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Editorial

This issue of the *Bulletin* comes out at a time when Africa's approach to foreign relations in an increasingly multipolar world is under scrutiny.

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The Russia–Ukraine war, nearing its fourth month, has gripped the attention of the world. The future is, as a consequence, being discussed in terms of the outcome of the war and how this outcome will shape it. Western countries have done their best, through the Western media, to propagate a narrative of 'good' versus 'evil' about the war. This has been done in an attempt to mobilise the rest of the world to take sides and perceive the war through the lens of Euro-American hegemony. But the efforts at mobilisation have not been very successful. For Africa, in particular, the responses have been divided, with many countries voting in favour of Ukraine but certainly not buying the overall Western propaganda in which criticism of Russia is cast. Thus, the February vote at the UN General Assembly saw twenty-eight African countries voting in favour of the resolution to condemn the Russian invasion, but seventeen abstaining and one, Eritrea, voting in favour of Russia. It has not been lost to observers that some African countries did not take an outright position during the UN vote. A review of those who abstained shows that they are predominantly countries that Russia supported during the Cold War and in their wars of independence from white settler regimes and apartheid.[1]

Efforts to use global organs of governance such as the UN to tilt the war propaganda in favour of the West have instead exposed a new multipolar reality in which China and India are key players. The high-voltage rhetoric that the US government and Western media unleashed has certainly not drawn the expected support from numerous capitals in Africa, Asia and the Middle East; with China and India, and other formerly less consequential players like Turkey and Pakistan, assuming crucial roles in challenging the US hold on an eroding unipolarity. Where old actors like the United Kingdom, Germany and France almost unilaterally would have defined the nature of this engagement, most of these ageing former imperial nations have been reduced to repeating tired Cold War slogans, such as 'evil empire' and new ones like 'oligarchs', which have doubtful explanatory power in the context they are used.

The Russia–Ukraine conflict, however, has the potential to become even more catastrophic, with enormous consequences for the world in general and Africa in particular. This possibility remains alive precisely because of the nuclear threat that sits at the heart of recent exchanges in the diplomatic negotiations. Already, the global impact of the war on supply chains is adverse. The increase in prices of oil and gas and the effect on commodity prices across the world has caused outrage. Further, the resulting scarcity of some foodstuffs that Russia and Ukraine supply to the world is a notable global consequence of the war. This is true especially for basic foods, like wheat, the supply chain of which is dominated by the two countries. For Africa, while the disruption of oil markets has triggered commodity price increases, including the cost of food, the expectation is that the crisis leads to internal soul-searching in Africa, questioning why Africa should be dependent on food imports given its abundance of arable land.

But there are specific aspects of the Russia–Ukraine tussle that stubbornly remain a European affair. The political rhetoric aside, the expansion of NATO into former Soviet states set the stage for this eventuality. The origins of the war are therefore internal to European and North American geopolitics, which have been under stress since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The reluctance of both sides to fully observe the agreements reached with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the persisting presence of NATO — a military alliance formed to deter the Soviet Union — provide an explanation for the growing tensions that have resulted in the current war.

More consequential from the war will be the impact on the politics of economic and infrastructural interdependence in Europe, where Russia is a key player. Many western European countries rely on Russia for oil and gas. Russia is the third-largest oil-producing country in the world. Russia has played the gas card to good effect and continues to hold this as a major hand in the unfolding war. But perhaps even more consequential is the thinly veiled warning about nuclear missiles as a potential factor in the war. This threat has acted as a deterrent to NATO countries who prodded Ukraine into this situation in the first place but prevaricated from active military engagement in the war. While NATO has warned and threatened Russia, beyond a plethora of sanctions it has not actively participated in the war in defence of Ukraine. The inability or unwillingness to be active combatants in the war has left Western sanctions the only weapon of choice.

Sanctions have their place in war. But the effectiveness of sanctions, as the Russian experience seems to suggest, depends on the country in question. Ultimately, power asymmetries need to be steep enough for the panoply of sanctions to be crippling to the point of deterring the atrocities we have witnessed in Ukraine. Of course, the jury is still out on what the long-term consequences of the sanctions will be for Russia. But in the immediate term, the projection that a raft of sanctions would cripple Russia and deter it from continuing to inflict damage on Ukraine is not borne out. The growing strength of the ruble, in a context of what was meant as debilitating sanctions, raises valid questions about the effectiveness of sanctions.

The implication of the war in Ukraine for Africa is a lot more immediate for the African social science community. The critical question to ask is not which side of the Russia–Ukraine divide Africa supports. Rather we should inquire into what opportunity and spaces the war provides for Africa to disentangle itself from externally mediated development paths that have failed to actualise Africa's development ambitions. The war in Ukraine represents a geopolitical milestone that will reshape, in some ways, the nature of the relationships between different countries. It comes at a point when the new scramble for Africa is intensifying. This scramble has pawned Africa on a chessboard on which

North America and Western Europe play against new actors in Africa like China, Russia and India. That a new scramble is ongoing is evident in recent moves from Europe — for instance, in the French president instituting a process of 'refoundation' of relations between France and Africa.[2] The Germans, in similar fashion, took the lead in pushing for building a Marshall Plan with Africa from 2017, which was meant to recentre Europe in Africa's development narrative.[3] Of course, it is not lost to observers that in October 2019 Russia successfully convened the first African summit in Sochi.[4]

These *refoundation* initiatives are not free of the national interests of the sponsoring country. In fact, at the heart of the initiative is a strategy to advance European interests even though they are presented in the language of development cooperation that comes embellished with the vocabulary of mutuality, inclusivity and partnership, just as other powers like the USA, Canada, Russia and China have, to a greater or lesser extent, used development cooperation to channel and advance their interests in Africa. In a context where the Ukraine war is forcing a geopolitical rethink, the opportunity and space is presently available for Africa to strategise about its interest in the next phase.

Four areas of such rethinking and restrategising are worth the attention of African academics and researchers. The first area refers to the role of trade in enhancing regional integration. The second is agriculture and food security. The third concerns the need for internal mechanisms for peace and security. Lastly, is the area of higher education, science and technology.

The coming to force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in May 2019 created the capacity to galvanise regional economic communities to realise a pan-African trade area. AfCFTA comes with workable distribution mechanisms and economies of scale, if it is backed by the supportive political will. Forty-one of the continent's fifty-four countries have ratified the agreement, which suggests there is strong political will. Rather than lamenting wheat shortages resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war, Africa should expend its energies examining how to fully implement the agreement and utilise it to improve food distribution on the continent. If Ethiopian Airlines (ET) figured out how to lift African students stranded in Ukraine to safety in Africa, it is possible to strengthen trade within the continent using regional economic blocs, which are already integrated and constitute viable nodes for achieving this ambition.

Optimising trade within the continent will address the challenge of agriculture and food security. There are too many contradictions in Africa regarding agriculture and food security and many of them have nothing to do with agricultural productivity. Often, even within the same country, food is available but not accessible to the rest of the country due to distribution limitations. But rather than address this challenge of distribution, countries resort to expensive and non-sustainable imports that depress local production and empower farmers in far-off places where state subsidies render imported foodstuffs cheaper than local produce. Elite approaches to increasing agricultural productivity, framed in the language of 'agricultural transformation', have tended to favour large commercial farmers, many of whom are focused on non-food commodities for export, at the disadvantage of smallholder farming systems that constitute the bedrock of food security and nutrition for most households. Even the much-touted Alliance for a Green Revolution (AGRA), conceived in 2006 as the magic bullet for food security and increased incomes for smallholder farmers in Africa, has not delivered on this promise due to the unsuitability of AGRA's model to most smallholder farmers in Africa. This accounted for the low uptake of its proposed interventions.[5]

Certainly, a great deal of policy sovereignty is required in this area if the priority is to develop homegrown solutions to food security, and careful choices must be made to strike a suitable balance between homegrown interventions that support smallholder farmers and nutrition on the continent and externally derived interventions that see the solution to food security in terms of structural transformation of the sector. For us, any intervention that favours the commercial aspects of agriculture but does not deal with trade-related barriers within the continent that favour expensive food imports to the detriment of improving food distribution mechanisms is a deceptive intervention.

Establishing internal mechanisms for peace and security within the continent remains a challenge. The establishment by the African Union of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) was meant to realise an African solution to the issues of peace and security. Despite a few successes — for example, in attempts to create an African standby force — resourcing such interventions is still dependent on external resources, which are often unsustainable, as the AMISOM experience in Somalia shows. The ownership of such missions remains in doubt — in a few cases, the AUC intervention has had to seek approval from the United

Nations Security Council. The AU attempt to be proactive in Libya was neutered by the global alliance of the US and key European actors.

Dependence on external resourcing for peace and security operations has led to instances where foreign countries put 'booths on the ground' as a substitute for resources, to allow African countries to strengthen the continent's standby force. Foreign 'booths on the ground' can secure interests for their countries beyond, and sometimes to the detriment of, securing peace and security on the continent. For example, Russia's 'second coming' to Africa has been characterised foremost by placing elements of its army in countries such as Mali and Central Africa Republic. In some cases, the Russian army operates side by side with Russian mercenaries. The possibilities that the US/European versus Russian armed conflict underway in Ukraine could be replicated in Africa abound, unless the continent rethinks its approach to peace and security, especially in terms of securing sovereign resources to undertake this task.

Lastly is the area of higher education and scientific cooperation. The immediate concerns to Africans in this area have been the plight of African students who were studying at Ukrainian universities. Besides efforts to lift the students to safety, African governments — with the support of some European countries — continue to place students in European universities to complete their studies. Attracting African students for commercial reasons has become a critical aspect of the internationalisation strategy of most universities in Europe. The October 2019 Russian–African summit at Sochi thrust Russia into this race for African students as part of Russia's 'soft power' engagement with the continent. By the 2020/2021 academic year, the number of students from Africa enrolled in higher education institutions and scientific organisations in Russia was slightly over 27,000.[6] Besides, and resulting from the Sochi Summit, Russia has enhanced scientific collaboration with several African countries, notably Morocco and South Africa. The call for countries to boycott scientific collaboration with Russia as part of the sanctions against Russia therefore puts several African countries in a difficult position, having to reconcile their political choices with the plight of their students in Ukraine and Russia. It also endangers ongoing scientific collaboration, from which they are being pushed to delink. It is noteworthy that the African countries who were absent or abstained from the February UN vote were largely those with some form of scientific collaboration with Russian institutions.[7] A deliberate drive to rethink this area will benefit from the historical experience of scientific collaboration during the Cold War. Did it strengthen or weaken capacity for a self-sustaining higher education sector in Africa?

Notes

1. So threatening has been this failed attempt at unipolarity that the US Congress enacted on 27 April 2022 the 'Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act', which expressly directs 'the Secretary of State to develop and submit to Congress a strategy and implementation plan outlining United States efforts to counter the malign influence and activities of the Russian Federation and its proxies in Africa, and for other purposes'. See https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7311/text
2. For a critique, see https://roape.net/2021/12/13/from-summit-to-counter-summit-imperialism-francafrique-and-decolonisation/
3. https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/external-relations/eu/2038-marshall-plan-africa-and-europe-a-new-partnership-for-development-peace-and-a-better-future-bmz-january-2017/file.html
4. Abdallah, H.I. and Abdul Salam A., 2021, Rethinking Russian Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Prospects and Opportunities for Cooperation in New Geopolitical Realities, *EJ-SOCIAL, European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April.
5. Wise, A. T., 2020, Failing Africa's Farmers: An Impact Assessment of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, Global Development and Environment Institute, Working Paper No. 20-01. https://sites.tufts.edu/gdae/files/2020/07/20-01_Wise_FailureToYield.pdf
6. Higher education students from Africa in Russia 2020 by country, Statista Research Department, 4 March 2022. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1131857/number-of-african-students-in-russia-by-country/
7. Cameroon, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Togo, Eswatini and Morocco were absent. Algeria, Uganda, Burundi, Central African Republic, Mali, Senegal, Equatorial Guinea, Congo Brazzaville, Sudan, South Sudan, Madagascar, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa abstained.

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Éditorial

Ce numéro du *Bulletin* paraît à un moment où, l'approche de l'Afrique en matière de relations étrangères dans un monde de plus en plus multipolaire fait l'objet de toutes les attentions. Le monde entier a les yeux rivés sur la guerre russo-ukrainienne qui est sur le point de boucler son quatrième mois. De ce fait, l'avenir se discute en fonction de l'issue de la guerre et de la manière dont cette issue va le façonner. Parlant de cette guerre, les pays occidentaux ont tout fait, à travers leurs médias, pour répandre la thèse de la lutte du « bien » contre le « mal ». Ils ont ainsi tenté de mobiliser le reste du monde pour qu'il prenne parti et regarde la guerre à travers le prisme de l'hégémonie euro-américaine. Mais les efforts de mobilisation n'ont pas été très fructueux. Pour l'Afrique, en particulier, les réponses ont été divisées, de nombreux pays votant en faveur de l'Ukraine, mais n'adhérant certainement pas à la propagande occidentale globale dans laquelle la critique de la Russie est de rigueur. Ainsi, lors du vote de février à l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies, vingt-huit pays africains ont voté en faveur de la résolution visant à condamner l'invasion russe, mais dix-sept se sont abstenus et un, l'Érythrée, a voté en faveur de la Russie. Il n'a pas échappé aux observateurs que certains pays africains n'ont pas pris une position franche lors du vote de l'ONU. En y regardant d'un peu plus près ceux qui se sont abstenus, on constate qu'il s'agit principalement de pays que la Russie a soutenus pendant la guerre froide et dans leurs guerres d'indépendance contre les régimes coloniaux blancs et l'apartheid[1].

Les efforts déployés pour utiliser les organes de gouvernance mondiaux tels que l'ONU, afin de faire pencher la propagande de guerre en faveur de l'Occident ont, au contraire, révélé une nouvelle réalité multipolaire dans laquelle la Chine et l'Inde sont des acteurs clés. La rhétorique crispante déclenchée par le gouvernement américain et les médias occidentaux n'a certainement pas suscité le soutien escompté de la part de nombreuses capitales d'Afrique, d'Asie et du Moyen-Orient. La Chine et l'Inde, ainsi que d'autres acteurs, autrefois moins importants comme la Turquie et le Pakistan, jouent un rôle crucial dans la remise en question de l'emprise américaine sur une unipolarité qui s'effrite. Alors que les acteurs de longue date comme le Royaume-Uni, l'Allemagne et la France auraient défini presque unilatéralement la nature de cet engagement, la plupart de ces anciennes nations impériales vieillissantes en sont réduites à répéter les slogans éculés de la guerre froide, tels que « l'empire du mal » et de nouveaux slogans comme « les oligarques », dont le pouvoir explicatif est douteux dans le contexte où ils sont utilisés.

Le conflit russo-ukrainien pourrait toutefois devenir encore plus catastrophique, avec des conséquences énormes pour le monde en général, et l'Afrique en particulier. Cette possibilité est réelle, précisément en raison de la menace nucléaire qui est au cœur des récents échanges dans les négociations diplomatiques. Déjà, l'impact mondial de la guerre sur les chaînes d'approvisionnement est catastrophique. L'augmentation des prix du pétrole et du gaz et l'effet sur les prix des produits de base dans le monde entier ont suscité l'indignation. En outre, la pénurie de certaines denrées alimentaires que la Russie et l'Ukraine fournissent au monde est une conséquence notable de cette guerre. Cela est particulièrement vrai pour les matières premières, comme le blé, dont la chaîne d'approvisionnement est dominée par ces deux pays. Pour l'Afrique, si la perturbation des marchés pétroliers a entraîné une hausse des prix des produits de base, notamment le coût des denrées alimentaires, il faut espérer que la crise conduise à un examen de conscience interne en Afrique, en battant en brèche la dépendance de l'Afrique aux importations des denrées alimentaires, alors qu'elle dispose de terres arables en abondance.

Mais certains aspects spécifiques de l'affrontement entre la Russie et l'Ukraine restent obstinément une affaire européenne. Au-delà de la rhétorique politique, l'expansion de l'OTAN dans les anciens États soviétiques a préparé le terrain pour cette éventualité. Les origines de la guerre sont donc internes à la géopolitique européenne et nord-américaine, qui est sous tension depuis l'effondrement de l'Union soviétique. La réticence des deux parties à respecter pleinement les accords conclus lors de l'effondrement de l'Union soviétique et la présence persistante de l'OTAN (une alliance militaire formée pour dissuader l'Union soviétique) permettent d'expliquer les tensions croissantes qui ont abouti à la guerre actuelle.

L'impact de la guerre sur la politique d'interdépendance économique et infrastructurelle en Europe, où la Russie est un acteur clé, aura des conséquences plus graves. De nombreux pays d'Europe occidentale dépendent de la Russie pour le pétrole et le gaz. La Russie est le troisième plus grand pays producteur de pétrole au monde. La Russie a joué la carte du gaz à bon escient et continue d'en faire un atout majeur dans la guerre en cours. Mais ce qui est peut-être encore plus important, c'est l'avertissement à peine voilé concernant les missiles nucléaires comme facteur potentiel de la guerre. Cette menace a eu un effet dissuasif sur les pays de l'OTAN qui ont poussé l'Ukraine à se retrouver dans cette situation, mais qui ont évité de s'engager militairement dans la guerre. Si l'OTAN a mis en garde et menacé la Russie, elle n'a pas participé activement à la guerre pour défendre l'Ukraine, hormis une pléthore de sanctions. L'incapacité ou le refus d'être des combattants actifs dans la guerre n'a laissé que des sanctions occidentales comme seule arme de choix.

Les sanctions ont leur place en temps de guerre. Mais l'efficacité des sanctions, comme semble le suggérer l'expérience russe, dépend du pays en question. En fin de compte, les asymétries de pouvoir doivent être suffisamment marquées pour que la panoplie de sanctions soit paralysante au point de dissuader les atrocités dont nous avons été témoins en Ukraine. Bien sûr, on ne sait pas encore quelles seront les conséquences à long terme des sanctions pour la Russie. Mais dans l'immédiat, l'hypothèse selon laquelle un ensemble de sanctions paralyserait la Russie et la dissuaderait de continuer à infliger des dommages à l'Ukraine n'est pas avérée. La force croissante du rouble, dans un contexte de sanctions censées être débilitantes, soulève des questions pertinentes sur l'efficacité des sanctions.

Les implications de la guerre en Ukraine pour l'Afrique sont beaucoup plus immédiates pour la communauté africaine des sciences sociales. La question essentielle à poser n'est pas de savoir de quel côté de la division Russie-Ukraine l'Afrique penche. Nous devrions plutôt nous interroger sur les opportunités et les espaces que la guerre offre à l'Afrique pour se dégager des voies de développement échafaudées de l'extérieur qui n'ont pas réussi à concrétiser les ambitions de développement de l'Afrique. La guerre en Ukraine est un jalon géopolitique qui va remodeler, d'une certaine manière, la nature des relations entre les différents pays. Elle survient à un moment où la nouvelle ruée vers l'Afrique s'intensifie. Cette ruée a placé l'Afrique sur un échiquier sur lequel l'Amérique du Nord et l'Europe occidentale jouent contre des acteurs nouvellement venus sur le continent comme la Chine, la Russie et l'Inde. Les récentes mesures prises par l'Europe montrent bien qu'une nouvelle ruée vers l'Afrique est en train de s'opérer. Par exemple, le Président français a lancé un processus de « refondation » des relations entre la France et l'Afrique[2]. De la même manière, les Allemands sont les ardents défenseurs d'un plan Marshall pour l'Afrique et depuis 2017 appellent à recentrer l'Europe dans le discours sur le développement de l'Afrique[3]. Bien sûr, les observateurs attentifs n'ont pas manqué de noter qu'en octobre 2019, la Russie a réussi à convoquer le premier sommet africain à Sotchi[4].

Ces initiatives de *refondation* ne sont pas dénuées d'intérêts nationaux du pays qui les parraine. En fait, au cœur de l'initiative se trouve une stratégie visant à promouvoir les intérêts européens, même s'ils sont présentés sous le sceau de la coopération au développement, agrémenté du vocabulaire de la mutualité, de l'inclusion et du partenariat ; de la même manière que d'autres puissances comme les États-Unis, le Canada, la Russie et la Chine ont, dans une large ou moindre mesure, utilisé la coopération au développement pour canaliser et promouvoir leurs intérêts en Afrique. Dans un contexte où la guerre en Ukraine oblige à repenser la géopolitique, l'occasion et l'espace sont actuellement disponibles pour l'Afrique de définir une stratégie concernant ses intérêts dans la prochaine phase.

