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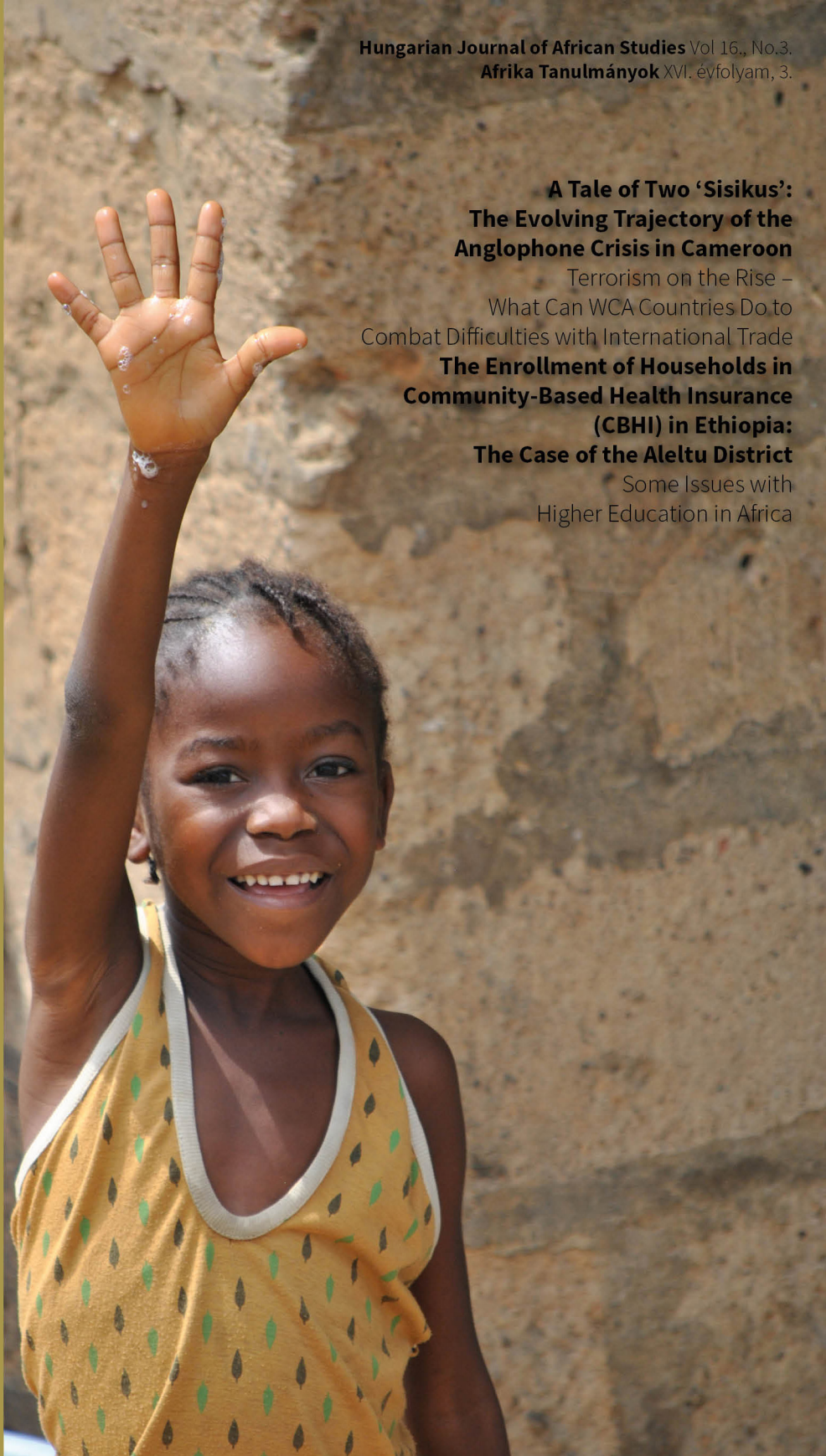

GUTAMA NAMOMSA DARAJE

THE ENROLLMENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH INSURANCE (CBHI) IN ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF THE ALELTU DISTRICT

In developing countries, people's attitude about their health is very poor. People visit health institutions only when they are sick. This trend is especially common in rural areas. For the majority of people, health care is accessed and covered by money sourced from their existing funds or assets, which frequently results in citizens not using health care services. Poor health care financing remains a major challenge for the health system in Ethiopia. It leaves households vulnerable to impoverishment from high health expenditures and slows progress towards health improvements such as the Sustainable Development Goals, limiting access to essential health services among citizens with lower socio-economic status. Important barriers to improved health care financing include low government spending on the health sector, strong reliance on out-of-pocket expenditure, inefficient and inequitable utilization of resources, and poorly harmonized and unpredictable donor funding. Different studies illustrated that in developing countries the majority of people from poor families cover health care costs with out-of-pocket funding. As a result, many fall into debt, which aggravates the severe poverty conditions. This study revealed that all households (n=150) are aware. This awareness has positive contribution on enrollment and sustainability of the scheme by minimizing the drop out of the member. The major benefit the households experienced by enrolling in Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) is that it saves people from having unplanned health costs. Eighty percent of the respondents stated that their health status improved and that their families were insured. Currently, both premiums were paid and Poor members of the scheme are enrolling in the Aleltu district because they understand the advantages of being members of CBHI.

LAWALLEY COLE

SOME ISSUES WITH HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

This policy paper highlights several macro issues with African higher education, including inadequate funding, governance challenges, and a lack of access to digital infrastructure compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper also notes the historical and continuing impact of colonialism on Africa's education systems and women's challenges in accessing higher education. The author emphasizes the importance of investing in human capital and improving the quality of primary education to strengthen Africa's human resource base and advance economic development. The paper calls for a paradigm shift in education policy and practice, underscoring pragmatism over ideology and focusing on building the capacity for sustained development through training in science, engineering, medicine, and agriculture. The author also highlights the need to address gender inequalities in access to higher education and diversify institutional models to meet the demands of the digital age. Ultimately, the paper calls for a concerted effort to improve funding, governance, and quality across African higher education institutions, leveraging partnerships and innovations to expand access and promote excellence.

DIANA SFETLANA STOICA

DECOLONIALITY IN DANGER OR BEING BOOSTED? AN EXPLORATION OF ECOWAS POSITIONS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE WESTERN AFRICAN REGIONARO REGION

This paper aims to explore the notion of decoloniality by examining the decisions and actions of the ECOWAS in response to the coup d'état in Burkina Faso in 2022, as well as other comparable sanctions imposed on Mali and Guinea during internal crisis challenges. These topics were raised and debated in various mass media outlets. For this purpose, readers are invited to imagine, based on ideas interpreted from official positions of the ECOWAS, or perceptions of them, expressed in academic narratives and the media, if decoloniality could be boosted or is in danger, following the decisions, actions, and positions of the ECOWAS. The interpretations through the lens of decoloniality portrayed in African narratives, and these explorations are characteristic of qualitative analysis. In examining how ECOWAS manages potential crises in the region, particularly in the cases of Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso, we can identify basic features of decoloniality. Taking a social-constructivist perspective, we can explore how African narratives of development can inspire critical resistance. Specifically, we must consider how power and relationships based on power can be decolonized to prioritize a people-centric view of development. In analyzing the use of violence and safety in the actions of the ECOWAS, we can determine whether they boost or endanger decoloniality. The academic community has shown considerable interest in the impact of the ECOWAS on the political climate of Western African states. However, it is important to consider the philosophical perspective on how the portrayal of ECOWAS actions and decisions can affect the narratives of opposition, anti-ism, and power dynamics. Specifically, in the case of internal conflicts, these portrayals can direct the debate on whether decolonization, as a theory, cultural movement, or process, can continue the work of African resistance initiated during the decolonization process which remains unfinished.

ALEMSEGED ABBAY

STATE-BUILDING/STATE-DESTROYING IN ETHIOPIA – A BACKDROP TO THE TIGRAY GENOCIDEA

Federalist Tigray and unitarian Amhara have been historical rivals in the daunting task of state-building in Ethiopia. To neutralize Tigray and its de facto federalism (1872–89), Amhara found a formidable ally in Italy, which colluded with Britian to have "a place in the sun." Amhara rewarded Italy with half of Tigray, which was christened "Eritrea," and imposed the unitarian system in the country. Worse still, in the middle of the 1950s, Amhara annexed the western and southern parts of Tigray. Tigray and Eritrea (which returned to Ethiopia in 1952) were suffocated by amharanization and political centralization, the twin pillars of the unitarian system. Military insurgencies brought the system to an end in 1991 and the Tigrayans who assumed the reins of power introduced de jure federalism, to the chagrin of the Amhara. The paper offers a critical historical analysis of state-building and state-destroying in Ethiopia, with particular attention given to the Amhara return to power in 2018 and humanity's newest genocide in Tigray.

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A TALE OF TWO "SISIKUS": THE EVOLVING TRAJECTORY OF THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS IN CAMEROON

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Abstract

Cameroon has been plunged into a devastating civil conflict since December 2017 when President Paul Biya declared war on secessionists after the killing of four soldiers and two police officers in the South West Region. This paper approaches the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis from the theoretical premise of remedial secession. It argues that the evolution of the crisis from a moderate return to federalism pursued by "Sisiku" Agbor Felix Nkongho to the radical secession espoused by "Sisiku" Julius Ayuk Tabe can be understood within the framework of remedial secession. The cogency of this argument is examined against efforts made by the Cameroon government to tackle the crisis and the concept of territorial integrity. This paper concludes that the protracted nature of the conflict reflects the theoretical impasse between remedial secession and territorial integrity.

Keywords

Cameroon Anglophone Crisis, Remedial secession, Territorial integrity, Intra-state conflict, Nationalism

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INTRODUCTION

The political landscape of Cameroon in recent times has been marked by a conflict that threatens to dismember the territory between its two constituent linguistic communities—Francophones and Anglophones. The current crisis can be traced back to Cameroon's checkered political history marked by the marginalization of Anglophones from independence to contemporary times. Before expanding recently into a full-blown arm conflict, the Anglophone crisis began as an outcry by the Anglophones against their marginalization in a reunited independent territory, starting in 1961 and continuing to the present day. The marginalization, referred to by some scholars as the "Anglophone Problem" (Eko 2003; Eyoh 1998), describes "the emergence of an Anglophone consciousness derived from the feeling of being 'marginalized', 'exploited' and 'assimilated' by the Francophone-dominated state in Cameroon" (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, p. 207). This has triggered two principal solution mechanisms in the Anglophone community: dialogue, on the one hand and secession on the other.

To understand the Anglophone crisis, it is imperative to define what "Anglophone" means in the context of Cameroon. There is no conventional definition of what constitutes an Anglophone or a Francophone in Cameroon, but given the etymology of both terms (Dollinger 2020; McArthur 2020) it would be safe to categorize such individuals as members of English-speaking and French-speaking linguistic communities. Therefore, Anglophone in the Cameroonian context refers to Cameroonians originating from the two English-speaking regions of the country (South West and North West), which both constitute former British Southern Cameroons' territory. British Southern Cameroons formed part of the British Cameroons colony which made separate decisions about their political destiny in a referendum held on 11 February, 1961. British Southern Cameroons decided to gain independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon and British Northern Cameroon decided to get its independence by joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) of "Sisiku" Agbor Felix Nkongho opted for a strategy of dialogue and negotiation while "Sisiku" Ayuk Tabe of the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF) opted for a secession. The two "Sisikus" (a knighthood title of the Bayangi ethnic group in the South West Region of Cameroon) represent the evolving trajectory of the Anglophone crisis. Sisiku Agbor Felix Nkongho represents the moderate segment of the Anglophone Cameroonian population that was open to dialogue and negotiation with the Cameroonian government at the outbreak of the crisis. Their platform was the return to the Federal system of government adopted by Cameroon at independence in 1961, which explains why Anglophone Cameroonians and others who espouse this opinion are called Federalists.

It should be noted that the call for a return to the Federal system of government in Cameroon emerged in the late 90s and gained momentum among the prominent Anglophone Cameroon Elites at the time. In April 1993, prominent Anglophone elites like Carlson Anyangwe, Sam Ekontang Elad, Benjamin Itoe and Simon Munzu

organized the All Anglophone Conference (AAC) in Buea, over 5000 delegates attended to forge a unified position for convening a national debate on constitutional reform by the government. The Buea Declaration that resulted from the conference highlighted the need to go back to the Federal system of government adopted at independence (Konings, 1999). Federalism has also been embraced by the famous contemporary Francophone Cameroon political leader Prof. Maurice Kamto, who views this governmental system as the solution to the conflict in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon (Takambou, 2020).

"Sisiku" Ayuk Tabe represents the radical segment of the Anglophone Cameroonian population, and he considers secession and independence the only remedy to the Anglophone crisis. Though military confrontation with the Cameroonian government by secessionist factions is new, the idea of secession and the formation of an independent Anglophone Cameroonian state have some historical precedence. The idea of secession and independence of the former British Southern Cameroons gained prominence in 1985 when the first Cameroon Bar Association President Fon Fongum Gorji-Dinka declared Ambazonia a state in a pamphlet he published entitled "The New Social Order" (Takambou, 2019). After decrying the marginalization of Anglophones, in an address to the regime of President Paul Biya he underscored that "If the expression 'Southern Cameroons' has exposed us to any annexationist ambitions, then we will henceforth call ourselves AMBAZONIA" (Gorji-Dika, 1984). "Ambazonia" is derived from the "Ambas Bay" (a former British protectorate), which refers to a bay in the South West Region of Cameroon. It connotes a separated Southern Cameroons, distinct from the Republic of Cameroon (Mwakideu, 2017).

This paper examines the origins and evolution of the Anglophone crisis. It approaches the Anglophone Cameroon crisis from the theoretical lens of remedial secession. It examines the dichotomous reaction of Anglophone Cameroonians to their marginalization from the perspective of the theory of remedial secession. The paper argues that the evolution of the Anglophone problem from the moderate stage of dialogue with the government on the resolution of major grievances (pursued by "Sisiku" Agbor Felix Nkongho) to the radical option of secession (espoused by "Sisiku" Julius Ayuk Tabe) can be explained by how a portion of Anglophone Cameroonians perceived secession. Proponents of secession viewed it as the last option for ending their protracted marginalization. The paper starts by providing a historical background to the conflict. Next, it establishes a theoretical and conceptual framework to be used in analysing the conflict before moving to an analysis of the dialectic pathways pursued by two of the key actors in the struggle against Anglophone marginalization. It contrasts the moderate approach taken by Sisiku Nkongho Agbor Balla and the radical option espoused by Sisiku Ayuk Tabe. It also examines the response of the Cameroonian government to the crisis. An attempt was also made to gauge the perception of Anglophone Cameroonians on the existence, nature, reasons, and solutions to the on-going crisis in the Anglophone regions, thereby providing an opportunity for them to share their thoughts on efforts to resolve the problem.

This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What explains the evolution of the Cameroon Anglophone crisis from a protest against the marginalization of 'Anglophones' in the educational and judiciary sectors to its radicalization to a secessionist movement demanding the establishment of an independent state for Anglophone Cameroonians?
2. How applicable is the doctrine of remedial secession in the Anglophone crisis?
3. What is the general perception among Anglophone Cameroonians concerning the nature, causes, and solution to the Anglophone crisis?

This paper adopts a mixed method in its empirical inquiry into the Anglophone crisis leveraging on both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis to perform a critical analysis of its evolution. Mixed methods procure several advantages in carrying out research on a complex phenomenon like the Anglophone crisis amongst which include: triangulations (the ability to confirm research findings using different methods); and complementarity (using results from one research method to elaborate, clarify, or enhance that from another) (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The major quantitative method employed in this research was a structured questionnaire-based survey on the perception of Anglophones concerning the Anglophone crisis. The perception survey was carried out using a random sampling approach to ensure adequate representativeness and less bias among the sample population. The sample population consisted of adult Anglophone Cameroonians (defined as those who have the only two Anglophone regions in Cameroon—South West and North West, as their regions of origins) of irrespective of gender, age group, or level of education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is remedial secession. Generally, secession refers to a situation where "a territorially concentrated group breaks away from the state in which it is currently included to form its own independent state, thereby tak-

Maps showing the historical and geographical evolution of Cameroon from 1960. 1 January 1960 – 1 June 1961 / 1 June – 1 October 1961 / 1 October 1961 – 2 June 1972
Source: Wikimedia Commons / Cameroon Boundary Changes

ing away that part of the current state's territory which it occupies" (Catala, 2013, p. 74). According to Buchanan (1997), theories on secession rights are divided into two basic groups: primary rights theories and remedial rights theories. This paper addresses the latter. Empirical cases of the operationalization of primary rights theories are rare compared to remedial rights theories, which have flourished in international discourse recently, such as the cases of Quebec (Supreme Court of Canada, 1998), Katanga (ACHPR, 1995), and Kosovo (ICJ, 2010).

Buchanan further notes that remedial rights theories are based on two important preconditions: a general right to secede when the group seeking secession has suffered injustice or when there are special rights to secede. These rights are granted by the state and provided by the constitution or an agreement "by which the state was initially created out of previously independent political units included the implicit or explicit assumption that secession at a later point was permissible" (Buchanan, 1997, p. 36). Brando and Morales-Gálvez (2019) underscore two pathways making the remedial right to secession possible: one that is restricted to groups that are victims of "grave injustices and human rights violations or unjust annexation by a state" (Ibid., p. 107) and another that is based on "the infringement of specific collective rights and the lack of constitutional recognition of minorities by the state" (Ibid.). In more explicit terms, Buchanan (2003, p. 335) points out that:

> If the state persists in serious injustices toward a group, and the group's forming its own independent political unit is a remedy of last resort for these injustices, then the group ought to be acknowledged by the international community to have the claim-right to repudiate the authority of the state and to attempt to establish its own independent political unit.

The question that arises from this theory, therefore, is whether the struggle for secession launched by Anglophone separatist can be justified under remedial secession.

Before delving to our analysis, it is important to note that some scholars have added a caveat to the theory of remedial secession to clearly situate the context in which it can be valid or invalid according to international law. One such scholar is Jure Vidmar. In his analysis of the Quebec case and the case of Loizidou vs Turkey, which was brought before the European Court of Human Rights in 1997, Vidmar noted that remedial secession has not been accepted by any judicial body as an entitlement in any specific case. The author added that it was viewed by its academic proponents as an exceptional option or a solution of last resort (Vidmar 2010). Catala (2013) also admits that secession resulting from a unilateral decision not backed by the consent of mother state or sanctioned by the constitution is controversial.

The other important argument against remedial secession is that it constitutes a violation of the territorial integrity of a state, which is conceived as "a right of States to maintain their territorial integrity, whether it is against other States or from the threat of broken unity from within the State" (Wedel, 2018 p. 16).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The term "Anglophone Cameroon" is a linguistic and cultural designation of the two English-speaking regions (Northwest and Southwest) that constitute part of the present-day Republic of Cameroon. To fully understand the present conflict that has embroiled both regions, it is important to revisit the historical evolution of the territory now called Anglophone Cameroon. The history of this linguistic-cultural group dates back to the era of German imperialism in Africa. What constitutes present day Cameroon was annexed by Germany in 1884 (Fanso, 1999). German Colonisation of Cameroon occurred between 1884 and 1914. Though relatively shorter than the British/French Mandate and Trusteeship periods, some scholars have argued that the German colonial period was the historical climax of Cameroon nationalism. LeVine wrote, "The German experience remains, for many Cameroonians, at once a political touchstone and a potent symbol of a half-mythical golden age when the Cameroons were one" (1964, p. 38). The nostalgia of a united Cameroon under the German colonial administration was crucial to the rhetoric of Cameroonian nationalism (Johnson, 1973).

German colonialism in Cameroon ended in 1914 when they were defeated in the territory by British and French forces. What followed was a period of dual governance by Britain and France, which was called "Condominium." There was a partition of the territory between both countries in 1916 based on the Milner-Simon Agreement, and it was placed under the League of Nations Mandate with British and French control in 1922 and later under the trusteeship system of the United Nations until 1960 (Ardener, 1962). The French acquired three-quarters of the territory of Cameroon, while the British acquired one-quarter (Fanso, 1999; Njeuma, 1995). While, scholars like Fru and Wasserman (2017) have traced the marginalization of the Anglophones in Cameroon to this disproportionate partition of the Cameroonian territory, which provided the framework for the emergence of a Francophone majority and an Anglophone minority (Awasum, 2000), other scholars such as Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) pointed out that the Anglophone identity might be distinct and peculiar when the general presumptions of identity formation are taken into consideration. Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) argue that colonial borders, reunification and the post-colonial state project of nation-state formation are responsible for the construction of the distinct identities in Cameroon.

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Interestingly, historical analyses of the Cameroon nation-state project have indicated that while both communities yearned for independence, this unification was agreed upon knowing that it would accom-

modate their post-colonial differences. This was also highlighted by J. O. Fields, the British commissioner of Cameroon ,in his address to the Southern Cameroons House of Chiefs prior to the referendum:

> The UK and the UN are anxious that before the plebiscite takes place, it should be equally clear what their position would be if they should people choose to join the republic of Cameroon. To this end, my ministers are now engaged in discussions with representatives of the Cameroon Republic with a view to finding a basis of agreement on the constitutional, fiscal, economic and cultural position of Southern Cameroon if it were to become part of the Cameroon Republic. (Fields, 1961)

The British and French Mandate over Cameroon lasted from 1922 to 1945, when the United Nations Trusteeship Mission replaced the League of Nations Mandate Commission as the supervisory authority over Cameroon. While the French administered their own territory as a full-fledged colony, the British administered a portion of Cameroon as part of their Nigerian colony. French Cameroon gained its independence in January 1960 while British Southern Cameroons got its independence in February 1961 after a referendum conducted by the United Nations on the future of the territory (Fru & Wasserman, 2017).

Scholars have argued that through their various era of colonial rule, British and French Cameroon developed two distinct and diverse culture and national identities. In this regard, Fanso (1999, p. 284) notes that "Anglophone nationalism emerged separately from Francophone nationalism." Anglophone culture (education, language, political philosophy, and other influences of the British colonial administration) constituted the primordial component of Anglophone nationalism (Fanso, 1999), distinct from Francophone nationalism. This assessment was originally highlighted by President Ahidjo in his welcome address at the Foumban Conference:

> Gentlemen, the principal object of this gathering is to study together the important outlines of our future Constitution. You know that even before the Referendum and since then during our talks with Mr. Foncha, we chose a federal framework. Why this formula? It was because linguistic, administrative, and economic differences do not permit us to envisage seriously and reasonably a state a state of the Unitary and Centralized type. (Ahidjo, 1961).

Johnson (1973) also argues that despite the German colonial heritage, Cameroon had the trappings of a fragmentary society at independence lacking sufficient historical foundation, national unity, and integration. The collapse of the federal system of government in 1972 and the development of the Anglophone problem (i.e., marginalisation of Anglophones within the reunited Cameroon) only supports Johnson's claims. Cameroonians in their overwhelming majority voted in favour of transitioning from a federal to a unitary state during a referendum organized on 20 May, 1972.

Out of 3,236,280 registered voters, 3,177,846 (roughly 98%) voted for the motion of dissolving the federation in favour of the establishment of a unitary state. Additionally, 176 people (0.005%) voted against the motion, 56,646 (1.75%) abstained, and 1,612 (0.04%) of the ballots were declared null and void (Chem-Langhëë, 1995).

The perception of marginalization by Anglophones Cameroonians in the unitary state emerged after the dissolution of the Federal system of government on 20 May, 1972. These feelings of marginalization were at alarming proportions when Cameroon's President Paul Biya, in a presidential decree on 4 February, 1984, unilaterally decided to change the country's name from the United Republic of Cameroon (the name adopted after the 1972 Referendum) to the Republic of Cameroon (the name adopted by the former French colony of Cameroon during independence in 1960) (Nkwi & Nyamjoh, 2017). This triggered an outburst of frustration and condemnation by Anglophone Cameroonians who perceived it as an unequivocal attempt to destroy their identity and disregard their history. This sense of dissatisfaction was eloquently expressed by Anglophone political groups such as the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) and the Ambazonia Movement. It was termed "The Buea Peace Initiative", and CAM pointed out that the decision taken by President Biya to rename the country was a betrayal of the reunification of both Cameroons under a two state federation. In its reaction to the decision, CAM underscored that it:

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> …sounded the death knell of the unification of British and French Cameroons [and] consummated the constitutional secession of East Cameroon from the United Federal Republic which was negotiated in Foumban... in fulfillment of

> Resolution A/C.4/L 685 of April 1961 by the United Nations General Assembly. (Tande, 2006).

This sentiment was echoed by the Ambazionia movement:

> The constitutional mutation brought about by the United Republic of Cameroon Law 84/01 in January 1984, and it dissolved the illegal union first called Federal Republic of Cameroon (FRC) and later United Republic of Cameroon (URC). It restored our two nations to their original position as separate and independent of each other. So by law, Cameroon's authority is now limited to the East of the Mongo River. (Ibid.).

Anger against the marginalization of Anglophones pushed one of the founding fathers of Cameroon's reunification and former Vice President John Ngu Foncha to resign from his post as Vice-President of the ruling Cameroon's People Democratic Party (CPDM). In his resignation letter on 9 June. 1990, Foncha enumerated several cases that highlighted the marginalization of his people (i.e., Anglophone Cameroonians) and justified his resignation:

> All projects of the former West Cameroon I had either initiated or held very dear to my heart had to be taken over, mismanaged and ruined, such as Cameroon Bank, West Cameroon Marketing Board, WADA in Wum, and West Cameroon Cooperative Movement...
> The Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into the Union have been ridiculed and referred to as "les Biafrians", "les enemies dans la maison", "les traites' [traitres], etc., and the constitutional provisions which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voices drowned while the rule of the gun has replaced the dialogue which Anglophones cherish very much.... (Ncha, 2017).

The above reactions can be seen as the remote origins or build-up of events that culminated in the strike organized by Anglophone teachers and lawyers in November 2016, which sparked a series of events that plunged the country into a full-blown conflict between secessionist forces and the Cameroonian military. This conflict has been going on for the past six years (2017 – 2023).

TWO SISIKUS AND TWO TRAJECTORIES FOR ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON

There are two main organizations in the Anglophone region that played prominent roles in the on-going Anglophone crisis: The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC), led by Sisiku Agbor Felix Nkongho (popularly known as Agbor Balla); and the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF), led by Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe and the Cameroonian Government. As

time unfolded, there was an evolution in the focus, strategy and outcome of the Anglophone crisis following a transition of leadership from the CACSC and Sisiku Agbor Balla to te SCACUF and Sisiku Ayuk Tabe. Under CACSC, the crisis continued, and it was characterized by non-violent protest and demonstration. Meanwhile, the crisis took a violent turn with the advent of SCACUF as the leading movement piloting the Anglophone struggle. These three actors (CACSC, SCACUF, and the Cameroonian Government) in the crisis, the strategies they pursued, and the resulting outcomes are analysed below.

Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC)

The CACSC, led by Sisiku Agbor Balla, was the first principal actor in the crisis for the Anglophones. The CACSC was established in December 2016 as part of concerted efforts by the Anglophone teacher and lawyer trade unions to form a united front to engage in dialogue with the Cameroonian government (Caxton, 2017). The CACSC stood out as the voice of the Anglophone community and focused its activism on the following demands for Anglophones:

> a. An end to the marginalisation and annexationist disposition of Yaounde.
> b. A return to the two-state federation in the management of public affairs in Cameroon that was the basis of the union entered in 1961.
> c. Preservation of the cherished legal and education systems of Anglophone Cameroon.
> d. Unconditional release of over 100 bona-fide Cameroonians arrested in connection with the protests in the Northwest and Southwest regions since September 2016, and
> e. Immediate restoration of internet services throughout the Anglophone regions. (Abouem a Tchoyi as cited in Okereke, 2018, p. 9)

In terms of strategy, the CACSC utilized a sit-down protest and strikes called "Ghost Town" in the southwest and northwest Anglophone regions of Cameroon. After the collapse of talks between the government and the striking Anglophone lawyers and teachers trade unions, on 27 December, 2016, the CACSC issued "Press Release No. 9" that called for the continuation of the teachers and lawyers strikes. They also reiterated their firm resolve to continue with the strike until their call for a two-state federation was heeded by the government:

> We are not unaware of violent history of this country or the barbaric methods the government is capable of. But we must, however, reiterate our communal resolve to uphold the strikes until the State of Cameroon provides a viable political framework within which citizens of Former West Cameroon can live in peace, justice and equal opportunity; a two-State Federation where our people will no longer be humiliated, marginalized and treated as second class citizens! ...As from 2 January, 2017, the Teachers' Strike will extend to all

English speaking sections of nursery, primary and secondary schools across the River Mungo. (WCA, 2016)

Concerning outcomes, the strong stance of the CACSC during the negotiation pushed the government to make some concessions, including the recruitment of a thousand bilingual teachers, a 2 billion FCFA grant to confessional schools, and the production of the English version of the OHADA (Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Laws in Africa) Uniform Act, which previously existed only in French (Caxton, 2017). These measures failed to satisfy the CACSC, which doubled down on its call for a two-state federation and continuation of the strike. Their intransigence culminated in a decision by the Cameroonian government to ban the CACSC and arrest its leaders—President Sisiku Agbor Balla and Secretary General Dr. Fontem Neba (AT editor, 2017).

Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF)

The Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF) was created in February 2017 after a decision by nine Anglophone separatist organisations to merge and form a united front. Meeting in Nigeria (where most Anglophone separatist took refuge after the government banning of CACSC and crackdown on secessionists within Cameroon), the following groups merged to form SCACUF: Republic of Ambazonia, Movement for the Restoration and Independence of Southern Cameroon (MORISC), Southern Cameroons South Africa Forum, Southern Cameroonians in Nigeria (SCINGA), Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), Southern Cameroons People Organization (SCAPO), Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL), and Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) (Amabo, 2017).

In terms of strategy, SCACUF made a milestone move on 1 October, 2017, by symbolically declaring independence from the Federal Republic of Cameroon. In a statement on its Facebook page, SCACUF said, "Today, we reaffirm our autonomy over our heritage and over our territory," (Essa, 2017). Meeting a day before in Abuja, Nigeria SCACUF adopted a constitution for "Ambazonia". A fifteen-member interim government was formed in November with Sisku Ayuk Tabe at the helm (ICG, 2017). It is imperative to point out that among the entities that merged to form SCACUF, the AGC has taken a life of its own, opting for a guerrilla type military resistance against the Cameroonian army. The AGC oversees the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) commanded by Lucas Ayaba Cho. It has become the main force in the Anglophone military resistance and fight for independence.

In a prelude to the 56th anniversary of the day (1 October, 1961) both sections of British and French administered Cameroon officially began their reunification under a federal constitution, the AGC encouraged Anglophones to show up for public demonstrations. The climax of the demonstrations was to be the celebration of what was hoped to be the independence of Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia). On Sunday, 1 October, 2017, there were mass protests in the southwest and northwest Anglophone regions of Cameroon, and protesters attempted to raise up the Ambazonia flag. These

protests where met with a heavy-handed crackdown by the Cameroonian military with security forces opening fire on protesters in several towns in the Anglophone regions according to local sources. Reports from Amnesty International estimated the death toll at 17 (Atabong, 2017).

The ADF are not the only armed group involved in the Anglophone secessionist struggle. Alongside the independently operating ADF there are two other rebel militias and a dozen "self-defence" groups. The two other militias are the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF) under the leadership of Ebenezer Akwanga and the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SCDF) commanded by Nso Foncha Nkem (ICG, 2017). These military groups have been involved in fierce battles with the Cameroon army with high casualties on both sides.

The response of the Government of Cameroon to the Crisis

The government of Cameroon has used a carrot and stick approach, switching from dialogue and concessions to crackdowns and military operations. During the negotiations with the teachers and lawyers trade unions at the outset of the crisis, the government offered some concessions including the recruitment of 1000 bilingual teachers, a grant of two billion FCFA to confessional schools, and the translation of the OHADA Uniform Act into English. When these failed to satisfy the demands of the CACSC on the behalf of the teachers and lawyers, the government turned to more aggressive tactics, arresting the leaders of the CACSC (i.e., President Sisiku Agbor Balla and Secretary General Dr. Fontem Neba Aforteka'a) and other prominent Anglophone activists (i.e., Supreme Court Justice Ayah Paul Abina), and a journalist and leader anglophone activist (i.e., Mancho Bibixy) (Caxton, 2017).

After receiving intelligence of the planned demonstrations and declaration of independence by Anglophone Cameroon secessionists on 1 October, 2017, the government declared a two-day curfew banning public rallies and demonstrations in the two Anglophone regions and deployed the military (Kaze & Walton, 2021). Following an ambush attack by ADF on a Cameroon military convoy in the town of Mamfe (South West Region of Cameroon), which led to the death of some soldiers, Cameroon's Minister of Defence Joseph Beti Assomo declared that "measures will be taken immediately" to "eradicate this inconvenient situation" (Mbom, 2017). His statement echoed the firm resolve of the Cameroonian President Paul Biya to launch a military crackdown on the assailants. Prior to the Defence Minister, President Biya denounced the attacks and assured Cameroonians that "steps are being taken to incapacitate these criminals and to make sure that peace and security are safeguarded" (News24, 2017). These declarations from the President and the Defence Minister were unequivocally interpreted by State radio as a declaration of war on "terrorists who seek secession" (News24, 2017).

In January 2018, the government of Cameroon worked with the Nigerian government towards the arrest and extradition of the SCACUF leader and head of the Interim Government of Ambazonia, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, along with 46 other separatists. Ayuk Tabe and nine others were apprehended by the Nigerian Intelligence

Agency and Department for State Service in a hotel in Abuja, and the remaining 38 were allegedly arrested at different locations in Nigeria (BBC News, 2018; Kindzeka, 2018). The arrested Ambazonia leaders and other separatists were extradited to Cameroon on 29 January, 2018. Cameroon's Minister of Communication, Issa Tchiroma, confirmed their extradition and detention in Cameroon, adding that the arrested separatists were going to "answer for their crimes" (Vanguard, 2018). He also lauded what he qualified as the "excellent cooperation between Nigeria and Cameroon particularly with regards to security matters" (Kindzeka, 2018).

In the current situation, the Cameroon government has primarily adopted a military strategy that seeks to eliminate the secessionist forces and preserve the territorial integrity of the Cameroonian state. However, it has failed to heed to calls from the international community to engage in dialogue and seek a political solution to the crisis.

In the current situation, the Cameroon government has primarily adopted a military strategy that seeks to eliminate the secessionist forces and preserve the territorial integrity of the Cameroonian state. However, it has failed to heed to calls from the international community to engage in dialogue and seek a political solution to the crisis. Recently, the government has made two major decisions to diffuse the situation, which has elicited mix reactions from observers. The first decision was to establish a National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR), and second decision was to suspend the prosecution of 289 individuals arrested and facing trials in the military court for involvement in secessionist activities. While some interpret both decisions as gestures of good faith, others see the creation of the NCDDR without a ceasefire as putting the cart before the horse. The decision to release the 289 alleged secessionists has also been criticized as half-hearted for its failure to include the ring leaders of the secessionist struggle, who are still being detained by the government.

The boldest step taken by the Cameroonian government to resolve the Anglophone crisis was the organization of the "Major National Dialogue" from 30 September to 4 October, 2019 in Cameroon's capital, Yaounde (Köpp. 2019). The forum, initiated by the country's President Paul Biya and chaired by its Prime Minister Dion Ngute, brought together participants from all ten regions and the diaspora, including civil society, political parties, religious entities, and other major socio-political entities. Before the talks, consultations were carried out by Prime Minister Ngute with Cameroonians across the political and social spectrum to identify an appropriate framework and solicit opinions and contributions (Cameroon Tribune, 2019).

As a special gesture in the wake of the national dialogue, President Paul Biya ordered the release of 333 prisoners arrested for their alleged involvement in the Anglophone secessionist uprising (Aljazeera, 2019). However, the move was dismissed by the secessionist fighters as a political stunt, and they refused to participate in the national dialogue and promised to continue fighting (Aljazeera, 2019). Separatist forces based in the United States and Europe disavowed the talks outlining two conditions that must be met for them to participate in any dialogue—that is held outside Cameroon and mediated by a third party (Kindzeka, 2019). The Major National Dialogue still took place with the following proposals adopted at the end of the event:

- the adoption of a special status for the two Anglophone regions
- the restoration of the House of Traditional Chiefs
- the election of local governors
- the immediate relaunch of certain airport and seaport projects in the two regions
- the rapid integration of ex-combatants into society
- the name of the country be returned to former name, the United Republic of Cameroon
- implement the law that government officials declare their assets in order to tackle corruption. (Chimtom, 2019)

Reacting to the proposals adopted at the Major National Dialogue, President Paul Biya stated that all the recommendations "will be considered attentively and diligently with a view to implementing them, taking into account their relevance and feasibility, as well as the capacities of our country" (Biya, 2020). This promise was kept, and on 23 March, 2020 a presidential decree was issued putting in place a follow-up committee for the implementation of the resolutions of the Major National Dialogue (Teke, 2020).

While the Cameroonian government and its spokesperson and Communication Minister Rene Sadi expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the Yaounde national dialogue forum (Teke, 2019), some pundits do not share same positive attitude. Bone and Nkwain (2019) already predicted that the talks were doomed to fail given the fact that it side-lined the voice of Anglophone representatives who form only a quarter of participants, along with the absence of the secessionists. Anglophone and anti-Ambazonian social media activist, Frankline Njume, also expressed scepticism on the success of the Major National Dialogue, criticizing its lack of inclusiveness of patriots like himself (Azohnwi, 2019). Critics have also casted doubts on the special status granted to the northwest and southwest Anglophone regions, arguing that the level of autonomy is vague because of centralization of power in the Francophone dominated administration in Yaounde, the nation's capital (Nkongho & Tinsley, 2020).

The crisis is almost becoming intractable as both sides have steadfastly argued for their positions and they are unwilling to back down or compromise. The humanitarian damages have been colossal. The most recent statistics (2023) from International

Crisis Group on the humanitarian damages of the crisis puts the total number of casualties from the war at 6000 persons; and the number of refugees and displaced persons at 6000 and 765,000 people respectively (International Crisis Group, 2023).

The Applicability of Remedial Secession to the Anglophone Crisis

There are arguments for and against the applicability of remedial rights theories in the case of the Anglophone quest for secession and the establishment of an independent state. These arguments will be analysed based on the requirements highlighted in the theoretical framework. Firstly, proponents of remedial rights theories do admit that remedial secession is an "exceptional, last-resort" (Vidmar, 2010, p. 40). For the Anglophone crisis, the argument can be made that the establishment of SCACUF and the step it took to declare the independence of the Anglophone Regions under the name of the Republic of Ambazionia was a measure of last resort considering the failure of negotiations between the CACSC and the government, as well as its subsequent disbanding by the Cameroonian government. CACSC called for measures to address the grievances of Anglophone lawyers and teachers concerning the destruction of the Anglophone educational and legal (Common Law) systems and a return to the federal system of government adopted by Cameroon at independence.

The petitions of CACSC reflected protracted dissatisfaction among Anglophone Cameroonians concerning their marginalization over the years since independence. The failure of negotiations and the disbanding of CACSC laid the foundation for the establishment of SCACUF and its pursuit of the creation of an independent Anglophone Republic called Ambazonia. While this argument has some cogency, the determination of whether all available options to seek redress against marginalization has been exhausted usually constitute a matter of subjective interpretation and debate, which may differ for both sides involved in the issue.

One of the pathways under which remedial secession is permissible according to Bando and Morales-Galvez is "the infringement of specific collective rights and the lack of constitutional recognition of minorities by the state" (2019, p. 107). Here the argument can be made that the dissolution of the federal system of government in Cameroon was a violation of the constitutional right of the Anglophone minority. This contention is based on Section 10, Article 47 (1), which states that "Any proposal for the revision of the present Constitution which impairs the unity and integrity of the Federation shall be inadmissible" (DePaul University, 2021). The conduct of a referendum to transform the system of governance from federalism to a unitary system has been considered by some scholars (Efuetzi, 2018; Konings, 1999) to be a violation of the provision of Article 47 (1) of Section 10 of the federal constitution. Concerning this article, Konings (1999) underscored that "This important clause had been specifically inserted into the constitution to assure Southern Cameroonians that federation could not be dissolved." (Konings, 1999, p. 303). The issue of constitutional violation of Article 47 (1) of Section 10 of the federal constitution of Cameroon, prominent Anglophone elite and former president of the Cameroon Bar Association, Barrister Akere Muna, argued that the current Anglophone crisis (i.e.,

the secessionist war going on in the two Anglophone regions in Cameroon) has roots in "the governance or the mismanagement of colonization and the ending of the trusteeship arrangements and the management of the Federal Constitution," which clearly provided for a two state federation (Muna, 2021).

Proponents of the unitary state may argue that its establishment was the outcome of the practise of direct democracy because it resulted from the conduct of a referendum to seek the approval of the Cameroonian people to terminate the federal system of government. However, this argument can be contested by the fact that clause 4 of Article 47 stated unequivocally that the "Proposals for revision shall be adopted by simple majority vote of the Members of the Federal Assembly provided that such majority includes a majority of the representatives in the Federal Assembly of each Federated State" (DePaul University, 2021). This implies that even if there were to be a constitutional revision that would dissolve the federal system of government, this process could only be completed through an act of parliament. Concerning the choice of a referendum instead of an act of parliament, Konings wrote the following:

> The use of a referendum was probably chosen by Ahidjo to avoid any public debate on the new constitution and to secure an overwhelming turnout in its favour. The autocratic nature of his regime helps to explain why the inhabitants of Anglophone Cameroon voted massively for the draft constitution, and hence for the immediate establishment of the United Republic of Cameroon. (Konings, 1999, p. 303)

This argument is also corroborated by Chem-Langhëë who notes:

> Since, under Ahidjo, it was politically unwise and even unsafe to hold and express views different from those of the President on any issue, there was no public debate. There was, at this time, no press which cared to debate the details of the constitution: the habit of self-censorship had grown up next to official censorship. No one publicly opposed the creation of the unitary state. No one tried to examine the proposition that the unitary state would contribute greatly to the future political integration, unity and stability of Cameroon, or that bilingualism and multiculturalism were better served by it or raised the question as to why or whether federalism is inconsistent with national integration and stability. Or indeed to debate any of the principal issues involved in a long constitutional document. (Chem-Langhëë, 1995, p. 24)

Therefore, it can be logically argued that the former Federal Republic of Cameroon President Ahmadou Ahidjo's choice of referendum was not only a violation of the federal constitution but also a savvy political ploy. Another factor that may have contributed to Ahidjo's political calculations was the overwhelming majority of Francophones (French-speaking Cameroonians) constituting the State of East Cameroon, which makes it very easy for them to impose their will on the minority in

the event of a national referendum based on nationwide vote tally. In this respect, Ngwane (2016) pointed out that "on 20 May 1972 this federal structure was abolished through a referendum in which the numerical majority from East Cameroon foisted a unitary structure over the numerical minority of West Cameroon widely known as Anglophones."

However, it would be factually inaccurate to entirely attribute the collapse of the federal system of government to the referendum of 20 May, 1972. One significant factor that contributed to the demise of the federal system of government, rarely mentioned by scholars, is the transition of various government departments in West Cameroon from state to federal status. This contributed to the erosion of its state autonomy as a result of the rational calculations of Anglophone civil servants. Muna (2022) points out that most civil servants working under the state of West Cameroon were attracted to the higher salary paid to workers of the federal government, and they clamoured for their departments to transition from the state to the federal government. This transition implied a transfer of jurisdiction from the state government to the federal government, and therefore a loss of autonomy at the level of the state. A good example is prison administration, which was integrated into the federal government and harmonized based on the more organized West Cameroon system compared to East Cameroon. Other examples of the transfer of jurisdiction from the state to the federal government include the cases of the West Cameroon post office, telecommunication, education, the police, and customs departments. Another net consequence of this transition is that the state of West Cameroon began losing its capacity to generate revenue, which led to its inability to pay salaries and subsequent dependence on subsidies from the federal government.

From the perspective of special rights to secede (through permission by the mother state), there is need for a constitutional provision; or an agreement in the creation of the state that includes implicit or explicit assumption that secession was permissible at a later point. All of these conditions are absent in the Anglophone quest for statehood through secession given that the there is no such provision (as stated above) in the Cameroon constitution. Article 47 (1) Section 10 of the federal constitution of the reunified Cameroon adopted at Foumban in 1961 proscribes secession by unequivocally stating the following: "Any proposal for the revision of the present Constitution which impairs the unity and integrity of the Federation shall be inadmissible." (DePaul University, 2021). Equally, Article 2 Section 1 of the 1996 Revised Constitution of Cameroon states that "The Republic of Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary State. It shall be one and indivisible, secular, democratic and dedicated to social service" (National Assembly, 2021). Thus, the Article proscribes the right to secession for any constituent entity. Konings points out that "The final version of the constitution left no room for legal secession from the federation, although some Southern Cameroons delegates had wanted a proviso inserted into the constitution sanctioning the peaceful withdrawal from the federation" (Konings, 1999, p. 301).

Furthermore, the path to remedial secession resulting from "grave injustices and human rights violations or unjust annexation by a state," as mentioned by Buchanan (cited in Brando & Morales-Gálvez, 2019, p. 108) cannot be factually appropriated in the context of the Anglophone crisis. This is because Buchanan fails to specify what exactly constitute grave injustices. The issue of grave human rights violation may resonate in the current context of military confrontation between the government forces and secessionist fighters but as Human Rights Watch has noted, human rights abuses has been committed by both sides in the conflict (Roth, 2019). Additionally, it is difficult to establish a case of grave human rights abuse systematically targeting Anglophones prior to the escalation of tensions and conflict between the these parties in 2016 and 2017. The case of unjust annexation is invalidated by the fact that the reunification of both Cameroons was the outcome of a United Nations supervised referendum that took place in British Southern Cameroons on 11 February, 1961. The Anglophone Cameroonians (then British Southern Cameroonians) voted to join the Republic of Cameroun (Awasom, 2002).

It is complex to rule one way or the other concerning the applicability of remedial secession in the case of the Anglophone crisis because of the pros and cons analysed above. In such a context, it can be very useful to identify what Anglophone Cameroonians think about the current situation and the way forward. Therefore, we conducted a survey to explore the perceptions of Anglophone Cameroonians and we discuss the survey results in the next section.

PERCEPTION OF CAMEROONIANS ON THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

One of the most important groups whose views are often neglected in the analysis of the conflict and possible solutions is the community of people directly involved in the conflict. In the context of this study, this group is comprised of Anglophone Cameroonians. Many writers on the Anglophone crisis have focused their attention on Anglophone secessionist militias and activists (Akoh, 2020; Nwati, 2020; Sombaye Eyango, 2018), Cameroon politicians, political parties, and the government of the Republic of Cameroon (Amin, 2018; Okereke, 2018; Pommerolle & Heungoup, 2017; Konings & Nyamjoh, 1997). An online public perception survey was conducted to gauge the opinion of Anglophone Cameroonians (individuals who are from the Northwest and Southwest regions of the country) concerning their views on the nature, reasons and solutions to the Anglophone crisis.

Methodology

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper adopts mixed methodology (quantitative and qualitative methods). The qualitative method is essentially focused on text analysis from secondary sources (mostly books and peered reviewed journal articles). The quantitative method centred on a structured questionnaire survey that was carried out to sample the perception of Anglophone Cameroonians concerning the crisis. The survey was carried out using random sampling to ensure representativeness and reduce bias in the sample population. The sample population comprised

Anglophone Cameroonians (defined in this paper as Cameroonian citizens who hail from the only two Anglophone regions in the country—South West and North West) of irrespective of gender, age group, or level of education. The survey was carried out online using Google forms. It was carried out through a voluntary process in which participants consent was sought and their identity kept anonymous given the sensitive nature of topic of the survey.

Survey Results

In terms of participation demographics, the survey registered 203 participants, 124 (61.1%) of whom are of Northwest origins and 79 of Southwest descent (see Figure 1). In terms of gender representation, 147 (72.4%) of the participants were male and 56 (27.6%) female (see Figure 2).

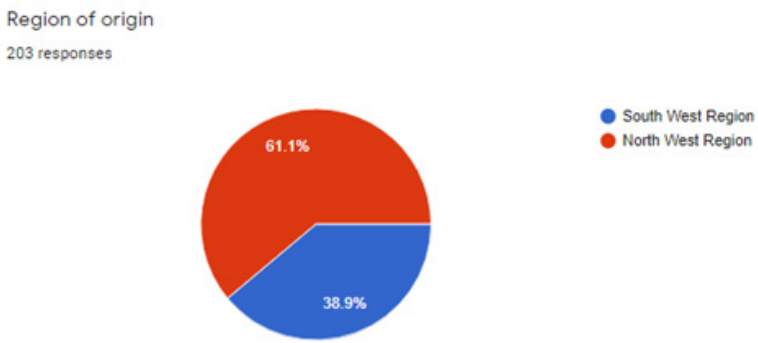

Figure 1: Respondents' region of origin. Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

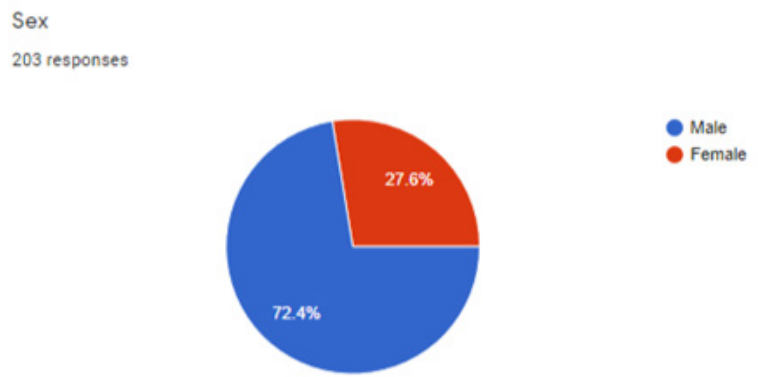

Figure 2: Respondent's gender. Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

A majority of participants were teenagers and young adults (15-30 years old) and middle-aged adults (30-45 years old) (see Figure 3). Most of the participants (94.6%) were university educated (See Figure 4).

Concerning perception on the existence of an "Anglophone Problem" in Cameroon, 86.2% (175) of the respondents strongly agreed (See Figure 5).

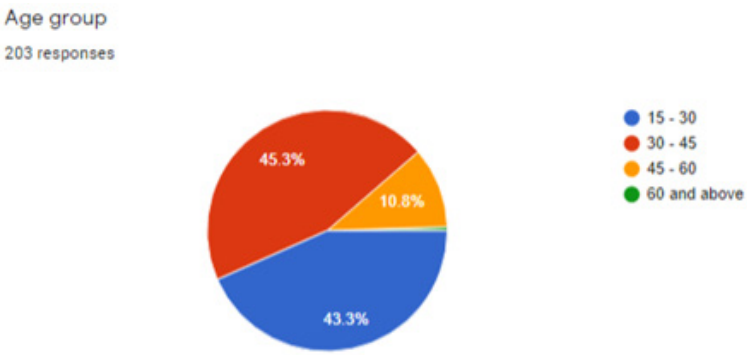

Figure 3: Respondents' age groups. Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

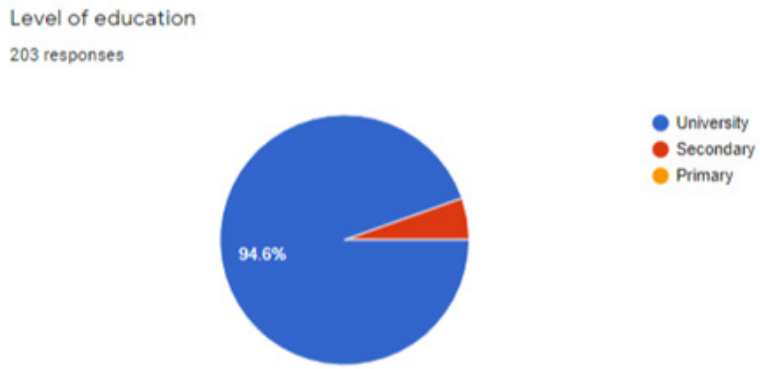

Figure 4: Respondents' level of education. Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

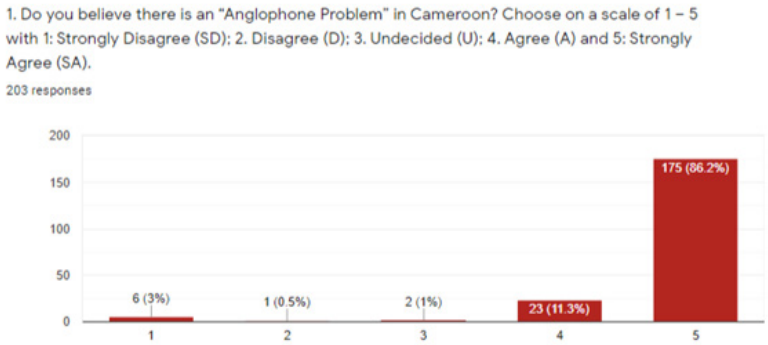

Figure 5: Perception in the existence of an "Anglophone Problem".
Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

With regards to the nature of the "Anglophone Problem" there was a divergence of views. A sizeable percentage of respondents (33%) believe the problem refers exclusively to the marginalization of the Anglophone Cameroonians, but a majority held the view the problem was a combination of four different factors: the marginalization of the Anglophones, the Anglophone-Francophone rivalry, a lack of regional autonomy (decentralized decision-making) among Anglophones, and the "Francophonization" of the educational and legal systems (see Figure 6).

On why the Anglophone Crisis degenerated into a conflict, the majority of respondent believed that it was as a result of the poor management of the crisis by the government of Cameroon (see Figure 7).

Concerning a short-term solution to the present conflict, 42% of respondent opted for cease-fire and mediation by a third party; additionally, 27% of respondent called for intervention by the African Union and 26% were in favour of a ceasefire and national dialogue (see Figure 8).

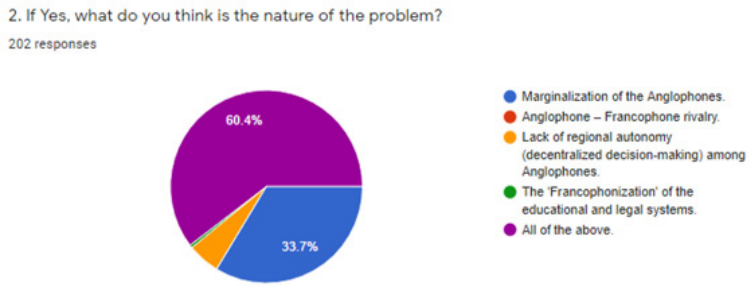

Figure 6: The nature of the Anglophone Problem.
Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

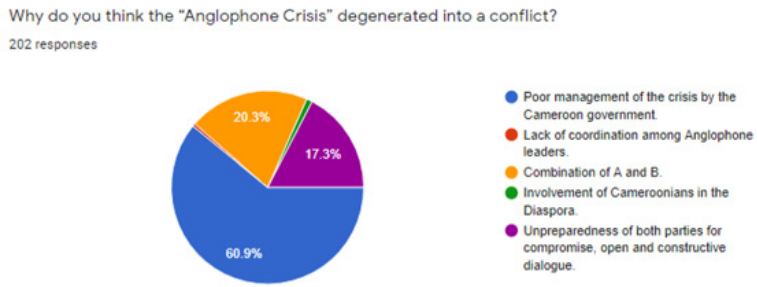

Figure 7: Why the Anglophone Crisis degenerated into a conflict.
Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

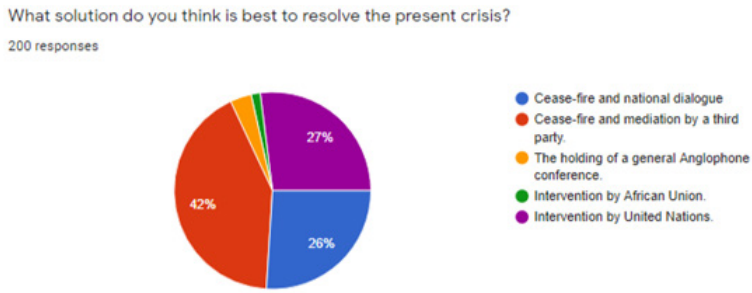

Figure 8: Short term solution to the Anglophone Crisis.
Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

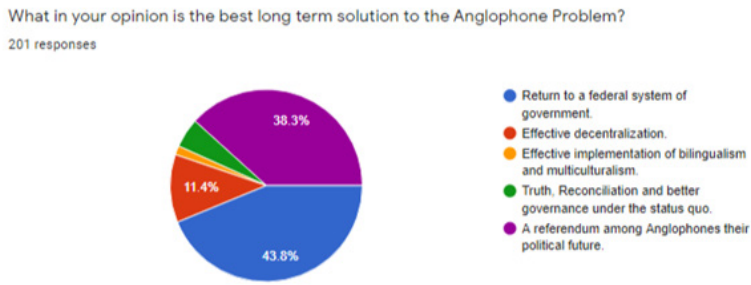

Figure 9: Long term solutions to the Anglophone Crisis.
Source: online survey by the authors on Google forms

With regards to a long-term solution to the crisis in the Anglophone regions, there was significant disparity with 43.8% of respondent's preferring a return to a federal system of government and 38.3% opting for a referendum among Anglophones to determine their political future (see Figure 9).

DISCUSSION

While Anglophone Cameroonians differed on different aspects of the issue, an overwhelming number of respondents concurred that an Anglophone Problem truly exists. It is a well-known truism that the first step to solving a problem is to acknowledge its existence. In this regard, the consciousness among Anglophone Cameroonians of the existence of an Anglophone Problem and their similar view on the nature of the problem (i.e., marginalization of Anglophone Cameroonians in Cameroon) lays a good foundation for efforts towards its resolution.

