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Jean Monnet Network

*The European Union, Africa and China in the
Global Age*

Bradford (UK), Bujumbura (Burundi), Corinth (Greece), Dar es Salaam
(Tanzania), Gulu (Uganda), Kigali (Rwanda), Lancaster/Shandong
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Special Issue 2020 – Part 2

***Africa, the European Union and China Towards a New Global
Order –
From Pandemic to Renewed Integration and Global
Cooperation?***

**Part 2:
International Cooperation
Migrations
Youth and Education**

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Chinese cooperation with Africa in health infrastructure in the context of Coronavirus Crisis. BRI's new emerging priority?

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to analyse infrastructure cooperation projects China has carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa in the period 2013-2020, considering that since Xi Jinping's assumption China has spread more cooperation initiatives in infrastructure projects in the framework of the BRI. We focus on Chinese cooperation in health infrastructure, since COVID-19 global health emergency highlighted the lack of multilateral cooperation and gave China once again the opportunity to consolidate itself as a big player in the international system, this time in health issues.*

Key words: *China-Africa-BRI-Health Infrastructure-COVID19.*

Introduction

The beginning of the new century has witnessed a progressive transition of China's international performance. At first, it was marked by the attempts to prove that the country's impressive national growth would not turn it into a new superpower with hegemonic ambitions (Zheng, 2006; Jisi, 2013). However, recently, there has been evidence of its invigorating global power, which started with Xi Jinping's administration in 2013 and has consolidated through the international pandemic scene the beginning of 2020 (Ikenberry, 2020; Acharya, 2020; Cooley & Nexon, 2020; Tellis, 2020). In this way, the Chinese government has abandoned its traditional low-profile strategy (Zhao, 2015; Zhou, 2019) and has adopted policies aimed at a revisionist multilateralism that requires changing the established regulations

(Sanahuja, 2017) as well as playing a prominent role in the supply of global public goods (GPG).

It is in this context that China launched the ‘Silk Road’ initiative—as it was originally coined—which had been announced by Xi Jinping in 2013 with the aim of creating a trade and infrastructure network that would allow Asia to be connected to the rest of the world. It was renamed The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and experts have described it as one of the most ambitious and important programmes of the 21st century, striving for an integrated global economy architecture (Clarke et al., 2017; Oviedo, 2018). Such aspirations go against the tide of the global processes in the Western world, marked by a fragmented governance with a clear withdrawal of the American—and to a certain extent, European—global leadership, which demonstrate little capacity to articulate collective solutions for current unavoidable issues.

In its modernisation process, China has strengthened its infrastructure sector, achieving an annual growth of 20% since 1999. In this way, it has become the greatest infrastructure market of the world and a global leader in construction services (Johnston, 2016). In the last decades, Beijing has consolidated its global expansion by promoting its investments in multiple sectors and around all the continents. In this regard, there are specific policies, such as the ones introduced by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the ones included under the BRI, which have showed the Chinese interest in enhancing its large-scale infrastructure projects.

During the first stage of the BRI, energy and connectivity infrastructure were the most salient priority areas. In geographical terms, the BRI originally assigned a modest role to the African continent, but then it gained a place of special relevance. It is worth mentioning that the relations between the People’s Republic of China and Africa have been prolific since Maoist times. These bonds were re-launched in the nineties—after the Tiananmen events—and they have further developed since the early 21st century.

This is illustrated by the last report of the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA, 2018, 48), which states that ‘China’s investments and construction in African infrastructure amounted to \$25.7 billion in 2018. This is the highest level of commitments recorded since ICA started collecting such data, which averaged \$13.1 billion per year in the 2011-2017 period’. China remains as the first external financing source for infrastructure in the African continent, surpassing ICA members¹ and private investors. In the 2011-2018 period, the amounts allocated to the sectors of energy—49 billion—and transport—50.8 billion—remained practically stable (ICA, 2015; 2018), being West Africa and East Africa the most benefited regions.

In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic due to the rapid global spread of COVID-19 virus, being Wuhan (China) the epicentre of the outbreak. In a short period, there were also cases of coronavirus in sub-Saharan Africa. The global health emergency unveiled once more the lack of multilateral cooperation distinctive of these times and it has given China the opportunity to thrive as a strong player in the international system.

The present global health crisis, which inevitably implies a socio-economic crisis, leads to the following question: is it possible to reconfigure the BRI agenda giving the health issue higher priority? Considering the critical situation that the spread of coronavirus represents for Africa and its insufficient national healthcare systems, what cooperation policies is China developing towards the continent? Particularly, which health infrastructure projects were already running before the pandemic? Which of them have been enhanced? Which new health initiatives have been incorporated in the framework of the Sino-African cooperation?

¹ ICA members: African Development Bank, Development Bank of Southern Africa, European Commission, European Investment Bank, G7 countries and Russia, the Republic of South Africa and the World Bank Group.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the infrastructure cooperation projects that China has carried out in the 2013-2020 period, with special emphasis on health infrastructure. It should be noted that before the outbreak of the pandemic, China's cooperation in the region was frequently questioned for generating a debt trap. This means that China's unrestricted loans for infrastructure to African countries have led to an increase of their public debt. This unsustainable situation has driven them to go into debt with other countries in order to pay their obligations to China (Dussort & Marchetti 2019).

In this sense, the global pandemic context has revealed a world economic stagnation that makes past debts unlikely to be paid off. In consequence, some countries like China, which have provided Africa with considerable amounts of financial resources, are currently subject to the 'creditors trap', that is, to the fact that they cannot recover pre-pandemic loans in the near future. However, the Chinese government has doubled its efforts presenting two channels through which it will pursue debt relief for African countries: the G-20 Debt Suspension Initiative and bilateral support (Sun, 2020). Our hypothesis in this work is that the reinforcement of Chinese cooperation in this global crisis has given Beijing's government the opportunity to enhance its international image², validating its role as a 'great power' and supplier of global public goods.

For the sake of this research work, from a theoretical viewpoint, it is relevant to make the following conceptual clarifications. From our perspective, international cooperation policy must be understood as a dimension of a country's foreign policy (Lechini, Morasso, 2015). In this regard, it is defined as 'a field of public policy that comprises the transfer of financial resources (refundable and non-refundable) as well as the exchange

² The need for an improvement of its national image derives from the criticism at a global level due to the fact that COVID-19 proceeded from China and the government took several weeks to recognise the seriousness of the situation and inform WHO.

of genuine competences between countries, with the aim of promoting economic and social development' (Malacalza, 2014: 2).

In the framework of the 2006 'China's African Policy Paper', the relations between China and Africa materialised in a 'strategic association' that fostered cooperation in various spheres. In terms of economic cooperation, specific objectives were detailed in order to develop infrastructure cooperation. Moreover, according to the 'Infrastructure Consortium for Africa', it is possible to conceptualise infrastructure distinguishing between 'hard infrastructure', which encompasses physical infrastructure projects and 'soft infrastructure', which refers to all the measures that support physical infrastructure, including research, project planning and the development of capacities to execute them.

Finally, it is important to resort to the studies that have analysed the great powers that supply global public goods. Olson and Zeckhauser (1996) were the first to coin this term, which emerged linked to the United States foreign policy as a global superpower. Afterwards, Kindleberger (1986) and Gilpin (1987) claimed that the hegemonic power was the only actor with enough capacity and incentives to supply GPG. China's growing pre-eminence, emphasised in a pandemic context, has enlivened these debates. In this way, a GPG is defined as 'a benefit providing utility that is, in principle, available to everybody throughout the globe' (Ferroni & Mody, 2002: 35). Oliver et al. (2002: 40-41) identify five types or sectors of GPG: environment, health, knowledge, security and governance, all of which can be achieved through basic activities—related to GPG supply or production—and complementary activities—referred to the assistance provided for the supply of such good. Hence, international health cooperation appears as a suitable field to assess China's supply of GPG.

With the aim of developing the presented arguments, the first section of this article deals with China's 'hard infrastructure' in sub-Saharan countries, which has gained prominence in the early 21st century and has consolidated

with the launch of the BRI. Although these initiatives were mainly associated with energy and connectivity sectors, it is also possible to identify projects within the field of health. The second section analyses Chinese cooperation regarding 'soft infrastructure', highlighting the policies aimed at building health capacities, which have proliferated in the present pandemic scene as what is known as 'mask diplomacy' (Verma, 2020). Finally, the purpose of the conclusion is to prove the working hypothesis with the intention of effectively clarifying whether China is behaving as a major power that supplies GPG.

Pre-pandemic trends of China's hard infrastructure projects in sub-Saharan Africa

The Silk Road Economic Belt concept was introduced by President Xi Jinping for the first time in September 2013 during his visit to Kazakhstan, in a speech delivered at Nazarbayev University. After this event, Xi announced China would offer guidance on constructing the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to promote maritime cooperation. At the same time, he proposed establishing the AIIB to finance infrastructure construction and to promote regional interconnectivity and economic integration³.

Initially, the Economic Belt focused on China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe, while the Maritime Road went from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route. In other words, the African continent was being only tangentially considered. Nonetheless, in the 'Action Plan on the principles, framework, and cooperation priorities and mechanisms in the Belt and Road Initiative', released in 2015 by the Chinese government, Africa was included at the same level of importance than Asia and Europe. This document states that 'The Chinese government has drafted and published the Vision and Actions [...] to promote the implementation of the Initiative, instil vigor and vitality

³ Information from <http://english.www.gov.cn/news/top_news/2015/04/20/content_281475092566326.htm> (accessed 4 July 2020).

into the ancient Silk Road, connect Asian, European and African countries more closely (...)’ (The State Council, The People’s Republic of China, 2015).

From the beginning, the Chinese government established the following priorities for the Belt and Road Initiative: transportation infrastructure, easier investment and trade, financial cooperation and cultural exchange. The 2015 Action Plan confirmed these priorities and it considered health-related issues within the cooperation priority areas,⁴ being denominated ‘people-to-people bond’. It is worth noting that these issues essentially focused on soft infrastructure.

Therefore, as a first step, it was fundamental for the Chinese government’s initiative to improve physical connectivity among the countries involved. Regarding African countries, it is important to note that several hard infrastructure projects had already started before the announcement of the BRI. Most of them were part of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) but they were later framed within the global initiative.

In this sense, from 2000 onwards, Beijing has increased its role as provider of physical infrastructure in African countries. This is illustrated by the existing projects in sub-Saharan Africa that promote the transport sector, that is, railways, ports, roads and airports. As for railways projects, the most distinct are the following: Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, Zambia-Malawi Railway, Mali-Senegal Railway, the Benguela Corridor, the Lagos-Kano Railway, the Nairobi-Mombasa, the Belinga-Santa Clara Railway in Gabon and another railway in Mauritius that connects Nouakchotta Bofal (Foster et al., 2009; The Economist, 2016).

With regards to ports, at the beginning of 2019, there were at least 46 projects planned, financed, built or controlled by Chinese entities (operational or not): Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar,

⁴ The other mentioned cooperation priorities were policy coordination, facilities connectivity (infrastructure), trade and financial integration.

Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, the Republic of the Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde and Guinea (Devermont et al., 2019). It is worth mentioning that in some cases, there is more than one proposed port for the same country.

In terms of kilometers of built roads, Ethiopia, Botswana and Angola appear as the largest beneficiaries (Foster et al., 2009). Moreover, Chinese state-owned companies participated in the construction of airports in Angola, Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Republic of the Congo, Togo, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Liberia and Ethiopia (China Daily, 2015).

In this context, there are three considerations of central importance to be taken into account. In the first place, although health-related infrastructure projects were not an initial priority of the BRI, since 2017, they received a special denomination within this Chinese policy: the Health BRI—which will be analysed in the following section. In the second place, it was acknowledged that without physical connectivity projects among countries—such as roads or airports—it would not be safe to take patients or persons with serious health conditions to hospitals; and additionally, the provision of health assistance would be slow and problematic—namely, providing medical equipment, supplies or specialists. In the third place, China’s health-related hard infrastructure projects were never a matter of low politics, but a crucial point in the FOCAC agenda, mainly since 2006.

Within FOCAC’s framework, China has improved the level of investment and financial cooperation by supporting Africa’s infrastructure construction needs and capacity building in attaining universal health coverage. These comprised the construction of regional and community hospitals, treatment centers, infrastructure and facilities to combat infectious diseases and medical care delivery teams to tackle public health and sanitary crises (Tambo et al., 2016; Tambo et al., 2019). In 2006, China spent 35 million

dollars on health projects in Africa. By 2014, the Chinese government had disbursed an estimated 150 million annually (Wang & Bateman, 2018).

To be more specific, from 2010 to 2014, China helped build 30 hospitals and 30 malaria prevention and control centers in the African continent. Furthermore, it invested about 123 million dollars in supplies, anti-malaria drugs and medical equipment (such as ultramodern infrastructure and facilities used in emergency, resuscitation, pediatrics, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, medical imaging, etc.). In addition, it trained over 3,000 health care workers from various African countries (Tambo et al., 2016; Shuang et al., 2016). During the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, China worked to contain and control the epidemic in 13 countries of sub-Saharan Africa providing technical and non-technical assistance through bilateral and multilateral channels. In this framework, Chinese financial cooperation with the UN Response Multi-partner Trust Fund was meant to support the recovery and rehabilitation process of the affected countries (Tambo et al., 2016: 122).

In sum, the information mentioned above proves that even though the BRI has drawn the attention of the media and of a considerable part of Western scholars, China's strategy in Africa has not been reduced to the outline of ports, roads, bridges, trains and airports. The actions that were meant to strengthen the health sector in African countries have been included in the FOCAC agenda since the first decade of the 21st century. Possibly, this was also a way of providing medical assistance to the large number of Chinese workers in Africa⁵, who were in charge of executing the millionaire projects of physical connectivity.

Therefore, these facts highlight that the China's media image during the pandemic months does not represent a detached effort with the only

⁵ One of the distinctive features of Chinese infrastructure projects is that they are mostly executed by national personnel, in the role of Chinese migrant workers. This has been often questioned as it disregards local African workers.

purpose of enhancing its international image and reaffirming its global power. On the contrary, it is the corollary of a long-term strategy with a sophisticated planning, which can show concrete results. In effect, building 30 hospitals and 30 health centres implies establishing an average of one hospital per country throughout the African continent.

China's 'soft infrastructure' as an asset in Africa

Apart from the mentioned significant results that China's government achieved regarding 'hard infrastructure', it is possible to observe the progress made in terms of 'soft infrastructure', that is, research and project development. In this regard, the present section focuses on soft infrastructure related to policies aimed at building health capacities.

The Chinese Center of Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) started in 2002⁶ and it is a governmental and national-level technical organization, which specializes in disease control and prevention and public health. China CDC has actively participated in the development of strategies, techniques and resource mobilization within the field of global health. It has established multilateral and bilateral cooperation mechanisms, which have been efficiently implemented. Among its main initiatives, the most remarkable are the successful exchanges and collaboration with international organisations, bilateral governmental organisations and international NGOs.

In August 2016, the Chinese government inaugurated the new Centre for Global Public Health (CGPH) as part of China CDC. This new entity has the primary responsibility to formulate China's global health strategy and to plan and manage international cooperation projects on public health. The CGPH has been working on the dispatch of experts, technical cooperation, emergency response and foreign aid projects. In addition, it has provided support for the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), a specialised technical institution of the African Union (AU), officially

⁶ Information available from <<http://www.chinacdc.cn/en/>> (accessed 6 July 2020).

launched in January 2017. Its objective is to support member states in their efforts to strengthen healthcare systems, to contribute to disease control and prevention in the region and to formulate response plans before continental health emergencies⁷.

It is noteworthy that China CDC professionals were dispatched to Africa to train public health personnel. At the same time, China CDC received African visitors in order to make technical exchanges or collaborate in projects. Every year from 2002 to 2016, China CDC has financed or jointly organised more than ten international conferences or academic workshops and over a hundred collaboration projects with international partners (China CDC, online).

In the same line of strengthening health cooperation, in January 2017, Beijing signed a memorandum of understanding with WHO in Genoa to provide an additional voluntary contribution of 20 million dollars with the purpose of supporting the global efforts of this organisation. In this framework, the idea of building the Health Silk Road began to take form. In effect, Xi Jinping's speech expressed his intention of strengthening health collaboration with BRI members with the object of reducing the impact of health emergencies and reinforcing national healthcare systems.

In August of that year, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, visited China on the occasion of the seminar entitled 'Belt and Road Forum on Health Cooperation: Toward a Health Silk Road', where they laid the foundations for a more solid and strategic collaboration between the organization and the Asian country (Lancaster et al., 2020). In that opportunity, Dr. Tedros stated that 'health reforms introduced in China prove that it is possible to achieve big-scale and high-standard transformations in a short period. The access to medical assistance provided for 95% of Chinese population is a model that other countries could imitate

⁷ Information available from <<https://africacdc.org/about-us/our-history/>> (accessed 6 July 2020).

in order to move towards a fairer, safer and healthier world. We all have something to learn from China' (WHO, 2017).

The 2018 FOCAC Summit also laid particular emphasis on health issues. Before the summit, during the preparatory meetings took place the High-Level Forum on China-Africa Health Cooperation themed 'Deepen China-Africa Health Cooperation, and Jointly Build the Health Silk Road'. Among the debated topics were the African pharmaceutical industry, treatment of diseases and the improvement of healthcare systems (Kennedy, 2018).

These events show that China's participation in global health issues started before the COVID-19 pandemic. Probably, the previous planning of actions framed within the Health BRI was what allowed Beijing to react rapidly shortly after the coronavirus outbreak and its global spread.

The case of Africa was a clear proof of this situation. On 14 February 2020, Egypt detected its first case of COVID-19, caused by the arrival of an infected Chinese tourist and on 24 February, the sub-Saharan region had its first case when an Italian arrived in Nigeria. From then on, the rest of the countries of the continent have begun to become infected and on 13 May, coronavirus was also detected in Lesotho, the last border that remained virus-free.

The continent then faced the challenge of coping with the pandemic with highly vulnerable national healthcare systems. The administrations of some countries like Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, reacted in advance declaring a lockdown, which implied travel restrictions, schools closures, bans on large gatherings and the creation of analysis centres (Wood, 2020).

Within this context of health and humanitarian crisis, China's response was not long awaited. When only a few cases had been reported, the representative of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zhao Lijian (2020), announced the engagement to deepen healthcare systems and boost epidemic prevention and control capacity with the aim of ensuring regional and global public health security. Consequently, China dispatched medical

expert teams and trained over 20,000 local doctors, making virtual learning indispensable. In effect, thanks to China's experience against COVID-19, the specialists could share their expertise through teleconferences so that Africans could gain the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge to withstand the pandemic.

This situation proves that within the COVID-19 crisis, Chinese efforts devoted to soft infrastructure in Africa were of enormous importance, notwithstanding the fact that cooperation on hard infrastructure has never been neglected, as we have mentioned in the previous section.

In addition, China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA⁸) has had an active participation sending anti-epidemic supplies including personal protection kits, N95 masks, protective medical suits, safety glasses, gloves, thermometers and ventilators, among others. Eventually, deliveries increased and by mid-June, 'China ha[d] ensured the supply of 30 million testing kits, 10,000 ventilators and 80 million masks each month for Africa' (CIDCA, 2020). The supplies have been sent in various stages, having as initial arrival points Ethiopia and Ghana, before being redistributed to other countries of the continent. In this context, Africa CDC adopted a central role in handling the pandemic since it has worked as a distribution centre of the obtained resources.

An aspect that deserves particular consideration is the shift in the cooperation modality and the instruments used before and after COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, cooperation was essentially focused on low-interest concessional loans and multilateral assistance. However, coronavirus changed the way of managing cooperation. The new modality incorporates

⁸ The China International Development Cooperation Agency was launched in 2018.

multiple actors, including China's government, private-owned companies⁹ and civil society (Africa Report, 2020).

As for the aid offered by businesspeople and philanthropists, reference should be made to the arrival of the first Chinese humanitarian aid load on 22 March 2020 in the Ethiopian capital. It contained over 1.5 million rapid diagnostic tests and 100 tons of other medical supplies offered by philanthropist Jack M., owner of Alibaba Foundation. These supplies were distributed around the continent by Africa CDC and they represented the first of many deliveries that the continent began to receive.

At a governmental level, on 17 June 2020, the presidents of China, South Africa—who chairs the AU—and Senegal—who co-chairs FOCAC—organised a virtual extraordinary China-Africa Summit on solidarity against COVID-19. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus attended the summit as special guests. President Xi Jinping affirmed his commitment to continue cooperating with the continent through the dispatch of medical supplies in order to further the construction of CDC hospitals and infrastructure and accomplish the health agreement signed within the FOCAC framework. Moreover, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa expressed the African peoples' gratitude and Senegalese head of state Macky Sall reaffirmed the solidarity between Africa and China.

In the mentioned summit, Xi Jinping referred to the possibility of an external debt relief for African countries. This is a crucial issue in the debate about the post-pandemic international scene, yet Beijing has not taken a decisive

⁹ Among these companies, Huawei made a financial donation to South Africa, Huajian Group provided masks and other medical supplies to eight countries—Kenya and Rwanda amongst them—and China Star provided medical supplies to Rwanda. There were also donations from Chinese nationals to the African communities where they live. In other words, the Chinese government international cooperation has been complemented by private-owned companies with paramount interests in Africa and by a large diaspora that lives throughout the continent.

position so as not to pronounce in favour of a generalised debt forgiveness. In fact, in that occasion, the Chinese president stated that 'China will cancel the debt of relevant African countries in the form of interest-free government loans that are due to mature by the end of 2020 within the FOCAC framework'(CIDCA, 2020; Xi 2020). He also declared that he would work within the G20 to implement an initiative to postpone the debt service for the poorest countries.

Nevertheless, debt forgiveness is one of the pending issues that remain unsolved in the Sino-African relation, as it was explained at the beginning of this article. This stems from the extremely high African indebtedness with China and the deeply questioned debt trap. Some examples of this can be illustrated by Djibouti's debt, which represents 80% of its annual economic production; Ethiopia's debt, which represents 20% (Abi-Habib y Bradsher, 2020) and Kenya, whose government must face a mounting external debt, being China its main creditor accounting for 66% (Anzette Were, 2018).

On balance, China's cooperation in Africa regarding health issues demonstrate a remarkable resilience. Its ability to adapt to changing circumstances leads us to conceive that in a pandemic context, Chinese decision to focus on soft infrastructure serves as an ideal complement to the previous and widely known efforts devoted to hard infrastructure.

Final remarks

Throughout this work, we have analysed the infrastructure cooperation projects that China has carried out in sub-Saharan Africa. In this sense, it has been proved that projects related to energy and connectivity have had a central place. Nevertheless, it was also possible to identify the implementation of projects within the field of health. Initially, in the early 21st century, the focus of the actions was put on hard infrastructure projects, mainly framed within FOCAC, which were enhanced when the BRI was launched. This has evidenced that China's role in the COVID-19

pandemic has not represented a detached effort but a corollary of a long-term strategy, which can show concrete results, such as the construction of hospitals and primary healthcare centres in various African countries.

During the second decade of this century, new projects associated with soft infrastructure started to be outlined, taking advantage of the progress made in hard infrastructure over the previous years. In view of this, there were a series of governmental agencies that created an institutional network aimed at formulating the Chinese global health strategy. Therefore, China CDC established the CGPH, a department to implement its international actions. China also promoted closer cooperation ties with WHO and the African Union's Africa CDC and in 2017, it outlined the Health Silk Road.

Hence, as the coronavirus pandemic spread in 2020, Beijing's government reacted rapidly and efficiently given an action scheme that was already working. Virtual training and the provision of medical supplies were the first manifestations of China's soft infrastructure in Africa during the pandemic.

China's cooperation scheme in Africa over the last decades has been frequently questioned due to the debt trap problem. However, despite the fact that pandemic context foretells a world economic stagnation and an imminent creditors trap, Chinese cooperation, far from declining, has increased. Accordingly, Beijing has offered national economic resources to alleviate a critical situation that does not seem to have a clear solution in the near future.

Considering all the presented arguments, we believe that the reinforcement of Chinese cooperation in this global crisis has enabled Beijing's government to enhance its international image and validate its role as a 'great power' and supplier of global public goods. The launch of the Health Silk Road together with the improvement of China's health assistance by investing in hard and soft infrastructure in Asia and Africa, strongly influence the idea of a global health engagement.

These new efforts suggest an encouraging innovative direction for China, which demonstrates a more explicit commitment to other global public goods rather than merely hard infrastructure related to physical connectivity or strategic resource extraction. The present analysis is important in the context of the withdrawal of traditional powers (United States, Germany, Great Britain) at a regional and international level. In an environment of prevailing individualism, China has undoubtedly sustained its presence and engagement with all the developing countries in the North and the South in this dramatic scenario.

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Durabilité des relations sino-burundaises. Soutien diplomatique, Coopération économique

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Abstract: *Des nouveaux Etats élargissent actuellement leur champ de coopération à d'autres pays qui étaient jusque-là la sphère d'influence des anciennes puissances coloniales. Cet élargissement s'accompagne d'une intensification des relations politiques matérialisées, entre autres, par des rencontres au plus haut sommet et un accroissement des échanges économiques. La présente contribution traite des relations particulières entre le Burundi et la République populaire de Chine; il s'agit de relations multiformes ayant commencé dans les années 60, et qui continuent à se diversifier depuis ces dernières décennies. L'auteur analyse les fondements d'une si longue coopération et les facteurs qui expliquent la persistance d'une relation devenue privilégiée. Enfin, les résultats de cette recherche permettent de comprendre d'une part les ressorts de la politique étrangère des deux pays, et d'autre part, au-delà du cas particulier du Burundi, pourquoi les pays africains continuent à promouvoir une coopération intense et multiforme avec la Chine.*

Mots clés: *Burundi, Chine, Afrique, Coopération, développement, politique internationale.*

Introduction

L'apparition de l'ouvrage «*Quand la Chine s'éveillera, le monde tremblera*» (Peyrefitte A., 1973) semble ouvrir le monde sur un pays-continent quasi inconnu. L'auteur part de l'hypothèse qu'eu égard à sa taille et à sa croissance démographique, la Chine finira par s'imposer au reste du monde dès qu'elle aura suffisamment maîtrisé la technologie. Cette citation paraphrase plutôt une pensée prémonitoire de Napoléon I^{er} qui affirme déjà en 1816 sur l'île Sainte Hélène que «*laissez donc la Chine dormir car lorsque la Chine s'éveillera, le monde entier tremblera*». Encore sans grande technologie, la Chine s'était déjà réveillée sur le monde comme certains facteurs le démontrent telles des découvertes archéologiques (tombes, bols

en porcelaine, carte) sur la côte Est, de la Somalie à l'Afrique du Sud en passant par les îles de l'Océan indien attestent d'une présence chinoise sur le continent, probablement entre le IX^{ème} et XV^{ème} siècle, des populations d'origine africaine déjà présentes en Chine dès le VIII^{ème} témoignant de vieux contacts entre Chinois et Africains.¹

Pourtant, le renforcement des relations entre la Chine et les pays Africains suscite appréhension et espoirs de la part de certains Etats et des chercheurs. D'aucuns y voient une menace à la suprématie occidentale, décèlent des risques de néo-colonialisme, de danger de surendettement des pays pauvres malgré les exonérations de la dette des institutions de Bretton Woods etc.² Et ainsi, les relations entre la Chine et l'Afrique sont traitées dans leur ensemble à travers des titres comme «*la Chine et l'Afrique*»³, «*La Chine, une puissance africaine*»⁴, ou une menace à la souveraineté des pays africains eu égard à la conclusion de gros contrats dans les domaines des infrastructures, d'acquisition de terres, ou encore une forte présence de ressortissants chinois œuvrant sur le continent.

D'autres, plus optimistes, y trouvent, par contre, une chance inespérée pour les pays africains de diversifier leurs partenaires étrangers avec des réalisations tangibles, comme des infrastructures modernes, un modèle de développement à suivre, et pour les gouvernants en place une occasion de se légitimer et de se défaire des conditionnalités des aides des bailleurs de fonds classiques, tant «*le regard tranche tous les débats.*»⁵

¹ François Bart, «Chine et Afrique, une longue histoire, une nouvelle donne géographique,» *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, 253-254, 269-292 (2011), <http://com.revues.org/6243> (30.09.2018); Gilbert Etienne, *La voie chinoise* (Paris: PUF, Collection Tiers-Monde, 1962).

² Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's gift: The real story of China in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³ François Bart, «Chine et Afrique.»

⁴ François Lafargue, «Une puissance chinoise,» *Perspectives chinoises* 90 (2005): 2-10.

⁵ Etienne de Tayo, *Tous les chemins mènent en Chine* (Yaoundé, 2018).

Bref, polarisation stérile et suspicion réciproque paralysent une analyse des relations sino-burundaises tenant plutôt compte des intérêts, des intentions réelles, des objectifs des acteurs en présence. Si cette approche nous rappelle les vieilles rivalités de la guerre froide au sortir de la deuxième guerre mondiale, elle imprègne pourtant la production scientifique sur cette thématique contribuant à comprendre la Chine et la région de l'Asie du Sud-Est, et les enjeux qui en découlent pour la politique internationale.

Le monde académique s'intéresse davantage à la Chine dans ses dimensions politique, économique, militaire et autres. Cet intérêt grandissant se traduit, sur le plan structurel, par l'ouverture, entre autres, de centres de recherche sur la Chine contemporaine (instituts, centres, groupes de recherche etc.) dans des universités, la tenue de conférences et autres évènements scientifiques à travers le monde. Ce facteur témoigne également l'importance multiforme que connaît aujourd'hui la Chine dans les affaires internationales qui se matérialise à travers la reconquête d'un siège permanent aux Nations Unies depuis 1971, sa puissance économique, une projection de la force militaire au point d'ouvrir une base militaire à Djibouti, la participation aux opérations de maintien de la paix comme au Sud-Soudan, ou encore un nouveau Représentant spécial du Secrétaire Général des Nations unies pour les Grands Lacs d'origine chinoise. L'évolution en cours est d'analyser lesdites relations sur le plan thématique, militaire ou sécuritaire, économique,⁶ mais aussi les rapports spécifiques entre la Chine et un pays, en l'occurrence le Burundi.

Les premières tentatives des nationaux et des étrangers d'analyser les relations du Burundi avec d'autres pays ont été conduites jusque dans les années 1990. Il s'agit, pour la plupart, des travaux de mémoire et de thèses de fin d'études relatifs aux relations entre le Burundi et d'autres pays en général en se focalisant sur un domaine bien précis. Ces travaux ont porté

⁶ Oita Etyang et Simon O. Panyako, «China and Africa's Peace and Security Agenda: The Burgeoning Appetite,» *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies*, Vol. 3, Iss. 1 (2016).

sur des aspects généraux de la politique étrangère du Burundi ou sur les relations entre le Burundi et différents partenaires bilatéraux comme la Tanzanie, la République Démocratique du Congo, le Rwanda, la Belgique, la Suisse, la France, l'Allemagne, les Etats Unis d'Amérique (USA).

D'autres travaux ont porté leur attention sur certaines institutions burundaises comme le parti Uprona encore dominant la scène politique nationale (1966-1992), des organisations régionales comme l'Union Européenne, des organismes des Nations Unies comme le Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement (PNUD) etc. La période de consolidation de la paix a suscité des recherches sur le processus d'adhésion du Burundi à la communauté de l'Afrique de l'Est comme une des réponses à l'enclavement géographique du Rwanda et du Burundi.⁷

Des écrits sur les rapports sino-burundais vont par la suite fleurir avec l'intensification des relations entre les deux pays. L'Agence de presse chinoise Xinhua est présente dans notre pays avec une partie du staff composé de journalistes burundais travaillant au niveau régional, des visites entre dirigeants des deux pays à tous les niveaux font que la Chine et le Burundi sont présents dans diverses publications de leur pays respectifs démontrant ainsi le caractère exceptionnel de cette relation. A cet effet, le récent ouvrage d'une journaliste burundaise ayant vécu six mois en Chine et l'évènement ayant accompagné sa publication est un facteur révélateur de l'évolution de ces relations.⁸

Dans cet ordre d'idées, la présente contribution entend analyser les relations entre la République Populaire de Chine et la République du Burundi sous différents aspects politique, économique, culturel en vue de

⁷ Joseph Gahama, «La Communauté d'Afrique de l'Est: Une jeune organisation régionale promise à un bel avenir?» *Les perspectives de l'Afrique au XXI^{ème} siècle*, 65-77 (Dakar: Codesria, 2015); Jérémy Révillon, *L'intégration régionale dans les Grands Lacs: analyse comparée Rwanda / Burundi*, Thèse de doctorat (UPPA, 2016).

⁸ Blandine Niyongere, *La Chine vue par une journaliste burundaise* (Paris: Ed. Horizon oriental, 2018).

mettre en exergue les motifs bien compris des deux Etats d'intensifier leurs relations et dans des contextes très évolutifs. Quels sont les fondements d'une si longue coopération ? Quels sont actuellement les facteurs qui expliquent la persistance de ces relations? Autant de questions auxquelles nous nous adressons dans cette contribution. La recherche d'une alternative diplomatique, d'un soutien politique et économique expliquent l'intérêt croissant des deux pays à coopérer si étroitement d'une part, et d'autre part, des facteurs spécifiques de leur politique intérieure respective, de l'environnement politique international fondent la diversification de leurs instruments de coopération.

La présente contribution analyse, dans un premier temps, les concepts de conflit et coopération et les instruments y relatifs soit que les parties entendent exacerber leur conflit soit qu'elles décident de les mitiger et collaborer. Deuxièmement, l'auteur aborde les différentes phases de la coopération sino-burundaises, depuis le contexte difficile de l'établissement des relations diplomatiques entre les deux pays en 1964 que les deux acteurs ont nouées faisant fi du contexte géopolitique du moment jusqu'à l'intensification en cours de leurs relations. Dans un troisième temps, il sied de mener une analyse qualitative des relations sino-burundaises se traduisant par des accords et traités bilatéraux dans des domaines variés, et des relations qui évoluent en phases. Enfin, nous allons apprécier, évaluer l'enjeu de ces relations pour les deux parties et les facteurs d'évolution desdits rapports à la lumière des politiques internationales à l'égard de la Chine, et l'impact de la pandémie du Coronavirus 2019 dit Covid-19 sur de futurs choix en politique extérieure.

1. Conflit et Coopération comme modes d'interaction entre Etats

L'interaction entre les Etats est caractérisée soit par le processus de coopération, soit par l'entrée en conflit, latent ou ouvert. Le conflit existe lorsqu'une action d'un Etat, ou le système d'un acteur A (personne, groupes sociaux ou gouvernement) porte préjudice à un autre acteur, Etat B, ou à

son système dans son ensemble. Par contre, la coopération entre deux Etats ou acteurs A et B s'entend comme un profit, une connexion mutuelle des changements positifs et égaux dans les deux systèmes d'Etats.⁹ Elle est ainsi le contraire ou le côté positif du conflit, ce que les hommes politiques appellent «*coopération*» (ou «*cooperari*» en latin) qui se définit comme un «*act of working together to one end*». La coopération signifie également «*l'action de coopérer, de participer à une œuvre commune, à un projet commun.*»¹⁰ Elle lie deux pays, sur base d'accords entre eux traduisant des échanges réciproques dans des domaines variés.