Quatre domaines dans lesquels il convient de repenser et de redéfinir les stratégies méritent l'attention des universitaires et des chercheurs africains. Le premier domaine concerne le rôle du commerce dans le renforcement de l'intégration régionale. Le deuxième concerne l'agriculture et la sécurité alimentaire. Le troisième concerne le besoin de mécanismes internes pour la paix et la sécurité. Enfin, il y a l'enseignement supérieur, la science et la technologie.

L'entrée en vigueur de la Zone de libre-échange continentale africaine (ZLECA) en mai 2019 a créé la capacité de galvaniser les communautés économiques régionales pour réaliser une zone commerciale panafricaine. La ZLECA s'accompagne de mécanismes de distribution et d'économies d'échelle réalisables, si elle est soutenue par une volonté politique. Quarante et un des cinquante-quatre pays du continent ont ratifié l'accord, ce qui suggère une forte volonté politique. Plutôt que de se lamenter sur les pénuries de blé résultant de la guerre entre la Russie et l'Ukraine, l'Afrique devrait consacrer son énergie à examiner les modalités de mise en œuvre intégrale de l'accord et l'utiliser pour améliorer la distribution alimentaire sur le continent. Si Ethiopian Airlines (ET) a trouvé le moyen de transporter en toute sécurité des étudiants africains bloqués en Ukraine, il est possible de renforcer le commerce sur le continent en utilisant les blocs économiques régionaux, qui sont déjà intégrés et constituent des pôles viables pour réaliser cette ambition.

L'optimisation du commerce au sein du continent permettra de relever le défi de l'agriculture et de la sécurité alimentaire. Il y a trop de contradictions en Afrique concernant l'agriculture et la sécurité alimentaire, et beaucoup d'entre elles n'ont rien à voir avec la productivité agricole. Souvent, au sein d'un même pays, les produits alimentaires sont disponibles mais ne sont pas accessibles au reste du pays, en raison de problèmes de distribution. Mais plutôt que de relever ce défi de la distribution, les pays recourent à des importations coûteuses et non durables qui dépriment la production locale et renforcent les agriculteurs de contrées lointaines où les subventions publiques rendent ces denrées alimentaires importées moins chères que les produits locaux. Les approches élitistes de l'augmentation de la productivité agricole, formulées dans le langage de la « transformation agricole », ont eu tendance à favoriser les grands exploitants commerciaux, dont beaucoup se concentrent sur les produits non alimentaires destinés à l'exportation, au détriment des systèmes agricoles des petits exploitants qui constituent le fondement de la sécurité alimentaire et de la nutrition de la plupart des ménages. Même l'Alliance pour une révolution verte (AGRA), tant vantée, conçue en 2006 comme la solution miracle pour la sécurité alimentaire et l'augmentation des revenus des petits exploitants agricoles en Afrique, n'a pas tenu ses promesses en raison de l'inadaptation du modèle de l'AGRA à la plupart des petits exploitants agricoles en Afrique. Cela explique le faible taux d'adoption des interventions proposées[5].

Il est certain qu'une grande souveraineté politique est nécessaire dans ce domaine si la priorité est de développer des solutions locales à la sécurité alimentaire, et des choix prudents doivent être faits pour trouver un équilibre approprié entre les interventions locales qui soutiennent les petits exploitants agricoles et la nutrition sur le continent et les interventions externes qui voient la solution à la sécurité alimentaire en termes de transformation structurelle du secteur. Pour nous, toute intervention qui favorise les aspects commerciaux de l'agriculture mais ne s'attaque pas aux barrières commerciales au sein du continent qui favorisent les importations alimentaires coûteuses au détriment de l'amélioration des mécanismes de distribution alimentaire est une intervention trompeuse.

L'établissement de mécanismes internes pour la paix et la sécurité sur le continent reste un défi. L'architecture africaine de paix et de sécurité (AAPS) créée par l'Union africaine était censée apporter une solution africaine aux problèmes de paix et de sécurité. Malgré quelques succès (par exemple, dans les tentatives de création d'une force africaine en attente) le financement de telles interventions dépend toujours de ressources externes, qui sont souvent non durables, comme le montre l'expérience de l'AMISOM en Somalie. L'appropriation de ces missions reste incertaine : dans quelques cas, l'intervention de la Commission de l'UA n'a pu se faire qu'avec l'aval du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies. La tentative proactive de l'UA en Libye a été neutralisée par l'alliance mondiale des États-Unis et autres principaux acteurs européens.

La dépendance à l'égard des ressources extérieures pour les opérations de paix et de sécurité a conduit à des cas où des pays étrangers ont envoyé des « troupes sur le terrain » à la place des ressources, afin de permettre aux pays africains de renforcer la force en attente du continent. Les « troupes étrangères sur le terrain » peuvent protéger les intérêts de leurs pays au-delà, et parfois au détriment, du maintien de la paix et de la sécurité sur le continent. Par exemple, le « second débarquement » de la Russie en Afrique s'est surtout caractérisé par le placement d'éléments de son armée dans des pays tels que le Mali et la République centrafricaine. Dans certains cas, l'armée russe opère aux côtés de mercenaires russes. Les possibilités que le conflit armé entre les États-Unis et l'Europe, d'une part, et la Russie, d'autre part, qui se déroule actuellement en Ukraine, se reproduise en Afrique sont nombreuses, à moins que le continent ne repense son approche de la paix et de la sécurité, notamment pour l'obtention de ressources souveraines pour entreprendre cette tâche.

Enfin, il y a l'enseignement supérieur et la coopération scientifique. Les préoccupations immédiates des Africains dans ce domaine ont été le sort des étudiants africains qui s'étaient inscrits dans les universités ukrainiennes. Outre les efforts déployés pour mettre les étudiants en sécurité, les gouvernements africains (avec le soutien de certains pays européens) continuent de placer les étudiants dans des universités européennes pour qu'ils y achèvent leurs études. Attirer des étudiants africains pour des raisons commerciales est devenu un aspect essentiel de la stratégie d'internationalisation de la plupart des universités en Europe. Le sommet russo-africain d'octobre 2019 à Sotchi a propulsé la Russie dans cette course aux étudiants africains dans le cadre de l'engagement de la Russie en matière de « *soft power* » avec le continent. À la rentrée 2020/2021, le nombre d'étudiants africains inscrits dans des établissements d'enseignement supérieur et des organisations scientifiques en Russie était légèrement supérieur à 27 000[6]. Par ailleurs, et suite au sommet de Sotchi, la Russie a renforcé la collaboration scientifique avec plusieurs pays africains, notamment le Maroc et l'Afrique du Sud. L'appel lancé aux pays pour qu'ils boycottent la collaboration scientifique avec la Russie dans le cadre des sanctions contre ce pays place donc plusieurs pays africains dans une position difficile, devant concilier leurs choix politiques avec la situation critique de leurs étudiants en Ukraine et en Russie. Il met également en péril la collaboration scientifique en cours, dont on veut les éloigner. Il convient de noter que les pays africains qui étaient absents ou se sont abstenus lors du vote de l'ONU en février étaient en grande partie ceux qui entretenaient une forme de collaboration scientifique avec des institutions russes[7]. Une volonté délibérée de repenser ce domaine bénéficiera de l'expérience historique de la collaboration scientifique pendant la guerre froide. A-t-elle renforcé ou affaibli la capacité d'un secteur de l'enseignement supérieur à être autonome en Afrique ?

Notes

1. Cette tentative ratée d'unipolarité a été si menaçante que le Congrès américain a promulgué le 27 avril 2022 la « loi sur la lutte contre les mauvaises influences de la Russie en Afrique », qui demande expressément au « Secrétaire d'État d'élaborer et de soumettre au Congrès une stratégie et un plan de mise en œuvre décrivant les efforts des États-Unis pour contrer les mauvaises influences de la Fédération de Russie et de ses mandataires en Afrique, et à d'autres fins ». Voir https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7311/text
2. Pour une critique, voir https://roape.net/2021/12/13/from-summit-to-counter-summit-imperialism-francafrique-and-decolonisation/
3. https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/external-relations/eu/2038-marshall-plan-africa-and-europe-a-new-partnership-for-development-peace-and-a-better-future-bmz-january-2017/file.html
4. Abdallah, H.I. et Abdul Salam A., 2021, Rethinking Russian Foreign Policy Towards Africa : Prospects and Opportunities for Cooperation in New Geopolitical Realities, *EJ-SOCIAL, Revue européenne des sciences humaines et sociales*, Vol. 1, No. 2, avril.
5. Wise, A. T., 2020, Failing Africa's Farmers : An Impact Assessment of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, Global Development and Environment Institute, Working Paper No. 20-01. https://sites.tufts.edu/gdae/files/2020/07/20-01_Wise_FailureToYield.pdf
6. Étudiants de l'enseignement supérieur originaires d'Afrique en Russie en 2020 par pays, département de recherche de Statista, 4 mars 2022.

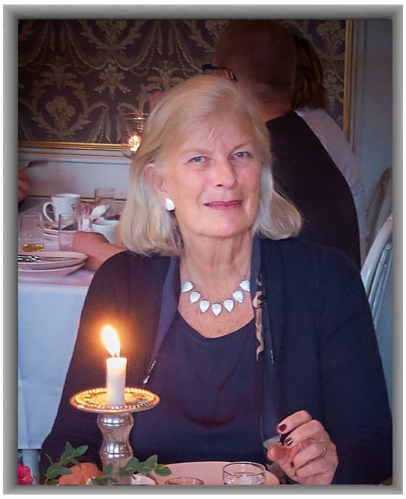
   https://www.statista.com/statistics/1131857/number-of-african-students-in-russia-by-country/
7. Le Cameroun, l'Éthiopie, la Guinée, la Guinée-Bissau, le Burkina Faso, le Togo, l'Eswatini et le Maroc étaient absents. L'Algérie, l'Ouganda, le Burundi, la République centrafricaine, le Mali, le Sénégal, la Guinée équatoriale, le Congo Brazzaville, le Soudan, le Sud Soudan, Madagascar, le Mozambique, l'Angola, la Namibie, le Zimbabwe et l'Afrique du Sud se sont abstenus.

Godwin R. Murunga
Secrétaire exécutif, CODESRIA

&

Ibrahim O. Ogachi
Directeur des Publications (par intérim), CODESRIA

Tribute



Dr Berit Olsson: A Truly Formidable Woman of Courage and Vision

Godwin R. Murunga
Executive Secretary
CODESRIA

The Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA) received the news of the passing on of Dr Berit Olsson, former Director of SAREC, Sida's Department for Research Cooperation on Thursday 31st March 2022. We were happy to have been allowed to send a confidential note of condolence to the family, but given the importance of Dr Olsson to the Council and to the research corporation community, it is my privilege to share this note publicly on behalf of CODESRIA and its community of scholarship.

Dr Berit Olsson assumed the leadership of SAREC as its Director in 1998 and served in that position up to 2008. This was also the year when SAREC, then responsible for improving research capacity in low-income countries, was disbanded in the context of a broader reorganisation within Sida. For the period of her leadership, Dr Olsson developed a close relationship with many organisations and researchers in the global South, this being the reason why she was highly regarded in CODESRIA circles.

The news of her passing on therefore came to CODESRIA as sad indeed. For many years, she worked tirelessly and with admirable commitment to support the relationship that Sida/SAREC nurtured with CODESRIA – and, indeed, many other organisations in the global South, most especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These organisations included CLACSO which at the time was also exploring the possibility of developing a tri-continental partnership framework and SAREC was one of the few organisations, alongside Ford Foundation, that helped drive this initiative. This led to the emergence of a number of South-South initiatives that have subsequently bolstered greater engagement between CODESRIA and other institutions in the global South.

To understand the significance of Dr Olsson's leadership at SAREC to the African research community, the context within which she operated is instructive. The 1980s and 1990s were critical years, marked by a sharp decline in the fortunes of African universities due to the onslaught precipitated by the Structural Adjustment Programmes. The decline that followed had many adverse implications, especially in the realm of funding and research training capacity in African universities and research centers. These affected Africa in ways that were, in a number of instances, new and unanticipated. As the state in Africa divested from funding universities and research in general, education and research in the universities were subjected to the logic of the market in ways that undermined commitment to endogenous research in developing countries. This logic asserted that investment in education was useless to make unless the rate of return on investment were good. This indeed became the language of the Bretton Woods institutions.

The resulting challenges presented themselves in ways that only a visionary leader could understand. Working with those affected, such leaders would be called upon to embrace suitable interventions to help forestall a full collapse in the higher education and research sector in the continent. Dr Olsson was one such leader, capable of listening to and understanding the new challenges to higher education and willing to work with those affected to facilitate solutions.

Dr Olsson worked closely with CODESRIA and supported the sustenance of independent research work and the renewal of research capacity across Africa through core and ear-marked multi-year support. Through such funding, the institutional health of organisations SAREC funded was enhanced while the research capacities were built. She understood that institutional health was necessary for building research capacity and invested in it. As a result, she became a trusted friend and a reliable ally of the African social science research community represented by CODESRIA and similar organisations.

On numerous occasions, she joined the community in several meetings and keenly listened to presentations and interventions from a range of scholars and policy actors. She was good at thinking through what the best options out of persisting challenges would be. This gave her a rare look into, and genuine understanding of the challenges African scholars and policy intellectuals were grappling with and their priority concerns. She used these insights to frame SAREC's interventions in a manner that built resilience in the face of adversity, nurtured agency at a time of immense repression, and defended the intellectual freedom of scholars amidst a massive erosion of university autonomy.

Many in CODESRIA community will recall the second last meeting Dr Berit Olsson attended at CODESRIA. At the time, SAREC sought to allocate resources to support gender research in Africa. CODESRIA was invited to prepare a background paper. Soon after the review of the paper, a decision was taken to convene a range of scholars to discuss the content of this proposed intervention. The meeting, held in Dakar in April 2007, was a meeting of minds, bringing together the best of African feminist thinking and contributed to re-shaping CODESRIA gender work to enhance feminist entry points and perspectives.

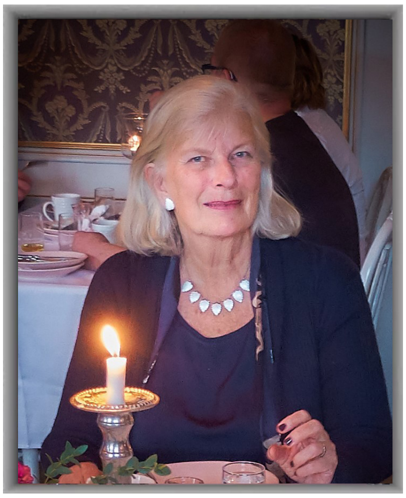
Dr Olsson's name easily appears alongside most mentions of research, research cooperation, higher education and innovation in Africa and beyond. CODESRIA felt the impact of her leadership in positive and rewarding ways even as she never compromised the importance of accountability and prudence in the use of public funds delivered to the research community in solidarity and enlightened self-interest. One of the lasting imprints she made on the relationship with organisations SAREC partnered with under her leadership was their conscious empowerment. She encouraged and championed the autonomy of our institutions, aiming that they independently think through their research agenda while being assured of support for innovative and relevant ideas. "I believe that if people [in developing countries] have developed analytical skills and have the tools to analyse," she argued, "they will both be able to better access international research as well as define their research questions differently than those who are based in the north," CODESRIA's autonomy as a pan-African institution was guaranteed so long as the judicious and transparent use of resources was evident. If there ever were allies who also defended the independence and autonomy of African researchers and institutions against donor pressures, Dr Olsson was a fine example.

On behalf of CODESRIA, its Executive Committee and the broader membership, we join in sharing our condolences on the passing of a truly formidable woman of courage and vision. CODESRIA is lucky to have recorded its appreciation of Dr Olsson at the 13th CODESRIA General Assembly in Yaoundé, Cameroon when the Council formally thanked and bid her goodbye pending her retirement.

We wish Dr Olsson's family, especially Björn Olsson and Susanna Mjörnheim, friends and former colleagues at Sida our best in this difficult transition and pray for the grace they need to remember her as she takes her eternal rest.

12th May 2022

Hommage



Dr Berit Olsson : une femme véritablement formidable, courageuse et visionnaire

Godwin R. Murunga
Secrétaire exécutif
CODESRIA

Le jeudi 31 mars 2022, le Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique (CODESRIA) a appris la nouvelle du décès du Dr Berit Olsson, ancienne directrice de SAREC (Département de la coopération pour la recherche de SIDA). Nous sommes heureux d'avoir été autorisés à envoyer une note confidentielle de condoléances à sa famille, mais, vue l'importance du Dr Olsson pour le Conseil et pour la communauté des chercheurs, j'ai le privilège de partager publiquement cette note, au nom du CODESRIA et de sa communauté de chercheurs.

Le Dr Berit Olsson a assuré la direction de SAREC à partir de 1998 et a occupé ce poste jusqu'en 2008. C'est également cette année-là que SAREC, alors en charge de l'amélioration des capacités de recherche dans les pays à faible revenu, a été dissoute dans le contexte de réorganisation au sein de Sida. Pendant son mandat, Dr Olsson a développé une relation étroite avec de nombreuses organisations et chercheurs dans les pays du Sud, et était très appréciée dans les cercles du CODESRIA.

La nouvelle de son décès a été donc reçue avec beaucoup de tristesse au CODESRIA. Pendant de nombreuses années, elle a travaillé sans relâche et avec un admirable engagement à soutenir la relation de Sida/SAREC avec le CODESRIA – et, avec de nombreuses autres organisations du Sud, plus particulièrement en Afrique, en Asie et en Amérique latine. Parmi ces organisations, il y avait CLACSO qui, à l'époque, explorait également la possibilité de développer un cadre de partenariat tricontinental, et SAREC était l'une des rares institutions, avec la Fondation Ford, à avoir contribué à la mise en oeuvre de cette initiative. Cela a mené à l'émergence d'initiatives Sud-Sud qui ont, par la suite, créé un plus grand engagement entre le CODESRIA et d'autres institutions du Sud global.

Pour comprendre l'importance du leadership du Dr Olsson à SAREC pour la communauté de recherche africaine, un rappel du contexte dans lequel elle a travaillé est nécessaire. Les années 1980 et 1990 ont été essentielles, marquées par un revers pour les universités africaines soumises aux assaut répétés des Programmes d'ajustement structurel. Le déclin qui a suivi a eu de nombreuses implications négatives, en particulier dans le domaine du financement et de la capacité de formation à la recherche des universités et centres de recherche africains. Ces programmes ont affecté l'Afrique d'une manière sans précédent et imprévue. Alors que l'État en Afrique se désengageait du financement des universités et de la recherche en général, l'enseignement et la recherche dans les universités étaient soumis à la logique de marché, sapant l'engagement pour la recherche endogène dans les pays en développement. Cette logique était sous-tendue par l'affirmation qu'il était inutile d'investir dans l'éducation si le taux de retour sur investissement n'était pas satisfaisant. C'est, en effet, devenu le credo des institutions de Bretton Woods.

Les défis qui en ont résulté se sont présentés d'une manière que seul un leader visionnaire pouvait comprendre. En œuvrant avec les personnes concernées, ces leaders ont été appelés à adopter des interventions appropriées afin d'éviter un effondrement complet de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche sur le continent. Le Dr Olsson était l'un de ces leaders, avec une capacité d'écoute et de compréhension des nouveaux défis de l'enseignement supérieur et disposé à travailler avec les personnes concernées afin de trouver des solutions.

Le Dr Olsson a travaillé en étroite collaboration avec le CODESRIA et soutenu la poursuite de travaux de recherche indépendants et le renouvellement des capacités de recherche en Afrique grâce à un soutien pluriannuel de base dédié. Grâce à ce financement, la santé institutionnelle des organisations financées par SAREC a été améliorée et leurs capacités de recherche ont été renforcées. Le Dr Olsson a compris qu'une bonne santé institutionnelle était nécessaire au renforcement de la capacité de recherche, et y a investi. Elle est ainsi devenue une amie et une alliée fiable de la communauté africaine de recherche en sciences sociales représentée par le CODESRIA et des organisations similaires.

À de nombreuses reprises, lors de plusieurs réunions, elle s'est jointe à la communauté et a attentivement écouté les présentations et les interventions d'universitaires et d'acteurs politiques. Elle était douée pour la réflexion aux meilleures options de solutions aux défis persistants. Elle en a tiré une perspective rare et une véritable compréhension des enjeux auxquels les universitaires et politiques africains étaient confrontés, et leurs préoccupations prioritaires. Elle s'est appuyée sur ces informations pour encadrer les interventions de SAREC d'une manière qui renforce la résilience face à l'adversité, nourrit l'agentivité à une époque d'immense répression, et défend la liberté intellectuelle des universitaires au milieu d'une érosion massive de l'autonomie universitaire.