Secondly, the responsibility of the government of Cameroon during the outbreak of the conflict in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon was clearly highlighted by respondents. This also places the responsibility of finding a solution more in the hands of the government than the secessionist fighters. As a state that seeks to

protect its territorial integrity and maintain its sovereignty while protecting the life and property of its citizen, Cameroon needs to be more proactive in ensuring that a lasting solution is found that restores long-term peace in these areas. A failure to fully address the prevailing situation may render the state of Cameroon vulnerable to political instability. For short-term solutions, third party intervention seems to have won the support of many Anglophone Cameroonians and therefore merits full consideration by all parties involved in finding a solution. Lastly, Anglophone Cameroonians are indecisive about a return to the federal structure formulated at independence and voting on a referendum among Anglophones about their political destiny.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES TO THE STUDY

The security situation in Cameroon has deteriorated to the point most are generally afraid for their lives and the lives of their families if they speak out about the current political situation in Cameroon. Cameroonians are afraid from reprisals from both camps involved in the conflict should they openly express an opinion that favours their opponent. As a result of this it was difficult to recruit willing participants for this study on the ground and hence our decision to undertake and exclusively online anonymous survey which at the end could not get us as many persons as we initially desired. A total of 203 participants finally took part in the online survey. This number could have at least doubled had the security situation in Cameroon permitted us to complement the online survey with a physical survey with Anglophones in Cameroon.

The same insecurity factor, prevented us from conducting interviews which would have greatly assisted us to triangulate the results gotten from the questionnaire-based survey.

It was also very challenging to achieve an age balance among the participants of this study. We observed that there were some difficulties in obtaining some people of a certain age who to provide us with their own perception of the Cameroon Anglophone crisis. Majority of the respondents were youths and the old were largely left out. This can be attributed to the nature of the survey, which was carried out online and most people of old age in Cameroon are not prone to new information and communication technologies.

CONCLUSION

The present research has analysed the evolving trajectory of the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis from a theoretical perspective of remedial secession. After exploring the historical context of the crisis, it established the theoretical framework with a critical review of the theory of remedial secession. This paper traces the current crisis to historical antecedents in the colonial period where the division of the former German colony of Kamerun between two colonial powers (Britain and France) led to the development of separate colonial identities and cultures that increased nationalism. As Willard Johnson (1973) aptly pointed out, the nostalgia of oneness under the

German colonial administration was not enough to create a bond among the heterogeneous and politically fragmented Cameroonian society. The marginalization of the Anglophones developed to what became known as the "Anglophone Problem," which degenerated into a full-blown conflict in 2017.

Different leaders involved in the struggle had different strategies. A non-violent approach geared towards securing a federation was pursued by Sisiku Agbor Balla and his CACSC, but this transitioned to the radical and violent struggle for secession under Sisiku Ayuk Tabe. From a theoretical perspective of remedial secession, it is possible to interpret this evolution from negotiation towards a return to federalism to a struggle for secession and independence as an alternative or last resort to repair the damage of marginalization. However, there are pertinent arguments for and against the applicability of remedial secession in the case of the Anglophone crisis. The goal of this paper was not to make a determination as to the validity of remedial secession in the case of the struggle for independence launched by Ambazonia separatist. Our aim was to ignite intellectual curiosity and stimulate research and scholarly debates on the theoretical basis of the Anglophone crisis, which has been underexplored before our study. At a time where the conflict remains intractable and attracts the interest of scholars, professionals, and entities dealing with mediation and negotiation, an exploration of the potential theoretical causes of the conflict may provide some useful information to help find a lasting solution to the crisis.

This research exposes critical and structural problems surrounding efforts towards creating a blended Cameroonian identity agreeable to all Cameroonians. While this research portrays strides made by the government to acquire solutions towards the Anglophone Problem, it also exposes the rigid divergence that exist between the warring parties' needs. One party is adamant on territorial sovereignty and a "one and indivisible Cameroon" while the other insist on a return to a federal structure or complete secession. In considering these options in order to design room for common grounds, a question for further research will: Does a return to federalism (not by decentralisation) negate a one and indivisible Cameroon? And what are the structural and political mechanisms preventing the Cameroonian government from genuinely exploring this option. Further research is needed to answer these interrogations.

Furthermore, the data above indicates that Anglophone Cameroonians are indecisive between a return to the federal structure formulated at independence and voting on a referendum among Anglophones on their political destiny. There is a need for further research on other sustainable models other than these two, applicable to the Anglophone case which expands their options. A recall of history indicates that some Anglophone Cameroonians blamed the UN in 1961 for not providing a third option in the plebiscite questions which narrowed their option. Hence, further research is required on hybrid models of government that incorporates the needs of all parties and can sustain a Cameroonian identity.

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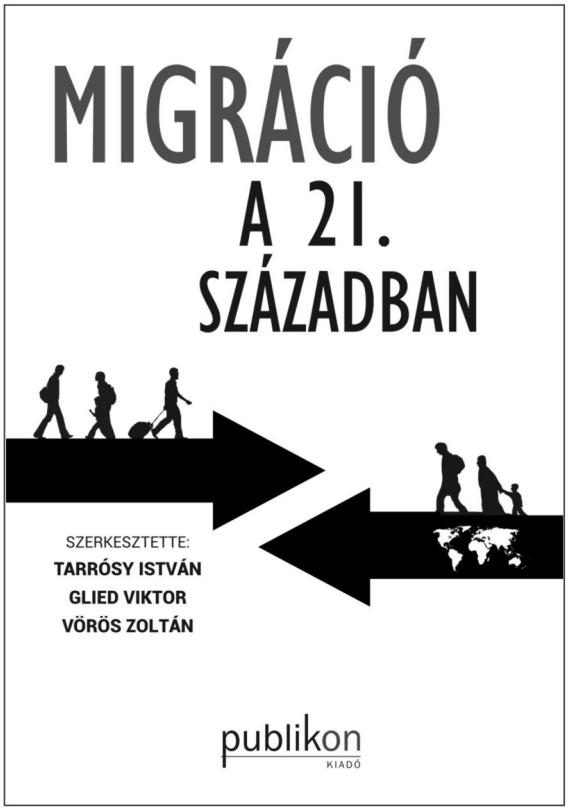

Tarrósy István – Glied Viktor – Vörös Zoltán (szerk.)

Migráció a 21. században

Napjainkban a migráció okozta társadalmi, gazdasági és politikai hatások kezelése jelenti az egyik legnagyobb kihívást az államok számára, legyen szó aggasztó mértékű el- és kivándorlásról, vagy a migránsokat befogadó országban időről-időre fellobbanó, együttélésről szóló vitákról. Az ENSZ jelentése szerint jelenleg több mint 240 millió embert érint a migráció, érthető tehát, hogy a kérdéssel foglalkozni kell.

A kötet szerzői hatalmas – a migráció számtalan aspektusát érintő – ismeretanyagot összegeztek fejezeteikben, kiemelve a manapság leginkább érdeklődésre számot tartó problémákat és dilemmákat.

A könyv első részének tanulmányai részletesen tárgyalják a migráció alapfogalmait, biztonságpolitikai, jogi és emberi jogi aspektusait, aktuális tendenciáit, valamint hatásait. A második rész Földünk különböző régióinak migrációs mintáit, illetve jellemzőit veszi számba, külön figyelmet szentelve Ázsia, Afrika, Dél- és Észak-Amerika, valamint az Európai Unió térségének, de természetesen helyet kap benne Magyarország helyzetértékelése is.

A kötetet ajánljuk mindazon olvasó számára, aki mélyebben szeretné megismerni és megérteni a migrációt kiváltó tényezőket, a vándorlás folyamatát és a bevándorlás okozta következményeket.

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TERRORISM ON THE RISE – WHAT CAN WCA COUNTRIES DO TO COMBAT DIFFICULTIES WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE?

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Abstract

In the last 5 years, the center of gravity of terrorism has shifted from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to sub-Saharan Africa. As of 2018, this region had the highest number of fatalities and the greatest material damage. This paper assesses the situation of the countries most affected by terrorism in the WCA (West and Central-Africa) region by examining economic complexity, the costs of cross-border trade and corruption. The AEO (Authorized Economic Operator) program is a means of ensuring the security of international supply chains while simultaneously facilitating the cross-border flow of goods. By 2020, 97 countries in the world had operational AEO programs, but only one country in the WCO (World Customs Organization) WCA region had implemented one. The threat of terrorism is very high in seven countries of the region: Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, Chad and Mali. As a result of the evaluation, it can be concluded that these countries need mechanisms to facilitate international trade and would benefit from the implementation of the AEO program.

Keywords

terrorism, WCA region, economy, trade

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Introduction

The trend of terrorism has changed, its center of gravity is increasingly moving from the Middle East and North Africa region to the territory of Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to the direct damage caused to human lives and property, terrorism has a negative impact on many areas of the economy, including international trade. Modern, primarily religiously motivated terrorism made it necessary to ensure the security of international supply chains. International trade by its very nature requires careful planning and substantial investments, which can be recouped only over long periods of time (Nagy et al, 2017; Erdeiné Késmárki-Gally Sz. 2014; Tiutiunyk et al,. 2022). With the cooperation of the World Customs Organization (WCO), the AEO program (Authorized Economic Operator), a tool that guarantees the security of trade while promoting it, was created. After the publication of the SAFE Framework (Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade), which laid down the basic principles in 2005, countries developed and implemented their AEO programs. In the West and Central-Africa (WCA) region of the WCO, among 24 countries, only one country has implemented an AEO program, and it became operational only in 2020. This study examines the terrorist threat of countries in the WCA region and whether these countries would benefit from the AEO program, in particular Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, DR Congo, Mali, Niger and Nigeria.

Methodology and Data

This research adopts a non-experimental research design. The data used were obtained from secondary sources: the Institute for Economics & Peace, the World Customs Organization, the World Bank, Transparency International, and the Observatory of Economic Complexity.

The method used is a descriptive-analytical exploration of economic, social and political aspects and elements that influence the impact of terrorism on international trade, examination of cost correlation and ad valorem equivalent conversion and the utilization and application of relevant indices such as the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), Trading Across Borders Ranking, Economic Complexity Index (ECI) and the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

The evolution of terrorism

In the second decade of the second millennium, the number of terrorist attacks in the world increased significantly. It caused 2.5 times more death than the previous decade worldwide, where there was:

- 130% growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA);
- 160% growth in South Asia (SA);
- 486% increase in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA);
- 17% decline in the rest of the world (The Global Economy.com, 2022).

The more serious acts of terrorism, which claimed more lives, took place in the first half of the decade; the highest number of fatalities was in 2014. From 2018, the center

of gravity of terror shifted from the MENA region and became more concentrated in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2018, there have been more deaths from terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa than in the MENA region. In 2018 the economic impact in SSA amounted to 12.5 billion USD. (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019)

In 2019 41% of ISIL-related attacks occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa. (OEC, 2020) The Islamic State and its affiliates' focus shifted to the Sahel region. In 2021 35% of global terrorism deaths occurred in this region, compared with 1% in 2007. (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2022) In Nigeria, the most populous African country, which has the richest oil reserves in the region as well, terrorism considerably hinders achieving economic prosperity and social progress which may lead to stability and the long-term peaceful co-existence of the various ethnic and religious communities (Neszmélyi, 2012).

In developing countries, terrorism can be linked to ethnic and religious differences and corruption. (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020; Tóth & Topa, 2014)

The impact of terrorism on international trade

It was first demonstrated by Nitsch and Schumacher's empirical study that terrorism has a reductional effect on international trade. According to their results, a doubling of the number of terrorist acts in one year reduces international trade by 4 percent, ceteris paribus. This has a very significant effect, as it shows that the terrorist act already results in a marked reduction in the year of its occurrence. In the relationship between a pair of countries, if at least one terrorist act occurred in one of them, it caused a nearly 10% decrease in bilateral trade. (Nitsch & Schumacher, 2004.)

The disaggregated approach study by Bandyopadhyay, Sandler, and Younas also showed the trade-reducing effect of terrorism, both in the case of transnational and domestic terrorism in both exports and imports.

Terrorism also affects the product composition of international trade. Disaggregated studies by Bandyopadhyay, Sandler, and Younas in 2018 showed that domestic terrorism can cause an increase in the export of raw materials in parallel with a decrease in the export of manufactured goods in developing countries, further reducing the already small portion of higher value-added exports. (Bandyopadhyay, et al., 2018)

Terrorism also affects the direction of international trade. According to Chang Hoon Oh's investigation, terrorist attacks and technological disasters increase the trade of developed countries with each other. Less developed countries can increase their attractiveness in trade by cultivating a more stable political climate. (Oh, 2017.) While the exports of countries with a high threat of terrorism decrease, a country less affected by terrorism can benefit from the increased demand for goods whose supply chain has been disrupted by the high threat of terrorism and the increased prices. (Bandyopadhyay, et al., 2016)

Terrorism reduces trade openness according to the study of Saeed, Ding, Hammoudeh and Ahmad. The impact is significant for developing countries. The stronger

economies of developed countries can generally reduce the impact of terrorism on the openness of the economy, while developing countries must reckon with more serious consequences of terrorism and are less able to prevent these effects. (Saeed, et al., 2018)

Terrorism increases the costs of international trade. Blomberg, Hess, and Orphanides, examining the impact of violent acts on trade processes, concluded that the combined effect of terrorism and external and internal conflicts corresponds to a 30% tariff. Considering the evolution of the average levied duties, this is a very significant barrier to entry. Albeit the mentioned study did not separate terrorism, according to GTI (Global Terrorism Index) data, terrorism is strongly linked to other violent conflicts, meaning that the study's result clearly shows the harmful effects on economies affected by terror by proxy. (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2022) Marsai and Tarrósy add to this discussion another considerable dimension – via the cases of Boko Haram and al-Shabaab –, i.e. that violent extremist organizations (VEOs) exploit crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and prove to be more adaptive to the changing circumstances than central governments, in particular in "ungoverned spaces" (Marsai & Tarrósy, 2022), further escalating insecurities.

AEO program

The events of 9/11 drew attention to the vulnerability of international supply chains. The USA already implemented the C-TPAT (Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism) program in 2002, which serves to increase the security of import shipments.

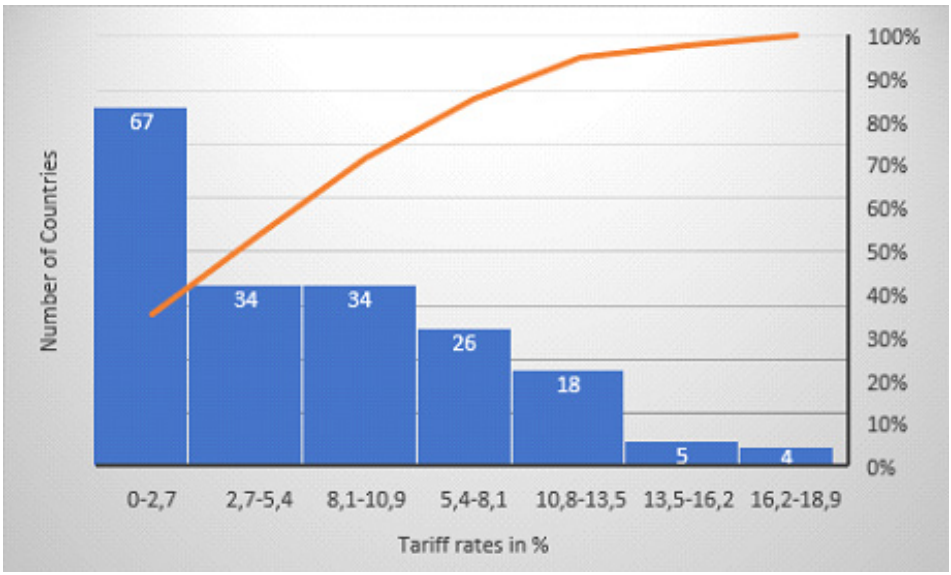

Figure 1: Weighted average applied tariff rates in %
Source: Authors' visualisation of data from WTO

In June 2005, the World Customs Organization (WCO) published the SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade with the aim of countering the threat of terrorism. According to the objectives set out in its foreword, there is a need for a strategy approved by the World Customs Organization that ensures the security of international trade in goods in a way that facilitates the conditions for international trade. (World Customs Organization, 2005)

Several countries have established AEO programmes within the framework of the Standards system. The Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programmes transpose the objectives and basic elements of the system of standards into national law and thus operationalize it. An Authorized Economic Operator is an economic operator with a special status, who based on his special status, is considered by the customs authorities to be a reliable partner, and therefore receives several benefits from the customs authorities.

These benefits include fewer customs inspections, faster and simpler administration, and favorable payment conditions for the certified companies, thus resulting in significant cost reductions parallel to the increase in security of the flow of goods.

Most AEO programs require economic operators to comply with the law and maintain liquidity to obtain certification, in addition to keeping appropriate records in a transparent manner and ensuring the security of their premises. These qualities, in turn, make licensed companies desirable trading partners in international trade.

The economic actors participating in the program may differ from country to country, but in most countries all companies participating in international trade can apply for a certificate: exporters, importers, warehouse operators, forwarders, carriers, customs brokers etc.

Since the publication of the Standards System and subsequent launch of operational programmes, the AEO programme has become the number one tool for the safe and smooth conduct of international trade.

As Figure 2 shows, in 2020, 97 countries had an operational AEO program broken down by WCO region: 42 countries in the Europe Region (EU), 19 countries in

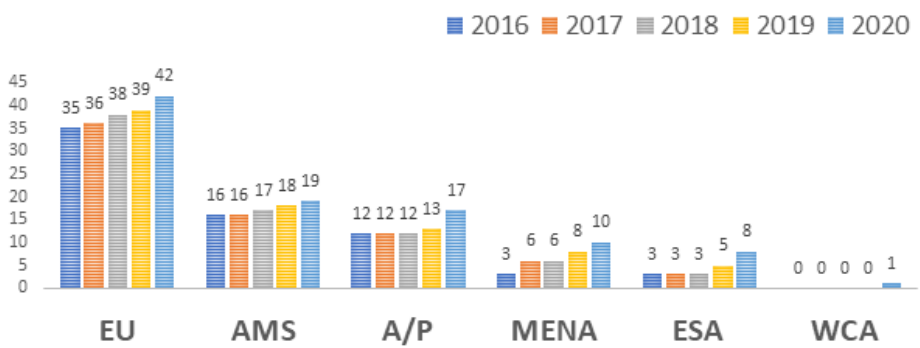

Figure 2: Operational AEO Programs by WCO Region (2016–2020)
Source: Online AEO Compendium (World Customs Organisation, 2022)

the Americas and Caribbean Region (AMS), 17 countries in the Asia Pacific Region (A/P), 10 countries in the North of Africa, Near and Middle East (MENA), 8 countries in the East and Southern Africa Region (ESA) and 1 country in the West and Central Africa Region (WCA).

The application of AEO programmes in accordance with the international standard allows the countries operating AEO or equivalent programmes to recognize each other's programmes and to sign Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs). (World Customs Organization, 2018) Since 2016, the number of MRAs has increased significantly, as Figure 3 shows.

The theoretical advantages of AEO programs and MRAs are also confirmed by practical experience. Korean and Chinese Customs presented the results of a research on AEO and AEO MRA effects conducted by an empirical study of the time measurement of the good's release and by survey. The research found that before MRA, the time needed to release the goods after custom clearance was shorter by AEO certified companies than by non-AEOs. After the MRA, the effect was greater from AEO export to AEO import. Import customs clearance time for AEO exporter was greatly reduced, and the number and percentage of cargo inspection for AEO companies was significantly reduced after MRA. (Lee & Shao, 2014)

The survey of the University of Virginia's Center of Survey Research had very similar results after asking 3 901 C-TPAT members about the program in 2010. The perception of the benefits increased in proportion to the duration of the membership. The findings about the benefits of the C-TPAT membership include the decrease of the time to release cargo by CBP (Customs and Border Protection) and in CBP

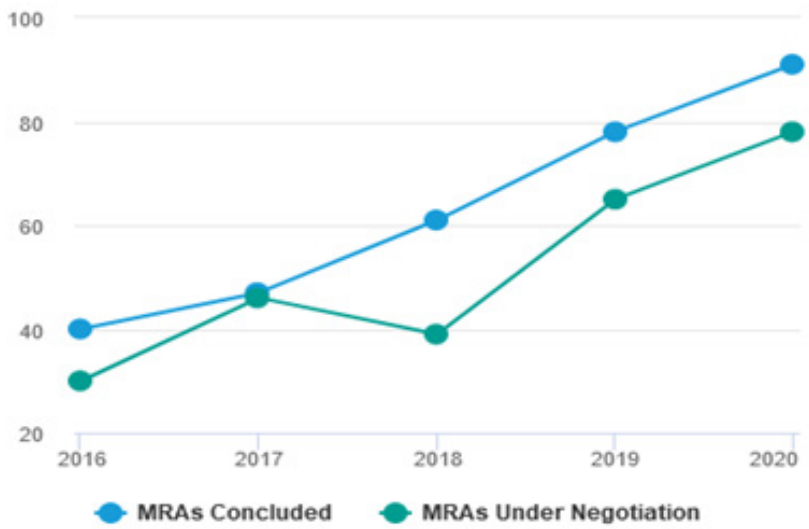

Figure 3: Mutual Recognition Arrangements/Agreements (MRA) (2016–2020)
Source: Online AEO Compendium (World Customs Organisation, 2022)

inspection lines, decreased waiting time for carriers at land borders and at ports of entry and decreased disruption of the supply chain, and increased in the predictability of good flows and in security. (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2010)

Based on a European survey, modelling the effect of safety on efficiency Urciuoli and Ekwall also concluded that in the case of companies that ensure the safety of the flow of goods with an AEO certificate, the efficiency also increased. (Urciuoli & Ekwall, 2015)

WCA Region

It is striking that while 10 of the 18 countries of the MENA region and 8 of the 24 countries of the ESA region had an operational AEO program, only one of the 24 countries of the WCA Region had an AEO program operational in 2020.

The question arises: Do the countries of the WCA Region need the AEO program?

Terror Rankings in the WCA Region

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) analyses the impact of terrorism in 163 countries and makes a ranking with the most impacted country in the first place.

As the Figure 4 shows, there are many countries in the region particularly affected by terror. Nigeria has been around 4th place almost since the introduction of the GTI, mainly due to the activities of Boko Haram. Cameroon's ranking around 10th place is also constant, and this is also the case for Chad at around 20th place.

However, a significant increase in terrorist activity can be observed in Burkina Faso. Since its 30th place in 2016, the country has continuously moved up in the ranking, and in 2021 it also surpassed Nigeria as the region's most terror-stricken country, at 4th place in the GTI ranking. Since 2016, Mali has also experienced increased terrorist activity, moving from 13th to 7th place. In the case of Niger, an even greater deterioration can be observed, from the 19th place in the ranking to the 8th place by 2021. After the temporary improvement in DR Congo (from 36th place in 2016 to 57th place in 2018), the number of terrorist acts increased again, so that in 2021 the country was already in 17th place.

Seven countries of the region can therefore be considered to be strongly affected by terrorism.

Economic complexity

The Economic Complexity Index (ECI) is a measure of the relative knowledge intensity of an economy by considering the knowledge intensity of the products it exports. ECI has been validated as a relevant economic measure by showing its ability to predict future economic growth. (OEC, 2020)

Since the ECI is based on the export of products requiring complex knowledge, it gives a good indication of a country's ability to export manufactured goods. The deterioration of the country's position in the ranking usually indicates a decrease in the export of more complex products, but it can also be caused by a lack of growth in a period when other countries increase the export of manufactured goods.

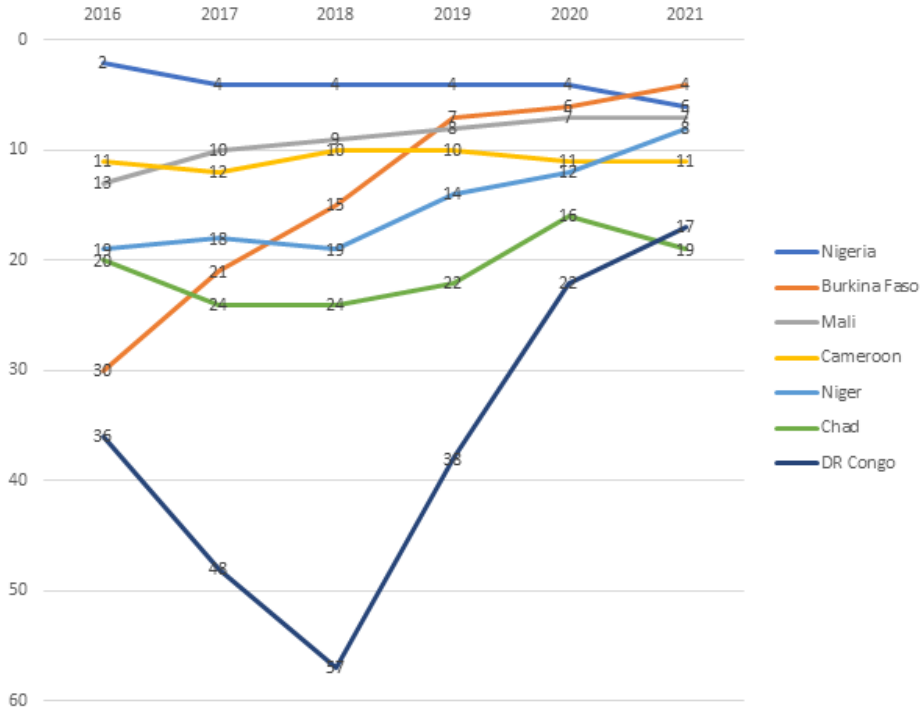

Figure 4: Countries of the WCA in the top 20 of the Global Terrorism Index
Source: Authors' visualisation of data from GTI 2022 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2022)

Depending on the year, ECI ranks between 125 and 135 countries depending on the availability of data. In 2020, 127 countries were included in the ranking. Among the examined countries, no 2020 data is available for Chad.

As Figure 5 illustrates, the reduction in complexity is clearly visible in the case of countries particularly affected by terrorism in the WCA region. A significant continuous decline can be observed in the case of Burkina Faso, which by 2020 has slipped to the penultimate, 126th place among the ranked countries. The 125th place in the ranking is occupied by Nigeria, whose efforts to diversify exports have not been fruitful. DR Congo reached 123rd place in 2020, which can be evaluated as an almost stagnant performance. On the other hand, the situation of Cameroon deteriorated significantly, falling from 94th place to 121st place in 4 years. In 2020, four of the last seven places in the ECI ranking were occupied by the countries included in the study. After a few weaker years, Mali, which ranked in the top 100 again, slipped back to 103rd place, and Niger's constantly improving situation also reversed, and in 2020, it slipped 10 places in one year to 95th place.

The decrease in complexity experienced in 2020 can probably not be written 100% at the expense of terrorism, but it certainly played a significant role in the

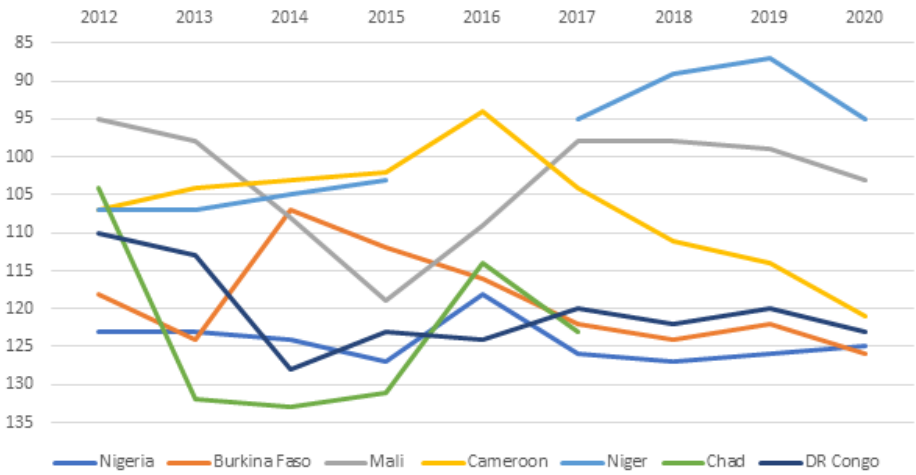

Figure 5: Economic Complexity Index – Ranking of 127 countries in 2020
Source: Authors' visualisation of data from ECI 2020 (OEC, 2020)

countries examined. The impact of the pandemic on the exports of these countries is assumed to be negligible.

Cost barriers of trade across borders

The trade openness of the examined countries is low, mostly below the average of the African continent. (The Global Economy.com, 2022) This value may be appropriate for Nigeria due to the size of its economy, while for smaller economies it indicates that these countries are largely excluded from international supply chains.