D'après Siitonen Lauri, des concepts proches peuvent avoir d'autres contenus. Dans la coopération, «*there is a common goal, toward which the interaction is oriented, and which is shared by the actors*»¹¹; la coopération cherche un intérêt réciproque et requiert un consentement de tous les acteurs. D'une façon générale, la coopération porte en soi une connotation positive où deux parties interagissent en vue d'atteindre des objectifs partagés. Des concepts aussi proches peuvent avoir des connotations différentes. La compétition veut dire «*seeking or endeavouring to gain what another is endeavouring to gain at the same time*». Une partie entend plutôt aboutir à ses intérêts tels qu'elle les définit dans une interaction étatique; un travail de rivalité fera qu'une partie empêche sa rivale d'atteindre ses propres objectifs et implicitement l'en empêcherait également d'atteindre les siens. Dans la compétition, «*the common goal is no more shared*».

Par contre, en matière d'assistance, «*they may be common goals, but the very action of giving aid is oriented towards helping the other part to realize his or her own goals*»; et enfin, dans la rivalité («*the goal is to hinder another*

⁹ Frank R. Pfetsch, *Internationale Politik* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1994), 212; Philippe Braillard & Braillard Philippe / Mohamed Reza-Djalili, *Les relations internationales*, Collection «Que sais-je» (Paris: PUF, 2016).

¹⁰ www.laToupe.org (15.09.2020).

¹¹ Lauri Siitonen, *Political Theories of development cooperation - A study of theories of international cooperation* (Tokyo: World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University, 1990), 2-14.

to gain his or her own goals.»¹² L'assistance sous-entend une relation asymétrique entre deux parties, où l'une reçoit d'une autre en vue de réaliser ses propres objectifs avec comme conséquence que la partie qui donne peut également définir la nature de ces liens dans cette interaction, et enfin de compte c'est la partie favorisée par les rapports de force en présence qui, en principe, arrive à ses propres fins en les manipulant.

Pourtant, la coopération, vue sous l'angle du développement apporte de nouveaux aspects à ces différents concepts. D'un côté, il s'agit de pays riches, plus ou moins indépendants, coopérant ou rivaux sur la scène internationale, qui entendent établir de relations avec des pays pauvres dont le fonctionnement de l'Etat reste encore en question. A la différence du colonialisme où les rapports étaient caractérisés par la coercition et la logique de profit dans le plus grand intérêt d'une partie, la décolonisation a débouché sur une formation de nouveaux Etats indépendants confrontés à des problèmes multidimensionnels, depuis la création de structures étatiques fonctionnels jusqu'aux problèmes de défense, de sécurité pour les régimes et les individus, la satisfaction des besoins collectifs pour leur population.

2. Coopération et Développement

La coopération au développement implique de nouvelles considérations tant les acteurs ne sont pas au même niveau si l'on considère des facteurs tels que la consolidation de l'Etat, l'industrialisation, le niveau de structuration de la société etc. Les acteurs sont d'un côté les pays du Nord, riches, démocratiques, avec des institutions étatiques renforcées; et de l'autre, des pays situés pour la plupart dans l'hémisphère Sud dit-on, en Amérique latine, en Afrique et en Asie. Cette coopération au développement trouve ses racines dans le processus de décolonisation de ces Etats et par la suite dans les rapports entre anciens colonisateurs et les

¹² The Oxford Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory, 2018 ed., s.v. «Foundations of rivalry research».

pays indépendants suite au processus d'autodétermination dès la fin des années 50 et au début 1960.¹³

Après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, une forme institutionnalisée existe suite à diverses circonstances. Au regard de la destruction du continent européen après cette guerre, et la difficulté de l'économie européenne à redémarrer sans une reprise par l'Allemagne de ses capacités industrielles d'avant la guerre, l'ancien Secrétaire d'Etat américain Georges C. Marshall (1880-1959) prononce à l'Université de Harvard le 05 juin 1947 un discours dont le plan de redressement des économies ruinées en Europe occidentale portera son nom (Plan Marshall, 1947-1952 ou «*European Recovery Program*», ERP). Ce plan était doté de 13,3 Milliards ainsi réparti : Grande Bretagne (24%), France (20%), Italie (11%), Allemagne de l'Ouest (10%), Pays-Bas (8%), Grèce (5%), Autriche (5%), Belgique et Luxembourg (4%).¹⁴

Des pays dits du Tiers-monde rentrent à leur tour, deux ans plus tard, dans la liste des pays bénéficiaires. Ainsi, le Président américain Harry Truman (1884-1972) prononce dans son discours inaugural du 20 janvier 1950 le fameux «*Point four*» où il décline la volonté des USA de faire bénéficier les Pays en Voie de Développement (PVD) de la science et de la technologie américaine, invitant à la même occasion toutes les autres nations riches à octroyer une assistance technique et financière plus accrue aux régions sous développées dans le monde.¹⁵

Les motifs de cette générosité s'explique, dans les deux cas, par les facteurs du moment: sur le plan économique, une volonté en effet de reconstruire l'Europe détruite par deux guerres mondiales en moins de 20 ans, de créer un nouveau marché économique et sur le plan idéologique, il s'agit de contrer le communisme aux portes de l'Europe occidentale et qui gagnait

¹³ www.acodev.be (21.11.202); Lauri Siitonen, Op. Cit., 18.

¹⁴ www.latoupie.com (08 mars 2020).

¹⁵ Plus détaillé dans Michael A. Heilperin, «Le point IV du Président Truman,» *Politique Etrangère* 15, 2 (1950): 165-177, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3406/polit.1950.5753>.

dans les pays du Tiers-Monde et ainsi offrir au bloc soviétique et au reste du monde un modèle d'organisation politique et économique alternatif.

3. Cadre structurel des mécanismes de coopération coordonnée

La science économique s'enrichit de nouveaux concepts aussi divers que «*aide étrangère, aide au développement, Development Aid, Foreign Aid etc.*» dans lesquels ces différents concepts se confondent parfois dans les faits. «*Foreign assistance*» (ou «*Overseas Development Assistance*») désigne l'ensemble des moyens financiers et autres rendus disponibles en vue d'aider d'autres Etats en vue d'accélérer leur développement économique ou tout simplement satisfaire leur besoins humains fondamentaux.¹⁶ A cet effet, la structure de cette assistance se subdivise en fonction des alliances. Le Comité de Assistance au Développement («*Development Assistance Committee*», DAC) regroupe les Etats d'Amérique du Nord, de l'Europe de l'Ouest, du Japon, et du pacifique dont les ¾ des aides vont directement aux gouvernements du Sud.

En outre, la coopération connaît différentes formes: d'une part, elle peut être bilatérale directe (d'Etat à Etat) ou bilatérale indirecte (en passant soit par une agence d'implémentation créées par un Etat, soit par des Organisations Non gouvernementales, des Eglises, soit par la coopération universitaire ou d'autres organismes proches). Des institutions d'exécution des programmes et projets des Etats sont à cet effet créés par leur Etat respectif comme la «*Deutsche Internationale Gesellschaft für Entwicklung Zusammenarbeit*» (GIZ allemand), l'Administration Générale de la Coopération au Développement (AGCD belge devenue Enabel), ou encore le «*Japan International Cooperation Assistance*» (JICA).

D'autre part, un quart des aides est canalisé à travers les Nations Unies et ses agences et se veut ainsi multilatérale ou indirecte (par le biais d'une

¹⁶ Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations* (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 485.

organisation internationale) par exemple le «*Basket Fund*» où les pays donateurs contribuent en versant dans un fonds leur aide destinée aux pays en phase de consolidation de la paix.

Enfin, la coopération connaît généralement trois piliers¹⁷: elle se réalise sous forme de coopération technique ou l'envoi de personnel ou d'experts auprès d'un gouvernement étranger pour une durée limitée en fonction de la tâche d'exécution d'un projet (étude de faisabilité, d'évaluation, de conseiller auprès d'une institution étatique, formation de la future élite d'un pays etc.). Sur le plan financier, des prêts peuvent être octroyés en vue d'acheter des produits dans le pays donateur, formant ainsi un marché futur pour les même produits (fourniture de matériels de haut niveau technologique, équipements en laboratoire par exemple); un envoi de fonds comme un appui budgétaire ou financement direct d'un projet ; des prêts garantis ou des dons peuvent être octroyés.

Il existe deux autres formes de coopération: premièrement, la coopération militaire avec ses propres exigences dans la mesure où ces fonds ne sont pas considérés comme rentrant dans la promotion économique d'un pays. Deuxièmement, la coopération en matière de politique étrangère entre pays européens par exemple qui vise à harmoniser les politiques étrangères nationales sur une base purement inter-gouvernementale. Les gouvernements se trouvent obligés de se consulter avant d'adopter une position définitive sur toute question de politique étrangère ayant un intérêt général européen¹⁸, une dimension que d'autres d'organisations régionales n'ont pas encore atteinte.

Il faudra néanmoins, sur le plan technique, considérer le niveau de développement du pays receveur d'aides, et analyser davantage le type d'aide (une assistance militaire par exemple se diffère sur le plan technique

¹⁷ Ibid., 487-495.

¹⁸ Michel Drain & Cécile Dubernet, *Relations internationales* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2018), 316-317.

des autres formes d'aide), les sortes de garanties offertes etc. en vue de mieux évaluer l'efficacité et l'opportunité d'une aide.

4. Research design, Méthodologie, et Cadre opérationnel

En vue de réaliser cette contribution, nous avons fait recours d'abord à la recherche documentaire: Travail sur documents, interview semi-directive auprès des académiciens, hommes / femmes politiques travaillant sur les relations sino-africaines; des entretiens avec des acteurs des relations sino-chinoises au Burundi ont également été conduits en vue de recueillir des points de vue variés sur la matière sous revue. Il s'agit des membres de l'administration publique, des diplomates et universitaires chinois et burundais, des acteurs économiques. Une observation personnelle vient compléter les techniques employées pour avoir eu l'occasion de visiter la Chine populaire deux fois au cours de l'année 2019 en participant à des visites et conférences sur ledit pays.

Nous partons du fondement des relations entre la Chine et le Burundi entendent exclure par principe les conflits et se focaliser plutôt sur la coopération, «*la confiance mutuelle*». La Chine n'entend pas formellement recourir à des instruments de coercition à l'égard d'autres Etats en vue d'atteindre ses objectifs de politique étrangère, elle privilégie ainsi le recours à la coopération et d'autres instruments de «*soft power*». Cette approche suscite d'autres conflits avec les puissances déjà présentes sur le continent africain pour un pays n'ayant pas eu des véritables anciennes relations interétatiques avec des pays lointains.

Le professeur Pfetsch Frank dresse une liste de dix instruments possibles¹⁹, de la diplomatie bilatérale à l'intégration régionale en passant par la diplomatie multilatérale, les moyens économiques, militaires, etc. pour lesquels l'on distingue des approches positives et négatives selon qu'elles

¹⁹ Frank R. Pfetsch, *Internationale Politik*, 178-179.

ont pour finalité soit d'aplanir les relations, soit d'exacerber les conflits et conduire à l'escalade entre Etats.

Tableau N°1: Instruments des relations interétatiques

Instruments	Réduction / désescalade des conflits: Usage positif	Intensification des conflits Usage négatif
Diplomatie (au niveau bilatéral)	Reprise des relations diplomatiques; Envoi d'un conseiller spécial; Visites d'Etat; Négociations; Recours à un médiateur; Création de canaux diplomatiques.	Rappel de l'ambassadeur Suspension / Rupture des relations diplomatiques; Note de protestation; Report d'une visite; Arrêt de négociations; Actes ou propos malveillants; Annulation de contrats; Expulsion de ressortissants.
Diplomatie (au niveau multilatéral)	Organisation d'une conférence internationale; Recours à une	Boycott d'une conférence ou d'un évènement international;

	<p>organisation internationale comme médiatrice;</p> <p>Résolution / prise de position en faveur d'un Etat;</p> <p>Conciliation, médiation, etc.</p>	<p>Résolution contre un Etat;</p> <p>Soutien à des groupes d'opposition en exil voire une rébellion;</p> <p>Poser un acte irrespectueux.</p>
Information, propagande	<p>Usage intentionné de moyens de propagande en vue d'une influence positive.</p>	<p>Recours à une désinformation intentionnée, entre autres, dans les médias.</p>
Moyens économiques	<p>Arrêt de préférence économique;</p> <p>Octroi de crédits,</p> <p>Octroi d'aides économiques etc.</p>	<p>Droits de douane élevés;</p> <p>Embargo, arrêt des exportations;</p> <p>Taxe élevée sur les importations;</p> <p>Subvention des exportations;</p> <p>Corruption;</p> <p>Fermeture de frontières;</p> <p>Politique</p>

		d'établissement des étrangers, ressortissants du pays et fixation d'un problème interne.
Instruments militaires	Envoi de conseillers militaires; Livraison d'armes; Envoi de «troupes de la paix»; Retrait de troupes.	Envoi / stationnement de troupes, de bateaux de guerres Concentration de troupes; Manœuvres militaires; Arrêt ou suspension de l'aide militaire.
Intégration régionale	Création ou adhésion à une organisation internationale; Organisation une conférence régionale (hôte); Soutien des organisations.	Retrait d'une organisation; Refus de participation.

Source: Auteur sur base de Pfetsch R. Frank, Op. Cit., 178-179.

RESULTATS

Les relations entre la RP de Chine et le Burundi se déclinent en trois phases: la première étant d'ordre idéologique et se heurte aux politiques

internationales dans la Région des Grands Lacs, la deuxième consacre le retour de la RP de Chine au Burundi et enfin, la troisième se caractérise par une expansion desdites relations dans les années 2000.

1. Idéologie et solidarité avec les peuples du Tiers-Monde (1955-1971)

1.1 Contexte de l'accession à l'indépendance

Le Burundi accède à l'indépendance le 01 juillet 1962 dans un contexte régional et international structuré par la guerre froide consécutive à la rivalité des puissances victorieuses sur le futur sort et le contrôle de l'Allemagne vaincue. Ce facteur structurant ne manque pas d'impacter la vie politique intérieure du Burundi, et les relations extérieures du jeune pays fraîchement indépendant en 1962 mettant fin à soixante ans de présence belge (1922-1962). Ses liens avec les anciens partenaires belges et occidentaux restent très étroits surtout pendant les dix premières années, de 1962 à 1972, année marquée par des tueries politico-ethniques avec pour effet de restructurer la vie politique nationale tandis que les partenaires étrangers, Belges en particulier, revoient leurs instruments de coopération avec le Burundi après une forte présence dans tous les secteurs de la vie nationale même après l'indépendance.²⁰

Cette indépendance politique suppose que les nationaux deviennent maîtres de leur destin et doivent ainsi conduire les affaires étatiques de leur pays, réaliser le développement politique, économique et social souhaité. Le jeune Etat fait pourtant face à des défis d'ordre structurel tels que l'enclavement au «*Cœur d'Afrique*», dit-on, l'exiguïté du territoire et du marché national, et enfin une pression démographique galopante. Ces facteurs auxquels faut-il ajouter une volonté d'émancipation expliquent sans doute les raisons de la coopération internationale et la diversification de ses partenaires qui entendent prendre pied dans le pays et la région.

²⁰ Jean-Pierre Chrétien et Jean-Marie Dupaquier, Burundi 1971. Au bord de deux génocides (2007).

A côté de ces contingences physiques, le Burundi entame une instabilité politico-ethnique caractérisée par des tentatives de déstabilisation des institutions établies et une violence politico-ethnique (et quatre drapeaux de 1962 à 1966!!). Au-delà des dates sinistres de l'histoire postcoloniale du Burundi, et la volonté de la politique coloniale d'influencer sur le groupe devant contrôler l'Etat pendant la période postcoloniale, il est question de donner une réponse à trois questions fondamentales, à savoir, sur le plan structurel, trouver le fondement de la légitimité du pouvoir, et sur le plan conjoncturel, bannir le recours à la violence pour des fins d'accès et de maintien au pouvoir, et enfin, et surtout repenser les voies de solution au défi du développement afin de résoudre les problèmes collectifs.

1.2 Un intérêt croissant de la Chine dans une région troublée

La Chine s'intéresse à l'Afrique au sortir de sa révolution dans le contexte d'une décolonisation possible. La Conférence de Bandung en 1955 suivie de cinq autres conférences afro-asiatiques tenues en Afrique devient une occasion de nouer des relations avec les pays fraîchement décolonisés. Sur un plan général, elle entend afficher une solidarité envers les pays du Tiers-Monde face aux puissances occidentales en apportant un appui multiforme aux mouvements de libération nationale (contacts, formation, aide en matériels etc.). La Chine commence à organiser sa coopération avec l'Afrique par la création d'une Direction des Affaires Africaines au sein du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères en octobre 1960.

C'est dans ce cadre qu'intervient la visite sur le continent africain du Premier Ministre chinois d'alors, Chou En-Lai, du 14 décembre 1963 au 05 février 1964, dit le *«périple du missionnaire chinois en Afrique»*, dans le but de marquer la présence et l'action chinoises sur le continent, de gagner la confiance des pays africains et de *«rétablir les droits légitimes de la Chine aux Nations-Unies»*. C'est également l'occasion de reformuler les *«cinq principes de coexistence pacifique»* (*«the Five Principles of Coexistence in Peace»*) formant la base des relations entre la Chine et les pays africains et

du Tiers-Monde, à savoir le développement pacifique, l'établissement des relations économiques dans le cadre du «*mutual benefit*», l'appui à une résolution pacifique des conflits. Enfin, la Chine élargit ses relations avec tous les Etats, et sur le plan symbolique, elle s'investit dans la construction de grands chantiers, et accueille de plus en plus des milliers d'étudiants africains, future élite de leur pays d'origine.

La Chine et le Burundi décident de nouer des relations diplomatiques au niveau des ambassadeurs au mépris du contexte géopolitique régional. Ainsi, le Ministre burundais ad intérim des Affaires Etrangères et du Commerce Extérieur, Pierre Ngendandumwe, accueille l'Ambassadeur de la République Populaire de Chine, Monsieur HO YING, et décident ensemble le 21 décembre 1963 d'établir des relations diplomatiques entre les deux pays. Deux jours plus tard, le premier Ministre chinois, Chou En-Laï envoie un message au Ministre burundais des Affaires Etrangères saluant chaleureusement l'établissement de ces relations. Cette décision sera immédiatement suivie d'effets, le premier Secrétaire de l'Ambassade de Chine, Monsieur CHAN-TEN présente ses lettres de créances au Premier Ministre et Ministre des Affaires Etrangères de l'époque le 13 janvier 1964 l'accréditant en qualité de Chargé d'Affaires ad intérim.

Ces excellentes relations diplomatiques en perspective ne manqueront pas dans l'immédiat de dégénérer. Les nouvelles relations entre la Chine et le Burundi se retrouvent inscrites dans la politique d'influence géopolitique de la Région des Grands Lacs Africains. Ainsi, l'indépendance accordée aux trois anciennes colonies belges (RD Congo, Rwanda et Burundi) n'empêchent pas pour autant aux pays influant dans la région de chercher à garder leur influence sur la politique et les acteurs régionaux. C'est dans ce cadre que le Burundi revêt une importance stratégique pour les puissances extérieures. Considéré par les Belges comme «un simple appendice du Congo», tandis que pour les USA «*comme un poste d'observatoire placé à l'Est du glacie congolais où leurs positions solides à la Tanzanie dont les étroites et*

*amicales relations avec le Gouvernement de Pékin les inquiétaient beaucoup.»*²¹

Nous sommes dans une période où toute démarche diplomatique d'un Etat est analysée sous l'angle structurant de la rivalité Est-Ouest. Le camp occidental redoute d'un revirement du gouvernement du Burundi vers la sphère d'influence communiste, un pays en Afrique centrale aux confins de l'actuelle RD Congo tant convoitée pour sa position stratégique dans la région des Grands Lacs Africains (neuf pays limitrophes) et les immenses richesses de son sous-sol; et la Tanzanie, au sortir d'une tentative de renversement des institutions en 1964 contre Nyerere est qualifiée de prosocialiste. Sans doute, *«pour prendre l'Afrique, il faut prendre le Congo; mais pour prendre le Congo, il faut prendre le Burundi (...); celui qui possède le Congo sans posséder le Burundi n'est jamais tranquille puisqu'il n'est pas sûr de posséder l'Afrique aussi longtemps que le Burundi lui échappe.»*²² Dans ce contexte, les nouvelles relations entre le Burundi et la RP de Chine inquiètent les autres puissances occidentales craignant, un revirement du pays vers le camp communiste à travers des actes tels que le parti UPRONA au pouvoir se veut le frère du Mouvement Nationaliste Congolais (MNC) et d'autres mouvements rebelles congolais taxés de communistes par les Occidentaux auxquels elle accorde installation et hospitalité en Février 1964 à Bujumbura, l'envoi d'une forte délégation à l'occasion de l'indépendance du Congo, l'ouverture d'une ambassade à Moscou, des faits auxquels il faut ajouter cette arrivée de diplomates chinois arrivent au Burundi en 1964 etc.²³

Une violence multidimensionnelle accompagne encore ces relations: Premièrement, la Chine affirme de son côté sa vision du Burundi car d'après

²¹ Le Monde diplomatique, *«Un avant-poste du socialisme en Afrique centrale,»* décembre 1971, 5.

²² Philippe Siriba, *La colonisation et la tribalisation au Burundi* (Paris: ICP Thèses en Sciences sociales, 1977), 438.

²³ S. Sindaye, *Aspects de la politique étrangère du Royaume du Burundi (1962-1966)* (UB: FLSH, Mémoire, 1986), 63.

le diplomate chinois, Toung Tchi- Ping, le «*Burundi est notre tremplin majeur contre le Congo dont Mao Tse-Toung veut s'emparer pour dominer le continent...*»²⁴; tandis qu'un un Chargé d'Affaires chinois disparaît mystérieusement dans la capitale Bujumbura, et l'on ne le retrouvera plus. Deuxièmement, le Congo accède à l'indépendance le 30 juin 1960 avec des velléités d'émancipation à l'égard de l'ancienne puissance colonisatrice la Belgique et l'éclatement de la violence politique: Destitution du Premier Ministre Patrice Lumumba en 1961 qui ravive les tensions déjà existantes, une rébellion voire un mouvement sécessionniste éclate dans le Sud-Est du pays, au Katanga, tandis qu'une rébellion contre le nouveau pouvoir établi à Kinshasa se forme également dans l'Est du Congo. Pour maîtriser cette rébellion à l'Est du Congo et garder une emprise sur ce géant africain, il fallait disposer de bases-arrières dans les pays limitrophes, particulièrement au Rwanda et au Burundi. Troisièmement, le gouvernement du Burundi de l'époque ne s'accommode pas de certaines pratiques peu diplomatiques des USA et de la Belgique. Un raid belgo-américain en 1964 sur la frontière burundo-congolaise attire également le courroux du gouvernement de Bujumbura considéré comme une violation flagrante de son espace aérien et terrestre. Dans son discours aux Nations Unies, le Ministre des Affaires étrangères du Burundi de l'époque condamne cette «*agression caractérisée et un défi au continent africain.*»²⁵ Bujumbura se solidarise avec les autres pays africains pour porter la question congolaise à l'analyse du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies et faire condamner les acteurs.

1.3 Une expérience diplomatique interrompue

C'est dans cette période d'instabilité qu'est mis fin l'embellie des relations diplomatiques entre la Chine et le Burundi. L'assassinat du premier ministre burundais, Pierre Ngendandumwe, le 15 janvier 1965, impacte à la fois cette l'évolution politique du pays et ses relations diplomatiques. Le nouveau

²⁴ G. Nzeyimana, *Trente ans de coopération américano-burundaise (1963-1993)*, (UB, FLSH, Mémoire, Histoire, 1994), 49.

²⁵ Info-Burundi N°135, du 01.01.1965, 5.

Gouvernement du Burundi remet le 29 janvier 1965 (14 jours après l'assassinat) à l'Ambassadeur de Chine au Burundi une note diplomatique lui signifiant la suspension des relations diplomatiques entre le Burundi et la Chine, et intimant les membres de l'Ambassade de Chine de quitter le pays endéans quarante-huit heures. En guise de justification, le Représentant Permanent du Burundi aux Nations-Unies d'alors déclare en 1965 que *«la suspension temporaire des liens diplomatiques avec la Chine était imputable aux seules raisons de politique intérieure»*²⁶ avant d'ajouter que le Burundi renouera dans un avenir proche ses relations diplomatiques avec Pékin. Le Gouvernement chinois se plia à la mesure prise unilatéralement et qualifiée par Pékin *«d'absolument injustifiée et sans fondement.»*

Malgré la rupture des relations diplomatiques par le Burundi, la RP de Chine s'est employée à garder la porte ouverte en vue d'une éventuelle reprise des relations diplomatiques. L'Ambassadeur chinois de l'époque, Liuye-Fene, déclare plus tard que si le Gouvernement du Burundi envisage à l'avenir la reprise des relations entre le Burundi et la Chine, le Gouvernement de Pékin la prendra en considération et avec sympathie. L'Agence Chine Nouvelle abonde dans le même sens en déclarant que *« le Gouvernement chinois a toutes les raisons de demander aux autorités du Burundi de revenir sur leur demande concernant la suspension des relations diplomatiques. Cependant, nous avons évité de le faire (...) parce que nous ne voulons pas que le gouvernement royal se trouve placé dans une situation difficile. Nous sommes persuadés qu'en agissant ainsi, nous permettons au gouvernement royal et au peuple du Burundi de discerner plus clairement qui sont leurs amis et qui sont leurs adversaires.»*²⁷

Le départ des Chinois ne semble pas améliorer les relations du Burundi avec l'étranger. Une rupture des relations diplomatiques est consommée entre le Etats-Unis et le Burundi, car en effet, les USA invitent Le 12 janvier 1966

²⁶ Le Monde diplomatique, *«Politique Burundi-Chine,»* du 14.04.1965, 3.

²⁷ P. Mertens et P. F. Smets, *L'Afrique de Pékin* (Bruxelles: Ed. Mertens et Smets, 1966), 61.

l'Ambassadeur du Burundi à quitter le territoire américain dans les plus brefs délais suite à l'expulsion par le gouvernement du Burundi de trois diplomates américains en poste dans le pays. Le gouvernement du Burundi affirme «*souçonner les trois diplomates américains d'avoir maintenu des contacts avec des conspirateurs complotant contre le Burundi.*»²⁸

Au-delà des faits historiques, comment peut-on expliquer cette rupture des relations diplomatiques entre la Chine et le Burundi? Cinq ans viennent de passer après l'accès des pays de la région à l'indépendance et l'ensemble des institutions, des acteurs étrangers, belges en particulier, dominant encore la vie politique, économique et culturelle du pays et de la région. De surcroît, le système international est structuré par la guerre froide, et la grande préoccupation des grands acteurs internationaux est de garder dans leur influence sur les autres Etats du continent et d'ailleurs. Ces acteurs bénéficient déjà d'une position avantageuse héritée de la colonisation qu'ils entendent exploiter à leur avantage. D'un côté, cette expérience avortée s'explique par une volonté chinoise de pénétrer dans le pays et la région alors que, de l'autre, les puissances occidentales exercent encore une forte influence sur le Burundi. Ainsi, aussi longtemps que ces deux facteurs, à savoir l'influence héritée de la colonisation et la guerre froide, une puissance étrangère comme la Chine qui se voulait un nouvel acteur sur la scène internationale, aurait du mal à pénétrer au Burundi et dans la région. Il faudra attendre la fin de la première décennie d'indépendance caractérisée par l'avenue de régimes militaires, le retrait et la diminution progressive de la domination des anciennes puissances coloniales pour que la Chine s'implante définitivement et pour longtemps dans le pays.

²⁸ Le Monde, du 13 janvier 1966.

2. Reprise des relations diplomatiques entre la Chine et le Burundi (1971-2000)

La reprise des relations diplomatiques entre les deux pays se réalise dans un contexte où la Chine a repris sa position de membre permanent du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies et ce grâce en grande partie au vote favorable des pays africains dont le Burundi. La Chine connaît encore des défis économiques internes entamant certes sa capacité à mener une politique étrangère, mais l'influence et l'intervention directes des puissances étrangères dans la région diminuent; ainsi, les relations entre la Chine et le Burundi vont s'inscrire dans la durée.

Au moment de la création des Nations Unies en 1945, le siège de la Chine était occupé par le Représentant de la République de Chine. Après son départ pour l'Île de Taiwan en 1949 et l'arrivée au pouvoir du Parti Communiste Chinois, le gouvernement chinois en exil continuait pourtant à occuper le siège de la Chine. Il a fallu d'une part le rejet en 1961 par l'Assemblée générale (AG) des Nations Unies d'une résolution selon laquelle toute motion ayant pour effet d'expulser «la Chine de Formose» des Nations Unies serait considérée comme une «*question importante*» qui devrait alors recueillir une majorité des deux tiers; d'autre part, l'adoption par ladite AG de la Résolution 2758 dans la nuit du lundi 25 au mardi 26 octobre 1971 présentée par l'Albanie (par 76 voix pour, 35 contre et 17 abstentions) qui «*décide le rétablissement de la République populaire de Chine dans tous ses droits (en tant que membre originaire et permanent des Nations Unies, du Conseil de Sécurité et disposant le droit de veto) et la reconnaissance des représentants de son gouvernement comme les seuls représentants légitimes de la Chine à l'Organisation des Nations Unies (...).*»²⁹

²⁹ Michel Hammer, «L'entrée de la Chine aux Nations Unies,» *Les relations internationales* 3, N°127 (2006): 71-77.

2.1 Une volonté de regarder en avant

Les relations sino-burundaises reprennent sept ans après leur rupture coïncidant avec la commémoration du dixième anniversaire de l'assassinat du héros national, le Prince Louis Rwagasore. Un communiqué conjoint publié simultanément à Bujumbura et à Pékin le 13 octobre 1971 à vingt heures locales stipule qu'«*en vue de développer les relations amicales et de coopération entre la République Populaire de Chine d'une part, et la République du Burundi d'autre part, les deux pays ont décidé de rétablir les relations diplomatiques au niveau d'Ambassadeurs à partir du 13 octobre 1971.*»³⁰

Ce début d'implantation de la Chine est encore emprunte de considérations idéologiques et non d'intérêts commerciaux. Ainsi la logique de l'aide directe l'emportait sur la logique commerciale; derrière «*cette idéologie qui précède l'entreprise*», la Chine se préoccupe avant tout d'élargir sa sphère d'influence politique et son désir de reconnaissance diplomatique tandis que son engagement sur le continent africain est mû par l'idée qu'entre l'Afrique et la Chine il existait une «*communauté de destin et d'intérêt.*»³¹

C'est pourtant le début d'une coopération intense, couvrant quasiment tous les domaines de la coopération bilatérale et multilatérale. Les principes fondateurs de la politique étrangère du Burundi et de la République Populaire de Chine semblent modérément formulés, servant de base pour la coopération entre les deux pays. Pour le gouvernement du Burundi d'alors, il s'agit du bon voisinage qui se ressource dans la Charte des Nations Unies dont le Préambule invite «*les Etats membres à pratiquer la tolérance, à vivre en paix, les uns avec les autres, dans un esprit de bon voisinage*» (Charte des Nations Unies, Préambule). Cette politique se prolonge dans la coopération sous régionale ayant conduit à une intégration régionale matérialisée par la

³⁰ République du Burundi / Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération, 1971, 1.

³¹ Laurent Delcourt, «La Chine en Afrique. Menace ou opportunité pour le développement?» <https://www.cetri.be> (28.08.2018).

participation à des organisations sous régionales telles que la Communauté économique des pays des Grands lacs (CEPGL), la Communauté économique des Etats d'Afrique Centrale (CEEAC), la Communauté Est-Africaine (CEA), la Zone d'échange préférentiel (ZEP) etc. Les autres lignes directrices sont la non-ingérence dans les affaires intérieures des autres Etats, la coopération internationale, le non alignement positif et le soutien aux mouvements de libération nationale.

Lors de sa visite sur le continent africain effectué du 20 décembre 1982 au 17 janvier 1983, le Premier Ministre Chinois Zhao Xiang réaffirme en d'autres termes les cinq principes de coopération économique et technique appliquée par la R P de Chine à l'égard des pays africains à savoir les principes de solidarité et d'amitié, d'égalité, et d'avantages réciproques respect de la souveraineté pas de conditionnalité politique ni un privilège quelconque; une coopération qui se fonde sur les besoins et des possibilités réels des partenaires, réalisation des projets en brefs délais; tenir compte des conditions locales et sous forme multiples comme la fourniture des services techniques, la formation des praticiens et des cadres de gestion; le but de la coopération est de permettre aux partenaires de se compléter et de s'aider mutuellement de manière à accroître leur capacité d'autonomie respective et à promouvoir le développement de leur économie respective.³²

Quoique autrement formulés, ces principes rencontrent l'approbation des pays africains car ils convergent sur tous les égards. Encore faut-il ajouter d'autres aspects développés par les dirigeants chinois, à savoir d'un côté, que la Chine et les peuples africains sont des pays en voie de développement et appartiennent tous au Tiers Monde, et qu'il s'agit d'une coopération sud-sud (Jouve E. 1978: 21); et de l'autre, le rôle prépondérant joué par Chou Enlai lors de la Conférence de Bandoeng en 1955 où il encourageait les leaders africains à une lutte farouche contre «le

³² L. Ma et N. Wang, «La diplomatie de Chou-En-Lai,» *La Chine et le Monde*, N°4, (1983): 8.

colonialisme et l'impérialisme occidental» leur assurant que «*la Chine s'efforcera de prendre part à la décolonisation*» (Etienne G., 1962: 296). Il s'agit en quelque sorte d'étendre l'expérience révolutionnaire de la R P de Chine en Afrique en vue de se frayer un chemin diplomatique sur le continent et ainsi renouer avec les pays africains dont elle se profile comme un partenaire avec lequel elle partage plutôt les mêmes préoccupations.

3. Expansion des relations bilatérales dans tous les domaines (2000-2018)

3.1 Diversification des domaines de coopération

La troisième phase des relations sino-burundaises s'ouvrent dans un contexte d'offensive de la Chine sur la scène internationale en diversifiant et en structurant davantage les instruments de sa coopération. Elle se concrétise par la création en 2000 du «*Forum on China-Africa Cooperation*» ou («*Forum sur la coopération sino-chinoise*», dit FOCAC) en vue de développer les relations entre la RP Chine et le continent africain, qui se veut un «*mécanisme institutionnel de consultation*» rassemblant, et tous les trois ans, les cinquante-trois Etats africains membres de l'Union africaine ayant noué des relations avec la Chine. Cette rencontre ayant lieu de façon alternative en Chine et sur un pays africain attire depuis lors beaucoup de délégations africaines, il constitue un forum de cadrage de la coopération économique et diplomatique des relations entre la Chine et les Etats du continent africain. C'est un mécanisme de diplomatie de dialogue entre la Chine et l'Afrique et facilite le développement d'un agenda politique et économique. L'intérêt que les deux partenaires portent sur ce forum se remarque par les fortes délégations qui y participent, les décisions économiques prises en matière d'investissements, d'infrastructures et enfin le volume des échanges commerciaux d'un sommet à un autre. Depuis 2000, premier sommet du FOCAC, le volume des échanges commerciaux entre la Chine et l'Afrique s'est multiplié par quatre, la Chine devenant le troisième partenaire du continent africain derrière les USA et la France. Ainsi, le

FOCAC a adopté, à sa 6^{ème} édition en Afrique du Sud, le «*Sino-African Cooperation Johannesburg Action Plan (2016-2018)*».