De nombreux membres de la communauté du CODESRIA se souviendront de l'avant-dernière réunion à laquelle le Dr Berit Olsson a assisté au siège du CODESRIA. À l'époque, SAREC voulait allouer des ressources pour soutenir la recherche sur le genre en Afrique. Le CODESRIA a été invité à préparer un document de référence. Peu de temps après l'examen du document, une décision a été prise de réunir un éventail d'universitaires pour discuter du contenu de cette proposition d'intervention. La réunion, qui s'est tenue à Dakar en avril 2007, a été une rencontre d'esprits, rassemblant le meilleur de la pensée féministe africaine, et a contribué à remodeler le travail sur le genre du CODESRIA et amélioré les approches et les perspectives féministes.

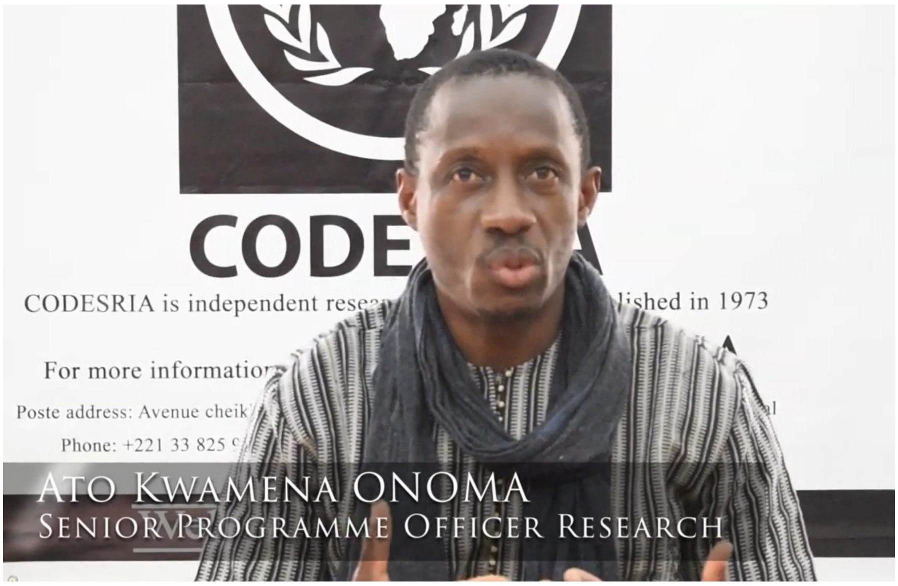
Le nom du Dr Olsson figure dans les mentions de recherche, de coopération en matière de recherche, d'enseignement supérieur et d'innovation en Afrique et au-delà. L'impact de son leadership a été ressenti de manière positive et gratifiante au CODESRIA, même si elle n'a jamais compromis l'importance de la responsabilité et de la prudence dans l'utilisation de fonds publics versés à la communauté de recherche dans un esprit de solidarité et d'intérêt personnel éclairé. L'autonomisation consciente des organisations avec lesquelles SAREC a collaboré sous sa direction est une des empreintes durables de son action. Elle a encouragé et défendu l'autonomie de nos institutions, la réflexion indépendante dans leurs programmes de recherche, avec l'assurance de soutien pour des idées innovantes et pertinentes. « Je crois que si les gens [dans les pays en développement] développent des compétences analytiques et ont les outils d'analyse », a-t-elle soutenu, « ils pourront, à la fois, mieux accéder à la recherche internationale, et définir leurs questions de recherche différemment de personnes basées dans le Nord », l'autonomie du CODESRIA en tant qu'institution panafricaine était garantie tant que l'utilisation judicieuse et transparente des ressources était manifeste. S'il y a jamais eu des alliés qui ont, de la même manière, défendu l'indépendance et l'autonomie des chercheurs et des institutions africaines contre les pressions des donateurs, le Dr Olsson en était un exemple patent.

Au nom du CODESRIA, de son Comité exécutif et de l'ensemble de ses membres, nous présentons nos condoléances à la famille d'une femme véritablement formidable, courageuse et visionnaire. Lors de la 13e Assemblée générale du CODESRIA tenue à Yaoundé, au Cameroun, le CODESRIA a eu l'occasion d'organiser une cérémonie d'au revoir en l'honneur du Dr Olsson pour la remercier et lui exprimer officiellement son appréciation avant son départ à la retraite.

Nous souhaitons le meilleur à la famille du Dr Olsson, en particulier à Björn Olsson et Susanna Mjörnheim, à ses amis et anciens collègues de Sida, en ces moments difficiles et prions qu'ils trouvent la force nécessaire pour se souvenir d'elle lors de son repos éternel.

Le 12 mai 2022

A Kind of Farewell to Ato Kwamena Onoma



Godwin R. Murunga
Executive Secretary
CODESRIA

Our colleague, Ato Kwamena Onoma, has served CODESRIA for a period of just under a decade, starting from November 2013 to end of May 2022. He served two full terms as Senior Programme Officer from 2016 to 2022, having previously worked with the Council as Programme Officer in the Research Programme, from 2013 to 2016. These have been nine and a half years of distinguished service to the Council, contributing immensely to revitalising the Research Programme in particular and CODESRIA in general. It is for this reason that we celebrate him in this issue of the *Bulletin*, even as we release it at the completion of his term, and wish him well in his transition to fresh and more challenging engagements. This therefore is 'a kind of farewell' to a colleague who is also a cherished friend in CODESRIA, within the community of scholarship in Africa, and beyond.

The title, 'A Kind of Farewell', is borrowed from Thandika Mkandawire's last message to the CODESRIA community, published in *CODESRIA Bulletin* No. 2, 1996. This phrase refers to the necessity of transition, as required by the contractual limits enshrined in the Council's regulations. However, it is also a reminder that this kind of transition does not signal an end to the relationship that we in the community, who are privileged to serve at the Secretariat, have with the Council. Indeed, as the past decades have witnessed, many who have been members of the Council's staff never end their relationship with CODESRIA, and serve its community and individuals well after the completion of their tenure at the Secretariat. Ato exemplifies such a member. His outstanding service as the head of the Research Programme has entrenched this relationship and made him, I believe, a key pillar of reliance for CODESRIA in the past, the present and in the future.

Ato's engagement with the Council goes way back, roughly to 2003, when his paper was accepted for presentation at CODESRIA's thirtieth anniversary celebrations. Subsequently, in 2005, he attended the twelfth CODESRIA General Assembly in Maputo. At the time, he was a graduate student at Northwestern University, a recipient of the Northwestern University Presidential Fellowship, which supported his graduate studies at that institution. It is worth noting that, at the time, a partnership between CODESRIA, the University of Ghana-Legon and the Program of African Studies (PAS) at Northwestern University was the foundation of a shared African Humanities Program convened by Professor Kofi Anyidoho, through which a number of African students secured admission to Northwestern University for graduate studies. This group of scholars became Ato's core team during this time, and the basis of his continued engagement with CODESRIA.

The team worked together occasionally with the mentorship of the Senegalese philosopher, Professor Souleymane Bachir Diagne, and prioritised engagements with CODESRIA. Not only did this group, of which Ato was an active member, convene a panel at the thirtieth CODESRIA anniversary celebration, they also began to publish with CODESRIA. Earlier on, Ato had published a piece titled 'Hybridization: its promise and lack of promise,' in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, Nos. 1–2, 2004. Through this group, he later published another piece, titled 'Exploring Intersections: The Language Question Again!', in *Africa Development*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2008. It was therefore not surprising when he was appointed Programme Officer in the Research Programme, in time. He was, after all, a 'child of CODESRIA'.

In accepting an appointment at CODESRIA, Ato made a deliberate choice to join the army of CODESRIA members who express 'a missionary attitude' in serving the Council. He had other options, after all. He was at the time an Assistant Professor at Yale University on leave of absence. He had been the recipient of a postdoctoral research fellowship at Princeton University and of several enviable awards. Indeed, his 2009 book, *The Politics of Property Rights Institutions in Africa*, published by Cambridge University Press, was an award winner, and his second book, by the same publisher, titled *Anti-Refugee Violence and African Politics* was due for release in 2013. In deciding to relocate to Dakar to work for CODESRIA, Ato was clearly choosing to make a manifest statement of his convictions to serve the continent through directly investing in the intellectual community that is the Council.

At CODESRIA, Ato has overseen specific programmes with commitment and conviction. Too many times, one meets employees who join organisations with the objective of benefiting personally, seeking to use positions of community responsibility to construct networks that serve them as individuals. Ato has been of benefit to CODESRIA and has used his skills to serve the community. This is clear in his performance; he has accomplished his tasks with the attention and seriousness they deserved. The minutes of the Executive Committee meetings and Council annual reports bear witness to his dedication and attention to detail.

The years 2015 to 2016 are particularly key in this narrative. These are the years in which the Executive Committee of CODESRIA undertook a process of internal reforms. Ato drafted a number of key documents for the Council and supported the process throughout. It fell upon him, for instance, to elaborate a new framework for mobilising research in the community. This led to the Meaning-Making Research Initiative (MRI). During the period 2017 to 2021, the Council underwent three major evaluations and eleven audits, some of which were particularly intrusive and trying, albeit ultimately vindicated in the final reports. The process was difficult, generating a sense of siege among staff in the Secretariat. But throughout this experience, Ato remained the voice of poise and reason, and assisted greatly in steering the Council through this demanding time.

During his term of service at CODESRIA, Ato has therefore been a reliable pillar for the leadership of the Council, contributing immensely to discussions in the management team. Other than helping define the MRI as a new vehicle for mobilising research at CODESRIA, he oversaw its implementation, from 2017 to 2021. The 2021 evaluation of the Strategic Cycle confirmed that the Council had made significant steps in rethinking the research vehicles and the implementation was successful. Further, Ato has been an advocate for breaking down the silos that used to characterise the relationship between programmes at CODESRIA and instituted new ways for CODESRIA's Research Programme to work with other programmes for the collective good of the Council. In the process, he helped to revitalise a system of engaging the community of scholarship which ensured that the MRI was successfully implemented.

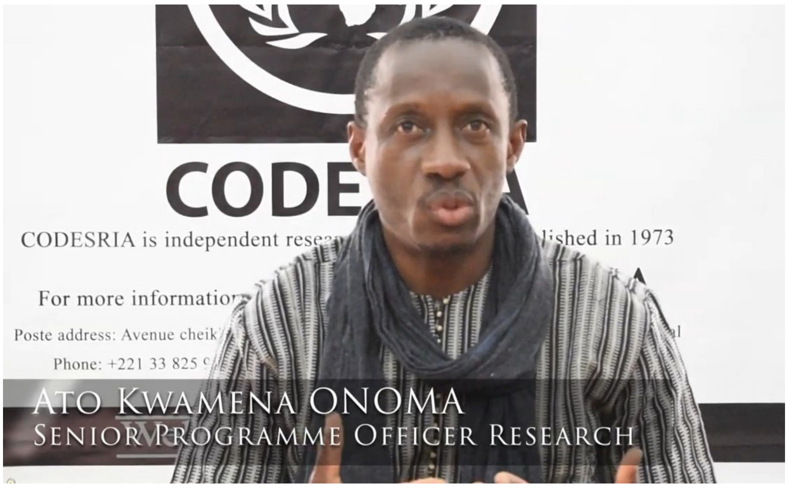
Ato leaves CODESRIA to take up a professorial appointment at a university with an established tradition of engagement with Africa, and which has within its faculty colleagues whose interest in the study of Africa is very well established. In a way, he is leaving the CODESRIA Secretariat to rejoin the main CODESRIA community, this time as part of a cohort of CODESRIA members whose commitment to the Council is proven and never-ending. This is a welcome transition, which the Secretariat will take full advantage of in building new partnerships. It is thus that it is only a 'kind of farewell' that we are extending to him.

Many in the community will miss the camaraderie that Ato brought to his identity as a member of staff in the CODESRIA Secretariat. For us in the Secretariat, we will miss a reliable friend and colleague, one whose poise instilled a sense of stability in the Council, whose critical engagement allowed us to reflect about what he put on the table, be it in support of our thoughts or to debate them, and whose 'missionary attitude' demonstrated his willingness to serve CODESRIA and its membership, even in moments of great difficulty.

Ato Kwamena Onoma, we truly thank you, and wish you all our very best.

Une sorte d'au revoir à Ato Kwamena Onoma

Godwin R. Murunga
Secrétaire exécutif
CODESRIA



Notre collègue, Ato Kwamena Onoma, a servi le CODESRIA pendant une période d'un peu moins d'une décennie, de novembre 2013 à fin mai 2022. Il a effectué un mandat complet en tant qu'administrateur principal de programme de 2016 à 2022, après avoir travaillé auparavant avec le Conseil en tant qu'administrateur de programme au programme de recherche, de 2013 à 2016. Il a rendu un service exceptionnel au Conseil durant ces années et demie, contribuant énormément à la revitalisation du Programme recherche en particulier et du CODESRIA en général. C'est pour cette raison que nous le célébrons dans ce numéro du *Bulletin*, même si nous le publions à la fin de son mandat, et nous lui souhaitons bonne chance dans sa transition vers de nouveaux engagements plus stimulants. Il s'agit donc d'une « sorte d'au revoir » à un collègue qui est également un ami cher au CODESRIA, à la communauté des chercheurs en Afrique, et au-delà.

Le titre, « *Une sorte d'au revoir* », est emprunté au dernier message de Thandika Mkandawire à la communauté du CODESRIA, publié dans le *Bulletin du CODESRIA* No. 2, 1996. Cette expression fait référence à la nécessité d'une transition, comme exigé dans le règlement du Conseil sur les limites des durées de contracts . Toutefois, elle rappelle également que ce type de transition ne signifie pas la fin de la relation que nous, membres de la communauté, qui avons le privilège de servir le Secrétariat, avons avec le Conseil. En effet, comme on a pu le constater au cours des dernières décennies, nombreux sont les membres du personnel du Conseil qui ne mettent jamais fin à leur relationavec le CODESRIA, et continue à servir sa communauté et ses membres bien après la fin de leur mandat au Secrétariat. Ato en est un exemple. Son service remarquable rendu en tant que responsable du Programme recherche a consolidé cette relation et fait de lui, je crois, un élément clé de la fiabilité du CODESRIA dans le passé, le présent et l'avenir.

L'engagement d'Ato dans les activités du Conseil ne date pas d'aujourd'hui, il faut remonter plus ou moins à 2003, lorsque sa communication a été acceptée pour être présentée lors des célébrations du trentième anniversaire du CODESRIA. Il a, par la suite, participé à la XIIe Assemblée générale du CODESRIA organisée à Maputo en 2005. A l'époque, il était étudiant de troisième cycle à Northwestern University, avec une bourse présidentielle de la même Université, qui lui a permis d'y poursuivre ses études supérieures. Il convient de noter qu'à l'époque, un partenariat entre le CODESRIA, l'Université Ghana-Legon et le Programme d'études africaines (PAS) de Northwestern University était à l'origine d'un programme commun sur les humanités africaines organisé par le professeur Kofi Anyidoho, à travers lequel un certain nombre d'étudiants africains ont été admis à Northwestern University pour poursuivre leurs études supérieures. Ce groupe d'universitaires est devenu le noyau de l'équipe d'Ato pendant cette période, et la base de son engagement continu avec le CODESRIA.

Par moments, l'équipe travaillait ensemble sous la supervision du philosophe sénégalais, le professeur Souleymane Bachir Diagne, et donnait la priorité aux activités du CODESRIA. Non seulement ce groupe, dans lequel Ato était un membre actif, avait organisé un panel lors de la célébration du trentième anniversaire du CODESRIA, mais il avait également commencé à publier avec le CODESRIA. Auparavant, Ato avait publié un article intitulé « *Hybridization: its promise and lack of promise* », dans le *Bulletin du CODESRIA*, Nos 1&2,

2004. Par le biais de ce groupe, il a ensuite publié un autre article intitulé « *Exploring Intersections: The Language Question Again!* », dans *Africa Development*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2008. Il ne fallait donc pas s'étonner qu'il soit nommé, en fin de compte, chargé de programme au sein du Programme recherche. Il était, après tout, un « enfant du CODESRIA ».

En acceptant un poste au CODESRIA, Ato a délibérément choisi de rejoindre l'armée des membres du CODESRIA qui adoptent une « attitude de missionnaire » au service du Conseil bien qu'il avait d'autres options. A l'époque, il était professeur assistant en congé, à l'Université de Yale et était. Il avait bénéfié d'une bourse de recherche postdoctorale à l'Université de Princeton et plusieurs autres prix intéressants. En effet, son livre *The Politics of Property Rights Institutions in Africa*, publié en 2009 par Cambridge University Press, a été primé, et son deuxième livre, chez le même éditeur, intitulé *Anti-Refugee Violence and African Politics* devait sortir en 2013. En décidant de s'installer à Dakar pour travailler au CODESRIA, Ato a délibérément choisi de faire une déclaration manifeste de sa conviction de servir le continent en investissant directement dans la communauté intellectuelle qu'est le Conseil.

Au CODESRIA, Ato a supervisé des programmes spécifiques avec engagement et conviction. Trop souvent, on rencontre des employés qui rejoignent des organisations dans le but d'en tirer un bénéfice personnel, cherchant à utiliser des positions de responsabilité communautaire pour construire des réseaux qui les servent personnellement. Ato a été utile au CODESRIA et a mis ses compétences au service de la communauté. Cela apparaît clairement dans sa performance ; il a accompli ses tâches avec l'attention et le sérieux qu'elles méritaient. Les procès-verbaux des réunions du Comité exécutif et les rapports annuels du Conseil témoignent de son dévouement et de son attention minutieuse aux détails.

Les années 2015 à 2016 sont à marquer d'une pierre blanche dans ce récit. Ce sont les années au cours desquelles le Comité exécutif du CODESRIA a entrepris un processus de réformes internes. Ato a rédigé un certain nombre de documents clés pour le Conseil et a été présent tout au long du processus. Il lui incombait, par exemple, d'élaborer un nouveau cadre pour mobiliser la recherche dans la communauté. C'est ainsi qu'est née les initiatives de recherche pour la construction du sens (MRI). Au cours de la période 2017 à 2021, le Conseil a fait l'objet de trois évaluations majeures et de onze audits, dont certains ont été particulièrement intrusifs et éprouvants, quoique finalement éclaircis dans les rapports finaux. Le processus a été difficile, générant un sentiment d'état de siège parmi le personnel du Secrétariat. Mais tout au long de cette expérience, Ato est resté la voix de la sérénité et de la raison, et a grandement contribué à guider le Conseil dans cette période difficile.

Au cours de son mandat au CODESRIA, Ato a donc été un pilier fiable pour la direction du Conseil, contribuant énormément aux discussions au sein de l'équipe de management. En plus d'avoir aidé à définir le MRI comme un nouvel outil pour mobiliser la recherche au CODESRIA, il a supervisé sa mise en œuvre, de 2017 à 2021. L'évaluation du cycle stratégique de 2021 a confirmé que le Conseil avait pris des mesures importantes pour repenser les mécanismes de recherche et que la mise en œuvre était une réussite. En outre, Ato a été un défenseur du décloisonnement des programmes au CODESRIA et a insufflé au Programme recherche du CODESRIA de nouvelles façons de travailler avec lesautres programmes pour le bien collectif du Conseil. Ce faisant, il a contribué à revitaliser un système participatif pour la communauté des chercheurs qui a assuré la mise en œuvre réussie du MRI.

Ato quitte le CODESRIA pour aller enseigner dans une université qui entretient des relations de longue date d'échange avec l'Afrique, et qui compte dans son corps professoral des collègues dont l'intérêt pour l'étude de l'Afrique est très bien établi. D'une certaine manière, il quitte le Secrétariat du CODESRIA pour rejoindre la grande communauté du CODESRIA, cette fois-ci en tant qu'élément d'une cohorte de membres du CODESRIA dont l'engagement envers le Conseil est avéré et sans limite. Il s'agit d'une transition opportune, dont le Secrétariat tirera pleinement parti pour établir de nouveaux partenariats. C'est donc seulement une « sorte d'au revoir » que nous lui adressons.

