghana (Risberg 2019, 44). It should also be noted that only about 28% of road networks in Africa are paved (Adeniran et al. 2021, 7). According to the World Bank (2019, 6), complementary policy reforms could maximise gains from transport projects.

If countries reduce regional trade barriers while embracing the development of intra-regional transport corridors, they could see a significant improvement in their economies.

4.2 Assisting in African Industrialisation and Economic Advancement

Phiri and Mungomba (2019, 2) correctly point out that industrialisation is a key component of the ability of Africa to reach inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Technology is a critical component for long-term sustained economic growth, especially in terms of facilitating service-led growth. Service-driven economic transformation is made possible through innovation, new opportunities for scale and spillover effects (World Bank 2021). Technology transfer between China and Africa occurs in different ways, such as knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing, and technical assistance. Many of the investment projects of the BRI are done using a combination of local and Chinese manpower in conjunction with Chinese technology. This leads to the inevitable transfer of certain skills and knowledge to Africans (Adeniran et al. 2021, 18). However, this is often inadequate in light of high unemployment levels and deficient educational opportunities on the continent. Consequently, in recent BRI projects, African countries have been embracing the Chinese vocational education model as a way of developing local technical capacity. For example, Beijing has offered scholarships for Nigerian students to study railway engineering in China. Upon graduation, these students are expected to work with the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, a state-owned enterprise, to take co-responsibility for Beijing's megaproject in Nigeria, the Lagos–Kano Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) (Olander 2020).

The BRI prioritises cooperation in manufacturing equipment and building production capacity and can therefore be used to develop production capacity in Africa and consequently attract Chinese FDI. Bluhm et al. (2018, 1) found that Chinese transportation projects in particular, and Chinese development projects in general, reduced economic inequality in low- to medium-income regions. Their results also suggest that Chinese investments in connective infrastructure produce positive economic spillover. While there are undoubtedly substantial risks, the BRI's impact on Africa has positive implications. By investing in both human capital and infrastructure, the BRI can allow African countries to develop and diversify their economies. This drastically improves domestic economic stability and allows countries to integrate better into the global economy. The BRI's shift towards high-tech communication

infrastructure furthermore enables African countries to participate effectively in the international economy (Habibi and Zhu 2021, 1). This presents the opportunity for full digital value-chain activity and brings digital firms, such as Alibaba, Tencent and Huawei, to Africa (Boo et al. 2020, 3).

4.3 Emerging Diplomatic Initiatives: The Health Silk Road

The Health Silk Road (HSR) provides an opportunity for deeper diplomatic ties between China and Africa. According to the party secretary of the CCP committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qi Yu, the HSR was originally designed as a component of the BRI under the pillar of people–people bonds but has since developed into an emerging diplomatic initiative aimed at promoting health cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2021). In contrast to the hard infrastructure division of the BRI, the HSR represents increased prioritisation of the global soft power of Beijing (Tillman, Ye and Jian 2021, 1). The HSR was developed in 2015 but has evolved significantly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and is currently a tool to strengthen economic and investment relationships between China and BRI countries (Habibi and Zhu 2021, 2). According to Cao (2020, 2), the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the largest global recession of the past 50 years while causing the deaths of thousands of people and jeopardising the developmental gains made by African countries.

Africa is faced with multiple challenges in obtaining the required number of COVID-19 vaccines to reach herd immunity. By May 2022, only 17% of Africans had been fully vaccinated as opposed to the global average of 59.79% (Our World in Data 2022). This means the BRI could serve as a channel for the distribution of aid to combat the pandemic. According to Coetzee (2021, 4), China has donated vaccines to African countries ranging from Somalia to Cameroon while promising many more doses to other countries. Even though there is no doubt that China is employing the HSR as a tool to increase its global influence and to demonstrate and increase its soft power in Africa, as well as diplomatically supporting its vision of a "community of shared futures for mankind" (Machacha 2021), the HSR, as a component of the BRI, certainly plays a key role in African efforts to obtain COVID-19 vaccines (Coetzee 2021, 4).

In addition to providing physical health infrastructure, the HSR also assists in capacity building by providing training for local professionals and establishing

pharmaceutical trade networks. For example, New South Group's dihydroartemisinin, artesunate and related products have become Africa's top choice for malaria treatment (Habibi and Zhu 2021, 5). According to Aiping (2021), the HSR is more systemic and larger in scale compared to traditional health cooperation. The initiative's focus on developing manufacturing capacity gives it the potential to make a more sustainable impact than traditional aid programmes since it empowers countries to further develop their healthcare sectors. Africa is currently importing over 90% of its health needs with regard to medical equipment and pharmaceuticals (Songwe 2022). Bausch and Wiysonge (2022) reason that weak health systems in Africa provide ample opportunities for the spread of dangerous pathogens. According to these authors, increased manufacturing capacity is a critical part of strengthening the continent's healthcare systems. The HSR can thus be leveraged to improve the capacity of Africa's healthcare system.

5. Risks Associated with the Belt and Road Initiative

As much as the BRI poses significant opportunities for Africa, some pertinent risks are also of interest. In order to embrace the opportunities posed by the BRI effectively, these risks need to be analysed and mitigated by African governments. In the discussion below, three important risks with a broader application to African countries in general will be under review.

5.1 Unsustainable Debt Concerns

A narrative has emerged that often associates the BRI with promoting debt-trap diplomacy in developing countries. The notion of Chinese debt-trap diplomacy was coined by a think tank in India in 2017. This narrative spread through Western governments, media and intelligence circles, and within a year, it generated nearly 2 million search results on Google in 0.52 seconds (Brautigam 2019, 1). The debt-for-equity swap of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka is typically cited as an example of this. In 2017, China excused Sri Lanka's $8 billion debt in exchange for a 99-year lease on a strategic port in the country (Risberg 2019, 43). These concerns are vastly exaggerated; however, the lack of transparency in agreements and other technicalities of loans is concerning. Chinese state-owned lenders act as surrogates of the state and consequently act in a profit-maximising manner. Interest rates and grace periods are, therefore, not particularly generous (Malik et al. 2021, 1). According to Stein and

Uddhammar (2021, 18), Chinese lenders often utilise collateral arrangements, such as lender-controlled revenue accounts and debt-for-equity swaps, in conjunction with acceleration, stabilisation and cancellation clauses in contracts to give creditors an opportunity to influence debtors' domestic and foreign policies. By making provision for the exclusion of collective restructuring, such as prohibiting Paris Club clauses, these contracts could put African countries in a difficult position (Seleshie 2021). Structural problems and market failures in infrastructure investment, particularly in the transport and energy sectors, elevate the risk of contingent liabilities. If a government guarantees loans contracted by a state-owned enterprise and then defaults on the loan, it will likely borrow more, thereby increasing its debt stock (AfDB 2021, 54).

The lack of transparency in BRI projects is particularly problematic, and given the strict control Beijing has over the flow of information within China, it is difficult to gauge the true amount of debt African countries have accumulated. This lack of transparency poses a risk for African countries (Risberg 2019, 44). Secret deals conceal the true costs of borrowing, which is important to analyse whether the investment increases welfare or not. In addition, if the interest rate charged is higher than alternative sources of funding, it will crowd out other public activities. Debt transparency is needed so that borrowers and creditors can make informed decisions with regard to safeguarding debt sustainability and using available financing efficiently. Without transparency, it is difficult for civil society to hold governments accountable for how they choose to distribute funds (Bandiera and Vasileios 2019, 35). A lack of transparency, therefore, hampers debt sustainability assessments, complicates asset pricing by private investors, and ultimately becomes an obstacle that complicates the future of the BRI in Africa (Stein and Uddhammar 2021, 19).

Since the inception of the BRI in 2013, there has been a major transition in how China conducts overseas lending. Before the BRI, the majority of lending was directed towards sovereign borrowers. Nearly 70% of overseas lending by China is directed at state-owned banks, state-owned companies, private sector institutions, joint ventures and special purpose vehicles (Malik et al. 2021, 1). Consequently, these debts often do not appear on government balance sheets (Phiri and Mungomba 2019, 3). This blurs the lines between private and public debt and has introduced substantial public financial management challenges for host governments. The inclusion of confidentiality clauses in Chinese contracts contributes to this lack of transparency, barring countries from disclosing even the existence of debt (Stein and Uddhammar 2021, 18). According to Malik et al. (2021, 2), Chinese debt burdens are therefore significantly larger than

previously understood. It is estimated that 42 countries have levels of public debt exposure to China exceeding 10% of their GDP and that there are approximately $385 billion in underreported debts.

It is not lack of access but rather disproportionate costs of borrowing that affect African economies. Bandiera and Vasileios (2019, 33) report that by 2019, 28% of BRI investment recipients were likely to experience increased debt vulnerability in the medium term due to the BRI. Given the weak socio-economic conditions and unstable political environments with which many African countries struggle, these countries are often seen as high-risk investments. This limits their ability to secure affordable financing for necessary projects (Seleshie 2021). The political and economic costs attached to Western and international market funding further discourage African countries from securing alternative sources of financing such as Eurobonds. For example, Eurobonds are offered at high interest rates, high-coupon payments and shorter debt maturities for African countries. This means that the government has a shorter period to use the costly funds and will also be paying periodic interest. The average interest for Africa's bonds is 5% to 16%, with a tenor of 10 years (Mutize 2021). Because of this lack of competition, China has the ability to negotiate financing deals that benefit it significantly more than the host country (Nyabiage 2021). For example, by 2019, China was the principal creditor of Congo-Brazzaville, Djibouti and Zambia, while about 20% of all African debt was owed to the Chinese government (Risberg 2019, 44).

5.2 Impact of Increasing Trade Deficit on Domestic Markets

Trade between Africa and China rose by 35% from 2020 to $254 billion in 2021 (General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China 2022). This increase is significant given that it occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic-induced economic downturn. According to Lokanathan (2020, 7–8), one of the primary drivers of the BRI is the need to find new emerging markets for Chinese industrial overcapacity to counteract a slowing domestic economy in China. It is estimated that sub-Saharan Africa will have the largest working-age population in the world in the next 20 years. Consequently, the coming decades will see a considerable increase in potential consumers in the region (Stein and Uddhammar 2021, 33). Chinese exports to Africa mainly consist of manufactured consumer goods and capital equipment, whereas African exports to China are predominately resource-based. By 2019, the trade deficit between Africa and China was more than $17 billion (Adeshokan 2021).