Sans être exhaustif ni mener une analyse des politiques publiques en la matière, la coopération avec la Chine s'étend désormais sur presque tous les domaines. La coopération politique et diplomatique: des visites au plus haut niveau symbolisant une confiance accrue. Dans cet ordre d'idées, le Burundi et la Chine ont conclu un accord portant sur la gratuité du visa pour les ressortissants désireux de se rendre dans l'un ou l'autre pays, tandis que les détenteurs de passeport diplomatique et de passeport de services sont exemptés du visa. Cette décision pallie aux difficultés rencontrées par les ressortissants des pays du Tiers-Monde en général en matière de libre circulation des personnes et de biens lorsqu'ils entendent voyager dans les pays occidentaux, particulièrement européens et nord-américains. Cette décision facilite en retour le trafic des biens et services entre le Burundi et la Chine, et au-delà la région des Grands Lacs dans la mesure où des ressortissants congolais et autres ont, pour premier contact avec la Chine, son ambassade basée à Bujumbura (Agence PANA du 28.08.2014). Ainsi, membres du gouvernement, hauts fonctionnaires, agents du secteur paraétatique à différents niveaux, professeurs d'université, étudiants, commerçants visitent souvent la Chine à travers des programmes de visite, de stages, de mobilité «*en vue de mieux comprendre la Chine*»³³. Cette mobilité dans les deux sens finit par renforcer les échanges entre le Burundi et la Chine dans d'autres domaines comme les relations économique et commerciales.

Les relations économiques et commerciales: depuis 01.01.2005, exemption de taxes sur 190 catégories de marchandises pour 28 pays les moins

³³ Plus particulièrement, un programme de bourses d'études en Chine existe avec des conditions et procédures d'octroi plus ou moins simplifiées pour «*des étudiants dont les pays d'origine ont établi des relations diplomatiques avec la Chine*»: chercher sur internet, s'adresser au Bureau des Bourses et Stages du Burundi, ou demander à l'Ambassade de Chine dans son pays; voir www.scholarship.cucas.edu.cn.

avancés, s'accompagnant d'une facilité d'octroi de visa pour les opérateurs économiques et des personnes visitant la Chine à divers titre. Cette procédure fait du Burundi un centre régional où des citoyens congolais passent par l'Ambassade de Chine au Burundi pour leur formalité de demande de visa et de voyage à l'étranger.

La construction d'infrastructures comme le Ministère des finances, le Palais présidentiel, la rénovation de l'Aéroport International Melchior Ndadaye de Bujumbura, la construction future d'un Mall à Bujumbura, les routes Bujumbura-Source du Nil, Mutambara-Bururi, Gitega-Bururi en partie, Mugina (Mabanda)-Nyanza-Lac, des barrages hydro-électriques comme celui de Mugere, en province de Rumonge en cours de construction etc permettent d'atténuer la dépendance du Burundi vis-à-vis de l'extérieur, de diversifier en qualité et quantité les ressources en énergie, dans une période où le pays développe son secteur industriel et que le taux d'urbanisation augmente³⁴.

Le domaine de la santé comme la construction d'hôpitaux, livraison de matériels sophistiqués (Hôpital de Mpanda), envoi de «*missions médicales*». Le secteur agricole comme le projet Rukaramu des années 1990; dans le redéploiement industriel (Cotebu, Cogenco). La «*diplomatie militaire*» comme l'équipement de la marine nationale, l'octroi de stages de perfectionnement et divers équipements.

Dans le domaine culturel et social: Construction des bâtiments de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure dans les années 2000, l'Ecole de Formation professionnelle (EFP) de Kigobe, l'octroi de bourses d'études et de stages, et la création des Instituts Confucius (CI), véritable instrument de la diplomatie publique: 48 CI en Afrique dont 5 en Afrique du Sud, 4 au Kenya, et un au

³⁴ La population de Bujumbura seulement, la capitale, est d'environ 45.000 habitants en 1962 au moment de l'indépendance, elle s'élève à 800.000 actuellement. Quant à l'industrialisation, la Brarudi, le COTEBU, VERRUNDI, les usines à café ont pu profiter particulièrement de cette nouvelle énergie.

Burundi dans les enceintes de l'Université du Burundi. En contrepartie, l'université des langues étrangères de Pékin va bientôt créer un département dédié à l'enseignement du Kirundi en Chine dès 2020 contribuant ainsi au rayonnement de la langue et de la culture burundaise.

Numérisation des équipements de la RTNB, la société «StarTimes», émissions de Radio Chine Internationale (RCI), équipement de «villages» et écoles en matériels de réception d'émissions TV, la présence de l'agence de presses Xinhua News Agency, littéralement «Chine nouvelle» créée en 1937, connaît son expansion à l'étranger depuis 1983, elle travaille au Burundi.

Tableau N°2: Volume des échanges commerciaux entre le Burundi et la Chine

Exportations			Importations	
1.	Emirats Arabes Unis	38,4 M\$ (24%)	China	11M \$ (14%)
2.	DR Congo	24,1 M\$ (15%)	Inde	103 M \$ (13%)
3.	Pakistan	13,2 M\$ (8,1%)	Arabie Saoudite	62,4M\$ (8,1%)
4.	Inde	10,8 M\$ (6,6%)	Tanzanie	56,2 M\$ (7,3%)
5.	Belgique-Luxembourg	8,95 M\$ (5,5%)	Kenya	50,4 M\$ (6,5%)
6.	China	7,3 M\$ (4,5%)	Emirats Arabes Unis	50 M\$ (6,5%)

Source: Auteur basé sur les données publiées par www.oec.world (03.03.2020).

DISCUSSION

1. Coopération & Développement

En les instruments de relations interétatiques (tableau N°1: 7), force est de constater que, cinquante ans après, les relations sino-burundaises couvrent tous les instruments d'interaction interétatiques. Après l'intermède de 1964 à 1971, les relations reprennent avec la conclusion d'un Accord de Coopération Economique et Technique signé le 06 janvier 1972 entre les deux pays et suivis par la suite de nombreux Accords et Protocoles en matière de coopération politique, économique et culturel.

Sur le plan politique et diplomatique

Les principes des relations de la Chine avec l'Afrique et le reste du monde sont marqués par un pragmatisme évident consistant à «*laisser de côté les différences et exploiter les points communs.*» Les cérémonies d'inauguration d'une exposition de photos le 30.12.2013 et marquant le cinquantième anniversaire de l'établissement des relations diplomatiques entre le Burundi et la Chine ont été une occasion pour les deux pays de retracer les piliers de leur coopération autour de quatre axes, à savoir les visites de haut niveau et la confiance politique mutuelle; la coopération économique, commerciale et technique; les échanges sociaux, culturels et humains; ainsi que l'assistance militaire (Agence Xinhua du 20.12.2013). Nous ne prétendons pas à l'exhaustivité ni à la quantité ni de la qualité des données présentées, ce qui est important pour nous est de présenter cette diversité des domaines de coopération entre la Chine et le Burundi et plus tard d'en discuter la portée et les limites d'une telle relation.

Cette coopération permet au Burundi de diversifier ses partenaires et se libérer de la coopération classique avec les pays occidentaux et des institutions de Brettons Wood assortie de conditionnalités comme le respect de la bonne gouvernance, de l'état de droit etc. surtout en période de tensions diplomatiques de différente nature ayant caractérisé les relations

entre le Burundi et le monde occidental depuis l'indépendance en 1962. Face aux tensions entre la Belgique et le Burundi dans les années 70 ayant conduit à l'interruption unilatérale de la coopération civile et militaire, un diplomate fait remarquer que «*l'hypothèse de plus en plus crédible d'une assistance chinoise rendait l'assistance belge moins indispensable.*»³⁵ Cette assistance continue sans relâche tant le «*consensus de Pékin*» interdit l'intervention dans les affaires intérieures d'un autre Etat. En période d'embargo politico-économique décidé par les pays limitrophes de 1996 à 2000, la Chine a continué sa coopération en matière d'aide et de bourses d'études. Elle a constitué une bouée de sauvetage pendant les moments de crise, pendant la guerre civile où tous les bailleurs bi- et multilatéraux s'étaient détournés du Burundi, allant pour certains jusqu'à fermer leur ambassade. Actuellement les relations entre les puissances occidentales et le Burundi sont tendues depuis 2015, et la Chine constitue pour le Burundi un appui multiforme, défend le pays dans les instances internationales empêchant la prise de résolution sinon de sanctions sévères à l'égard du Burundi³⁶. Bref, il s'agit d'un retour de bâton, puisque le Burundi avait soutenu en 1971 l'adhésion de la Chine à l'ONU et sa place au Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies.

De son côté, la Chine est assurée que son partenaire burundais le soutiendra également au moins en ce qui concerne des questions qui relèvent pour la Chine de sa «*High politics*» comme l'île de Taiwan (Formose) qu'elle considère comme une partie intégrante de son territoire et les tensions existant avec les autres pays de sa région, la question de Hong Kong et des Ouïgours sur lesquelles le gouvernement du Burundi affiche un soutien avoué à la République de Chine. Rappelons à cet effet que le Burkina Faso a repris ses relations avec Pékin en mai 2018 suite à la rupture avec l'île des

³⁵ Jean-Pierre Chrétien et Jean-François Dupaquier, *Burundi 1972 au bord de deux génocides* (Paris: Ed. Karthala, 2007), 392-394.

³⁶ «*Les relations sino-burundaises sont dominées par beaucoup de consensus importants*», dans les différents domaines de coopération bilatérale et multilatérale, déclaration du Ministre assistant des Affaires Etrangères de Chine en visite au Burundi, samedi 07.12.2017.

relations diplomatiques vieilles de 24 ans. La Chine ne pouvait également pas financer un projet régional impliquant ce pays³⁷.

Depuis trois ans, le Burundi est en froid avec ses partenaires traditionnels qui, en guise de pression, ont coupé le robinet de la coopération bilatérale et structurelle. Le gouvernement chinois reste fidèle à ses principes de coopération en continuant à soutenir le Burundi sur tous les piliers de la coopération. «*Nous continuerons à fournir au Burundi des aides, aussi bien alimentaires que budgétaires, sans contrepartie*»; et cela par «*respect de la souveraineté nationale et la lutte contre toute ingérence extérieure*»³⁸. Il s'agit d'une position de principe justifiant pourquoi la Chine (avec la Russie) refuse de voter une résolution ou des sanctions contre le pouvoir de Bujumbura au Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies. La récente visite du Ministre chinois des Affaires étrangères au Burundi du 11 janvier 2020 renforce la primauté de ces relations dont les échanges entre les autorités des deux pays ont abordé des questions aussi diverses que l'octroi d'un don financier, la lutte contre le terrorisme, le renforcement des relations bilatérales, la création de nouveaux axes de développement (Chine magazine: Les échanges entre la Chine et le Burundi se renforcent, 15 janvier 2020). Cette embellie des relations entre les deux pays se traduit par des visites et d'échange d'entretiens téléphoniques en cas de nécessité au plus haut niveau avec pour objectif l'instauration d'une confiance mutuelle entre pays.

Ces relations s'accompagnent d'un nouveau langage traduisant un nouvel esprit dans l'approche de la coopération, incitant les Etats et les peuples africains à se prendre en charge. Mao affirme que «*nous avons toujours considéré que compter sur ses propres forces est le fondement même de la*

³⁷ Le Burkina Faso rétablit les relations diplomatiques avec la Chine, RFI du 26 mai 2018. Les visites servent également à s'assurer, à réaffirmer les positions des deux pays en ce qui concerne l'île de Taiwan.

³⁸ Déclaration de Li Yuanhao, Vice-Président chinois à l'issue de son entretien avec le Chef de l'Etat burundais Pierre Nkurunziza, le 11 mai 2017; voir également Gros Marie-France: Burundi. La Chine à la rescousse du régime Nkurunziza, La Libre Belgique du 12 mai 2017.

révolution et de l'édification d'un pays (...). Que l'Afrique ouvre les yeux sur la Chine, elle verra comment l'histoire n'aide que ceux qui s'aident tous seuls.»³⁹

Si cette assertion traduit la dimension idéologique des débuts de la coopération chinoise, il faudra néanmoins que chaque pays définisse le type de développement qu'il voudrait atteindre et le niveau de sa prise en charge. Car, au-delà des questions de légitimité, de satisfaction des besoins collectifs, les pays africains ont besoin de créer des systèmes, des ordres politique, économique, culturel etc. en vue de résoudre la question des éléments de diversité.

Les relations politiques entre la Chine et même les autres pays africains ont cette particularité que les nouveaux partenaires des pays africains, y compris la Chine, contrairement à l'époque coloniale et postcoloniale, ne sont pas des exportateurs d'idéologie politique. Ils ne fournissent pas un modèle de pensée comme dans le temps du marxisme-léninisme, fer de lance des mouvements révolutionnaires dans le Tiers-monde.⁴⁰

De surcroît, des accords de jumelage ont été conclus en 1986 entre les villes de Bujumbura et Hefei (Province d'Anhui) et un deuxième conclu en mars 1991 entre les provinces de Gitega (Burundi) et Qinghai. L'objectif de ces jumelages entre villes et provinces des deux pays est de renforcer ensemble des moyens de coopération et d'échange d'expérience dans les domaines de coopération économique, sociale et culturelle. Cette forme de coopération décentralisée n'a pas encore connu de fruits, car *«il serait souhaitable que des visites soient programmées entre les deux pays afin de relancer cette*

³⁹ L. Ma et N. Wang, «La diplomatie,» 18.

⁴⁰ Thierry Vircoulon, Entretien dans la Croix, du 04.04.2018.

forme de coopération et explorer les possibilités de promouvoir la coopération entre les villes susmentionnées.»⁴¹

La réalisation d'infrastructures

Notons que la réalisation de grands travaux tels que des routes, barrages hydro-électriques, travaux d'irrigation, des hôpitaux, des écoles exerce un impact évident tant sur l'économie, la circulation de biens et services diminuant un tant soit peu la dépendance du pays vis-à-vis de l'étranger. Ces chefs d'œuvre de la coopération sino-burundaise accordent une certaine légitimité aux dirigeants à cause de leur visibilité et la satisfaction d'un besoin urgent pour la population. En outre, pour un pays aussi exigu comme le Burundi, toute réalisation exerce un impact évident du fait qu'il profite dans l'immédiat à une partie importante de la population et sur une grande portion de son territoire. Il faudrait néanmoins que d'autres secteurs de production se développent en même temps pour éviter toute inflation artificielle (augmentation de la demande due à la mobilité, faiblesse de l'offre).

Ce développement de la collectivité exige une planification rigoureuse tant les efforts fournis dans un domaine tel que la construction d'infrastructures augment la demande alors que d'autres secteurs comme l'agriculture, l'urbanisation non planifiée n'accroissent pas pour autant l'offre. Cela revient à développer séparément les secteurs nationaux, tout en réfléchissant aux implications de l'ensemble sur le développement souhaité, une démarche qui constitue également une autre façon de se prendre en charge.

⁴¹ République du Burundi / Ministère des Relations Extérieures et de la Coopération (DAA) (1994): Mémoire sur les Relations entre la Chine et le Burundi, Bujumbura.

Dans le domaine de l'éducation

Les étudiants bénéficiaires des bourses de la coopération chinoise affirment que la formation est très solide, assortie même de beaucoup de stages sur terrain, alliant la théorie et la pratique, une forme de transmission de savoirs et de compétence largement appréciée des étudiants (Propos d'une ancienne étudiante en Chine). La coopération chinoise s'avère, dit-on peu onéreuse, et adaptée aux besoins des pays d'intervention et de surcroît efficace dans sa réalisation. Un membre d'une ONG africaine n'avait-il pas déclaré au Forum de Nairobi que *«les Chinois ne font pas les choses à moitié. Ils ne perdent pas leur temps en réunion. Ils vont de l'avant et construisent des routes.»*⁴² Elle est accordée dans des conditions apparemment non offensantes pour le pays bénéficiaire avec des experts qui mènent un style de vie proche de celui des citoyens qu'ils assistent (Partage de moyens de transport, de logement, des équipements bref une vie en communauté rendant peu l'ensemble de l'aide au développement). Néanmoins, la Chine devrait travailler sur son image; une tension due à une promiscuité sans réels contacts entre communauté africaine hôte et chinoise surgit souvent dans certaines capitales africaines, car des communautés chinoises prestent dans les mêmes secteurs que les nationaux comme le commerce de détail, la restauration devenant des concurrents sans chercher à s'ouvrir. Une étude de 2018 montre le niveau de satisfaction des populations à l'égard des Chinois; Nigéria 61%, Kenya 67%, SA 49% ailleurs y compris au Burundi entre 20 et 40% d'opinion favorable; pourtant ils sont 67% en Russie, et 70% en Tunisie.⁴³

Dans le domaine commercial

Il va sans dire que le volume des échanges n'est guère intéressant pour la Chine, mais pour le Burundi, le pays constitue une alternative de débouchés à cause du rapport entre prix et qualité des produits qui vont inonder le

⁴² Laurent Delcourt, «La Chine en Afrique,» 10.

⁴³ Denis Kat, Ibid., 2018.

marché local. Rappelons que la balance commerciale entre la Chine et l’Afrique en général est positive pour le continent africain dans la mesure où 70% des importations chinoises proviennent de quatre pays exportateurs de matières premières (Angola, Congo Brazzaville, Afrique du Sud, Soudan) tandis que trente-sept autres pays africains, dont le Burundi, sont déficitaires en raison de la structure des productions de la Chine qui exporte vers l’Afrique des produits manufacturés à forte valeur ajoutée.

Coopération piégée?

La coopération avec la Chine et les pays africains suscite également des débats au point de s’interroger si cette relation privilégiée ne serait-elle pas piégée. Le surendettement des pays bénéficiaires alors que la Chine évoque plutôt qu’il est dû aux aides antérieures accordées par d’autres pays. Delcourt évoque des accords de financement de projets recourent à un maillage savant où les fonds ne sont pas directement versés à un Etat africain⁴⁴. Une entreprise publique chinoise réalise les travaux, en contrepartie une entreprise privée reçoit l’exploitation d’une ressource naturelle, le tout s’accompagnant de dons consacrés à la construction d’hôpitaux, d’écoles, de stades de football. Ce «*package deal*» trouve son fondement dans la perception par la Chine de la coopération qui se réalise au nom de la «*solidarité Sud-Sud*», dans un partenariat «*d’égal à égal*», et dans l’idée que se fait la Chine du développement, à savoir le renforcement de la base économique qui doit en retour profiter à l’ensemble de la collectivité.

D’autres évoquent des pratiques en matière d’octroi de l’aide et de marché qui s’accompagnent d’une confusion telle que l’on ne peut difficilement distinguer ce qui relève de dons, d’assistance personnelle, matérielle et financière, et de marché. Il est courant de constater, à l’occasion d’accords de construction d’une route par exemple, des stipulations telles la prise en

⁴⁴ Laurent Delcourt, «La Chine en Afrique,» 7-8.

charge par le gouvernement local des dépenses relatives aux frais locaux, l'engagement de rapatrier des experts et techniciens chinois, la partie chinoise s'engage à financer le coût du matériel technique employé au cours de l'exécution des travaux et le paiement des salaires du personnel chinois etc. Ces prescrits sont en rapport avec la construction par exemple d'une route, d'un barrage dont la réalisation devrait en principe être confiée à une entreprise privée, soit-elle chinoise. Cette imbrication d'aspects juridique, financier et économique requiert un recourt systématique à l'expertise dans ces différents domaines et l'implication des institutions nationales au-delà de l'exécutif pour toute forme de contrat avec les pays étrangers.

Enfin, Tull D. (2014) explique le succès rencontré par les relations sino-africaines en général. La Chine trouve par contre des opportunités, investit dans des pays où les occidentaux, souvent les partenaires classiques voient des difficultés et se replient. Il décrit particulièrement la stratégie chinoise qui consiste d'une part dans la multipolarité se traduisant par la pénétration tous azimuts dans tous les pays tout en privilégiant les pays fournisseurs de matières premières (Angola, Nigéria, Afrique du Sud, Kenya), et d'autre part la non-intervention dans les affaires intérieures. Moratoire de la dette, baisse des droits de douane, opportunités de nouveaux investissements à cause des infrastructures construites, rapprochement avec la population sont autant de facteurs ayant pour conséquence, entre autres, des avantages tant pour la Chine que pour les élites qui gouvernent les pays africains.⁴⁵

2. Trends dans les relations entre la Chine et le reste du monde

Trois facteurs peuvent certes influencer les relations futures entre la Chine et le reste du monde dont le Burundi, mais ils dépendront de l'évolution interne du pays et des décisions que la RP de Chine prendra en vue de s'adapter à un nouvel environnement politique et économique.

⁴⁵ Denis M. Tull, «China's engagement in Africa: Scope, significance and consequences,» *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 44, Numéro 3 (Septembre 2006): 459-479.

Premièrement, les rapports entre la Chine et ses voisins immédiats sont empreints de conflits multiples de souveraineté autour des îles, de délimitation de frontières terrestres, et partant de la maîtrise des routes maritimes devant permettre voire favoriser le commerce maritime de ce pays et d'autres dans la région obligeant Pékin à intensifier ses relations avec la Russie, le Pakistan et le Myanmar qui lui permettent de contourner un isolement fatal en cas d'escalade. De surcroît, la Chine développe, à travers l'Initiative de la Route de la Soie («*Road and Belt Initiative*», RBI), des routes maritimes et terrestres devant booster la construction des infrastructures et, en conséquence, favoriser son commerce international.

Rappelons à cet effet que d'après Ischinger, le statut de grande puissance repose actuellement, non seulement sur la puissance militaire ou économique, mais aussi sur la capacité à convaincre et gagner des partenaires tant au niveau régional qu'international.⁴⁶ Et dans cet ordre d'idées, la Chine, n'ayant pas un véritable modèle politique à «*exporter*», elle fait recourt à des instruments politiques de «*soft power*» et surtout économiques en vue de s'attirer la sympathie et gagner des Etats et peuples étrangers: des visites de ressortissants étrangers permettent de mieux comprendre la Chine, son organisation politique et économique, sa capacité à mettre sur pied un Etat fonctionnel devant gérer 1,4 Mds d'individus sur un immense territoire couvrant quatre fuseaux horaires.

Deuxièmement, la dimension politique et économique de la Chine actuelle fait du géant chinois à leurs yeux une puissance rivale des pays occidentaux, un pays au besoin à combattre au moyen d'instruments de sanctions économiques, individuelles et étatiques tout en coopérant sur d'autres thématiques. Dans les années de la présidence Obama aux USA (2008-2016), la tension portait plutôt sur la Russie accusée de violer le droit international, notamment le libre choix des peuples à l'auto-détermination et sanctionnée

⁴⁶ Wolfgang Ischinger, «Eine Aufgabe für Generationen. Der Westen muss gegenüber Russland auf eine neue Doppelstrategie setzen,» *IP*, January / February 2015, 32-33.

à cause de son intervention en Géorgie en 2006, puis en Ukraine. Au cours de la présidence Trump (2017-2021), la Chine est considérée comme la véritable rivale des USA et du monde occidental au point d'infliger des sanctions économiques et personnelles à ce pays et donner une nouvelle dimension du choc des civilisations exprimées dans les années 1990.⁴⁷

Dans les deux cas russe et chinois, il s'agit de limiter les sources de puissance politique et économique de deux pays rivaux, d'affaiblir et décrédibiliser le système de pouvoir en place, les obliger à terme à collaborer avec l'occident ou alors perdre de leur aura international.

Ces pays occidentaux restent néanmoins des partenaires politiques et surtout économiques importants pour la Chine ne pouvant à être remplacés par de nouveaux rapports avec l'Afrique et le reste du monde. Ces mauvaises relations ont des incidences économiques et impactent les relations de la Chine avec les autres pays dans leur dimension économique car elles obligent la Chine à terme à définir de nouvelles stratégies et priorités.

Troisièmement, l'autre facteur consiste en l'actuelle expansion de la pandémie dite Coronavirus 2019 ou Covid19. Le virus apparaît en Chine dans la ville de Wuhan et, la Chine reconnaît officiellement au 30.12.2019 l'existence du Coronavirus avant d'enregistrer la première victime au 11.01.2020. Et l'Afrique, jusque-là épargnée, est atteinte à son tour avec le premier cas découvert trouvé en Egypte le 14 février 2020. L'organisation Africa CDC publie au 20.03.2020 un document de Stratégie Continentale Africaine face au Covid19 avec certes une difficulté évidente de coordonner les programmes spécifiques de chaque pays, mais devenant un centre de ressources importantes en vue de mieux connaître la pandémie, de produire des statistiques actualisées et fiables y relatives. Pour une population en Afrique de 1,3 Milliards soit 17% de la population mondiale, l'organisation

⁴⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, *The clash of civilisations and the remaking of world order* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1996, 1997: version française).

panafricaine, Africa CDC, a enregistré, au 19.11.2020, 48.408 décès dus au Coronavirus, l'équivalent en Grande-Bretagne, et 2.013.388 de porteurs du virus.

Il s'avère néanmoins difficile de coordonner les programmes de lutte contre la pandémie au niveau international. Le Burundi connaît en mars 2020 trois défis majeurs: un contexte politique marqué par la préparation et la campagne électorale de mai à septembre 2020, une vie précaire de la majorité de la population, et enfin l'impact perceptible de mesures drastiques comme le confinement («lock-down») sur le pays en général. Les premières réactions face aux informations alarmantes sur la propagation de la pandémie auront été ambiguës pendant trois mois, allant du déni manifeste de la réalité à des mesures de précaution que le ministère de la santé, des missions étrangères, des organismes internationaux, des ONG, et des églises ont prises.

La pandémie a été déclarée quand, au 31.03.2020, deux cas confirmés de Covid19 sont détectés chez des personnes ayant voyagé au cours des 14 jours précédents à Dubaï (EAU) et à Kigali (Rwanda). En guise de réaction, le Ministère de la Santé et de la lutte contre le Sida esquisse un Plan de Contingence et de réponse à la pandémie. Une campagne de dépistage général a eu lieu du 06.07 au 05.10.2020 et continue dans des centres appropriés. D'après le Rapport de Situation sur la Réponse à la pandémie due au Covid19 du 16.11.2020, il existe depuis le 31.03.2020, sur 59.834 personnes testées, 631 cas positifs, 1 décès soit un taux global de positivité de 1,05%.

Certes, la pandémie n'a pas évolué de façon significative comme on l'avait envisagé, mais les conséquences s'avèrent énormes sur le plan structurel (déclin de la production interne, difficile commerce extérieur, tourisme en berne, rareté de certains produits vivriers etc.), sur le plan conjoncturel (perte d'emploi, diminution des revenus), au plan régional (diminution ou cherté du trafic transfrontalier, suspension de certains vols internationaux)

sur le plan social et personnel (arrêt des voyages, mesures barrières à respecter, suspicion, remise en question de l'entourage, peur diffuse et désorientation, incertitudes, recours à l'automédication) etc. Les défis restent un renforcement du dépistage du Covid-19 dans toutes les provinces sanitaires du Burundi et aux différents points d'entrée, l'identification, la gestion et le suivi des alertes, et le traitement efficace des cas positifs.

Conclusion

La présente contribution avait pour objectif d'analyser les facteurs de durabilité des relations sino-burundaises. Elle s'adresse à l'un des domaines de politique étrangère, la coopération entre deux pays du Sud par opposition à la coopération classique entre un pays africain et son ancienne puissance coloniale. Le Burundi noue des relations de coopération avec la Chine dès les premières années de son indépendance en 1963, relations vite interrompues à cause de l'enjeu régional du pays et de la Région des Grands Lacs. Cette expérience a duré sept ans et les deux pays ont renoué leurs relations au niveau diplomatique et des ambassades en 1971.

L'article analyse de surcroît les fondements des relations sino-burundaises qui ne cessent plutôt de s'intensifier, de se diversifier en dépit des crises internes ou au niveau international. Il s'agit de deux pays aux niveaux de développement économique certes différents, mais qui trouvent ainsi matière à coopérer. Leur approche est d'éviter les conflits dans les relations et insister sur la confiance mutuelle et la solidarité. Ils ont besoin d'un soutien politico-diplomatique et économique réciproque et constant de nature à les renforcer mutuellement tant au niveau interne qu'international.

La coopération sino-burundaise constitue une alternative stratégique permettant de contourner depuis des décennies les mauvaises relations avec les partenaires classiques occidentaux, et pour la Chine des relations difficiles avec les pays limitrophes, et l'objectif de se ravitailler en matières premières. Elle se veut efficace, assure une grande visibilité des actions

offrant ainsi une certaine légitimité aux pouvoirs en place et à la Chine d'étendre son influence politique et surtout économique dans le monde, de s'assurer de l'approvisionnement en matières premières après des centaines d'autarcie sans ouverture sur le monde.

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Coronavirus and the International Energy Market: Assessing the Impact of the Pandemic on China-Nigeria Trade and Investment Relations

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Abstract: *This paper explores the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on China-Nigeria trade and investment cooperation in the contexts of oil-backed loans and infrastructure development. In this paper, I make three primary claims. First, the suspension and cancellation of Nigeria's debt to China will reinforce Beijing's economic principle of mutual benefit and its idea that international trade should not take a dominance-dependence structure. Second, it is likely to enhance China's credibility in its move to create a new global economic and investment order. Third, the provisions of the China-Nigeria BIT on diplomatic and negotiated trade dispute resolution have the potentials to deepen trade and investment relations between China and Nigeria, even in the face of global commercial and economic uncertainties.*

Key words: *COVID-19; China; Nigeria; oil; loan; infrastructure; debt; force majeure; trade.*

Introduction

China is arguably the most important emerging state actor in transnational trade and investment and a growing major operator in natural resource extraction in Africa. Nigeria - Africa's most populous country and the continent's largest petroleum¹ exporter is currently one of the major

¹ In this paper, we will be using the words 'petroleum' and 'oil' interchangeably. Generally, petroleum is the umbrella word for oil and natural gas as both resources are usually extracted together and separated through the refining process. Etymologically, the word petroleum comes from two Latin words *petra* – which means rock, and *oleum* – which means oil. See Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, *I Need to Know: An Introduction to the Oil Industry & OPEC*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Austria: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, 2013). See also "What Is Petroleum?," About, American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG): Petroleum Through Time (accessed July 2,

recipients of China's oil investment. China's 'Going Out' strategy and international petroleum policy are two key political and economic frameworks that are driving Beijing's oil investment in Nigeria and Africa at large. The "Going Out" strategy is a plan of action by Beijing for entering and navigating the mainstream global trade and investment landscape through its state-owned enterprises (SOEs).² The objectives of China's international petroleum are to implement the "Going Out" strategy, diversify the country's petroleum imports, build globally competitive flagship oil companies, and conduct petroleum diplomacy, among others.³ In terms of the institutional framework, China and African governments have increasingly used the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) which was established in 2000 to forge stronger trade and investment partnerships.⁴ The FOCAC initiative was set up to deepen Sino-African

2020), <<https://www.aapg.org/about/petroleum-geology/petroleum-through-time/what-is-petroleum#3428309-about>>.

² "Better Implementation of the 'Go Global' Strategy," The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, March 15, 2006, <http://www.gov.cn/node_11140/2006-03/15/content_227686.htm>, <<https://perma.cc/T28R-UHUM>>. The objectives of the "Going Out" strategy are to expand the space for China's economic development, promote common development, supplement the resources that the Asian country needs, drive the export of goods and services, cultivate the country's multinational companies and well-known brands, promote the employment of host countries' citizens, and ease investment and trade. In this paper and the context of China, state-owned enterprises and national oil companies are used to refer to companies recognized by a national regulation as an enterprise in which the state exercises ownership either by the state being the ultimate beneficiary owner of the majority of voting shares or otherwise exercising an equivalent degree of control. See, for example, *OECD Guidelines on Corporate Governance of State-Owned Enterprises*, 2015th ed. (Paris: OECD Publishing, n.d.). See also Curtis Milhaupt J. and Wentong Zheng, "Beyond Ownership: State Capitalism and the Chinese Firm," *Georgetown Law Journal* 103, no. 3 (2015): 665.

³ Bo Kong, *China's International Petroleum Policy*, Energy and Security Series (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 61s.

⁴ "FOCAC Mechanisms," About FOCAC, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation | Forum Sur La Cooperation Sino-Africaine, <https://www.focac.org/eng/ltjj_3/ltjz/> (accessed July 10, 2020). For a detailed objective of FOCAC, its establishment as well as the politics and challenges surrounding its existence, see Ian Taylor, "The Institutional Framework of Sino-African Relations," in *China-Africa and an Economic Transformation*, ed. Arkebe Oqubay and Yifu Justin Lin (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2019), 98–125.

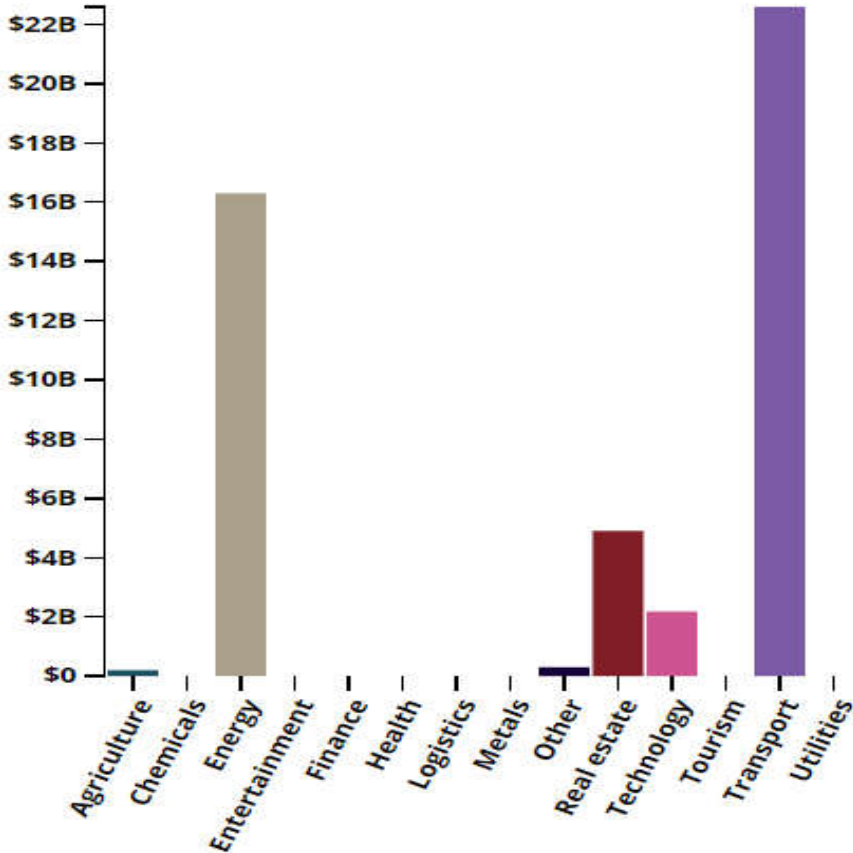
economic cooperation and to create a new international political and economic order in the 21st century. The China-Nigeria trade and investment relations through the FOCAC have resulted in the execution of critical national infrastructure projects valued at US\$5 billion.⁵ In addition, successive Nigerian and Chinese presidents have exchanged official visits to each others' countries and have used the platforms to reach important milestones on economic cooperation. The adoption and implementation of China's "Going Out" strategy, international petroleum policy, the principles of FOCAC, and the presidential reciprocal visits have cemented Sino-Nigeria trade and investment cooperation and resulted in some quid pro quo deals between the two countries.