International trade is significantly hindered by the difficulty and high costs of transporting goods across national borders. The World Bank provides survey data as part of the Doing Business index in the framework of the Trading across Borders ranking.

The data is calculated for export and import of a container of goods in the value of 50.000 USD. It evaluates the times and the costs for documentary compliance and for border compliance for normal procedures. These costs to be paid by the companies reimburse the costs of operating the state bodies that carry out entry and exit examinations and procedures.

For this research, translating time into costs, for every hour 1 USD is calculated for labour costs, additional financing and potential demurrage charges.

It is important to emphasize that the data only includes the administrative costs of crossing the border, the taxes, customs duties, and excises to be paid are not included. This also means that importers and exporters pay these costs, but state budgets do not realize income from these company costs.

In the ranking of Trading across borders index the examined countries have the following ranks out of 187 countries:

- 187 DR Congo
- 186 Cameroon
- 179 Nigeria
- 173 Chad
- 126 Niger
- 122 Burkina Faso
- 95 Mali

The rankings achieved show that these countries have higher-than-average costs for clearing the goods across the border. For DR Congo, Cameroon and Nigeria, these costs are significantly higher than average.

To better understand the impact of border crossing costs on the flow of goods, these costs can be converted into ad valorem customs rates. Figure 6 shows the extent of the equivalent of additional customs rates by the seven countries examined. Refer back to Figure 1 for the average rates of customs rates.

In the case of goods with a lower duty rate and shipments of lower value, this may mean a significant increase or even a multiplication of the duties to be paid on imports and may result in a significant increase in the domestic price of imported goods. For example, in the case of a shipment worth 10.000 USD a 4% additional ad valorem rate means that the importer must pay 20% of the value of the shipment for border crossing costs. If the normal duty rate of the goods is 5%, then the 20% additional cost to be paid will quintuple the importer's burden. This is due to the fact that the administrative costs are nominative, resulting in the penalization of lower value shipments, probably to the point of raising a barrier to entry.

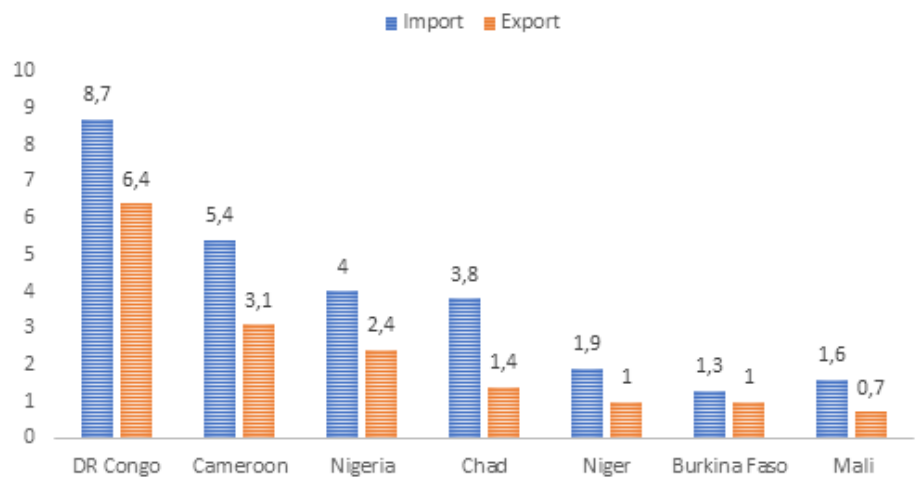

Figure 6: Ad valorem customs rates equivalent of Trading across borders costs in % for a 50,000 USD value containerload.
Source: Authors' visualisation of data from World Bank (Doing Business, 2018)

In exports, the high costs of crossing the border make the exported goods more expensive, thus impairing the country's international competitiveness.

It should be noted that the border crossing costs of the three port countries reach extremely high values. Some of these costs are probably the result of the inefficient operation of congested ports, thus affecting the costs of landlocked countries as well. In the case of landlocked countries, these do not appear as border crossing costs, but are part of the freight cost.

Previous research has shown that there is a strong positive correlation between import and export border crossing administrative costs. In the case of imports, it could be assumed that these costs were intentionally kept high since high border crossing costs represent an additional market entry barrier. In exports, however, the additional costs threaten the market positions of the country, so except in crisis situations, no country puts obstacles in front of its exports. The strong correlation between export and import costs suggests a lack of intentionality and makes it likely that the high border crossing administrative costs are the result of inefficiency of the procedures.

The extreme extent of the costs of crossing the border is even better illustrated by the comparison with GDP per capita shown at purchasing power parity, which is illustrated in Figure 7. Among the countries examined, in Mali, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, which show a more favourable ratio, the entry of a container load into the country costs almost a third of the GDP per person. An acceptable average cost level corresponding to the reimbursement level is around 300-500 USD for import and 100-300 USD for export. The reimbursement level should be even lower in developing countries due to lower wages and operating costs.

Since the data used are the results of surveys of companies, it cannot be guaranteed that the cost data only represents official costs.

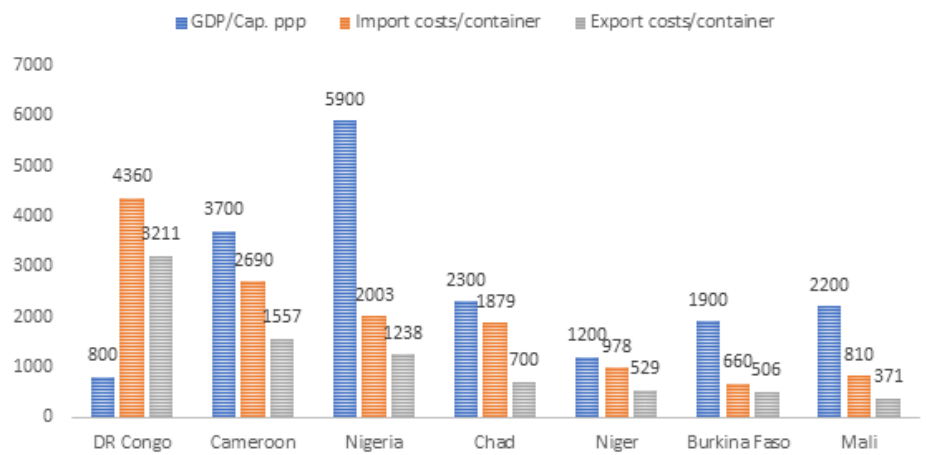

Figure 7: Trading across border costs compared to GDP in USD
Source: author's visualisation of data from World Bank (Doing Business, 2018)

Corruption

Corruption greatly distorts the functioning of governance and the public sector. It increases costs and risks, makes the operation of the regulatory environment opaque and unpredictable. Corruption disrupts business processes. This makes the companies of the highly corrupt country undesirable business partners, thus having a negative impact on international trade and making it difficult for the country to join international supply chains.

High level of perceived corruption in a country increases social disparities consequently increasing dissatisfaction. It makes it easier to radicalize the population and creates a hotbed for the growth of terrorism. However, the spread of corruption can also be a consequence of increasing terror.

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) published by Transparency International ranks 180 countries based on the perceived corruption of their public sectors. The scores are given on a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 is very clean and 0 is highly corrupt.

Perceived corruption is high on the African continent. In 2020, out of the 54 countries evaluated, only 6 countries scored higher than 50 points, and another 9 scored between 40 and 50 points. The average score of the assessed African countries was 32 out of 100.

It can be read from the data in Table 1. that only Burkina Faso's result is better than the average of the African continent, and Niger's result is the same as the average, Mali's is not far behind. The DR Congo can be classified as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

The AEO program makes the process of border administration transparent and simple, thereby helping to reduce corruption. However, the authors' previous research showed that high levels of corruption hinder the implementation of the AEO program. The only country with an AEO program in operation in the WCA Region is Cote d'Ivoire which improved its perceived corruption index score by 7 points between 2012 and 2020.

Country	Rank	Score
DR Congo	170	18
Chad	160	21
Nigeria	149	25
Cameroon	149	25
Mali	129	30
Niger	123	32
Burkina Faso	86	40

Table 1. CPI score and rank of the examined countries in 2020.

Source: (Transparency International, 2020)

AEO in WCA Region

The Region has only 1 operational AEO program, launched in 2020. Four countries included in the analysis, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Nigeria, DR Congo – in addition to Gabon and Ghana – have started developing their AEO program, but they are moving at a snail's pace. It is not clear when the programs will become operational. The introduction of the AEO program should be accelerated throughout the region.

Conclusions

Terrorism has adverse economic effects in the WCO WCA and represents a further growing threat. Seven countries are particularly strongly affected. In the case of the examined 7 countries, the decreasing complexity of the economy, the extremely high administrative costs of trading across the border, and the high level of corruption can be clearly demonstrated. To compensate for all these harmful effects, these countries are in great need of the introduction of the AEO program.

It is encouraging that the countries most in need of the AEO program, DR Congo, Nigeria and Cameroon, are actively working on the introduction of the program. In the case of Burkina Faso, the AEO program under preparation will help prevent further deterioration.

The introduction of the AEO program is also strongly recommended for the other three examined countries and for the less terror-affected countries of the region to take advantage of the trade facilitation effect. The large and growing number of operational AEO programs and MRAs may result in countries without them being marginalized in international trade and unable to participate in international supply chains.

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THE ENROLLMENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH INSURANCE (CBHI) IN ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF THE ALELTU DISTRICT

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Abstract

In developing countries, people's attitude about their health is very poor. People visit health institutions only when they are sick. This trend is especially common in rural areas. For the majority of people, health care is accessed and covered by money sourced from their existing funds or assets, which frequently results in citizens not using health care services. Poor health care financing remains a major challenge for the health system in Ethiopia. It leaves households vulnerable to impoverishment from high health expenditures and slows progress towards health improvements such as the Sustainable Development Goals, limiting access to essential health services among citizens with lower socio-economic status. Important barriers to improved health care financing include low government spending on the health sector, strong reliance on out-of-pocket expenditure, inefficient and inequitable utilization of resources, and poorly harmonized and unpredictable donor funding. Different studies illustrated that in developing countries the majority of people from poor families cover health care costs with out-of-pocket funding. As a result, many fall into debt, which aggravates the severe poverty conditions. This study revealed that all households (n=150) are aware. This awareness has positive contribution on enrollment and sustainability of the scheme by minimizing the drop out of the member. The major benefit the households experienced by enrolling in Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) is that it saves people from having unplanned health costs. Eighty percent of the respondents stated that their health status improved and that their families were insured. Currently, both premiums were paid and Poor members of the scheme are enrolling in the Aleltu district because they understand the advantages of being members of CBHI.

Keywords

Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI), Enrollment, Aleltu district

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1. Introduction

One-hundred million people worldwide are driven into poverty every year due to high health expenditure. Most of these people reside in regions that have limited resources, such as countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) with weak modern health care systems and nonexistent health insurance schemes (WHO, 2003).

In less developed countries, formal and well-functioning health insurance scheme are only available for a limited number of people employed in formal sectors. For the majority, health care is accessed and funded from personal funds or assets, which lead to reduced use of health care services (WHO, 2003).

Health is increasingly being viewed not only as an "end" in itself but also as a crucial "input" into the development process. A positive link between health and economic growth is widely established, particularly for low-income countries. As these countries embrace market reforms as well as integrate themselves into the world economy, there is a concern about insulating the poor from any possible adverse consequences. While the role of the state is declining in most economic spheres, in social sectors such as healthcare, the state's role will continue to be important (Jutting et al., 2003).

According to Meghan (2010), more than half of health expenditure in poor countries is covered by out of pocket (OOP) payments incurred by households. An increase in such expenditure can have catastrophic effects and may deplete a household's ability to generate current and future income. This can result in inter-generational consequences as households may be compelled to incur debt, sell productive assets, reduction of reserve food stocks, and sacrifice children's education.

Due to their advantages over standard health insurance products, Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) schemes are considered better alternatives to fill the void in the healthcare financing system of many low- and middle-income countries (Jutting, 2004). The overarching goals of these programs are increasing access to healthcare services, protecting households from health-related financial risks, and ultimately improving the health status of the poor. In recent years, governments are rolling out CBHI schemes at the national level, integrating them into the existing healthcare provision and financing systems, and allocating significant resources in the form of subsidies and steering operational activities. The proliferation of CBHI schemes in many low-income countries as mainstream healthcare financing mechanisms has triggered considerable analytical and policy questions concerning their impact in providing access to healthcare services and protecting households from financial risks due to illnesses.

At different times the government of Ethiopia has been making reforms in the health sector. Currently, the government is introducing various tools to finance health sector programs, including CBHI in the informal sectors and Social Health Insurance (SHI) in agricultural sectors. SHI involves formal and employed sectors of the economy. Once policies are issued, premium collection is directly deducted from the salaries of beneficiaries. Both CBHI and SHI are insurance types existing in Ethiopia, however they are differ on the amount ad ways of premium collection.

The type of paying participants (members) involved in CBHI requires continuous and rigorous awareness creation and behavioral change activities (EHIA, 2015).

The main research questions are as follows; how is the enrollment of households in CBHI, What are the types of members of CBHI in the Aleltu districts, what are the determinants of CBHI enrollment, How did the households has been covered their medical expenses before enrolling in CBHI?.

This study is needed because of the relatively limited literature available in the study area on the enrollment of households in community-based health insurance, which has a direct impact on the sustainability of this insurance scheme. The objective of this study is to assess enrollment of households into Community- Based Health Insurance in Ethiopia and the Aleltu District.

This study used mixed method research approach where research questions are answered using descriptive statistic method (Mena, standard deviation, frequency and Percentage) and interview questions would be analyzed by narrating the statements using direct words of the respondents. SPSS Version 26 was used for data processing.

This paper is structured as follows, the first sections deals the introductory parts the second parts deals with the theoretical and empirical concepts of CBHI the next section deals with the research methodology, section four of this paper presents data presentation and analysis whereas the final sections deals with conclusions and recommendations.

2. CBHI in Developing Countries

In the absence of third party and prepayment systems such as health insurance and tax-based healthcare financing, households in many low-income countries are exposed to the financial risks of large out-of-pocket medical bills. In recent years, community-based health insurance schemes have become popular alternatives to fill this void in the healthcare financing systems (Shimeles, 2010).

Research in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa shows that community-based health insurance has been less effective in securing equity than expected. Poor people are less likely to enroll in such schemes, and a limited number of studies show that once enrolled their use of the services is not great enough to compensate for pre-existing inequities in access. Therefore, the major challenge for community-based health insurance is how to secure greater equity across socioeconomic groups, in terms of both enrolment and access to services (Ibid).

Community-Based Health Insurance Schemes (CBHIs) have flourished in the developing world. By reaching those who would otherwise have no financial protection against the cost of illness, CBHIs also significantly contribute to equity in the healthcare sector. However, many schemes do not perform well due to a number of problems related to their implementation (Habiyonizeye, 2013).

People living in developing countries have been understating the important role of the CBHI and they are starting to enroll in the insurance scheme. However, various factors are contributing to fewer enrollments in the scheme according to research

conducted by Watkins (2013), which illustrated that while affordability is an issue, the main reason for the declining enrolment rate is the poor quality of care at health centers accessible to members.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. The study area

Aleltu is one of the Aanaas (districts) in the Oromia of Ethiopia. It was part of the former Bereh Aanaa. It is part of the North Shewa Zone. Towns located in this district include Tale, Digare, Sant'e, and Galata. The closest major cities include Addis Ababa, Adama, and Bishoftu (Aleltu, 2022). Aleltu is found in the Northern Shewa zone of Oromia. It is bounded by Kimbibit and Jida district from the north, the East Shewa zone from the south, the Amhara region from the east, and the Berech woreda from the west. The total area of the district is 588 km2. It has two major towns, Miqawa and Fitch Galila. The numbers of villages in the district are 22, of which 20 are rural and two are town villages. The Aleltu Oromo is what anthropologists define as "sedentary agriculturalists". Of the total district area, about 28,048 hectare is under 8762 farm holders and about 17,502 hectare is under cultivation. Most of people earn their livelihood from agriculture and animal husbandry (AWIDS, 2007) as cited in Girum (2010).

3.2. Research Design

The design selected for research should be the one most suited to answer the proposed research question. For this particular study, the researcher collected both qualita-

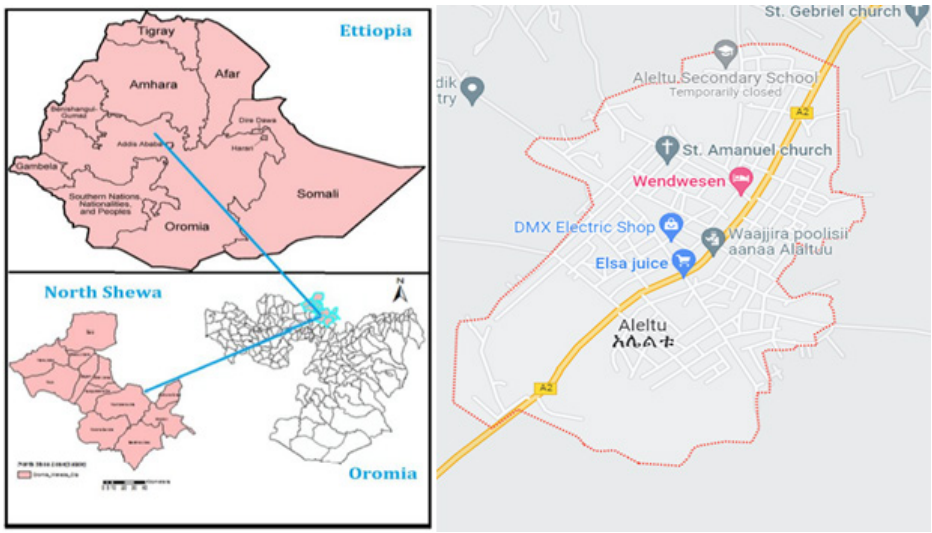

Figure 1. Political Map of North shewa zone and Aleltu district.
Source: Tafa and Worku; Map of Aleltu District Source: (Aleltu · Ethiopia, n.d.)

tive and quantitative data on the CBHI practice and challenges. This research study used the descriptive method of study. It presents facts about CBHI enrollment and existing conditions in the area of the study. The Statistical analysis of the research included descriptive statistics to reveal the current situation on CBHI practice and challenges. The main survey instrument used for this study was a questionnaire and an interview.

3.3. Sample and Sample Size Determination

The rule of thumb cited in Durrheim et al. (2006) was to use 30% of the sample size for a small population of up to 1000. Therefore, the primary data for this study were collected from 150 households and beneficiaries of community-based health insurance. According to the data of the district CBHI bureau, the total population in the selected villages was 600. Among these, there were 500 households enrolled for more than one year was 500. I intentionally excluded those households enrolled less than one year in order to collect in-depth information from those families that have good enrollment and membership renewal. Therefore, I randomly selected the following five Gandas[1]; Gora, Mikawa, Sagani-Sagda, Ejersa, and Wegini-Dara A total of, 150 respondents (30%) from the households responded to the questionnaire for the data collection process.

3.4. Types of Data

This research is based on primary (survey data collected in 2017) and secondary data collected from primary and secondary sources.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Background of the respondents: As indicated in *Figure 2* below, 60 (40%) of participants were female beneficiaries of community-based health insurance in the Aleltu district. The percentage of male respondents constitutes the largest part that is 90 (60%) of the total respondents, suggesting that man-headed households are enrolled more.

Regarding the age distribution of the respondents, 20% of respondents were 18-48 years old, 26.7% were 49-69 years old, and 53.3% were 70-90 years old. According to Haileselassie, (2014) age is a determinant factor for households enrolling in CBHI. Beside this study as experience of Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania and Burkina Faso indicated that increase age of household was significantly related with enrollment in CBHI (Dror et al., 2016; Jehu-Appiah et al., 2012; Gnawali et al., 2009). Hence, as people getting older require healthcare security; they become members of insurance plans in order to get health service from the health institution through their premium payments. Table 1 illustrates that majority of respondents enrolled in CBHI were older people.

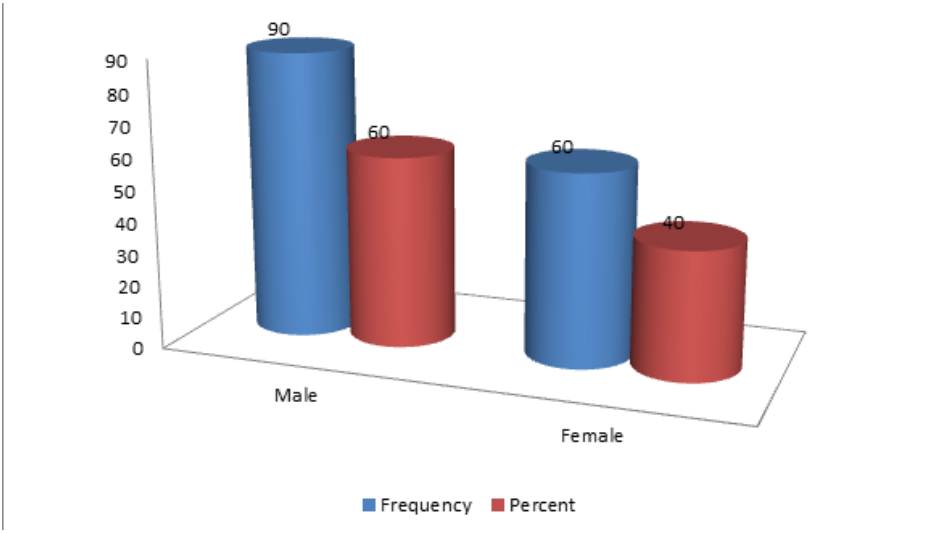

Figure 2. Gender distribution of the respondents
Note: General Information; this data is survey data conducted by the researcher
Specific information: The frequency and percentage distribution of Households is illustrated

Item	Frequency	Percentage
18-48	30	20
49-69	40	26.7
70-90	80	53.3
Total	150	100

Table 1. Age related Distribution of Beneficiaries
Note: General Information; this data is survey data conducted by the researcher
Specific information demonstrated the age range of households and the frequency and percentage

Concerning the marital status of the respondents, *Figure 3* below shows that only 3.3% were not married, 76.7 were married, 13.3% were widowed, and 6.7% were polyandrous. The majority of the respondents (96.7%) were not bachelors, and from this total amount 20% of lost their wives or husbands and were living with their children. Marital status is among factor for enrolling in and renewing CBHI membership. Studies conducted in Ethiopia and India shows that marital status and household size determine the household's enrollment in CBHI (Haileselassie (2014); Namomsa (2019); Reshmi et al. (2018).

As data in *Figure 3* illustrated that the majority of the respondents were married households that enrolled in CBHI. This suggests that households and families that

have children feel they require more security than those individuals that are not married or do not have families with children. Marital status is among the factor that determines individual to enroll and stay in insurance schemes like CBHI.

Regarding the occupation of the respondents, *Table 2* below displays that 63.3% were engaged in agricultural activity, 13.3% were housewives, 6.7% were self-employed, 6.7% were laborers, and 10% were engaged in other private work. This shows that in total, 60% were engaged in agricultural activity. The focus of community-based health insurance is rural people engaging on informal activates of the economy, and the insurance scheme focuses on farmers and non-formal active.

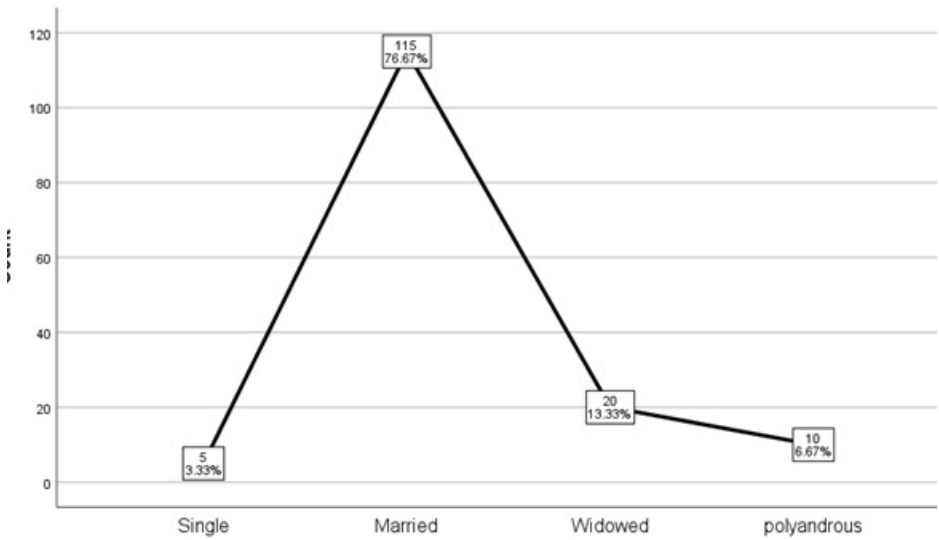

Figure 3. Marital Status of the respondents
Note: General Information; this data is survey data conducted by the researcher
Specific Information: In this figure the y-axis represents the frequency of the respondent's response on their marital status whereas the x-axis represents the marital status.

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Farmer	95	63.3
Housewife	20	13.3
Trader	10	6.7
Laborer	10	6.7
Other (Private)	15	10

Table 2. Occupational Status of Respondents
Note: General Information; this data is survey data conducted by the researcher
Specific information: the list of occupation in each households engaged starting from farming to the private business.

Regarding the family size of the respondents, *Figure 4* shows that 40% of the respondents have 1–5 children, 6.7% have 11–15 children, and 53.7% have 6–10 children. This illustrates that the majority of respondents (60%) have beyond half dozen children. According to Guy (2003) family size can be considered a factor responsible for inadequate access to health service and low patient satisfaction in less developed countries. As survey in 2009 conducted by the WHO shows that in Ethiopia the number of hospital beds per 10,000 people was only two, which is a small number compared to other sub-Saharan African countries (WHO, 2009).

Employees were asked the interview question, which was about the impact of large and small family size on getting the insurance service with membership in CBHI. One respondent stated the following:

> ''For now the impact is insignificant since the scheme is subsidized by the federal government in addition to premium payment contributed by the non-indigent member of the CBHI'' (Employees and official of CBHI).

According to CBHI, there are three types of government subsidies for the insurance schemes: targeted subsidies, general subsidies, and financing management costs (i.e., salaries, office space, and operational costs). The regional and district governments finance premiums with different arrangements. In South Nation Nationality and People (SNNP) and Oromia national regional state, districts finances all the costs of poor people district governments also finance the salaries and operational costs of all schemes. The federal government subsidizes 25% of CBHI premiums for both paying and non-paying members (Ethiopian Health Insurance Agency, 2015).

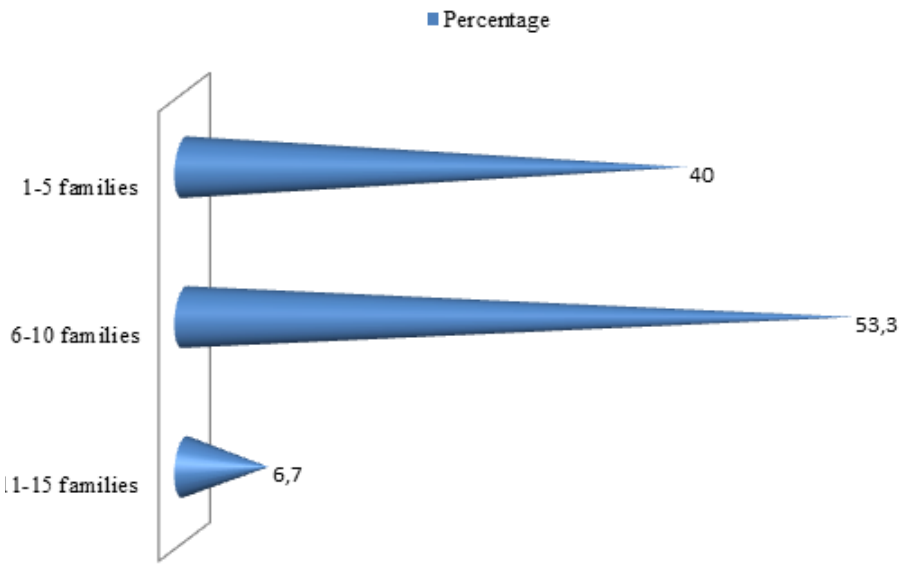

Figure 4. Family Size of the Respondents
Note: General Information; this data is survey data conducted by the researcher

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Less	20	13.3	13.3	2.733	0.932
Medium	30	20	33.3		
Valid Good	70	46.7	46.7		
Very Good	30	20	80		
Total	150	100	100		

Table 3. Level of Awareness (Knowledge) of CBHI
Note: General Information; this data is survey data conducted by the researcher
Specific Information: the level of households awareness on CBHI are rated using the 4 scale rating that is from less to very good.
n= 2.733 which is above the medium value 2

The finding in *table 3* indicates that the mean value is 2.73. This indicates that the respondents are aware of or have knowledge of community-based health insurance scheme; therefore, CBHI is not new idea or concept for respondents. Generally, good awareness creations activities are performed in the Aleltu district are there is not a lack of knowledge on community-based health insurance. A significant amount of research conducted on CBHI enrollment showed that among factors contributing to sufficient enrollment in CBHI, creating awareness of the households regarding the scheme contributes to the sustainability of insurance by preventing the withdrawal of members. A greater understanding of health insurance, and in particular knowledge of the CBHI scheme, is expected to support retention. Regarding the awareness creation in households about CBHI, so far the study district (Aleltu) did well because all of the households included in this sample study have good awareness regarding the CBHI (Table 3 supports this conclusion).