Furthermore, export diversification plays a critical role in the ability of an economy to absorb shocks and recover quickly. Reliance on a narrow range of export products, therefore, amplifies the impact of external shocks on Africa. Consequently, economic diversification is an important part of building shock absorption capacity in Africa (AfDB 2021, 34). Therefore, it is problematic if trade relations encourage the disproportionate concentration of economic activity in the primary sector.

Africa finds it challenging to compete with China, both regionally and on a global scale. The majority of BRI projects in Africa help to create industry, infrastructure and connectivity across Africa, but these projects largely also serve the function of building capacity so that Chinese businesses can further infiltrate the African market (Lokanathan 2020, 8). Chinese manufacturing firms could displace domestic competitors that produce similar goods due to domestic exchange rate over-evaluations and low-cost competition from China. This applies in particular to footwear, ceramic products, textiles and furniture. Either African exports to third markets, such as America or Europe, could be displaced, or Chinese firms could contest domestic suppliers (Busse, Erdogan, and Mühlen 2014, 2). This has been observed in countries such as Nigeria, Rwanda and Ethiopia. The import of cheaper Chinese products and the establishment of Chinese factories in special economic zones in these regions have a devastating effect on local manufacturing capacity (Feng and Pilling 2019). Industrial projects also predominately employ skilled labour from China and a few African locals as low-end employment (Lokanathan 2020, 8). This minimises positive spillover effects on domestic economies.

5.3 Large-Scale Infrastructure Investment

In recent times, the BRI has focused on large-scale infrastructure projects that are very expensive and predominately financed by Beijing. The way the coastal areas of East Africa are being looped into China's maritime belt is especially relevant, relating to a variety of financial and construction activities by Chinese financiers and constructors. In fact, countries in East and North Africa have been among the largest recipients of Chinese investment in megaprojects in recent years. One striking example is the Doraleh Multipurpose Port in the Gulf of Aden, Djibouti's largest mega project (Coetzee 2021, 10). Other examples are the construction of railway lines linking regional hinterlands to coastal ports. The two most notable projects in this regard are the Addis Ababa–Djibouti Railway and the Nairobi–Mombasa Railway (Irandu and Owilla 2020).

As mentioned in the preceding discussions, in several African countries, the BRI focus on large-scale infrastructure adds to African countries' existing debt burdens (Habibi and Zhu 2021, 4). Furthermore, Beijing's approach of focusing on infrastructure-led growth does not necessarily translate into social and economic development (Appleyard and Field 2017, 603). It should also be noted that, by financing infrastructure development in Africa, China is creating an increase in demand for Chinese services and goods in the relevant African states, resulting in a rise in the Chinese domestic GDP. It is not uncommon for countries to start sourcing goods and services almost exclusively from China after a loan has been granted. Regardless of whether or not the infrastructure investment was redundant in the host country, China still stands to gain diplomatic inroads as well as new markets in host countries (McGregor and Havenga 2019).

Large infrastructure projects also present certain inherent challenges. A mega-project can be seen as an infrastructure investment of $1 billion or more. An example of this is a $12 billion investment by China Railway Construction to build a 1 402-km railway line along the coast of Nigeria linking Lagos with Calabar, as well as a $2.5 billion agreement between Liberia and China Road and Bridge Corporation for building roads and electricity supply infrastructure (McGregor and Havenga 2019). While all infrastructure project financing could affect fiscal risks and sustainability, megaprojects pose more risks. These projects are especially prone to severe delays and large cost overruns, which in turn could become liabilities for governments by limiting other spending as debt servicing rises. This creates challenges for the implementation of fiscal policy and monetary and exchange rate policy (Bandiera and Vasileios 2019, 31).

In addition to the above, large infrastructure projects often create governance risks, such as failures in public procurement and corruption. Despite BRI projects being executed in conjunction with local governments, bidding processes are often opaque (Lokanathan 2020, 4–5). Similarly, corruption in BRI projects tends to correlate with the corruption levels of host countries (World Bank 2019, 7). This is problematic given that Transparency International's (2021, 4) Corruption Perceptions Index indicates that sub-Saharan Africa is the worst-performing region, with an average score of 43/100. The BRI lacks effective mechanisms to counteract corrupt activities, such as mismanagement of funds and Chinese firms bribing African officials. Large infrastructure projects could therefore lead to higher levels of corruption in countries where weak institutional capacity prevails (World Bank 2019, 7). The BRI is based mainly on soft law regulations, such as non-binding declarations, agreements and

memorandums of understanding, and is not encapsulated by any single treaty. A lack of uniform or standardised regulation presents difficulties and challenges relating to inconsistency, a lack of predictability, and a lack of transparency (Coetzee 2021, 27–28).

6. Conclusion

The aim of this article is to assess and evaluate the risks and opportunities associated with the BRI. The study commenced by contextualising the background to and current foundation of the BRI. A historical overview of the BRI illustrated how it developed alongside Beijing's domestic policies. The study submits that China's strategic motivations and objectives are fundamentally rooted in supporting and sustaining its partner countries' domestic economic growth challenges. Given the complex nature of the BRI, the article further maintains that the best theoretical approach underlying a study of this kind is an eclectic approach or theoretical pluralism. This is motivated by the following: there can be no doubt that the BRI serves Beijing's global agenda in general and its strategic interests in Africa in particular. At the same time, the BRI aims to strengthen China's connectivity with the world and is specifically aimed at expanding relationships and cooperation between China and partner countries, including those on the African continent, specifically by creating a vast network of railways, energy pipelines, highways and streamlined border crossings. As such, there are mutual benefits. But the BRI is often regarded as a case of Chinese debt-trap diplomacy, which some structuralist theorists link to an exploitation strategy followed by China in a similar fashion to how the Global North has historically exploited the Global South for the accumulation of wealth. The research in this article suggests that studying the BRI in Africa reveals a nuanced reality of how the BRI functions in the developing world in general and on the continent in particular. The study consequently argues that there is not a singular international relations theory that can examine and explain the BRI sufficiently and that a rigid theoretical approach is not suited to a proper explanation and understanding of the BRI.

This study further argues that the BRI has the potential to be an important aspect of development in Africa. The South-South cooperation promoted by the initiative could help create an international system in which African countries could become more competitive international actors. The opportunities associated with the BRI are not limited to the initiative itself but instead stem from increased inclusion in global value chains. Consequently, the BRI offers the opportunity and has the potential to

provide African partner countries and the African continent as a whole with the tools needed to uplift itself instead of adopting a paternalistic approach and forcing foreign development models on the continent. In other words, the BRI's focus on infrastructure development and capacity building through educational and health initiatives could help Africa develop economically, as suggested by liberal scholars in International Relations.

It is, however, also clear that the BRI is not without risks for African countries. In fact, it is important for African role players to have a good understanding of the relevant risks with a view to mitigating them. First and foremost are the challenges associated with unsustainable debt burdens that have emerged because of the lending practices associated with the BRI. In this regard, unsustainable debt could allow China undue influence if these challenges are not managed well by African governments and relevant role players. In addition, investment in infrastructure often poses governance challenges and environmental, social and corruption risks. Moreover, the lack of transparency in the BRI makes it incredibly challenging to gauge the true amount of debt created by it or the terms on which loans were granted. Another problem is the trade deficit between China and Africa.

Yet it would be wrong to claim that all of China's engagement along the BRI is detrimental to the relevant African partner states and the continent as a whole. The BRI should therefore be acknowledged for what it is—potentially one of the largest infrastructure initiatives in the contemporary global economy and by far the most significant contemporary macro-project on the African continent and for many years to come. Although many critics and observers, especially from the realist paradigm, have expressed valid reservations and criticism about the BRI, it cannot be denied that Africa, as the world's least developed continent, could potentially benefit significantly from China's BRI. This does not imply that other large top-down infrastructure and development initiatives such as B3W and Globally Connected Europe, as well as smaller, local bottom-up alternatives, should be dismissed as opportunities to fuel Africa's development. Given the diversity of the African continent, a myriad of solutions could be employed. This study merely concludes that the BRI has the potential to make a positive impact on the continent's development. However, the initiative's success will largely depend on African governments' ability to utilise it to their advantage. Collective bargaining through institutions such as the AU and further research into both Africa's needs and the BRI's risks and opportunities could empower African countries to enter the dragon's den with more confidence and increase their chances of ultimately securing a better future for the continent as a whole.

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Youth and Women Participation in Extractive Industries: A Cooperatives Approach to Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM)

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.3764

Abstract

Small scale mining largely remains an informal and unexplored economic sector. Mining is generally dominated by big players in the form of multinational corporations (MNCs) who are characterised by large scale for profit production at the expense of smaller players. In particular, the participation of youth and women in extractive industries is usually restricted to either illegal or small-scale mining. Whilst artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is promising and has a potential in terms of employment creation and enterprise development, this sector remains at the periphery of options and is deemed the sector of last resort for most youth and women. The sector is marked by lack of government regulation and neglect with regards to issues of safety, health and environmental protection. Observations from across the African continent and the rest of the developing world indicate that ASM is a formidable source of employment and economic development for poor communities. It could therefore be argued that for youth and women on the continent ASM proffers opportunities and thus needs to be formalised and promoted as a viable option for economic participation especially within poor communities. Using secondary data sources, this paper foregrounds the cooperatives approach, as championed across sectors in South Africa, as a tried and tested model that could be replicated across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to complement existing policy instruments such as the SADC mining protocol and the African Union (AU) Mining Vision. This paper

ISSN 1013-1108

contends that cooperatives offer a low entrance barrier type of formalisation of ASM initiatives for youth and women whereby legal entities within the extractive industries could be established.

Keywords: Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), Extractive Industries, Youth and Women, Cooperatives, SADC.