To address Nigeria's infrastructure deficit, China signed an oil-for-infrastructure (OFI) deal with the African country. Under the Sino-Nigeria OFI pact, Chinese state-owned financial institutions (SOFIs) give long-term loans to the host state to finance its large infrastructure projects such as refineries, railways, highways, seaports, airports, electricity-generating plants, and free trade zones. Some of the loans are repaid with oil sales and drilling rights to China and its national oil companies (NOCs).⁶ China's trade and investments in Nigeria, as will be seen in figure 1 below, straddles various industries such as oil and gas, transport, real estate, information technology, agriculture, education, and manufacturing.

⁵ "President Buhari Greets President Xi Jinping on Chinese Lunar Year," Press Release, The State House, Abuja, January 21, 2020, <<https://statehouse.gov.ng/press-releases/president-buhari-greets-president-xi-jinping-on-chinese-lunar-year/>>.

⁶ Others will be repaid with internally generated revenue from the projects. See "Amaechi On Railway Service Infrastructure, Governance Under Buhari - Amaechi," Youtube, *Newsnight* (Abuja, Nigeria: Channels Television, December 16, 2019), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HReyKLYLJHw>>.

Figure 1: China's Sectoral Investments and Contracts in Nigeria (2005-2019)



Source: American Enterprise Institute.⁷

Research Problem

Data from the Debt Management Office of Nigeria shows that as of the end of the first quarter of 2020, Nigeria's debt to Exim Bank of China stood at

⁷ "China Global Investment Tracker," American Enterprise Institute - AEI, <<https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/>> (accessed April 30, 2020).

US\$3.121 billion.⁸ It appears very challenging for Nigeria to repay the Chinese loans as the country is in a post-recession era⁹ with huge external debt and budget deficit.¹⁰ More crucially, since the outbreak of the coronavirus in late 2019, there has been a steep downward plunge in the international oil price which has begun to adversely affect the profitability of crude oil and the suspension of some lucrative oilfield development activities in Nigeria. As of July 15, 2020, Bonny Light - which is a light sweet crude oil grade produced in Nigeria and which serves as a regional benchmark crude for West Africa sold for as low as US\$43.44 per barrel.¹¹ Nigeria had budgeted US\$57 per barrel of oil for the 2020 fiscal year.¹² Nigeria's federal lawmakers are currently calling for a review and renegotiation or outright cancellation of the Chinese loans because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the nosedive in oil prices which have made it

⁸ "Press Release - Facts About Chinese Loans to Nigeria," News & Events, Debt Management Office Nigeria, June 18, 2020, <<https://www.dmo.gov.ng/news-and-events/dmo-in-the-news/press-release-facts-about-chinese-loans-to-nigeria>>.

⁹ "Nigeria: Out of Recession and Looking Beyond Oil," IMF News, International Monetary Fund, March 15, 2018, <<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/03/15/na031518-nigeria-out-of-recession-and-looking-beyond-oil>>.

¹⁰ "Debt Management Office Nigeria," Debt Profile, External Debt Stock, <<https://www.dmo.gov.ng/debt-profile/external-debts/external-debt-stock>> (accessed June 12, 2020).

¹¹ "Oil Price Charts," OilPrice.com, <https://oilprice.com/oil-price-charts> (accessed July 15, 2020). In the same vein, the price of Qua Iboe crude stood at US\$43.46 on July 15, 2020. Qua Iboe crude is a light crude produced from numerous offshore fields in the Bight of Biafra in southeastern Nigeria. It has very low levels of sulfur, metals, and asphaltic material; and when refined will provide similar low sulfur specification products. Qua Iboe crude oil is a well-balanced intermediate crude that produces high quality, low sulfur products after simple refining. The naphtha produced can be reformed to produce high octane gasoline blendstock. See, for example, "Qua Iboe," Crude Oils, ExxonMobil, November 21, 2018, <<https://corporate.exxonmobil.com:443/Crude-oils/Crude-trading/Qua-Iboe>>.

¹² Felix Onuah, "UPDATE 2-Nigeria to Scale Down Budget in Face of Oil Price Crash," *Reuters*, March 9, 2020, online edition, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-oil-idUSL8N2B25KB>>.

impracticable to repay the loans.¹³ Some of the lawmakers argue that the award of oil blocks to Chinese NOCs was bereft of transparency, that the executive branch is pledging away the nation's resources through excessive borrowing which could mortgage the country's future.¹⁴ If the proposal of the lawmakers is accepted and carried out by the executive arm of government, it may lead to a trade war between China and Nigeria, derail the infrastructure developments in the host state, and inevitably trigger legal actions under international investment regime. The lawmakers appear to not have carefully considered the effects of their proposal on bilateral trade and investment relations between the two countries and the relevant provisions of China-Nigeria Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT). Furthermore, it has not yet been specifically addressed whether the Nigerian government can rely on the doctrine of force majeure in contract law. Legal scholars and political economists have engaged in analyses and counter-analyses of the Sino-Nigeria trade and investment cooperation and the oil-backed loans and have critiqued the economic relations based on the opacity of the arrangement.¹⁵ However, the literature has not adequately addressed how

¹³ Ihuoma Chiedozie, "DMO Faults Reps, Says Lawmakers Approved \$3.18bn Chinese Loans," *Punch Newspapers*, May 29, 2020, <<https://punchng.com/dmo-faults-reps-says-law-makers-approved-3-18bn-chinese-loans/>>.

¹⁴ "Chinese Loans Shrouded With Secrecy, Rep Member Claims," Video, *Sunrise Daily* (Channels Television, May 14, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6gOW9Fw_YA>.

¹⁵ Olufunmilayo B. Arewa, "Constructing Africa: Chinese Investment, Infrastructure Deficits, and Development," *Cornell International Law Journal* 49 (2016): 101. Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Ian Taylor, "The Pathology of Dependency: Sino-Nigerian Relations as a Case Study," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian Politics*, ed. Carl Levan and Patrick Ukata (Oxford University Press, 2018). Omolade Adunbi and Howard Stein, "Political Economy of China's Investment in Nigeria: Prometheus or Leviathan?" in *China-Africa and an Economic Transformation*, ed. Arkebe Oqubay and Yifu Justin Lin, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 192. Cyril Obi, "The Changing Dynamics of Chinese Oil and Gas Engagements in Africa," in *China-Africa and An Economic Transformation*, ed. Arkebe Oqubay and Yifu Justin Lin (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2009), 173. Ian Taylor, "Chinese Interest in Nigeria's Oil and the American Context," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 48, no. 3 (2014): 391-404.

these recent and novel developments can impact the economic relations. It is these crucial questions that this paper attempts to address.

Research Methods

This paper does not draw from one established epistemological tradition as it is broadly analytical and at the same time embraces both legal methods and interdisciplinary approach in social sciences. As an interdisciplinary research, it relies on a collection of primary data on Chinese economic engagements with Nigeria which are assembled by research institutes, centres, and media organizations. In terms of secondary data, it relies on scholarly literature in social sciences.

China-Nigeria Bilateral Trade and Investment Cooperation in Historical Context

From pre-colonial Nigeria in the mid-twentieth century, China and other Asian states have forged bilateral relations with Africa for the advancement of their collective political and economic cooperation.¹⁶ Beginning in February 1971 when China and Nigeria established diplomatic relations, bilateral business ties between the two countries have experienced continuous growth¹⁷ and their trade relations have since entered a new stage of rapid development with prominent achievements.¹⁸ The latest bilateral investment treaty between China-Nigeria was signed in 2001 and

¹⁶ The Asian-African Conference of 1955 which was convened and coordinated by the Indonesian government and held in Bandung is one example of such political and economic partnership.

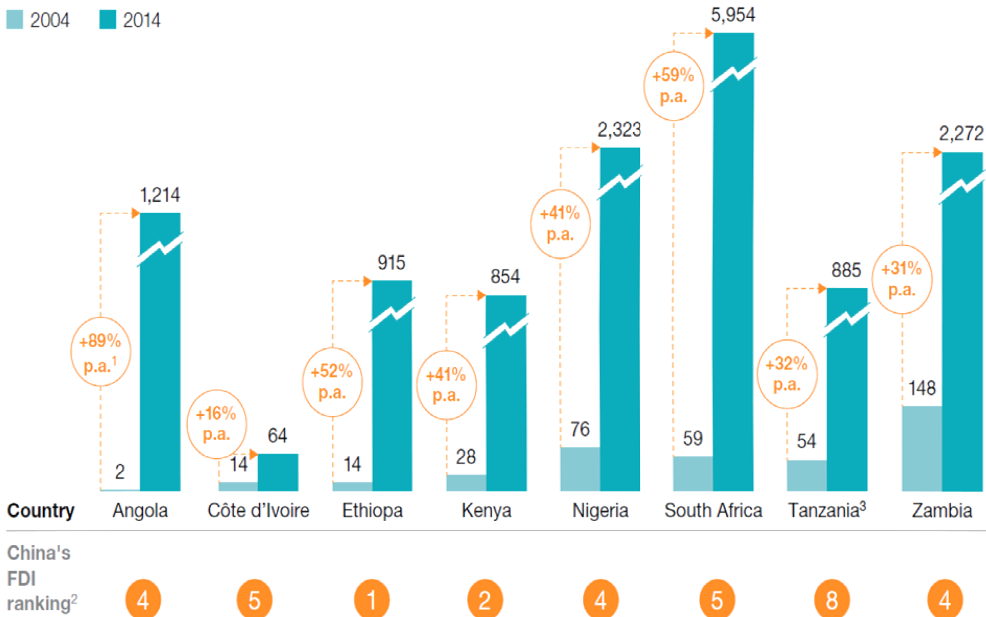
¹⁷ "Ministry of Commerce: Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Nigeria," Brief Introduction of Bilateral Relations, July 22, 2014, <<http://nigeria2.mofcom.gov.cn/article/bilateralcooperation/inbrief/201407/20140700669579.shtml>>, <<https://perma.cc/DNC7-TDYH>>. China and Nigeria signed the first economic and technical agreement in 1972.

¹⁸ "Remarks of Ambassador Zhou Pingjian at the Forum on China-Nigeria Production Capacity and Investment Cooperation," Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, August 18, 2018, <<http://ng.china-embassy.org/eng/zngx/cne/t1586187.htm>>.

entered into force in 2010.¹⁹ In contemporary times and specifically since 2011, Sino-Nigeria economic cooperation has grown at meteoric rates. As figure 2 below shows, Nigeria is China’s third-largest trading partner and second export market in Africa, only next to South Africa; while China is Nigeria’s number one import source.

Figure 2: China’s Foreign Direct Investment in Eight African Countries - 2004-2014

(Official Cross-Border Flows Only)



Source: McKinsey & Company, 2017.

¹⁹ “China-Nigeria BIT (2001),” Bilateral Investment Treaties, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD): Investment Policy Hub, <[https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/international-investment-agreements/treaties/bilateral-investment-treaties/949/china---nigeria-bit-2001->](https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/international-investment-agreements/treaties/bilateral-investment-treaties/949/china---nigeria-bit-2001-) (accessed July 2, 2020).

An Overview of China's Oil Investment in Nigeria

China has deepened its trade and investment cooperation with Nigeria by increasingly establishing oil and gas production base in Nigeria. As figure 3 illustrates, China has acquired oil blocks, signed biofuel production pact, and crude oil supply contracts with the host state. According to Nigeria's national oil company, China's investment in Nigeria's oil and gas industry has reached US\$16 billion.²⁰ There are three Chinese NOCs that are operating with their subsidiaries in Nigeria, namely, China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC), China Petroleum & Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec), and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). The acquisition and development of many oilfields in Nigeria by the Chinese NOCs are hugely significant for Beijing. First, in addition to the gargantuan sizes of the oil blocks, the prolificacy of the assets largely represents the actualisation of China's "Going Out" investment strategy and international petroleum policy which we saw earlier. Second, it brings to limelight one of the corporate hues of China's NOCs as implementers of both the "Going Out" strategy and the country's international petroleum policy. For the part of the host state, China's oil investments act as a stimulus for the expansion and further development of its offshore projects and economy. This is because most of the oil platforms are primarily developed locally to accelerate the pace of industrial fabric and the transfer of technology.²¹

²⁰ Chika Oduah, "China Invests \$16 Billion in Nigeria's Oil Sector," Voice of America, August 28, 2019, <<https://www.voanews.com/africa/china-invests-16-billion-nigerias-oil-sector>>.

²¹ "Egina: A Flagship Offshore Project Driving Local Development and Expertise," Total.com, <<https://www.total.com/energy-expertise/projects/oil-gas/deep-offshore/egina-nigeria>> (accessed May 4, 2020).

Figure 3: China's Foremost & Ongoing Investment in Nigeria's Oil Industry

Company / Subsidiary	Year of Acquisition	Type of License Area / Name of Oilfield	Type of Investment	Investment Value
CNOOC / Nexen	2005	Oil Mining License (OML) 130 ²²	Crude oil production	US\$2.69 billion ²³
	2002	OML 138 (Usan) ²⁴	Crude oil production	US\$2.5 billion
	2008	OML 139 (Owowo South B-1)	Crude oil production	Not known

²² "Nigeria: Deepwater Reserves Deliver Steady Production," CNOOC - Operations - Nigeria, <<https://en/operations/middle-east-and-africa/nigeria>> (accessed May 6, 2020).

²³ Kate Linebaugh and Shai Oster, "Cnooc Pays \$2.27 Billion For Nigerian Oil, Gas Stake," *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 2006, sec. Markets, <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB113680307278841473>>. Peter S. Goodman, "Cnooc Buys Oil Interest In Nigeria," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, January 10, 2006, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/09/AR2006010901779.html>>.

²⁴ In this license area, the NNPC is the concession holder. ExxonMobil's subsidiary – Esso Exploration & Production Nigeria (Offshore East) Ltd is the operator with a 30% interest. Other partners include Chevron (30%) and Total (30%). "Crude Oils - Usan," ExxonMobil, November 26, 2018, <<https://corporate.exxonmobil.com:443/Crude-oils/Crude-trading/Usan>>. In Nigeria, oil blocks and fields are identified by a unique designation after a licensee or lessee must have obtained the written approval of the Department of Petroleum Resources. The designation of a block consists of the name of the oil well to be drilled and the serial number which indicates the chronological order in the drilling sequence for the field. All oilfields bear names in a Nigerian vernacular language which generally refers to any geographical or topographical features in the vicinity of the field. The names of fields are chosen from the names of the flora or fauna of Nigeria. See "Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations," Legal Notice 69 § 34 (1969).

	2018	OML 154 (Owowo South B)	Crude oil production	Not known
SINOPEC / Addax	2007	OML 138 (Usan)	Crude oil production	US\$2.5 billion
	2002	OML 124	Crude oil production	Not known
	2002	OML 123	Crude oil production	Not known
	2004	OML 126	Crude oil production	Not known
	2007	OML 137	Crude oil production	Not known
	2000	Oil Prospecting License (OPL) 227	Crude oil exploration and production	Not known
	2006	OML 67	Crude oil production	Not disclosed
CNPC / PetroChina / Chinese National Oil & Development Company / China	2005	Not applicable	Sale of 30,000 barrels of crude oil per day to China	800 million

Petroleum Pipeline Engineering Company Limited				
	2006	OPL 471	Crude oil exploration and production	Not disclosed
	2006	OPL 298	Crude oil exploration and production	Not disclosed
	2006	OPL 721	Crude oil exploration and production	Not disclosed
	2006	OPL 732	Crude oil exploration and production	Not disclosed

Source: Author's compilation based on data from various sources.²⁵

²⁵ Oil companies' websites, Nigeria's Department of Petroleum Resources, and media reports.

China's Infrastructure Investment Projects in Nigeria

As we shall see in figure 4 below, beginning in 2003, Chinese state-owned engineering and construction firms have increasingly pursued the ambitious execution of infrastructure projects in many sectors of the Nigerian economy. As Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria's president stated on China's 69th anniversary, "the Peoples' Republic of China is Nigeria's valued partner in progress. We have cooperated extensively in the fields of trade, technology, security infrastructure, and human development."²⁶ From investments in commuter trains and high-speed railway transit systems to the construction of deep seaports, from mega power projects to boost electricity generation to the construction of airports in major cities, China is gradually making major strides in infrastructure development in Nigeria. Some of the OFI projects have been completed and handed over to the host state while others are in progress.²⁷ All the railways, seaports, airports, and transnational highways projects in Nigeria are being handled by Chinese state-owned engineering and construction firms. About 85 percent of the infrastructure projects are funded with the oil-backed loans from China and Nigeria provides a counterpart fund of 15 percent.

²⁶ "President Buhari Congratulates China on 69th Anniversary," Press Release, The State House, Abuja, September 29, 2018, <https://statehouse.gov.ng/news/president-buhari-congratulates-china-on-69th-anniversary/>.

²⁷ "President Muhammadu Buhari's Address at the Commissioning of the Abuja Light Rail System," Speeches and Remarks, State House, Abuja, July 12, 2018, <https://statehouse.gov.ng/news/president-muhammadu-buharis-address-at-the-commissioning-of-the-abuja-light-rail-system/>. The following projects have been completed including but not limited to the Abuja light rail, Papalanto Power Plant, Omotosho Power Plant Phase 1, and Abuja, Port-Harcourt, and Lagos airports, respectively.

Figure 4: Some Key Infrastructure Projects Financed by China

Year	Project	Project Cost
2003	Maintenance & Construction of Nigeria Railway System & Supply of Locomotives ²⁸	RMB4.4 billion
2016	Abuja Light Rail ²⁹	US\$824 million
2011	Abuja-Kaduna Rail Line ³⁰	US\$876 million
2019	Abuja-Itakpe-Warri Rail Line ³¹	US\$3.9 billion
2003	Lekki Deep Sea Port ³²	US\$1.6B

²⁸ "China Railway Construction Corporation Limited Overseas Construction and Maintenance of the Nigeria Railway System," Overseas, China Railway Construction Corporation Limited, February 19, 2008, <http://english.crcc.cn/art/2008/2/19/art_21578_2435561.htm>.

²⁹ Supra "President Muhammadu Buhari's Address at the Commissioning of the Abuja Light Rail System."

³⁰ Supra "Abuja-Kaduna Rail Line," Projects, Railway Technology (accessed May 28, 2020), <<https://www.railway-technology.com/projects/abuja-kaduna-rail-line/>>.

³¹ Okechukwu Nnodim, "FG, China Sign \$3.9bn Abuja-Itakpe-Warri Rail Contract," *Punch Newspapers*, October 11, 2019, Online edition, <<https://punchng.com/fg-china-sign-3-9bn-abuja-itakpe-warri-rail-contract/>>.

³² "Nigeria ICRC PPP Platform," Project, LEKKI DEEP WATER PORT (accessed May 28, 2020) <<https://ppp.icrc.gov.ng/project/118/lekki-deep-water-port>>.

2017	Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) Gas Pipeline³³	US\$2.8B
2017	Mambilla Hydroelectric Plant³⁴	US\$5.8B
2019	Gurara II Hydropower Project	US\$1B
2014	Zungeru Hydropower Plant	US\$1.29B
2019	Dualization of Abuja-Keffi/Trans-Saharan Highway	Not Known
2018	Port-Harcourt International Airport	US\$600M
2018	Abuja International Airport	US\$600M
2013	Lagos International Airport (Terminal 2)	Not Known
2013	China-Nigeria Friendship	US\$12M

³³ "Nigeria ICRC PPP Platform," Projects, AJAOKUTA-KADUNA-KANO (AKK) GAS PIPELINE (accessed May 27, 2020), <<https://ppp.icrc.gov.ng/project/295/ajaokuta-kaduna-kano-akk-gas-pipelinenbsp>>.

³⁴ Supra "China Helps Light up African Countries," Ministry of Commerce - People's Republic of China/China Daily, July 16, 2019, <<http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/counseloroffice/westernasiaandaficareport/201907/20190702882058.shtml>>.

	Hospital ³⁵	
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Source: Author’s compilation based on data from the Nigerian government’s website, companies’ website, Global Development Policy Center at Boston University, and Aid Data, respectively.

We have seen so far that crude oil and infrastructure development projects have been pivotal in the Sino-Nigeria trade and investment relations. In what follows, we attempt to map out the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the dearth of health facilities in Nigeria.

Nigeria’s Vulnerability to COVID-19 and China’s Contributions

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a novel and highly deadly disease which is caused by a virus that is in the same family with the severe acute respiratory syndrome.³⁶ The initial known cases were reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) in late 2019 from Wuhan City, in the Hubei Province of China.³⁷ The COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the global health body and at the time of writing, has no scientifically proven vaccine. The pandemic has increasingly ravaged almost all the countries in the world, including Nigeria and China – the two most populated countries on two continents. On February 27, 2020, Nigeria with a population of about 202 million people reported its first case of the virus involving an Italian national

³⁵ “China-Assisted Hospital Commissioned in Nigeria,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, January 29, 2013, <http://za.china-embassy.org/eng/zfgxss/ca00/t1009068.htm>. See also “China Donates Federal Staff Hospital / China-Nigeria Friendship Hospital,” Projects, China Aid Data, 2017, <<https://china.aiddata.org/projects/30629#amount>>.

³⁶ “Naming the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Virus That Causes It,” Diseases: Technical Guidance, World Health Organization, <[http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-\(cov id-2019\)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-(cov-id-2019)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it)> (accessed July 4, 2020).

³⁷ “Pneumonia of Unknown Cause – China,” Disease Outbreak News, World Health Organization, January 5, 2020, <<http://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unkown-cause-china/en/>>.

who works in Nigeria and had returned from Milan.³⁸ He later recovered and was discharged from a hospital. As of July 4, 2020, Nigeria has a total number of 28,167 confirmed cases of COVID-19.³⁹ Out of that number, a total of 11,462 persons have been discharged from hospitals and isolation centres. About 634, including government and ruling party officials,⁴⁰ have succumbed to the virus.⁴¹

Although there has been an economic intervention by the Nigerian government to fight the pandemic, the human population in the African country is highly vulnerable to the COVID-19.⁴² Since the attainment of independence in 1960, there has been an abysmal lack of investment in healthcare facilities by Nigeria's federal and state governments. Poor healthcare infrastructure, inadequate funding of the health sector, and lack of robust health policy frameworks have led to the high hospital mortality rate in the country.⁴³ In an on-going case in a Nigerian court, an anti-corruption non-governmental organization - the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project are seeking to compel Nigerian state governors to use public funds budgeted for their security votes⁴⁴ and life pensions to fund the

³⁸ "Health Minister: First Case Of COVID-19 Confirmed In Nigeria," February 28, 2020, <https://health.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=613:health-minister-first-case-of-covid-19-confirmed-in-nigeria/>.

³⁹ "COVID-19 Nigeria," National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), July 4, 2020, <<https://gloepid.org>>.

⁴⁰ Alexis Akwagyiram, "Nigerian President's Chief of Staff Dies from Coronavirus," *Reuters*, April 17, 2020, Online edition, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-nigeria-idUSKBN220001>>. See also "Oyo Ex-Governor, Ajimobi, Dies at 70, Buhari, Tinubu, Lagos APC Mourn," June 26, 2020, <<https://guardian.ng/news/oyo-ex-governor-ajimobi-dies-at-70-buhari-tinubu-abiodun-lagos-apc-mourn/>>.

⁴¹ "COVID-19 Nigeria."

⁴² Aisha Salaadeen, "Government, Banks and Wealthy Individuals Contribute Billions to Fight Coronavirus in Nigeria," *CNN*, March 27, 2020, <<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/27/africa/coronavirus-nigeria-fund/index.html>>.

⁴³ "WHO | Nigeria," Countries' Statistics, World Health Organization, <<http://www.who.int/countries/nga/en/>> (accessed July 11, 2020).

⁴⁴ In Nigeria, "security vote" is the budgetary or extra-budgetary allocations earmarked for security, and received by the President, Governors, and Local Government Chairmen which they spend without legal obligation to account for how it is spent. It is an amount spent by

health sector and address the impact of COVID-19 on Nigerians, among other requests.⁴⁵ Healthcare workers in government-owned hospitals are usually owed salaries for many months leading to industrial actions that paralyze the health sector.⁴⁶ There is a high rate of medical brain drain from Nigeria which has shown no sign of abating.⁴⁷ For lack of standard medical facilities in government hospitals, the Nigerian elite, including current and former government officials⁴⁸ and their family members usually seek medical care in foreign countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, the United States, and India.⁴⁹ Empirical data indicates that Nigeria is not prepared to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as it currently has the

heads of government with or without legislative appropriation, supposedly - on security without the requirement of disclosure on how the money is spent. Thus, what constitutes security vote may not have been appropriated by the relevant legislature; and even where the amount is appropriated, how it is spent, why it is spent and when it is spent are matters within the exclusive prerogative of the particular head of government who is not under any imperative duty of making any disclosure. See Ngozi Joy Ezeilo, Uchechukwu Nwoke, and Ndubuisi Sylvester Anya, "The (Un)Constitutional Appropriation and Expenditure of Public Funds in Nigeria: Analysing the 'Security Vote' Paradigm Through the Law," *Journal of African Law* 62, no. 2 (2018): 225–53.

⁴⁵ "COVID-19: SERAP Asks Court to Compel Govs to Fund Healthcare with Security Votes," Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), July 2020, <<https://serap-nigeria.org/covid-19-serap-asks-court-to-compel-govs-to-fund-healthcare-with-security-votes.ngo/>>.

⁴⁶ "Nigerian Doctors Strike for Better Benefits During Coronavirus Crisis," *Reuters*, June 15, 2020, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-nigeria-healthcare-idUSKBN23M1BZ>>.

⁴⁷ Mercy Abang, "Nigeria's Medical Brain Drain: Healthcare Woes as Doctors Flee," *Aljazeera News*, April 8, 2019, online edition, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/nigeria-medical-brain-drain-healthcare-woes-doctors-flee-190407210251424.html>>.

⁴⁸ Emmanuel Akinwotu, "Nigeria's President Draws Criticism for Seeking Medical Care Abroad," *The New York Times*, May 8, 2018, Online edition, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/africa/nigeria-president-buhari-health.html>. See also Bukola Adebayo, "Africa's Leaders Forced to Confront Healthcare Systems They Neglected for Years," Text, *CNN*, April 10, 2020, <<https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/10/africa/african-leaders-healthcare-coronavirus-intl/index.html>>.

⁴⁹ "Nigeria Losing \$1B Annually to Medical Tourism, Authorities Say," *Voice of America (VOA)*, May 10, 2019, Online edition, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/nigeria-losing-1b-annually-medical-tourism-authorities-say>.

capacity to test only 2,500 samples a day, and just half of these are administered each day because of a shortage of human resources, testing kits, and laboratories.⁵⁰ Before the outbreak, Nigeria had only 350 ventilators and 350 intensive care unit beds for its entire population of about 200 million.⁵¹ In April 2020, the country acquired 100 more ventilators.⁵² Given that there has been a continuous rise in the number of cases and deaths in the country and no flattening of the curve has yet been observed,⁵³ the facilities are not enough, and Nigeria may plunge into a health catastrophe if there is no foreign or international assistance and cooperation.

Notwithstanding that scores of xenophobic attacks against Nigerian residents in China in the wake of COVID-19 has triggered diplomatic rows between Beijing and Abuja,⁵⁴ there has been some level of cooperation and solidarity between China and Nigeria in the area of healthcare. In 2013, for example, a 150-bed China-Nigeria Friendship Hospital was built in Abuja as a gift from Beijing to mark the 42nd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.⁵⁵ Beijing and Abuja have supported each other in the fight against the global pandemic through the exchange of medical and scientific knowledge. China Railway Construction Corporation has sent a team of health workers from Beijing to assist Nigeria

⁵⁰ Siddharth Dixit et al., "How Well Has Nigeria Responded to COVID-19?" *Brookings* (blog), July 2, 2020, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2020/07/02/how-well-has-nigeria-responded-to-covid-19/>>.

⁵¹ Siddharth Dixit et al.

⁵² Siddharth Dixit et al.

⁵³ Siddharth Dixit et al.

⁵⁴ Zaheena Rasheed, Qazi Ramy Allahoum, Shereena, "'Unacceptable': Nigeria Condemns Treatment of Citizens in China," *Aljazeera News*, April 14, 2020, online edition, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/nigeria-condemns-treatment-citizens-china-200414172052630.html>>.

⁵⁵ "China-Assisted Hospital Commissioned in Nigeria."

in the fight against COVID-19.⁵⁶ Beijing has also donated various types of medical supplies to Nigeria.⁵⁷ In May 2020, following a request by the Nigerian government, the China Civil Engineering Company built, equipped and handed over a Dome Treatment Centre to their host state to help in the treatment of COVID-19 patients.⁵⁸ Crucially, the Sino-Nigeria trade and investment cooperation recently received a new impetus at the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19. During the Summit, President Xi Jinping pledged China's continued support to Africa's response to COVID-19.⁵⁹ President Jinping's promise to cancel the debt of African states to China and extend the period of debt suspension for some other countries who have been hit hard by the pandemic and are currently under huge economic stress⁶⁰ gives additional impetus to Beijing's trade relations with African states. For its part, the European Union has demonstrated global leadership and cooperation by supporting Nigeria on its fight against COVID-19 through a donation of EUR 50 million.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Mo Jingxi, "Nigeria Appreciates Chinese Support in COVID-19 Fight," *China Daily*, May 9, 2020, Online edition, <<http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202005/09/WS5eb5fed9a310a8b241154601.html>>.

⁵⁷ Jingxi.

⁵⁸ Jerry Omondi, "Chinese Built Health Facility Ready to Aid Nigeria's COVID-19 Fight," *CGTN Africa*, <<https://africa.cgtn.com/2020/05/13/chinese-built-health-facility-ready-to-aid-nigerias-covid-19-fight/>> (accessed July 10, 2020).

⁵⁹ "Full Text: Xi Jinping's Speech at Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity Against COVID-19," *China Global Television Network (CGTN)*, June 17, 2020, Online edition, <<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-06-17/Full-text-Xi-s-speech-at-China-Africa-summit-on-COVID-19-fights-Rp7hgf5tu0/index.html>>.

⁶⁰ "Full Text."

⁶¹ "EU Boosts Nigeria's COVID-19 Response with N21 Billion Contribution," Text, EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission - Delegation of the European Union to Nigeria and ECOWAS, April 14, 2020, <https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/nigeria/77571/eu-boosts-nigeria%E2%80%99s-covid-19-response-n21-billion-contribution_en>.

Mapping the Consequences of COVID-19 on Chinese Oil-Backed Loans to Nigeria

The Sino-Nigeria trade and investment relations have been greatly strengthened through the grant of loans to the host state. The crucial place of Chinese loans in the economic relations is patently evinced by the Nigerian president's speech to the Board of Directors of the country's Economic Summit Group where he stated:

*"We send our gratitude to the Chinese for all their support to Nigeria. Since independence, no country has helped our country on infrastructural development like the Chinese. In some projects, the Chinese help us with 85 percent payment, and soft loans that span 20 years. No country has done that for us."*⁶²

Chinese loans to Nigeria are concessional in that they are given on substantially more generous terms than those of Bretton Woods and the Paris Club. The concessional loans have low interest rates of 2.50 percent per annum with a tenor of 20 years and a grace period of 7 years.⁶³ The Chinese SOFIs such as the Export-Import Bank of China, China Development Bank, and China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation administer the loans on behalf of their home government.

However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current plunge in international oil prices pose serious threats to the Sino-Nigeria trade and investment cooperation and the successful completion of the many critical infrastructure projects which we saw earlier. This is because as we stated above, a huge part of the Chinese loans to Nigeria are collateralized with crude oil. The projects that can generate huge revenues to fund the cost of

⁶² "Press Release: We Will Deliver On Three-Pronged Campaign Promises - President Buhari," Press Release, *The State House, Abuja* (blog), January 22, 2018, <<https://statehouse.gov.ng/news/press-release-we-will-deliver-on-three-pronged-campaign-promises-president-buhari/>>.

⁶³ "Press Release - Facts About Chinese Loans to Nigeria."

their construction such as seaports have not been completed. That many of the loans are collateralized with crude oil exacerbates Nigeria's debt profile to its creditor as the means of repaying the loans are currently complicated. Crude oil is the major source of revenue for the Nigerian government, accounting for about 86 percent of its total export earnings.⁶⁴ Nigeria's fiscal revenues is currently in deficit and may go into a deep recession in late 2020 as a result of declined petroleum exports in light of the global financial crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated Nigeria's already battered economy and its rising debt to China. The Nigerian government borrows from Chinese state-owned financial institutions to carry out huge infrastructure projects. Data from the Debt Management Office of Nigeria shows that as of the end of the first quarter of 2020, Nigeria's debt to Exim Bank of China stood at US\$3.121 billion.⁶⁶ Beijing is facing pressure from some African leaders to cancel debts owed by countries in the continent since the early 2000s. In light of the plunge in the prices of oil and the global economic meltdown, scholars and commentators are cynical about the prospects of the successful execution of China-funded projects in many African countries. However, despite the economic threat posed to Sino-Nigeria trade and investment cooperation by COVID-19, China has continued to fulfill, albeit gradually, its contractual obligations under the OFI arrangement. On June 30, 2020, Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari virtually flagged off the construction of a US\$2.5 billion Trans-Nigeria gas

⁶⁴ "Nigeria Facts and Figures," OPEC: About Us, Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, <https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/167.htm> (accessed July 5, 2020).

⁶⁵ "OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report" (Vienna: Austria: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, June 17, 2020) at 22.

⁶⁶ "Press Release - Facts About Chinese Loans to Nigeria."

pipeline project which was awarded to a consortium of Chinese engineering and construction firms and financed by Bank of China and Sinosure.⁶⁷

COVID-19 and the Doctrine of Force Majeure in Sino-Nigeria Oil-Backed Loans

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, many health and safety restrictive measures such as lockdowns, suspension of non-essential travels, social and physical distancing have been put in place and enforced in national and transnational spaces. Generally, COVID-19 and the restrictive⁶⁸ measures have made the performance of the contractual obligations undertaken by investors and their trading partners almost commercially impracticable.

COVID-19 and its attendant restrictive measures are supervening events in which parties to an agreement could not have foreseen or avoided at the time of entering into the contract and which prevent or delay the performance of contractual duties and obligations. In contract law, the supervening events are known as force majeure and frustration of contract.⁶⁹ Some of the examples of force majeure events in common law include tornadoes, lightning, floods, fire, earthquakes, droughts, and severe weather conditions. Typically, epidemics and pandemics are not included as examples of force majeure. For a party to a contract to rely on force majeure, the contract must contain a force majeure clause as well as either the specific events or effects that force majeure may have on the performance of the contract. Long-term contracts involving the sale or

⁶⁷ "Buhari Pledges Speedy Completion of \$2.5bn AKK Gas Pipeline Project," *The Guardian Nigeria News*, June 30, 2020, Online edition, sec. News, <<https://guardian.ng/news/buhari-pledges-speedy-completion-of-2-5bn-akk-gas-pipeline-project/>>.

⁶⁸ "Nigerian Oil Union Suspends Industrial Action After Exxon Mobil Workers Freed," *Financial Post*, April 19, 2020, <<https://business.financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/nigerian-oil-union-suspends-industrial-action-after-exxon-mobil-workers-freed>>.