L'esprit de camaraderie qu'Ato apportait à son identité en tant que membre du personnel du Secrétariat du CODESRIA manquera à beaucoup dans notre communauté. Pour nous, au Secrétariat, c'est un ami et un collègue fiable qui nous manquera, un collègue dont le sang-froid insufflait un sentiment de stabilité au Conseil, dont l'engagement critique nous permettait de réfléchir à ce qu'il mettait sur la table, que ce soit pour soutenir nos idées ou pour en débattre, et dont l'« attitude de missionnaire » démontrait sa volonté de servir le CODESRIA et ses membres, même dans les moments de grande difficulté.

Ato Kwamena Onoma, nous te remercions sincèrement et te souhaitons le meilleur.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine: What does it mean for Africa?

Yusuf Bangura
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Russia's invasion of Ukraine marks a decisive end to the post-Cold War security regime that has governed the strained but stable relations between the West and Russia and guaranteed the independence of East European countries and former Soviet republics over the last three decades. The invasion threatens the security of small nations and reinforces the illiberal turn in world politics by challenging the body of rights and democratic norms that gained ascendancy in the 1990s. African opinion- and policy-makers should understand what this portends for the continent.

Russia's transition from communism to capitalism was messy: its economy contracted by about 40 per cent after a shock therapy of price liberalisation and privatisation, inflation skyrocketed, the ruble plummeted, and shortages of basic food items became the norm. While the employment data did not show any mass layoffs, about a quarter of the workforce was on unpaid or low-paid leave. A third of the population fell into poverty and the social protections developed in the Soviet era proved insufficient for maintaining basic wellbeing. Boris Yeltsin, the first post-communist president, sought and Russia was granted membership of the IMF in 1992 and obtained a series of loans with tough conditionalities that did not improve the country's economy (Gould-Davies and Woods 1999; Crotty 2020). Indeed, former Russian foreign minister and prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov, believes that Russia's losses under the IMF were twice as large as those suffered during World War II (Arkangelskaya and Shubin 2013).

Many Russians saw the IMF loan agreements as an attack on Russia's sovereignty (Gould-Davies and Woods 1999) and an attempt to turn Russia into a vassal state of the West. Indeed, the loss of the Soviet republics, the deep economic recession, and dependence on Western institutions for finance profoundly weakened Russia's status as a global power and provoked a conservative and neonationalist turn in domestic politics. Russians yearned for a strong leader who would reverse the decline and restore the country's position in the comity of nations.

After winning several fairly credible elections and stabilising the economy with the help of soaring oil and gas prices, Vladimir Putin, an ex-KGB official, fit the bill of a new messiah. When Putin assumed power in 2000, Russia's political system, though fragile, could still be described as an electoral democracy in that relatively free and competitive elections were regularly held. However, within a few years of his rule, Putin reined in independent political organisations, developed the brutal tactic of poisoning his key critics, controlled national television stations and other media, weakened the power of the oligarchs who had been empowered by fire sales of state assets, and concentrated power in the presidency (McFaul 2021). Supreme political authority provided the basis for challenging Western hegemony and reclaiming former Soviet lands.

Ever since he came to power, Putin has been obsessed with recreating the boundaries of the Soviet Union as Russian territory. In 2005, he told the world that the collapse of the Soviet Union 'was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century' and a 'genuine tragedy' for the Russian people as 'tens of millions' of Russians found themselves outside Russian territory (BBC 2005). His strategic view of the world is a throwback to the Concert of Europe of the nineteenth century in which the great powers had vested interests and spheres of influence, intervened in the internal affairs of small states and acted collectively to maintain a balance of power or security in Europe. Such a system is antithetical to the current multilateral norms and arrangements that seek to curb unilateralist behaviour by states.

The US and its Western allies did not only refuse to dismantle NATO, they proceeded to expand it to include former Soviet republics and East European countries. This was a strategic blunder of enormous proportions, especially as Putin wanted Russia to join the alliance but was told that he had to apply like any state seeking membership (Rankin 2021). Hubris or triumphalism clouded Western strategic policy-making. Many bought the dubious and self-serving idea of the end of history—that markets and democracy would now determine how states are governed, and that the US would be the only superpower and would do as it pleased in policing the world. This posture fuelled Putin's suspicion that the West still regarded Russia as an enemy and was not serious about world peace. In the logic of *realpolitik* and national security, the borders of states, especially those of great powers, should be free of antagonistic military forces. It is highly unlikely that Estonia and Latvia, which share a common border with Russia, would have been allowed to join NATO if Russia had regained its confidence and was governed by a resolute and calculating leader like Putin. Matters were not helped when NATO signalled that it would consider Ukraine's membership of the alliance.

There are two key planks in Putin's strategy to revive Russia's power. The first is his challenge of liberal values and the rules-based multilateral system. It must be stressed that the attack on liberalism is not just a Russian problem. The US and its allies ignored UN rules and procedures in 2003 by invading Iraq under the false pretence of looking for weapons of mass destruction. And there have been countless other US interventions in foreign countries that clearly violated the rules-based international order, including the use of lethal drone strikes in Pakistan and Arab countries. In his *United States of War: A Global History of America's Endless Conflicts, from Columbus to the Islamic State* (2020), David Vine observes that the US 'has been at war or has invaded other countries almost every year since its independence'.

Liberal values have also eroded in the US, where there was an attempt in January 2021 to prevent a transfer of power to the winner of the presidential election, and laws are being passed in Republican-controlled state legislatures to limit black participation in the electoral process and overturn election results. Putin's anti-liberalism is, however, visceral or an article of faith and serves as an instrument for resurrecting Russian power. In this regard, Russia has emerged as a leading actor in disinformation, cyberattacks and tampering with the electoral processes of Western and other democracies. Russia's hacking of Hilary Clinton's and the Democratic National Committee's emails, and its collusion with Wikileaks to influence the 2018 elections in favour of Donald Trump, another leader with an authoritarian mindset', is instructive. It is clear from Putin's pronouncements that he is unhappy with the post-Cold War security arrangements and the global rules-based liberal order, which he believes shackle his quest for global power.

The second plank of Putin's strategy is to claw back lost territories along Russia's border. The vehicle for realising this strategy is the 25 million ethnic Russians who reside in the new ex-Soviet countries. The creation of the Soviet Union in 1917 was accompanied by the Russification of non-Russian republics, through a process that involved the deportation of large numbers of disloyal individuals from indigenous populations and the encouragement of Russians to migrate and fill gaps in labour markets and public administrations. One of the most glaring examples of Russification was the displacement of the German population in Kaliningrad (which does not even share a border with Russia but is wedged between Lithuania, Poland and the Baltic Sea) and the massive migration of Russians into the region after Germany's defeat in the Second World War. Joseph Stalin occupied, demanded and was given the right to annex Königsberg (the previous name of Kaliningrad) by the Allied Powers as compensation for the mass suffering Russians had been subjected to by Nazi Germany. Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, supported the expulsion (ethnic cleansing) of Germans from Königsberg. In his words, 'expulsion is the method which, in so far as we have been able to see, will be the most satisfactory and lasting. There will be no mixture of populations to cause endless trouble' (Sukhankin 2018: 41). In 1945, there were only 5,000 Russians and more than 100,000 Germans in Königsberg; by 1948 about 400,000 Soviets had moved into the region. There are now only 1,600 Germans or about 0.4 per cent of the population; Russians currently account for 87 per cent of the population (Wikipedia[a]).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine had the largest number of ethnic Russians (about 8,300,000, or 17.2 per cent of the population), followed by Kazakhstan (3,600,000, or 20.2 per cent of the population), Belarus (785,000) and Uzbekistan (750,000). However, Latvia (487,250, or 25.2 per cent of the population) and Estonia (322,700, or 24.2 per cent) have higher percentages of ethnic

Russians than all other countries (Wikipedia[b]). Relations between ethnic Russians and host nations are often tense as the latter seek to undo historical injustices. I observed in 2004 the deep animosity between Latvians and ethnic Russians when I organised an UNRISD conference in Riga, the capital (with the UNDP office in Latvia acting as hosts), to discuss the findings of our multi-country research project on Ethnic Inequalities and Governance of the Public Sector. The current Latvian deputy prime minister and defence minister, Artis Pabriks, who was a researcher at the time, conducted the Latvian study. Memories of the 60,000 or more Latvians deported to Siberia by Soviet leaders just after the Second World War were still fresh among Latvians, who also disliked the fact that Russians constituted the majority population in their capital city. Russians, on the other hand, complained about language laws and tough citizenship rules that made it difficult for Russians to obtain citizenship under the new government.

Putin has used the agitation of ethnic Russians for equal treatment as a basis for invading the new territories. The forerunner to the invasion of Ukraine was Russia's intervention in the conflict in 2008 in Abhkazia and South Ossetia, in Georgia, in which Russia supported and later recognised the two breakaway territories from Georgia. Despite the very small number of ethnic Russians in those territories, residents there now carry Russian passports. The big prize is Ukraine, which Putin regards as a spiritual and cultural home for Russians and which, as we have seen, hosts the largest number of Russia's diaspora. The pattern for annexation is clear: ethnic Russians complain about discrimination and declare independence in their localities, the Russian army is sent in to defend them, the Russian Parliament recognises the breakaway territories, and Putin formalises the process by incorporating the territories into Russia. The popular uprising in 2014 against the Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovych (who was critical of Ukraine's application to join the EU), his removal from office and subsequent exile to Moscow may have been a turning point for Putin.

The first invasion of Ukraine was in 2014 in Crimea, where ethnic Russians account for 65 per cent of the population. The failure of the Western powers to draw a line on Crimea emboldened Putin to mount a second invasion of the country. Again, as in the first invasion, ethnic Russians complained about maltreatment, they seized Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbas region, where they constitute a majority, the Russian military rendered support, Russia's Parliament recognised their autonomy and Putin sent in the military for a full invasion, which, this time, may involve the annexation of the entire country. Russia's strategy for the countries bordering its southern border, which are less antagonistic, involves the creation of a regional alliance (the Collective Security Treaty Organisation) of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and turning these countries into puppet states. This allowed Russia to send troops to oil-rich Kazakhstan in January 2022 to put down anti-government protests. The other non-Soviet country on Russia's southern border, Mongolia, relies on Russia to counter Chinese threats to its territory.

The two-plank strategy of disdain for the liberal rules-based world order and the annexation of ex-Soviet republics is underpinned by a policy of reducing Russia's economic dependence on the West in order to be able to withstand sanctions. *The Economist* (2022) reckons that Russia has reduced its debt to just 20 per cent of GDP, built formidable reserves of USD 620 billion and created a 'fortress economy'. The extent to which such measures will insulate the Russian economy, and the appetite of its *nomenklatura* and oligarchs for Western goods and services, from the current raft of Western sanctions remains to be seen.

Implications for Africa

Russia's mission to upend the liberal rules-based multilateral order suggests a lack of confidence in its ability to use those rules to catch up with the West. Playing rogue is the weapon of great powers in decline. In this regard, Russia's behaviour contrasts sharply with that of China, a rising economic and technological powerhouse, which seeks to use—not disrupt—the existing global arrangements to challenge Western hegemony and attain its goal of superpower status. Russia is not even among the top ten largest economies in the world: its GDP of USD 1.4 trillion is dwarfed by those of the US (about USD 20 trillion) and China (USD 14 trillion). Russia's GDP equals that of Brazil but lags behind India and even the Republic of Korea, with a population of only 50 million. Despite a few pockets of excellence and an educated workforce, Russia is also outmatched in the technological field: it spends just 1 per cent of its GDP on research and development; its corporations conduct little or no research; and the country as a whole trails China, the US, Japan, Korea, Germany and India in patent applications. Its technological strength is in nearspace exploration, rocket engines and military hardware; however, research suggests that there have been hardly any spillovers from such sectors into the civil sphere (Sanghi and Yusuf 2018).

While Russia is an economic dwarf, it ranks second to the US in the global firepower index, or military capability (Armstrong 2022) and has the largest number of nuclear warheads in the world—6,257 to the US's 5,500 and China's 350 (World Population Review 2022). This asymmetry between military power and economic and technological prowess may explain Putin's infatuation with military might and willingness to use it to assert Russia's status as a global power. The wide-ranging sanctions recently imposed on Russia suggest that the West is willing to stand up to Russia by isolating it from vital areas of global finance, trade, investment, technology, entertainment and travel. The scale of the sanctions is unprecedented. We may well be witnessing the return of the Iron Curtain, which may plunge Europe into protracted instability as Russia fights back to break free from isolation. It is highly unlikely now that Ukraine will be admitted into NATO. However, the invasion has given NATO a new lease of life and produced an outcome that Putin wanted to prevent: NATO troops and potential instability on Russia's western border. Neutral Western countries like Sweden, Finland, Ireland and even Switzerland may abandon their longstanding policy of neutrality and seek NATO membership for protection. Remarkably, the decision of Sweden and Switzerland to fully participate in the Western sanctions makes them vulnerable to Russian retaliation if they remain outside the military alliance.

The Doctrine of Spheres of Influence Undermines the Security of Small Nations

The invasion and unfolding geopolitical crisis have serious implications for Africa. Three stand out in bold relief. The first is the danger of reinstitutionalising the doctrine of spheres of influence in the governance of the world system. Putin regards the territories of the former Soviet republics as 'historical Russian land', which suggests that Russia has the right to take them back or intervene in them to get the leaders of those countries to submit to Russian demands. Putin's address to the world on the day of the invasion is telling. In that long and rambling speech, he asserted that 'The problem is that in territories adjacent to Russia, which I have noted is our historical land, a hostile anti-Russia is taking shape'[1] This statement suggests that Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan belong to, and will always be contested by, Russia. Part of Putin's problem of seeing ex-Soviet republics as Russian territory is that the Russian empire was the only empire in Europe that survived the First World War. The Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and German empires all collapsed in 1918 and a host of new nations were born. The Russian empire was simply transformed into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics when the Bolsheviks took power in 1917. However, the fact that the ex-Soviet republics have enjoyed only three decades of independence doesn't mean they should lose it against their will.

Big powers have historically carved out areas that they regard as spheres of influence. The Monroe Doctrine, for instance, informed the foreign policy of the US for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Under this doctrine, the US viewed efforts by European powers to influence or control countries in the Americas as a threat to US security. In exchange, the US agreed to not interfere in the affairs of Europe and its colonies. When, in 1962, Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet leader, decided to station nuclear weapons on Cuban soil, just 145 kilometres (90 miles) off the coast of the US, John Kennedy saw it as an act of war and threatened to take them out by blockading Cuba. Khrushchev caved in and Kennedy agreed to not invade Cuba. As imperial powers, the foreign policies of France, the UK and Portugal have also been driven by notions of spheres of influence. Britain struggled to maintain control of its ex-colonies after it agreed to give them independence; it created the Sterling Area and Commonwealth system to defend the waning international role of the pound sterling. Under this system, it tried to compel the newly independent countries to retain the colonial currency boards instead of creating central banks, maintain their reserves in the UK treasury, tie their currencies to sterling and pursue extremely restrictive fiscal policies (spending only what they earned as foreign exchange) in exchange for the UK directing its investments, trade and aid flows towards them (Bangura 1983). And through the franc zone, France continues to exercise considerable control over the monetary policies of the Francophone African countries and regards those countries as part of its sphere of influence. It intervenes regularly in those countries to change or prop up regimes; for example, it currently has 3,500 troops in Mali under the guise of fighting Islamist militants. Even during the

Ebola crisis, Western assistance to the three West African countries affected by the virus (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea) followed a spheres-of-influence logic, with the UK heavily involved in Sierra Leone, the US in Liberia and France in Guinea (Abdullah and Rashid 2017).

The doctrine of spheres of influence has no place in the UN charter or international law. Indeed, the raison d'être of the UN (and its antecedent, the League of Nations) was to outlaw the quest for spheres of influence in world politics. The fundamental principles of the UN are the prohibition of force in settling disputes unless when sanctioned by the Security Council or for self defence; acceptance of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and equality of all member nations; and respect for freedom and human rights. These principles seek to outlaw war in the conduct of international relations. Despite their violation in many instances, they remain important for small states that do not have the resources to confront strong nations. Indeed, resistance to the doctrine of spheres of influence and military alliances informed the decision by developing countries to form the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War. Most developing countries still regard these principles as sacrosanct. It is not surprising that the overwhelming majority of developing countries (111) voted for the UN General Assembly resolution that 'deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine', and called on Russia to 'immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces'. If Putin's blatant attempt to relegitimise the doctrine of spheres of influence is allowed to stand, what will stop the former European imperial powers from affirming their right to intervene regularly in Africa, and even recolonise a few countries, by arguing that they created those countries in Berlin in the nineteenth century?

How a Beleaguered Russia is Likely to Behave in Africa

The second issue is how a beleaguered Russia is likely to behave in Africa. If the West's sanctions bite and Russia finds itself excluded from much of the European social, economic and political space, it is likely to become more paranoid and confrontational and would aggressively seek allies in non-Western regions, including in Africa. Africa's open, fragmented, underdeveloped and contested policy space makes it a strong candidate for enhanced Russian intervention, big power politics and the creation of spheres of influence. Russia's engagement with Africa will be substantially different from Soviet engagement with it during the Cold War. During the Soviet era, Russia had a progressive, anti-Western or anti-imperialist policy: it stood in solidarity with African countries in fighting European colonial domination and the obnoxious racist regime of apartheid South Africa. It provided technical, educational and financial aid as well as military assistance to many countries. And it did not associate itself with kleptocratic and bloody military regimes like those of Idi Amin of Uganda, Jean-Bédel Bokassa of Central African Republic, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire or Samuel Doe of Liberia, which were nurtured or supported in varying degrees by Western powers. Russia served instead as an inspiration to forces across Africa that were interested in transformative social change, even though in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Angola, where attempts were made to implement the Soviet model of development, it turned out to be a disaster.

A beleaguered, authoritarian, economically weak, rent-seeking capitalistic Russia that has been stripped of its aspirational ideology will be different. The current Russia will be highly transactional, aggressive and opportunistic. Russia's recent attempts to revive its flagging relations with African countries are instructive. Given its weak economy, it will not be a strong competitor in productive investments, trade and aid compared to China, the EU and the US. Russia's exports to Africa amounted to a mere USD 13 billion in 2019, and its foreign direct investment was estimated to be less than 1 per cent of Africa's total FDI stock in 2017 (Irwin-Hunt 2020). This is a pittance compared to China's FDI stock of USD 110 billion in Africa (Yu 2021) and China's USD 250 billion trade with Africa. Russian companies in Africa have largely focused on the extractive sector—such as diamonds, nickel, manganese, oil and gas—as well as nuclear energy, where they have a comparative advantage. Even though Russia is rich in mineral resources, it lost many of those resources to the new states after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is believed that importing raw materials from Africa is cheaper than extracting them from Russia's remote regions that hold the bulk of its resources (Arkhangelskaya and Shubin 2013).

Increased Russian involvement in Africa's extractive sector, which has a history of corruption, bad deals and illicit transfers, is unlikely to be different from the West's, and recently China's, pillage of the continent's resources and impoverishment of its people. In *Honest Account 2017*, Global Justice Now (2017) reported that, in 2015, Africa as a whole was a net creditor to the rest of the world (largely Western countries) by USD 41.4 billion. In other words, more resources (USD 203 billion—through tax avoidance, debt payments and resource extraction) were taken out of the continent than flowed in (USD 161.6 billion—through loans, remittances and aid). The Thabo Mbeki-led African Union-Economic Commission for Africa's (2005) own report estimated that USD 50 billion left Africa as illicit financial flows every year. And War on Want (2016) reported that about 100, mostly British, companies listed on the London Stock Exchange controlled more than USD 1 trillion worth of resources in just five commodities—oil, gold, diamonds, coal and platinum—and a quarter of those companies are registered in tax havens. Russia's quest for raw materials may spur enhanced greed and dirty tricks as it tries to compensate for lost opportunities in the West. This may aggravate Africa's resource drain.

Russia is also likely to push African countries to transition to nuclear energy, where it has a huge advantage, citing the continent's large deficit in power generation. About 600 million Africans are estimated to be without access to electricity. Nuclear energy was one of the agenda items in the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi, attended by 42 African leaders. Russia is in negotiations with most North African countries, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia and Rwanda to sign nuclear energy deals, and has committed to provide 80 per cent of the funds to build Egypt's first nuclear power plant for a whopping USD 25 billion (Chimbelu 2019). However, Russia has a poor record in large-scale infrastructure projects. Despite Nigeria sinking more than USD 10 billion into the Ajaokuta iron and steel project, the Russian company, TyazhPromExport, contracted to build the plant in 1976 failed to produce any steel before the project was abandoned in 1994. The failure of the Ajaokuta steel project was a huge blow to Nigeria's quest for industrialisation. Nuclear reactors are expensive, capital-intensive, take years to build, and have high maintenance and safety costs. African countries should be wary of incurring unsustainable debts and permanent dependence on Russia to run and maintain reactors. It is not surprising that South Africa cancelled its agreement with Russia for a second nuclear plant in 2017, citing cost, after an environmental group successfully challenged the government in court. Surely, there must be cheaper and safer green energy alternatives—such as solar, hydro and wind power—to nuclear reactors in solving Africa's electricity problem.