1. Introduction

Small scale mining has been in existence for some time across the globe. It is asserted that activities of the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector are largely poverty driven, and there is a correlation between the human development index (HDI) position of countries and the proportion of the total workforce involved in ASM (Hoadley and Limpitlaw 2004, 1). The trend is for countries with low HDI positions to have a high proportion of workers employed in ASM (Hoadley and Limpitlaw ibid.). With the advent of modernity and mechanised extraction of mineral resources, participation for the poorest communities in the mining industries has been via established private mining companies which operate at large scale production. For African countries in particular, multi-national corporations (MNCs) have been the most dominant actors as proponents and beneficiaries of colonialism and uneven socio-economic relations between the African continent and the west. Studies of the mining industry in South Africa point out that one of the negative legacies of the apartheid era is a markedly skewed mining sector that favours the established companies, and almost completely neglects small-scale mining enterprises (Mkubukeli and Tengeh 2015). Though a major source of revenue for South Africa, the current state of the mining sector does not directly benefit the previously disadvantaged who dominate small scale mining (Mkubukeli and Tengeh 2015).

These skewed power relations have certainly structured the mining landscape such that for countries such as South Africa and others within the region, the institutionalisation of the migrant labour system has sustained the sector at the expense of indigenous small and big players not least the youth and women. Ledwaba and Nhlengethwa (2015) note that in South Africa the mining industry in South Africa is dominated by (large) transnational mining houses as opposed to local companies – 90 per cent of the mining houses are large scale. Whilst the industry contributes significantly to the nation's economic growth as well as social development (that is, employment of locals), there is still an exclusion of locals from participating, benefiting, and having direct access to the sector. Thus, the mining sector is yet to benefit Africans in particular from the country's mineral endowment (Ledwaba and Nhlengethwa 2015). In recent years, small scale mining has been noted as a bed for criminal activity and environmental damage. Whilst marred by negativities, small scale mining has nevertheless continued to attract many amongst the poor as viable option for creating livelihoods. Amongst African governments and regional bodies such the

Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) the move has been towards formalising and providing resources for the promotion of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM).

In February 2009 the African Union (AU) adopted the African Mining Vision (AMV) (AU 2009). The vision has been conceived as "Transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development" (AU 2009). The AMV further articulates that the African mining sector should be knowledge-driven and catalyse and contribute towards broad-based growth and development of the continent leading to a fully integrated single African market (AU 2009). With regards to artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), the goal is establishing a sector that harnesses the potential of small-scale mining to stimulate local/national entrepreneurship, improve livelihoods and advance integrated rural social and economic development (AU 2009). The vision arguably accommodates the participation of youth and women as it strives for the objective of a mining sector that is safe, healthy, gender and ethnically-inclusive, environmentally friendly, and socially responsible (Ruzvidzo 2015). Organisations such as the African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) put the figures of the artisanal mining workforce at about 8 million across the continent with women constituting more than 50% of this informal industry (Ruzvidzo 2015).

The phenomenon of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) has accordingly been previously neglected as a conduit towards economic participation and prosperity for the poor within countries in the region. Illegal mining has on the other hand burgeoned and become an option for making livelihoods in countries such as South Africa. This type of small-scale extraction of mineral resources formally known as illegal artisanal mining (IAM), has been declared a serious environmental and social problem in countries particularly in South Africa (Mkhize 2017). Illegal miners commonly known as '*zama zamas*' or those who hustle to make a living, have especially received a lot of media attention in recent years. In Ghana, IAM is referred to as *galamsey*, in Mongolia it is referred to as ninja mining, while in South Africa illegal miners are referred to as *zama zamas* which literally means to 'try and try again' in the Nguni languages but figuratively and colloquially refers to 'hustling' or just getting by to earn a living (Mkhize 2017).

Whilst it remains illegal, (IAM) is believed to have a critical role to play and contributes to rural economic development (Mkhize ibid.). The goal of African governments within the mining sector should thus be facilitating the participation and legalisation of many smaller local players in order to transform extractive industries which are currently

characterised by big multinationals which continue to benefit through the exploitation of poor communities. It is, however, worth noting that member states of the SADC and the AU have made efforts towards formalising ASM as a sector with a potential for employment creation and small enterprise development for communities within the region. It is imperative for SADC member states to invest more resources towards ASM and further support the SADC mining protocol which aims at improving, regularising, and regulating small scale mining within the region.

Through formalisation, ASM should accordingly be situated within the broader spectrum and value chains of the mining industry as well as the national economies in their entirety. Within the taxonomy of extractive industries in general, ASM should feature as a sub-sector that is specifically targeted by governments of the SADC region for both technical and financial assistance in order for the sector to flourish for the sustainability of both urban and rural livelihoods. Learning from numerous successful South African cases from the field of trade and industry, SADC and the African continent broadly should consider the co-operatives approach in forming legal entities within the ASM sector. Cooperatives as voluntary and democratic organisations that are led by their own autonomous members should thus be promoted as a legal form of establishing ASM businesses for youth and women in the region. For a number of developing countries cooperatives as an organisational form have been successfully implemented by poor communities especially in agriculture.

The gender dimension of ASM reveals that the sector is a critical component of the mining industry as a whole and women in particular form a large portion of this informal field with a workforce estimated at 40-50% across the African continent (Ruzvidzo 2015). Thus, women typically play a substantial part of the ASM as a sector and most of them are found in this artisanal aspect of the industry compared to large scale mining (Ruzvidzo 2015). This paper argues that youth and women participation in ASM could be promoted and accelerated through the establishment of legal entities such as cooperatives which have been explored and utilised across a number of sectors within South Africa. Youth and women led ASM co-operatives could thus be established and replicated across the SADC region borrowing from the successful cases which have been gleaned across industry sectors in South Africa.

Defining Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM)

At face value, small scale mining could be confused with numerous peripheral economic activities such as recycling of materials, selling scrap metal, subsistence agriculture, and other features of the informal economy. The latter assertion is confirmed by Kramcha (2004, 4) where it is contended that a key observation about the ASM sector is its huge diversity (e.g. between and within countries, type of mineral, modes of extraction and processing, marketing arrangements, political economy, socio-economic organisation, etc.). ASM is "*broadly understood to refer to mining activities that are labour-intensive and capital-, mechanisation- and technology-poor*" (Chamber of Mines 2017, 4). ASM incorporates both formal and informal activities, where informal activities include those operating outside the legal framework of the host country (that is, illegal mining) (Chamber of Mines 2017).

The illegal dimensions of small-scale mining further stigmatise the sector as high risk and an extension of the criminal world. There seems to be a thin line between illegal and informal small-scale mining such that other commentators define informal ASM as including the absence of any permit to undertake mining, minimal use of safety equipment, and the selling of minerals informally (Jinnah and Tafirah 2017). It has been further posited that ASM activities often cause extreme environmental and social impacts and seldom contribute to government revenues (Hoadley and Limpitlaw 2004). The South African Chamber of Mines (2017) highlights that in the case of South Africa illegal mining costs industry and fiscus more than an estimated R20bn/year in lost sales, taxes and royalties. Further social, economic, and environmental impacts include theft of copper, electricity cables, dragline cables, diesel, and materials prejudice economic viability of companies and pose risks to mine infrastructure, amongst others. Therefore, in their current status, ASM activities cannot be arguably regarded as contributing to sustainable livelihoods, but they provide emergency poverty relief and daily sustenance (Hoadley and Limpitlaw 2004).

Some commentators have highlighted how rural communities can be negatively impacted by mining (Spiegel 2013). A closer look at the sector however uncovers enormous potential and complexity of the ASM field in general. Studies conducted in Asia reveal that very little research has focused on the diversities of rural socioeconomic challenges among populations of small-scale miners or on institutional options for regulating mining groups that have long operated outside regulatory frameworks (Spiegel 2013). Considering a predominantly tainted history for small scale mining, it

becomes inconceivable to look up to the sector as a potential employment creation and enterprise development option for poorest people in both rural and urban communities. Dire economic conditions however compel fractions of the poor to partake within the sector despite the listed challenges.

ASM is often defined by the use of rudimentary mineral extraction technologies and practices, and most ASM activity around the world is unlicensed (Hinton 2006 cited in Spiegel 2013). Although widely thought of as "illegal" and portrayed as a "rural problem," such mining activity provides livelihoods to growing numbers of rural people (Telmer and Veiga 2008 cited in Spiegel 2013). What is notable is that small scale mining in general occurs at the margins of the mainstream economy. Others contend that ASM relates to mining by individuals, groups, families or cooperatives with minimal or no mechanisation, largely in the informal (illegal) sector of the market (Hentschel et al. cited in Mkhize 2017). It has also been observed that ASM is practiced extensively as an alternative economic activity in times of stress (Hoadley and Limpitlaw 2004). Therefore, ASM is largely informal and unregulated, short of finance, technologically backward, and a significant proportion of the sector's activities are illegal. Up to 50% of artisanal miners are women and, in some countries, the proportion rises to three-quarters (Borla 1997 cited in Hoadley and Limpitlaw 2004). It is important to note the differences 'artisanal mining' that is purely manual/informal and very small in scale from 'small scale mining' involving mechanisation and somewhat larger scales (Mkhize 2017). However, the end products of ASM immediately find their ways into the broader avenues with other mainstream mineral products.

Situating Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) within the Broader Mining Sector

It has been observed that the mining industry is the biggest employer after agriculture in countries such as South Africa (Mkhize 2017). In South Africa for example, the mining industry is responsible for 500 000 direct and 800 000 indirect jobs and in total it accounts for 16% of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) (Mkhize 2017). A decline in the formal mining industry has been noted over the past few decades and this has consequently resulted in the increase in illegal activities. The rise in illegal mining is directly linked to the global developments within the sector as a whole. In their study of illegal mining in South Africa, Jinnah and Tafirah (2017, 3) report that over the last decade, there has been a lowering of the international gold price and global

demand, coupled with rising national labour costs, making gold mining less profitable in the country. For example, within South Africa there were 65 active gold mines in the company in 1987; this dropped to 15 in 2015 (Geocouncil 2016 cited in Jinnah and Tafirah 2017).

In their study of small-scale mining in South Africa, Mutemeri et al. (2010) discovered that the sector is quite diversified with operators active across a broad range of minerals and not just diamonds and gold. Mutemeri et al. (2010) reported in their study that the commodities (for example, precious stones, base metals, industrial minerals, construction materials, and coal) in which small organisations are involved in are quite varied if one considers participation in the whole mining value chain, i.e. from exploration to producing and marketing a finished product.