According to Meghan (2010), more than half of health expenditure in poor countries is covered by out-of-pocket (OOP) payments incurred by households. An increase in such expenditure can have catastrophic effects and may deplete a household's ability to generate current and future income. This can lead to intergenerational consequences as households may be compelled to incur debt, sell productive assets, decrease buffer food stocks, and sacrifice children's education.

Beneficiaries were asked questions regarding the previous history of health cost coverage in order to compare the dependency ratio of OOP and borrowing to pay for healthcare cost coverage. The following table reveals the insured households report on their previous history of health cost coverage before they were insured in community-based health insurance. The result of the report is interpreted and analyzed as follows.

Concerning the health cost coverage of households before enrolling in CBHI, 46.7% of respondents used out-of pocket payment (OOP) to cover their health expense before they enrolled in CBHI, while 26.7% of the respondents borrowed from others persons to cover their health cost. But 13.3% and 6.7% of them covered their expenses by Ekub (Ikub) and Idir and free governmental health service respectively;

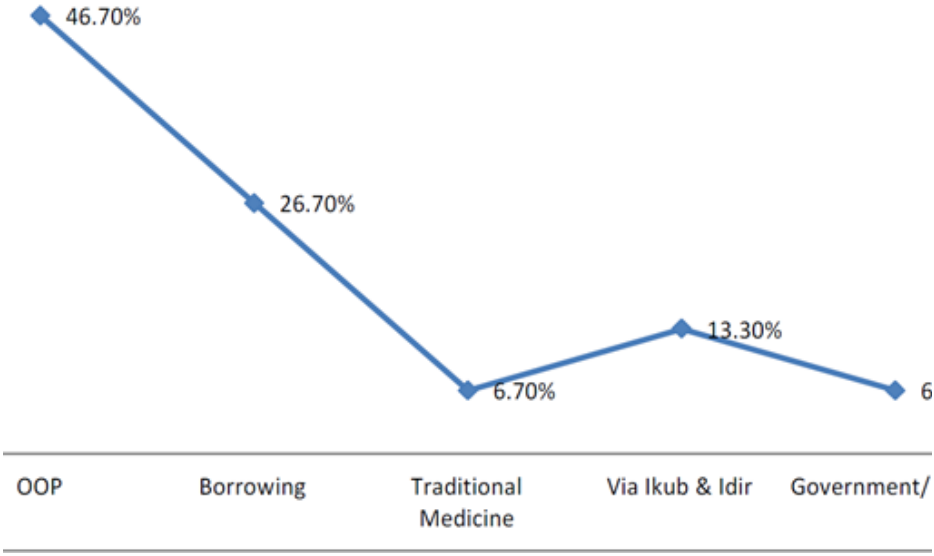

Figure 5. How did you cover your medical expenses before enrolling in CBHI?
Note: General Information; this data is survey data conducted by the researcher

Ekub (Ikub) and Idir are among the informal or traditional financial institutions found in Ethiopia, Ikub is a type of saving association in which members have to contribute fixed payments monthly or weekly and the fixed large sum money are exchanged for the group based on lottery method (Levine, 1972; Mauri, 1978; Baker 1986). Ikub have saving as core characteristics (Miracle et al., 19800) it is rotating saving and credit association (RoSCA's) (Emana, 2005) Idir is an indigenous institution formed to help members in times of difficulty (Ashenafi and Williams, 2005). From the above data one can reveal that that the majority of the households utilized OOP in order to finance their health cost coverage. As a result of the introduction of the CBHI district, many people were saved from OOP, borrowing, and other expensive ways of covering expenses. Studies conducted on financial risk protection in Low and Middle income countries show that in the majority of developing countries, health cost converges is through OOP and borrowing (Sahoo and Madheswaran, 2014; Habib et al., 2016; Pauly et al., 2006;Ather and Sherin, 2014; Nishtar, 2010; Kruk et al.,2009;Muhammad and Azam, 2012;Namomsa, 2019). This number is high in Ethiopia with more than 80% of total private health expenditure in the form of out-of-pocket payments. This suggests that the majority of people rely on out-of-pocket payment in order to cover heath expenses, which is a very traditional way of health expense coverage according to Kawabata, (2002) due to the OOP many people are pushed below poverty line.

4.1. Type of Membership

Interviews were conducted with employees on identifying the total number of indigent and non-indigent households enrolling in CBHI. Respondents reported the following: There are 1,455 poor people (non-paying) and 6,798 non-indigent members. This illustrates that since 2014 the total number of households enrolling in the Aleltu district and its 23 Gandas (local villages) was 8,253. This included both non-paying member and paying members of CBHI. Enrollment was not satisfactory when compared to the total population of 69,847 in the district in 2016. When excluding the number of public servants in the district, the number of households participating in the informal sector was 62,862. In this population only 8,253 were enrolled in CBHI.

On this regard an interview was conducted with employees of CBHI Aleltu districts in order to triangulate the result that was collected with questioner;

- What is the current total house hold number enrolling in the program? Among them how
- Many of them are identified as paying and non-paying members?

Concerning, the above interview question the answer of the employees were narrative in the following sentence:

> "*For the current year our office is planning to enroll 1,417 households from that time up to today (March, 2017). 758 households are fully enrolled in the CBHI. In order to enroll non-members households in CBHI, the office is working with different stakeholders like workers of health extension, kebele administration (managers of village), Woreda health bureau, farmer's development army, and religious leaders. Therefore, they are helping us on bringing continuous and rigorous awareness creation and behavioral change into households*" (Employees and official of CBHI).

This shows that more than 50% is achieved by the office for enrolling new households and if the Aleltu CBHI bureau continues with the current performance and activity they can achieve their goals.

The following figure shows the feedback of beneficiaries regarding their membership types, and the interpretation and analysis are provided under the *Figure 6*.

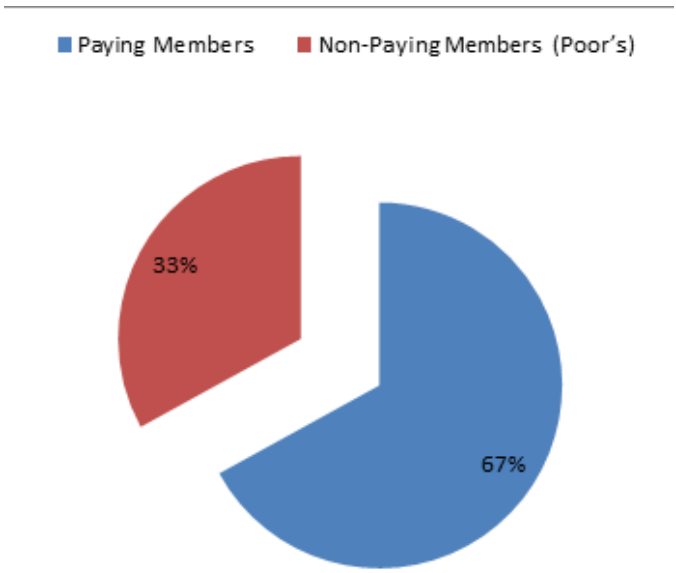

Figure 6. Membership Type
Note: General Information; this data is survey data conducted by the researcher

Among the total respondents as indicated in the above **Figure 6**. Among total respondents 50(33.3%) are non-paying members who receive free health services without needing to make payments. This is the category for households living in extreme poverty. However, 100(66.7%) are paying members of CBHI. This category of households receives health service by paying an annual premium. This shows that the scheme provides insurance service to poor households without them being required to make any payments. The sources of income for the scheme are governments, members, and donors. The number of paying groups should exceed the number of non-paying members in order to strengthen the financial viability of the scheme. Out of these three sources of funding, the sources funded by donors is situational and it is not sustainable therefore, the in order to make the scheme strong and financially efficient it is better to focus on the main source of finance that is premium payment and government subsidies. As survey data found in **figure 6** illustrated that the number of the paying member exceeds the number of non-paying group. This is good for CBHI in the early stages to make it strong enough in terms of scheme packaging. The increased and improved cash flow has had a positive effect on the availability of drugs and other supplies, which in turn has improved the quality of health services the facilities provide.

5. Limitation of the study

Lack of related conducted studies specifically in the study area made it difficult in comparing results and elaborates some of the findings as expected.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

The study found that enrollment into community-based health insurance is showing its robust progress in the Aleltu district since its establishment. However, enrollment into CBH is still less compared to the total population and enrolled households. The total number of households living in the Aleltu district is 69,847. When deducting the number of public servants (10%) from the total population, there are 62,862 households engaged in the informal sectors of the economy. Out of these total households only 8,253 people were enrolled in the community-based health insurance both as indigent and non-indigent members of the society.

6.2. Recommendations

The enrollment rate of CBHI in the Aleltu district has been increasing over the years. This is satisfactory performance to scale up insurance, reduce out-of-pocket expenses, and achieve universal access to health. Additionally, the office is working on reducing the drop rate of permanent members. CBHI in the Aleltu district is on track to scale up the enrollment and minimize members leaving the scheme. Problems encountered when enrolling members into CBHI include lack of skilled man power and ability to solve problems. The agency should recruit new employees from the market and train exiting employees by providing education opportunities. Additional problems include limited computers, printers and size of offices. Absence of enough office computers, inconvenient office spaces, and improper handling of data for members of the CBHI members also contribute to improper working environments.

Note

[1] Ganda is smallest administrative structure in Ethiopia.

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SOME ISSUES WITH HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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Abstract

This policy paper highlights several macro issues with African higher education, including inadequate funding, governance challenges, and a lack of access to digital infrastructure compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper also notes the historical and continuing impact of colonialism on Africa's education systems and women's challenges in accessing higher education. The author emphasizes the importance of investing in human capital and improving the quality of primary education to strengthen Africa's human resource base and advance economic development. The paper calls for a paradigm shift in education policy and practice, underscoring pragmatism over ideology and focusing on building the capacity for sustained development through training in science, engineering, medicine, and agriculture. The author also highlights the need to address gender inequalities in access to higher education and diversify institutional models to meet the demands of the digital age. Ultimately, the paper calls for a concerted effort to improve funding, governance, and quality across African higher education institutions, leveraging partnerships and innovations to expand access and promote excellence.

Keywords

African Higher Education, Research and Development, Financing, Economic Development, Social Stability

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Introduction

During the past decade, almost all countries have launched significant efforts to ensure that all children will have an opportunity to complete primary education of acceptable quality. Concurrently, accelerating economic growth and social change are creating an urgent prerequisite to expand access to further learning to strengthen the human resource base on the continent. Sustained growth and development in Africa require rapid strengthening of the human capital base. Immediate priorities for this effort involve improvements in the quality of primary education, increases in primary completion rates, and expansion of access to secondary education.

According to the World Bank, GDP growth in Sub-Saharan Africa has accelerated to over 6.0 percent on average since 2002 (World Bank, 2019). This evolution is excellent, but Africa will need a significant increase in investment in physical and human capital over an extended period if this flow is to evolve into a virtuous spiral that stimulates even higher – and sustained – growth rates on the continent. African countries must acquire the capabilities to spawn new industries that create more productive jobs, have multiple linkages, and diversify exports. These capabilities will derive from investment in physical assets, such as infrastructure and production facilities, as well as institutions and human capital.

Human capital is the stepping stone to a viable and growth-promoting industrial system. Physical investment and institutions are essential complements; the former cannot be efficiently utilized or maintained where technical and managerial skills are lacking. We can only engineer or implement the latter when more human capital is needed. When utilized effectively, human capital can transform African countries' economies to increase efficiency and maximize the returns from limited physical capital (Iten, 2016). In addition, African countries can only cope with profound threats from disease, an expanding youthful and urbanizing population, and climate change through knowledge and informed judgment.

African governments and their partners need to understand better the issues of higher education and its contributions towards social and economic development on the continent, especially giving special attention to Africa's youth. The current trend is that Africa's young generations will live and work in changing, increasingly open societies driven by technology and ones that could contribute to global networks of production and trade. Africa's education systems must provide a much more significant proportion of our youths with an education that effectively prepares them for work and further education and training. African societies' labor markets increasingly demand advanced knowledge and skills that emphasize the lifelong ability to learn and acquire new skills (African Development Bank Group, 2016; the World Bank, 2019; UNESCO, 2018). This element calls for a diversification of existing systems or a paradigm shift to meet the realities and demands of today's world. There must necessarily be changes in financing and curricula. However, even more importantly, there should be a change in the mental models of schooling and governance that dominate African education policy and practice. In practice, ideol-

ogy rather than pragmatism has determined policy (Waghid, 2013). The paper looks at several macro challenges across the African higher education landscape.

The challenges African higher education faces

Resistance to change continues to be deeply rooted in the education community. In many countries, an education policy detached from a longer-term vision for national development remains the concern of professionals in the ministries of education and, in some cases, other cooperating partners (Sayed & Lingard, 2017). It is captive to the pursuit of short-term problem resolution. Development and capacity building should determine higher education policy on the continent, emphasizing training in the sciences, engineering, medicine, and agriculture for viable and sustained development (Ibid).

At present, African higher education faces unprecedented challenges. The demand for access is unstoppable, especially in Africa's traditionally low post-secondary attendance levels, and higher education is recognized as a critical force for modernization and development. In the 21st century, there is a growing recognition that education and knowledge play a central role in society (Bidwell & Humphreys, 2020). This distinction is reflected in the increased importance placed on higher education to foster innovation, creativity, and economic growth (OECD, 2021). Geopolitical considerations and even the geoeconomic impact of the mobility of students, among others, are now also part of national and institutional policies (Császár et al., 2023). With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to accelerate the digital transformation of education, there is a greater need for individuals to possess advanced knowledge and skills to successfully navigate the changing landscape of work and learning (UNESCO, 2020).

The African continent has witnessed a remarkable growth in the number of tertiary institutions during the last fifty years following independence in individual states. According to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, the number of tertiary institutions in Africa increased dramatically from 396 in 1970 to 1,820 in 2014. This gain is a significant growth of approximately 360% over 44 years (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014), representing a significant expansion of the tertiary education system in the region over the past decades. Thirty years ago, universities in African countries were known for their high academic standards, equal to

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the best tertiary-level institutions in the developed world. However, the mid-1980s saw these institutions needing more support, adequate funding, weak governance, and a massive student body expansion, severely diminishing their teaching and learning capacities and deteriorating their physical facilities and infrastructure. This phenomenon was seen across all levels of education in Africa, and even the leading universities no longer engaged in much research. Moreover, research-based linkages with the business sector were meager in almost every country. This trend continues to date, and no country in Africa can convincingly claim to put its tertiary education on a sound financial and institutional footing for long-term development. Today, the World Bank's rankings show that no university from Sub-Saharan Africa falls within the top 200 universities in the world (World Bank, 2021).

Both Times Higher Education (THE) and QS World University Rankings provide global rankings of universities based on various criteria such as teaching, research, citations, industry income, and international outlook. Unfortunately, these rankings suggest that African universities are generally not highly ranked globally. According to THE World University Rankings 2021, nine universities in Africa made it to the top 1000 list, and the University of Cape Town is the highest-ranked African institution, coming in at 201-250. The QS World University Rankings 2021 is the same, as only 12 institutions in Africa made it to their top 500 list, and the University of Cape Town is still the highest-ranked African institution but is now ranked 220th globally. Although Africa still has a long way to go regarding catching up with the rest of the world in higher education, it is essential to note that some African institutions have progressed over the years. However, there are emerging signs of positive progress as some African universities are investing in research, international collaborations, and innovation. However, African universities generally rank lower than universities in other regions, with most African universities failing to make it into the top 500 of these rankings.

African universities generally rank lower on these global rankings than universities in other regions, indicating a lower level of research, academic quality, and educational resources in the continent. However, it is essential to note that these rankings have limitations and do not reflect all aspects of a university's strengths and weaknesses. Since independence in the 1960s, governments, and development partner institutions have emphasized primary and secondary education in-country development programs, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Tertiary education did not receive its due importance, and with neglect, even though many would have recognized that this was an added means to improve economic growth and mitigate poverty (*Iguh, 2015).* However, the past five decades have seen access to tertiary education expand unprecedentedly, with enrollment in higher education growing faster in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region. Women have been the first to benefit in most parts of the world. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) figures indicate that while there were fewer than 200,000 tertiary students enrolled in the Africa region in 1970, this number soared to over 4.5 million in 2008 – a more than 20-fold increase. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) for tertiary education grew at an

average rate of 8.6% for each year between 1970 and 2008 – compared to a global average of 4.6% over the same period. This rate exceeded the population growth of the relevant age group across the region (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010).

According to UNESCO data, the average gross enrolment ratio (GER) for tertiary education in Africa has increased from 3.1% in 1980 to 9.8% in 2018, with some variations across countries and regions. However, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education in Africa has increased from 2.3% in 1980 to 9.4% in 2021.

This spectacle indicates a solid commitment to education and the importance placed on tertiary education in the region. It also suggests that there has been significant investment in educational infrastructure and policies to promote access to higher education. However, it is important to note that GER does not necessarily reflect the quality or relevance of tertiary education in the region, nor does it address issues of equity and access for disadvantaged groups. Therefore, while a high GER is a positive indicator, there may still be challenges and areas for improvement in the tertiary education system.

Attempting to generalize about such a vast and multifaceted continent as Africa can take time and effort. Africa is a vast landmass home to diverse cultural practices and socioeconomic and political scenarios. Arguably, one of the most pressing problems facing Africa today is the state of higher education on the continent. African universities are grappling with a myriad of challenges stemming from social, economic, and political problems that are rife across the continent. These difficulties manifest in numerous ways: inadequate funding for research and development, low enrolment rates, limited infrastructure and resources, and difficulty retaining talented lecturers and scholars.

Moreover, globalization and the need for African higher education to remain competitive on the global stage add another layer of complexity to this challenge. Despite these challenges, there is reason for hope. African governments and other stakeholders are placing a considerable emphasis on education reform for sustainable economic growth. More resources are being allocated to improve infrastructure and resources, and efforts are being made to restructure university governance and seek successful partnerships with institutions in the West and elsewhere. At the same time, innovative teaching methods such as blended and interactive online learning are being deployed to enhance student engagement and success. Through such efforts, Africa can one day overcome its complex challenges in higher education and lead the way in global innovation and sustainable economic development.

Questions of enrollment and financing

The African continent is home to fifty-five countries, all of which have over 1,300 academic institutions. These institutions meet the criteria for defining a university, but compared to international standards, Africa needs to catch up in development in higher education. It has the lowest enrollment rates among all world regions. While certain countries in Africa have a comprehensive academic system with various

educational institutions, many still have only a few institutions. Additionally, they are yet to establish differentiated post-secondary procedures that are required to meet the demands of the digital age and the fourth industrial revolution. The state of higher education in Africa varies widely from country to country, depending on several factors such as economic development, social stability, and political governance. For instance, countries like South Africa and Egypt have a more developed higher education system than many African countries. The importance of higher education in Africa cannot be overstated. It is a crucial aspect of sustainable economic development and is essential for the continent to participate in the global economy successfully. High-quality educational institutions can provide the skilled workforce necessary for innovation and technological advancement, attracting foreign investments and boosting productivity.

Moreover, access to higher education is crucial in reducing poverty and inequality in Africa. According to a study by the World Bank, every additional year of higher education can increase a person's income by up to 20 percent (World Bank, 2019). Higher education also increases the accessibility of healthcare services, reduces crime rates, and promotes gender equality. In conclusion, although Africa has over 1,300 universities, it still needs to catch up in development in higher education. African countries must invest in educational systems to boost economic growth and reduce poverty and inequality.

According to UNESCO, the gross enrollment ratio for higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa was only 9% in 2018, compared to the global average of 38%. This figure shows that Africa has the lowest enrollment rates among all world regions. Indeed, the rate varies significantly within the region. In Mauritius, for example, gross tertiary enrollment is 40%. In Cape Verde, it is 23.6%. In Ghana and Togo, it is 15%. In Lesotho, it is 10%; in Niger, the ratio is 4.4%. Generally, 21% of government education expenditure in the region goes to tertiary education, while 27% is allocated to secondary education, with 43% to primary education (World Bank, 2018).

The World Bank estimates that over half of Africa's 1.2 billion people are under 25, creating a massive demand for quality higher education. However, only about 10% of African students are enrolled in higher education, the lowest rate in the world. The World Bank also highlights the importance of higher education in reducing poverty and increasing economic growth. According to their research, higher education can increase a person's income by up to 20% for every additional year of education. Similarly, UNESCO reports that higher education can contribute to economic growth by providing a skilled workforce and promoting innovation and technological advancement. Therefore, it is clear that despite having a significant number of universities, the African continent needs to improve its higher education system to meet international standards and cater to the needs of the digital age. This view will require investment in education infrastructure, curriculum development, quality assurance, and student support services. Only then can Africa unleash its full potential and fully participate in the global economy. Moreover, while a few African countries can claim comprehensive academic systems, many have just a

few educational institutions and still need to establish the differentiated post-secondary procedures required for the digital age in this fourth industrial revolution (Gardner & Jolley, 2019).

Across Africa, about 9 million students participate in the higher education sector, 3% of all students enrolled in the region, and 4% of the total tertiary education students enrolled globally. There are varying functions and diversity in quality, orientation, financial support, and other factors evident in Africa. Understanding the broader themes that shaped the realities of tertiary education in Africa at the beginning of this twenty-first century is vital. The harsh reality lies in inadequate financial resources and an unprecedented demand for access. We also have to cope with the legacy of colonialism and longstanding economic and social crises in many countries. Besides, we also had the HIV/AIDS challenges in parts of the continent, and now the COVID-19 and post-pandemic issues to tackle.

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Historically, African higher education is quite ancient, with the first universities in Morocco, Egypt, and Timbuktu. The University of Al Quaraouiyine, located in Fez, Morocco, is the oldest in the world, according to UNESCO and the Guinness World Records (UNESCO, 2021). It was founded in 859 CE and later recognized as a university in the 13th century. Egypt's Al-Azhar is also one of the oldest universities in the world, founded as and still is the principal seat of Islamic learning (Ikelegbe, 2013). Al-Azhar is currently the only major academic institution in the world organized according to its original Islamic model. All other African universities have adopted the Western model of educational organization. While Africa can claim an ancient academic tradition, the fact is that traditional centers of higher learning in Africa have all but disappeared or been destroyed by colonialism. Today, academic institutions shaped by colonialism and organized according to the different European models dominate the continent.

Many European colonizers, including Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, and Spain – have shaped Africa's development paths. These colonial legacies affect contemporary African higher education, too. The most important colonial powers in Africa, Britain, and France have left the most significant lasting impact, not only in the organization of academia and the continuing links to the metropole but in the language of instruction and communication. Colonial higher education policy had some common elements. Among these are limited access, language, limited freedom, and limited curriculum *(Ibe, 2018).*

African higher education systems continue to face financial challenges, which have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In a report released in May 2021, UNESCO revealed that the pandemic had caused significant disruptions to

higher education systems in Africa, resulting in a decline in funding and enrollment (UNESCO, 2021). This decline in funding has resulted in many universities needing help to fulfill their mandate fully, with many institutions unable to afford essential resources such as laboratory equipment, textbooks, and technology required for teaching. Another significant factor contributing to the funding crisis in African universities is the prioritization of funding by governments. Many African countries prioritize other areas, such as defense spending or infrastructure development, at the expense of education (UNESCO, 2018). This prioritization often results in inadequate funding for higher education, leading to a lack of essential resources and low morale among academics and staff.

Additionally, the role of international lending institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been heavily criticized for placing too much emphasis on austerity measures. Instead of investing in higher education, these institutions recommend cutting spending on education to reduce government deficits (Koseoglu et al., 2016). This approach has further undermined the ability of African universities to cater to the needs of their students and faculty adequately. In conclusion, African higher education systems continue to face significant financial challenges, undermining their ability to provide quality education to a growing number of students. There is a need for African governments and international lending institutions to prioritize education funding and invest in essential resources required for teaching and learning.

Public and private higher education

Most African higher education institutions are publicly owned, and governmental involvement in university affairs is common. This phenomenon has resulted in a governance structure that often reflects this legacy. The head of state is usually the ultimate authority in appointing individuals down the administrative line, with the chancellor or president as the head of the university system in many English-speaking countries. The board of directors mainly comprises government-appointed members, with the minister of education appointing vice-chancellors. The chain of administrative power starts with the vice-chancellor, moves to deans or directors, and then department heads (Oniang'o & Sakwa, 2020).

The academic profession has less power in Africa than in Western industrialized nations, and professorial authority often needs to be improved. However, innovations and policies that reduce the state's role in higher education have led to a rise in African higher education institutions. Despite this, many universities still need better and less bureaucratic management systems, with lesser poorly qualified personnel and poorly remunerated staff as the norm. There have also been severe corruption charges and embezzlement of funds in some African universities. The mismanagement of funds and misplaced priorities have contributed to financial difficulties and deplorable student living and studying conditions (Mugenda, 2019).

The mismanagement issue tends to be generally similar across nations and systems, but the governance structure and leadership appointment methods often

contribute to the magnitude and scope of the issues. Nonetheless, there have been efforts to improve African university governance and management systems, with lessons learned from processes in other parts of the world (Mugenda, 2019). These innovations and harmonization of policies across the continent aim to address the inefficiencies and weaknesses of the current systems.

Private institutions' provision of higher education is growing in many African countries. However, African countries have been slower to expand the private sector in higher education than other regions. Several factors have contributed to the trend towards private higher education, including increasing demand for access from students, the declining capacity of public universities, and external pressure to cut public services. In addition, private schools are smaller and specialize in specific fields such as business administration, leading to more private institutions than public ones in some countries. In the past thirty years, Africa has continued to see a rapid increase in the number of private universities. As of 2019, there were over 1,500 private universities in Africa, a significant jump from just 300 in 1990 (Ernst & Young Africa, 2019). This growth has been attributed to various factors, including rising demand for tertiary education, increasing investment from both domestic and foreign sources, and a greater acceptance of private education as a viable alternative to public institutions.

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Meanwhile, the number of public universities in Africa has also grown steadily, with over 600 operating across the continent (Ibid Africa, 2019). However, issues such as poor infrastructure, limited funding, and political instability remain significant challenges for African private and public universities. The trend towards the growth of private universities in Africa will likely continue in the coming years, with factors such as demand for higher education, increasing population and urbanization, and government policies and funding affecting the growth of both private and public universities.

Governments in most African countries do not provide financial support to private institutions, as they find it extremely difficult to secure adequate funding for tertiary education. Furthermore, public spending on higher education is disproportionately high in many sub-Saharan African countries, as public resources are highly concentrated among relatively few students. Many students from sub-Saharan Africa pursue tertiary education abroad, as they represent 7.5% of the total number of mobile students worldwide. However, private institutions in some countries receive direct financial support from governments (Ibeh et al., 2016). The specific African countries that provide direct financial support to private institutions for higher education may vary, but some examples are 1. Ghana: The government provides financial support to private universities through the Ghana Education Trust Fund. 2. Kenya: The government provides funds to private universities through the Higher Education Loans Board. 3. South Africa: The government provides private universities subsidies based on criteria such as student enrolment numbers and academic performance. 4. Uganda: The government funds private universities through the Private Universities' Development and Support Project. 5. Rwanda: The government financially supports private universities through the Higher Education Council. 6. Tanzania: The government provides a percentage of funding to private universities through the Tanzania Commission for Universities.

However, it is generally essential to note that government policies on funding for private institutions vary across African countries. Some countries may provide financial support to private institutions for various reasons, such as improving education quality, increasing access to education, or boosting the economy. Other countries may not provide financial support to private institutions due to limited financial resources or a preference for public institutions.

Private institutions provide high-demand and relatively low-cost, skill-based courses, which serve as an immediate safety net in addressing the need for higher education in the continent, where enrollment rates in higher education institutions are meager. Nonetheless, private institutions are prone to financial difficulties, too. The pandemic has forced some private universities to lay off employees or suspend staff members, signaling that some private universities may eventually close due to a revenue shortage. This phenomenon can affect the quality of higher education in the long term, thus impacting economic development.

With a huge disparity in access to digital infrastructure, most students in the region need help to continue their learning. While the COVID-19 crisis presented an opportunity for African universities to explore the potential of introducing technology-based platforms for learning, most of them still need to be equipped with such platforms within their learning management systems. The lockdown situation further prevented them from investigating the best options for e-learning to implement for their students.