A beleaguered Russia is also likely to be heavily involved in the internal politics of African countries. Such intervention will be seen primarily through the prism of its conflict with the West and its need to secure whatever resources and economic opportunities it can get as it tries to evade sanctions and diversify its stuttering economy. Democratic norms and practices have not fared well in Africa after the wave of democratisation that ended military and one-party rule in much of the continent in the 1990s. There has been a serious democratic regression as incumbents in many countries change their constitutions to extend their rule, governing parties capture state institutions, harass opposition parties and restrict the rights of citizens, and elections are rigged to prevent a transfer of power. By 2020, term limits had been modified or eliminated in 16 African countries (Siegle and Cook 2020), and in a list of controversial elections in the world, 50 are African (Wikipedia[c]). Such setbacks in democratisation, security challenges and failure to improve the lives of citizens have encouraged the military to make a comeback in African politics (Ibrahim 2022). Military coups have occurred in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Sudan and Chad in the last two years. While Western powers have been opportunistic in advancing the democracy agenda in Africa (punishing countries they dislike while giving a pass to others until there is a breakdown of order), they have joined African regional organisations, which have failed to hold flawed democracies to account, to oppose the return of military rule on the continent.

Russia has stepped in to prop up besieged African dictators by providing arms and military protection. Its state-owned arms export agency, Rosoboronexport, is the largest arms exporter to Africa, accounting for about 50 per cent of Africa's arms imports. It is the second largest arms exporter in the world after the US. Indeed, the armament sector plays a big role in Russia's economy as it accounts for a large proportion of manufactured exports (Chatham House 2017). Algeria and Egypt are Russia's biggest clients in Africa, but it has recently expanded sales to a number of sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria, Tanzania, Cameroon, Angola and the Central African Republic (Episkopos 2020).

Russia uses its paramilitary or mercenary outfit, the Wagner Group, which specialises in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism training as well as use of military hardware, to challenge Western power in Africa and provide security to rogue African leaders who want to remain in power and roll back democratic change. In exchange, Russia receives concessions to extract mineral resources, commercial contracts or access to ports and airbases (Fasanotti 2022). The Wagner Group is active in the Central African Republic, where it has been accused of summary executions, torture and indiscriminate targeting of civilian facilities (Parachini and Bauer 2021), Sudan (especially during Omar Al-Bashir's regime), Mozambique, Madagascar, Libya, Chad, Mali and Burkina Faso. There has been a standoff between France and Mali, where French troops have been unable to beat back Islamist terrorists despite committing 3,500 troops there since 2013. Faced with pressure from France, its European allies and African regional organisations to organise elections for a transition to civil rule, the military leader, Assimi Goita, invited the Wagner Group to bolster his security and declared the arrogant and pushy French ambassador *persona non grata.*

We are likely to see an aggravation of this kind of big-power competition in Africa in which Russia and willing African dictators try to beat back pressure for democratisation and the protection of human rights. Western governments may also be forced to give up all pretence of promoting democracy in Africa and may relate with countries primarily from the strategic perspective of countering Russian and Chinese penetration of the continent. It is indeed astonishing that although 25 African countries supported the General Assembly resolution that called on Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine, 17 countries abstained, eight did not vote and one voted against. Russia provides security through its Wagner Group to many of the states that abstained or stayed away, others are under sanctions themselves, and some have bilateral military co-operation agreements with Russia.

It is important to understand that Western powers became interested in the global democracy project only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For much of its history, the West practised democracy at home and *realpolitik* or pragmatism, as defined by its strategic and economic interests, overseas. This meant it could use force to achieve its objectives without following UN rules or international law and work with all kinds of despots and corrupt leaders whose interests were aligned with its own. Its cosy relations with the despotic regimes of the Gulf oil states underscore the latter point. Western powers failed to sanction or hold to account the Saudi Arabian leadership after the Saudi Arabian journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, was butchered by Saudi officials at the Saudi embassy in Istanbul in 2018. Britain tried to use democracy as a tool to stagger its exit from its colonies in the 1950s and part of the 1960s, while devising new methods of influence and control, such as the Sterling Area system and the Commonwealth—but this was only for a brief period. France did not bother with the idea of injecting democracy into its decolonisation project, and Portugal was chased out of its colonies through armed struggles. Let us be clear: the belief that the US had become the only superpower in town after the collapse of the Soviet Union encouraged the West to cloak its global strategic interests with the ideals of democracy. We may be heading back to the stark days of authoritarian politics of the pre-1990s. It is difficult to believe that the West will firm up its already questionable commitment to democracy on the continent when faced with challenges from Russia and China, which have no interest in democracy.

Short Term Costs of the Crisis

One final issue that should be highlighted in discussing the invasion and how it is likely to impact Africa is the short-term effects of the rise in oil, gas and wheat prices. Russia is the world's second largest exporter of oil after Saudi Arabia; it is also the fourth largest gas exporter after the US, Qatar and Algeria. And both Russia and Ukraine are major wheat producers, with Russia ranked third in the world after China and India, and Ukraine seventh. Both Russia and Ukraine account for 30 per cent of global wheat exports, and Ukraine is a major exporter of maize and vegetable oil. South Africa, for instance, imports about 30 per cent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine, and Russia is the second largest exporter of wheat to Nigeria. Supply chains in commodity production and marketing are often disrupted during global crises. It is not surprising that the prices of oil, gas, wheat and other grains, which were already rising in late 2021, have skyrocketed since the invasion.

The effects of price rises depend on whether a country is a net exporter or importer. For the big oil producers, such as Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Libya, Algeria, Republic of Congo, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea and Chad, the price increase in oil is likely to be a boon as state revenues will increase, especially if production is ramped up. Gas producers like Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Angola and Equatorial Guinea may also take advantage of the cancellation of the Russo-German Nord Stream 2 oil pipeline if they can invest in the infrastructure for supplying gas across the Mediterranean into Europe (Iyora 2022). However, the vast majority of African countries do not produce oil or, if they do, are net importers. For these countries, the global oil price hike has translated into a sharp rise in the prices of petrol and related products as well as increases in transport fares. A similar problem can be observed with grain. The important wheat producers in Africa are South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Nigeria. However, all these countries are net importers. While the rise in wheat prices may improve the incomes of local farmers, it may hurt consumers as bread, pasta, noodles, biscuits and cakes become expensive.

Conclusion

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the current standoff between Russia and the West threaten world peace. The doctrine of spheres of influence, which informs Putin's invasion, is dangerous not only for former Soviet republics but also for African countries and other small nations around the world. It provides a justification for redrawing boundaries, annexing countries and undermining the territorial integrity of states, which is a fundamental principle of the UN. The isolation of Russia through the West's punitive sanctions may not only adversely impact Africa through oil, wheat and other grain price hikes, it may also create a Fortress Russia that will pursue an aggressive policy in Africa and other weak regions in order to gain allies, markets and raw materials and diversify its external relations. This is likely to impact African politics negatively as equally beleaguered African politicians who do not want to give up power may sign up for Russian protection. In this new dynamic, Western countries may be forced to abandon their already questionable support for Africa's troubled democracy project and engage with African countries through the prism of their rivalry with Russia.

The insistence of the West on maintaining NATO's open-door policy of admitting any country that seeks to join the alliance is dumb. Putin should withdraw from Ukraine and Ukraine should not be admitted into NATO. The Cold War arrangements that kept Finland, which shares a border with Russia, out of the military alliances of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, while allowing the country to thrive as a Western social democracy provide useful lessons. While the doctrine of spheres of influence should be rejected unreservedly, the security interests of all states that do not threaten the territorial integrity of other states should be respected. Putin seems to have overplayed his hand. The West cannot win a war against him because of his nuclear arsenal, but his economy can be crippled and the three decades of his citizens' exposure to, and enjoyment of, Western lifestyles and contacts can be disrupted, fuelling resentment and possibly instability in his country. The invasion has done profound damage to Russia's relations with the West, which will be difficult to reverse as long as Putin and like-minded people around him are in power. Africa should brace itself for the challenging years ahead.

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Note

1. Address by the President of the Russian Federation, 24 February 2022.

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The Unresolved Question of Identity in Ethiopia[1]

This article articulates an argument for pan-Ethiopian identity in understanding processes of state formation in Africa. The article is part of CODESRIA's initiative to welcome intellectual reflections and dialogue around different, even contending, positions on the Ethiopian question and how comparative analyses of similar situations in Africa might shed light on attempts to end the crisis and explore suitable ways forward. CODESRIA Bulletin is a platform for ideas and opinion that contribute to better understanding of society and among many other topics, we aim here to discuss the challenge of nation-building in Africa. The Council welcomes contributions that will advance rigorous intellectual debate on these matter for review and publication as a way of facilitating intellectual dialogue on these issues.

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Introduction

The recent conflict in northern Ethiopia has put the country in the international spotlight. In a pattern rather reminiscent of Darfur in the first decade of this century, Tigray has become a household name and genocide the buzzword. Over a decade ago, Mahmood Mamdani wrote a scathing critique of the 'Save Darfur' movement (Mamdani 2010), highlighting the liberal use of the term 'genocide'. But the world does not seem to have become the wiser for it. 'Save Darfur' has been replaced by 'Stand with Tigray'. The agitprop value of the term genocide is so high that the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and its partisans have been harping on it. This has continued even after the joint investigation of the UN OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission established that, while atrocities were committed by all parties to the conflict, there was no act that justified the use of the genocide label. It has been sustained even after TPLF forces have committed large-scale atrocities, including rape, mass executions and looting and wanton destruction of health and educational facilities, in the wake of their incursions into the Amhara and Afar regions after the unilateral declaration of ceasefire by the federal government in June 2021.[2]

A proper understanding of the Ethiopian historical context has been woefully lacking in the media reports and the analyses of 'pundits'. Aside from the longue durée of Ethiopian history, even the short span of the three decades when the TPLF held central political power has eluded most analyses. And yet those three decades form such an important backdrop to the current conflict. In the longer perspective, the conflict emanated from the as yet unresolved question of identity in Ethiopian politics. Since the middle of the twentieth century, Ethiopian identity, which had been almost axiomatic, has been subjected to a severe test. A counter-narrative has exposed the glaring deficiencies of that identity. The remedy prescribed to address those deficiencies, which gave primacy to ethnic identity, far from resolving the problem, seems to have aggravated it. The current conflict is the latest (and hopefully the last) episode in this tension between pan-Ethiopian and ethnonationalist identity. This article is intended to throw some light on the trajectory of identity politics in Ethiopia.

The Evolution of Pan-Ethiopian Identity

The Ethiopian state is notable for its antiquity and its resilience. Legendary origins aside, it can be traced back at least two thousand years. Aksum, which has come to assume such negative connotations in the recent conflict, was its foundation. It gave Ethiopia its monarchy, its two major religions (Orthodox Christianity and Islam), its unique Ge'ez syllabary, and its architectural and musical traditions. Just as the country's medieval rulers (c. 1270–1529) traced their dynastic line back to Aksum and beyond, its modern emperors evoked the might and grandeur of the medieval kings. In a process that combined peaceful overtures with physical violence, Emperor Menilek (r. 1889–1913) forged the modern Ethiopian state. Haile Selassie I, who was crowned in 1930 after a protracted struggle for succession, initiated an unprecedented centralisation of power. Schools and the military were the two pillars of the process of nation-building, even if these were characterised by a high dosage of assimilation.

Not only did the Ethiopian state show remarkable continuity, but it was also resilient in the face of both external and internal stresses. It survived the devastating raids of Queen Yodit (Gudit) in the tenth century, the Wars of Ahmad Gragn and the massive population movements of the Oromo in the sixteenth century, the uncertainty that attended the ailment and eventual demise of the mighty Menilek, the tribulations of the 1974 Revolution, and the change of regime in 1991. Its rulers put aside their internal differences and fought as one to defeat Italian colonial intrusion at the Battle of Adwa in 1896. That victory not only guaranteed the country's independence but also became a beacon of freedom and dignity to Africans in particular, and black people in general. Similarly, Ethiopians rallied against the Fascist Italian Occupation (1936–1941) by waging a guerrilla war that cut the enemy's tenure short. They rallied yet again from 1977 to 1978 to reverse the Somali invasion, and from 1998 to 2000 during the Ethiopian-Eritrean border war.

Until about the middle of the twentieth century, regional affiliation was a more important marker than ethnic identity. This was particularly true of the Amhara, who identified themselves by their regions (Gojjam, Gondar, Shawa, Wollo) or even sub-regions (Damot, Gayent, Manz, Yefat, Bulga, Yajju, etc.) rather than as Amhara. Indeed, Shawa was the ethnic melting pot par excellence, blending the Amhara, Oromo and Gurage into a distinct geographical entity.[3] Among the Oromo as well, clan identity (Borana, Karayu, Leqa, Salale, Sibu, etc.) was more pronounced than pan-Oromo identity. Even in Tigray, where ethnos and region were relatively more coterminous, sub-regional identity (Adwa, Agame, Enderta, Shire, Tembien) was equally powerful.

The fluidity of ethnic identity was reflected in the high degree of interethnic interaction that prevailed, including interethnic marriages. The most ancient people of Ethiopia, the Agaw, became so fused with the Amhara that, except for a few pockets, they practically lost their identity. But the supreme example of interethnic mixing was provided by the Oromo, who experienced a process of reciprocal assimilation with the peoples they came across—assimilating as well as being assimilated (Yates 2020). Wallo is the supreme example of the acculturation of the Amhara and the Oromo. Farther to the west, in Gojjam, the Oromo not only intermingled with the Amhara population but also came to have a decisive role in the power politics of the centre. The boundary between the Amhara and Oromo is quite blurred in the district of Salale. Likewise, there was a great deal of acculturation between the northern Gurage (known variously as Soddo, Kestane or Aymallal) and the adjacent Oromo (Zewde 2008).

Interethnic marriages, particularly among the elite, have been common since the wedding of the Hadiya princess, Ite Jan Zela (more famously known as Queen Eleni), to Emperor Ba'eda Maryam (r. 1433–68). This became the norm in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as interdynastic marriages were arranged to fend off opposition or ensure succession. Thus Emperor Takla Giyorgis of Wag (r. 1868–1971), successor of Emperor Tewodros, was married to the sister of Kassa Mercha of Tigray (the future Emperor Yohannes, r. 1872–1889). The latter's son was married to the daughter of King Menilek of Shawa. Such arranged interethnic marriages were elevated to the level of an art by Menilek's spouse, Taytu, who created a web of matrimonial relations to consolidate her power in her husband's waning years. Likewise, Emperor Haile Selassie's family was linked by marriage to the ruling houses of Wollo, Tigray, and Wallaga (see, for example, Serekeberhan 2002).

Ultimately, these intermarriages helped create a ruling class that had its members coming from different regions of the country. Oromo leaders came to play an important role in the power politics of the Gonderine period, culminating in the establishment of a power bloc that came to be known as the Yajju dynasty. Menelik's campaigns of territorial expansion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century were spearheaded by his Oromo general, Ras Gobana Dachi. Fitawrari Habte Giyorgis Dinagde, of Oromo-Gurage parentage, emerged as a formidable powerbroker during the interregnum between Menelik's incapacitation and Haile Selassie's ascent to the throne (Zewde 2008).

A cursory survey of Ethiopia's national icons demonstrates their varied ethnic backgrounds. These include the already cited Habte Giyorgis (Oromo-Gurage), the legendary marathon runner Abebe Bikila (Oromo), the 'King of Pop' Tilahun Gessesse (Amhara-Oromo), Ethiopia's most accomplished poet laureate, Tsegaye Gebre-Medhin (Amhara-Oromo), Emperor Tewodros (Amhara), Emperor Yohannes, the redoubtable general Ras Alula, and the most incisive intellectual of the early twentieth century, Gabra Heywat Baykadagn (all Tigrayans), and Emperors Menilek and Haile Selassie (of mixed Amhara and Oromo parentage). Also of interest is how ethnic culinary specialities attained national status. These include the Amhara (particularly Gondaré) *doro wat* (chicken curry), the Gurage *kitfo*, the Oromo *chachabsa* and the Tigrayan/Eritrean *(h)ambasha*.

The Ascendancy of the Counter-Narrative

The above trajectory of pan-Ethiopian identity came under serious challenge in the second half of the twentieth century. The icons became villains. Menilek, the victor of Adwa and the creator of modern Ethiopia, became the ruthless conqueror. His Oromo general, Ras Gobana, became the arch collaborator and traitor. In 1943, an anti-government protest in Tigray known as Wayane severely tested the authority of the newly restored government of Haile Selassie, following the end of Fascist Italian Occupation (1936–1941). While a number of factors contributed to its outbreak, the marginalisation that the province experienced after the death of Emperor Yohannes was a contributory factor. But it was largely confined to the southeastern part of the province and was quickly suppressed (Tareke 1991).[4]

Elsewhere, it was not so much marginalisation as downright oppression and exploitation that triggered ethnonationalist movements. In many parts of southern Ethiopia, the territorial campaigns of Menilek were followed not only by the imposition of administrative control but also the appropriation of economic resources (particularly land) and the exercise of various forms of cultural oppression. Although the Oromo on the whole fared relatively better than many of the other southern peoples, some of whom were subjected to enslavement, it was they who felt the first stirrings of ethnonationalism. A self-help association named after the two major branches of the Oromo, Mecha and Tulama, was formed in 1963. The government was uncomfortable with this development and became alarmed when the leaders of the association organised a hasty and ill-considered attempt to assassinate the emperor. The leaders were detained, one of them was subsequently hanged and the association was banned, only to resurface as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 1974 (Hassen 1998). Simultaneously, for the better part of the 1960s, a peasant rebellion in the Oromo and Somali-inhabited province of Bale posed a serious challenge to central government authority.

A much more serious challenge to the pan-Ethiopian thesis emerged in Eritrea. Following the liberation of that country from Italian colonial rule in 1941, Eritreans were divided into those who favoured union with Ethiopia and those who opted for independence. As a sort of compromise, the UN resolved in 1950 to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia. Following the abrogation of the federal arrangement in 1962, a liberation movement emerged in Eritrea, first campaigning for the restoration of the federation but eventually fighting for independence. To give their movement international legitimacy, the Eritrean liberation fronts couched their struggle as an anticolonial one. The OLF took the cue and eagerly adopted the same rhetoric.

It was to accommodate these ethnonationalist and regional challenges that the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) began to tackle seriously what it called the question of nationalities. The upshot of the two-year debate was the adoption in the summer of 1971 of the Leninist-Stalinist principle of self-determination, up to and including secession. This became the credo not only of the ESM but also the leftist parties that sprouted from it, notably the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (more commonly known by its Amharic acronym, Me'ison). The TPLF, which emerged on the fringes of that movement, also embraced self-determination wholeheartedly as it found it an effective weapon to mobilise the Tigrayan population for the armed struggle that it launched in 1975. The eclipse of the pan-Ethiopian organisations (notably EPRP and Me'ison) through their mutual destruction and the notorious 'Red Terror' paved the way for the ascendancy of ethnonationalist organisations like the TPLF and OLF ('Quest') (see Zewde 2014, 20018, especially Chapter 6).[5]

The victory of the TPLF-spearheaded EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front) over the Darg in 1991 paved the way for the legal consolidation of self-determination, which was first enunciated in the ESM—initially via the Charter of the Transitional Government and next in the 1995 Constitution that established the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Ethiopia was divided into nine ethnolinguistic regions. Precedence was given to the 'nations, nationalities and peoples' of Ethiopia over the pan-Ethiopian entity. Sovereign power resided in the former rather than the latter. Most importantly, the first sub-article of Article 39 gave the entities an 'unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession' (Republic of Ethiopia 1995).

The principle of self-determination, although meant to address the long-standing problem of the oppression and marginalisation of many nationalities, was faulty in conception and devious in execution. To begin with, it was based on a blind imitation of the Leninist classics rather than a careful reading of Ethiopian history or ethnography. As a result, it accentuated the differences of the various ethnic groups and totally ignored the similarities and interrelationships that have been outlined above. This deficiency was reflected in the fact that the right to secession was prioritised over the advantages of living together, provided that the linguistic and cultural rights of the nationalities were respected. This 'fixation on secession' (to borrow a phrase from one of the student leaders of the time) was blissfully explained away as being the surest way of actually discouraging secession. Moreover, it was deemed imperative to bring the Eritrean liberation movement into the common struggle against imperial rule.