The informal extraction of diamonds and gold has been known to have serious environmental challenges, but this remains unquantified as there is scant research information on small scale, legal and illegal, mining (Mkhize 2017). According to the UNECA *2013 Economic Report for Africa* the continent owns about 12% of the world's oil reserves, 42% of its gold, 80-90% of chromium and platinum group metals, and 60% of arable land, in addition to vast timber resources (Manuh 2015). However, this dominance of the extractive industries in many African countries coexists with an excessive focus on capital-intensive growth sectors, fragile institutions and unequal redistribution policies that result in the exclusion of large swathes of populations – particularly women and youth – from reaping the benefits of growth and development (Manuh 2015). The dearth of research into ASM within the continent masks the complete picture of the diversified activities that occur within the ASM sector. There is a thus a need for concerted programmes that will locate ASM within the broader value chains of the mining industry such that wide range of products and opportunities proffered by the sector are uncovered. In the case of South Africa, one may argue that besides the activities of ASM operators within the diamond and gold sector, not much attention has been paid towards clay, coal, slate, and building sand mining which are also mined illegally with a devastating environmental impact.

In 1998 the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 13 million people are directly employed in ASM, and up to 100 million depend on it (Hoadley and Limpitlaw 2004, 1). From an African context, governments such as those of South Africa identified ASM as a vehicle for social and economic development, particularly for disadvantaged communities that were excluded from participating in the national mining economy (Ledwaba and Nhlengethwa 2015). Consequently, ASM offered

alternative economic opportunities for the majority that reside in rural parts of the country and living in severe poverty (Ledwaba and Nhlengethwa 2015). The latter perception of ASM is further accentuated by the SADC Mining Protocol where it stipulates that

Introducing Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) Cooperatives

As already indicated, this paper argues for the formalisation of ASM entities via the usage of the cooperatives approach. Historically cooperatives have been used in a number of sectors with agricultural cooperatives being the most prominent. Wanyama et al. (2009) contend that cooperatives have long been recognized to play important roles in society that translates into the improvement of living conditions of their members, particularly the low-income earning cadres of the population, as well as the society at large. Being voluntary, democratic and self-controlled business associations, cooperatives offer the institutional framework through which local communities gain control over the productive activities from which they derive their livelihoods (Ofeil 2005 cited in Wanyama et al. 2009).

In essence, a cooperative is thus a user-owned and user-controlled business that distributes benefits equitably on the basis of use or patronage (Barton 1989 cited in Ortmann and King 2006). In this regard for example a farmer member who accounts for 5% of the volume of corn delivered to the cooperative would receive 5% of the net earnings derived from the handling, processing and marketing of that corn or related products (Ortmann and King 2006). The logical and systematic nature of cooperatives as an organisational form applied in agriculture could therefore serve as a template that could be replicated in the formation of ASM cooperatives across the region with the support of national governments and SADC as a regional body.

Again the lessons that could be gleaned by the ASM cooperatives emanate largely from the agricultural sector due to its long history of implementing this organisational form. There is accordingly a long history of the application and practice of the cooperatives model within the farming sector across the continent. It is also worth mentioning that cooperatives are a worldwide phenomenon. Cooperative development started among white farmers as a means of improving their productivity and the initial legal framework that guided the formation of these organizations excluded African participation until after the Second World War when African nationalism gained momentum (Hyden 1973 cited in Ortmann and King 2006). In the colonial and

apartheid periods due to segregation, the usage of cooperatives did not accommodate the practices of African farmers and business practitioners. African farmers lost from both the technical assistance and financial injection fronts. As exclusive enterprises of the white farmers and largely functioning under the whims of the colonial government that envisaged separate development in the colonies, cooperatives were then at variance with African interests (Ortmann and King 2006).

According to Ortmann and King (2006) the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA 2005) defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise". This paper particularly advocates for the application of cooperatives within the ASM sector particularly based on their simplified model which exhibits low entry barriers for easy access by youth and women. The guiding principles of cooperatives arguably provide an empowerment element for youth and women as they enhance, they autonomy and decision making. The seven internationally recognized cooperative principles are: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; provision of education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for the community (Ortmann and King 2006). The latter principles have been acquired in their entirety in the case of South African legislation, the Cooperatives Amendment Act of 2013, which governs the founding of this legal entity. There seems to be indigenisation of these principles in a number of countries which employ the cooperatives model. In the formation of ASM cooperatives across the SADC region it would therefore be only logical to follow a similar definition and principles in establishing cooperatives.

Conclusion: Harmonisation and Institutional Framework for ASM Cooperatives

Harmonisation entails the vertical alignment of national legislation within member states of SADC as a regional body with its Mining Protocol. It is thus imperative for SADC member states to formulate policies that are consonant with the overarching regional policy instruments in the governing of ASM cooperatives. The SADC Mining Protocol should thus advocate for a regulatory framework for ASM cooperatives as well as the operating conditions for miners within the sector. The formulation of ASM cooperatives legislation should accordingly also be gender sensitive as it attempts to

create an enabling environment for the participation of youth and women within the mining sector.

Within the SADC region, the implementation of the mining protocol is as a matter of course a responsibility of mining and mineral resources ministers. Through the SADC Committee of Mining Ministers, a proposal for the formulation of a regional ASM Cooperatives Plan could be broached onto the agenda and the policy formulated. It is these executive heads and their technocrats who serve as policy custodians who should champion the establishment of ASM cooperatives across the region. Counties such as South Africa have already established a directorate of small-scale mining within the Department of Mineral Resources and these institutional arrangements could provide valuable lessons for other governments in the region. Youth and women led ASM cooperatives are a viable option towards broader economic participation and enterprise development within the region. The diversified nature of the extractive industries should be considered and there should be a paradigm shift from the parochial perception of small-scale mining as high risk and only focused on diamonds and gold. A shift in focus into building sand, coal, clay, granite, slate and other mineral resources should be promoted. This move should however be invariably accompanied by an environmental protection plan. The diversification of small-scale mining should further not compromise agricultural production. ASM cooperative should thus form part of a broader plan which incorporates, people, environment, economy and land reform where necessary.

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Uncontaining Mobility: Lessons from COVID-19

2nd AMMODI (African Migration, Mobility and Displacement) Annual Keynote Lecture, 30 June 2022

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https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v44i1.4149

Abstract

This keynote lecture argues that both the perpetrators of policed mobility and its victims can learn tremendous lessons from COVID-19's nimble-footedness, which humbles racialised technologies of containment and politics of redlining or something akin to it. The talk asserts that using technological gadgets that are very good at making it possible for us to be present in absence and absent in presence, strangers at various borders could borrow a leaf from COVID-19 on how to compress time and space in ways that enable even unwanted wayfarers to see, hear, smell, feel and touch virtually, thereby regaining freedom of movement by crossing borders undetected. The world as a whole could learn from resilient philosophies of kinship and solidarity in Africa to approach mobility in a more humane manner. Priority would be less on containment and more on accommodation of the stranger and freedom of movement.

Keywords: Mobility, Africa, COVID-19, Incompleteness, Borders, Kinship and Solidarity.

ISSN 1013-1108

1. Introduction

To what extent has COVID-19 taught those of us in positions of power and privilege to exercise greater accommodation of those we tend to dehumanise and immobilise or mobilise purely on our own terms? As borders and airports closed down in a bid to police the spread of COVID-19 reopen, what lessons in global solidarity and tolerance have we learnt? How generous to strangers, foreigners, migrants, and returning emigrants are we prepared to be, regardless of race, ethnicity, geography, class, gender, sexuality, culture, religion and related categories that inform our judgement, policies, decisions and practices about who belongs or not?

This talk explores some lessons that can be learnt from COVID-19 about mobility and the policing of mobility. The fact of a resilient racialised configuration of the world has meant that black and brown people have borne the brunt of coronavirus infections and deaths as well as the effects of radical containment measures by states. In its globalised nimble-footedness, COVID-19 opportunistically insinuated itself into intimacies by preying on sociality, comparative disadvantages, pre-existing precarities, and related physical frailties that feed from and into debilitating hierarchies of systemic inequality.

In its globetrotting ambitions of conquest, Europe has effectively employed and schooled its colonial subjects to internalise and reproduce hierarchies of race, ethnicity and geography to divide and conquer and to instil an exclusionary framework of being and belonging steeped in ever-diminishing circles of inclusion and legalities. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the fact of racial and ethnic hierarchies of humanity has meant that the Chinese and other East Asians were stereotyped and unfairly victimised as vectors at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and Africans were in turn subjected to similar prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and physical and social distancing. "The scapegoating of migrants as the transporters of disease and economic woes" may have intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was nothing new; countries have often chosen to play up the dangers and fear of strangers as a ploy to deny foreigners access to their native lands and resources and, by extension, to social visibility (Sichone 2022, 82). Countries that turn strangers (as well as contaminated insiders) away from their shores have no qualms about luring the same strangers (both offline and online) to cross consumer borders and embrace the plethora of consumer products on offer. Strangers are invited to consume and subsidise economies as long as they do so from a distance.

Zambian anthropologist Owen Sichone—who has researched extensively and written on African mobilities—reminds us that we will not have learnt the right lessons if, after two years of lockdown and the almost total grounding of international airlines, trains, trucks, and buses, we were to opt for a return to business as usual. Business as usual would entail "a return to mobility of goods and tourists, though not quite free movement of migrant workers, refugees and other undocumented migrants" (Sichone 2022, 74–75)—those whose mobility tends to be rendered invisible and marginalised by the oppressive structures of power and privilege at play (see Bjarnesen and Turner 2020). While the grounding of flights the world over saw aviation's CO2 emissions plummet by up to 60 % in 2020, it would be business as usual simply to return to flying the pre-pandemic way, missing out on the challenge to explore lower-carbon forms of transport, including the option of carbon-free planes or a world without planes (see Timperley 2022).