⁶⁹ Joseph Chitty, *Chitty on Contracts*, 31st ed. (London: Sweet & Maxwell: Thomson Reuters, 2012).

supply of oil, coal, or natural gas often include a force majeure clause.⁷⁰ Regrettably, it is not possible to know if there are force majeure clauses in the China-Nigeria oil-backed loan agreements or the type of natural events that the clauses cover as the deals are rarely available in the public domain. At present, China has begun to issue force majeure certificates to its companies in various sectors to give to their overseas business partners.⁷¹ Chinese international oil and natural gas companies such as CNOOC have declared force majeure on some petroleum contracts.⁷²

That being said, Article 8 of the China-Nigeria BIT provides that state to state investment disputes are to be settled amicably through diplomatic channels and shall be submitted to international arbitration only when the parties cannot reach an agreement within twelve months.⁷³ In a similar vein, investment disputes between a Chinese investor and a Nigerian business enterprise and vice versa are to be settled through negotiations.⁷⁴ In the event of a failure in the negotiations, the dispute shall be submitted to a Nigerian court. This aligns with the Declaration of the Beijing Summit 2006 and Beijing Platform for Action where China and African states agreed to address trade and economic disputes that may arise between them through friendly consultation and mutual understanding.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ P. J. M. Declercq, "Modern Analysis of the Legal Effect of Force Majeure Clauses in Situations of Commercial Impracticability," *Journal of Law and Commerce* 15, no. 1 (1996): 213–56.

⁷¹ "More than 4,300 Force Majeure Certificates Issued to Exporters," Policies, China Council for the Promotion of International Trade - Beijing Sub-Council (CCPIT Beijing), February 28, 2020, 300, <http://english.ccpitbj.org/web/static/articles/catalog_2c94bbf02fd8b281012fd8debea40005/article_ff8080816da92f5b01708ab3ca8f2280/ff8080816da92f5b01708ab3ca8f2280.html>.

⁷² Bate Felix and Jessica Jaganathan, "France's Total Rejects Force Majeure Notice from Chinese LNG Buyer," *Reuters*, February 6, 2020, Online edition, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-health-total-idUSKBN2001XQ>>.

⁷³ "China-Nigeria BIT (2001)."

⁷⁴ "China-Nigeria BIT (2001)."

⁷⁵ Uche U. Ewelukwa, "South-South Trade and Investment: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly - African Perspectives," *Minnesota Journal of International Law* 20, no. 2 (2011): 513.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have seen that there is increased trade and investment cooperation between China and Nigeria. We have also stated Nigeria's debt profile to China is on the rise. The outbreak of the COVID-19 and the current nosedive in international oil prices have significantly halted the execution of Chinese-funded infrastructure projects in Nigeria. However, if Beijing fulfills its promise to suspend loan repayment and cancel Nigeria's debt and those of other African states who are in deep economic distress, it will not only cushion the economic effects of the pandemic in Africa but will also strengthen China's relations with the continent. Furthermore, it will enhance China's global image in the context of its economic engagements with Nigeria and other African countries which have for some time received a barrage of criticisms based on debt-trap diplomacy and neo-colonialism theories. The suspension of loan repayment and debt cancellation by China will reinforce Beijing's economic principle of mutual benefit and its idea that international trade should not take a dominance-dependence structure. A prospective act of magnanimity of such magnitude in an era of global economic meltdown is likely to enhance China's credibility in its move to create a new global economic and investment order. The provisions of the China-Nigeria BIT on diplomatic and negotiated trade dispute resolution have the potentials to deepen trade and investment relations between China and Nigeria, even in the face of global commercial and economic uncertainties.

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Post-Covid-19 West African Health Security: Europe and the Foreign Virus

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Abstract: *This article analyses how the emergence of the global health security norm of the COVID-19 pandemic has played out as a threat to African security – the appearance of the foreign virus. The article provides a framework for understanding the securitisation of the COVID-19 epidemic as an international norm defined and promoted by the World Health Organisation and cascaded down to the level of African member states. However, at an African level, it encounters resistance as a ‘foreign virus’. This is completely in line with previous epidemics, such as Ebola. The predominant reported weakness in West African national responses was a pervasive lack of trust in government institutions, mistrust up to the highest level of government in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This article derives this consequence from West Africa’s ontological security derived through its colonial past and its past relationship with Europe. As was the case with Ebola, with COVID-19, several communities initially refused to believe that the virus outbreak was real, judging it to be part of a conspiracy by Europe and the international community.*

Key words: *West Africa; Europe; health security; foreign virus; COVID-19; ontological security.*

Introduction

African security during the Cold War was dictated by the geo-political interests, manipulations and manoeuvres of the great powers. The countries on the continent of Africa, just like other Third World countries, were pawns on the political chess board of the great powers. Regimes were protected no matter how bad they were as long as they supported either of the great powers. Every other source of insecurity such as internal or intrastate conflict was unconstitutionally and draconically quelled and subdued. There

was no policy to articulate a regional or national security architecture that would be in the national or regional security interest of the people. Because of this external involvement in the internal politics of African states, they became the battleground for proxy wars as conflicts and armed opposition to the incumbent regimes escalated. They were managed with military assistance from the patron foreign states – the United States of America or the Soviet Union. African security thus became a victim of Cold War politics in two ways. One is that even after independence there was lack of home-grown security direction or mechanisms that naturally should flow from regional or national security issues. Two, arising from the first, is the ad hoc approach in securitization of these issues. In other words, the neo-patrimonial state actors according to their security interests embarked on framing issues as security threats in line with the securitization framework. Scholarly works on Africa paid attention to this Cold War impact on African security. The support African countries received during this period were dependent on which side of the fence they stood - but this hobnobbing could not last forever. The end of the Cold War revealed those fault lines that were ignored and not securitised. There is no shortage of literature on the relations between Africa and the Cold War protagonists. Where the literature is silent is in relation to the security challenges that befell Africans during this period. Africa and its interests were interpreted, subsumed and aligned along the Cold War interests and strategic pursuits of the great powers. Africa's security issues - especially during the Cold War epoch - suffered serious attention deficits and hence little or no scholarly work addressing them emerged; instead, it was the relationship that benefited the superpowers that received academic attention.

Considering the above, the silence in the literature on African security was broken following the withdrawal of the great powers from the continent, the shifting of attention to other places such as East Europe, the implosions in the wake of the end of the Cold War and the attendant security upheavals. For instance starting from Liberia and Sierra Leone, West Africa

which is the focus of this article witnessed serious crises. The scholarly attempts at discussing the security of the continent started gaining ground from this period onwards. However, what is still missing in these works is a broader notion of security, from a critical security perspective, vis-à-vis post-Cold War West African security studies. There is a significant lack application of such a valuable idea to the study of West African security: first, securitization theory is Eurocentric in both origin and application; second, as a result, West Africa's security challenges are not addressed. It is therefore argued here that analysis of West Africa's security will benefit by addressing that significant gap – the aim of this article.

This article analyses how the emergence of the global health security norm of the COVID-19 pandemic has played out as a threat to African security – the appearance of the foreign virus. The article provides a framework for understanding the securitization of the COVID-19 epidemic as an international norm defined and promoted by the World Health Organisation, and cascaded down to the level of African member states. However, at an African level, it encounters resistance as a 'foreign virus'. This is completely in line with previous epidemics, such as Ebola¹. The predominant reported weakness in West African national responses was a pervasive lack of trust in government institutions, mistrust up to the highest level of government in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This article derives this consequence from West Africa's ontological security derived through its colonial past and its past relationship with Europe. As was the case with Ebola, with COVID-19, several communities initially refused to believe that the virus outbreak was real, judging it to be part of a conspiracy by Europe and the international community.

¹ A. Kamradt-Scott, S. Harman, C. Wenham, and F. Smith, *Saving lives: The civil–military response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in west Africa* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2015).

Global Health Security & Securitization

Developed in the waning years of Cold War politics, broader notions of security have seriously challenged the traditional European and American military-realist perspective in security studies. They are more contemporary, dynamic and in tandem with emerging global security issues away from a static 'as-it-is' idea of world security². One aspect of these new theoretical innovations is the idea of securitisation, introduced by the Copenhagen School whose main scholars are Ole Waever and Barry Buzan. They have defined securitisation as a speech-act process 'through which an inter-subjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat'³. But the threat only becomes securitised 'only if and when the audience accepts it as such'⁴.

In other words, according to Buzan and Wæver (also known as the 'Copenhagen School'), security is a 'speech act'⁵. It is an intersubjective and socially constructed phenomenon. Key concepts in the securitisation framework are the 'securitising actor', who socially constructs a specific issue as a threat to the survival of a given entity, known as the 'referent object', which therefore requires urgent protection through the use of

² H. Stritzel, "Towards a theory of securitisation: Copenhagen and beyond," *European Journal of International Relations* 13, 1 (2007): 357.

³ Barry Buzan and Waever Ole, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴ Barry Buzan, Waever Ole and de Wilder, *Security: New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Reinner, 1998).

⁵ Waever Ole, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in *On security*, ed. R. D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Paul Roe, "Actor, Audience(s) and emergency measures: Securitization and UK's decision to invade Iraq," *Security Dialogue* 39, 6 (2008): 615; Thierry Balzacq, "The three faces of Securitization: Political agency, audience and context," *European Journal of International Relations* 11, 2 (2005): 75; Thierry Balzacq, "The policy tools of securitization: Information Exchange; 'European foreign and interior policies'," *European journal of common market studies* 46, 1 (2008): 171.

extraordinary measures. Another important concept is that of the 'audience'. According to the Copenhagen School, '[a] discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitisation – this is a securitising move, but the issue is securitised only if and when the audience accepts it as such'⁶. To sum up, securitisation is understood as a process whereby a given actor frames a specific issue as an 'existential threat', which is then presented to a target audience for approval in order to employ extraordinary means and measures to tackle it⁷.

Health issues have become of significant importance to securitisation scholars⁸, often due to global mobility, which can be affected by global pandemics⁹ such as COVID-19. In this debate, questions about the normative and methodological dimensions of securitisation of global health have been at the forefront, for instance: should health problems be securitised?; have securitising moves in relation to health issues been successful?¹⁰. In this debate, we can identify three important contributions: firstly, Elbe's work on the normative dilemma in relation to the securitisation of HIV/AIDS¹¹, whereby he contends the fact that securitisation leads to raising awareness, and, thus, a wider recognition of the negative effects followed by a stronger allocation of resources to curb the pandemic. However, he warns of the massive state involvement at the expense of other actors, leading 'toward military and intelligence

⁶ Barry Buzan, Waever Ole and de Wilder, *Security: New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Reinner, 1998).

⁷ Sarah Leonard and Christian Kaunert, *European Union, Refugees, and Security* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

⁸ Thierry Balzacq, Sarah Leonard and J. Ruzicka, "Securitization revisited: theory and cases," *International Relations* 30, 4 (2016): 494.

⁹ S. J. Maclean, "Microbes, mad cows and militaries: Exploring the links between health and security," *Security Dialogue* 39, 5 (2008): 475-94.

¹⁰ Thierry Balzacq, S. Leonard and J. Ruzicka, "Securitization revisited: theory and cases," *International Relations* 30, 4 (2016).

¹¹ S. Elbe, "Should HIV/AIDS be securitized? the ethical dilemmas of linking HIV/AIDS and security," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, 1 (2005): 119-44.

organisations with the power to override the civil liberties of persons with HIV/AIDS' and the 'threat-defence logic'¹². Building on this, secondly, Youde¹³ agrees with Elbe about the disadvantages of securitising health issues, identifying three main costs of the securitisation of avian flu: (1) inappropriate responses with traditional security means, (2) increased vulnerability to other threats as a result of disproportionate resources being allocated to the securitised threat, and (3) an increased gap between Western states and the rest of the world. Thirdly, Sjöstedt¹⁴ explains the securitisation process of HIV/AIDS in Russia in the face of policy-makers who did not believe the threat narrative and dismissed it as a Western construction. In her contribution, she utilizes Finnemore and Sikkink's account of 'norm cascade'¹⁵. This article follows Sjöstedt¹⁶ and, in particular, Vieira¹⁷, who provides a framework for analysing the securitisation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic as an international norm defined and promoted by multilateral bodies. The article agrees with the conceptualisation of the UNSC as an important actor in establishing the global health security norm, framed health issue in security terms, but also aimed at replacing one kind of security logic with another as a basis for remedial action.

Ontological Security in West Africa

The use of ontological security, developed over the last 10 years in International Relations, has proved to be of help to better understand the

¹² Ibid., 119.

¹³ J. Youde, "Who is afraid of chicken: Securitization and avian flu," *Democracy and security* 4, 2 (2008): 148.

¹⁴ R. Sjöstedt, "Exploring the Construction of threats: Securitization of Hiv/Aids in Russia," *Security Dialogue* 39, 1 (2008): 7.

¹⁵ M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organisation* 52, 4 (1998): 887.

¹⁶ R. Sjöstedt, "Exploring the Construction of threats: Securitization of Hiv/Aids in Russia," *Security Dialogue* 39, 1 (2008).

¹⁷ M. Vieira, "The Securitization of HIV/AIDS Epidemic as a Norm: A contribution to Constructivist Scholarship on the Emergence and Diffusion of International Norms," *Brazilian Political Science Review* 1, 2 (2007): 137.

emotional reasons behind the apprehensions and fears of African citizens¹⁸. Steele's book¹⁹ builds on previous work on ontological security, such as Jennifer Mitzen, Catarina Kinnvall, and Jef Huysmans²⁰. The concept is based on Anthony Giddens' definition of ontological security - a "sense of continuity and order in events."²¹ Steele operationalises ontological security through the motivation of states. Firstly, for a state 'to be ontologically secure' it must 'possess answers to fundamental existential questions which all human life in some way addresses'²². Secondly, agents turn actions into 'routines which contribute to their sense of 'continuity and order' that is so important to their sense of self'²³. Ontological security is thus 'predictability in relationships to the world, which creates a desire for stable social identities'²⁴. Ontological Security presents a specific type of challenge — a 'critical situation' — and can undermine a state's identity²⁵. It can cause anxiety and shame. Thus, unlike the Copenhagen School definition of security as survival, ontological security is 'security as being', a concept borrowed from the field of social psychology. The concept of ontological security is primarily driven by emotion; 'the primary role of emotion in humans is to alert the individual experiencing the emotion that action in some situation is necessary'²⁶. Thus, emotions help coordination actions by prioritizing a selection of information.

¹⁸ Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self Identity and the IR State* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 50-51.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, 6 (2006): 341-370; Catarina Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity and the Search for Ontological Security," *Political Psychology* 25, 5 (2004): 741-767; Jef Huysmans, "Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier," *European Journal of International Relations* 4 (1998): 226-255.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 50-51.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

²⁶ Ibid., 12-13.

Ontological security cornerstone is the analysis of autobiographical narratives and routines and how they are used as vehicles to exhale one's anxiety. It was also applied the ontological security lens to analyse narratives and better conceptualize and understand how different perceptions and experiences of menaces to public security fluctuate according to identity, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, location, and generation. Moreover, according to Catarina Kinnvall²⁷, an ontological security approach allows us to unveil how fears and anxieties influence groups, states and to understand the psycho-socio-political effects that shape political movements, policy debate at the African security level. Ontological security seeks, therefore, to dissect biographical narratives and repeated practices as way to understand how these practices outline political choices and its consequences. In spite of the fact that physical and ontological security are theoretically different, they are nonetheless intrinsically related. Traumatic events such as being victim of violent crimes, being a victim of terrorist attacks or subject to harsh physical traumas, may transform negatively personal and collective identities and unleash the feeling of ontological insecurity²⁸. Allied to the analysis of the discourses and practices, ontological security emerges as an auspicious theoretical and empirical input not only to this particular project within West African security studies arena, but similarly opens the door to novel theoretical and methodological approaches with the security studies in general acknowledging providing a more holistic approach to answer research questions. Issues related to the emergence of ontological (in) security are mainly related to the search for a self-identity that can emotionally structure the individual within its community. It turns out that when all that is socially known and inherently acquired, and when routines are disrupted, there is a destabilization and a shudder of all that gives the individual and

²⁷ Catarina Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity and the Search for Ontological Security," *Political Psychology* 25, 5 (2004): 741-767.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the society where he is inserted, a sense of solidity and confidence, paving the way for ontological insecurity.

Development of global health security norms – the case of Ebola

Kamradt-Scott²⁹ analysed the World Health Organisation (WHO) Secretariat as a norm entrepreneur in establishing a new norm in global communicable disease control. In his work, he utilised Finnemore and Sikkink's³⁰ "norm life cycle" theory and analysed how the new practice of using 'unofficial sources of information to verify disease outbreaks' was progressively advanced under the guise of revising the International Health Regulations (IHR). Notably, Kamradt-Scott³¹ contends that a new practice was established as a norm in the WHO. According to him³², the WHO secretariat promoted its ability to manage global health security. According to Davies, Kamradt-Scott, and Rushton³³, global health governance underwent a significant set of reforms in 2005, which resulted in the revision of the International Health Regulations (IHR) and focused on disease surveillance and reporting mechanisms. Thus, it constituted a broader consideration of issues that could potentially entail health risks globally. It also opened the way for the intervention of non-state actors in disease notification. Davies, Kamradt-Scott and Rushton³⁴ demonstrated convincingly how states were able to 'reconceptualise their interests in ways that favoured cooperation over isolationism'. External shocks (such as the 2002 to 2004 SARS outbreak) were interpreted in a broad ideational context whereby states' preferences

¹⁴ A. Kamradt-Scott, "The WHO secretariat, norm entrepreneurship, and global disease outbreak control," *Journal of International Organisations Studies* 1, 1 (2010): 72.

³⁰ M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organisation* 52, 4 (1998).

³¹ A. Kamradt-Scott, "The WHO secretariat, norm entrepreneurship, and global disease outbreak control," *Journal of International Organisations Studies* 1, 1 (2010).

³² A. Kamradt-Scott, "WHO is to blame: The World Health Organisation and the 2014 outbreak of Ebola in West Africa," *Third World Quarterly* 37 (2016): 401.

³³ S. E. Davies, A. Kamradt-Scott and S. Rushton, *Disease Diplomacy: International norms and global health security*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press (2015).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

were shaped by concerns about what constitutes responsible international behaviour. Despite instances of noncompliance, states often adjust their behaviour to meet new expectations. In their view, the IHR revision process constituted the ‘codification of a new set of expectations’³⁵. Security vocabulary and rationality were fundamental in the process leading to the implementation of the IHR and helped to convince states that it was in their interest to cooperate more closely towards a more effective and proportionate international response.

The WHO was established in 1948 with the express objective of improving the health of all populations worldwide³⁶. Within the mandate of its objective, the containment and eradication of infectious diseases was considered to be the WHO’s primary task, for which it was provided with considerable authority and autonomy in order to achieve this as a precondition for peace and security. Infectious diseases would adversely affect not only the health of populations, but also the global economy, by disrupting international trade³⁷. Thus, the WHO was provided with the objective of eliminating infectious diseases wherever they arose. The WHO has played a significant role in several public health achievements, most notably the eradication of smallpox, the near eradication of polio, and the development of an Ebola vaccine³⁸. In stark contrast, however, the organisation’s response to several pandemics has been questioned³⁹: (1) the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak; and (2) the response to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic and of the 2014 outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in West Africa. This has led to several independent

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ A. Kamradt-Scott, “WHO is to blame: The World Health Organisation and the 2014 outbreak of Ebola in West Africa,” *Third World Quarterly* 37 (2016): 402.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ A. Kamradt-Scott, “Explainer: What Donald Trump’s funding cut to WHO means to the World,” *The Conversation*, 15 April 20.

³⁹ A. Kamradt-Scott, “WHO is to blame: The World Health Organisation and the 2014 outbreak of Ebola in West Africa,” *Third World Quarterly* 37 (2016).

external reviews of the organisation's performance. McInnes⁴⁰ suggests that criticisms of the WHO's performance, including the subsequent 2014 Ebola crisis, but also those earlier epidemics, reflected also tensions between different forms of authority.

Regarding West Africa, the major challenge is the area of health is poor health care systems⁴¹. The national budget on health by African countries is low. This results in insufficient and dilapidated infrastructures due to lack of resources. African countries do not have adequate number of trained health workers and standby capacity to deal with any domestic surge in health crisis. Health workers are leaving in large numbers to other climes for better pay and conditions of service. There is continuous surge in medical tourism by the rich and privileged while local health services suffer. These were evident in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the Ebola crisis. There was no way the governments in Freetown and Monrovia could manage the crisis. They had to depend on assistance from both and external entities. But they had to grapple with the concern of the impression from the population of receiving orders from foreign government. However, foreign military assistance came majorly from the United States of America and Britain.

According to Adam Kamradt-Scott et al. (2015), subsequent to West African national responses, notably in Liberia and Sierra Leone, brought a pervasive lack of trust in government institutions to the forefront. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, citizens did not trust their own government, up the highest level, and the military was perceived as the only trustworthy actor. This mistrust significantly hampered the Ebola response as well as coordination efforts. Important communities in Sierra Leone and Liberia did not accept the Ebola outbreak as real, perceiving it as part of a government conspiracy with the ambition to get funding from Western donors. Furthermore, this suspicion

⁴⁰ C. McInnes, "WHO's next: changing authority in global health governance after Ebola," *International Affairs* 91, 6 (2015): 1299.

⁴¹ A. Kamradt-Scott, S. Harman, C. Wenham and F. Smith, *Saving lives: The civil-military response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in west Africa* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2015).

eventually turned against international community. The community started to believe conspiracy theories. Notably, the perception of Ebola was shaped as intentionally introduced to depopulate West Africa for its mineral resources. The conspiracy theories have very clear links to ontological fears of colonial and post-colonial times in West Africa. Fears and anxieties influenced West African citizens; the psycho-socio-political effects of ontological security clearly shaped their perceptions of the pandemic - thus, the policy debate on health security. Consequently, there were significant incidents of violence against both national health workers as well as NGO representatives in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

COVID-19 and Africa

The devastating 2014–2016 Ebola Virus Epidemic in West Africa showed how badly prepared the respective countries were to the crisis. Similarly, 2018–19 Ebola Virus outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo also showed the devastation that can be caused even for health services with considerable experience. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic caused considerable fear in West Africa. There is a strong similarity between the approach adopted in managing Ebola and the current COVID-19 pandemics. In early January 2020, the African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention raised concern over reported cases of pneumonia coming from Wuhan⁴². The Emergency Operations Centre for the pandemic was immediately put in place as four countries in Asia confirmed cases of COVID-19. Experience from 2014 Ebola issues was enough to spur African leaders to consider COVID-19 a serious security threat to the continent. They were fully aware that failing to handle the pandemics would negatively impact on the health, economy and security of the continent. The approaches in handling the crisis showed some commonality among the countries in Africa⁴³.

⁴² L. M. Massinga, A. Tshangela and S. J. Saliper, "Covid-19 in Africa: Spread and Response," *Nature Medicine* 26 (2020): 996.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 999.

Towards the end of March 2020, few African countries were beginning to record cases of the pandemic (Cameroon, Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Togo, South Africa, and Senegal). Most of the initial cases in these countries could be traced to Europe which had become the epicentre of the disease by this period. For example, the index case in Nigeria happened to be an Italian citizen returning from Italy to work in Nigeria⁴⁴. A second case was also a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen. Coming from the history of disease outbreaks in the continent African leaders needed to be serious in managing the issue of COVID-19. It earned priority among all other issues at the moment. Tourism, trade, sporting activities, social events, and holidays had to be suspended. Bill Gates warned that Africa could record as high as 10 million deaths from the disease⁴⁵. Containment and mitigation measures were put in place reflecting the global health environment. Since the outbreak of the disease in China, several countries became seriously affected by huge numbers of cases of infection and death tolls. Countries were beginning to shut their borders from foreigners to avoid further spikes in cases. African countries had to follow the same line of action as countries in the West and in Asia. They instituted travel bans on most affected Asian and European countries including United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, China, Iran, Japan, Norway, South Korea, Netherlands, Spain and United States. There was also closure of borders except for cargos and freights⁴⁶. Considering that Africa is destination point for most of these countries for business and many other exchanges, the benefits from such interactions were no longer considered important enough. Health security was now given serious attention.

⁴⁴ Chibuikwe Alagbaso and Bashar Abubakar, "The first 90 days: How has Nigeria responded to Covid-19 outbreak," *Nigeria Health Watch*, June 2, 2020.

⁴⁵ Sarah Knapton, "Bill Gates warns of 10 Million deaths as Corona Virus spreads to Africa," *Telegraph UK*, 15 February, 2020.

⁴⁶ Yomi Kazeem, "Africa is starting to lock out the world to slow the spread of Corona virus on the continent," *Quartz Africa*, 16 March, 2020.

The disease was beginning to appear to be a foreign disease. Suspicion arose among Africans that COVID-19, like Ebola, was a grand design by the West to depopulate the African continent⁴⁷. There was uproar against the remark by Bill Gates that there would be a high death toll from Africa arising from the pandemic. News reports of high rise in cases were greeted with high nonchalance and disbelief. Leaders were thought to be complicit to such unproven complicity. Directives to get people to abide by the rules of social distancing were not adhered to because COVID-19 was not accepted as 'real'. For instance, in the Kano area of Nigeria, the governor made an argument that the cases of deaths recorded were as a result of 'mysterious circumstances' and issues like hypertension, diabetes, meningitis and acute malaria⁴⁸. Citizens were suspicious as people from heavily infected areas were not allowed to go into other areas. COVID-19 also caused serious social dislocation as people were no longer able to interact and socialise freely for fear of contacting the disease. Social events were discontinued; churches, mosques, markets, restaurants were all shut. Considering the nature of the local economies, it was not easy to abide by those rules of social distancing.

It was only a matter of time until the disease started having serious devastating impact on African countries and the deficiencies in the health services were exposed. Rising cases and deaths were recorded across African countries. Makeshift quarantine facilities started springing up in different countries. Some foreign assistance were recorded; in early February 2020, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation committed US\$20 million to help strengthen emergency operations centres, effective surveillance and contact tracing and isolation on the continent⁴⁹. Each of the 55 countries in Africa also received some medical supplies, such as

⁴⁷ Karsten Noko, "Medical Colonialism in Africa is not New," Aljazeera, 8 April 2020.

⁴⁸ Felix Onuah, "At least half of mystery deaths in Nigeria's Kano due to Covid-19," Reuters, June 9, 2020.

⁴⁹ L. M. Massinga, A. Tshangela and S. J. Saliper, "Covid-19 in Africa: Spread and Response," *Nature Medicine* 26 (2020): 996.

diagnostics and equipment from Jack Ma Foundation⁵⁰. However, African countries did their best in trying to provide some support to the citizens. The citizens resorted to helping themselves by producing masks for instance from local fabrics; hand sanitizers put in place in public places like markets. Senegal developed a COVID-19 testing kit that would in ten minutes detect a positive case current or previous through antigens in the saliva. The country is among those in the continent that did not record too many deaths. The same thing applies to Ghana with its extensive system of contact tracing, utilising a large number of community health workers and volunteers, and other innovative techniques such as pool testing in which multiple blood samples are tested and then followed up as individual tests only if positive results are found. This approach is appreciated by the World Bank. Madagascar had to go the way of traditional herbal remedies such *Artemisia annua* which claimed to have provided cure to the country and is being exported to other African countries for trial. This was beneficial as African countries cannot afford expensive pharmaceutical products.

In conclusion, the African response to the novel COVID-19 became a self-help approach with the whole world engulfed in the pandemic. At the same time, suspicion that the pandemic was not originally an African disease – a foreign disease – resulted in conspiracy theory, as with Ebola. The problem was perceived as an imported problem from abroad. Again, as with Ebola, these conspiracy theories have very clear links to ontological fears of colonial and post-colonial times in West Africa where foreigners were bringing in misery, pain and hardship. These fears and anxieties influenced African citizens. The ontological security of Africa clearly shaped their perceptions of the pandemic - thus, the perception of a foreign virus.

⁵⁰ Africa CDC, "Africa receives third donation of medical supplies from Jack Ma Foundation," African Union: Addis Ababa, 27 April 2020.

Conclusion

This article analysed how the emergence of the global health security norm of the COVID-19 pandemic has played out as a threat to African security – it appeared in the form of a foreign virus. While the WHO rang the alarm bells globally to prevent the spread of the disease, and while this global health security norm of COVID-19 was generally accepted, it arrived in Africa as a foreign – Western – imposition, despite its origin in China. This is a continuation of fears from previous epidemics, such as Ebola⁵¹. This article suggested that ontological security fears in Africa were driving this process, fears derived from its colonial past and its past relationship with Europe and the West. As was the case with Ebola, with COVID-19, African citizens refused to believe that the virus outbreak was real. The use of ontological security, as conceptualised in this article, has proved to be of help to better understand the emotional reasons behind the apprehensions and fears of African citizens⁵². Ontological security has been defined here as the “sense of continuity and order in events.”⁵³ Ontological security thus achieves ‘predictability in relationships to the world, which creates a desire for stable social identities’⁵⁴. The concept of ontological security is primarily driven by emotion; emotions help coordination actions by prioritizing a selection of information. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the predictable relationship between Africa and the West has been one of exploitation, as evidenced by colonial times. Western colonists would acquire African territory and resources to enrich Europe and the West. The net losers of this geopolitical game were Africans. Consequently, it is only understandable that the information from the COVID-19 pandemics, as was the case with Ebola, is one of Western exploitation of Africa. Only too understandable that

⁵¹ A. Kamradt-Scott, S. Harman, C. Wenham and F. Smith, *Saving lives: The civil–military response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in west Africa* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2015).

⁵² Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self Identity and the IR State* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 50-51.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

COVID-19 would be a foreign disease – perhaps to acquire African material resources. Conspiracy theories that use real existing ontological security fears are likely to be accepted, against all medical evidence. Ontological security needs to provide a sense of continuity and order in events – and this is the established accepted relationship between Africa and the West, as seen from Africa.

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Human Security in Africa during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Sustainability of the EU-Africa Relationship System

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Abstract: *The article, using the example of the human security crisis in Africa and the EU caused by COVID-19, explores the likelihood of transformation of the entire EU-Africa relationship system. The key threats and challenges to the humanitarian security environment of African countries are examined, the example of its social subsystem detailed as the most complex and multifactorial. The internal and external risks for the EU are analysed in the implementation of the African vector of its foreign policy in a pandemic situation. It is argued that, despite the difficulties encountered for both sides, the development of the EU-Africa relationship system itself will not change its path: the system remains balanced and based on a pragmatic approach.*

Key words: *human security, Africa, COVID-19, European Union, migration.*

Introduction

The term ‘human security’ first entered the political vocabulary in 1994 in the text of the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). It was interpreted as a dual concept: firstly, as “safety from the constant threats of hunger, disease, crime and repression”; and secondly, as “protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of our daily lives—whether in our homes, in our jobs, in our communities or in our environment.”¹ By the beginning of the 2000s, human security had become a global norm, understood as a

¹ The United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report, 1994*, <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats.pdf> (accessed 6 May 2020).

consensus among a large group of states and international organizations that individuals and communities have the right to protection from harm and that other entities (including states or organizations) can and should assist them in providing this protection.

The European Union considers human security an important part of its international political identity. This is reflected both in official documents of the European Union—for example, the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (2016)²—and in well-known reports: the Barcelona Report (2004), the Madrid Report (2007), and the Berlin report of the *Human Security Study Group* (2016).³

An important direction for the EU's promotion of human security is Africa. There is a wide range of reasons for this, at the core of which are Africa's colonial past and historical memory; the EU's role in the architecture of modern humanitarianism as one of the key providers of humanitarian assistance; and the security of the European Union itself, which is in the focus of huge migration flows from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the EU, together with African countries, has developed a number of complementary programs and projects that emphasize the various features of the continent so that assistance can be concrete and effective.⁴ The ultimate goal declared in the treaties is to create and strengthen the EU-

² European External Action Service, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, 2004, <http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf> (accessed 5 July 2020).

³ "A Human Security Doctrine for Europe," *The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities*, 2004, <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/40209/1/AhumansecuritydoctrineforEurope%28author%29.pdf>> (accessed 5 July 2020); *A European Way of Security: The Madrid Report of the Human Security Study Group*, 2007, <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/40207/1/AEuropeanWayofSecurity%28author%29.pdf>> (accessed 5 July 2020); "From Hybrid Peace to Human Security: Rethinking EU Strategy Towards Conflict," *The Berlin Report of the Human Security Study Group*, 2016 [Электронный ресурс], <<http://recom.link/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/The-Berlin-Report.pdf>> (accessed 5 July 2020).

⁴ Council of the European Union, *EU-Africa Relations*, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-africa/#:~:text=The%20Cotonou%20agreement%20is%20the,countries%20in%20Sub%2DSaharan%20Africa>> (accessed 5 July 2020).

Africa relationship system on the basis of mutually beneficial conditions. The scenario of cooperation within the framework of the created system has been implemented more or less effectively for years.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be an unforeseen scenario malfunction, a black swan that triggered a global human security crisis. Freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live with dignity have been threatened by both the EU and Africa. The pandemic has revealed the need to explore the characteristics of relations between those who have relatively sufficient resources to ensure their own human security and those who have no guarantees of being protected on their own.

The key questions of the article: Will the interaction of the European Union with Africa help resolve the human security crisis of the continent during the pandemic or could it become a trigger to change the entire system of their relations? Will the EU's human security policy toward African countries (in a situation of slow growth of financial resources and difficulties in compensating for failures in the EU's management effectiveness caused by the pandemic) lead to increased tension in this system, its crisis, or the creation of another strategy?

Hypotheses: The COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, aggravated for the EU by the migration threat, is likely to complicate existing and create new problems in the EU-Africa relationship system, but the development of the system itself will remain in the tube of trajectories. Emissions of accumulated internal stresses in the system are inevitable, but not destructive: even such a powerful factor as the COVID-19 pandemic is not enough for a total reform of the system as far it is necessary to overlap several very significant factors (that are not visible in the medium term).

Theoretical and methodological frameworks of the study

For the study of possible changes within the EU itself and in its relations with Africa, we rely on the concept of European integration, presented in the framework of social constructivism in its conventional version.⁵

The article's human security research is based on the concept proposed by Akihiko Tanaka, with a few modifications.

The human security threats scheme presented by Tanaka indicates the locations of various threats within three differentiated systems.⁶ The first system is a physical one: threats come from the peculiarities of geographical location, landscape, and access to the oceans, and are associated with natural processes. The second system is biological: threats come from biosphere specifics and biodiversity. These include the spread of infectious diseases and pathogens of unknown origin. The third system is social: threats come directly from political and social institutions and from people themselves—wars, conflicts, terrorism, economic crises, trafficking, migration.

In his theory, Tanaka further splits each system into subcategories of threats to human security; in our opinion, this is excessive, leading to the artificial convergence of the systems. There is no need to describe each case of a particular human security threat, since then it would be necessary to create an exhaustive list of threats (which is impossible), and thereby significantly limit the possibilities for further interpretation. The division of human security threats into three systems focuses on its core, thereby forming certain boundaries and filling them with an essence. At the same time,

⁵ Jeffrey T. Chekel, "Constructivist Approaches to European Integration," *ARENA Working Papers*, <https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2006/wp06_06.pdf> (accessed 6 May 2020).

⁶ Akihiko Tanaka, "Toward a Theory of Human Security," in *Human Security in East Asia: Beyond Crises*, eds. Carolina G. Hernandez, Eun Mee Kim, Yoichi Mine and Xiao Re, 21–40 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

possible aspects, details, and nuances, and a specific differentiated list of human security threats related to the periphery can turn from hypothetical threats into real ones depending on specific conditions. In this regard, we propose to divide the human security threats into two broad categories: conditional and unconditional. Conditional are those that can become a human security agenda in an unpredictable specific situation; unconditional ones relate to the physical aspects of human security, such as life and health, and always exist.

The key research question of the article is explored on the basis of unconditional threats to the social system of human security in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa.