Secondly, no effort was made to disaggregate the collective appellation 'nations, nationalities and peoples', although it was meant to denote a descending order of social organisation. In fact, the fifth subarticle of the same controversial Article 39 gives a blanket definition for all three categories.

Thirdly, in view of the fact that some eighty 'nations, nationalities and peoples' are known to exist in Ethiopia, it is difficult to see where this splintering of the country into regional states will end. As it turned out, the period since the promulgation of the Constitution has been characterised by various demands for autonomous status, either as a region or zone or a 'special zone'. Currently, with the breakaway of two new regions from the rather amorphous Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (quite a mouthful by itself!), the number of regions in the country has been raised from nine to eleven.

Fourthly, although it was stipulated in the Constitution that self-determination was to be exercised by means of a referendum, it was not always clear whether that referendum reflected the actual feeling of the people concerned or was the result of the manipulation of the many 'liberation fronts' that have mushroomed in the country. Self-determination comes not only with political autonomy but also with perks and privileges for the governing elite.[6]

Equally sobering has been the practical implementation of self-determination. Although the regions were theoretically deemed to be autonomous, they were actually controlled from the centre through the powerful EPRDF party apparatus. Behind every regional president was a TPLF functionary who exercised real power and ensured the party line was adhered to. The TPLF had such hegemonic control over the EPRDF that it became common to pair the two organisations as TPLF/EPRDF. The three other members of the coalition—the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO) and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Front (SEPDF)—had a manifestly secondary status. Even more marginalised were the so-called 'allied parties', mostly representing the nationalities on the periphery (Markakis 2011; Aalen 2001).

Further, an arrangement that was meant to bring about a harmonious relationship among the different nationalities actually ushered in an era of unprecedented ethnic conflict. Somalis were pitted against Oromo, Gujji against Gedeo and Oromo against Amhara. These conflicts escalated after the TPLF lost its hegemonic position and retreated to its Tigray stronghold, with most of the conflicts being attributed to its strategy to destabilise the Abiy Ahmed government. The relative weakness of that government to enforce its authority, partly emanating from the general spirit of liberalisation that was its birthmark, has accentuated the problem. As a result, hundreds of Ethiopians have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands have been internally displaced. Amhara settlers have suffered the most as they have been targeted by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), the armed wing of OLF, in Wallaga and northern Shawa, and armed Gumuz fighters in Beni Shangul.

Dénouement?

The war that erupted in Tigray in November 2020 is in a way the culmination of this unresolved problem of identity. The much-vaunted harmonious coexistence of nationalities has evaporated into thin air amidst the deafening roar of guns and mutual recriminations of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Tigray, the bedrock of Ethiopian statehood and civilisation, seems poised to break away from Ethiopia. There is nothing more disheartening for an Ethiopian than to see Tigrayans trampling the Ethiopian flag and expressing pride in being privileged to witness (somewhat prematurely, one should add) the breakup of Ethiopia. That is the same flag around which the Tigrayan Emperor Yohannes IV rallied Ethiopians against Egyptian invasion, Italian encroachment, and Sudanese Mahdist incursions.

Conversely, the war has reinforced the nascent Amhara nationalism and reinvigorated the residual pan-Ethiopian nationalism. If there were two protagonists of the imperial order, it was the Amhara and the Tigrayans. Now, they have become mortal enemies. Already, as a result of the harassment that the Amhara have suffered in many parts of the country and the inability of the Amhara contingent of the ruling party to come to their defence, a strident Amhara nationalist party known as the National Movement of Amhara (NAMA) has emerged (Tazebew 2021). The war, and in particular the TPLF depredations in the Amhara region, has strengthened Amhara nationalism. Even more significantly, the threat posed by the TPLF has reinvigorated the residual pan-Ethiopian nationalism. Ethiopians of almost all nationalities have rallied behind the federal government in a manner that is reminiscent of Adwa in 1896, the anti-Fascist resistance of 1936–41, the Somali invasion of 1977–78 and the Ethio-Eritrean War of 1998–2000. What is of particular interest is that this pan-Ethiopian patriotism is as strident (if not more) among historically marginalised nationalities, such as the Afar, the Gambellans and the southern peoples.

Yet, there are genuine apprehensions that the resolution of the Tigray conflict might not be the end of the story. The position of the Oromo elite has been somewhat perplexing. Its strategy in the past decades has ranged from the creation of an independent Oromia, articulated by the OLF, to achieving self-determination within Ethiopia, as encapsulated by the OPDO (now rechristened Oromo Prosperity). Yet, the boundary between the two has not always been watertight. The impunity with which the OLA has been killing and maiming in the past three years has led to speculation that it might be enjoying the connivance or benevolent neutrality of the ruling Oromo elite. The total destruction of the town of Ataye, only some 200km from Addis Ababa, in April 2021 lent credence to these suspicions. If the Oromo elite is not going to learn from the disastrous outcome of the TPLF's hegemonic aspirations, Ethiopia will be heading for yet another round of conflict.

Hopefully, the much-anticipated national dialogue that is now being launched will address all these outstanding issues and come up with a set of recommendations that could move the country forward. That the 1995 Constitution has to be revised goes without saying. For far too long, it has been venerated like the tablets of Moses or the Holy Bible. That Ethiopia should have some form of federal arrangement has become an inescapable reality. Likewise, ethnic identity is not something to be wished away. Perhaps the solution is an arrangement that recognises ethnic identities but gives pride of place to a pan-Ethiopian identity. The student movement that cast such a spell on Ethiopian politics focused more on social justice ('Land to the Tiller') and equality ('self-determination') and less on freedom. The recent history of the country has shown that the accent should be placed on political pluralism rather than on self-determination.

Notes

1. The ideas in this piece were first presented at a public lecture I delivered at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study in October 2021 as part of the Fellows' seminar series. I am grateful to STIAS for granting me the fellowship to help me develop my research on the issue of identity in Ethiopia.
2. See the following for TPLF's 'love affair' with genocide: https://ethiopost.medium.com/tplf-and-genocide-a-love-affair-2e2d8c023e72 and https://www.the-star.co.ke/opinion/star-blogs/2022-01-12-wosen-melaku-tplfs-obsession-with-genocide-and-how-to-end-it/. There is now ample documentation on TPLF atrocities in the Amhara and Afar regions. See, among others, the following links: TPLF War Crimes- Rape-Massacres-90% of Public Infrastructures Ransacked and Deliberately Destroyed; www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/09/rebel-forces-accused-of-killing-civilians-north-ethiopia; https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ethiopia-conflict-tplf/; https://youtu.be/7EckON-2PyQ.
3. See Berhanu Abegaz (https://issuu.com/amharacouncil/docs/the_enigmatic_amara), who defines the Amhara as 'arguably the most detribalized of Ethiopia's cultural groups', and Gerry Salole, 1979, Who are the Shoans?' *Horn of Africa* Vol. 2, No. 3, for the unique historical status of Shawa.
4. This is the standard work on the Wayane.
5. See Chapter 6 for ESM's handling of what it called the 'national question' or the 'question of nationalities.
6. I have discussed the troubled legacy of ESM's handling of the question in an Amharic piece, 'The Legacy of the Ethiopian Student Movement on the Question of Nationalities', which recently got wide publicity online (cf. https://sebategna.com).

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Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism and the African Search for Viable Statehood: Matters Arising

This is the second in a series of articles that CODESRIA is publishing on the issue of nation-building in Africa based on a reflection on the Ethiopian crisis. The article critically discusses the dynamics of federalism as expressed in the Ethiopian case while also mobilizing experiences from across the continent to bring in a comparative dimension. As indicated in CODESRIA Bulletin Online, No. 4, the Council welcomes intellectual contributions and reflections that advance our understanding on these issues.

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At the time of its negotiation and adoption in the 1990s, the Ethiopian model of 'ethnic federation' presented a breath of fresh air for African states grappling with how to balance the devil of diversity and the deep blue sea of cohesion and integration. It was even more significant that the Ethiopian journey was taking place at the same time that South Africa was transitioning from apartheid to a democratic state, and the rest of Africa was searching for new paradigms of viable statehood. Ethiopia and South Africa were confronting one of the more fundamental but unresolved issues of statehood in Africa: the equitable accommodation of contesting subnationalist forces that in some cases required the acknowledgement of the right of constituent states to self-determination. The history and circumstances of the transitions in the two countries made the issue even more critical not only for them but also the theory and practice of statehood, national integration and federalism in Africa's divided societies for which the transitions presented new hopes and opportunities in the long-drawn-out search for workable solutions.

Ethiopia has a complex past of ethno-regional domination, rebellions and separatist agitations, which reached a head in the wars of the ethnically based liberation movements (1974–1991), with the centralist and centripetal forces of Ethiopia *Tikdem* (Ethiopia First) contending with those of regionalism and autonomy. South Africa's situation was different, if not peculiar, but the circumstances that demanded a political solution were not entirely dissimilar. Like Ethiopia, the opposing forces were those for centralization/national integration and those for regional autonomy/separatism. Students of federalism will readily agree that the balance of forces in both situations demanded a federal solution of the variety that operates on the basis of a federal Constitution that shares power between at least two tiers of government (as opposed to less thorough going variants that do not involve a federal Constitution and government). It was just as well that the two countries adopted the federal solution at the time they did because, as Horowitz (2007) argued, as conflict management instrumentalities, federal solutions tend to be more effective when applied at the right time, that is, before conflicts reach disintegrative and irreconcilable points.

But whereas South Africa opted for a form of *undivided* federalism, which substantially followed centrist conventional wisdom with a heavy dose of Jacobinism and has been relatively stable so far, Ethiopia adopted a form of *divided* federalism within strumentalities that were unprecedented and unique in Africa, and even in the universe of federal theory and practice, and which has been troubled and unstable. Ethiopia's ethnic federation not only had the country's major (ethnic) nations, nationalities and peoples (defined as groups with a common culture, language or religion and an identifiable territory) as constituent regional states with substantial autonomous powers, but also granted the nationalities the right to self-determination, including the 'unconditional right' to secede. The country's history of intense agitations for separation and regional autonomy and contested hegemony, which shaped the transition, seemed to demand this kind of divided federalism. However, the underlying contradictions of ethnic federation and statehood raised questions about the feasibility and stability of the arrangement, and whether it was meant to be short-term or long-term, a means to an end, or an end in itself. The structure of the federal system raised even more fundamental questions. How workable is a federal formula that:

1. freezes ethnonationalities as *permanently* divided entities, thereby reproducing historical and structural inequalities and discriminations, including the domination, oppression and relegation of some groups (especially ethnic and religious minorities),
2. whose political economy deprives constituent units of the resources and capacities to discharge autonomous powers on matters as basic as the development of local languages and mother tongue education,
3. that was constructed by an authoritarian regime and assigns extensive powers of control and intervention to federal authorities over regional states, including most notably the power to declare a state of emergency (which is seen as a legacy of the Derg regime), and
4. holds the ideology of Ethiopia *Tikdem* overarching and sacrosanct?

With regard to (4), the point should be made that, although Ethiopia has a history of insurgency and separatist agitation, dissent has mostly been over equitable accommodation within the state rather than independence from it. (For fairly well-known historical reasons Eritrea was the exception in this regard.)

Ethiopia's experience so far, especially since the political crisis that led to the Oromo and Tigray insurgency and spiralled into civil war under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who acceded to power in 2018, suggests that the ethnic federation may havefailed to meet the expectations of its design and to address the contradictions that underlie the unity and diversity nexus. These contradictions mostly emanate from an endemic African disease, namely, the unrestrained colonial powers of central governments and ruling elites, which undermine the forces of self-government and autonomy and render the core federal principles of non-centralisation, devolution, decentralisation and power-sharing weak and ineffective. In intent and design, Ethiopia's ethnic federalism appeared capable of curing this disease but, once again, the overbearing power of the centre has proven to be impregnable. The failure of decentralisation schemes to raise the self-governance status of subnational units has been attributed to this factor. In fact, it has been argued that in Ethiopia, like other countries in Africa, decentralisation strengthens the central government rather than subnational governments.

So, why has Ethiopia's ethnic federalism not been able to cure the African disease? To begin with, in spite of the ethno-regional character of regional states and the constitutional efforts to make them the 'owners' of the federal government (for example, by having members of the House of Federation, the second national legislative chamber that protects the constituent interests in constitutional interpretation and judicial review, represent nations, nationalities and peoples rather than states), the regional states remain creations of the 'imperial' federal government whose political and fiscal control has continuously constrained their ability to function in any meaningfully autonomous way. This might very well be an endemic problem for federal systems that come into being through the disaggregative process, whereby a previously unitary system is disaggregated, as it were, for the purpose of federalism: more often than not, federalism becomes 'a matter of the central government's yielding a great deal of power to the substate units, often simply to facilitate the ability of ethnic contestants to live in separate compartments while purporting to inhabit a common central state' (Horowitz 2007, 953).

This seems to be true of the Ethiopian case, what with the one-party authoritarian regime built around the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its successor Prosperity Party (the EPRDF won 100% of the legislative seats in federal and regional parliaments in the 2015 elections), as well as *Zenawism*, which reflected he strong power wielded by former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi under whose government ethnic federalism was adopted, and later Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Yet the Ethiopian experiment with its provisions for strong regional states seemed to offer a solution.

The declarations of states of emergency by the federal government in 2015, 2016 and 2021 that literally turned the country into a military state, however, deepened the authoritarian framework within which federalism has had to work. Perhaps, then, the inability of the regional states to counterbalance the dominance of the centre, which was one of the built-in expectations of ethnic federalism, due partly to structural disabilities (some of which have been highlighted above) and partly to the resurgent unification drive by coalition partners of the Prosperity Party who reject 'divisive' ethnic federalism, may have been a key driver for Tigray (and Oromo and Amhara) dissent and rebellion. The displacement from power at the centre of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which was the dominant force in the old EPRDF, may also have been another key propellant, as was the case with Afrikaners who, upon displacement from power in South Africa sought refuge in regional autonomy.

The overbearing power of the central government is not the only pertinent issue in the travails of Ethiopia's ethnic federalism, however. The recent insurgencies in particular have rekindled the age-old debate over the benefits or dangers of granting autonomy and self-determination rights to 'self-contained' ethnic nationalities, such as those in the regional states. On one side of the debate is the view that doses of autonomy, self-determination and self-governance are necessary for addressing problems of ownership and inclusivity in highly divided societies where equity and justice on the part of central governments are not assured. The clamour for resource control by groups that bear or produce commodities on which national economies depend, which has become widespread across Africa, for example, takes its cue from this. It is therefore not surprising that such demands are usually the first lines of defence by ethnic champions, insurgents and separatists in negotiations with state power-holders. In theory, at least, autonomy and self-determination are helpful for managing deeply divided societies, and this was expected to be one of the benefits of Ethiopia's ethnic federalism.

The opposing view considers free-will autonomy of the kind embodied in ethnic federation dangerous on at least two grounds. First, the implicit sense of ownership and independence of the regional state could harden ethnic identities and encourage feelings of exclusivity that lead to discrimination against so-called non-indigenes. This polarising tendency, which has been reported in several regional states in matters like access to land, education and employment, is similar to that of Nigeria where conflicts between indigenes and non-indigenes induced by a variant of ethnic federalism have aggravated national question contestations. These debates include demands for new (own) states. In 2019, the *Sidama* people voted overwhelmingly (98.5 %) for a separate state from the regional state of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples.

Second, autonomy and self-determination are likely to make the country more (permanently) divided and incentivise opposition, insurgency, separatism and secession, particularly when the nationalities – as regional states – perceive the central government to be encroaching upon, usurping or depriving them of their constitutionally guaranteed powers (such as the reduction of federal funding to Tigray in 2020). The rebellions of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF),later branded Tigray Defence Force (TDF), Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDU), Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM), Gambella People's Liberation Army (GPLA), Global Kimant People's Right and Justice Movement (GKPRJM), Kimant Democratic Party (KDP), Sidama National Liberation Front (SNLF) and Somali State Resistance (SSR), and the formation of the anti-Abiy alliance known as the United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces, have been largely attributed to these tendencies. This underlies the resurgent Ethiopia Tikdem movement that has gained traction with Abiy's Prosperity Party, which seeks national unity through a coalition of ethnic political parties and movements, but which opposition forces see as intended to further strengthen the unitary-authoritarian framework and undermine the basis of ethnic federalism.

The contradictions, tensions and troubles that Ethiopia is presently going through do not indicate that the ethnic federation model has failed. If anything, the system, which suits the historical, political, social and economic circumstances of a country that requires a balance between diversity and integration, has not been allowed to work as designed. The dissent and insurgencies are therefore to be seen as signposts that the federal system needs review, rebargaining and renegotiation, which may yet necessitate the adoption of new instrumentalities to make the regional states more effective and less exclusionary tiers of government, and the federal government more democratic and accountable. This is because federalism is a dynamic system, the viability, stability and ultimate success of which depends on the capacity of its managers to respond to changing political realities, forces and demands. The greatest dangers to federalism are not just the overbearing power of the federal government and authoritarian regimes but opportunistic elites who seek state capture at national and subnational levels for personal gain rather than the common good.

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In the Shadows of the Natural Sciences The Humanities in Crisis or the Crisis of Humanity?

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Introduction

The sociology of knowledge categorises the fields of intellectual inquiry into the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. The natural sciences study natural phenomena using empirical evidence from observation and experimentation with a view to not only describing and understanding such phenomena, but also predicting the same. They are divided into life sciences (botany and zoology), physical sciences (astronomy, chemistry, and physics), and earth sciences (geology, oceanography, meteorology, and palaeontology). The humanities are broadly defined as a large family of disciplines that study the expressions of the human mind. They include the study of languages and cultures, literature and the fine arts, musicology, history and archaeology, religions, ethics, gender, and philosophy, in their widely ranging forms, including important sections of communication and media studies (Vale 2011: 22–3). Social sciences on the other hand, are the disciplines that fall between the humanities and natural sciences. They include anthropology, economics, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology among others. The taxonomic distinction between the humanities and social sciences is said to be a conceptual distinction between two forms of knowledge which are, erroneously some would say, seen as abstract (humanities) and applied (social sciences). Social sciences' claim to applied knowledge rests on the argument that traditionally, social science disciplines often focus on defining social problems and intervening in their solution while the humanities are said to focus mainly on hermeneutics, i.e., interpretation and understanding. According to Bod and Kursell (2015:338), the humanities study texts, they study the products of human culture, but in this they are 'typically distinguished from the social sciences in having a significant historical element, in the use of interpretation of texts and artefacts rather than experimental and quantitative methods, and in having an idiographic rather than nomothetic character'. Ideographic approaches, prevalent in the humanities, emphasise the unique elements of individual social phenomena, the historically particular, and are thus individualising approaches. Nomothetic approaches prevalent in the social sciences, however, focus on providing general law-like conclusions about social phenomena, they seek to emulate the scientific logic and quantitative methodology of the natural sciences. They thus seek to produce generalising rather than individualising epistemologies.

Despite the presumed taxonomic difference between the humanities and social sciences, however, juxtaposed with the natural sciences, they are ontologically similar in their focus on social phenomena in contradistinction to natural sciences which focus on the physical world. The natural sciences, such as astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology and physics employ strictly quantitative methods, experimental research, and both deductive and inductive scientific logic to describe, explain, and predict natural phenomena as well as make prescriptions about them. They generate the quintessential applied knowledge. Indeed, the utilitarian value of their knowledge products in areas such as medicine, engineering, computing and mechanics has elevated them to the pride of place both in the academy and in society generally. Conversely, the utilitarian relevance of the humanities and social sciences has increasingly been questioned, especially in the contemporary neoliberal global dispensation given its free-market logic and quest for profit maximisation. In this paper, I examine the current crisis within the humanities with a view to explicating its causal factors and proffering possible remedies. I argue, like some critical voices in the academy have done, that the crisis in the humanities is essentially reflective of a crisis within humanity more generally.

The Crisis in the Humanities and its Causes

According to Ibanga Ikpe (2015: 50), the debate as to whether the humanities are in decline is almost over. Statistics on declining enrolments, shrinking job prospects, dwindling funding, and growing condescension from society add up to show that all is not well. He notes that the future of the humanities as an academic pursuit that is relevant to the needs of society has been variously described as gloomy, hopeless, and bleak. This diagnosis has been mainly due to declining interest in the humanities both by students and the society in general. Whereas the more favoured disciplines in the natural sciences, especially in the science, engineering, and technology subfields bask in the admiration of society and thereby attract funding for studies, research and community engagements, the humanities disciplines continually struggle under the threat of being consigned, like alchemy, to the dumpsite of historical relics. Indeed, whereas students fight to be accepted into any one of the favoured natural science or business programmes, and such programmes can pick and choose from among the best of students, students for the most part only consider the humanities as a last resort. Consequently, humanities departments have to settle for students that have been rejected by other programs (Ikpe 2015:51).