Sichone suggests that the rest of the world—Europe and the USA in particular, given the sustained ambitions of global dominance even as they make fortresses of themselves—could learn from resilient philosophies of kinship and solidarity in Africa to approach mobility in a more humane manner. Priority would be less on containment and more on accommodation of the stranger and freedom of movement. Such philosophies may not be shared by all, but the fact of their resilience speaks to their continued relevance. Granted that freedom of movement is actually illegal until papers are verified, to embrace or reactivate such resilient philosophies of flexible mobility and accommodation of strangers is a form of rebellion.

Another lesson we cannot afford to ignore is the fact that not everyone under COVID-19-induced shutdowns and lockdowns could afford the privilege or luxury of working remotely from home, assisted digitally by technologies such as the internet, the smartphone, and various applications and social media platforms that make it possible to be present while absent and absent while present. There were those whose very lives and livelihoods depended on being mobile and mobilised to render service.

COVID-19 has given us reason to radically rethink prevalent technologies of policing mobility that are heavily reliant on sensory perception and exclusionary logics of citizenship and belonging. Could those whose mobility and belonging continue to be negatively affected by such technologies and the hierarchies of humanity that legitimate them learn from COVID-19's capacity to be present in ways that defy the logic of containment and confinement? How could those whose physical mobility is confined or contained draw inspiration from what the past two years of COVID-

19-related lockdowns and physical and social distancing have taught us? How can we leverage digital technologies for more inclusion rather than exclusion? How can we actualise complementary and hybrid forms of mobility and presence in multiple places and spaces simultaneously? What lessons have we learnt from those whose vulnerabilities, precarities and itinerant livelihoods during the pandemic precluded or severely limited possibilities of physical and social distancing? What additional forms of policing mobility have come with the COVID-19 pandemic? How innovative and humane in mobility policies have states become as a result of lessons learnt from and under COVID-19?

These questions are of especial interest for Africans and in Africa, where histories of unequal encounters with an imperialistic, colonising, recklessly mobile and winner-takes-all Europe have ensured the institutionalisation and perfection of "absurd policing of mobility of the indigenous population" (Sichone 2022, 75), sometimes disingenuously justified by the colonialists "as a means of preserving African cultures" (Sichone 2022, 76) and curbing brain drain. It is worth bearing in mind that the policy of colonial administrators to control the physical mobility of the colonised usually went hand in hand with a policy to restrict their social mobility, even as the colonialists sought to justify colonialism with pretensions of being involved in a civilising mission (Sichone 2022, 78).

The idea of bringing enlightenment to a dark continent has had the effect of pulling, confining and containing Africa down an abyss of inhumanity perfected by Europe. To confine Africans to their villages or to the status of landless labour, the way Europe has since its imperial and colonial encounters with the continent, meant that Africans could only be mobilised as devalued labour within the harsh, racially-determined labour system instituted by treasure-hunting Europeans while reserving for whites the real prospects of finding greener pastures through the freedom of movement in the colonised territories.

It is in this sense that British treasure hunter Cecil John Rhodes, in his unchecked imperialism, "worked hard to colonise lands in Southern Africa where he could resettle his compatriots in order to ease the pressure on resources in the mother country" (Sichone 2022, 75–77). Rhodes would have countries like present-day Zambia and Zimbabwe named after him (Northern and Southern Rhodesia) as part of a process of unsettling the colonised natives by turning them into strangers and settling the colonisers by turning them into natives in terms of access to power, privilege and resources. Rhodes discovered the perks of turning the tables on the natives without the

encumbrance of having to go native in the anthropological sense of deep immersion, adoption of, and even conversion to the cultures of one's community of study as a result of prolonged participant observation. This situation sowed the seeds of the pandemics of landlessness, deprivation of material resources, and alienation that plague the region, where economic freedom is yet to catch up with hard-earned political liberation. The situation provides a historical background to the resilient colonialism that provoked the "Rhodes Must Fall" and "Fees Must Fall" student protest movements across South African universities in 2015 and 2016 (Nyamnjoh 2016).

Drawing on the concept of incompleteness and its ubiquity and universality as a framework, this talk calls for creativity and innovation in imagination and policy by exploring and harnessing interconnections and complementarities and de-emphasising confinement, containment and hierarchies of being, belonging and relationality that underpin exclusionary frameworks of identity and identification. The talk calls for conviviality through flexible mobility and flexible citizenship and belonging. Such models of flexibility can draw inspiration from nature, for example, the seasonal migration of birds globally or the annual great Serengeti wildebeest migration across the Tanzanian-Kenyan border. Or the annual mass migration of "tens to hundreds of millions of sardines from the warm-temperate waters of South Africa's south coast to the subtropical waters of the east coast, over a thousand kilometres away" (Teske et al. 2021), which migration is known as the KwaZulu-Natal sardine run. With reference to technologies of containment and facilitation, the talk encourages the need to bring the imperative to physically cross borders into sustained conversation with other modes of mobility in which to be seen, heard, felt, smelt and tasted even when physically and socially distanced are possibilities and currency.

2. Limits of Containing Mobility

Although we live in a world where, strictly and empirically speaking, incompleteness and mobility are regular and universal, we have been cultivated and schooled in the sustained pursuit of completeness through a stubborn and violent ambition to dominate and enshrine exclusionary games of belonging. "Freedom of movement, especially by people deemed to be less endowed economically, is perceived by those who consider themselves more economically gifted as potentially disastrous and thus needing to be contained at all costs and against all odds" (Nyamnjoh 2016, 14). Our zero-sum pretensions to being and belonging drive us to use hierarchies of ever-shifting

categories such as race, ethnicity, culture, place, class, gender, sexuality and age to imagine, impose and police borders between insiders and outsiders, us and them, home and away, the civilised and the profane, and humanity and nature. With scant regard for freedom of movement and the aspirations, lives and livelihoods of those we want to exclude, we do not hesitate to use barriers such as "Border walls and fortifications, armed police, and other devices … to keep certain people out." Not only does this amount to policing physical mobility, but it also stifles upward social mobility and "prolongs childlike dependency upon parents and the state charitable organisations" (Sichone 2022, 90–91). Due to such winner-takes-all ambitions of dominance or quest for supremacy, we create, contest and recreate the boundaries of visibility, prominence and privilege through our capacity to define and confine and contain in tune with the whims and caprices that animate us. In our mobility, we name and rename the unfamiliar to render them familiar, even when we may lack the power to enforce the names.

When COVID-19 emerged, it rapidly became evident the extent to which it could be argued to be no respecter of borders, be they physical, social, political or cultural. It may have been first identified in Wuhan, China, but COVID-19 rapidly proved, through its invisible nimbleness of feet and wings, that it was not only a Chinese or a Wuhan virus. Its giant compressor ambition was no respecter of walls and fortresses, real or imaginary. Even with a near-perfect fortress-like North Korea, which heavily polices the land borders it shares with South Korea and China, the authorities announced, in May 2022, albeit two years later than most other countries (its neighbours included), its first cases of COVID-19 deaths (*BBC News* 2022; Agence France Presse 2022). In general, COVID-19 spread at lightning speed, metamorphosing almost in the blink of an eye into a truly global crisis that required nothing short of a well-coordinated collective global response. In this regard, it is regrettable that whilst the virus has spread rapidly and spared no corner of the globe, public health responses have remained rather local and national. Though, to their credit, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and representatives of African Ministries of Health held regular virtual meetings to learn lessons across borders and coordinate efforts.

Purely national approaches buttress exclusion and its hierarchies of legitimation to the detriment of humanism. COVID-19 is only the latest in a series of global challenges that are simply much too big for any single nation-state (however giant its claims to sovereignty) or world region (however advanced) to resolve. That notwithstanding, the global response has been to use the logic of ever-diminishing circles of inclusion as a blunt policy instrument, almost as if to say, "we may all be afflicted by the pandemic,

but everyone for themselves!"

Even at the best of times, states are not always efficient at policing their borders. Although, in principle, the state can reach and bring everyone in its territory under its control, its resources and technologies of confinement and containment can be stretched by both those who crave genuine freedom and may move from where the state's presence is strong to where it is weaker and those who use digital and other technologies to subvert the state's surveillance capacity. The production and dissemination of spyware and malware in cyberspace could serve the state just as they can work against the state. At some border crossings, the technologies of containment are weakened by corruption and bribes (Nyamnjoh 2019).

Other ways of mitigating the control of the state include crossing borders into more accommodating situations or settling for the elusive grey (betwixt and between) zones. Without implying it is an easy option by any means, Sichone suggests "seeking refuge across state borders by those who insist that freedom of movement is freedom itself, mobility is freedom and to accept regulated movement and settlement marks the beginning of becoming captured dependent" (Sichone 2022, 78). Implicit in this argument is the premise that although it is in the nature of states to confine and contain, there is an element of relativity and degree that could be beneficial to people shopping between and across states for inspirational policies and practices on freedom of movement. Nimble-footed Africans who take incredible risks crossing the Sahara, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic to explore other opportunities are a good example in this regard.

In addition, research increasingly focusing on South-South migration, such as the work by the Migration for Development Equality (MIDEQ) hub, recently featured in a special issue of *Zanj: The Journal of Critical Global South Studies* (Crawley, Garba, and Nyamnjoh 2022), would suggest that there are more options on the menu for those determined to assert their right to freedom of movement. There is much to be gained in studying mobility in Africa in terms of popular resistance to the violence of the colonial state and its emphasis on narrow nationalism through confinement and containment. Ordinary Africans determined to cross borders even at the cost of losing their lives is a reminder of the Berlin Conference that resulted in the arbitrary partitioning of Africa, with scant regard to the need for congruence between polity and culture. It also speaks to Pan-Africanism as an inclusive aspirational project that takes incompleteness and mobility seriously and refuses the logic of confinement and containment that has served Europe's ambitions of global dominance. Above all, it

supports a logic of relationality that encourages taking seriously a world of crooked lines, in which to insist that the only mobility possible and acceptable is in straight lines is quite simply to seek to pass for reality an uncherished unilinear figment.