The social system of human security of Africa in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, by the end of 2020, up to 3.3 million people on the African continent may die from coronavirus.⁷ The pandemic has caused a change in the structure of budget expenditures, falling prices for raw materials, and a revision of social obligations that most African states are no longer able to implement fully. In addition, the need to tighten belts has caused resentment not only among citizens, but also among elites. The social system of human security is the most vulnerable, and the key threats to it can be defined by a chain of subsets: increased terrorist activity, increased migration trends, politicisation of the pandemic, and 'coronisation' of the population.

⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies*, April 2020, <https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/eca_covidreporten24aprweb1.pdf> (accessed 4 July 2020).

The intensification of terrorist activities increasing conflict potential (the case of Chad, Nigeria, Niger)

On April 15, 2020, Abubakar Shekau, leader of the Boko Haram terrorist group (connected with the Islamic State terrorist organization), posted online an audio recording about the coronavirus epidemic. He characterized international measures to combat the pandemic as “part of the war against Islam by the forces of evil.”⁸ He condemned social distancing practices and suspension of the pilgrimage to Mecca, arguing that “true Muslims”—by which he means exclusively the followers of his extreme Salafi movement—were “protected from the virus”.

Earlier (March 23, 2020), Boko Haram attacked the village of Boma near the border of Niger and Nigeria (Lake Chad region). It led to the mass deaths of civilians; in addition, 98 government soldiers were killed and 47 people were injured.⁹ Following this, the Chadian military started an operation called Colère de Boma (‘Revenge for Boma’) launched on March 31, aimed at cleansing the territory of the militants. In this regard, it is important that at the time of the terrorist attack in Chad, there were only nine confirmed cases of COVID-19, but the speech of the militant leader caused serious concerns among the population. Such attacks are a kind of test for the stability of a state and its institutions. The demonstration of power by the Chadian military reinforced the image of the Chadian army as a bulwark of the struggle against militant Islamist groups in the region. The operation also

⁸ John Campbell, “Boko Haram’s Shekau Labels Anti-COVID-19 Measures an Attack on Islam in Nigeria,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 2020, <<https://www.cfr.org/blog/boko-harams-shekau-labels-anti-covid-19-measures-attack-islam-nigeria>> (accessed 9 July 2020); “Audio Message on Coronavirus by Abubakar Shekau,” *Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria*, <<https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/04/19/boko-haram-abubakar-shekau-audio-message-on-coronavirus-april-15-2020/>> (accessed 4 July 2020).

⁹ “Boko Haram Militants Kill Nearly 100 Chadian Soldiers in Attack,” *Reuters*, March 25, 2020, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-chad-security/boko-haram-militants-kill-nearly-100-chadian-soldiers-in-attack-idUSKBN21COVA>> (accessed 4 July 2020).

increased pressure on neighbouring countries to engage their armed forces more actively in the fight against terrorists.

The ability of Boko Haram to carry out such a massive attack itself, along with the previous steady increase in Islamic militants' activity, clearly indicates that Boko Haram and ISIS are gaining great strength, and speculation about the threat of COVID-19 offers them more chances to legitimize themselves. The possibilities of repeat terrorist attacks are being examined, which could lead to fierce and bloody battles in the region. This leads to the next threat to Africa's social security system: uncontrolled migration.

Strengthening migration trends

More than 25.2 million refugees and internally displaced people live in Africa.¹⁰ Most organizations dealing with issues of refugees and displaced people are chronically underfunded, and most migration hubs are located in poor countries with weak health care systems. The vast majority of health care systems in African countries are not able to handle a sharp surge in the number of people infected with COVID-19.

This is illustrated by the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where Ebola and measles have not subsided over the past two years. In the DRC, there are only 50 places in intensive care units (in Burkina Faso and the Republic of Congo, for example, there are 15 and 20, respectively). In Niger, there are only five ventilation systems; in Cameroon and Senegal, there are 20 and 80, respectively. The COVID-19 pandemic could lead to disaster.

¹⁰ Allehone Abebe and TSION Tadesse Abebe, "How Africa can Reduce COVID-19's Impact on Displaced Persons," *The Institute for Security Studies*, May 12, 2020, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/how-africa-can-reduce-covid-19s-impact-on-displaced-persons?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=ISS_Today&utm_medium=email> (accessed 4 July 2020).

In addition, eight of the ten largest refugee camps in the world are located in Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Ethiopia).¹¹ According to information presented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 225,000 refugees and asylum seekers, including those evacuated from Libya, live in Niger. With continued militant offensives in the Lake Chad basin, the region is expected to see an increase in the number of asylum seekers. Burkina Faso is also facing a big crisis in the field of migration: there are 840,000 internally displaced persons.¹² It is important that refugee and internally displaced persons' camps are ideal places for the transmission of coronavirus. They are overcrowded and do not have sufficient access to water supply, sanitation, hygiene products, and medicine in general.

There is every reason to believe that many thousands of refugees will move on the continent and go beyond its borders, to Europe particularly. The reverse process is also possible: frightened by COVID-19 and the lack of expected living conditions in the EU, many illegal migrants will want to return to their homeland. Traffickers have already established such routes.¹³

¹¹ The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), *Inside the World's 10 Largest Refugee Camps*, <<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=8ff1d1534e8c41adb5c04ab435b7974b>> (accessed 4 July 2020).

¹² The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), *UNHCR Warns Chronic Lack of Resources Contributing to New Crisis in Burkina Faso*, April 7, 2020, <<https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/4/5e8c3b614/unhcr-warns-chronic-lack-resources-contributing-new-crisis-burkina-faso.html>> (accessed 4 July 2020).

¹³ "Migranti Obrátili, z Evropy Prchají Před Koronavirem. A Platí Za to Víc," *iDNES.cz* (Czech News Agency), April 24, 2020, <https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/spanelsko-migranti-pandemie-koronavirus.A200424_142550_zahranicni_jhr> (accessed 6 July 2020); in English, <<https://rmx.news/article/article/migrants-paying-smugglers-5-400-to-go-back-to-africa-during-coronavirus-outbreak>> (accessed 6 July 2020).

The politicisation of the pandemic: the risk of using the COVID-19 epidemic to achieve political goals

The scale of the epidemic, unprecedented for the twenty-first century, proves that public health care system problems can be used to justify repression of opposition politicians and the public, and to manipulate the vital humanitarian component. In African states, where authoritarian trends existed before COVID-19, the mechanism of restricting the freedoms of the population has risks of increasing both autocratic and populist trends.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni warned about the risk of political opportunism during the pandemic, referring to “the opportunistic and irresponsible politicians who try to distribute food for cheap popularity.”¹⁴ He announced that “anybody involved in that effort will be charged with attempted murder.”¹⁵ At the same time, the presidential elections in Uganda, scheduled for August 2021, were postponed indefinitely due to the pandemic. The opposition accuses J. Museveni of persecuting anyone who dares to challenge his presidency.

The spread of the COVID-19 epidemic has led to the legitimization of a certain set of means and methods of population control, the restriction of civil liberties, and the introduction of tracking technologies. The impact of digital technology on civil liberties is likely to go beyond the current crisis, and African countries also want to keep up with the times. However, only some African countries currently have laws on the protection of personal data and confidentiality, and an even smaller proportion of them are actually implemented.

¹⁴ “President Museveni Addresses the Nation on COVID-19 Situation in Uganda,” *NTV Uganda*, April 28, 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6AN7ZXKkHk>> (accessed 4 July 2020).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

'Coronisation' of the population and the perception of 'strangers'

The term 'coronisation' means the importation of the virus by foreign citizens coming from countries harbouring high-risk epidemiological areas.¹⁶ The term was quickly politicized and began to spread on social networks, increasing the African population's fear of 'strangers'. This fear has different forms and different directions.

The first direction is anti-Chinese. More and more Africans have expressed dissatisfaction with China's help to Africa in the fight against COVID-19, believing that medical equipment supplied as humanitarian aid is "a means to legally transport the virus from China to Africa."¹⁷ In the wake of a general panic in Nigeria, civil society groups put pressure on the government to "close the state's borders with countries with a high incidence of COVID-19"¹⁸(meaning primarily China), and the Nigerian Medical Association expressed its disagreement with the arrival of the Chinese medical group in the country.

The second direction is anti-European. The Africans expressed their indignation that many Europeans in the midst of the epidemic in their countries were still prepared to come to Africa—for example, in the comments on social networks about the confirmation of the second case of COVID-19 in Senegal on March 3, 2020 (the patient was a French national who arrived in Dakar): "Dear French people, please stay in France until the virus is over ... they have always been a part the greatest misfortunes Africa

¹⁶ Matteo Maillard, "Covid-19: Médias et Réseaux Sociaux Africains Mettent en Cause un Virus venu d'Ailleurs," *Le Monde*, March 6, 2020, <<https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/03/06/covid-19-medias-et-reseaux-sociaux-africains-mettent-en-cause-un-virus-venu-d-ailleurs60321163212.html>> (accessed 4 July 2020).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

has ever known ... stay home;”¹⁹ “They colonise us, they coronise us;”²⁰ “The French, as always.”²¹

The death of George Floyd in the USA and the vigorous actions of the Black Lives Matter movement also got a response from among the African population. It affected different countries, and was particularly sensitive for South Africa, with its history of apartheid. Zimbabwean officials decided to rename the street where the US Embassy is located G. Floyd Street.

These events not only revealed issues related to police arbitrariness, but also the connection between racial discrimination and colonialism, neocolonialism, and debt obligations in Africa, as well as gender-based violence related to the murder of a pregnant woman, Tshegofatso Pule, in South Africa.²²

The European Union’s African policy during the COVID-19 pandemic

The EU’s position—unlike a number of other significant international actors, perhaps—is clear: “We have to help Africa in our own interest because if the pandemic spreads there, it will [come] back to Europe.”²³ Therefore the European Union is steadily increasing its cooperation with African countries in the fight against the epidemic, increasing humanitarian assistance to the continent. This fully meets its own European interests in terms both of (political, human, economic) security, and restoring the image of Europeans, tarnished by the COVID-19 pandemic, across the African continent.

¹⁹ “Coronavirus: Un Deuxième Cas est Confirmé au Sénégal,” *TV5MONDE Info*, March 3, 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rX6yPUclQyM>> (accessed 4 July 2020), Comments by Pierre Seck2, SNB 47, Diop Ababacar.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² #JusticeForTshego.

²³ “The Press Conference with the HR/VP Josep Borrell on the Foreign Affairs Minister’s Video Conference,” April 3, 2020, <<https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanExternalActionService/videos/-follow-live-the-press-conference-with-the-hrvp-josep-borrell-on-the-foreign-aff/225685978490712/>> (accessed 6 July 2020).

The European Union has the opportunity to provide financial and other assistance to African countries—for example, to strengthen the humanitarian response by opening safe trade corridors, especially for medical supplies, food, and revamping the health care system infrastructure. The EU's financial support measures for African countries can be divided into passive (debt relief) and active (assistance). On April 8, 2020, the EU launched the Team Europe project. The financial package includes 18.8 billion euros to assist the most vulnerable countries, in particular in Africa (3.8 billion). Most of this funding comes from reorienting existing EU funds and programs. Because of the pandemic, the EU is providing an additional 105.5 million euros to the countries on the Horn of Africa. This package is aimed at financing such projects as supporting medical institutions, food provision, and assistance to refugees and internally displaced people (providing physical protection, housing, water access, food, health care, and education). The proposed measures are fully consistent with the new EU-Africa strategy 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa', unveiled in March 2020.²⁴

The European Union's internal risks

The internal risks to the EU cannot be ignored. Ongoing economic and political destabilization in Africa is very painful for the European Union itself, and the EU's economy is damaged by COVID-19. The European Commission's summer forecast emphasized that the recession in EU countries will reach 7.4 percent. The situation is aggravated by uncertainty about the possibility of a second wave of coronavirus and the debates about the need for a common European reaction to the problem. Now the European Union is discussing, firstly, the new multi-year financial program

²⁴ European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa'*, Brussels, March 3, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/communication-eu-africa-strategy-join-2020-4-final_en.pdf> (accessed 6 July 2020).

2021–2027, and secondly, the creation of an €750 billion economic recovery fund.

Therefore, despite the fact that the idea of activating the internal resources of African countries with the financial dominance of the EU is not new in the European political discourse, it takes on a slightly different meaning in the context of the spread of the epidemic and turns into a management discourse, exchanging urgent humanitarian assistance to Africa in the present for financial control in the future. Not all African countries support that policy. Therefore the European Commission uses financial measures—for example, intends to include such African countries as Mauritius, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Ghana in the list of countries involved in money laundering.²⁵

Another internal risk is serious destabilization on European borders, especially from the south. Migration from Africa to Europe has long been securitized on the European agenda. It has turned into a situation of insecurity: migrants are a threat to the EU's own security, and at the same time they are a vulnerable group and suffer from insecurity.

Today the European Union's development policy is an instrument of border control. Of course, it is impossible to predict accurately the impact of COVID-19 on migration from Africa to Europe, but a number of possible consequences are already being observed more or less clearly, among them toughening measures to cross European borders and reducing migration flows. Hungary used the virus as an excuse to suspend access to the asylum system, and deportations of migrants and refugees have become more frequent—for example, in Malta and Greece. Attacks on refugee boats in the Mediterranean have not been isolated cases for a long time, and are

²⁵ David Ochieng Mbewa, "Four African Countries Added to EU Blacklist for Money Laundering," *CGTN Africa*, May 8, 2020, <<https://africa.cgtn.com/2020/05/08/four-african-countries-added-to-eu-blacklist-for-money-laundering/>> (accessed 4 July 2020). Already on the list are Afghanistan, Iraq, Vanuatu, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Uganda, Trinidad and Tobago, Iran, and North Korea.

gradually becoming a brutal strategy of intimidation of migrants that violates both national and international law. Perhaps this practice will continue after the cessation of the spread of the disease.

The EU-Africa partnership clearly demonstrates who benefits: “A mix of positive and negative incentives will be integrated into the EU’s development and trade policies to reward those countries willing to cooperate effectively with the EU on migration management and ensure there are consequences for those who refuse”.²⁶ It seems that if the tendency to increase border closures continues, then in the context of migration, this will lead to an increase in illegal migration channels, an increase in problems in those sectors of the economy of EU countries that depend on labour migrants, and the activation of other international actors in Africa that will undoubtedly use the EU’s damaged image (the African Union claims this too²⁷).

At the same time, during the pandemic, there were some encouraging events in EU countries, such as the release of detained migrants from custody, the suspension of deportation, the provision of social benefits and medical supplies to undocumented migrants, and specific attempts at government level to grant refugee status to persons without documents (for example, in France).

The European Union’s external risks

The fate of the current EU’s missions and operations in Africa is not clear, and European politicians refrain from commenting. Missions and operations

²⁶ European Commission, *Commission Announces New Migration Partnership Framework: Reinforced Cooperation with Third Countries to Better Manage Migration*, Press release, Strasbourg, June 7, 2016, <<https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP162072>> (accessed 4 July 2020).

²⁷ Cedric de Coning, “How COVID-19 is Impacting the African Union’s Operations,” *The Africa Portal*, April 6, 2020, <[https://www.african-union/](https://www.africaportal.org/features/covid-19-and-african-union/)> (accessed 4 July 2020).

of the European Union in African countries, such as the European Union's Capacity Building Mission in Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger) or the Atalanta operation in Somalia, are still active, but it is not clear whether the scope of their work will remain as it was before the pandemic. In addition, it seems important for the European Union not to fall into the trap of its own obligations: instead of ensuring the security of African countries, there is a risk of reorienting existing programs exclusively to ensure the EU's security and protection against illegal migration.

Conclusion

The EU-Africa relationship system has been built over decades. The European Union has to determine its African policy in the form of a consistent set of tools and directions that can successfully combine its own geopolitical interests with a deep understanding of the complex needs of local communities. This involves implementing a scenario of rapprochement between the two on economic and political axes. The accumulation of organizational skills, coupled with the capabilities of modern communications, does not in itself lead to an immediate breakthrough, but plays a huge role in the progressive nature of the implemented changes. The focus for the EU is the policy of Africa's development, ensuring human security in the continent's countries, protecting the population and protecting the states with the focus on the social system of human security.

The EU-Africa relationship system is designed to be strong enough and not provoke crises. However, some crises are difficult to predict, and their cumulative impact can lead to system-wide failures. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the creation of a generally negative environment, but it did not act as a trigger that turned the system in the direction of devastating consequences and dead ends. The EU-Africa relationship system continues to operate in automatic mode, does not require manual control in terms of the intervention of top officials. This means that EU-Africa relations are not threatened with dismantling: they still have high potential, determined by

the significant interweaving of the European and African continents' security environments.

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Health and Education in the context of a COVID-19 pandemic – the case of the Iberian Peninsula

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Abstract: *The 21st century school has become a space for learning and sharing very different realities. However, in view of recent events, Coronavirus will be quite devastating and it is clear that, in this process, pandemics can compromise not only youth future but also their physical and mental health. In developing countries, with all their specificities and vicissitudes, managing this type of situation proves to be an even more challenging task. The central theme of this work is to share our view on the case of Portugal and Spain in Covid19 context of pandemics. As two of the less outstanding countries in Europe, with strong historical links to Africa, the Iberian Peninsula School has been dealing rather positively with the situation of social isolation, while keeping on with teaching and learning routines, monitoring the health, educational and economic situation of its students and families.*

Key words: *Health, Education, COVID-19 pandemic; the Iberian Peninsula; Portugal; Spain.*

Introduction

As stated, it is our intention to present a showcase in Portugal and Spain. We must highlight, however, that, in the case of Spain, since it is divided into seventeen Autonomous Communities, we are going to focus our study in Castilla-La Mancha.

The Spanish Case

The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) was first diagnosed in the city of Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (at least, this is the data we have at the date of closing this contribution; subsequent studies may shed light on it). It is

assumed, however, that month before there was considerable concern in this regard. On 31st December 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health and Sanitation Commission (Hubei Province, China) reported 27 cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology. On 7 January 2020, Chinese authorities identified as the causative agent of the outbreak a new type of virus in the Coronaviridae family, which has subsequently been named SARS-CoV-2. The disease caused by this new virus has been named by international consensus COVID-19.

In Spain, on 31st January 2020, a case of COVID-19 coronavirus was confirmed in La Gomera (Canary Islands) in a German citizen, who had had close contact with another case confirmed in Germany, originating in Bavaria. On 4th March 2020, Spain recorded the first death from coronavirus and a total of 198 positive cases.

On 11th March 2020, the World Health Organisation elevated the public health emergency caused by COVID-19 to an international pandemic. On the same day, Spain recorded 47 deaths and 2128 positive cases. These figures rose to 120 and 4209, respectively, on 13th March 2020. That day, through an institutional declaration, the President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, declared a state of alarm throughout the entire national territory, which came into effect on 14th March 2020, upon publication in the Official State Gazette (BOE) of Royal Decree 463/2020, of 14th March, declaring the state of alarm for the management of the health crisis situation caused by COVID-19. In accordance with its article 3, the duration of the state of alarm declared by this royal decree was fifteen calendar days. However, the Government soon began to prepare society for the real possibility of the state of alarm being extended beyond fifteen days, with the prior authorisation of the National Parliament).¹

¹ University Institute of Migration Studies, "Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU - Fundamental Rights Implications," European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 24

In the face of this unprecedented situation in contemporary society, rapidly disseminating the scientific results on COVID-19 is vital to allow rapid action on results with the prospect of success.² Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic requires a rapid response from researchers to help address biological, medical, and public health problems in order to minimise their impact. In this rapidly changing context, academics, professionals and the public need to quickly identify the situation to address the problem and make appropriate decisions.

In Spain, after the declaration on 14th March of the state of alarm for the management of the health crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 crisis,³ the Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports under the Regional Government of Castilla-La Mancha decided to provide the corresponding information to teachers, students and their families, in order to carry out timely monitoring of the situation and the actions generated by the coronavirus crisis. The regional government of Castilla-La Mancha, in coordination with the University of Castilla-La Mancha and the Ministry of Education itself was in charge of planning and adopting the corresponding measures in the different foreseeable scenarios.

Also, the Regional Government,⁴ the Regional University – UCLM⁵ – and the Regional Ministry of Education⁶ enabled a permanent space on their respective web pages with updated information on COVID-19.

March 2020, <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/spain-report-covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf>_(accessed 14 July 2020).

² P. Song & T. Karako, "COVID-19: Real-time dissemination of scientific information to fight a public health emergency of international concern," *BioScience Trends* 14, 1 (2020): 1-2, doi:10.5582/BST.2020.01056.

³ Advance HE, "Coronavirus (COVID-19) updates," Advance HE, <<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/coronavirus-COVID-19-updates>>_(accessed 14 July 2020).

⁴ Sanidad Castilla La Mancha, "Consejería de Sanidad," Sanidad Castilla La Mancha, <<https://sanidad.castillalamancha.es/ciudadanos/enfermedades-infecciosas/coronavirus>>_(accessed 14 July 2020).

Since the beginning of March, the UCLM and the Ministry of Education agreed to adopt the first preventive measures and public health recommendations directed at the educational community as a consequence of the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus,⁷ which were reinforced in mid-March with the adoption of the general non-attendance regime for the operation,⁸ always in accordance with the decisions and recommendations made by the authorities and in accordance with Decree 8/2020, 12th March, from the President of the Community Board, on extraordinary measures to be adopted on the occasion of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2).⁹

These first measures were intended to adapt the operation of teaching to non-classroom teaching activity, minimizing the interaction of people¹⁰ in the context of classrooms and laboratories, libraries, coffee shops, events and sports activities, ensuring the normal development of the different

⁵ Universidad de Castilla - La Mancha. "Información y recomendaciones durante la evolución del coronavirus (COVID-19)," Universidad de Castilla - La Mancha, <<https://www.uclm.es/Misiones/LaUCLM/Institucional/UCLMSaludable/SaludEntornoLaboral/COVID-19>>_(accessed 14 July 2020).

⁶ Portal de educación - Castilla La Mancha, "Información para Docentes / Coronavirus," Portal de educación - Castilla La Mancha, <<http://www.educa.jccm.es/es/coronavirus/informacion-docentes-coronavirus>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

⁷ Simon Burgess & Hans Henrik Sievertsen, "Schools, skills, and learning: The impact of COVID-19 on education," VoxEU & CEPR, 1 April 2020, <<https://voxeu.org/article/impact-covid-19-education>>_(accessed 14 July 2020).

⁸ K. Iwata, A. Doi & C. Miyakoshi, "Was School Closure Effective in Mitigating Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)? Time Series Analysis Using Bayesian Inference," *Preprints* 2020, 6 April 2020, doi: 10.20944/preprints202004.0058.v1.

⁹ UNESCO, "Education: From disruption to recovery," UNESCO, <<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures>>_(accessed 14 July 2020).

¹⁰ J. Casey & P. Wilson, "A practical guide to providing flexible learning in further and higher education," Enhancement Themes. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Scotland, 2005, <https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/ethemes/flexible-delivery/a-practical-guide-to-providing-flexible-learning-in-further-and-higher-education.pdf?sfvrsn=1c2ef981_8> (accessed 14 July 2020); S. Duffield & D. O'Hare, "Teacher resilience during coronavirus school closures," British Psychological Society: Leicester, 7 April 2020, <www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Member%20Networks/Divisions/DECP/Teacher%20Resilience%20during%20coronavirus%20school%20closures.pdf>_(accessed 14 July 2020).

educational activities with the least possible use of face-to-face meetings. In the management of the health crisis, the Ministry and the UCLM prioritized the general interest of public health in the field of the educational community, anticipating and basing their actions on the available health information and scientific studies in the framework of the advisory bodies created for this purpose, and in accordance with the proposals and recommendations of the coordinating bodies that affected them, such as the Sectoral Conference on Education.¹¹

At the same time, meetings were held at different levels according to the prospects for the evolution of the health crisis.¹²

The different previous meetings agreed that the evolution of this health crisis was not compatible with the resumption of face-to-face activity within the 2019/20 academic year. In this sense, there were no reasonable expectations that massive meetings could be held such as those that characterize the teaching activity or that they implied the realisation of face-to-face tests and exams.

Faced with these expectations, the Department of Education and the UCLM decided to implement a series of measures in order to organize early enough that students could finish their studies.¹³ The objective was to make the necessary adaptations, allowing educational centres to plan the rest of their teaching activities.

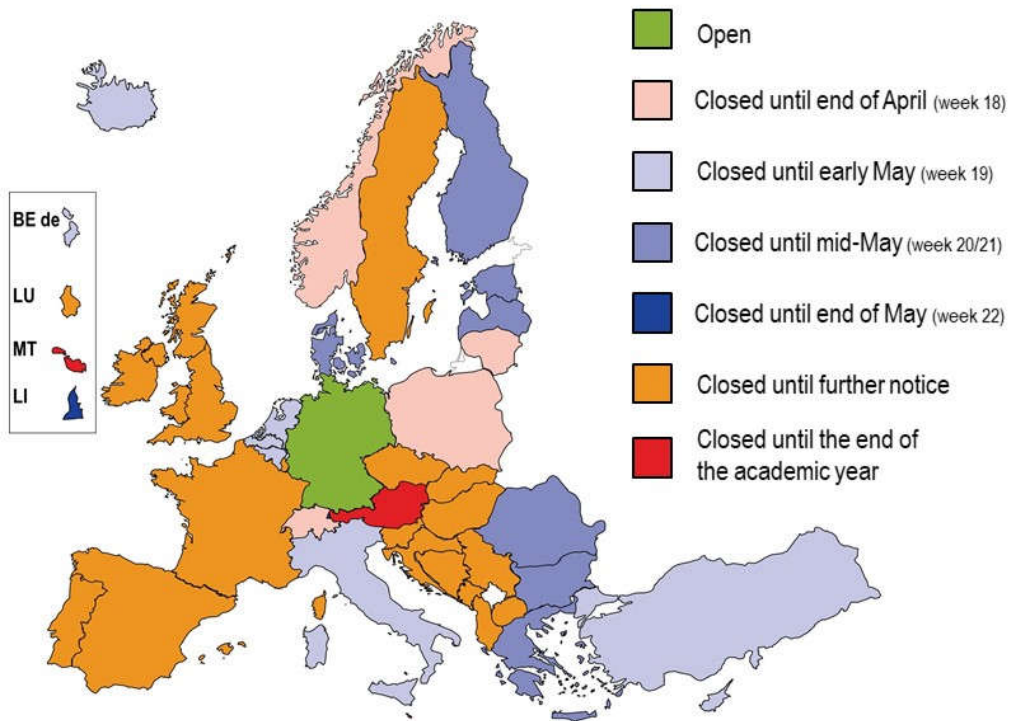
¹¹ Niall McCarthy, "COVID-19's Staggering Impact on Global Education," *Statista*, 24 March 2020, <<https://www.statista.com/chart/21224/learners-impacted-by-national-school-closures/>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

¹² Kaliope Azzi-Huck & Tigran Shmis, "Managing the impact of COVID-19 on education systems around the world: How countries are preparing, coping, and planning for recovery," *World Bank Blogs*, 18 March 2020, <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/managing-impact-covid-19-education-systems-around-world-how-countries-are-preparing>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

¹³ University of British Columbia, "What is Flexible Learning?" Flexible Learning, University of British Columbia, <<http://flexible.learning.ubc.ca/>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

In accordance with the aforementioned considerations, when the educational and political leaders were consulted in the pertinent meetings, it was decided to adopt the general non-attendance regime for the operation of the educational group in the region as a consequence of the situation, evolution and prospects of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Impact of Covid 19: Closure of higher education institutions in Europe



Source: Eurydice, 16/04/2020.

The impact of Covid-19: closure of higher education institutions in Europe¹⁴

¹⁴ Eurydice Network, "The impact of Covid-19: closure of higher education institutions in Europe," Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 16 April 2020, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/impact-covid-19-closure-education-systems-europe_en> (accessed 14 July 2020).

As a consequence of such decision, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the UCLM authorized the teleworking modality for all staff, reiterating the request to the different sectors of the educational community for maximum collaboration to follow the public health recommendations made by authorities.¹⁵



A Cyclical approach to education in emergencies.¹⁶

After the first week of suspension of the face-to-face activity and the confinement decreed by the Government of Spain (from 16th to 22nd March), both the Ministry and the UCLM considered the serene, responsible and committed response of the entire educational community as very positive, publicly expressing their appreciation. Normality in non-face-to-face teaching was possible thanks to the commitment of teachers, students, families, and the support of technological resources.

¹⁵ R. Huang, G. Chen, J. Yang & J. Loewen, "The New Shape of Learning: Adapting to Social Changes in the Information Society," in *Reshaping Learning SE – 1*, ed. R. Huang & J. M. Spector, 3–42 (Berlin: Springer, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-32301-0_1> (accessed 14 July 2020); Joseph Crawford, "COVID-19: 20 Countries' Higher Education Intra-period Digital Pedagogy Responses," *Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching* 3, 1 (2020): 1-20.

¹⁶ Azzi-Huck & Shmis, "Managing the impact of COVID-19 on education systems around the world: How countries are preparing, coping, and planning for recovery."

The teaching activity was developed through different non-face-to-face methodologies, allowing students to continue their training and finish their studies for the academic year 2019/2020, even though the various modalities of practices were affected that for obvious reasons do not allow their development on -line.¹⁷

Solidarity translated into the generosity of educational centres, laboratories, administration personnel and services ... Furthermore, a considerable number of teachers volunteered in some cases and were required in others to collaborate with the health system, not only in the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha but also moving to other parts of the country. Likewise, almost half a thousand final year students of the Medicine and Nursing degrees offered to collaborate as health support to the Castilla-La Mancha Health System. For their part, professors and researchers were working on the design of respirators to improve them and to facilitate their faster production due to their scarcity. And it goes without saying that facilities that could be useful for better health care for citizens were made available to the authorities.

At the end of the second week of suspension of the face-to-face activity (from 23rd to 29th March), initiatives continued to take place, which were being launched from all sectors of the educational community to collaborate in the fight against the pandemic: the realization of preparatory tests for COVID-19 diagnoses, 3D printing of protective material for toilets, design and manufacture of respirators, facilitation, collection and transfer of masks, gloves and other elements, or the provision and conditioning of facilities.

¹⁷ Tai-Kuei Yo & Tai-Yi Yu, "Modelling the factors that affect individuals' utilisation of online learning systems: An empirical study combining the task technology fit model with the theory of planned behaviour," *British Journal of Educational Technology* 41, 6 (2010); R. M. Viner et al., "School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: a rapid systematic review," *Lancet Child Adolescent Health* 4 (2020).

Likewise, an extraordinary patronage program was opened so that any citizen, company or institution could make contributions in order to defray the expenses that these initiatives entail. The response was immediate and generous from members of society. As a curiosity, in the first 24 hours more than 180 contributions were made for an amount greater than 24,000 euros.

In the week of 30th March to 5th April, various coordination meetings were held, in which it was found that the evolution of the health crisis was not compatible with the resumption of face-to-face activity within the academic year. Consequently, it was agreed to establish the end of the academic year in a non-face-to-face way in general, guaranteeing that any student could finish the studies in which they were enrolled.

Work was then carried out on adapting the evaluation and promoting the preparation of a proposal on the criteria for adapting the evaluation systems to the distance system. The change from a face-to-face modality to a non-face-to-face modality in the evaluation system should preserve the acquisition of the legally indicated competences.¹⁸

Specific guidelines for conducting the face-to-face assessment

A. Temporary nature of teaching and evaluation

It was decided to keep the academic calendar in force at that time.

B. Evaluation system

The evaluation system should pivot on a non-face-to-face continuous evaluation model in such a way that the final grade of the student in each

¹⁸ International Association of Universities, "The impact of COVID-19 on higher education worldwide. Resources for Higher Education Institutions," International Association of Universities, 24 April 2020, <https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/covid-19_and_he_resources.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2020).

subject was obtained, as a general rule, from a combination of progress tests, content development work and test final, trying to increase the weight relative to continuous evaluation and limit the weight of the final test.

In this exceptional situation, asynchronous tests, that is, tests carried out not simultaneously by all the students and without the presence of the teacher, made available to the students for a certain period of time (generally long), should become the preferred tool evaluation, since they minimize technical difficulties.

On the other hand, synchronous tests, that is, those in which the group of students connects simultaneously during the same period of time (generally short) and with the teacher's online supervision, would be applied on time. There is a wide diversity of assessment methods applicable in this situation such as rubrics, individual or group work, case studies, problem solving or cases, qualified discussions in forums, test-type exams, live or recorded presentations by students, class participation records with achievement, self-evaluation activities, coevaluation and portfolio, etc., as well as evaluation resources such as the so-called "Task", "Workshop", "Questionnaire", "Chat" or "Forum".

C. Technological support systems

The different evaluation activities should be carried out through the institutional system of the corresponding Virtual Campus, complemented by corporate virtual class and videoconferencing platforms (Teams, Skype for Business, Google Hangouts ...) and email. These systems are available for mobile devices (m-learning)¹⁹ with full support for synchronous or

¹⁹ Z. Zayapragassarazan, "COVID-19: Strategies for Online Engagement of Remote Learners," [version 1; not peer reviewed]. *F1000Research*, 9 (2020) (document), <<https://doi.org/10.7490/f1000research.1117835.1>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

asynchronous assessment tasks,²⁰ thus promoting inclusiveness²¹ with less exposure to the risk of digital gap by students.²²

D. Record of evaluation evidence and reviews

In the new context of face-to-face evaluation, the evidence of evaluation of the acquisition of the competences and learning results by the student should continue to be recorded as established in the quality guarantee systems of the degrees. In the particular case of tests carried out by videoconference, teachers should record and keep the recording for the purpose of reviewing the qualification of these tests and registration. These videos would be stored in shared institutional spaces, respecting current regulations on the protection of personal data.

On the other hand, the teaching staff should foresee the necessary mechanisms for the review of assessment tests using the videoconference systems discussed above.

E. Accreditation systems for identification and fraud control

To verify the identity of the student as the author of a test or work, access to the systems using user credentials has been used.

²⁰ J. Littlefield, "The Difference Between Synchronous and Asynchronous Distance Learning," *ThoughtCo*, 14 January 2018, <<https://www.thoughtco.com/synchronous-distance-learning-asynchronous-distancelearning-1097959>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

²¹ Texas Education Agency, "COVID-19 FAQ: At Home Learning Resources for Students with Disabilities," Texas Education Agency, 7 April 2020, <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid-19_-_at_home_learning_resources_april_7.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2020).

²² S. Petrina, "Instructional Methods and Learning Styles," *Advanced Teaching Methods for the Technology Classroom* (2011), <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-337-1.ch004> (accessed 14 July 2020); UNESCO, *Handbook on Facilitating Flexible Learning during Educational Disruption*, International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education, March 2020, <<https://iite.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Handbook-on-Facilitating-Flexible-Learning-in-COVID-19-Outbreak-SLIBNU-V1.2-20200315.pdf>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

F. Curricular external practices

The external curricular internships were considered passed when at least 50% were completed, complementing the remaining credits, if necessary, with seminars or other training activities directly related to these internships.

In the cases in which they started and did not reach 50% of completion, they were considered to have been passed, compulsorily complementing the remaining credits with seminars and other activities in order to consider them equally passed.