In the short or medium term, it is crucial to assess the pre-existing capacity of the universities to deliver continued teaching and learning via remote and online learning platforms and the proportion of students and faculty that can access these while

off-campus. In addition, it would be essential to understand the readiness of the faculty members to deliver online content, and this knowledge will ensure excellent connectivity and flexibility for continued learning.

In Africa, there is a widespread belief that public institutions offer superior academics to private institutions, despite some private institutions having top-notch academic staff and modern equipment and facilities. This perception may be due to the rigorous selection process and tough competition for limited spaces in public universities. As student enrollment increases across the continent, entrance requirements have become increasingly stringent, ensuring that those admitted are the best students in the country. On the other hand, private institutions mainly enroll students who could not gain admission to public institutions for various reasons, perpetuating their reputation as inferior. Despite this, private higher education is a rising trend in Africa, driven by internal and external factors. However, several challenges hinder the growth of private institutions, such as unclear legal status, poor quality control, and high service costs. Traditional public tertiary institutions need help maintaining educational quality and financial sustainability while expanding their enrolments. Private universities, technical institutes, non-residential community colleges, and distance learning programs could offer viable alternatives for continued enrolment growth until public institutions have improved their quality, research capabilities, and graduate programs.

The quality of education at many private post-secondary institutions has also been an issue of some concern. Many multinational businesses across the world provide educational services today that are driven by profit motives. Multinational companies and a few foreign-based universities have established satellite campuses in countries with a big market for higher education. These transplanted institutions are often criticized for the lack of accountability or social responsibility and potentially threatening and eroding the cultural fabric of a nation.

The female question in higher education

Contrary to global trends, women still need access to tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa. Recent figures from the UIS state that the tertiary GER in sub-Saharan Africa for women is 4.8%, compared to 7.3% for men. Nevertheless, the region made significant progress toward gender parity in the 1990s (UIS, 2019)**.** Women in sub-Saharan Africa continue to face significant barriers to tertiary education in countries with the lowest levels of national wealth. UIS figures also show that those countries with a GDP per capita of less than US$1,000 have relatively low gender parity indexes (GPIs), ranging from 0.31 to 0.51. In light of the overall level of participation in tertiary education, gender equality is essential. Countries must address gender inequalities as they seek to broaden access to higher education for all students, regardless of sex (UIS, 2020)**.**

Gender imbalance will continue in the continent's educational institutions. Cultural, sociological, economic, psychological, historical, and political factors foster these inequalities. While some efforts are now underway to rectify gender

imbalances, much remains to be done across all educational sectors. The gender imbalance in higher education is acute in all African countries and most disciplines. Various efforts and initiatives have been made to increase the participation of female students in post-secondary institutions. The following initiatives can be cited here:1. The African Development Bank has launched a program called "Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa," which offers financial assistance to female students pursuing tertiary education. 2. The African Women in Leadership Organization (AWLO) is a non-profit organization that empowers and promotes women leaders across various sectors, including education. 3. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has launched several initiatives to address the gender imbalance in education, including the "Gender Equality in Education: Training Toolkit," which offers educational materials to educators to promote gender-sensitive teaching practices. 4. The African Union Commission has also launched several initiatives to promote gender equality in higher education, including establishing a center of excellence in gender and leadership in Nairobi, Kenya. 5. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is a scholarship program that provides financial assistance to young African women to pursue higher education in partnership with various universities across the continent. 6. The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is a feminist grant-making organization that supports organizations working towards gender equality and women's empowerment, including initiatives focused on promoting access to education for young women. 7. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has launched a program called "Empower Women," which offers training, mentorship, and financial support to women entrepreneurs and young women to achieve their educational and professional goals. 8. The African Network for Women in Infrastructure (ANWIn) is a platform that supports women's participation in the infrastructure sector, including programs aimed at encouraging young girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

The research and publishing landscape

Africa's research and publishing landscape remains challenging, with various factors hindering the development of research capacity on the continent. Inadequate research infrastructure, a shortage of highly qualified experts, poor library facilities, and declining salaries for academic staff are among the critical challenges faced by African researchers today. Additionally, the expansion of undergraduate education has not been accompanied by sufficient funding opportunities, while oversight of research applicability needs to be stronger. Recent reports indicate that African countries allocate only a tiny fraction of their budgets to research and development (R&D). This results in a significant gap between the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for secondary and tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the World Bank, the region's GER for upper secondary education is five times higher than that of tertiary education (World Bank, 2019). This phenomenon implies that despite the growing demand for higher education in Africa, the tertiary system needs more

resources to absorb the increasing number of students eligible for higher education. There is a need for policies targeted at expanding the tertiary education system and increasing funding for R&D to close this gap and boost research capacity in Africa. Efforts to build a more robust research infrastructure, improve library facilities, and retain highly qualified experts within academic institutions are also important. For instance, some initiatives have been developed to support African research capacity building, such as the African Union's Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA, 2024) and the African Academy of Sciences Grand Challenges Africa.

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A more knowledge-intensive approach to development is emerging as an attractive option for many African countries. Despite social and political demands for expanding public tertiary enrolments, there is a need to balance the need to increase the relevance of education and research by encouraging the production of applied research capabilities that promote competitive industries. Rapid increases in enrolment in the recent past have undermined the contribution of tertiary education to growth. Therefore, African countries must consider innovative ways to build tertiary education systems equal to global economic challenges. Neglecting tertiary education could jeopardize Africa's longer-term growth prospects and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Academic freedom

Most African governments are intolerant of dissent, criticism, nonconformity, and freely expressing controversial, new, or unconventional ideas. There have been severe violations of freedom of speech and expression by security forces, opposition groups, and militant groups in some African countries that have silenced scholars and citizens. In many African countries, unwarranted government interference and abuses of academic freedom have eroded the autonomy and quality of higher learning institutions.

In such an environment, the academic community is often careful not to overtly offend those in power, contributing to perpetuating a culture of self-censorship. In some cases, those who courageously speak frankly and express their views often

face dictators capable of using terror, kidnapping, imprisonment, expulsion, torture, and even death to silence dissident voices.

The brain drain

The brain drain remains one of the most severe challenges facing many African countries. The migration of high-level scholars and scientists from its universities takes the form of internal mobility and regional and overseas migration. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the International Organization for Migration, an estimated 27,000 skilled Africans left the continent for industrialized countries between 1960 and 1975. During the period 1975 to 1984, the figure rose to 40,000. Since 1990, at least 20,000 qualified people, including skilled professionals, scientists, academics, and researchers, have left Africa annually. This migration of high-level expertise considerably influences the continent's capacity-building initiatives (James, 2019).

The stock of human capital with secondary- and tertiary-level skills in Africa is comparably small, and the quality is highly variable. Mortality from infectious diseases and the emigration of many of the most talented individuals hinder skill accumulation in some countries. Increasing investment in human capital is crucial for African countries to achieve sustainable economic performance, generate adequate employment for expanding populations, and narrow the economic gap between Africa and other regions. Internationally mobile students from sub-Saharan Africa have diverse destinations, with about two-thirds, or 65.1%, of mobile students from the region studying in North America and Western Europe. (Mars & Ward, 2018)

The language issue

More than half a dozen languages are currently used in African higher education. These include Afrikaans, Arabic, English, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Only Arabic and Afrikaans are languages indigenous to Africa. Overall, Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese remain the major international languages of instruction at African higher learning institutions. At a time when globalization has been such a powerful force, the dominant position of European languages has become even more accentuated and evident. English has become particularly powerful, even dominating other major European languages. Among other things, the Internet and globalization fuel the predominance of English.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016–2025 is a crucial initiative by the African Union to revitalize higher education and promote development-oriented research, community outreach, and teaching. The strategy recognizes the importance of gender considerations, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and public accountability in creating strong and vibrant institutions to meet the tertiary education needs of African countries. However, to achieve these goals, stakeholders must create a shared vision and a constituency for transforming

and investing in higher education, harness disparate efforts and initiatives, and spur innovation in African higher education. African countries must also address inadequate funding, weak governance, and declining academic standards to put their tertiary education on a sound financial and institutional footing for long-term development.

Quality is critical for revitalizing higher learning in Africa, not just in terms of academic standards but also in providing innovative forms of collaboration and promoting the mobility of graduates and academics across the continent. While some institutions like the University of Cape Town: https://www.uct.ac.za/ and the University of Alexandria: http://www.alexu.edu.eg/ both in South Africa have shown remarkable successes, the overall trend of inadequate funding, weak governance, and declining academic standards continues, resulting in a severe diminution of teaching and learning capacities and deterioration of physical facilities and infrastructure. Consequently, stakeholders must prioritize revamping the tertiary education sector to promote national cohesion, economic development, and better living standards for Africans to achieve the CESA's goals.

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DECOLONIALITY IN DANGER OR BEING BOOSTED? AN EXPLORATION OF ECOWAS POSITIONS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE WESTERN AFRICAN REGION

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the notion of decoloniality by examining the decisions and actions of the ECOWAS in response to the coup d'état in Burkina Faso in 2022, as well as other comparable sanctions imposed on Mali and Guinea during internal crisis challenges. These topics were raised and debated in various mass media outlets. For this purpose, readers are invited to imagine, based on ideas interpreted from official positions of the ECOWAS, or perceptions of them, expressed in academic narratives and the media, if decoloniality could be boosted or is in danger, following the decisions, actions, and positions of the ECOWAS. The interpretations through the lens of decoloniality portrayed in African narratives, and these explorations are characteristic of qualitative analysis. In examining how ECOWAS manages potential crises in the region, particularly in the cases of Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso, we can identify basic features of decoloniality. Taking a social-constructivist perspective, we can explore how African narratives of development can inspire critical resistance. Specifically, we must consider how power and relationships based on power can be decolonized to prioritize a people-centric view of development. In analyzing the use of violence and safety in the actions of the ECOWAS, we can determine whether they boost or endanger decoloniality. The academic community has shown considerable interest in the impact of the ECOWAS on the political climate of Western African states. However, it is important to consider the philosophical perspective on how the portrayal of ECOWAS actions and decisions can affect the narratives of opposition, anti-ism, and power dynamics. Specifically, in the case of internal conflicts, these portrayals can direct the debate on whether decolonization, as a theory, cultural movement, or process, can continue the work of African resistance initiated during the decolonization process which remains unfinished.

Keywords

decoloniality, power, people-centric, violence, safety

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Introduction

Western Africa is considered to be a fast-growing economic region, and also as a center for promoting narratives of development. The movement of Decoloniality, which has evolved under new paradigms, seeks to challenge the process of dissociation that began with decolonization, which was considered a non-event (Mbembe, 2021, p. 47). This movement, takes inspiration from a culture of liberation that followed the path of the anti-colonialist struggles of the continent, inspired by writings of the early African diaspora in Europe. In the meantime, Western Africa is considered a border region for ideals of Pan-Africanism, inspired by Kwame Nkrumah and other leaders who modelled resistance like, in the case of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, or, considering Nigeria, the evolved root of activism of Afro-American diaspora. Western Africa has been perceived as pragmatic and self-determined, both globally and in terms of knowledge production. It plays a significant role in the economic representation and symbolism of Africa. Thus, to analyze decoloniality, a comprehensive study of a Western African economic community was undertaken. The choice to talk about The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was not casual, but resulted from the relevance of recent events in some member states and the debate surrounding them.

ECOWAS is formed of 15 states from the western and central African regions, namely; Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Debates from recent years, inspired by the acknowledgement of the competition-conflict dyad of neighboring Western African states, have highlighted the place and role of ECOWAS in the regional balancing of powers and the changing images of the states in the global development mapping that is inevitably brought forth when talking about countries still considered to be Third World, but actually are part of an emergent Global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 50).

In connection with this balancing and the debates about ECOWAS and surrounding it, this paper intends to unpack decoloniality, as "pluriversal epistemology of the future" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 35), taking inspiration from Walter Mignolo's (2011) focus on the rise of Global South's epistemologies where the locus of the decolonial lies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 34), and reply to the question of whether, in the context of the actions, portrayal images, and perceptions of the ECOWAS reflected in debates carried African repository, decoloniality is in danger or it is being boosted. The necessity to invite scholars in African Studies to this reflection, although not limited to a mere reflection on the role of ECOWAS, but possibly extending this to include any kind of cooperation form between states in the African continent, was brought forward by the desire to look into decoloniality, not only as inherent to postmodernity but as an expression and symbol of a changing image of the African continent in the global development narrative.

Although decoloniality is seen as a theory, a research method, and a process that affects both the culture of the colonizer and the colonized (Alhuwalia, 2001 p. 50),

for the purpose of this discussion, the relevant perspective is one that encompasses the decolonial turn, which aims at the realization of a utopian world characterized by a lack of hierarchy, resistance to coloniality in the domains of knowledge, power, and being (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 39). Decoloniality deals with the alternatives of considering the power and the use of a taxonomy of narratives that keep the attention on the meanings of power while also deconstructing it.

The examples for reflection are the positions and actions of the ECOWAS in relation to the military coup in Burkina Faso and the situation in Mali, in order to explore and compare not only the decoloniality expressed by the recognition and acknowledgement of power to manage its own processes and situations but also the decoloniality shown by the ability to separate these processes and narratives from the European or global ones and avoid or reduce the influence of western narratives.

Finally, it is valuable to consider whether decoloniality is being boosted or endangered with respect to violence and safety and the actual role of an economic community in a region of conflict and competition. In order to deconstruct the meanings of power and explore decoloniality in its pathways from being in danger to being boosted, with ups and downs or back and forths, the proposition of the present paper is to depict an alternative reflection, with a poststructuralist background on ECOWAS, in reference to Burkina Faso and Mali, but also, on the features of decoloniality represented by violence and safety, thus bringing a contribution to a theoretic frame of decoloniality, based on a critical interpretation and connection to different views of African scholars.

Exploring decoloniality features in the conflict management actions of ECOWAS

Critical reflections on the ways ECOWAS has managed and responded to conflicts in the western area of the African continent, especially in relation to the coups d'état and the terrorist attacks of Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea, with a focus on the first two states, are central issues to construct a decolonial frame for the possible perceptions on the role and image of the ECOWAS, for the improvement of the African continent's image on the globe, but mostly, for the actual development in the region, or the African epistemic freedom.

In valuing the ways ECOWAS manages the situation in the region and how it positions itself as an economic community, some questions on the paths of the evolvement of decoloniality, as process and critical resistance, are to be put forth, and consequently, answered with the help of old and new or continued views on the sources and foundations of power, violence, or resistance in contemporary philosophy and narratives of development.

The first interesting fact to reflect upon is the different treatment of Burkina Faso, having been suspended from ECOWAS due to the military coup, but not having suffered additional economic sanctions, like Mali and Guinea previously[1]. In fact, according to Africa News[2], ECOWAS would have soon requested the newly come to power after the coup d'état of Burkina Faso, Lt. Col. Sandaogo Damiba, to provide a report on his mandate. It appears that there is a strong interest in exploring

the potential for Burkina Faso to reintegrate with expected standards. However, it is important to recognize the existence of a regional structure that manages and oversees relationships between member states of ECOWAS. This structure also respects national sovereignty within each member state.

At the Summit of ECOWAS in Accra on the 22nd of March 2022, the role it exercises is highlighted, foremost, by the strong position of condemnation of the coup d'état, the demand to release President Kaboré and the request for an acceptable transition plan, with a deadline after which Burkina Faso would also risk economic and financial sanctions, like with Mali.[3] Currently, Guinea is being closely scrutinized by ECOWAS, which is criticizing the absence of a transition timetable in the country and emphasizing the need for a facilitator to oversee the transition process. Meanwhile, Mali is facing sanctions and is in need of humanitarian aid. Finally, the relationship between ECOWAS and Burkina Faso is characterized by clear hierarchical perspectives, with Burkina Faso having been suspended from all ECOWAS institutions until constitutional order is restored. One positive development is that a mediator has been appointed to help resolve the situation in Burkina Faso.

When considering ECOWAS' involvement in the internal political affairs of a current or former member, their actions in the name of peace and democracy are subject to academic debate and criticism for potentially being led by neo-colonial powers.

When considering ECOWAS' involvement in the internal political affairs of a current or former member, their actions in the name of peace and democracy are subject to academic debate and criticism for potentially being led by neo-colonial powers, as noted by Wiredu (Eze, 1997, p. 314). It is a common narrative to consider, from an African academic perspective and African public dialogue, that agents of global coloniality have always tended to "keep Africa within the ambit of a Euro-North American-centric world system" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 50).

For example, it was said about the francophone block of ECOWAS that tended to hijack the initiative of ECOWAS in regard to the ECO currency (ISS, 2020), while in 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron, and President Alassane Quattara of Ivory Coast, stated that countries who have suffered from monetary imperialism would need to adopt the ECO currency. Still, the situation gave reason for major debate on the part of the Anglophone block of the organization (Ibid), in addition to levels of convergence criteria that would be more beneficial for francophone states, especially a newcomer such as Nigeria. The situation reveals more than just the persistence of monetary imperialism by dominant western nations or the sub-imperialism by powerful members of ECOWAS. It also exposes the Global North's agenda to strip ECOWAS of its initiative, thereby diminishing its regional power and relevance.

This move aims to thwart the African continent's resistance and reaffirmation, as well as the decolonial narrative of the Global South in the balance of global power relations. And in this regard, the demands for decoloniality became urgent (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 174).

Since this resulted in greater confusion among the member states, after debates on the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the actual resistance constructed around the subject reflected that Africa tried to fight for the "turning over of a new leaf," entailing "depatriarchization," in the words of Sankara (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 7), and projecting new perspectives for the narrative of their development, from Philosophy to Economy as well as Politics.

Although the conclusion drawn from research papers and workshops on ECOWAS' role in the region point to the perspectives coming from below, including people-centered standpoints[4], this is only reflected in the case of Burkina Faso, that did not suffer from immediate financial sanctions, but was not the case for the other states facing crisis situations. The lack of equality among members is apparent, and the focus on financial sanctions, whether previously established or not, suggests that they will be applied at some point. This highlights that ECOWAS' actions are not centered on the people as the ultimate goal but rather as a starting point. That is, financial sanctions that are ultimately more likely to affect people than states are preferred in cases of internal conflicts that, in fact, does not depend on individuals. But individuals do become victims of ECOWAS' conflict management measures, and their position as the victim could nourish the transition process that the state concerned faces, escalating, in the portrayal and narrative, the sovereignty of national governments and increasing the role played by ECOWAS in the supervision of the nation's transition processes from one regime to another.

In the African theorizing of decoloniality, people-centrality should be a destination point and not just a premise because the construction of the Self should be an ongoing process linked to development. In this scenario, centrality needs to be created or re-conceptualized in an African manner using African methods, particularly in the context of development. Narratives of the people in Africa record the quest for "the second independence" (Ake, 1996, p.159), so organizations that promote development, and would like to situate themselves on the side of those guaranteeing bottom-up initiatives, should act by integrating people in the discourse of development, to be molded after them, and not to the contrary.

In fact, choosing to put people at the center of sanctions could be a sign of the paternalistic attitudes of ECOWAS towards member states, necessarily recalling attention and active contestation, relative to a substantive democracy opposed to patriarchy (paternalism) recalled by decolonization/decoloniality (Ndlovu-Gatheni, 2018, p. 175). But, also considering the focus on democracy promotion as the aim of ECOWAS, it was reflected that in the end, the contestation was more a reaffirmation of ECOWAS intervention and also that of the African Union (Witt & Schanbel, 2020, p. 283).

The actions taken by ECOWAS in response to conflicts and social changes in West African states have failed to involve African people. This highlights the need

for a people-centric approach, as well as a reliance on Western models and suggestions and a weak epistemic position in the debate over neo-colonialism in the region. Such criticism was stronger in Mali, or in The Gambia 2017, where the presence of ECOMOG in order to defend Gambian peace, was covered by scepticism of "someone's hidden interest" (Witt & Schnabel, 2020, p. 283). However, in the conclusion of research from Witt and Schanbel in 2020 on ECOWAS' interventions in the political crises in the region, the actions of ECOWAS would not have been looked at from the point of view of legitimacy, but under its forms and aims, while notwithstanding this, the contestation of illegitimacy served ECOWAS to reaffirm its position in the region (p. 283).

According to an article on the online edition of Reuters, written by Thiam Ndiaga and Christian Akorlie, Ghana's President Nana Akufo Addo stated that ECOWAS may have felt the need to assert its importance to the world by taking a firm stance on the coup d'état in Burkina Faso.[5] Moreover, according to Western diplomacy, no other organization besides ECOWAS could have such a singular position as mediator and advisor among political and military actors in the Western African region (Yabi, 2010, p. 33), due to proximity, historical background. and indirectly put, colonial memory. This rhetorical "protection" from the West could signify decoloniality being in danger.

Meanwhile, James Tasamba and Enoch Fiifi Forson published on Anadolu Agency in March 2022, that the same president described the three states (Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea) as recalcitrant in their dialogue with ECOWAS, on the norms and deadlines imposed by it.[6] In this frame, relations of power are highlighted within ECOWAS at a rhetorical level as well, and the top-down approaches of ECOWAS reflect the limitations of a mediation capability in the region (Saidou, 2018).

A change of perspective in the relations and management of ECOWAS in situations of conflict is shown by the paradigm shift from preventive diplomacy adopted in the case of Guinea in 2005 (Yabi, 2010, p. 21) to a sort of *conceited diplomacy* in the present cases, diplomacy whose model could be inspired by interventionism. Although in the case of Guinea, the preventive diplomacy was one-sided on the part of ECOWAS, the actual conceitedness appears to be a feature of both parties in the dialogue, even with those countries at the bottom of the ECOWAS inner power balance who chose to oppose some of the traditional diplomatic behaviours (such as the case of Col. Assimi Goita of Mali, declining the invitation to attend the ECOWAS summit in Ghana in person).[7] From this perspective of conceited diplomacy, people-centricity is underscored.

Looking from both angles, people-centricity and conceited diplomacy, the decolonial feature seems to be boosted, considering the power relations between conceited actors on one side, the president of Ghana, who expressed a firm position regarding the internal conflicts of ECOWAS member states, and the attitudes of these states towards him. There is resistance to what is perceived as a top-down traditional intervention. So, on one hand, the narrative of the United States becoming a model of regionalism being defended by Kwame Nkrumah as a response to a post-

colonial predicament and unity, potentially having been embraced by Ghanaian actual narratives, (Gettachew, 2019, p. 117), while resistance is recalled in African repository in the case of European interventions in Mali undermining the free movement, as the aim of ECOWAS (Langan, 2018, p. 166), despite clear anti-colonial positioning of Mali's Prime Minister reported by france24.com .

In the case of sanctions applied to Burkina Faso, reflections can be made from the point of view of the 1958 union between Guinea, Ghana, and Mali, marking one of the first African continental unities (Ndlovu-Gatheni, 2018, p. 109), potentially causing higher expectations from Guinea and Mali, in comparison to a soft tolerance towards Burkina Faso, in the decisions made by ECOWAS. Examining the internal relations of ECOWAS and the instruments of power used to manage the crises that occurred, such as intervention, supervision, mediation, negotiation[8], or neutrality for the purpose of regional cooperation, all manifest different levels of power, are characterized by epistemic violence (Mbembe, 2021, p. 68), and highlight a commitment to ensure the safety of individuals both within individual states and across the region. An exploration of these features will be examined in the next section.

The actions taken by ECOWAS in response to conflicts and social changes in West African states have failed to involve African people. This highlights the need for a people-centric approach, as well as a reliance on Western models and suggestions and a weak epistemic position in the debate over neo-colonialism in the region.

One of the missions of ECOWAS is promoting democracy, which can be viewed from the perspective of protecting decoloniality, considering that the expansion of ECOWAS's role in the monitoring of elections in the member states, besides adopting the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in 2001, encourages the manifestation of election monitoring power and the power to impose sanctions against illegitimate governments (Johan Tejpar and Adriana Lins de Albuquerque, 2015),when the illegitimacy of the new government is not holistically confirmed, nor are there yet instruments to measure the implications of people in the state that suffered the coup d'état, to the realization, interpretation, adaptation, and the validation of it. However, opposition to election monitoring could be qualified as opposing the principles of democracy. As a consequence, besides encountering "no delinking from the colonial matrices of power", the condition of decoloniality according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, p.122), the opening to multiple "anti"-isms, like "anti"-isms of postmodernity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, p. 43) would highlight decoloniality.

Presupposing that ECOWAS member states and ECOWAS itself as an organization, should share the desire to "turn over a new leaf" in the making of Africa in the

world and continuing the call of Kwame Nkrumah (1963) to African Unity, which is opposed to disunity as the trademark of colonialism (Ndlovu Gathseni, 2020, p. 15), the differentiated treatment of member states experiencing internal crises produces disunity as a result of resentment and debates, thus decolonial features of ECOWAS actions are endangered.

Notwithstanding this, seeing that producing disunity would be counterproductive for the mission and aims of the ECOWAS itself, since unity represents the expression of a *vital force* or a constructed western imagined Bantu ontology (Imbo, 20, p. 370), *amandla* (power), *revolutionary spirit, relationality* and *the future,* according to Ndlovu Gatsheni(2020, p. 15), the different treatment of member states confronted with crises, and particularly the attention and lack of economic sanctions regarding Burkina Faso, beyond a hypothetical interest of stronger western African states, could reveal the belief that unity should be strengthened by understanding and accepting differences, and not creating them, as colonial order did (Ndlovu-Gathseni, 2018, p. 44; Serequeberhan, 1994, p. 78), by the acknowledgement of relativity, and by boosting the power of the critical society to stand up and denounce decisions that are not linked to development, but to mere regional economical politics. As an example that highlights this issue regarding relations between neighbours, Burkina Faso is historically an important supplier of emigrants to Ghana (Adeniran & Ikuteyijo, 2018, p. 423), so economic sanctions in Burkina Faso could deepen the problems of this situation at Ghana's expense.

However, like many African regional economic communities, ECOWAS seems to be more efficient politically than economically, not having escaped criticism and scandals in relation to military and police exchanges between the governments, including ostracism of leaders, such as, but not limited to, Thomas Sankara, leader of Burkina Faso (Bayart, 1993, p. 200). Or, as the intervention in Guinea has previously shown, the aim of ECOWAS to try to "bring states up to the standard in the region" (Yabi, 2010, p. 52), even if he was referring to the security sector and the encouragement of initiatives in cooperation with supporting more ambitious reform programmes, it is likely, that many measures taken by ECOWAS as a result of the crises in the region, especially in particular states, were meant to maintain the standards projected for the region, failing, meanwhile, to help improve the bilateral cooperation of member states already weakened by internal conflicts, further deepening the negative competition existing between them, in light of the different sanctions.

Although it could be regarded as negative, this type of management in the region could give shape to a form of decolonial booster because analyzing the Communiqué of March 25th, 2022, from Accra, Mali, and Burkina Faso, both are put under the call of humanitarian intervention, whilst they are in different phases of transition after a crisis. Regarding Guinea, it is important to direct the call for help to its government rather than involving third parties. This highlights the need for responsibility and unity, following the legacy of Nkrumah's belief that Western aid and power politics contribute to vulnerability. (Langan, 2018, p. 169) On the other hand, it would reveal the need to overcome the colonial memory and experience in order to use all avail-

able means, e.g., humanitarian intervention, to overcome the crises even if these means could signify neo-colonialism.

When considering the role of ECOWAS in Western Africa, it's important to compare it to the European Community's role in Europe. However, it's necessary to move beyond surface-level portrayals and rhetoric. To explore a de-colonial aspect of ECOWAS, it's interesting to consider that the formation of the European Economic Community was predicated on the colonization of Africa. This was pointed out by Hansen and Jonsson in 2011, as cited by Aman (2018, p.14). Therefore, decolonization must be considered as a crucial step in the formation of ECOWAS. This would be sustained also by the challenge to the African continent's unity, in the perspective of narratives of the division of the continent coming from Eastern and Southern Africa (Langan, 2018, p. 207).

Unpacking violence and safety within ECOWAS: A philosophical perspective

The concern of ECOWAS to assure a peaceful climate in the region, including interference in the legitimacy of governments and their alternation to power in member states with sanctions, control, and recommendations that result from such interference, also seems highlighted and justified by the narratives of African unity, development through regional cooperation, legitimacy and standards of the region, human rights, and last but not least, by the decolonization that is never just a local process (Mbembe, 2017, p. 172). As a regional organization that upholds these values, ECOWAS has a vested interest in participating in the continuation of these efforts, even if it involves interference.

In the light of these narratives, exploring the situation in Burkina Faso after the coup d'état and the reaction of ECOWAS to this situation, in comparison with reactions of preventive crisis management in the region related to conflicts in Mali and Guinea, the analysis of the cause-effect relation for the shaping of a decolonial booster or jeopardizer was preferred. For this objective, the relation of cause-effect is contextualized to violence-safety, considering the effect of "safety" as being the aim of crisis management and, in this context, the declared objective of the ECOWAS. Both elements are used several times, in a colonial historical and post-colonial political context, for the unpacking of power, under the form of resistance and the pragmatic perspective of its purposes.