The reason for this sorry state of affairs is not farfetched, according to Ikpe – the humanities are said to have failed to evolve with society and have therefore lost relevance. Courses in the humanities are generally seen as belonging to a long past era when there was no need for specialised skills for entry into the technical areas of the marketplace. According to Ikpe (2015:52), although there is no consensus as to when the decline of the humanities and social sciences began, the decline may have accelerated in recent times but it is not a recent phenomenon. Some scholars link the decline to the continuing current of positivism within the Western academy. Positivism defined quantity as the measure of reality and, in doing so, devalued the traditional knowledge of the public relevance of a liberal education (Frodeman *et al*. 2003). Other scholars trace the decline to the liberationist climate of the 1960s (Deneen 2010) and the desire of the youth to free themselves from the constraining academic culture of the humanities. Yet other scholars go so far as identifying the decline of the humanities with the founding of the American university and its links with the fortunes of the entrepreneurial class. As Newfield (2003) argues, the liberal arts tradition and the capitalist culture are contradictory forces that create conflicts for both the academy and the students who go on to constitute much of the middle class.

From a philosophical perspective, the decline in the humanities is sometimes attributed to the school of W.V.O. Quine, which espouses what Ikpe refers to as 'scientism'. This is the perspective that the best of our knowledge-claims are the ones advanced by scientists (see Meynell 2010:976). This philosophy and the increasing interaction of humanity with the products of science is viewed as having laid the foundation for an eclipse of the humanities, despite centuries of the humanities being at the centre of intellectual discourse. Others see it as having a much longer history and trace it to Francis Bacon's volume published in Latin, Novum Organum and its view that learning should consist of a careful study of nature rather than the analysis of ancient texts. David Hume is said to have also contributed to the eventual decline of the humanities in his rejection of metaphysics. He argued:

> If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quality or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion (Hume [1748] 1984:149).

Hume's influence and the subsequent rise in positivism, especially Auguste Comte's suggestion that all real knowledge should be derived from human observation of objective reality, 'vindicated the statements of common-sense fact and of science, but stigmatized those of metaphysics and religion as meaningless or nonsensical' (Meynell 2010:975). Similarly, Immanuel Kant's distinction between the higher and lower faculties and his view that the 'higher faculties' of medicine and law should be rated higher than the 'lower faculties' of theology and philosophy was arguably an early sign of the decline of the humanities. Such views heightened scepticism concerning knowledge from the humanities, especially since such knowledge is seen not to have any immediately visible practical application in society.

More recent intellectual discourse blames the decline of the humanities on the corporatisation of universities. Donoghue (2008) for instance, attributes the decline of the humanities to the infiltration of market forces into the administration of universities, especially the fact that economic motivations rather than academic concerns have become the basic foundation for decision making in the academy. Bill Readings (1997) advances this argument in his appropriately titled book, *The University in Ruins*. He contends that the increasing globalisation of capital is undermining the nation-state and with it the national cultures that have been the university's integrating principle since the Enlightenment (see also, Sirluck 1997: 617). As has already been said, Newfield (2003) argues that the liberal arts tradition and capitalist culture are contradictory forces that create conflicts for both the academy and students. This explains why university corporatisation cannot exist side by side with a thriving humanities culture (see Clark 2008: 467). Donoghue sees the intervention of market forces in academia as giving rise to 'for profit' universities and the tendency to de-emphasise the humanities and any such disciplines that cannot be 'granularised' into formulaic information bits. The result is best illustrated by Donoghue's quotation of John Sperling, leader of the for-profit education movement and founder of the University of Phoenix when he says, 'we are not trying to develop value systems or go in for that "expand their minds" bullshit' (Donoghue 2008:97). Donoghue argues that it is the success of such business-oriented institutions in providing cheaper, market-defined and more flexible education that puts pressure on others to adopt 'for-profit' strategies in an attempt to survive in an increasingly competitive industry.

As Weisbuch (1999:B4) rightly argues, whether the decline is due to a chain of contemporary events or due to a philosophical theory of an immediate or distant past, there is no denying the fact that the humanities, like the liberal arts generally, appear far less surely at the centre of higher education than it once did, and has lost the respect of colleagues in other fields as well as the attention of the general public. In the case of Kenya, nothing captures this reality better than the pronouncements of Deputy President William Ruto on the same. Addressing the press shortly after defending his PhD thesis in human ecology on 24 October 2018, Ruto dismissed anthropology, geography, history, and sociology as courses not worthy studying at the university. Urging universities that receive public funding to 'up their game', Ruto asserted that universities should be ashamed of churning out 'unemployable' graduates who end up 'roasting maize on the roadside' (Nasong'o 2018). In his view, universities should only teach the natural sciences and technical courses that guarantee employment post-graduation. Ruto similarly dismissed the arts and humanities in 2010 while serving as minister for higher education (Njoya 2010). This dismissal of and disdain for the humanities both in Kenya and elsewhere is, in fact, reflective of a profound crisis in humanity more generally.

The Crisis in Humanities as a Crisis of Humanity

It is eminently evident that the crisis in the humanities is indeed reflective of a fundamental crisis in humanity as a whole. This is manifested at four different levels: (1) the tyranny of passion, or the rule of the senses; (2) the demands of market forces and the worship of materialism; (3) the mantra of privatisation and preoccupation with the bottom line; and (4) complicit humanities scholars. In other words, the decline of the disciplines of the humanities is a function of the decline of society itself. As Ikpe (2015) rightly argues, although the decline of the humanities is often seen as an isolated crisis, it is in fact indicative of a wider crisis within humanity, and to a great extent, it is nothing compared to the parallel crisis within humanity. This is because, in his view, the crisis in the humanities could be said to be temporary and can be resolved either through a reinvention which creates a new niche within society for the humanities or when the current humanities scholars are led by some divine intervention to undergo some transformative Pauline experience and change the course and fortunes of humanities scholarship. The crisis within humanity on the other hand is a lot more complex and can neither be phased out nor resolved through reinvention. It is a crisis that threatens the essence of humanity as we know it and with it several centuries of human civilisation. The crisis in humanity threatens to redefine what it means to be human and at the same time create the nightmarish scenario of complete human extinction or mutation. It is a crisis which is not always recognised for the interrelated colossus that it is but is sometimes treated as isolated events that could be resolved with targeted interventions. It is a crisis which all the resources of human knowledge and wisdom should be utilised as far as possible in providing basic diagnoses and indicating directions of resolution (Bidney 1946: 534). But what is the nature of this crisis and to what extent should humanity feel threatened by it? Let us examine the four levels of this crisis in humanity more closely.

The Tyranny of Passion, or the Rule of the Senses

The tyranny of passion or the rule of the senses is related to what Ibanga Ikpe (2015) calls the seduction by the fleshpots of consumerism. This seduction, so prevalent in contemporary society, has resulted in an unhealthy desire for things that titillate the senses and that enflame the passions, thus leading to a decline in the desire for things intellectual and moral-ethical, the fulcrum of the essence of the humanities. It is this tyranny of passion that has led to contemporary society's preoccupation with the celebrity culture, the sponsor-sponsee transactional relationships, the slay queen-slay king phenomenon, the transient Facebook/ Meta and Instagram likes and dislikes; and the concomitant dislike and denigration of everything that does not lead to immediate gratification.

In discussing the crisis within humanity, Huxley (1949:199) observes that it exists, so to speak, on two levels: an upper level of political and economic crisis and a lower-level crisis in population and world resources. The lower-level crisis of humanity flows from the rapidly growing population of the world, which far outstrips the growth in food production and the capacity of the world economy to provide meaningful sustenance for all. This also accounts for the rapid depletion of the world's resources and the concomitant capacity of the environment to regenerate and continue to support human life. This lower-level crisis is often cited as the reason for climate change, erratic climatic events, and other problems of the physical world. The lower-level crisis is related to, even though it is often distinguished from, the upper-level crisis, which though identified as political and economic, is actually a cultural crisis with political and economic manifestations. It is reflected in the basic mental or spiritual disintegration or breakdown of our contemporary materialistic or 'sensate' culture and is the direct result of some dysfunction inherent in the very form and dynamics of the human culture (Bidney 1946: 534–7). The situation is such that the assumptions and behaviours that have served humanity for centuries are no longer appropriate and the capabilities that have enabled humanity to attain present levels of civilisation are insufficient to overcome the risks incidental to this achievement. It is this basic cultural crisis that has given rise to the more visible problems of everyday life.

Another aspect of the crisis in humanity at this level is related to the tyranny of the marketplace and is manifested in the emergence and growing tendency towards individualism and isolationism. Aristotle wrote in his *Politics* that man outside the society is either a beast or a god. This essence of humanism is also captured in the African concept and practice of ubuntu, the dictum that 'I am because we are'; that a person exists because of and through other people. To the contrary, contemporary society seeks to promote the individual over the collective and continues to create new ways of further isolating people from each other. Personal relations have been sacrificed for virtual relationships, which help people relate with one another without the vulnerability that comes with such relationships. Individuals log up thousands of Facebook/ Meta friends who have no existence outside the pages of Facebook/ Meta. Internet and other virtual-world addictions separate individuals from each other even when sharing a common public space. People routinely retreat into the virtual world of iPads, iPods, smart phones, Kindles and tablet computers while out on a date or sharing such communal spaces as public transportation, airport lounges, clubhouses, lecture halls, and doctors' waiting rooms. Hence, even though the world population is burgeoning and communication gadgets are getting ever more sophisticated by the day, the sense of community continues to atrophy rather than intensify as people relate less with each other and focus more on titillating their own senses, on satiating their own passions, and on seeking individual gratification.

The most worrying aspect of the crisis within humanity manifested in the tyranny of passion is the ubiquitous rise of an increasingly common anti-intellectualism. According to Hofstadter (1963:7), 'the common thread that binds together the attitudes and ideas called anti-intellectual is a resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it; and a disposition constantly to minimize the value of that life'. By this, Hofstadter refers to the current general disdain towards all forms of intellectual activity and a tendency to denigrate those who engage in it, by society in general, and especially by nationalistic ruling classes around the world. Anti-intellectualism has multiple manifestations and, according to Rigney (1991), it is identified with religious anti-rationalism, populist anti-elitism, and unreflective instrumentalism. Religious anti-rationalism refers to the belief in the superiority of faith over reason and the fear that scientific endeavours will lead to the elimination of religion. The growth of religious fundamentalism around the world and the popularity of new-age religions in the face of contemporary life challenges is a testament to this. Indeed, as the humanities crisis deepens, fundamentalist evangelical churches that promise instant miracles continue to prosper and grow in leaps and bounds as adherents flock in, ready and willing to part with their hard-earned meagre resources in the name of planting seeds for the expected miracle of instant material transformation.

Populist anti-elitism refers to the notion that academics view themselves as superior to the general population and encompasses, among other traits, 'a mistrust of claims to superior knowledge or wisdom' (Rigney 1991: 441). Thus, whereas the dynamics of governing a modern state requires an astute mind with requisite knowledge of people, their communities and the affairs of state, electorates are sometimes said to be more inclined to elect a person with whom they 'feel comfortable sharing a beer', or, in democratising countries such as Kenya, the force of affective ties dictate that voters cast their votes to comply with the dictates of ethnic belonging. Paradoxically, such electorates expect their leaders to be adept in economic management, social relations, and political affairs. The third manifestation of anti-intellectualism, unreflective instrumentalism, is said to devalue 'forms of thought that do not promise relatively immediate practical payoffs' (McDevitt and Sindorf 2012:113). The current crisis of the humanities could thus be said to arise from unreflective instrumentalism, especially since the most common critique of the humanities is that it has no relevance in the contemporary neoliberal marketplace.

The Demands of the Marketplace and the Worship of Materialism

The second level of manifestation of the crisis of humanity is embodied in the demands of the economic marketplace for job-specific qualifications. These demands have an impact on the career choices of fresh university students with the resultant effect of preferring the natural sciences to the humanities. In many parts of the world, Ikpe (2015) contends, university education, including humanities education, had always been seen as a guaranteed way out of undignified manual labour to a life of status, comfort, and privilege. However, over time, this changed as specialisations became narrower and eligibility for specific jobs required having specific qualifications. Since university candidates are either from middle-class or blue-collar backgrounds, it became increasingly important for them to be assured that they were being trained for a specific sector of the labor market as a way of uplifting themselves socially. Whereas this eventuality contributed to growing sophistication of the labour market, it simultaneously undermined, marginalised, and disadvantaged the humanities, particularly courses within the humanities that do not focus on training students for a life within a specific career.

Hendry (2004:3) describes the economic mindset as:

> rooted in the ideology of market culture and based on the principle of economic self-interest, which privileges private property over the common good and arms-length market over face-to-face interpersonal relationships. This mindset is what has led to universities being required to train rather than educate students. It prioritizes short-term over long-term interests, and treats money as the measure of all good.

Features of this economic mindset are increasingly evident in the day-to-day interactions of individuals, communities, and nations. Increasingly, economic considerations are playing a pivotal role in human decisions over and above group interest, morality, and other values. In his epic work on the tyranny of market economics, Sandel observes that 'we are in the grip of a way of looking at the world and social life and even personal relations that is dominated by economic ways of thinking. That's an impoverished way of looking at the world' (Sandel 2012:194). According to him, the tyranny of market economics has resulted in a consumerist idea of freedom, by which individuals assume that freedom is defined by what they consume. In other words, a person is most free when she or he is capable of consuming whatever it is that she or he desires, whether or not such goods or services are immediately available on the market. Despite acknowledging the role of market economics to world prosperity, Sandel argues that the economic ways of thinking ought not to influence our moral judgement since doing so will limit our freedom to engage in a full civic life.

In spite of Sandel's prescient warning, in the contemporary world, morality appears to be controlled by this economic way of thinking. The world has essentially abandoned the idea of intrinsic rightness or goodness of actions in favour of the instrumental good, with economic considerations as the supreme good of all instrumental actions. Economic considerations determine individual decisions concerning children's education, fashion, social interactions, religious affiliations, healthcare, transportation, and place of abode, among others. Economic considerations play an important role in the relationship between nations, where multinational corporations, with their considerable economic clout, rule the roost and can make or break the will of individuals, groups, and states. The humanist values of integrity, respect, and compassion only play second fiddle to the values of the neoliberal market. Thus, when humanities scholars complain that their disciplines have been devalued by the demands of the market, they are merely stating what is common to all human processes as they become devalued and subservient to the demands of the market.

It is the power of this tyranny of the market that has led to the prevalent culture of worshipping wealth and the wealthy without an iota of care about how such wealth is acquired. Indeed, in contemporary Kenyan society, a person who holds high public office and transitions out without having used the office for self-aggrandisement, such a person is derided and made fun of! Unfortunately, the foundation for this kind of appropriation of public office for self-enrichment was laid by Kenya's founding president, Jomo Kenyatta. A couple of years after Kenya's independence when Bildad Kaggia teamed up with the few truly nationalist leaders to fight for the rights of the landless, for social justice and equity in Kenya, and for restructuring Kenya's colonial economy to work for the ordinary citizens, President Jomo Kenyatta publicly ridiculed him for failing to amass the kind of wealth that his former fellow political prisoners at Kapenguria had amassed for themselves: 'If you go to Fred Kubai's home, he has a big house and nice shamba. What have you done for yourself? We were together with Kungu Karumba in prison and now he runs his own business… Kaggia! What have you done for yourself?' Kenyatta boomed at Kaggia in disgust.

Kaggia's response to this ridicule was emblematic of a true servant-leader with the highest sense of integrity and commitment to the general good. He calmly responded: 'I was not elected to Parliament to acquire a large farm, a big house or a transport business. My constituents sleep in mud houses. They have no shambas and have no businesses. So, I am not ashamed to be associated with them. By the time they have these things, I will also be able to have them for myself' (Kamencu 2014:2).

Unfortunately for Kenya, as elsewhere in Africa and even beyond, such leaders of integrity have been rare and far in between.

The Mantra of Privatisation and Preoccupation with the Bottom Line

The mantra of privatisation and preoccupation with the bottom line is a corollary to the above-elaborated tyranny of market forces. It too, is driven by the spirit and reality of neoliberal economics. Beginning the late-1970s, an insidious neoliberal mindset emerged particularly in Margaret Thatcher's Britain that encouraged the slow but steady rethinking of the role of higher education away from the notion of a public good towards the idea of privatisation, an idea that Thatcher herself championed. It is, in fact, argued that that she was the first to use the word 'privatisation'. In Britain, the privatisation project was symbolised by the Buckingham experiment. This was an effort, led by free market devotees like Keith Joseph, to show that the private University College of Buckingham (now the University of Buckingham) could be effective and, more importantly, efficient at delivering a big-ticket item like higher education (Vale 2011). More than four decades later, Buckingham remains the poster-child for what is approvingly called 'higher education reform' through privatisation in Britain and in many parts of the world (Vale 2011:27–8). This new regime of privatisation with its focus on the economic bottom line saw successive waves of government intervention in the universities. These were spearheaded, especially in Britain, by a network of new higher education authorities who, by invoking the idea of quality and standards, were licensed to conduct audits in the belief that the universities should 'account' to the public for the resources they receive from the state. Routines of surveillance, extracted from accounting procedures, were implemented under the idea that they gave greater freedom to students, who were increasingly thought of as consumers or clients.

This mantra of privatisation was replicated elsewhere with the establishment of private universities purely for commercial purposes while public universities were increasingly subjected to surveillance to justify continued receipt of public financing. They were increasingly called upon to train for the market rather than educate for humanity. Hence the deemphasis on the humanities and emphasis on the more practical and utilitarian subjects, especially the natural sciences. Funding for the humanities declined while funding for other branches of knowledge, especially in the natural sciences, simultaneously increased because of their presumed guaranteed contribution to the pocketbook. This preoccupation with numeric accounting, with the bottom line, resulted in a regime that enforced 'performance contracting,' rated individual academics, and eventually culminated in the ranking of universities. Like much else that drove the idea of globalisation, this was underpinned by the neoliberal belief that it was possible to unite the entire world peacefully in a society of universal commerce (Rothschild 2002:250). In other words, money has become the only goal in our globalised society. Hence, economics, not state politics nor the morality that the church had preached in earlier ages, would guide the course of human events. In order to survive, the humanities would have to adjust accordingly (Vale 2011:31).

The mantra of privatisation was accelerated by the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which marked the triumph of free market neoliberalism over statist capitalism. Following on from this, the power of individual states found aspects of their sovereignty eroded as business corporations drove the neoliberal agenda towards an increasingly borderless and deeply interconnected world. The resulting condition is the phenomenon called globalisation. The principal beneficiary of the emergence of this globalisation ideology has been the rich individuals, corporations, and countries. This has happened because its underlying principles are driven by the unreflective world of the consumer and in the action world of consumption interests. This turn to the world of practical knowledge and action is rooted in a 'second nature,' what Dillion (1994) calls habitus. This second nature resists 'theorizing or systemizing in terms of abstract 'underlying principles,' including those of economic interest' (Dillon 1994:211). Reflection of this kind is the great forte of the humanities, which explains why the world of neoliberalism has little place for critical issues like meaning and value, truth and justice, issues which both interest and worry the humanities (Vale 2011:27).

Indeed, in the wake of neoliberal globalisation, the so-called developing countries were called upon to liberalise and privatise, to rationalise and retrench, and to cut back on public spending by eliminating subsidies on staple foods and introducing cost-sharing with consumers of public goods, including education and healthcare. Institutions of higher learning were required to justify continued receipt of public funds by demonstrating their value to the national economy. The impact was decreased funding for disciplines, particularly in the humanities, that could not tangibly demonstrate their contribution to economic development. Many humanities departments in universities were abolished with several disciplines lumped together into single departments, such as history, philosophy, and religious studies. Concomitantly, with public funding constrained, universities resorted to introducing income-generating activities including parallel degree programmes that ended up commercialising public universities and, ipso facto, diluting the essence of university education.