Digital gap

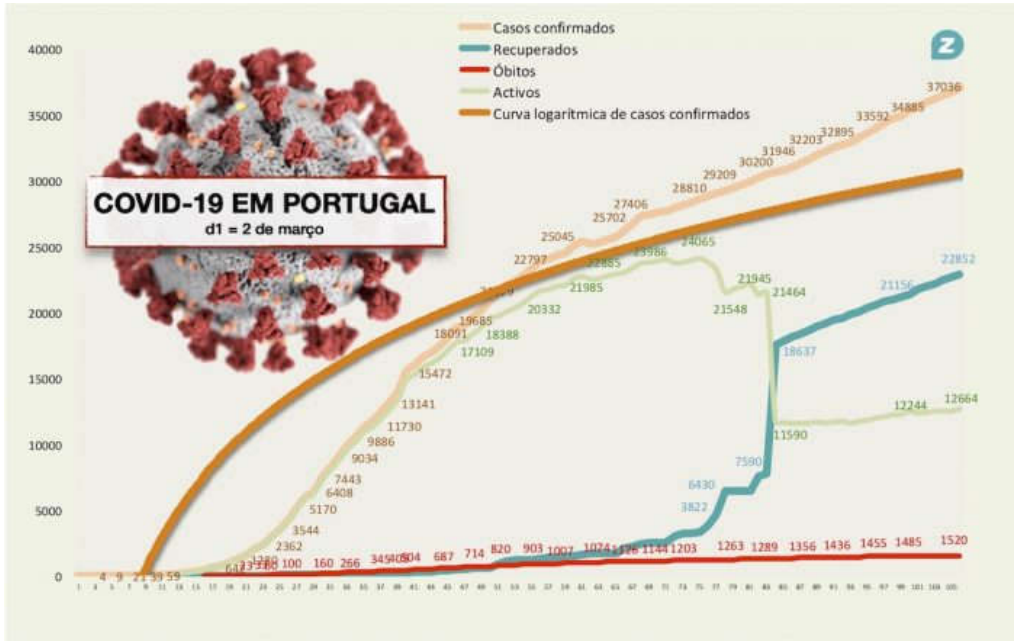
In order to support the students, the students who suffer the most from the digital gap began to be provided, from the middle of April, on loans, as well as high-capacity 4G data lines.

At the date of closing this contribution, you can venture a satisfactory development of the training activity, as well as the teaching evaluation. It is not an easy task, as the Spanish educational system as a whole proves, but apparently, and despite various incidents, adaptation to non-face-to-face assessment can be inferred.

THE PORTUGUESE CASE

The SARS CoV2, commonly known as COVID-19 Pandemic, officially hit Portugal on 2nd March 2020 when it was reported that two men, a 60-year-old doctor who was on vacation in northern Italy and a 33-year-old man who was in Spain at work, tested positive to COVID-19.

As of 27th July 2020, there were 50,299 confirmed cases, with a total of 1,719 deaths and 35,375 already recovered.



Source: ESRI Portugal (<https://www.esri-portugal.pt/pt-pt/landing-pages/covid19>, accessed on July 14th 2020).

However, experts warn that the current number of infections is probably much higher than the number of confirmed cases, since tests are limited to a specific number of people with symptoms and because many people with mild or even asymptomatic symptoms do not seek medical attention, even though they are actively transmitting the virus.²³

As a result of this situation, it became urgent to mobilize critical actors in the production and diffusion of scientific and technological knowledge, especially in the context of the situation of increasing uncertainty and social alarm countries are living in.

Therefore, rapid adaptation to an exceptional time impelled Portuguese society to a greater sense of civic duty, commitment to public health and

²³ zap.aeiou, “Coronavírus / Covid-19,” zap.aeiou, <<https://zap.aeiou.pt/thread/covid-19>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

safety of all, particularly the elderly and the most vulnerable. The actions and initiatives launched and in progress include:

1. The identification and enhancement of a set of scientific and technological initiatives and projects with immediate and effective implementation, where we can find, among others:
 - The PCR diagnostic test, implemented by the Institute of Molecular Medicine (iMM) based on the test developed by the CDC “Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), following all guidelines regarding the handling and analysis of clinical specimens, having been certified by INSA. It has the great advantage of using reagents produced in Portugal, by the biotechnology company NZYTech. The protocol implemented in iMM will also allow estimation of viral load, a parameter that may be relevant in the assessment of clinical prognosis;
 - The “Smart” screening of the company Biosurfit being implemented at the Field Hospital already installed at the Portuguese Red Cross, based on an early identification of patients at higher risk and allowing the early detection of the disease even before the patient has marked respiratory problems. This early identification allows medical action, prior to the deterioration of the clinical condition of patients, facilitating the prevention of the spread of COVID-19;
 - The first development in Portugal of invasive ventilators, namely by CEiiA, in close collaboration with medical institutions and the industry, as well as other types of ventilation systems (e.g. pandemic ventilators) by INESC TEC and INEGI, in close International collaboration;
 - The development of Personal Protective Equipment, PPE, by CITEVE in close articulation with the industry;
 - Other equipment and support systems, designed and produced in various academic and scientific institutions throughout the country;

- The efforts to mobilize many higher education and science and technology institutions, especially with activities in the biomedical field, to gather and donate various types of support equipment and tools to the hospitals and health care units to be particularly recognized.
2. Portugal participates in a large task force at the level of the General Directorate for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) of the European Commission, that allowed the launch of a financing line of 47.5 million euros through the program “*SC1-PHECORONAVIRUS -2020: Advancing knowledge for the clinical and public health response to the [COVID-19] epidemic*”.²⁴ Its results were already released. One of the approved projects involves the National Institute of Health.
- Doctor Ricardo Jorge (INSA): “RESEARCH 4 COVID 19”: FCT,²⁵ in collaboration with AICIB - Agency for Clinical Research and Biomedical Innovation, launched an exceptional financing line to support the reorientation of current R&D teams. Its goals include developing research projects and initiatives (R&D) that may respond to the immediate needs of the National Health Service (SNS) in the fight against the new Coronavirus. Some of them are new prevention tools, therapeutic development, diagnostic methods, clinical and epidemiological studies, as well as R&D activities that include a socio-cultural component and actions promoting a resilient society with the capacity to face the current context of uncertainty in which we live, especially in the older population and in groups at higher risk. The financing of each project is up to 30 thousand euros, with the Faculty of Science and Technology (FCT), from Universidade Nova de Lisboa having a budget available for this line in the amount of 1.5 million euros.

²⁴ Funding and Tender Opportunities, “Pan-European COVID-19 cohorts,” European Commission, <<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/sc1-phe-coronavirus-2020-2d>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

²⁵ Instituto Nacional de Saúde, “Diversidade genética do novo coronavírus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) em Portugal,” Instituto Nacional de Saúde, <<https://insaflu.insa.pt/covid19/>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

3. “Science 4 COVID19”: FCT and AICIB are also preparing, in partnership with health authorities and scientific research institutions, public and private, the “Science 4 COVID19” portal to mobilize scientific communities in projects and joint Research and Development (R&D) activities aimed at combating COVID-19 in line with the National Plan for Preparing and Responding to Disease from the General Directorate of Health (DGS), as well as with the strategies of other European and international health authorities. The portal groups metadata, datasets or hyperlinks, problem registration, research results in epidemiological surveillance and other secondary public health and anonymous data necessary to combat the coronavirus epidemic, such as clinical, analytical and demographic results.²⁶

Along with all the scientific effort that has been made so far, to deal with the pandemic, the government has approved a set of legislation to coordinate, manage and organize institutions, in order to create the possible “normality”, as far as schools, hospitals, enterprises, commerce and industry are concerned.

In Education, important measures were taken, to allow students, teachers and families to continue working, despite the pandemic. Decree-Law nr. 14-G/2020, from 13th April, for instance, establishes exceptional and temporary measures in the area of Education, in the context of the COVID-19 disease pandemic.²⁷

The government has also published a set of guidelines to help Multidisciplinary Support Teams for Inclusive Education, commonly known

²⁶ DGES, “Covid-19: avisos,” DGES, <<https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt/pagina/covid-19-avisos>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

²⁷ Estabelece as medidas excecionais e temporárias na área da educação, no âmbito da pandemia da doença COVID-19, Decreto-Lei n.º14-G/2020, Diário da República n.º72/2020, 2º Suplemento, Série I de 2020-04-13, <https://dre.pt/web/guest/legislacao-consolidada/-/lc/133723698/view?p_p_state=maximized> (accessed 14 July 2020).

as EMAEI (Equipas Multidisciplinares de Apoio à Educação Inclusiva) in the frame of a Distance Learning (E@D).²⁸

These guidelines were developed around four axes of action that are considered priorities in the current context, despite the importance of other EMAEI attributions:

Axis 1 – a support to teachers and technicians from the educational community.

Axis 2 – the continuity of implementation / identification of measures to support learning and inclusion defined or to be defined in the RTP / PEI / PIT.

Axis 3 – a support to families in the context of the E@D modality.

Axis 4 – the articulation with several community services.

All the work to be carried out in the current context is linked to the decisions taken by the school/group regarding the channels of communication with students and families and guardians, taking into account, in particular, the Guiding Principles for the Implementation of Distance Learning (E@D) in Schools (made available in the online space to support schools: <https://apoioescolas.dge.mec.pt/>), where resources and tools for inclusive education are also found.

Therefore, and as far as **Axis 1** is concerned, some measures were suggested:

- To define a work plan regarding EMAEI's performance in the context of implementing the E@D modality, considering the specific resources to

²⁸ DGE, “Orientações para o trabalho das Equipas Multidisciplinares de Apoio à Educação Inclusiva na modalidade E@D,” DGE. 8 April 2020, <https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/informacoes_escolas/orientacoes_emaei.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2020).

support learning and inclusion, human, organizational or existing in the community, which will be necessary to mobilize, organize and articulate, in close articulation with the full professors / class directors / special education teachers, with a special focus on online communication.

- To define moments of joint work, at a distance, organizing synchronous and/or asynchronous sessions, with the full professors/class directors of the students with selective and additional measures, in order to support and adapt inclusive practices and the development of skills to the E@D, using the teaching and learning platforms and communication channels that the respective school/grouping has defined for this purpose.
- To take care of ways of accessing information to students who cannot do so from oral or visual sources, involving, for this purpose, teachers from the Learning Support Centres (CAA), from the ICT Resource Centres (CRTIC), Portuguese Sign Language (LGP) and technicians from the Resource Centres for Inclusion (CRI), taking into account the specialized knowledge and experience in adapting materials and using assistive technologies, in online learning environments, EMAEI being responsible for more regular and intensive use of these situations. CRTICs will be able to support the use at home of support products for each student (e.g. braille machines, braille displays).

As far as **Axis 2** is concerned, it was suggested the continuity of implementation/Identification of support measures for learning and inclusion defined or to be defined:

- To develop a close and systematic monitoring plan for students who, for various reasons, face greater weaknesses in learning (e.g. students with additional measures and students who do not have access to digital media), stabilizing the communication channels with students and with families and guardians, in order to continue their participation in the curriculum and learning, facilitating and encouraging the participation of each person at a distance and, thus, maintaining the social interaction

and the bonds already created. Define, if it does not exist, an element of EMAEI to function as a reference person for each student.

- To establish, in agreement with the parents, a schedule of regular and frequent contacts (by phone or internet) with the reference person.
- To maintain contact with teachers, ensuring that support measures for learning and inclusion, namely those defined in the Pedagogical Technical Report (RTP), are being implemented considering:
 - a) respect for social isolation, using moments of flexibility with flexibility. online and offline interaction;
 - b) the family dynamics and feasibility of the measures, without this being an unaffordable task for families;
 - c) the learning pace and ability to execute each student;
 - d) advising on ways to resolve and overcome difficulties in participation and interaction at a distance.
- To collaborate with the head teacher / class director, interlocutors with parents and guardians, in the elaboration of a work plan for students with the additional measure (s): development of teaching methodologies and strategies structured; development of personal and social autonomy skills and / or significant curricular adaptations, ensuring that
 - a) it allows families to establish a daily routine in which everyone's needs and well-being are taken care of;
 - b) if there is a need to establish a timetable, this is compatible with the family schedule / functioning;
 - c) the proposed activities and the use of specific software, if necessary, consider the student's family context and personal situation in this particular context of E@D.
- Designing and agreeing between the parties a monitoring plan that allows identifying possible constraints in the work developed with students with weaker family background, using all available mechanisms to open channels of communication with these families and seeking specific support from the CRI, with the Children and Youth Protection Commissions (CPCJ) and other institutions that can mobilize resources

that guarantee the evolution of the learning of these students, their physical and emotional balance in the current context of social distance.

Axis 3, focused on the support for families in the process of adapting to the E@D modality, designed a set of measures:

- To define a close and systematic monitoring plan that ensures open communication with the families of students with selective and / or additional measures and students with special health needs, taking into account the expectations of the students and their families.
- To encourage and support full professors and class directors in the participation and interaction of networking, involving and connecting students with greater difficulties in terms of interaction and communication with their peers, in order to maintain the sense of belonging and social contact, although not in person.
- To support families whenever there are situations in which the management of emotions, resulting from the situation of social isolation, is creating barriers to the learning process and the well-being of the student, using the defined communication channels and using others; to be defined on a case by case basis, mobilizing, if necessary, the psychology services or the CRI psychologist.
- To encourage and support the creation of support groups between parents, whenever the parents wish to do so.
- To collaborate in the identification and elimination of constraints placed on the participation of students with selective and / or additional measures and families in the E@D modality.²⁹

Axis 4, on the other hand, sets the articulation with various community services, as a means to: ensure the continuity of activities foreseen in terms of therapies, in close collaboration with families; collaborate in the

²⁹ DGS, “Novo coronavírus COVID-19,” DGS, 17 March 2020, <<https://covid19.min-saude.pt/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/17.03-Comunidade-Escolar.pdf>> (accessed 14 July 2020).

elimination of constraints placed on the participation of students and families in the E@D modality, mobilizing, if necessary, partner entities of the community, which may involve other forms of support, in a logic of network work, based on territory, that facilitates online interaction and thus ensures the school-family-community connection.

Together with these measures, a roadmap, composed of eight guiding principles for the Implementation of Distance Learning (E@D) in Schools was also outlined.³⁰

Furthermore, the “Mobilize for Change” principle aims to involve the educational community in the search for the most appropriate E@D Plan for the School - direction, pedagogical council, coordinators of class, establishment, pre-school education, citizenship education, coordinators departments, class directors, teachers, course directors, resource centres for inclusion, entities promoting curricular enrichment activities, parents / guardians, student representatives - but also Parish Councils, Libraries, Parents Associations, Social Solidarity Associations, Firemen, NGO mediators, Social Economy organizations, among others, can be a way to reach all children and all students.

The principle of “Communicating in a network” stipulates: the fixed or flexible weekly timetable for students; the adaptation of the weekly workload of each discipline / UFCD; the definition of the time interval between each proposed task (tasks with a maximum of 20/30 minutes, according to the age groups); temporal flexibility in the execution of tasks; the different rhythms of learning.

The same document also equates the realization of ways of working at a distance, making careful use of synchronous sessions; clarification of doubts,

³⁰ DGE, “8 Princípios Orientadores para a Implementação do Ensino a Distância (E@D) nas Escolas,” DGE, 23 March 2020, <https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/roteiro_ead_vfinal.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2020).

with a fixed weekly schedule, for establishing routines and providing security to students. Fosters collaboration, articulation and inter-help between teachers, promotes teaching methodologies that promote an active role of students in the search for new learning - interdisciplinary projects, which lead students to mobilize the learning of various disciplines / components or tasks focused on problem-issues, case studies, projects, among others.

It promotes the development of student's emotional well-being and confidence in relation to school, while learning from home, with distance activities with students who should focus on creating work routines that will give them the sense of safety. At the same time, activities of a playful nature have been developed to promote the emotional well-being of the student, such as sending messages in video, SMS, or on paper. The contact between students through digital spaces is encouraged, or by any other technological means, to prevent situations of isolation of students, being essential for maintenance of social interactions and their motivation to perform tasks. The proposed activities include, as well, spaces for interaction and conviviality, promoting group work and breaking the isolation the students find themselves in. It is important to foresee the role to be played by psychologists and teachers who supported students in specific tutorial support, mobilizing all available resources.

At the same time, mutual help between students is promoted, both in terms of carrying out tasks and in terms of peer regulation, creating the figure of the digital consultant, who assists his colleagues in the use of technological means; in turn, the class delegate encourages the participation of colleagues in the execution of the proposed tasks and helps to monitor them, among others.

In order to monitor the work carried out, quality and quantity indicators, as well as collection frequency, have been defined. These quality indicators measure the degree of satisfaction of teachers, students and parents / EE, as

well as the quality of feedback given to students. As indicators of quantity, we choose, for example, the rate of completion of the tasks proposed by the teachers, the number of tasks sent by the teachers, depending on the work plan prepared, availability of technological means of E@D, support for the development of digital skills of teachers and students; development of support mechanisms, aimed at students without a computer and internet connection at home.³¹

Conclusions

Our intention with this contribution has been to show how Portuguese and Spanish schools have been dealing with an unexpected pandemic situation, according to daily updates, as well as in anticipating further necessity to come back to a possible second confinement, like the one we have just come out of.

This possibility will, undoubtedly influence young students' both health and school education. Coronavirus will have a huge impact especially on emerging countries and managing this type of situation is to be a huge challenge.

As we have shared our view on the case of Portugal and Spain, two of the less outstanding countries in Europe, that have been able to manage the situation, despite all constraints and errors, it is our opinion that this reality may serve as a good example to be followed by other countries. In the particular case of Portugal situation, and its strong historical links to Africa, this can be seen as a possible starting point to what African countries can learn from our own experience in this matter.

³¹ DGE, "Formação para a docência digital e em rede," DGE, 3 April 2020, <https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/informacoes_escolas/formacao_ead_ua_dge_diretores_oficio_vf.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2020).

Furthermore, since we have at our disposal the means to network, we can establish partnerships that will permit to find responses to the specific needs of every country, taking into account their respective specificities.

As far as the evaluation made, up till today, both by students, families and teachers, to the models that have been put into practice in these two countries, we have come to the conclusion that the Iberian Peninsula Schools are dealing positively with the situation of social isolation, while keeping on with teaching and learning routines, at the same time as it serves as an active participant in the management and monitoring of the health, educational and economic situation of its students and families.

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The Teaching and Learning Process during the Covid-19 Lockdown: Experiences of Students in Selected Rwandan Universities

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Abstract: COVID-19 has paralysed all sectors worldwide including education. There has been, therefore, a necessity to shift from offline to online teaching and learning as a means of containing the pandemic. As a new situation facing students and teachers, little is still known about their experiences with regard to online teaching and learning especially in developing countries. The study at hand explored university students' experiences about teaching and learning during the Covid-19 lockdown in Rwanda. Through a triangulation of questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, data was collected from a sample of 256 students. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic content. Results show that a variety of online platforms were used, but that WhatsApp and Moodle were those most frequently used. Despite the limited access to internet, the introduction of the e-learning mode created learning and socio-economic opportunities. These include self-responsible and self-regulated learning, digital literacy and time management. Students' direct university costs declined due to limited movements involving transport and accommodation at university. Findings suggest Government and Universities should invest in digital infrastructures and staff capacity- building.

Key words: Teaching and learning process, Covid-19 lockdown, e-learning platform, university education, students' perceptions.

Introduction

This article seeks to explore teachers' and students' experiences of teaching and learning in Rwandan higher education during the Covid-19 lockdown. COVID-19 was first detected in December 2019 in China. Since then, it has been expanding all over the world and declared as a world pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020.¹ The pandemic has become one of the most difficult times faced by humankind. It has paralysed the functioning of all sectors worldwide. Lockdowns have been imposed across the world as a means to contain the spread of the pandemic. Schools and universities, public events and travel were respectively closed and prohibited as measures to stop the spread of the pandemic. Universities suspended face to face teaching and learning.²

This has required a rethink of teaching strategies. It is in this perspective that universities across the world have shifted in unprecedented fashion from traditional face-to-face to online teaching via a variety of online platforms in order to ensure the continuity of learning.³ This implies reframing the pedagogical and didactical reflections and practices especially enhancing students' responsibility for their own learning. The unprecedented situation and related changes as well as challenges need empirical investigations in order to understand how teaching and learning processes take place especially in the global south. This paper focuses on reflections on teaching

¹ World Health Organisation, "Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Situation Report – 51" (11 March 2020), <<https://reliefweb.int/report/china/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-situation-report-51-11-march-2020>> (accessed 14 December 2020), 1.

² UNESCO IESALC, *COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow*, UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (9 April 2020); Zayabalaradjane Zayapragassarazan, 'COVID-19: Strategies for Online Engagement of Remote Learners,' *F1000 Research*, 9 March 2020, 246.

³ Wahab Ali, "Online and Remote Learning in Higher Education Institutes: A Necessity in light of COVID-19 Pandemic," *Higher Education Studies* 10, 3 (2020); R. H. Huang et al., *Guidance on Active Learning at Home during Educational Disruption: Promoting student's self-regulation skills during COVID-19 outbreak*, Beijing: Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University, 2020.

and learning during the lockdown as experienced by teachers and students in Rwandan higher education.

1. Background and relevance

Rwanda is one of the Sub-Saharan African countries which aspires to reach upper middle income country status. In this regard, Information, Communication Technology (ICT) is considered as engine for such development. For example, internet connectivity has increased from 9.3% in 2014 to 17.2 % in 2018. Moreover, the use of mobile phones has increased by 3.2% from 63.7% to 66.9%.⁴ With regard to the development of ICT infrastructure in educational institutions, a number of strategies have been put in place including the ‘one laptop per child’ initiative. This is a programme launched in 2008 by the Rwandan government to improve active learning in primary schools through the introduction of technology. To date, 269,116 laptops have been distributed to 933 primary schools across the country.⁵ The programme was expected to reduce the digital divide.⁶ For example, computer: student ratios reached 1:10, 1:8 and 1:2 and the internet accessibility is 34.8%, 61.1% and 100% respectively in primary, secondary and higher education. This has been accompanied by integration of ICT related courses in order to equip students with digital competencies. Research conducted in some schools shows that the programme has both positive and negative effects on the learning process. On the one hand, some learners have used it to improve their performance, and on the other hand, laptops are perceived as a source of distraction in the classroom.⁷

⁴ MINEDUC, *Education statistics* (Kigali: MINEDUC, 2019).

⁵ See Rwanda Education Board, “One laptop per child,” <<https://reb.rw/main-menu/project/olpc/>> (accessed 16 December 2020).

⁶ Munyantore, J. D. & Mbalire, M., “The role of one laptop per child project in academic performance in primary schools,” *International Journal of Management and Applied Science* 3, no. 6 (2017): 41-45.

⁷ Fajebe, A. A., Best, M. L., & Smyth, T. N., “Is the one laptop per child enough? Viewpoints from classroom teachers in Rwanda,” *Information Technologies & International Development* 9, no. 3 (2013): 2-429.

Despite the increasing accessibility to internet connectivity and higher computer-student ratio in higher education, familiarity with technology among students is very limited. Research shows that a significant number of incoming students at the University of Rwanda do not have any previous e-learning experience. Moreover, students have smart phones but never use them for learning purposes.⁸ This may be due to the fact the use traditional face-to-face teaching mode was still predominant in the great majority of higher learning institutions in Rwanda. This is a shared situation with other countries in the same region as Rwanda. In Kenya, for instance, eLearning was adopted for responding to high demand in higher education provision. However, as of 2016 only eleven universities had e-learning programmes.⁹

With regard to Covid-19, the first cases of Covid-19 were identified in Rwanda at the end of the first trimester of 2020. A lockdown in all services including educational institutions was then announced. Other services are open for the moment, except schools and universities, which were closed mid-March, expecting to reopen in September 2020. The Ministry of Education encouraged the continuity of teaching and learning in a number of ways. Firstly, the Rwanda Education Board started delivering courses for primary and secondary students via radio and television. Secondly, universities were requested to support students' learning through different social media and online platforms.¹⁰ Higher Learning Institutions have started to face numerous challenges, some of them significant, on their functionalities.¹¹ Several of them have already ceased teaching and learning activities because of financial difficulties, as for most of them, school fees

⁸ Jean Claude Byungura et al., "Familiarity with Technology among First-Year Students in Rwandan Tertiary Education," *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning* 16, no. 1 (2018).

⁹ Kibuku, Rachael Njeri, Ochieng, Daniel Orwa, and Wausi, Agnes Nduku, "e-Learning Challenges Faced by Universities in Kenya: A Literature Review," *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning* 18, no. 2 (2020): 150-161.

¹⁰ MINEDUC, *Keeping the Doors Open for Learning: Response Plan of Ministry of Education to the COVID-19 Outbreak* (Kigali: MINEDUC, 2020).

¹¹ Celestin Nsengiyumva, *How local Non-Government Organizations in Rwanda (NGOs) are affected by COVID 19* (DME for Peace, 2020).

are the only source of income. Some HLLs whose teaching and learning activities have survived, have adopted online platforms to continue teaching and learning activities during the lockdowns. However, the literature highlights certain deficiencies such as the weakness of the infrastructure of online teaching, the inexperience of teachers, low literacy in ICT for both students and teachers, the information gap and the complex environment at home.¹² Moreover, research conducted in South Africa on the context of the IT literacy environment in the education sector show that the population, especially those living in disadvantaged areas, face problems relating to cost, inadequate access and slow internet connection.¹³ A large digital gap between the urban and rural areas is also observed in Kenya, and lack of technical competencies as an additional challenge to eLearning. Furthermore, asynchronous modes of delivery and interaction characterised by the uploading of learning materials on the universities' eLearning portals to be downloaded by students in due course are the methods most frequently used.¹⁴

There are a number of questions which it is worth raising as regards how on-line teaching methods have been adopted and quickly implemented, especially in respect of the experiences and challenges of both teachers and students, as well as mitigation measures in regard to this unprecedented situation. How is teaching and learning organised? What kind of platforms are being used? How are quality and equity ensured?

Education in an emergency situation such as COVID-19 should put into place certain principles to ensure both quality and equity. For example, education in an emergency has to be inclusive in a way that it takes into consideration

¹² Wahab Ali, "Online and Remote Learning in Higher Education Institutes: A Necessity in light of COVID-19 Pandemic," *Higher Education Studies* 10, no. 3 (2020): 16-25.

¹³ Oluwole O. Durodolu and Samuel Maredi Mojapelo, "Contextualisation of the Information Literacy Environment in the South African Education Sector," *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning* 18, no. 1 (2020).

¹⁴ Kibuku et al., "e-Learning Challenges Faced by Universities in Kenya: A Literature Review," (2020).

the diversity of students in terms of socio-economic background and learning challenges to ensure that no-one is left behind¹⁵. This might be more significant in the context of Rwanda where internet connectivity is relatively low. Therefore, this study seeks to explore both teachers' and students' experiences about online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 lockdown. This study intends to answer the following research questions: What kinds of online platforms that are used for continuing teaching and learning process during the closure of universities due to COVID-19? What types of interventions in order to support teachers and students? What perceptions do teachers and students have about online teaching and learning? What challenges do they face and how do they overcome them?

2. Methods and methodology

In this study, a mixed approach has been used. The survey research design which used both qualitative and quantitative approaches was found appropriate to this research. The target population is 2,539 students and 64 lecturers from two selected universities in Rwanda. The sample size initially intended was 334 students and 55 lecturers. It was determined using the sampling table developed by Krejcie and Morgan, considering 95% as the confidence interval with a margin of error of 5%.¹⁶ However, ultimately, a sample of 236 students was established because face-to-face contact was prohibited in order to comply with COVID-19 prevention measures. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants. The qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews led by two student representatives, and related data were analysed through thematic content analysis. The results drawn from these interviews served as the basis for designing questionnaires to collect quantitative data from

¹⁵ INEE, *Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction* (Paris: Inter-Agency, 2004); Margaret Sinclair, "Education in Emergencies," in *Commonwealth education partnership 2007*, ed. Commonwealth Secretariat, 52–56 (Cambridge, UK: Nexus Strategic Partnerships, 2006).

¹⁶ Robert V. Krejcie and Daryle W. Morgan, "Determining sample size for research activities," *Educational and Psychological Measurements* 30 (1970).

the two categories: students and teachers. The questionnaires were composed by pre-structured close ended questions especially in the form of the Likert scale. Survey Monkey was used for online administration and data collection for both categories: students and teachers. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the quantitative data from the survey.

3. Results and discussion

In line with the research questions designed at the outset of this study, the findings are presented under five headings: the profile of the participants, the supporting mechanisms, the platforms used and their appreciation, the perceived quality of online teaching and learning by students, as well as any related challenges.

3.1. Demographic profile of participants: Gender and programme

Out of the 234 students who participated in this study, 65.81% were male while 34.19% were female. Of the 229 students who indicated their programme of study, 66.81% were pursuing programmes in education, 24.02% were following programmes in humanities and social sciences, 7.42% health sciences programmes and 1.75% were pursuing sciences and mathematics programmes. The proportion of students per programme recruited to the study reflected student numbers on the respective programmes in the sample institution, which has higher numbers enrolled in education and social sciences.

3.2. Supporting mechanisms for e-learning

The results of the study show that students were supported in different ways. Firstly, training was organised in order to introduce students to e-learning. Findings revealed that the sample institutions were able to provide training on E-learning tools to facilitate online learning during this university lockdown period, as confirmed by 76.5% of respondents. However, not all students (in fact only 23.50%) were able to attend scheduled training on e-

learning for a variety of reasons. On a 5-point Likert scale, the quality of the training received was rated 2.69 on average. The latter was an indication that students rated the quality of training as neither good nor bad. This finding shows a need for further empirical studies to understand the context and processes of such training and the need for further review for the purpose of improving the organisation of e-learning-related training.

Secondly, data from interviews shows the importance of private-private partnerships and of regular monitoring due to the financial challenges faced by students. Participants indicated that telecommunication companies like MTN and Airtel made a significant impact by allowing free internet access to eLearning platforms.

3.3. Platforms used during online teaching and learning

The respondents were asked to indicate the platforms lecturers used to teach during this lockdown period. The findings showed a combination of different platforms during online teaching. The use of Whatsapp and Moodle was mentioned by 74.79% and 68.80% of respondents respectively. Google classroom and Zoom were also used in different courses as indicated by 11.97% and 10.68% of respondents respectively. Other platforms such as Skype and Google Meet live session were used to a limited extent. Respondents rated the frequency at which different platforms were in use.

Table 1: Types and frequency of online platforms

	Never	Rare	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total	Weighted Average
Moodle	4.80%	8.00%	34.40%	23.20%	29.60%		
	6	10	43	29	37	125	3.65

	Never	Rare	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total	Weighted Average
Pre-recorded video clip	25.00% 8	28.13% 9	40.63% 13	6.25% 2	0.00% 0	32	2.28
Google meet live session	40.91% 9	36.36% 8	4.55% 1	13.64% 3	4.55% 1	22	2.05
Google Classroom	22.22% 8	33.33% 12	19.44% 7	25.00% 9	0.00% 0	36	2.47
WhatsApp	10.20% 15	1.36% 2	21.09% 31	24.49% 36	42.86% 63	147	3.88
Zoom	28.57% 10	31.43% 11	22.86% 8	11.43% 4	5.71% 2	35	2.34
Skype	83.87% 26	6.45% 2	0.00% 0	6.45% 2	3.23% 1	31	1.39
E-mail	7.89% 6	9.21% 7	39.47% 30	21.05% 16	22.37% 17	76	3.41

Source: Primary data (July, 2020)

Data in Table 1 showed the use of WhatsApp dominating with a weighted average of 3.88, with Moodle in second place with a weighted average of 3.65. Use of e-mails came third with an average of 3.41. For the

respondents, use of WhatsApp dominated in the teaching and learning process especially in sharing experiences and explanation between students and faculty members. Whatsapp was affordable in terms of internet bundles for many students and who already had experience using it in everyday life. Due to low internet connectivity, it was claimed that WhatsApp was suitable for on-line learning. Moodle was among the top platforms used. According to respondents, it was used as a university official e-learning platform, mainly in retrieving and upload learning materials or submission of assignments. The respondents indicated Moodle as a good platform for e-learning but costly for many of them. It is bundle-consuming compared to WhatsApp. Consequently, some students were unable to use it for e-learning. As an alternative, they waited for their colleagues to retrieve the learning materials posted and then to share them through WhatsApp and e-mails. Other platforms mentioned were used at the beginning of the lockdown and then abandoned in favour of Moodle and WhatsApp. They were considered not affordable and inaccessible to many students. Many students (216 out of 234) used smartphones in learning rather than other devices. Only 30.3% combined smartphones and laptop in their e-learning. Despite the unexpected situation, the leadership of some private universities worked hard to ensure the continuity of teaching.

3.4. Appreciation of the quality of online teaching and learning

Before the unprecently alarming situation of COVID-19, the sample universities used face-to-face teaching as a priority with limited use of e-learning. One of the aims of the study was to discover how students appreciated this new approach to learning. The findings are presented below:

Table 2: Appreciation of online teaching and learning

How do you rate the following statement	Very poor	Poor	Neither poor nor good	Good	Very good	Total	Weighted Average
The quality of the teaching and learning process	2.99% 7	6.41% 15	14.96% 35	55.13% 129	20.51% 48	234	3.84
My readiness to engage in online learning	1.71% 4	7.26% 17	12.39% 29	55.13% 129	23.50% 55	234	3.91
The quality of “Study Skills and ICT Modules” to enable me to use e-learning platforms	3.59% 8	14.80% 33	14.35% 32	50.67% 113	16.59% 37	223	3.62

Source: Primary data (July, 2020)

Data in Table 2 indicates student respondents were satisfied with the quality of online teaching and learning activities. The quality of teaching and learning process was rated satisfactory with a weighted average equal to 3.84. For the respondents, this new way of studying offered learning and economic opportunities to students. Learning opportunities mentioned were scaling of self-responsibility and self-learning among students. Each participating student was obliged to make an effort to understand the learning materials shared with them by lecturers. This was also expressed by one interviewee who said that:

‘... but you see the newness is that I had enough time to work on my own, doing research. You see, sometimes I say I am working on my

own. You may say for example that when you are at university, you work with your classmates and share ideas. However, I had enough time to sit and do assignments without any help. Consequently, it gave me [an] opportunity to sit, work and then evaluate the status of my own learning ...' (Interviewee B: 182-186).

Self-learning and reflection are seen to be enhanced by online learning. This was in contrast with face-to-face teaching, which was perceived as a motivating factor for 'spoon-feeding' of learning. Additionally, online teaching and learning processes cut some costs relating to transport and accommodation for students who attended classes during the weekends and holiday sessions. However, respondents acknowledge the existence of distractions at home which would stop them concentrating on their learning more in comparison to the face-to-face context at the university.

Moreover, respondents showed high levels of satisfaction with the content and practical experience they had in the course of study skills and ICT. The course introduced them to the use of ICT tools in learning. The study skills unit, according to respondents, helped them to engage in self-learning and time management. However, some respondents showed a skill gap in the use of e-learning platforms. They, therefore, suggest integrating a section about modes of e-learning into study skills and ICT courses.

With regards to the readiness of students to continue with online learning, the respondents rated their readiness with an average of 3.91 to engage in online learning. This result, in one way or another, validates the idea that online teaching and learning did offer learning and socio-economic opportunities to students, which in turn became motivating factors. Findings from interviews show the benefits of e-learning. For example, students at private universities, where a large number of students study part time, that is, at weekends, during the holidays or in the evenings, normally need money for transport and living costs to attend university classes. In regard to eLearning during the COVID-19 time, students stated that by learning from

home, they benefitted in various ways including social and economic respects. If they study from home, they do not need extra money for transport and living costs, and more especially they have time to spend with their families.