The paucity of imagination beyond the local and the national is contradicted by the capabilities of a virus that thrives on inequalities and a freedom of movement about which the overwhelming majority of the world's population can only fantasise. Due largely to its viral invisibility and insensitivity to various technologies of confinement and containment and regimes of detection, detention, and deportation, COVID-19 has proven, it could be argued, more aggressive at border crossings than capital, privileged forms of labour, the frequent flyer elite, consumerism, or any world religion has ever been. Like a cockroach meandering in the perforated luggage of an undocumented and underprivileged wayfarer at a heavily policed border crossing, COVID-19 has, with fascinating ease and deadening silence, demonstrated a debilitating ability to neutralise borders (physical, social, cultural, bodily, and ideological) that others hold in awe. Only digital technologies, in their current possibilities, come close in their capacity to cross borders and subvert the sovereignty of states in a remotely comparable way (see Nyamnjoh and Brudvig 2016).

There is nothing as frustrating for those whose power, privilege and supremacy depend on the meticulously choreographed production and articulation of borders as to be challenged by a stranger or an enemy whose mobility they cannot police. European colonialism across the world would hardly have been the outstanding (albeit astounding for the colonised) success it turned out to be for Europe had the colonial authorities not invented and imposed the concept of illegal migration on colonised peoples in order to nullify their freedom of movement and cheapen their labour. Colonialism would not have been possible had Europe accepted that "all human beings are equal and that they should be allowed to move and live freely" (Sichone 2022, 83). Simply by defining the colonised as lesser than human or not fully human, Europeans were able to write their relevance into the present and future of the colonised and to discipline and punish their colonial subjects with physical and social immobility and trickle-down munificence of little gift parcels of humanity and visibility. The triumph of colonialism was and remains for Europeans "to make a fortress of the geographies they inhabit" home and away through "the magic of visa control and deportation" and, if need be, by subcontracting and "paying other governments to keep the migrants away" from their borders (Sichone 2022, 75–76). "Founded upon supremacist ideologies, influx controls undermine international solidarity by keeping freedom of movement a privilege that

can be extended to the invited guests only" (Sichone 2022, 91).

Could the strangers at our borders borrow a leaf from COVID-19 on how to regain freedom of movement by crossing borders undetected? That would be something to explore, given how successfully COVID-19 has humbled states the world over and their propensity to resort to the blunt instrument of detection, detention and deportation in the bazaar of mobility to which many are called but few are chosen. Perhaps, the freedom of movement we seek could be achieved through resorting to hybrid modes of existence which have become part of everyday life under prolonged lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19. Increasingly, with the aid of digital technologies and their growing ubiquity, we have learnt to outsource to digital gadgets (smartphones, internet) and their multiple applications some of our requirements to be present in person. Some of these gadgets are very good at making it possible for us to be present in absence and absent in presence. We are able to compress time and space in ways that do not necessitate in-person presence. We can see, hear, feel and touch virtually, and even when we cannot smell, feel or touch in person, we can resort to archived memories of what it smelt and felt like in the past when we were physically present. Family and community members in the diaspora can attend weddings, birthdays, funerals and other social gatherings via Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube and related technologies of virtual intimacies instead of travelling long distances that require repeated COVID-19 tests and risking quarantine, costly delays and prolonged stays in hotels.

While it is true that the category of people most affected by migration curbs is least likely to afford the gadgets needed to adopt hybrid modes of existence, it could be argued that the hybridity suggested does not have to operate at a common homogenous level and that solidarities and interdependencies across categories could facilitate and extend such possibilities of hybridity to include those who do not necessarily enjoy the same purchasing power. Put differently, one does not have to consume first-hand or first-rate to benefit from the possibilities of hybridity in cultures that privilege sociality and solidarity. What is more, many an ordinary African who believes in the Divine, the living dead, magic and/or *juju* would find lots of parallels between these traditional technologies of self-extension and self-activation and modern digital technologies such as the internet, the cell phone, the smartphone, AI and 5G (Nyamnjoh 2019).

If we could bring these technologies and the knowledge of combining them efficaciously that we have acquired under the COVID-19 pandemic, we would be in a better position to challenge states and their obsession with policing our freedom of movement. This is all the more the way to go, especially when we consider that

only a small global elite ever get to travel beyond their countries of birth and primary citizenship. International migration, despite the grossly disproportionate media attention it receives, especially in Europe and North America, amounts to less than 4% of the world's population. This means that if people move or are allowed to move, their mobility tends to be within the borders of the state (Sichone 2022, 75–76). Even then, the practice is for states to make it difficult for their own citizens to circulate freely. This is just as true of postcolonial states, which have uncritically reproduced the same colonial policies and administrative practices that subjected the mobility of the endogenous population to the whims and caprices of the colonial project and its labour expectations. In Africa, for example, "Police checkpoints and roadblocks constantly remind citizens that even mobility within national borders, which is their constitutional right, is only grudgingly tolerated by the postcolonial state", a situation that COVID-19-related regulations have only compounded (Sichone 2022, 88).

COVID-19 has mostly exacerbated the victimhood of vulnerable populations in and around big cities and often to the detriment of custom, as Leslie Bank and Nelly Sharpley argue with regard to urban-rural interconnections in livelihoods, culture and healthcare in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa (Bank and Sharpley 2022). Most people, forced to balance between saving lives and saving livelihoods, were thrust into a very precarious existence. In South Africa, doubly affected by colonialism and apartheid and one of the countries hardest hit by COVID-19 on the continent, women, especially those who live in townships and commute to forage for subsistence in the cities, have been particularly affected. Pumla Dineo Gqola observes that, while it is possible for employers to socially distance by working from home, "this does not extend to the women who clean their houses, who are not able to work away from the physical sites of their jobs. Working-class black women in domestic work and similar employment are obliged to travel long distances almost daily" (Gqola 2020).

To the homeless and the unemployed, working remotely from home has been as much an aspiration as the hope to survive the pandemic. Everyone has been challenged by the prolonged immobilisation during the pandemic, with many frustrated by the inability to give the dead a decent funeral, especially when this has involved having to travel across national and provincial borders to the hometown or home village of a deceased migrant who died away from home. Equally challenged have been people who earn their living by crossing borders on a regular basis and who have had, in some instances, to bear the brunt of rising anger among nationals frustrated with joblessness and the threat of hunger. Nationals tend to perceive foreigners, wrongly or rightly, as

taking advantage of scarce jobs and/or spreading COVID-19 and crime. Hence, far from radically disrupting established hierarchies of inequalities in livelihoods, COVID-19 has mostly preyed upon and, in many instances, exacerbated existing victimhood and vulnerabilities among populations whose confinement and containment predate the pandemic (Angu, Masiya, and Gustafsson 2022).

Within and between states, COVID-19 has exposed the limitations of humanity and belonging articulated narrowly around exclusion and a hierarchy of citizenship premised on ever-decreasing circles of inclusion. It has shown that when the chips are down, many a human community has opted rather to unravel than to rise to the challenge of kinship as a permanent work in progress. In this regard, we have come across something like a morally depleted version of the Skull in Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (Tutuola 1952). The Skull can only activate itself into The Complete Gentleman it desires to be by borrowing body parts from others and can only hang on to its borrowings by recognising its debt and indebtedness to its lenders. Not to recognise and service the debt is to insist on an autonomy of being and action that is quite simply illusory. It is to suspend ethics and morality when challenged to acknowledge the interconnections and independencies that make us who we are and that legitimate our claim to a shared humanity. It is to jeopardise community, society and sociality as a basis of the possible and the universal in our project to be human. It amounts to claiming completeness when challenged by the reality of mobility and encounters that make composite beings of us and demands nothing short of the humility of incompleteness. Debts like slavery reparations, genocidal wars, when repaid, will narrow the gap between haves and have-nots as they economically should, after which the upside-down worldview will be unsustainable.

Postcolonial Africa has not been in a hurry to question inherited colonial hierarchies of race and ethnicity. Nationalism has remained narrow and informed by ever-diminishing circles of inclusion. Minority clamour for recognition and representation is often countered by greater and sometimes aggressive reaffirmation of age-old exclusions informed by colonial registers of inequalities amongst the subjected. Studies are crystalising myriad accounts across the continent of how the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare these contradictions.

Here is an example from Senegal. How COVID-19 affected articulations of belonging and citizenship in Senegal gives us food for thought on kinship as a permanent work in progress, something not to be taken for granted. Kwame Onoma's research shows, in Senegal—where attitudes of ambivalence (celebration and vilification,

embraced and distanced) have long characterised relations with southern Europe-based emigrant Senegalese—that responses to COVID-19, in its early days especially, included the stigmatisation by a section of the population of return migrants as vectors of the disease and a desire to have such *Modou Modou* (as they are popularly known in Senegal) confined in Europe as the country grappled with how to contain the virus with quarantines, lockdowns and border closures (Onoma 2021). The *Modou Modou*, according to Onoma, are male Senegalese migrants who originate mostly from the centre-west region and from cities and who have usually "headed to Italy and Spain, and, more recently, the United States of America, China, and Latin American countries such as Brazil and Argentina" (Onoma 2021, 656). Their relative financial success, despite their hardships as migrants, is often reason for people back home "to bestow on them a privileged social standing at the expense of men who have not migrated" (Onoma 2021, 659). This situation attracts envy, intra-family tensions and the suspicion that "jealous people who had old scores to settle with these migrants were using COVID-19 to humble them and keep them away" (Onoma 2021, 660–661). Thus, "For some Senegalese COVID-19 related bans on commercial flights, border closures, lockdowns, and quarantines were akin to previously deployed maraboutic spells that curbed the disruptive influences of these migrants on their home communities by confining them to Spain and Italy" (Onoma 2021, 662). These migrants, in their nimble-footedness, yearn for flexible mobility, as they are desperate to get to Europe to make money and desperate to return to Senegal to regain status and humanity.

As Onoma argues, the *Modou Modou* were stigmatised despite the fact that such emigrants are a popular fascination and often celebrated as heroes in popular music and film and by their families, local communities, and the state. This is understandable because these migrants "often see their travel as voyages in search of employment and resources to invest in Senegal and eventually return home" (Onoma 2021, 656). So their belonging and citizenship as Senegalese were not in question, despite the stigmatisation as a health risk by some of their compatriots. What was in question was the perceived threat that their status as returning emigrants posed to the communities in the hometowns and home villages to which they were returning. As the reasoning went, to protect these communities, such returning emigrants ought to be kept at a distance even if their Senegalese citizenship and community membership were not in doubt. Those *Modou Modou* with work and residency permits regularly visit Senegal and "remit money to care for their families, renovate and build houses for them, provide public services in their communities, and invest in many sectors in the country" (Onoma 2021, 656). The

fact that Spain and Italy, where most of the *Modou Modou* are based, in those early days, were among the most COVID-19-afflicted countries globally only further fuelled the stigmatisation of those of them attempting to return to Senegal (Onoma 2021, 660).