Violence is indeed a form of resistance, a "cleansing force" in the words of Eduard Said (Alhuwalia, 2001, p. 48), and any resistance implies a form of violence including all actions that are imposed from a top-down scheme that pretend to prevent or solve different crises. This form of violence could have been inspired by ECOWAS, that both united, and at the same time caused, disunity, due to common exposure to not only threats, but singular and specific critical resistance, as a continuation of the resistance over the course of many decades, from the independency of the African States to the actual discourses on decoloniality.

In fact, the debates over the differential treatment of member states by ECOWAS highlight the notion that such differences could be indicative of a decolonial narrative,

as suggested by Abdelkabhir Khatibi. Khatibi refers to a "rhetoric of the empire", and even if decolonization is only applied to thought, it implies that this logic extends to other senses as well and "is an openness to plurality and a free subversion of the powers that inhere in a discourse" (Spurr, 1993, p. 200). Also, Ndlovu Gatsheni saw in decolonization the expression of a unity comprising relationality (2020, p. 15) and unavoidable violence because it is not a choice, but would be imposed by the colonizer on the colonized (Serequeberhan, 1994, p. 78), decolonization according to Franz Fanon (Mbembe, 2019, p. 4), being an instrument of resurrection (Mbembe, 2019, p. 129), or a resistance to discourse, in the context of the free subversion of inherent powers that characterize said discourse.

From another perspective, states like Mali and Burkina Faso, having been confronted with terrorist attacks for several years, would express a major concern of vulnerability in regards to its international portrayal, as the standard of stability that ECOWAS established would not be met in situations when support and access to power in the member states are not yet clear. For this, ECOWAS has set transition periods and deadlines for explanations for each country that, based on specific circumstances, were extended. The manifestation of power is evident in this process, which reaffirms the sovereignty of member states. It involves the transfer of responsibility to ensure that standards are met, allowing for the lifting of suspension and the return of the state as an active ECOWAS member. Besides meaning empowerment, this reflects the conviction of other ECOWAS states, shown from the rhetoric of Ghana's President, cited above, that membership is an honor, brings privileges of integration and development, and should almost be mandatory. However, the recalcitrance to which President Nana Akufo Addo was referring, shows that some states do not see membership to ECOWAS as a number one concern, or at least not extending to their sovereignty to decide whether or not to be part of its contemplation.

It is important to recognize that there are various forms of violence that highlight the nuances of colonialism and its effects. Franz Fanon and Achille Mbembe (2019, p. 118) have both emphasized the need to create unity, but also acknowledge the potential for disunity and destruction (Mbembe, 2021, p. 55) when resistance is met with forceful integration into a new system of power that still carries the remnants of its predecessor. This requires even stronger resistance, especially when there are intermediary authorities involved. While ECOWAS may have valid arguments for why member states should participate, it is important to scrutinize its actions and avoid any potential for imperialism. The economic vulnerabilities in the region could attract unwanted "new colonizers," (Kivunja, 2017, p. 40) so it is crucial to prioritize decoloniality in all actions taken.

Regarding safety, as a presupposed effect of the actions of ECOWAS for the region, people-centricity is again relevant. As an aim to pursue, the guarantee of safety and a peaceful climate, not only for the individual, but also for the ECOWAS member states, the political climate in the Western African region and the economic relations between member states from an overall perspective, is by itself the representation of resistance to the violence manifested in the member states. Often this resistance

looks like the promotion of democracy in the region, with the limitation of doubts on its meanings and endings related to its deviations, like the "imperialism as democratic despotism," of Dubois (Getachew, 2019, p. 38), thus criticized in an African repository.

According to Achille Mbembe safety "would require a redistribution of feeling and affect, of perception and speech" (2017, p. 34), elements that are highly valuable in the considerations of how decoloniality was expressed by narratives of liberation from the colonization of thinking, models of behavior and acting, according to an African trend seen as pathetic (Rahaman, Yeazdani & Mahmud, 2017, p. 22), in a context where neither isolation would be the right choice. Could imposition set by ECOWAS to suspend member states to report their transition status, even in the case of their suspension, represent a safety feature? In a people-centered vision, the need individuals naturally feel to be safe could be transposed in the interest of the state to assure them of this safety, which means more than just peace and non-violence, the lack of which allows the perpetuation of political instability (Tshibambe, 2020, p. 38).

In fact, the debates over the differential treatment of member states by ECOWAS highlight the notion that such differences could be indicative of a decolonial narrative, as suggested by Abdelkabhir Khatibi.

In the context of ECOWAS, it would be essential for the newly transitioned political power to address the concerns of ECOWAS, while flatly allowing for election monitoring and supervision, especially after a suspension due to a coup d'état. The successful transition of power would make it a positive example of democracy that ECOWAS promotes and help overcome acceptance challenges both internally and externally. Kapoor (2008, p. 116) emphasizes the importance of the state being central to democracy. In particular, citizens across the continent also want laws and rules that set benchmarks and frameworks for the exercise of power for everyone, just as they do for other economic and social activities (Tarrósy, 2019, p. 129). In this case, safety is an image, or a perception, a reason for which violence is to be resisted by any means possible, as well as stability in the context of relations between states or inside supranational organizations.

But the matter of safety is still two-fold. Judging within the limits of these reflections, since safety is seen as resistance to violence, and being the preferred tool in settling differences (Benyera, 2020, p. 23), therefore, returning to the discussion of differences in reference to unity (as opposed to disunity imposed by colonial order) from the previous section, unity is important for decolonization. However, relying on safety measures implemented by organizations like ECOWAS could potentially undermine the decolonization process and reinforce power dynamics rooted in colonialism. This could perpetuate learned behaviors from the colonial era that have not yet been unlearned.

From a completely different angle, the call to cooperation and other sorts of action taken by ECOWAS, in relation to suspended states being weakened by internal conflicts and also rising terrorist movements like Boko Haram (Ikuteyijo & Olayiwola, 2020, p. 90), that challenge the security of all ECOWAS member states, shows the need for mutual recognition (acceptance or validation) and respect, if based on responsible reporting (of transition phases, transition projection, etc.), highlighting their call for solidarity to assure the safety of single states and the region, and to safeguard intraregional relations (Serequeberhan, 2015, p. 68).

The decisions made by ECOWAS regarding Burkina Faso and Mali may seem unusual given the importance of state authority in promoting African economic growth and regional trade expansion. However, it is worth noting that both countries were instrumental in founding CEN-SAD in 1998 (Ikuteyijo & Olayiwola, 2020, p. 88), which demonstrates their commitment to seeking safety through economic integration and unity among neighboring states. This aligns with ECOWAS' collaborative approach to promoting regional interests.

From the perspective of this analysis, a major issue that resumes reflections on decoloniality is the epistemology of power transformation from violence to safety, or from intention to solution, in regards to how ECOWAS represents the competition in the region under the sign of critical resistance and hegemonic images, besides the struggle to temper them while cultivating unity. Or, in the words of one scholar: "the constant seek of states […] to curb […] acts of benevolence that the neighbors within the region [mis]construed as hegemonic tendencies." (Adesanya, 2020, p. 18)

End reflections on decoloniality

Based on the ideas discussed, it appears that the concept of decoloniality should play a significant role in ECOWAS' decision-making, image portrayal, and actions. This potential for ongoing improvement has been emphasized by most of the analysts cited in this discussion.

However, there is also a threat of overemphasizing the relations of power and allowing states in competition to concentrate more on supporting the conflict, instead of allowing external forces to intervene, pursuing principles of freedom and sovereignty that imply the transformation of violence, as a feature of power and decoloniality into safety, another feature of it. Safety and violence are yet two terms with infinite operation modalities in the narrative of decoloniality, the space herein being limited from exploring deeper. It is necessary to recognize that the concept of safety can be linked to colonialism, as it can enable authoritarian regimes and unequal power dynamics to thrive under the guise of protection.

The paper has also expressed the concept of people-centricity, generally used in regard to the actions of the ECOWAS, in the debate on top-down/bottom-up directions, applied in a reflection over the financial sanctions, alongside conceited diplomacy, in the case of induced dynamics of diplomatic relations. The research around this term is very limited, and the call is to imagine its potential and develop

a theoretical frame for it, to design the paths toward sustainable development and peace in the region and the safety of relations between ECOWAS member states.

This would be, to the last degree, central to the climate of cooperation and the strengthening of an African community of resistance and guarantor of the "decolonial turn" aimed to achieve the "dreamed" finalization of the decolonization process.

Notes

1 https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/18/west-african-bloc-says-will-not-abandon-burkina-faso-after-coup, accesed on March, the 3rd, 2022, 11:23 a.m.
2 https://www.africanews.com/2022/03/18/burkina-faso-ecowas-worried-about-the-duration-of-transition/, accesed on March, the 3rd, 2022, 13:15 a.m.
3 https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/final-communique-extraordinary-summit-ecowas-authority-heads-state-and-government, accesed on July, the 7th, 2022, 16:29 p.m.
4 https://www.hsfk.de/en/research/projects/projects/local-perceptions-of-regional-interventions-au-and-ecowas-in-burkina-faso-and-the-gambia, accessed on July, the 20th, 2022, 10:30 a.m.
5 https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/w-african-bloc-ecowas-suspends-burkina-faso-after-military-coup-sources-2022-01-28/, accessed on May, the 5th, 13:54 p.m.
6 https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/west-african-bloc-issues-ultimatums-to-mali-burkina-faso-junta-leaders/2546248, accessed on July, the 3rd , 18:30 p.m.
7 https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/west-african-bloc-issues-ultimatums-to-mali-burkina-faso-junta-leaders/2546248, accessed on July, the 3rd , 18:30 p.m.
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STATE-BUILDING/STATE-DESTROYING IN ETHIOPIA – A BACKDROP TO THE TIGRAY GENOCIDE

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Abstract

Federalist Tigray and unitarian Amhara have been historical rivals in the daunting task of state-building in Ethiopia. To neutralize Tigray and its de facto federalism (1872–89), Amhara found a formidable ally in Italy, which colluded with Britian to have "a place in the sun." Amhara rewarded Italy with half of Tigray, which was christened "Eritrea," and imposed the unitarian system in the country. Worse still, in the middle of the 1950s, Amhara annexed the western and southern parts of Tigray. Tigray and Eritrea (which returned to Ethiopia in 1952) were suffocated by amharanization and political centralization, the twin pillars of the unitarian system. Military insurgencies brought the system to an end in 1991 and the Tigrayans who assumed the reins of power introduced de jure federalism, to the chagrin of the Amhara. The paper offers a critical historical analysis of state-building and state-destroying in Ethiopia, with particular attention given to the Amhara return to power in 2018 and humanity's newest genocide in Tigray.

Keywords

Amhara, ethnicity, federalism, genocide, Tigray

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Introduction

Deciphering why man, the "rational animal", annihilates members of his own species is a daunting task, especially when the victims are core people of a polity much like the Tigrayans in Ethiopia. Depending on primary and secondary sources such as travelers' accounts, reports of official delegates, diplomatic correspondences, books by military and political officers, contemporary intellectuals and researchers, and media outlets, the paper delves into the state-building process in Ethiopia to determine if past intercommunal relations could shed light on the road to the Tigray tragedy—humanity's most recent genocide.

Vilifying people as "parasites," "bloodsuckers," and "evil creatures" (Nazis to Jews), "traitors" (Ittihadists to Armenians), "stinking brute" and "detestable" (Khemer Rouge to urban dwellers, intellectuals as well as religious and ethnic minorities), "cockroaches" and "snakes" (Interahamwe to Tutsi), and "dogs" (Serbs to Bosniaks) are all dehumanizing terms historically applied in genocidal situations. Similarly, calling Tigrayans "daytime hyenas," "cancer," "tumor," and "weeds" freed the Amhara perpetrators to banish their Tigrayan victims from the human family and annihilate them. They explicitly vowed to "wipe [them]out" and "destroy" them. To rob Tigrayans of their last vestige of human dignity, the perpetrators weaponized rape. They manufactured and weaponized famine. Encouraged by the willful silence of the international community, actively backed by the Amhara bystanders, and blessed by the powerful Orthodox Church, the perpetrators have hitherto killed more than a million Tigrayans. As this article goes to press, in Southern and Western Tigray as well as Northern and Eastern Tigray, which are still occupied by the Amhara and Eritrean perpetrators respectively, the Tigrayan youth continue to disappear. Further, famine, as a mechanism of genocide, continues to kill people relentlessly. The clearly articulated intent and the actions (some videotaped) of the Amhara and Eritrean perpetrators have been to annihilate the Tigrayans entirely or at least to make them inconsequential in the socio-political and economic landscape of the Horn of Africa. It is a textbook genocide.

Yet, the progression of events that occurred between the ascendancy of Abiy Ahmed to power in April 2018 and the declaration of a genocidal war by Ethiopia and its partners—United Arab Emirates, Somalia, and Eritrea, against Tigray on November 4, 2020, requires a proper context. Identifying the links and missing-links in the state-building process can illuminate why a genocide has occurred in the very cradle of Ethiopia's 3000-year-old history/mythology.

The Gestation of the "Prison of Nations"

Regarding injustices in Ethiopia, the scholar of nationalism, Ernest Gellner, wrote that "The Amhara empire was a prison house of nations if ever there was one." Prior to the formation of the "prison," however, statehood in Ethiopia existed for two thousand years. Centered in today's Eritrea and Tigray, with its Red Sea port of Adulis, the Axumite Empire dominated the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula across the Red Sea for most of the first millennium CE. With Muslim Arabia controlling the

Red Sea trade beginning in the 8th century, Axum began to decline and by the 10th century it was no more. The subsequent political system was decentralized. Its principal autonomous rival states were Tigray and Amhara. The former, with its *Medri Bahri* (Maritime region) under the *Baher Negasi* in Derbarwa, was the first region in the decentralized political landscape that one encountered when entering from the Red Sea.[1] Warlords vied against one another for primacy in what came to be known as the *Zemene Mesafint* (Era of the Princes). A weak monarchy in Gondar tried to snatch power from the nobility to no avail. Warlords such as *Ras* Mikael of Tigray were forces to be reckoned with,[2] until the ascendency of Tewodros to power in 1855. However, without fully realizing his vision for unity Tewodros died in 1868. His Tigrayan successor Yohannes (1872-89) implemented his vision more effectively.

*Eighteen seventy-tw*o ushered in the Tigrayan administration which was determined to not let Ethiopia slide to the *Zemene Mesafint*. Further, at all cost, Yohannes IV would not cede Ethiopian territory to foreign invaders—Mahdist Jihadists, Egyptian expansionists, and Italian imperialists. Yohannes was more successful than his predecessor in effectively uniting the country. Apparently, realizing that the unitarian system was not going to work, he was interested in neither cultural homogenization nor political centralization. He did not impose his mother tongue, *Lisane Tigray*, as the official language of the country. Nor did he put pressure on Ethiopians to assimilate into the Tigrayan culture. Secondly, he devolved power to regional lords whom he crowned as *Negus* (king) under his overlordship as *Neguse Negast* (king of Kings). Under this federal system the various regions, such as Gojjam and Shoa, enjoyed autonomy. *De facto* federalism prevented Ethiopia from sliding back into the *Zemene Mesafint*.

The federal formula of devolving power helped regional leaders to consolidate power and conspire against Yohannes. Concurrently, the *Neguse Negast* had to deal with the external powers of Egypt, Mahdist Sudan, and Italy. Heavily relying upon his redoubtable general *Ras* Alula, Yohannes defeated them all. Resisting Queen Victoria's pressure to cede territories to Italy to avoid war, both Yohannes and Alula vehemently refused to cede an "inch" of their land, asserting that the natural border of their country was the Red Sea.[3] In 1889, though, Yohannes was at bay in a triangular trap—the Mahdists from the north-west, the Italians from the Red Sea coast in the north, and the Shoan Amhara *Negus* Menelik from the south were all advancing on him.

For the Tigrayans, the trans-Mareb[4] region was a homeland, a romantic subject, and an indivisible source of their identity for which they were ready to die. Alula vehemently rejected Queen Victoria's pressure to cede the Massawa hinterland of Saati to Italy, unless he became the governor of Rome.[5] For the Tigrayans, land was not a mere physical object or a sort of merchandise that was disposable at whim. It was a homeland with emotional attachment. Thus, they had to pay a heavy price defending it and keeping Ethiopia's sovereignty by defeating the Egyptian expansionists at Gundet (1875) and Gura (1876), the Mahdist Islamists at Kufit (1885) and Metemma (1889), and the Italian colonialists at Dogali (1887). Victories did not come easily to the Tigrayans. The Egyptians were trained and led by former Con-

federate officers from Texas,[6] Italians were well-equipped with industrial weapons, and the Mahdists were battle-hardened. All the while, the regional lords, particularly *Negus* Menelik, were abusing their autonomy to consolidate power, even by conspiring with the very foreign forces that Yohannes and Alula were fighting against.[7] Indeed, Menelik had been on the Italian payroll for a long time. With Yohannes's death fighting the Mahdists in 1889, Menelik grabbed power and Italy readily "supported his candidature, and supplied him liberally with rifles, ammunition, money, and with European advisors."[8]

Eighteen eighty-nine signaled the end of de facto federalism and the beginning of a unitarian system of state-building in Ethiopia.

Sale of the Mareb Mellash

Eighteen eighty-nine signaled the end of *de facto* federalism and the beginning of a unitarian system of state-building in Ethiopia, preceded by the sale of the *Mareb Mellash* (north of the river Mareb). The Italian offer of European advisors, armaments, and money to Menelik was not an act of altruism; it was an un-stated debt that had to be dearly paid back from the Wutchale Treaty (1889), ceding the *Mareb Mellash* – dear to the heart of the Tigrayans but not to the Amhara power-wielders. And yet, equipped with forces of modernity, the advent of colonialism in the Horn of Africa helped Menelik to annex massive regions with diverse populations in the south. The Ivory Coasts, Gold Coasts, Algerias, Nigerias, Bechuanalands, and Nyasalands were all created by historical forces that both shrank and expanded. These same forces were also responsible for the emergence of modern Ethiopia, albeit in a different manner.[9]

Tigray's *Medri Bahri* (*Mereb Mellash*) which Menelik sold to the Italians, was where Yohannes and Alula had faced external challenges. When in 1890 Italy birthed Eritrea, the battlefields of Gundet, Gura, Kufit, and Dogali, where the Tigrayans defeated foreign forces in defense of Ethiopian sovereignty were now ceded and placed in Italian Eritrea. For the Amhara empire-builders, trans-Mareb Tigray was not a homeland. With no sentimental attachment, it was a mere physical object they could slice and sell on a whim.

Menelik signed the Wutchale Treaty with three objectives: enduring Italian friendship, payment in money and armaments, and weakening Tigray. The latter involved urging the Italians to advance from the Red Sea coast and occupy *Kebessa* (the highlands of *Mareb Mellash*) against the Tigrayan political establishment.[10] The Amhara-Italian alliance was mutually beneficial. Wutcahle provided the Italians with far more than what was requested in the 1887 Portal Mission of Queen Victoria, including the reassignment of *Ras* Alula from *Kebessa* to a different province. Hitherto formidable challenges to their colonial ambition, the Tigrayans alongside their renowned general, Alula, were neutralized. The Amhara ruling elite, too, needed

the elimination of Tigray as a power contender. With the *Mareb Mellash* gone, demographically and territorially diminished Tigray was no longer a threat. Gone was also *de facto* federalism which the Amhara rulers replaced with the unitarian formula of state-building so that an Ethiopia that mirrored their own ethnic identity could be created. And Wutchale accomplished this task thanks to Italian collusion.

But Eritrea was merely a stepping-stone to further advancement. By itself, Eritrea could not quench Italy's thirst for *posto al sole* (place in the sun) and *spazio vitale*, what the Germans called *der lebensraum* (living space), for its surplus population—unemployed, unemployable, and restless youth. Thus, in a matter of a few years after Wutchale, Italy started advancing south of the river Mareb only to be stopped at Adwa in 1896. Yet, despite a costly military victory at the battle of Adua, Menelik made no effort to clear Italy out of Eritrea and regain access to the Red Sea. That would have reunited his Tigrayan nemeses once again, undoing his major preoccupation of permanently weakening them. Consequently, Tigrayans on both sides of the river Mareb harbored deep grievances against the Amhara for converting their homeland into a salable and divisible merchandise. Not surprisingly, those under colonial rule felt betrayed by the very state that should have defended them: "we remained lost in the hands of the Italians."[11]

Tigray's misery continued. On top of the rinderpest that killed ninety percent of the region's cattle, the marauding Ethiopian soldiers ravaged it during the battle of Adua. In what came to be known in Tigray as *Zebene Shiye* (Shewan Era), diminished, emaciated, and depopulated Tigray could hardly serve *Ras* Alula as a base for a sovereign state.[12] Tigray's pathetic situation was decried by a contemporary intellectual:

> During the reign of Menelik II, Tigray is completely devastated. Nowhere in that county is there fertile land … The Tigrayan youths are not living at home. They are dispersed in all four corners. There are more ruins of its past greatness than residential huts… [Menelik] does not regard Tigrayans as his people. It would be a travesty for Ethiopia if an ethnic group as great as that of the Tigrayans is exterminated.[13]

Selling a portion to the Italians and keeping the rest under his thumb, Menelik kept the Tigray fate bleak: "At no time did the emperor show his consciousness of the need for a special care, wise conciliation for this turbulent province with its separate language and traditions, its viral independence…"[14] As such, the Ethiopians did not belong to a nation that normally is a community of people with shared memory and consensually built[15] and simply manifesting "the look of a God-given entity."[16] On the contrary, Ethiopia increasingly resembled an unlawful hodgepodge of ethnic groups. Crammed together, the system baselessly claimed that its people are God's chosen people living in a country that "stretches its hands unto God." Deified, the polity asks God to serve it, conflating the altar of God with the altar of the state camouflaged for Amhara ethnic nationalism.

During a time of great power, those in politics aimed to make Ethiopia synonymous with the Amhara people, effectively erasing the presence of other ethnic groups in the country. This narrow-minded belief, exemplified by the saying "The Amhara is to rule, not to be ruled," only served to fuel a counteractive sense of nationalism. Unlike in Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland where *anglicization* was not imposed but gradually transplanted,[17] *amharanization* was superimposed upon Ethiopia, albeit as ineffective as *russification* in 19th century Russia or *Turkification* in early 20th century Ottoman Empire. In reaction, Tigray "… remained conscious of its separateness, and hostile—sometimes with bitter and active, sometimes with a dull smoldering, resentment…"[18]

Although the wherewithal to forge a unitarian state was not there, the gradual exposure of the country to forces of modernity was a game-changer. With no threat from Tigray in the north, Menelik focused on the center. He allowed the French to build the railroad connecting their colony of Djibouti with his capital, Addis Ababa—*le chemin de fer Franco-Ethiopien*. As in France where "*Les routes, les chemines de fer, ces grandes moteurs de la cvilisation,*"[19] the railroad served Ethiopia as a conduit for glimmers of modernity, helping the regime to consolidate power. Forces of modernity in the form of Western education and a rudimentary bureaucracy were trickling in, metamorphosing the feudal political system into an embryonic absolutism that was going to reach its apex in the post-1941 era.

The brief Fascist occupation (1936-41) was a contributing factor. Italy was home to the largest surplus population in industrialized Europe. As such, it intended to make Ethiopia *spazio vitale* which was, according to *Signor* Alessandro Lessona, Minister for Italian Africa, "one of the decisive ideas of the Ethiopian enterprise."[20] For that reason, Italy invested in communication (transport, telephone, telegraph, postal services), money economy (Lire and Maria Theresa Thaler), etc. According to the British, Italy's investment in Ethiopia in five years far exceeded their investment during their forty years stay in Kenya.[21]

When Ethiopia regained its independence in 1941, the Amhara elite reaped the benefits of the country's limited exposure to modernity to consolidate their power by accelerating political centralization and cultural homogenization. The nascent printing press gave their language, Amharic, permanence and helped it to assume a more solid official status. As such, it ended up being an instrument of power for the absolutist monarchy.

The status of Amharic symbolized the cultural and socio-political supremacy of its speakers. Not knowing Amharic led to consequences, up to and including a bullet in the head. For a current example, in a video clip that circulated on the internet, Ethiopian soldiers rounded up and tortured a group of Tigrayans as they were readying their guns to shoot them in the Tigray genocide. Whereas the elderly victims mumbled in broken Amharic, to satisfy their tormentors, vainly hoping to save their lives, a teenager, who was being roughed up and slapped in the face for not speaking Amharic, told his tormentors in his native tongue and with frightened body language and a desperate voice: "I do not know Amharic. I am a peasant."[22] Indeed,

knowing and lacking the language can be a matter of life and death. An impeccable knowledge of the language saved the life of a Tigrayan in the genocide in Western Tigray. Now a refugee in Sudan, the young man told the *New York Times*: "I had to speak my fluent Amharic to survive."[23] Making up only a quarter of the Ethiopian population, the Amhara are so touchy that they easily overreact to any form of challenge to their hegemony, including the status of their language when used as a deadly weapon of oppression and assimilation. Blessed are the people who were colonized for they do not have to worry which of their tongues will be the working language of their states. The former British multi-ethnic colonies such as Ghana and Nigeria have English, the former French colonies like Senegal and Congo have French, and the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique have Portuguese for their official languages.

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Europe passed through the daunting task of state-building with significant success. Regardless of how language unity was achieved in France, there are some similarities between the Ethiopian and French state-building processes. Unlike France, which has significantly succeeded in presenting itself to most of its populous as the will of the French to be French,[24] Ethiopia has not succeeded in portraying itself as the will of the Ethiopians to be Ethiopians. Yet, there is a striking similarity in how the rulers consolidated power. Emperor Haile Selassie identified himself with the state in the same vein as the French king Louis XIV. Like the latter (*le roi soleil*), the Ethiopian monarch (ጸሃዩ ነጉስ) shared the exact same title of "sun-king." Both enjoyed a divine stature. In the case of the Ethiopian absolutist monarch, even the Orthodox Church mass services included prayers of "bless the King, Haile Selassie." As God's anointed, it did not suffice to merely wish him a long life, public speeches and documents had to end with "Eternal Life for His Majesty Haile Selassie I." Eternity, not mere longevity, was what the monarch wished for himself and the public consented.

And yet, unlike the significant success in France, Ethiopia did not transition into a nation-state. The first challenge to political centralization and cultural homogenization, the twin pillars of absolutism in a unitarian system, came from Tigray. Although weakened by Wutchale, Tigray remained a stern opponent of the system. In the post-Fascist era, like *Ras* Alula before him, *Ras* Seyoum Mengesha, the grandson of Emperor Yohannes, was mulling over Tigrayan independence.[25] That was why Emperor Haile Selassie decided to confine him to Addis Ababa, contrary to the 1941 British warning:

> It is certain that only civil war can result if the Emperor is encouraged by us to believe that we will allow him to crush … all the principal nobles such as Ras Seyoum, in order to make himself an absolute and undisputed monarch and autocrat … Nothing that we can do or omit can alter the fact that Ras Seyoum is by right of birth and descent king of Tigre.[26]

At the same time, *Dejazmatch* Haile Selassie Gugsa, another descendent of Emperor Yohannes and former son-in-law of Emperor Haile Selassie, who had cooperated with Fascist Italy, was exiled to Seychelles. Compounded by the confinement of *Ras* Seyoum to Addis Ababa, his exile created a power vacuum in Tigray, nourishing a sense of insecurity among the public. Unsurprisingly, the absence of the two Tigrayan scions from the political platform revived the traditional Tigrayan resentment to Amhara rule,[27] leading to the 1943 *Woyane* insurgency. Unable to suppress it, Haile Selassie appealed to the US and the UK for help. While the US was mulling over giving him what he wanted-- armaments for 5000 soldiers, two fighter planes, as well as direct US bombardment of Tigray, the British agreed to suppress the insurgency.[28] They sent three Bisley aircraft from Aden to relentlessly bomb Tigray, until the insurgents surrendered[29] and the region was overrun by *Ras* Abebe Aregay's marauding Amhara forces. British technology prevailed over the people's just cause and *Woyane* remained ingrained in the Tigrayan psyche and safely stored in public memory, nurturing a distinct sense of Tigrayan identity. Grievances, far more than glories, enrich the collective sense of identity.[30]

Not realizing that the absolutist and unitary Ethiopia was qualitatively different from the decentralized and *de facto* federalist Ethiopia they had left in 1889, Eritreans returned to Ethiopia in 1952. But no sooner did they rejoin Ethiopia than they were put off by the Amhara unitarian nationalism. Feeling evicted, they fired their first secessionist shots in 1961. Subsequently, the Eritrean struggle was emulated by the Tigrayans and the Oromo in the rest of the country. Amhara, unlike Piedmont and Prussia in the Italian and German contexts,[31] did not come up with a nationalist doctrine to legitimize Ethiopian unity. Having failed to develop a pan-national identity, it has yet to be justified why the various ethnic groups should continue to live together. Ethiopian ethnic groups do not, for example, share the kind of values that keep Francophone and Anglophone Canada together, or a shared language as in the case of the Germans or the Italians.[32] Short of "a daily plebiscite,"[33] the country's bitterly contested territory and history along with the absence of shared primordial elements, beg the question of why Ethiopia should remain united.