It appears from interviews that students have different perceptions of online teaching and learning during university closures. Some found this a positive experience whereas others did not, and they reacted to the challenges which emerged in different ways. Some see the online system helpful as they continued learning from home without interruption. However, one participant indicated that he travels 3 km to reach somewhere with internet connectivity. Another student said that he had to climb either a tree or a hill to get good internet connection. Some students said that with remote learning, they are more actively involved in comparison to the previous model of face-to-face teaching. They see themselves playing a considerable role in the learning process. They have to conduct research and organise themselves for effective learning. On the other hand, some students saw this as challenging because of their low IT skills. It became difficult for them to cope with online learning because they did not have the IT skills required for this process. These students decided to stop following online classes and wait for the universities to reopen. Through the interviews, they explain that they found the experience very stressful. Some students developed a sense of responsibility for their learning, but on the other hand remote learning represented a real challenge for some students as it was a completely new situation. Furthermore, it demonstrated the fragility of the former face-to-face teaching and learning system, and especially the skill gap as far as IT is concerned. This questions the very nature of teaching, of the content and practice of assessments with regard to study and IT skills. But at the same time, online teaching has opened up opportunities in regard to ICT use. Students with basic ICT skills have found time to apply them.

Additionally, participants, especially those from education programmes, show that e-learning is a tool for enhancing competence-based teaching and learning. One interviewee said:

‘...the method is helpful and useful for teachers who are implementing CBC: it gives hints on how to keep students busy working. Not only working but also working hard for them to reach [their] own and learning objectives...’ (Interviewee A: 50-53).

3.5. Challenges faced in the use of online learning

The findings from both questionnaires and interviews revealed teaching- and learning-related challenges faced by students during the lockdown period. The respondents indicated poor internet connectivity (64.81%) and lack of internet data bundles (57.51%). It appears from interviews that limited internet bandwidth and high cost are one of the main problems faced by students, especially those coming from poor economic backgrounds, and / or living in deprived areas. In this regard, teachers make use of social media like WhatsApp in addition to institutional eLearning platforms, maximizing students’ participation. However, from what one of the students interviewed said it seems that some teachers are not yet conversant with the use of Moodle eLearning planning. This student said:

‘... this is because you realise that it is due to some lecturers, it is not only students, you realise a gap even on the side of lecturers who do not understand how to use those platforms and then escape to use such media [i.e. WhatsApp]. Therefore, all do not know how to use the online platforms especially Moodle. You see there some who invest a lot of energy to use it but others do not manage to put more efforts...’ (Interviewee B: 122-127).

Some students, especially those dwelling in remote areas, faced a complete lack of internet network as testified by 10.30%. In addition, the problem of internet connectivity hindered timely access to the information provided by

faculty members through the Moodle. The situation was worse for those who did not have appropriate devices (smart mobile phone or laptop) for e-learning as indicated by 15.02% per cent of respondents, and this was especially problematic for old fashioned smartphones. Other challenges mentioned in the interviews include lack of IT facilities for some students, and difficulties regarding checking students' participation, especially concerning assignments and attendance.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

This study has considered the experiences of students with regard to online teaching and learning during covid-19. Based on the findings, it was concluded that higher learning institutions organised crash training on e-learning platforms for students to ensure the continuity of learning during the covid-19 lock-down. However, the quality of training was rated to be neither good nor bad. Poor internet connectivity and lack of internet data bundles were the challenges facing students in that regard. Consequently, some students became discouraged from participating in online learning. The study revealed the existence of a skills gap in the use of IT tools in learning. Thus, the use of WhatsApp was preferred by students. It was considered to be easy to use and not bundle-consuming as compared with other platforms. Moodle was the official e-learning platform for universities, but it was considered not affordable by all students. Students in remote areas were more vulnerable in accessing Moodle or/and downloading large documents from WhatsApp. They frequently struggled due to complete lack of internet connectivity. The situation worsened to those who did not have appropriate devices (smart mobile phone or laptop) for e-learning.

Despite the challenges faced by students, the introduction of e-learning modes of study created learning and socio-economic opportunities. Due to sharing of learning materials and structural exercises, students developed a sense of responsibility for their learning, intensive use of ICT tools and time management skills. E-learning discouraged a spoon-feeding

learning system, and each student was conditioned to engage in self-learning and reflection on topics and assignments provided. Faculty members played the role of learning facilitators. E-learning cut some costs related to transport and accommodation though investment had to be made in internet access. Furthermore, students who are heads of households were able to organise their learning so that they could also fulfil their family responsibilities. Generally, the findings revealed high student satisfaction with the quality of the online teaching and learning process they went through.

The use of e-learning was therefore commended by respondents after the lockdown. Universities should make the use of e-learning platforms an integral part of study skills and ICT courses / modules to ensure that every student is equipped with knowledge and skills to use a variety of platforms. Universities through public and private partnership should explore possibilities to provide students with IT tools enabling them to use different e-learning platforms. Higher learning institutions should invest in IT infrastructures and regularly train faculty members.

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Deepening International Collaboration in a Post-Covid-19 Era for Youth and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract: *In humanitarian emergencies, education is usually hard hit, with countries faced with the difficult decisions of how to respond and recover from such crisis. Consideration for resources towards education might not always take priority. More vulnerable in such humanitarian emergencies are low-income African countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the education of the world's children and youths, from pre-primary to university. The disruption caused by this pandemic to communities and survivors alike is linked to both physical and emotional damage. Major concerns pertain to the inequity gap as it concerns families with low educational background and limited physical resources to support distance learning. Furthermore, the challenge, and fear, is that youths could fall through the cracks and disappear from the schooling systems. The pandemic continues to present challenges to even consider some form of restriction lifting in schools for most countries in Africa.*

Key words: *Education, Youth, Health crisis, SDGs, international collaboration, sub-Saharan Africa.*

This paper explores the opportunity for developed countries to deepen collaboration with the African continent on youth and education in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. Despite frustrations faced in these unprecedented times, it recognises the potential to turn challenges into opportunities for improving education systems through calling on and enhancing international cooperation and solidarity. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 – ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ - is a priority area for the members of the United Nations General Assembly. Likewise, ‘Investing in youth for accelerated inclusive growth and sustainable development’ was the driving theme of the African Union-EU Summit in 2017. The key objective was to invest in the continent’s young population and in future generations as a

prerequisite for building a sustainable future for African countries. There is no time like now to deepen policy dialogue on efforts to reform higher education in Africa, enhance collaboration and reaffirm the commitment of the EU and the AU.

Introduction

The unprecedented scale of the COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects on humanity. The crisis has put enormous pressure on countries around the world on how best to protect their population from the virus. Developed countries with advanced health systems and stronger economies in the past few months had struggled to curtail the spread of the virus and a few countries like Spain and Italy became overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis¹. Worrisome was the impact on low-income countries that met the crises from a weak position with limited resources to mitigate against the social and economic disruption caused by the crisis².

When the virus first hit the African continent, it brought along a myriad of challenges and countries had to figure out how to resolve the resultant economic consequences³. Following standard epidemiological advice, various restrictive measures were introduced by some governments in the continent to curb the spread of the virus as with the rest of the world⁴. For instance, in Nigeria, there were swift actions taken to slow down the spread of coronavirus in Africa's most populous country. The country's government initiated the closure of its airspace and airports, and also issued a lockdown

¹ Sara Belligoni, "5 reasons the coronavirus hit Italy so hard," *The Conversation*, March 26, 2020, <<https://theconversation.com/5-reasons-the-coronavirus-hit-italy-so-hard-134636>> (accessed 2 August 2020).

² Josephine Moulds, "How the threat of COVID-19 is affecting people across Africa," World Economic Forum, May 6, 2020, <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/africa-covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-food-water-perc>> (accessed 20 July 2020).

³ Niall McCarthy, "COVID-19's Staggering Impact on Global Education," *Statista 2020*, <<https://www.statista.com/chart/21224/learners-impacted-by-national-school-closures/>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

⁴ Josephine Moulds, "How the threat of COVID-19 is affecting people across Africa."

order in three of its populous states, Lagos, Abuja and Ogun. It has been widely reported that the lockdown restrictions were hitting the most vulnerable on the African continent the hardest, indicating some negative impacts and highlighting a vast array of issues impacting on low-income countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, about 23 million people are likely to go into extreme poverty due to the economic recession caused by the pandemic⁵. Generally, these African countries were already struggling with existing socio-economic vulnerabilities that included fragile health systems, huge infrastructure gaps, weak governance systems, poverty, increasing food insecurity and inequality challenges⁶.

One of the immediate negative impacts has been food insecurity, civil unrest against shortages of food and basic necessities has occurred in South Africa, Malawi, and Nigeria⁷. Parents have faced prolonged challenges finding adequate food for their children, especially, in the absence of school meals due to the temporarily closure of educational institutions as part of restriction measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Schools serve as the largest national childcare scheme in countries around the world; more so, attendance at schools provides groups of children from low-income and food insecure families with the much-needed social protection assistance and social stability. It goes without saying that school programmes that provide food rations and other support incentives act as

⁵ Daniel Gerszon Mahler, Christoph Lakner, R. Andres Castaneda Aguilar and Haoyu Wu, "The impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on global poverty: Why Sub-Saharan Africa might be the region hardest hit," *World Bank Blogs*, April 20, 2020, <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/impact-covid-19-coronavirus-global-poverty-why-sub-saharan-africa-might-be-region-hardest>> (accessed 02 August 2020).

⁶ Chukwuka Onyekwena, "The Impact of Covid-19 on Africa's Pre-Existing Vulnerabilities," The Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa, June 18, 2020, <<http://cseaafrica.org/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-africas-pre-existing-vulnerabilities/>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

⁷ Jean-Marc Bernard, Brahim Sangafowa Coulibaly and Rebecca Winthrop, "Education is crucial to Africa's COVID-19 response," Global Partnership for Education, June 4, 2020, <<https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/education-is-crucial-to-africas-covid-19-response/>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

powerful vehicles for delivering social and economic protection to families with limited resources.

In April 2020, about 1.6 billion students globally, that is approximately 91.3% of the world's students in 194 countries, were affected by school closures. Currently, countries like Denmark, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Norway and South Korea have reopened schools. There are still about 1.06 billion students, 60.5% of the world's students in 105 countries affected by school closures⁸. These figures refer to students enrolled at pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary schools and at tertiary levels of education. 63 million primary and secondary teachers have also been affected by school closures⁹.

This paper discusses and analyses the impact of the health crisis on children and youth and education in the sub-Saharan region of Africa. The paper comes from the perspective that there is an opportunity for developed countries; specifically, European countries to deepen collaboration with the African continent on youth and education in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. The paper refers to key goals and declarations stipulated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹⁰; specifically SDG 4 – 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and in the European Union and African Union (EU-AU) 2017 Summit themed – 'Investing in youth for accelerated inclusive growth and sustainable development'¹¹. 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) were set in 2015 by members of the United Nations General Assembly,

⁸ UNESCO, "Covid-19 impact on education," Global Education Coalition, August 4, 2020, <<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>> (accessed 4 August 2020).

⁹ Niall McCarthy, "COVID-19's Staggering Impact on Global Education."

¹⁰ United Nations, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," Sustainable Development Goals, September 25, 2015, <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>> (accessed 4 August 2020).

¹¹ African Union and European Union, "Investing in Youth for Accelerated Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development," Submit Declaration, November 30, 2017, <<https://au.int/en/documents/20171130/investing-youth-accelerated-inclusive-growth-and-sustainable-development>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

these SDGs were designed to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, and it is the aim to achieve them by the year 2030. The EU-AU 2017 submit declarations had a recommitment to invest in youth as a prerequisite for building a sustainable future. Priority areas in the declaration are to provide the youth with the skills and opportunities that they need through the deployment of smart and targeted investments. The paper discusses some of the evolving challenges that necessitate the reinforcement of Africa's relationship with the European Union (EU) through deepened international collaboration and solidarity as part of the global United Nations efforts in education.

Challenging times for education in sub-Saharan Africa

Africa is considered demographically as the world's youngest continent. In sub-Saharan Africa for instance, 43% of the population are reported to be younger than 15 years old and 3% are 65 years or older. In the European Union, 17% of the population are considered younger than 15 and 20% are 65 years or older¹². 10 to 12 million youths enter into the workforce each year and it is predicted that by 2030, one-fifth of the global labour force which is approximately one-third of the global youth labour force will come from Africa¹³. Education is a central feature to childhood and an important driver in human capital investment. While school closures was a logical solution in enforcing social distancing rules within communities in sub-Saharan Africa, the impact of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has opened up some disparities in education in low-income countries¹⁴. The immediate response to education provision has been to deploy nationwide remote learning tools such as TV and the internet. In some communities however, there are fewer opportunities for learning at home and being out of school

¹² Josephine Moulds, "How the threat of COVID-19 is affecting people across Africa."

¹³ Chido Munyati, "COVID-19 is likely to increase youth unemployment in Africa, this is how business can mitigate the damage," World Economic Forum, June 6, 2020, <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/covid-19-is-likely-to-increase-youth-unemployment-in-africa-this-is-how-business-can-mitigate-the-damage>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

¹⁴ Jean-Marc Bernard et al., "Education is crucial to Africa's COVID-19 response."

in some cases presents economic burdens for parents due to challenges posed in finding prolonged childcare¹⁵. It goes without saying that, certain groups of children and youths in sub-Saharan Africa countries are likely to suffer most from the economic impact of limited access to education and lost learning¹⁶. A report indicated that sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of education exclusion with over one-fifth of children between the ages of about 6 and 11 out of school and one-third of the youth population between the ages of about 12 and 14 are out of school. It also indicated that nearly 60% of the youth population between the ages of about 15 and 17 are out of school¹⁷.

The long school closures present a worrying picture in terms of the negative impact on the learning of students, the extent remains difficult to say, but it is not without certain consequences for students. Such consequences can be attributed to loss of human capital from losing out on future opportunities and economic benefits that can be suffered by students who receive far less education, most especially students from the poorest and most vulnerable populations. Sub-Saharan Africa already significantly lags behind other continents in human capital development due to the negative impact of the shortfall in health and education. It has been suggested that the loss of learning during the World War II had negative impacts on the lives of

¹⁵ Kaliope Azzi-Huck and Tigran Shmis, "Managing the impact of COVID-19 on education systems around the world: How countries are preparing, coping, and planning for recovery," Education for Global Development, March 18, 2020, <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/managing-impact-covid-19-education-systems-around-world-how-countries-are-preparing>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

¹⁶ George Psacharopoulos, Harry Patrinos, Victoria Collis and Emiliana Vegas, "The COVID-19 cost of school closures," Education Plus Development, April 29, 2020, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/04/29/the-covid-19-cost-of-school-closures/>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

¹⁷ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, "Education in Africa," Education & Literacy, November, 2016, <<http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/education-africa>> (accessed 20 July 2020).

students over 40 years later¹⁸. In essence, long-term disruption in education provision will harm sub-Saharan Africa's future productivity and economic competitiveness. Further decline in health and education would lead to widened productivity gaps between workers in Africa and in EU countries as well as having negative impact on Africa's long-term economic competitiveness. On the other hand, if the region achieves the highest health and education scores the GDP per worker will increase by 250%¹⁹.

Sub-sections 4.1 - 4.4 of the SDG 4 state the following; *4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education; 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university; 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship*²⁰.

The finance of education depends majorly on parents in countries sub-Saharan Africa has compared to wealthier EU countries. Considering the on-going restrictive measures, not all parents would be able to send their children back to school because of the impact the pandemic has had on their livelihood. Increase in school drop-outs are more likely to happen as family finances dwindle leaving children at risks of child labour, family violence, trafficking, forced marriage and exploitation. The challenge faced in most countries sub-Saharan Africa is ensuring that more children do not fall between the cracks.

¹⁸ Andrea Ichino and Rudolf Winter-Ebmer, "The Long-Run Educational Cost of World War II," *Journal of Labour Economics* 22, no. 1 (January 2004): 57-87, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/380403>>.

¹⁹ Jean-Marc Bernard et al., "Education is crucial to Africa's COVID-19 response."

²⁰ United Nations, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."

Crisis impact on vulnerable children and youths in sub-Saharan Africa

Education was hit hard by the Ebola epidemic during the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa. This was a humanitarian emergency that affected primarily the West Africa countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Adults, children and youths were confined at home with social distancing rules and other required behavioural changes. Schools were closed for up to nine months leaving five million children out of schools²¹. These three worst hit countries already had large out-of-school populations with only about 61% of children in Guinea completing primary school, 72% in Sierra Leone and 65% in Liberia²². After the Ebola outbreaks a lot of students never went back to school.

There are fears that during this COVID-19 pandemic many more children and youths will fall through the cracks, drop out of the school systems completely and are at a higher risk of becoming victims of the crisis. This is more worrying for female children who are further exposed to psychosocial and physical risks and are in time of crisis twice likely to drop out of school. Exclusion rate at primary school age for girls is 23% compared to 19% for boys and at secondary school age 36% compared to 32% for boys. More generally, across sub-Saharan 9 million girls between the ages of about 6 and 11 will never go to school, compared to 6 million boys²³. In Sierra Leone, during the Ebola epidemic, school closure led to an increase in sexual assaults and teenage pregnancies, unfortunately when schools reopened

²¹ Rebecca Winthrop, "COVID-19 and school closures: What can countries learn from past emergencies?"

²² Ewan Watt, "From Ebola to coronavirus: education must not be forgotten in a health crisis," *Theirworld*, April 2, 2020, <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/ebola-coronavirus-education-must-not-be-forgotten-health-crisis>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

²³ Silvia Montoya, "Missing From School: The Education Challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa," *UIS Blog*, July 20, 2016, <<http://uis.unesco.org/en/blog/missing-school-education-challenge-sub-saharan-africa>> (accessed 02 August 2020).

pregnant girls were not let back to their studies²⁴. The country's government signalled that allowing pregnant girls continue their studies was bad for their health and that it would encourage teenage pregnancy. It has taken about five years of campaigning by education and human rights activists for the government to overturn the ban²⁵. In recent times, girls' education in Africa has become a major priority, due to the great barriers to education and other gender-based vulnerabilities they face. The EU-AU 2017 submit acknowledges the importance of youth, especially girls and young women, and those living in fragile environments, to have access to the knowledge and skills that are necessary to enable them to be active citizens in their countries. So also a recommitment to increase efforts in both urban and rural areas to ensure universal, inclusive, and equitable access to quality education at all levels, from pre-school to higher education, for all children and youth, especially girls²⁶. This is coming on the back of the implementation of the AU roadmap on harnessing the demographic dividend through investment in youth.

Vulnerable, other marginalised children and youth groups that are often forgotten and most at risk during this crisis period are displaced and migrant children. It is very easy for this vulnerable group to fall through the crack because national policies may not always include this group in their national responses to crisis. Children and youth with disabilities and those affected by trauma or mental health issues are other groups of vulnerable young

²⁴ Amnesty International, "Sierra Leone: Continued pregnancy ban in schools and failure to protect rights is threatening teenage girls' futures," Sierra Leone: Right to Education, November 8, 2016, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/11/sierra-leone-continued-pregnancy-ban-in-schools-and-failure-to-protect-rights-is-threatening-teenage-girls-futures/>> (accessed 2 August 2020).

²⁵ Ewan Watt, "From Ebola to coronavirus: education must not be forgotten in a health crisis," Theirworld, April 2, 2020, <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/ebola-coronavirus-education-must-not-be-forgotten-health-crisis>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

²⁶ African Union and European Union, "Investing in Youth for Accelerated Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development," Submit Declaration, November 30, 2017, <<https://au.int/en/documents/20171130/investing-youth-accelerated-inclusive-growth-and-sustainable-development>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

people. For these two groups, schools and learning centres are places in communities that act as support systems for their wellbeing and development. When considering SDG 4, sub-section 4.5. *By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations*²⁷. The extent of government's continuous support of educational activities during the pandemic has a direct implication for the extent of learning loss for students. It should be noted that there is the risk of regression for children classified as the most vulnerable who do not have access to digital schools and virtual platforms where students can interact with their teachers²⁸. Widely accessible mediums like radio and television centred on mass education will be difficult to target children that are not learning under normal school settings²⁹.

The case for deepened international collaboration in sub-Sahara Africa education

Due to the extent of economic contraction caused by the unprecedented crisis, many governments in the region are in a difficult position on how to expend their resources to ensure education is not left out of the on-going response and recovery strategies. Revenues are dwindling and education budgets are being cut in order to put public health, social protection and economic stimulus ahead in response to the pandemic. During the 2008 financial crisis, governments were able to maintain education budgets by issuing debt, however, sub-Sahara's current public-debt burdens are already huge, and borrowing conditions are not quite favourable³⁰. As governments

²⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁸ Jean-Marc Bernard et al., "Education is crucial to Africa's COVID-19 response."

²⁹ Adedeji Adeniran, "Ensuring learning continuity for every African child in the time of COVID-19," Education Plus Development, June 4, 2020, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/06/04/ensuring-learning-continuity-for-every-african-child-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

³⁰ Jean-Marc Bernard et al., "Education is crucial to Africa's COVID-19 response."

plan their next policy move, it is pertinent to recognise that education is a paramount tool in securing future opportunities and in enhancing economic recovery initiatives³¹. The sacrifice being made by students as a result of learning loss should be taken into great consideration because ignoring continuity in education provision would have future consequential impacts on the region's productivity and competitiveness.

The move of school systems from traditional approach to learning, to remote technology-based learning is perceived as a welcome development. In fact, about 25% of countries in Africa are providing online and broadcast learning opportunities³². The approach supports students learning, allowing them to develop new skills and computer literacy. On the other hand, such move to remote learning has excluded the less-privileged learners from accessing online resources because not many schools have in place contingency plans to deal with the large-scale crisis that has led to many months of school closures. In addition, not many families can afford the internet charges or cost of equipment that are needed for remote learning³³. According to figures released from UNESCO, about 89% of students in sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to home computers and 82% have limited access to the internet³⁴. In other words, online classes serve only a limited number of the student population. Inadequate investment in the provision of education widens the inequality gap. The inequality issue that stems from this situation is that a learning gap is created for students who cannot access digital tools and these students will

³¹ Edwin Ikhuoria, "South Africa: Higher Education Budgets Key to Securing Africa's Future after COVID-19," AllAfrica, June 1, 2020, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202006010459.html> (accessed 09 July 2020).

³² Jean-Marc Bernard et al., "Education is crucial to Africa's COVID-19 response."

³³ Wycliffe Osabwa, "How students in Africa are handling the coronavirus outbreak," Times Higher Education, April 16, 2020 <<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/blogs/how-students-africa-are-handling-coronavirus-outbreak>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

³⁴ UNESCO, "Startling digital divides in distance learning emerge," Global Education Coalition, April 21, 2020, <<https://en.unesco.org/news/startling-digital-divides-distance-learning-emerge>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

for long after the pandemic is over struggle to catch up with their peers³⁵. 87% of children in sub-Saharan Africa already have limited skills to function in a dynamic labour market³⁶.

The many challenges faced by the education sector as a result of poor governance across the continent left most schools underprepared to survive migrating to remote learning³⁷ ³⁸. Worsening this problem is the limited technological infrastructure, erratic electricity supply and access to qualified teachers who can offer online learning³⁹. It is evident that there is a critical gap in providing continuous quality education remotely in Africa's education sector that would support not only learning, but also help maintain some normality during the crisis for the psychosocial well-being of both students and teachers⁴⁰. A multi-stakeholder support is necessary to mobilise resources and to finance the education gap⁴¹. As part of the EU-AU 2017

³⁵ Amorighoye, Toritseju, "COVID-19 has exposed the education divide in Nigeria. This is how we can close it," The World Economic Forum COVID Action Platform, June 2, 2020, <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/education-nigeria-covid19-digital-divide/>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

³⁶ Oley Dibba-Wadda, Adea and Stefano De Cupis, "After COVID-19, education in Africa will not be the same," Global Partnership for Education, June 16, 2020, <<https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/after-covid-19-education-africa-will-not-be-same>> (accessed 4 August 2020).

³⁷ Sampson Kofi Adotey, "What will higher education in Africa look like after COVID-19?" World Economic Forum, June 5, 2020, <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/higher-education-africa-covid19-coronavirus-digital-online/>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

³⁸ Wycliffe Osabwa, "How students in Africa are handling the coronavirus outbreak," Times Higher Education, April 16, 2020 <<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/blogs/how-students-africa-are-handling-coronavirus-outbreak>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

³⁹ Dube Bekithemba, "Rural Online Learning in the Context of COVID-19 in South Africa: Evoking an Inclusive Education Approach. Multidisciplinary," *Journal of Educational Research* 10, no. 2 (May 2020): 135-157, doi: 10.4471/remie.2020.5607 (accessed 09 July 2020).

⁴⁰ Allison Anderson, "COVID-19 outbreak highlights critical gaps in school emergency preparedness," Education Plus Development, March 11, 2020, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/03/11/covid-19-outbreak-highlights-critical-gaps-in-school-emergency-preparedness/>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

⁴¹ Adedeji Adeniran, "Ensuring learning continuity for every African child in the time of COVID-19," Education Plus Development, June 4, 2020, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/>

Summit Declaration, a pledge was made to deepen collaboration and exchange in education, technology development, knowledge, skills, research and in development to respond effectively to the specific needs of the EU and AU economies and to launch innovative actions in the fields of Scientific, Technical and Vocational Education and Training and, youth employment and entrepreneurship, aimed at increasing the employability of young people⁴². This pledge was made with the recognition that the fourth industrial revolution and its consequences impact on economies, including unlocking the potential of the digital economy for Africa and Europe in the creation of jobs, skills and economic development for the youth.

A central principle in post Covid-19 crisis recovery is to take advantage of the current situation to rebuild better and encourage children to go back to school⁴³. Education systems in sub-Sahara Africa can use this crisis as an opportunity to rethink some of their practices and to create innovative solutions for the transformation of their educational system. There is no better time than now to follow through on the pledge to mobilise financial and technical resources to support the joint priority projects; specifically, Joint Strategic Priority Area One by using appropriately integrated instruments and mechanisms to invest in people through education, science, and technology and skills development. There are an increasing number of global partnerships that have been formed to provide guidance and support as countries move towards some form of remote learning⁴⁴. Strategy tools that enable schools develop effective responses at the onset of a crisis are heavily influenced by the level of preparedness and

education-plus-development/2020/06/04/ensuring-learning-continuity-for-every-african-child-in-the-time-of-covid-19/> (accessed 11 July 2020).

⁴² United Nations, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."

⁴³ Rebecca Winthrop, "COVID-19 and school closures: What can countries learn from past emergencies?"

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

contingency planning⁴⁵. For instance, Malawi's education ministry long before the pandemic has been working with civil-society organisations to successfully use solar-powered offline tablets to deliver effective literacy and numeracy instruction⁴⁶. Strategies and frameworks advocating this approach has been published by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank and Department for International Development (DFID)⁴⁷. These strategies encourage an inclusive learning approach during emergency education. More so, collaborative responses that utilise locally available infrastructure and services should also be encouraged.

Towards building resilient sub-Sahara African education systems

In education emergency responses, collaboration is paramount towards joint work in support of governments. A diverse set of actors that have built experience from previous outbreaks and understands the options available is required to proffer innovative education solutions in crisis situations⁴⁸. Two main drivers of such collaboration are the budgetary challenges that necessitate the mobilisation of funding from international collaboration and the transfer of efficiencies from such international collaboration⁴⁹. This is

⁴⁵ Allison Anderson, "COVID-19 outbreak highlights critical gaps in school emergency preparedness."

⁴⁶ Paula J. Hubber, Laura A. Outhwaite, Antonie Chigeda, Simon McGrath, Jeremy Hodgen and Nicola J. Pitchford, "Should Touch Screen Tablets Be Used to Improve Educational Outcomes in Primary School Children in Developing Countries?" *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, no. 839 (June 2016): 1-4, <<https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00839>>.

⁴⁷ Adesuwa Ifedi, "These Nigerian schools are teaching more in a term than they used to in a year. Here's how," World Economic Forum, June 24, 2019, <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/06/nigeria-edo-school-education-reform>> (accessed 09 July 2020).

⁴⁸ Kaliope Azzi-Huck and Tigran Shmis. "Managing the impact of COVID-19 on education systems around the world."

⁴⁹ Osikhuemhe Okwilagwe, "Towards Rethinking Public Private Partnership Implementation: Insights from the Nigerian Context," in: *The Emerald Handbook of Public-Private Partnerships in Developing and Emerging Economies: Perspectives on Public Policy, Entrepreneurship and Poverty*, ed. Leitão, J., Sarmento, S. M. and Aleluia, J., 465-487 (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2017).

achieved by gaining access to their specialised capabilities and innovative approaches. These diverse actors usually operate through international collaboration; they work keenly with national governments and the private sector in areas of education and information communication technology (ICT) to develop and finance various innovative solutions for the continuity of education and to build capacity to respond to any future crises. The Education Commission's learning generation report estimated that spending on education would rise steadily in low and middle-income countries from \$1.25 trillion per year to nearly \$3 trillion between 2015 and 2030⁵⁰. International collaboration helps to close the funding gap and scale up targeted efforts. Such education finance is raised through a number of collaborative means that include funds from indigenous government's domestic resources, foreign aid and private and philanthropic aid. Generally, governments in low-income countries spend less than \$200 on education per school-age child; this is compared to wealthier countries that spend over \$12,000 on education per school-age child^{51 52}. As international agencies deploy their in-built agility and emergency response design to assist local bodies, their efforts should support innovative and cost-effective approaches.

⁵⁰ Education Commission, *Transforming the Education Workforce: Learning Teams for a Learning Generation*, New York: Education Commission, 2019, 1-170, <<https://educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Transforming-the-Education-Workforce-Executive-Summary.pdf>>.

⁵¹ Christopher J. Thomas, "The case for more international cooperation in education," *Education Plus Development*, June 2, 2020, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/06/02/the-case-for-more-international-cooperation-in-education/>> (accessed 4 August 2020).

⁵² World Bank, "Government expenditure on education, total (% of government expenditure) - Low income, High income, Lower middle income, Upper middle income," UNESCO Institute for Statistics, August 4 2020, <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GB.ZS?locations=XM-XD-XN-XT>> (accessed 4 August 2020).

In consideration of SDG 4 sub-sections 4.6 – 4.7⁵³: 4.6; *By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy*; 4.7: *By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development*; 4.a *Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all*; 4.b *By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries*; 4.c *By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.*

In line with the SDG 4⁵⁴, sub-section 4.1: *By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes*, extensive consultations during this crisis, with national governments, local actors and international response teams are paramount to assess and determine the entire educational needs of children and youth. International collaboration assisted many countries to achieve basic education in the 1990s and

⁵³ United Nations, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

⁵⁴ Ibid.

2000s⁵⁵. Much more of such collaboration is needed in sub-Saharan Africa countries to enhance their secondary and higher education. It should be noted that countries that moved up the World Bank's income group classification in the last 30 years educated their population at secondary and at higher levels⁵⁶.

In the EU-AU 2017 submit, a declaration was also made to commit to stronger mutual engagement and to a more coordinated approach to ensure effective multilateralism, including through stronger AU-EU collaboration at the UN and other international institutions and to also commit to strengthen AU-EU-UN trilateral cooperation. This requires in-depth consideration so as to ensure holistic approaches that cover child protection, quality of learning, gender equality, hygiene education and training of teachers⁵⁷. The various international agencies that coordinate with bodies like the UN to support responses at country levels comply with the UN's guidance to crisis response by determining critical areas for risk-assessments, priorities and directives. International collaborative responses that encourage increase access to learning and opportunities for girls as well as the prevention of barriers like the marginalisation in the home and inequitable distribution of learning resources should be prioritised, so also responses that provides structure and support for mental health issues. To provide quality education to children and youth beyond the pandemic, proposed interventions by the global education community need to take into consideration that the circumstances of each country are different, and

⁵⁵ Christopher J. Thomas, "The case for more international cooperation in education," Education Plus Development, June 2, 2020, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/06/02/the-case-for-more-international-cooperation-in-education/>> (accessed 4 August 2020).

⁵⁶ The World Bank, "World Bank Country and Lending Groups," Country Classification, August 4 2020, <<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>> (accessed 4 August 2020).

⁵⁷ African Union and European Union, "Investing in Youth for Accelerated Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development," Submit Declaration, November 30, 2017, <<https://au.int/en/documents/20171130/investing-youth-accelerated-inclusive-growth-and-sustainable-development>> (accessed 11 July 2020).

one policy measure imposed by donor and aid agencies would not work in every context. Imperatively, acknowledgment of local actors such as international bodies, educational administrators and policy makers in each context would support inclusiveness, build trust and confidence. Localised information, support and response are paramount to achieving any form of successful outcomes. The current situation is by all means challenging, but lessons must be learnt from countries that showed great resilience in past crises, building on the experience of this will generate quick response (Ebola, SARS)⁵⁸. This potentially provides the opportunity to improve education systems.

Teachers are at the centre of the learning process; a modern and effective education workforce can keep pace and respond to the shift in world's demographic and evolving curricula. Teacher quality is a very important determinant of learning outcomes at any school level. They should be recognised as a workforce of change makers. The transitioning period to the reopening of schools provides the opportunity to build a motivated and qualified teaching force during and after the pandemic. To meet SDG 4, an estimated 69 million teachers must be recruited globally by 2030, with over 76% of these in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia⁵⁹. In some of the poorest countries, the required increase in teachers is equal to at least half of the projected number of tertiary education graduates, given low secondary completion rates (less than 25% in Sub-Saharan Africa⁶⁰).

Continuity of salary in terms of the welfare of teachers and job security is paramount. Collaborative responses and decision-making processes to

⁵⁸ Kaliope Azzi-Huck and Tigran Shmis, "Managing the impact of COVID-19 on education systems around the world."

⁵⁹ Education Commission, *Transforming the Education Workforce: Learning Teams for a Learning Generation*, New York: Education Commission, 2019, 1-170, <<https://educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Transforming-the-Education-Workforce-Executive-Summary.pdf>>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

achieve should not lead to lengthy bureaucratic processes in obtaining approvals for the deployment of much needed fund⁶¹.

In conclusion, collaborative responses should channel creative thinking on how to deliver education differently, especially in terms of time intensiveness, amount of input and accessibility. If well implemented, it supports the mental health of children and youths, giving them a sense of stability and supporting them as they develop strategies for coping in the new normal amid rapid changes. While sub-Saharan African countries have started to gradually lift lockdown restrictions, life as we know it would not be as normal as it was before the pandemic. In the current, recovery mode, governments' approaches to implementing educational policies must be forward thinking in regaining lost time. The continuity of appropriate educational activities in addition to the public health safety messages is one of the broadest reaching activities pertinent in supporting children and youth through the process of adjusting to their changing external environment. Education has always played an important role in past public-health campaigns and in recent times, in reiterating lifesaving COVID-19 health messages, such as keeping social distance, temperature checks, wearing facemasks, handwashing and sanitising and sanitation practices. Schools can, therefore, serve as important front-line sites for public health interventions and could empower children with much needed knowledge that would translate into changing the behaviours of their families. Furthermore, these public health measures would serve to allay the fears of parents for when decisions are made for safe reopening of schools.

⁶¹ Osikhuemhe Okwilagwe, "Towards Rethinking Public Private Partnership Implementation: Insights from the Nigerian Context," in: *The Emerald Handbook of Public-Private Partnerships in Developing and Emerging Economies: Perspectives on Public Policy, Entrepreneurship and Poverty*, ed. Leitão, J., Sarmiento, S. M. and Aleluia, J., 465-487 (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2017).

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