Given that the spread and effects of COVID-19 in Africa were, relatively speaking (and surprisingly to many in the West), far less severe than its devastation in the West and elsewhere, it would be of interest to quantify the number of Europeans and North Americans that sought refuge in Africa during the pandemic. In view of the pandemic's capacity to problematise and endanger even taken-for-granted kin relationships, Onoma suggests that "Our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on social relations must go beyond narratives of rupture and transformation to tease out continuities and the complex intermeshing of multiple concerns that shape how people participate in, make sense of, and react to pandemic era changes" (Onoma 2021, 662).

Notwithstanding its homogenising and overly positive undertones of social dynamics in Africa, there is much to contemplate in Sichone's argument that "freedom of movement and equality" are core African values, and with them comes a commitment to extend hospitality to migrants and refugees on an equal basis, including their integration and assimilation. With incompleteness and mobility as universal attributes of being human, it is easy to understand the expectation, within communities where such a value system is held high, for strangers and refugees "to be welcomed and be allowed to find work and improve their skills as full members of the society" (Sichone 2022, 84). Hospitality to strangers should also be encouraged because "migrants are more likely to create wealth and jobs than to be parasites on the host society" (Sichone 2022, 89). Such gestures of humaneness based on kinship as an ideal should not imply a lack of awareness of the ever-present risks that come with reaching out to strangers. Rather, these gestures speak to the need to rise beyond the temptation to normalise hostility towards strangers (Sichone 2022, 84). In resilient solidarity ideologies in Africa, what is foremost concerning how strangers are treated is "kinship, not hierarchy or even security concerns" (Sichone 2022, 91). In other words, ubuntu and the humility of incompleteness are paramount, and taking the stranger in is integral to the enrichment we seek and is sought of us through encounters. After all, we know what we become when we normalise predation.

COVID-19 has also reminded us of the solidarity, sociality and humanity that we have been schooled by colonialism and capitalist relations of commodity exchange to ignore or to caricature. The realisation that one, as an individual or as a community, is only possible through the humanity of others is a core philosophy of personhood in

Africa and among Africans who can still exercise freedom of motion. Through the sociality and solidarity Africans crave and forge, there is an openness to strangers, visitors and outsiders that emphasises a shared humanity and the need to protect and promote it. COVID-19 reminds us of this. Notwithstanding its invisibility, COVID-19's mode of travel and privileged crucibles of self-propagation remain the human hunger for kinship, sociality, intimacy and ubuntu. In other words, COVID-19 depends on the human capacity to seek activation and potency through relationships with one another.

Our insistence on policies of physical and social distancing ought to be seen not as an excuse to turn strangers into enemies but rather to recognise and provide for our common humanity. Thus, far from using the COVID-19 pandemic as "a convenient reason for restricting movement by demanding vaccination visas and/or putting foreigners into quarantine centres", as has tended to be the case, acting in recognition of a common humanity should suggest otherwise. We need to realise "that we are in this together," regardless of race or status, and that "unless everyone is safe, nobody will be free from the threat of infection or re-infection by mutant variants, and even new viruses" (Sichone 2022, 83). These resilient forms of sociality and conviviality across Africa and beyond are not easy to unlearn or suspend, especially in densely populated places and spaces of poverty, vulnerability and precarities, where the most likely physical and social distancing possible is the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. We can ill-afford to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic in isolation from other pandemics such as prejudice and poverty. It could be argued that, in addition to rights and ideology, mobility, in some instances, is largely driven by poverty and inequality.

Thus, as Sichone argues, the world stands to benefit from a sustained reactivation and popularisation of resilient values of ubuntu, kinship and inclusive personhood. At the core of these values is hospitality as "caring for travellers and other strangers," not out of a profit motive but because of a duty to protect in kinship (Sichone 2022, 83–84). Such hospitality challenges us to embrace our incompleteness as individuals, communities, societies, nation-states, cultures and civilisations and explore inclusive frameworks of being and becoming in tune with the universality of mobility and enrichment that comes with encountering and interacting with incomplete others who may or may not be like us.

This resilient and popular hospitality challenges us to disabuse ourselves of superiority syndromes and the tendency to limit gift exchange "to the most intimate of relations" and treat gifts from strangers with "angry suspicion" (Sichone 2022, 89).

Without incompleteness, life and living would be impossible. In our self-acting and self-extending mobility, we must make ourselves available to be eaten as we are eating (Nyamnjoh 2018). Unlike "commodity exchange," which "turns strangers into enemies, slaves, refugees, stateless people, and even second class human beings who must wait for the leftover vaccines, surplus corn, egg powder, and sunflower oil only when the first class citizens of the world have had their fill," the kinship model of hospitality Sichone proposes prioritises "gift exchange," which "turns strangers into relatives" (Sichone 2022, 89–90) through an emphasis on inclusion, not exclusion. This "belief that all human beings are equal fits more neatly with ideologies of solidarity than supremacist notions that deem others as unfit to use the front door or even to enter the house or country that they have approached as migrants or refugees in search of safety" (Sichone 2022, 83–84). We need the prescience to open up to mobility as a necessary response to the permanence of incompleteness in motion. We are challenged to break ranks with ambitions of completeness through conquest, confinement and containment and to embrace the humility of incompleteness and the potential for conviviality that comes with mobility as something available to all and sundry in a universe perpetually on the move. And with mobility and encounters at the service of incompleteness comes debt and indebtedness.

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Review article:

Contested Histories and Entangled Memories: Cuba and Africa Relations

Bonacci, G, Delmas, A and K Argyriadis. eds. 2021. *Cuba and Africa 1959–1994: Writing an Alternative Atlantic History*, pp xxiii and 279. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

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1. Introduction

The publication of *Cuba and Africa 1959–1994: Writing an Alternative Atlantic History* is not just timely. The study is also a critical resource to assist modern society, particularly Africans, to grapple with the legacy of Cuba/Africa relations in a manner different from the traditional and dominant Cold War paradigm characterising much of this historiography. As the volume demonstrates, Cuba's involvement in Africa is controversial far less as a matter of monetary quantum and fact but more due to Cuba suffering an unresolved duality in Africa arising from its entanglement in the Cold War, the struggle against colonialism and apartheid on the continent, and its historical connection to Africa dating back to the era of slavery (Ferrer 2021, 3–6). Consequently, Sebastian Conrad's (2003, 85) notion of "entangled memories" and Marouf Hasian's (2007, 394) "contested histories" best illuminate the complex relationships (Miller 2003, 149) between Africans and the making of independent Africa in partnership with Cuba.

Though the title of the study suggests it is focused on Cuba's relationship with Africa, the book does not claim to be comprehensive about the history of Cuba's relationship with Africa. It is, instead, the beginning of reclaiming and reconstituting an

ISSN 1013-1108

alternative history of Cuba's Atlantic experience from slavery to African independence. Born from discussions and papers first presented at a conference in 2016 at the Institute for Humanities in Africa (HUMA) at the University of Cape Town, the book ends with the controversy of Cuban exiles in Florida and their dreadful treatment of Nelson Mandela's first visit to Miami in 1993. Concluding the volume in this manner is prescient. While there is not a single chapter on South Africa or by a South African scholar in the book, the publication locates South Africa's experience with Cuba as a critical and integral part of the history of Cuba and Africa.

2. Traditional Narrative

Cuba has defied and humiliated the US from 1959 onwards (Gleijeses 2006, 98). Consequently, the US's hostility and hatred towards Cuba has its own history and life, which many scholars have addressed over time. The most recent and insightful addition to that scholarship is award-winning Cuban-American historian Ada Ferrer's (2021) *Cuba: An American History*. Though Ferrer (2021, 3) correctly notes that "the history of Cuba lends itself to monumental and epic tellings", in South Africa, however, Cuba suffers an unresolved duality of being both a friend and a foe—a friend to the liberation struggle and an enemy to many South Africans involved in the border war in Angola.

The dominant traditional narrative about Cuba's relationship with Africa often casts this relationship within the Cold War paradigm, casting Cuba as the foot soldier of communist expansion in independent Africa, which led to the "Moscow proxy" thesis globally and the "rooi gevaar" (Red danger) thesis in South Africa. Cuba's Africa policy exacerbated its already strained relations with Washington, DC. Under the Carter administration, US–Cuba relations improved in 1977 with the opening of mutual interests sections in Washington and Havana and the signing of fishing, health, and maritime agreements. Cuba had even begun discussing the possibility of withdrawing troops from Luanda, Angola's capital. However, when Cuba sent 12 000 soldiers to Ethiopia in 1977, its relations with the US took another downward plunge, adding to its economic woes (Falk 1987, 1079).

Further complicating this thesis, Falk cautions that we should not underestimate Africa's political and economic strategic importance to Cuba. With a population two times greater than that of the United States, the nations of Africa constitute the second largest continent in the world. And because of Angola's strategic importance in southern Africa, it is, in geopolitical terms, "a bull's eye" and a key attraction to Cuba

(Falk 1987, 1079). Falk continues that "Cuba's interest in Africa is not only geopolitical because the value of southern and central Africa's minerals (which are vital to industry, energy programs, and modern weaponry) is of nearly equal importance" (Falk 1987, 1080). For Falk, "[i]t is not difficult to understand, therefore, why Cuba chose to involve itself in the strategic southern cone of Africa", at whatever cost (Falk 1987, 1081).

3. The Alternative Story

Piero Gleijeses argues that "[a]ny fair assessment of Cuba's policy in Africa must recognise its impressive successes, and particularly its role in changing the course of southern Africa's history, despite Washington's best efforts to stop it" (Gleijeses 2006, 146). Moreover, such an assessment must also grapple with Cuba's unapologetic and fierce commitment to its sense of international solidarity with Africa (Gleijeses 2006, 146). Consequently, the editors of *Cuba and Africa 1959–1994* acknowledge that the history of Cuba's involvement in Africa is traditionally located around Cuba's military assistance to African nations' struggles against colonial domination, as well as the alleged co-opting of African countries for geopolitical support of communism as per the Cold War dichotomy. However, what is less well known is that "Cuba's engagement in Africa was conducted in the name of 'principles, convictions, and blood'", as Fidel Castro, its principal instigator, pronounced in 1975, and took so many forms—political, military, social, educational, economic, medical, humanitarian, cultural, linguistic, and so on" (Argyriadis, Bonacci, and Delmas 2021, 1).