Tigrayan Reactive Nationalism

Nineteen ninety-one for Ethiopia was Year Zero. The unitarian state project of the Amhara power-wielders had encountered stiff resistance primarily from the Eritreans (1961-91), finally under the custodianship of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigrayans (1975-91), led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the umbrella organization it led, the Ethiopian People's Revolu-

tionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The former wanted to secede, and the latter to give unity a chance and remain within Ethiopia. When Asmara, the Eritrean capital, and Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, fell to the insurgents, Eritrea broke away and the rest of the country was on the brink of dissolution. As in 1872 when the Tigrayans saved the country from backsliding into the *Zemene Mesafint*, again in 1991, they decided to pick up the pieces and start a new beginning for the country with three goals: sovereignty, unity, and prosperity. In the period between 1991-2018, threats from Eritrea in the north and al-Shabaab in the east were effectively dealt with, making Ethiopia the most orderly, stable, and peaceful country in an otherwise troubled Horn of Africa.

Moreover, Ethiopia's unity was retained using the federal formula. In ethnically beleaguered societies, accommodating diversity is the ideal conflict-management mechanism.[34] Accordingly, the TPLF/EPRDF had to reframe the ever-protean Ethiopian identity to address ethnic grievances by introducing federalism that divided the country into nine autonomous regions (*killils*). Unlike the failed unitarian system of the Amhara political actors, the TPLF/EPRDF came up with a political formula of nonmandatory unity of all the ethnic groups, like the Swiss system of voluntary union.[35] "A necessary evil,"[36] it was designed to satisfy the psychological needs of the non-core ethnic groups. Although the Amhara elite still enjoyed many privileges, including having their tongue as the official language and dominating the bureaucracy, it was too difficult for them to accept that "Amhara" did not equate with "Ethiopia" and the Ethiopians did not mean just the Amhara. They had to share Ethiopia with others and an inclusive pan-Ethiopian identity had yet to emerge. Accordingly, *amharanization* had to pursue a slower path the way *anglicization* did in Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. That was why, regardless of how much the TPLF/EPRDF transformed Ethiopia (1991-2018), and they did profoundly change it for the better, the Amhara political actors continued to oppose them. No longer was the unitarian status quo tenable as Meles Zenawi stated in 1991 that ethnic federalism was the last-ditch effort to keep the country united: "A feudal monarchy and a repressive dictator could not hold Ethiopia together. Now we are trying another way. If Ethiopia breaks apart, then it was not meant to be."[37] Just as Yugoslavia's viability depended upon the political commitment to full equality of its constituent nationalities, so does Ethiopia's survival depend upon the full commitment to federalism of its constituent ethnic groups.

Finally, the TPLF/EPRDF was committed to shedding Ethiopia's image of being a perennial posterchild of famine and poverty. Determined to make it a middle-income country by 2025, the Tigrayan elite decided to crank up the economy. The new leaders vowed: "Development should be a matter of national survival … We can't have patriotism with an empty belly, and we can't have democracy with an empty belly either… Our national survival is not guaranteed unless we overcome poverty."[38]

Fighting poverty required a multi-faceted transformation program in health, education, agriculture, export trade, and industrialization. Health stations were built in all communities, bringing about a substantial decline in child mortality and a

growth in life expectancy. Birth rates dropped more dramatically than anywhere else in Africa. Education expanded when primary, secondary, and tertial schools multiplied. Student enrollment quadrupled. Since 1990, small farmers doubled their grain yields as agricultural productivity improved. Sales of cash crops such as coffee and sesame also multiplied significantly. Leather, textile, cement, and sugar manufacturing plants proliferated. The national airline, Ethiopian Airlines, grew quickly and became extremely successful at a time when many carriers worldwide failed. Sub-Saharan Africa's first modern light railway (tram) system was built in the capital city.[39] The Djibouti-Addis railway was updated …[40]

The economic dynamism reduced poverty by a third just between 2000 and 2015.[41] By then, as President Barack Obama acknowledged, Ethiopia became "one of the fastest-growing economies in the world," and in 2017, double the African average, it became the fastest growing economy in the world. The brainchild of the TPLF, the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) by the Blue Nile symbolized the economic resurgence of Ethiopia. Expected to double Ethiopia's power generation, it was essential to give the country a middle-income status. An Israeli historian attested to the marvelous transformation of the country:

> I have frequented the country since 1970, and it looks now moving forward like never before … it would be proper to declare that 1991 was the first real revolution in Ethiopia's two millennia history… it is definitely marching in the right direction, and in an ever [-] quickening pace … Consequently [,] it enjoys stability, continuity, and an amazing momentum of progress… A 2014 visitor, one who knows the country, cannot but marvel. Ethiopia is practically under construction. New buildings, roads, railways, factories, shopping malls, … The middle class is growing fast in both the rural and urban areas… Ethiopia of today is not anymore that poor a place. Rather, it is a better place to be born into than most African and Middle Eastern neighboring countries… Ethiopia is now a land of real promise.[42]

Obviously, Ethiopia's political, economic, and diplomatic ascendancy would have been unthinkable without good governance to ensure a lack of corruption and high security which was provided by "the extraordinary leadership in Meles Zenawi, perhaps the closest thing Africa has enjoyed to Lee Kuan Yew – super smart, pragmatic and with an authoritarian streak."[43] The stellar growth was set to make Ethiopia "a showcase country on the African continent and to prove that African lions can follow the Asian tigers."[44] Ultimately, however, the undeniable success of the Tigrayan mission was going to backfire. The economic growth did not quite match with the youth bulge. And youth unemployment grievances took ethnic dimension. All the sacrifices the Tigrayans made during the armed struggle to oust the brutal military junta (1975-91) and the stellar transformation of Ethiopia from a posterchild of war, poverty, and famine to one of the most peaceful, orderly, and fastest-growing economies in the world (1991-2018) ended up being a thankless mission.

Amhara Unitarian Nationalism

> It is important to underline that the current leaders [of Ethiopia] may have playfully endangered the continued survival of the carefully knit country, but it will certainly be difficult to reconstitute it again (Tigray Government, October 2, 2020).[45]

Two thousand eighteen ended "the first real revolution in Ethiopia's two millennia historym" heralding the return of the Amhara unitarians to the saddle of power with a vengeance against the Tigrayans. In 2018, in a redux of history, a catastrophe that was far worse than the one that had befallen them in 1889, was going to be unleashed by the Amhara unitarians. The mysterious death of Meles Zenawi in 2012 was followed by a power vacuum that lingered for six years until foreign forces who had stakes in the country decided to act. Indeed, the USA had been concerned with Chinese engagement in Ethiopia. And it decided not to miss the opportunity. In 2018, with the active involvement of the US Ambassador in Addis Ababa, Michael Raynor, and the US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Donald Yamamoto, Abiy Ahmed, a political novice and an unknown individual, was put in power.[46] The US was solely focused on its own interests of elbowing the Chinese out and dumping the "Developmental State" economic doctrine which was the bedrock of Ethiopia's transformation from a land of despair to "a land of real promise" and replacing it with the Western neo-liberalism, irrespective of the long-term consequences of its actions on the country. It was without Plan B that the West had intervened in Cuba, Congo, and Ghana in the 1960s, Uganda and Chile in the 1970s, as well as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya more recently, just to mention a few. Except in Cuba, where Plan A succeeded, the post-intervention situation that resulted has been nothing less than a disaster. The situation in Ethiopia is reminiscent of what happened in the Congo before. Like in the Congo, it was the lesser-known US officials such as Ambassadors Raynor and Yamamoto who had a significant impact on the future of Africa's second most populous country, Ethiopia.

No sooner did Abiy come to power than he hurled Ethiopia into a self-destructive war. In a downward spiral, he is spearheading its slide "from being an exporter of stability and peace to exporting instability and fear."[47] Abiy's rise to power was sudden and unexpected, but he lacks the necessary skills and experience to lead effectively. His mentor Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea shares these shortcomings, in stark contrast to the capable leadership of Meles Zenawi. Abiy's ability to learn on the job is also questionable. With no mass following of his own, in 2018 he was disoriented, desperately looking for a comfort zone.[48] Immediately after his ascent to the helm of power, he rushed to Mekelle to address the public in the Tigray Stadium, paying homage to the sacrifices that the Tigrayans made during the armed struggle against the *Derg* military junta (1975-91). He paid tribute to the martyrs for "democracy", "justice", and "development" in Ethiopia, "particularly Comrade Meles Zenawi". Unable to foresee his genocidal mindset, Tigray welcomed him. So did the rest of the country, except for the chauvinistic spectrum of the Amhara political elite.

Capped by the award of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, the international community too lavishly showered him with praise,[49] including overplaying his relative youth, notwithstanding the fact that at 42, and was one of the oldest people to come to power in Ethiopia – Haile Selassie, Mengistu, and Meles being younger when they assumed power. At 36, Meles, for instance, was six years younger and much wiser than Abiy, but no one made a fuss about his youth. Simply put, people were taken in by Abiy-mania. In any case, at no time in history had an unknown figure come to power with so much political capital in an Ethiopia that was enjoying "stability, continuity, and an amazing momentum of progress." Unearned, it was simply impossible for Abiy to appreciate the political capital that fell into his lap. He squandered it – easy come, easy go.

Since Abiy cannot understand the economic and political complexity of the country, he has no idea how to deal with it. Utopic, he makes wildly outlandish claims. In marked contrast to what Meles said in 1991 about his vision for Ethiopia that in ten years he would be satisfied if every Ethiopian would have three meals a day, Abiy declared that "By 2050, Ethiopia will be one of the two superpowers of the world."[50] He did not even have a grasp of how deep the country's ethnic fault lines were. A neophyte to politics, he could not come up with an all-embracing and inclusive political formula. Instead, he decided to pick and choose allies at the risk of alienating others. Consequently, it was expedient for him to reverse course and turn his back on Tigray and embrace its two formidable rivals: the Amhara political actors and Eritrea who were going to lead him on his suicidal path. Uncalled for and out of nowhere, he instantly adopted an overtly crude anti-Tigrayan rhetoric and policy. Stunned by his mercurial behavior and erratic vacillation, the Tigrayan youth who had warmly embraced him in the Tigray Stadium only months earlier gave him the apt moniker *Meshrefet*.[51] They easily perceived his utopian "change" as the dystopian "turbulence." Abiy-mania vanished in Tigray as quickly as it appeared.

With no vision whatsoever, his motto became all about a nebulous "change" which was accompanied by "love shall prevail" and, most notably, anther nebulous term "synergy" which he dubbed his political "philosophy." Surprisingly, his lofty-appearing and high-sounding empty terms helped him win, in a Machiavellian sense, a messianic illusion. Some such as the guru of Amhara chauvinism and avowed unitarian, Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, embraced him as an "elect of God"[52] which was fitting with Abiy's messianic delusion: "When I was seven years old, my mother told me I was going to be the seventh king of Ethiopia. Since then, it has been inculcated in my mind that I was going to be a king."[53] In lavish admiration, the professor continued: "Abiy's mind is advanced. He knows a lot. He has read a lot. Abiy has a special mind. He is wonderful… He reads. Twenty, thirty years ahead of his time."[54]

"Change" meant undoing the TPLF/EPRDF achievements during the previous 27 years. Anti-Tigrayan bigotry was officially sanctioned to serve Abiy as a "technology of power."[55] As a mechanism of consolidating power, the Tigrayan-alienating policy disseminates factually wrong, misleading, and demeaning ideas concerning

them. In genocidal euphemism, the newly minted hate narrative refers to the Tigrayans as "strangers," "daytime hyenas," "weeds," "cancer," "junta," etc. These hate terms spread like a wildfire among the Amhara who have what the Ethiopian social media icon Tewodros Tsegaye dubbed "narrative hegemony." "Junta," for instance, stuck among the Amhara as a derogatory term to belittle Tigrayans. Another signal of what Abiy had for Tigrayans was his courting of the US-based ultra-jingoistic media, Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT), which on August 6, 2016, aired an explicit call and a road map for annihilating Tigrayans.

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Although the national identity of a people is sustained by the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, the Amhara identity of Ethiopia is webbed by outrightly assaulting and erasing the 27-year-long era of peace, stability, and awe-inspiring economic growth that made Ethiopia, as stated by Haggai Erlich, "a better place to be born into than most African and Middle Eastern neighboring countries." Whilst Abiy Ahmed called it "an era of darkness", his staunch apologists and supporters of his genocidal regime such as the historian Bahru Zewde dismiss it as a "dismal record."[56] The fact that the Amhara intellectuals willfully overlook his buffoonery and liability, allow him to surrender Ethiopia's sovereignty to foreign states like Eritrea, to take the country on a suicidal mission of internecine civil wars, and that they either feign ignorance or fully support the Tigray genocide, adequately reveals the depth of the ethnic fault lines in the country. Frequently stressing that "even if he is a dog, he is our dog," akin to the jingoistic psyche of "My country, right or wrong," they are firmly behind Abiy whom they extol as "Moses."

Matter-of-factly, though, some of Abiy's public discourses recall Slobodan Milošević's speech to the Serbs and Theoneste Bagosora's speech to the Hutu, relegating Tigrayans to a severe security dilemma. Since words of leaders in a deeply divided society have very serious consequences, Abiy's coded messages and euphemistic name calling, as well as explicit hate speeches, have had deadly consequences. No mass violence starts with gas chambers, bullets, or machetes. Every mass violence begins with words. Greased by a wealth of grievances from their memory pool, such as the post-1889 period, Tigrayans have suffered from what a scholar of East Europe called "fear of the future, lived through the past."[57]

Abiy went beyond rhetoric. Even GERD, one of the Tigrayan signature achievements, was targeted. After dismissing it as a mega project that was built for mere political consumption, a sort of a white elephant, he made a mysterious trip to Egypt on June 9-10, 2018, publicly swearing in the name of Allah ("W*elahi*") not to hurt Egypt. The next month, and two days after he had said that GERD might not be finished in a decade, its chief engineer, Simegnew Bekele, was killed on July 26, 2018. Unexplained, three turbines of the dam were closed, reducing the intended capacity of power production from more than 6000 to less than 4000 kilowatts. It appears that the bullet that killed Engineer Simegnew also killed the dam and has stunted Ethiopia's economic growth.

The first thing that Abiy did after assuming the helm of power was to "normalize" relations with Eritrea on Eritrean terms. Just like the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939) was not only a non-aggression pact but also a partitioning of Poland between the USSR and Germany and the Wutchale Italo-Amhara Treaty (1889) was not just about mutual friendship, but also about dismembering Tigray (Article III), the Abiy-Isaias Pact was not only about normalizing relations but about mutually devouring Tigray as well. Encircled by Amhara and Eritrea, Tigray's security dilemma was so severe that it had no choice but to brace itself for a deadly struggle for sheer survival. For Abiy, as for Menelik, Tigray is not a homeland with emotional attachment and is therefore disposable. And just like Menelik did not regard Tigrayans as his people, Abiy vowed to destroy and wipe them out.

The Eritrean Dilemma: Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don't

A political accident birthed by Wutchale, Italy wanted to use Eritrea as a launching pad to invade Ethiopia, its principal target for a *spazio vitale*. Lagging far behind in the scramble for colonies, Italy appeared to be suffering from a small man syndrome. Consequently, unparalleled by colonial standards, it lavishly invested capital in Eritrea to make it a lovely "white man's country,"[58] giving the capital city, Asmara, the visage of a transplanted European town, aptly dubbed *piccola Roma*. Italian capital and skilled manpower were running the industrial economy while Italian and Arab merchant capital was responsible for the commercial economy. Normally, such socio-economic changes enable people to imagine their sense of collective identity. Indeed, it was similar material conditions at the turn of the 20th century that enriched the French political awareness to transform their sense of *mon viallage* into their sense of *mon pays*.[59] In the Eritrean context, however, natives were not integrated into the Italian economy, society, and culture. Not only was there a remarkable distance between urban and rural Eritrea, but the gap between urban natives and Italian settlers was also extreme. The indigenous people were "crowded into latrine-less native quarters, which lacked enough water for even their unambitious needs."[60] This apartheid-style segregation was eased after 1941 when Italy surrendered its colonies in World War II. Thereafter, natives claimed *piccola Roma*, proudly calling themselves "Asmarino," and continued to identify with the colonial fabric of Eritrea

that had been exposed to forces of modernity. Yet, the Italian character of Eritrea lingered:

> Without the Italian staff, the [British] Administration could not have functioned; without skilled Italian labour, the British and American war projects could never have been undertaken; without Italian industrial and agricultural enterprise, the Eritrean economy would have collapsed … [61]

In 1952, the UN decided to return significantly modernized Eritrea to predominantly agrarian Ethiopia; but the perception of being far more Westernized than the Ethiopians who had not been colonized, contributed to the desire to go it alone (1961-91). By 1991, when the liberators triumphantly entered Asmara, however, the Italian industrial capital and skilled manpower along with the Italian and Arab merchant capital had vanished. *Piccola Roma*'s magnificent art deco buildings were miserably falling apart, and its beautiful boulevards were without traffic and aging. In 1991, far from being *piccola Roma*, Asmara was a somnolent town, a mere shadow of its bubbly past.

A century after its birth in 1890, Eritrea became independent in 1991. However, the liberators were clueless about leadership beyond sovereignty for the former Italian colony. Political independence was an end game, not a means to advancing the socio-economic wellbeing of the people. Neither Biafra nor Katanga, Eritrea is resource-poor, as the post-Italian British caretakers noticed. On July 15, 1949, the then British Administrator of the region, F.G. Drew, sent a message to the Foreign Office in London, verifying that "It is [a] debatable point as to whether Eritrea could ever be made economically viable. On balance, I think it must be accepted that in the absence of the discovery of considerable mineral wealth it could not." Understandably, after a three-decade-long devastating war for independence, Eritrea in 1991 was in a much worse shape than in 1949. As such, it had no economy to sustain its independence. And yet, the liberators vowed to make it Africa's Singapore.[62] However, a yawning gap separated the dream from reality. At best *singaporizing* Eritrea could only be a "distant dream."[63]

In practice, the liberators looked to Ethiopia for subsidy. And the Tigrayans in power were willing to subsidize Eritrea's independence (1991-97), allowing it to use the Ethiopian currency *birr*, giving it 2 billion *birr* (~ US $500 million), thus allowing Eritreans significant access to the Ethiopian economy. But it was only a matter of time before the misplaced utopia of *singaporizing* Eritrea was going to clash with the reality of how far Ethiopia could subsidize Eritrea's independence. With no economy of its own to speak of, but inebriated with nationalism, in 1997 Eritrea issued its own currency, *naqfa*, and demanded its equal conversion with the *birr*. For Ethiopia, this was too much to take and the two parted ways. In 1998, using a border issue as a pretext, Eritrea invaded Ethiopia and in a two-year-long war that claimed 100,000 lives, Ethiopia prevailed. By then, Eritrea had fought with all its neighbors – Yemen, Sudan, Djibouti, and finally its benefactor TPLF/EPRDF's Ethiopia. Thereafter,

Eritrea has had the façade of a stillborn state which scapegoated Tigray for its economic malaise. A political accident, it could not live with Ethiopia, it could not live without Ethiopia.[64]

Like Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia has no idea how to lead a country in peacetime. With no political vision whatsoever, he chose to play the anti-Tigrayan ethnic card to earn himself a power base among the chauvinistic Amhara elite who had been dissatisfied with the dismantling of the unitarian system, which previously gave them a monopoly of power. Initially suspicious of Abiy, they have since become his unconditional supporters. Secondly, Aiby's intense desire for authoritarianism could not be fulfilled without subduing the Tigrayans who were the principal architects and the strongest defenders of the constitution.

Thus, crass anti-Tigrayanism led Abiy Ahmed to willfully surrender Ethiopia's sovereignty to Isais Afwerki, the dictator of the pariah state of Eritrea, commonly known as the African North Korea.[65] Isaias, during his thirty-year reign, believed that leadership was defined by engaging in war. Unfortunately, under his leadership, Eritrea became known for its massive refugee crisis. Abiy's submission provided the perfect opportunity for the Eritrean autocrat to seek revenge against the TPLF/EPRDF, who defeated him in 2000 and denied him unrestricted access to Ethiopia's economy. In the process, they effectively downsized his wild ambition to make Eritrea the Singapore of Africa. In a shout-out to the return of the unitarian Amhara, he publicly cherished the departure of his Tigrayan nemeses from the political scene as "game over" and vowed to bring about a clean slate (ሕጽቦ) in Tigray. Politicide, at face value, "clean slate," was going to become a full-blown genocide. Thereafter, the bromance between Abiy and Isaias took off, leading to numerous trips between Asmara and Addis Ababa. Some of their overt and covert chummy meetings included the leaders of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Somalia. They started charting the master plan of annihilating Tigrayans. Whereas US-client UAE and US-NATO ally Turkey supplied and operated sophisticated drones to make sure that Tigrayans did not have any means of defending themselves against the Amhara and Eritrean *genocidaires*, China and Russia made sure that the Tigray genocide was not discussed at the UN Security Council. As such, the international community has been far beyond a mere bystander to the Tigray genocide. Outgunned and outnumbered, virtually against the rest of the world, the Tigrayans have struggled for sheer physical survival and for the basic human right to exercise the Wilsonian self-determination. And, at the end of 2021, as they marched towards Addis Ababa to apprehend the *genocidaires*, the US was "frankly alarmed" and mulled over military intervention from its base in Djibouti to save the genocidal regime of Abiy Ahmed.[66] The world and its drones turned the tide in favor of the regime which comfortably sits in the saddle of power with no fear of accountability for the genocide it committed.

The Intent

In 1872, the Tigrayans in power prevented Ethiopia from lapsing into fragmentation by introducing *de facto* federalism as a mechanism of state-building. In 1889, they

lost power to the Amhara, the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, who had a different vision for Ethiopia. Unlike the Tigrayans, they wanted to transform the empire-state into a nation-state. This unitarian path of the state-building process was halted in 1991 when the TPLF/EPRDF assumed power and introduced ethnic federalism to accommodate diversity, to the dismay of the Amhara unitarians. The ascent of the latter to power in 2018, turned the constitution into a battleground where the constituency of the architects and defenders of the federalist formula, the Tigrayans, have been explicitly targeted for annihilation.

For nearly three years following April 2018, no opportunity was missed to weaken Tigray so that when war broke out in November 2020, the people meekly accepted their fate of annihilation. More than 110,000 Tigrayans were cleansed from the Amhara region in northern Ethiopia and returned to Tigray in 2018. Far from trying to halt their plight, Abiy even denied them any federal assistance to be resettled in their native land. Further, Tigray was denied its share of the international food aid given to Ethiopia in the form of a "safety net." When there was a locust outbreak in the country, the government planes spread pesticides in Amhara, but refused to spray any pesticides in Tigray, despite the pleas of the people. Worse still, when Tigrayan residents in Israel bought a drone to be used for spraying pesticides in Tigray, the regime refused to allow it to pass, keeping it grounded in Addis Ababa. The government sent face masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to all school children in the country except Tigray. The federal budget for the *killil* (US $ 281 million) for the fiscal year was blocked.

Anti-Tigrayanism culminated when the region was put under siege. Even world class Tigrayan athletes in Addis Ababa had difficulty leaving the country to participate in world competition representing Ethiopia. When they did, they managed to win medals in Valentia, Spain (October 7,2020), and Eugene, Oregon, USA (2022). All the while, they did not know whether their loved ones in Tigray had been killed or were slowly dying from lack of food and medicine.

Moreover, explicit calls for exterminating Tigrayans have been made. The Amhara President, Agegnehu Teshagar, declared:

> So long as the enemy [Tigrayans] is not wiped out, we cannot have peace. These people are the enemy of the entire Ethiopian people. These people are the enemy of the Oromo people. These people are the enemy of the Afar. These people are the enemy of Gambella. The enemy of the Somali. Thus, we must take the war we started against these people to its logical conclusion.[67]

An advisor to Abiy, the Orthodox deacon, Daniel Kibret, called the Tigrayans a "tumor" that "must be removed. It is a bad tumor. Unless we do something about it, it will infect our vital organs—liver, lungs, intestine, heart …"[68] Continuing his hate speech campaign, he said that not only should the Tigrayans be exterminated but they must also be "erased from memory and from historical records. If people in the future want to study about them, they will have to conduct [archeological] excavation."[69]

The goals of the *genocidaires* to "wipe out" and "destroy" the Tigrayans were also conveyed to the EU Special Envoy to Ethiopia and Finnish Foreign Minister, Pekka Haavisto, in no uncertain terms.[70] Avoiding the term genocide, even the US Secretary of State, Tony Blinken, told Congress on March 20, 2021, that ethnic cleansing had taken place in Western Tigray, in an apparent reference to the 1.2 million Tigrayan civilians from the sub-region who are unaccounted for. Needless-to-say, with Samantha Power and Susan Rice as cabinet members, the Biden Administration is too familiar with genocide.[71] In June 2021, in sympathy with the suffering of the Tigrayans, EU High Representative, Josep Borell, said that "To the people of Tigray we say: you are not alone. To Ethiopia and Eritrea: you will be held accountable." Without taking any badly and immediately needed action, the world is generous with its sympathetic words. According to the UN Humanitarian Chief, Martin Griffiths, what Tigray is going through is a "stain on our conscience."

The clarity of the "*intent* to destroy [Tigrayans] *in whole or in part … as such* by killing or imposing conditions inimical to [their] survival" is unambiguous. To bury ethnic federalism and give the unitarian state craft another lease on life, the Tigrayan architects and defenders of the accommodationist constitution must be either eliminated or substantially downsized. Only then could Tigray no longer be an impediment to the Amhara unitarian vision of building an Ethiopia that reflects their own mirror image – a centralized and homogeneous polity. And yet, regardless of whether Tigray survives or perishes, as the Tigray Government correctly had warned in 2020, taking the genie out of the bottle may have been far easier than putting it back in. Ethnicity is double-edged. In moderation, as in the case of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopia (1991-2018), it can play a positive role in producing a "carefully knit country." In excess, as in the case of the current Ethiopia, it can play a negative role in disturbing the very ethnic coexistence that was meticulously constructed for nearly three decades and take the country in a downward spiral. Just as the Serbs not only killed the Bosniaks, Kosovars, and Croats, but also Yugoslavia, the Amhara did not just kill Tigrayans but also may have irretrievably killed Ethiopia and Ethiopia-ness. In effect, there is no longer an Ethiopia that stands on its own. It is only held together by the West. However, regardless of the wish and commitment of the West to keep it together as an anchor state of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, like Yugoslavia, may end up in the dustbin of history.

Conclusion

The failure of state-building to produce a cohesive pan-Ethiopian identity is the backdrop to the Tigray genocide. Having not been colonized, Ethiopia did not adopt a Lusophone, Francophone, or an Anglophone European identity. Instead, the Amhara elite, who took the helm of power at the end of the 19th century, decided to build the state as a mirror image of their ethnicity. However, their unitarian path of political centralization and cultural homogenization (*amharanization*) failed as the Eritrean and Tigrayan reactive nationalisms effectively challenged it and prevailed in 1991.

Whilst Eritrea broke away, the Tigrayans who took the helm of power resorted to the federal model of state-building to create a stable and orderly Ethiopia in the turbulent Horn of Africa. Their "developmental state" economic doctrine also transformed the country from a posterchild of poverty to an "African miracle." Yet, the dramatic transformation was not without critics.

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First, the US was unhappy with Ethiopia being used by China as a gateway to Africa. Second, Eritrea, which sought free access to the economy of a weak and servile Ethiopia, found the mammoth economy in an orderly society impenetrable. Finally, the Amhara elite, who lost social, cultural, and political hegemony, decried federalism, and allied with Eritrea to found ESAT in Washington, D.C. and launch their master plan of genocide against the Tigrayans which they aired in 2016. To the Amhara, ESAT ended up being what Milles Collins was to the Hutu in 1994, a shaper of the genocidal discourse.

In 2018, preoccupied with closing the gateway to Africa for the Chinese, the US shoved the Tigrayans out and prodded the Amhara into power. Right away, ESAT's genocidal blueprint was put into action. Besieged by hostile Amhara and Eritrean forces, Tigray was subjected to a severe economic embargo. In November 2020, UAE was sending drones from its base in the Eritrean port of Assab to destroy Tigray's defense capacity. Economically and militarily emaciated, Tigray became easy prey to the Amhara and Eritrean *genocidaires*. UAE, Turkey, China, Russia, and USA supported the state system in Ethiopia. As such, the Tigrayan existential struggle against the world was destined to be a losing battle. So far, more than a million have perished and as many have been displaced. Every genocide has its unique features. What gives the Tigray genocide its *sui generis* is that the international community has not been a passive bystander. In one form or another, directly or indirectly, it has been an active enabler of the genocide.

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