Cuba and Africa 1959–1994 acknowledges that Cuba's significant intervention in Africa began in earnest in the mid-1970s when Cuba provided extensive military and technical support to the newly independent government of Angola led by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The MPLA stood against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) rebels. Both the US and South Africa backed these factions, which sought to overthrow the newly independent Angolan government and install a government sympathetic to the US and South Africa's strategic interests in the region. Cuba's involvement in this region of the continent enjoys extensive consideration in *Cuba and Africa 1959–1994* because of the scale and extent of Cuba's involvement in Angola, which is staggering by any measure.

However, Cuba's African journey did not just begin in 1975. For all intents and purposes, Angola was simply "a way station along a road that had begun in 1959 and

had led to Algeria, Congo Leopoldville (later called Zaïre), Congo Brazzaville, and Guinea-Bissau. Almost two thousand Cuban soldiers and aid workers had gone to Africa before the intervention in Angola" (Gleijeses 2006, 99). Furthermore, Cuba's role in international politics during the Cold War was unique. No other Third World country projected its military power beyond its immediate neighbourhood, making Cuba only second to the United States in this regard (Gleijeses 2006, 98). The final chapter in *Cuba and Africa 1959–1994* attends to yet another lesser-known fault line in these relations by way of Cuba's involvement in Brazzaville and Angola, which had Cubans exiled in Miami, Florida, fighting against their compatriots as a proxy to fighting Castro and his influence on the continent (Gonçalves 2021, 238). Gonçalves likens this to the "mirror-making" metaphor utilised when dealing with the contestations between West and East Germany in the Cold War context (Gonçalves 2021, 240).

Cuba and Africa 1959–1994 puts context, texture, and nuance to these interpretations with details and inputs from the African nations involved in these skirmishes and transactions. The publication also extends the historiography to address the relationship as far back as slavery and the first uprisings in Cuba emanating from the regions with the most significant slave populations. Viewed in this light, Cuba's sense of connection to Africa precedes the Cold War and the African independence movements after World War II—the "War of Ten Years" (1868–1879), the massive participation of enslaved people and "free people of colour" in the pro-independence forces marks the whole history of the Cuban independence struggle (Argyriadis, Bonacci, and Delmas 2021, 7).

4. Cuba's International Solidarity

Apart from its military interventions, Cuba's spirit and record of international solidarity has a long history and is best illustrated by its volunteer corps of expertise, particularly in the field of medicine that it has made available to nations across the globe and across time. *Cuba and Africa 1959–1994* shows that a massive technical assistance programme accompanied Cuba's military presence in Africa. Tens of thousands of Cuban experts, mainly in healthcare, education, and construction, worked in Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Ethiopia, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania, Congo Brazzaville, Benin, Burkino Faso, and Algeria. In addition, more than 40 000 Africans studied in Cuba on full scholarships funded by the Cuban government (Gleijeses 2006, 98).

Cuba did all this because, on the medical front, the Cuban government expanded

the number of doctors on the island from 3 000 in the immediate post-revolution years to 2 567 in 1986 (one per 399 inhabitants) and 60 248 in 1995 (one per 196 inhabitants). With this rapid increase, Cuba has been able to pursue a policy of providing medical practitioners to other developing nations, including 2 000 sent to countries hit by Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and 2 173 doctors placed under Cuba's Comprehensive Health Programme for Central America, the Caribbean and Africa since 2001 (Hammett 2007, 67).

The Henry Reeve Emergency Medical Contingent "was founded in 2005 to respond to the increasing threat of natural disasters" (Gorry 2019, 87). Made up of over 700 medical practitioner volunteers, the Henry Reeve Emergency Medical Contingent is a specialised team trained and equipped to provide emergency medical services in post-disaster scenarios and epidemics like the current global COVID-19 pandemic (Gorry 2019, 87). All this suggests that Cuba's involvement in Africa was more than merely playing Cold War politics, which is the alternative history *Cuba and Africa 1959–1994* tells.

5. Cuba/South Africa Relations

The absence of a specific chapter on Cuba/South Africa relations notwithstanding, the book references South Africa continuously. "Until 1994, Cuba had been a staunch supporter of the ANC-in-exile and had come into direct conflict with the apartheid government in Angola during the 1970s to 1980s, when its forces clashed with South African troops and UNITA rebels" (Hammett 2007, 65). UNITA was supported, directly and indirectly, by the US and South Africa. US military and political support for Jonas Savimbi, the founder and leader of UNITA, was demonstrated by Savimbi's 1986 visit to the United States during negotiations (Tyler and Ottaway 1986). It was also evident in the joint US/Zaïrean military manoeuvres that equipped UNITA's northern bases if Namibian independence would force it to give up Jamba in the south of Angola (Brittain 1988, 122).

As such, Cuba helped South Africans gain their freedom from apartheid. Cuba also fought South African Defence Force (SADF) members during the Angolan war until a settlement was reached, which, among other things, led to Namibia's independence from South Africa in March 1990 (Williams 2013, 157). This role cast Cuba as both a friend and an enemy of South Africans, depending on where you stand concerning the struggle against apartheid and the defence of the country's borders with the so-called

"frontline states" as servicemen conscripted by the apartheid government.

Furthermore, Cuba's involvement with healthcare provision in South Africa commenced with supporting the ANC-aligned South African exile communities in settlements such as those at Mazimbu in Morogoro, Tanzania, where SOMAFCO, the ANC school, was located and the ANC had built the ANC-Holland Solidarity hospital with the support of a Netherlands-based donor (Armstrong 2020, 51). Support also extended to the military camps in Angola, where Cuban medical personnel and army instructors assisted ANC cadres in the camps. During this time, Cuba's support also included providing medical training for South Africans in exile.

When South Africa achieved democracy in 1994, Nelson Mandela declared that South Africa would not turn its back on those who supported it during the struggle against apartheid (Hammett 2007, 64). The new South African government was committed to positively affecting global relations and promoting further and sustainable South-South development cooperation as an alternative to traditional North-South relationships (Hammett 2007, 64). Through the new South-South relationships, developing countries sought to "demonstrate how developing states can work together to promote development strategies under their ownership to mutual advantage" (Hammett 2007, 64).

After the historical events of 1994, "South Africa has pursued several cooperation agreements with Cuba, covering trade, health, and sport". Furthermore, "the South Africa-Cuba Joint Bilateral Commission (JBC), established in February 2001, served as coordinating forum for the periodic review of bilateral cooperation projects in identified areas of economic, scientific, technical and commercial cooperation and the extension of cooperation into new areas" (Magama 2013). As part of these agreements, "South Africa benefitted from Cuba's surplus of medical doctors—a result of the drive to train medical practitioners in the 1960s and Castro's desire for Cuba to become a world medical power—to support its health service" (Hammett 2007, 67). Accordingly, the bilateral agreement between South Africa and Cuba has been operating since 1995, and by 2001, 353 Cuban doctors and 22 medical lecturers were already working in South Africa. By 2002 the number had increased to 450 (Hammett 2007, 67).

The controversy over South African medical doctors trained in Cuba led scholars to explore "the experiences of Cuban- and South African-trained students, recent graduates and medical school faculty to better understand and hopefully resolve the current controversy" (Sui et al. 2019, 1). In South Africa, affirmative action policies in the eight medical schools allowed black and women students from disadvantaged

populations to enter medical school, which increased the proportion of black students. In 2014, of 9 170 students in medical schools, 39 per cent were black, 33 per cent white, 14 per cent coloured, and 14 per cent Indian/Asian. Despite increasing output from medical schools, the low ratio of doctors to population has not changed over the last decade due to population growth and migration of doctors (Sui et al. 2019, 1).

Because "[i]ndependent evidence on the effectiveness of the Cuban training programme [was] unavailable for their study, the researchers used questions that were drawn from the United States medical student survey questionnaires, which were validated by comparisons with medical education and medical care, and modified to cover specific topics relevant to South Africa" (Sui et al. 2019, 2). They conclude that their "qualitative findings go some way to dispelling the overall negative narrative that has arisen around these Cuba-trained doctors" (Sui et al. 2019, 9). Furthermore, for each cohort of Cuban doctors, the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and the Medical and Dental Professions Board (MDPB) send a delegation to Cuba to interview the applicants who have been pre-selected by the Cuban Ministry of Health. The HPCSA assesses the applicants' skills, knowledge, and linguistic ability before deciding whether they meet the required standards to comply with the South African Medical Council (Hammett 2007, 79).

6. Conclusion

Cuba and Africa 1959–1994 is a timely publication. Given the extensive involvement of Cuba with South Africa during the struggle against apartheid and in the post-apartheid context, the study invites and challenges South African scholars, established and new, to add their contribution to the alternative Atlantic history. Though a relatively small Caribbean country of a little over 11 million inhabitants, Cuba has been punching above its weight and making headlines on both sides of the Atlantic since even before that fateful day of 1 January 1959 when the late Fidel Castro and his comrades' revolution, led by the 26 July Movement, triumphed over the US-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista (Mandela and Castro 2016, 15; Miller 2003, 147). *Cuba and Africa 1959–1994* tells this story from a new perspective that should be emulated.

Dealing with contested histories and entangled memories opens the door for other African nations implicated in the Cuba/Africa relationship to contribute their voices and views to this alternative history because "neither the presence of Che Guevara in the Congo in 1965 nor the participation of thirty thousand Cuban soldiers in the

Angolan conflict allows for an appreciation of the depth, complexity, and richness of the links created [between Cuba and Africa]" (Argyriadis, Bonacci, and Delmas 2021, 11). This signals a real need to "contribute to a historiography of Africa that can account for the multiplicity of relations with Cuba" (Argyriadis, Bonacci, and Delmas 2021, 11).

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