Complicit Humanities Scholars

At the fourth level of the crisis are the humanities scholars themselves who stand accused of being complicit in the decline of their disciplines as a result of their lack of engagement with society. Ikpe (2015) posits that although it is fashionable to blame outside forces for the decline of the humanities, humanities scholars cannot escape blame for the crisis of their own disciplines. They have not done enough to ensure the continued relevance of their discipline in a fast-changing world (Ikpe 2015:51). For instance, in lamenting the death of the humanities at Stanford University, Cohn (1994:60) argued:

> Though the rise of science, rationalistic secularism, and the political drive to egalitarianism have patently played a part on the mournful drama of the imaginative spirit, for my part, I see no point in faulting science, reason or the idea of fairness, tolerance, justice and decency.

The catastrophe, as in individual fate, comes rather with an unhealthy imbalance of the various forces" (Ikpe 2015:53). Cohn's position is that although external forces contribute to the decline, other forces, including those arising from the failings of humanities scholars, are as much a part of the equation.

One of the most enduring claims is that humanities scholars have, over the years, withdrawn from the wider concerns of society to focus on issues arising within and relevant to the narrow confines of academia. Their views have become so specialised they are no longer intelligible to the general audience which should legitimately benefit from their conversations. Hacker and Dreifus (2010) concur that the link between professors and the public has been severed, largely due to the divorce of academic knowledge from everyday understanding. This view is shared by Lewin (2010: 105) who observes that 'scholars converse with one another but rarely venture outside the academy to participate in public humanities discussions'. Harpham (2011:22) similarly asserts that humanities scholars 'suffer from an inability to convey to those on the outside and even to some on the inside the specific value they offer to public culture'. This disconnect between humanities scholars and the general public has lost them the opportunity of leading opinion on issues that are relevant to contemporary life.

Ikpe notes that in limiting conversation about the humanities to an elite club within academia, humanities scholars are probably following the trend in the sciences where the language of science restricts conversations to its inductees. They fail, however, to distinguish between technical communication, which takes place between professionals, and regular communication, which is directed towards the general public. Whereas scientists regularly communicate their ideas to the general public in the form of technological innovations, and as such are not required to speak directly to the public, the ideas emanating from humanities research can only be communicated through direct interaction with society. Cobb (2010:129) captures the effect of this when he observes that, insisting on 'pure' research is keeping professors from other work that would increase their visibility outside academia. Incidentally this attitude has been identified by Frodeman et al. (2003:30) as similar to the stance of scientists in the early twentieth century when they spoke lovingly of their pursuit of 'pure' science: pure because the research was conducted without consideration of use and was motivated by curiosity alone. They argue that this attitude resulted in a poor perception of the sciences until the practical worth of their research was aptly demonstrated during the Second World War. What this shows is that, in concentrating solely on technical communication, without an alternate conversation with society, humanities scholars are alienating the public and emasculating their discipline.

Secondly, it is argued that there is a sense in which the study of the humanities has ceased to be interesting, especially to the demographic group that formed its core constituency in years past. Critics observe that the humanities have abandoned the rigorous search for the truth to focus on trivial issues in attempts to accommodate emerging disciplinary interests. Trivial issues such as identity studies, abstruse theory, sexuality, film and popular culture have become part of the mainstream study of the humanities thereby reducing the attention given to traditional humanities curriculum. Whereas I do not agree that the study of identities, sexuality, and popular culture is trivial, I concur with Georg Mann's exemplification of the extent of triviality in the humanities. Mann (1962:97) gives an example of cases where 'moral forces were expended acquiring the skills to riffle through an edition of a sixteenth-century play, note the pattern of typographical errors, and identify not only the print shop but the probable typesetter'. One cannot discount the fact that an exercise of this sort requires skill, but this is not the edifying intellectual exercise that built the humanities and won it respect both within and outside the academy. It however illustrates a growing pattern in humanities research and a tendency for humanities scholars to expend a lot of academic capital in pursuit of the frivolous. It is this growing concern with the trivial that has generated public apathy for the humanities both within and outside the academy.

Third, there is also a concern that humanities scholars have shifted their attention away from issues that are the immediate concern of human beings. Wilson (1994:66) for instance observes that:

> Philosophy was once written to teach men and women how to live; now, much of it is written to befuddle fellow philosophers. Poems and paintings were once produced to move the spirit and engage the common man; now, many are produced to repel the many and titillate the few. Literature was once thought to convey deep meaning; now, some think it can convey no meaning at all.

In other words, the humanities have in the course of history redefined themselves to an extent where they are looked upon as irrelevant by their patrons. Also, in decrying the contemporary direction of arts criticism, Mann (1962:99) compares a time when criticisms were prepared to improve either the artist's product or the general public's understanding to the current situation where criticism has become an end in itself. There is, therefore, a growing consensus both within and outside the academy that humanities discourse has drifted towards the realm of unintelligibility and has stopped being fun both within and outside the academy (Weisbuch 1999:B).

Fourth, the humanities have also been accused of not being sufficiently innovative in a world that is constantly evolving. While there is nothing wrong with studying the Homeric poems or investigating the impact of the trans-Saharan trade on the great empires of West Africa, it would be foolhardy to expect this to be of interest to the society if members of the public cannot relate it to contemporary life. Humanities knowledge appears to have become stale and no effort has been made by scholars to inject a new relevance to it. The story is told of the president of a major research university, who when he offered his faculty members funds for new proposals, received more than 50 ideas from scientists, 30 from social scientists, and nothing from humanists except requests to put more money into existing programmes (Weisbuch 1999: B4). In other words, humanities scholars are not sufficiently innovative but rather hide under the same tired old research programmes that they inherited from their mentors. They do not open up new research trends for their students and end up cloning themselves professionally and presiding over a creeping homogeneity (Cobb 2010:128) within academia. Even where there is innovation, the direction of such innovation sometimes leaves observers more perplexed as it sometimes entails what Deneen (2010:60) refers to as victimisation studies, namely multiculturalism, disability studies, queer studies, and so on, studies that do not define a holistic human experience but highlight the past in a way that is not useful for the future. In all, the humanities have been accused of either being trapped in the past or wandering aimlessly in the wilderness of the future.

Toward Recuperation: The Significance of the Humanities

Despite the foregoing crisis, the humanities confront issues of great political significance and do so typically in ways that cut beneath specific policy questions. Recognising differences in the humanities disciplines with regard to content and method, Martha Nussbaum (2002) argues that all of this diversity is held together by a set of themes and problems:

> roughly, the problem of how to live with dignity as a rational animal, in a world of events that we do not fully control. Issues of human vulnerability and need, of terror and cruelty, also of pleasure and vision, are its subject matter, a subject matter as capacious as life itself, but pursued with a reflectiveness and rigor that life itself rarely attains (Nussbaum 2002:39).

> In real life, Nussbaum contends, people typically seek to avoid the challenge that the humanities pause: they live unreflective lives, lives that are often cramped and narrowed by the pursuit of gain, or bare security, lives in which the imagination of human suffering is frequently allowed to lapse if, indeed, it ever existed. According to her,

> If we want only one reason why the humanities are essential in public life in this era of rapid globalization, a sufficient such reason is that the humanities keep our eyes on the human meaning of public policy and on a rich human and ethical set of ends for human action, while economic science too easily narrows its vision, lending itself as a tool to the forces that already are committed to the all-out pursuit of profit. This means that the humanities … are key to dispelling barriers of hatred and ignorance that divide people the world over by class, caste, race, sex, and religion and thus key to the formation of just sets of policies in the area of human development… (Nussbaum 2002:39–40).

According to Patricia Spacks (2006), successive revolutions during the past century have energised the natural sciences in often thrilling ways. Given the evidence for dramatic change apparent in new discoveries, new inventions, and new solutions to recognisable problems, the educated public understands that recurrent transformations only corroborate the importance of the natural sciences as an intellectual endeavour. Corresponding transmutations of the humanities, in contrast, prove both less recognisable and less readily acceptable, not only to the public, but even to academics professing the natural sciences and the social sciences. Nevertheless, seismic shifts have altered individual disciplines in the humanities in the course of the twentieth century. Such alterations generate no new understanding of the brain or the biosphere, but they can change our ways of comprehending our cultural heritage and thus our grasp of what it means to live in the world – a shift of consciousness potentially as consequential as mapping the human genome.

Kant argues convincingly that a robust critical public culture, prepared to question authority in the name of morality, rests on a respect for reason and its constraint (cited in Nussbaum 2002:42). Yet, the illumination and human understanding that the humanities have given in this regard, and are still giving, to our undergraduates and our culture, may gradually be lost. When administrators, parents, and students focus narrowly on the bottom line, it is difficult to see the relevance of literature and philosophy. They look like useless frills, distractions from the real business of education, which is all too often seen as preparation for a job. This utilitarian approach to the humanities, Nussbaum notes, did enormous damage in Thatcher's Britain, where universities were asked to justify their humanistic pursuits by showing that they contributed to economic growth. A fundamental thing that needs underscoring is that college education is a general preparation for citizenship and for life, and a formation of citizens for our public culture. It is not difficult to see that the humanities provide essential ingredients for citizenship: clarity of mind, knowledge of the world, an expansive and subtle imagination. Indeed, universities exist to serve the general public rather than the narrow interests of capitalist entrepreneurs. As the 1963 Robbins Report on Higher Education in the United Kingdom points out, universities are charged with four main functions of which instruction in skills is only one. The other three are the search for truth (hence the importance of academic freedom), the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship, and, perhaps most importantly, the promotion of the general powers of the mind in order to produce cultivated men and women rather than mere specialists for the labour market (Nasong'o 2018). And herein lies the significance of the humanities.

A public policy made without the influence of the humanities is likely to be a cramped and crude policy (Nussbaum (2002:48). The cultivation of the imagination that comes with the study of literature, the cultivation of the ethical sensibility that comes with the study of philosophy and religion, these are essential equipment for citizens and policy makers in a world increasingly united, and driven forward, by the profit motive. The capacity to look at a single life with understanding and love is not automatic, and can also be lost. We need to think clearly about this danger, and try as best as we can to prevent it, through strong support for the future of these disciplines. Hence, artists and humanists, who seek out the common pleasures and visions, the terrors and cruelties of an individual's day on this planet, are people of great political significance, even and especially when what they do is not simply about politics. It is difficult to see how we can have any hope of overcoming barriers of prejudice and ignorance without them.

So, in view of the imperative significance of the humanities, what can be done to address the crisis that confront these disciplines? A number of remedies can be gleaned from extant literature on the subject. First, the wealth of knowledge within the humanities needs to be harnessed for practical use through such a reinvention as happened in ethics towards the end of the twentieth century. During the final quarter of the twentieth century, a combination of scientists and philosophers brought ethics down from the clouds of meta-ethical abstraction to dwell among the scientific clinics, research laboratories, industrial applications, and technological communications networks. The emergence of biomedical ethics, research ethics, environmental ethics, and computer ethics is an attempt by the humanities to help humanity live appropriately with the expanding powers of science and technology (Frodeman *et al.* 2003:31).

The second remedy should entail humanities scholars reengaging more assertively with the general public with a view to reasserting the rule of reason over the tyranny of passion and, in so doing, return the humanities to humanity. Humanities scholars should increase the role of the humanities disciplines beyond the academy by sensitising the general public to the vital role that the humanities can and does play in fostering a critical civil society. In this vein one can argue following Harpham (2011:152) that a study of the humanities leads to 'an awakened understanding of oneself as a member of the human species, a heightened alertness to the possibilities of being human' and also the capacity to sympathise, empathise, or otherwise inhabit the experiences of others. One can also argue like Nussbaum (1997:8) that the humanities 'liberates the mind from the bondage of habit and custom, producing people who can function with sensitivity and alertness as citizens of the whole world'.

A third way of saving the humanities should involve projecting the value of humanities education to the public and convincing them of the role that the humanities play in contemporary life. In extolling the value of the humanities in academic medicine, for instance, Fins et al. (2013:355) argue that

> philosophy, history, literature, and the arts already offer a discourse instrumental to reflective practice. These disciplines encourage introspection and a deeper understanding of how medicine operates within society. Such reflection has a 'transformative power', enabling practitioners to, in John Dewey's words, 'reconstruct' the world.

They further argue:

> Even though science is the bedrock of medicine, science does not fully capture the personal dimension of clinical work. The practice of medicine becomes art and ceases to be, in the words of Karl Popper, falsifiable... The scientific realm limits and constrains a broader practice of medicine because it excludes other ways of knowing that cannot be ascertained, explored, or probed by the notion of falsifiability. If one were to remove those other ways of knowing, it would impoverish medical practice and deny patients the humane care that they want and deserve. (Fins *et al*. 2013:360).

Lata and Devika (2013:333) make a similar argument concerning humanities and engineering when they argue that 'arts and humanities courses inculcate creative thinking which is indispensable to explore creative and analytical techniques for generating fresh ideas and possibilities and select an appropriate solution or take an implementable decision'. Similarly, in outlining the importance of the humanities for business executives, Joseph Pichler (1983:13) notes that

> Business courses have a comparative advantage in teaching

> future executives to develop systems of evaluation, execution, and control. The humanities have an advantage in developing a predisposition for creative and integrative thinking. These qualities of mind are more likely to be instilled if the humanities are taught from a humanistic rather than a technical perspective.

In the same vein, in discussing the humanities' unique contributions to society, Chambers (2001:4) argues that 'typically moral dilemmas (concerning euthanasia, unemployment, genetic modification and so forth) all involve questions of value which is the particular concern of the humanities'. What this suggests, Chambers posits, is that scholars of the humanities are not merely teaching techniques of doing things which, once studied, can be applied to an appropriate trade within society. They are, rather, cultivating an inquiring mind that ought to be able to grapple with the fundamental problems of society and proffer innovative solutions that transcend knowledge acquired in the classroom (McCormick 2001).

The fourth remedy is the need to reassert the idea of humanities as therapy. In this regard, humanities therapy should seek to harness its therapeutic value not only because it is necessary for its own survival as an academic discipline, but also because of the practical benefits that accrue for humanity. Humanities therapy may be defined as the theoretical and practical activities that prevent and cure mental and emotional problems (Keon-Sang 2012). It is more readily recognised by its popular and practical variant, creative or expressive arts therapy. Creative-arts therapy consists in the use of music, painting, clay, dance, voice or drama for therapeutic purposes under the direction of a therapist. It is this therapeutic function of the humanities that Hudson-Jones (1997:275) refers to when she argues,

> The physician and the poet can both be healers. They share a common goal in their efforts to maintain light and order against the chaos of darkness and disease, and to create or restore the beauty and harmony of health: in this quest, medicine serves the body, poetry the spirit.

The notion of humanities as therapy dates back to biblical times in the relationship between David and Saul and has been growing ever since. According to the Bible, 'whenever the tormenting spirit from God troubled Saul, David would play the harp. Then Saul would feel better, and the tormenting spirit would go away' (1 Samuel 16:23). Poetry readings, for instance, can soothe the minds of those brutalised by the tyranny of the economic mindset, while selected literary readings can help humanity to discover that there are values that do not have a price tag. The Socratic method of philosophical counselling can help people discover the truth about themselves and their environment and the general appreciation of culture can stem the social and moral decay that results in disillusionment, discontent and disaffection. A humanistic therapy for the sane is indeed what humanity needs, not only to help it appreciate the humanities but, more importantly, to help it rediscover itself (see Ikpe 2015:51).

Fifth, it is imperative for humanities scholars to demonstrate that it is only their disciplines that can help redress the crisis of humanity especially as embodied in the tyranny of the market and the tyranny of passion. This is because only the humanities are concerned with the development of human consciousness or the transcendence of the human condition (Gastile 1977:10). It is therefore up to the scholars of the humanities to convince a sceptical public of their capacity to make a difference within the current crisis. One way of doing so, according to Mann (1962:98), is for the humanities scholar (the practitioner of humanities) to double up as a humanist. In Mann's view, a humanist is one who uses facts, while a practitioner of the humanities is merely one who discovers them. For a long time, humanities scholars have been primarily concerned with the search for facts within their disciplines and have lost out on the opportunity to use such facts in the service of humanity. The idea of learning for its own sake has been highly prized, while the relevance of such learning to the immediate challenges of culture has been ignored. For Mann therefore, the humanities disciplines can only regain their pride of place in academia when the humanities scholars either become humanists or at least make contributions toward humanism. Currently, 'the professional study of literature, the languages, philosophy, the fine arts and history by competent scholars of the humanities, is not necessarily either humane nor a contribution to humanism' (Mann 1962:99). This has to change for the public perception of the humanities to change. The humanities need to abandon the idea of the university as an ivory tower and appreciate the fact that the production and dissemination of knowledge is not limited to the classroom, but also be achieved through an engagement with society. It is through such engagement that the public will come to realise that not all items of value are exchangeable commodities with a price tag.

Sixth and finally, it is even more critical to make the argument that the humanities do teach people a lot of vocational skills and that the creativity, flexibility, and adaptability of people trained in the humanities are in demand where employers need to employ people with facility in critical thinking and who can cope with change and uncertainty (Viljoen 2008: 9). Making these arguments, as Viljoen (2008) observes, may appear as succumbing to the tyranny of the market and an endorsement of the 'unreflective instrumentalism' that have been elaborated above as the bane of contemporary society. But, Viljoen rightly adds, there is need to 'stoop to conquer' and in doing so save the humanities from total extinction.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the crisis in the humanities and traced its development across the space of time. It has explored the causes of the crisis and strongly demonstrated that the crisis in the humanities is indeed a manifestation of a deep crisis in humanity more generally. The crisis of humanity, the paper shows, is manifested in the tyranny of passion or the rule of the senses over reason, the demands of market forces and the worship of materialism, the neoliberal mantra of privatisation and preoccupation with the bottom line, and complicit humanities scholars who have divorced academic knowledge from everyday realities and understandings by increasingly conversing with one another but rarely venturing outside the academy to participate in public humanities discourses. This disconnect between humanities scholars and the general public has lost these scholars the opportunity of leading opinion on topical issues of great significance to contemporary life. The paper has articulated a number of measures to help redress the crisis in the humanities. These include harnessing the wealth of knowledge within the humanities for practical use, reengaging more assertively with the public with a view to reasserting the rule of reason over the tyranny of passion and the greed of markets, projecting to the public the critical value of a humanities education, and reasserting the age-old idea of humanities as therapy, among others. Overall, humanities scholars need to engage more with society even as they continue in scholarly activities that have defined the humanities through the ages. A reassertion of humanities therapy in all its expressive trajectories is a critical way for the humanities disciplines to engage with the contemporary world that is increasingly enamoured with the world of technology even though the vast majority of humans are technological immigrants rather than technological natives.

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Towards Post-Coronial Futures: COVID-19, Rapid Digital Transformation and University Responsiveness

Dramatic COVID-19-inspired changes – upended economies, exacerbated job losses, inequalities, major social deprivation and accelerated digital transformation – occurring in the structure and scope of higher education institutions have put a premium on responsiveness to change. As open systems, universities are affected by contingencies in their environment, including complex demands, which they have to respond to in order to enhance their adaptability and societal relevance. This paper examines the dramatic changes occurring in the external environment of universities in the context of COVID-19, especially accelerated digital transformation, and maps various response trajectories and reconfigurations by universities as they reposition for the yet unknown post-pandemic era.

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Introduction

COVID-19, which was declared a global pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO), has caused major societal disruptions. It has claimed many lives (more than 6 million deaths by the end of March 2022), upended economies, exacerbated job losses, inequalities, and caused major social deprivation (Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe 2021). Jayaram, Leke, Ooko-Ombaka & Sun (2020) predict that between 9 and 18 million jobs in Africa could be lost or made redundant due to COVID-19 and that 30 to 35 million jobs on the continent are at risk of a reduction in salary.

Before the pandemic, universities across the world were already grappling with challenges such as funding and institutional sustainability; widening participation for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds; providing innovative and flexible learning experiences; producing 'future-proof' graduates; advancing the public good; deepening connections with communities, industry, and civil society; producing research that addresses the world's pressing problems; and embracing rapid technological change. COVID-19 has heightened some of these challenges, exposed the lack of viability of some institutional systems and processes, and accelerated various incipient trends which were previously regarded as future challenges (Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe 2022).

Ongoing digital disruption, often referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), is a key feature of the complexity and turbulence that circumscribe higher education. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, digital disruption was generally spoken about in futuristic terms. Whilst this remains largely the case, given the emerging nature of various digital technologies, the response to COVID-19 has speeded up these so-called futuristic developments. Similarly, the disruptions caused and heightened by the contagion of the pandemic have brought into sharp focus the role of technology in the advancement of society. The various digital advancements, their promises and perils, provide an important backdrop for imagining the ongoing transformation of society, the future of work and professions, and the evolving role of universities as knowledge institutions. As open systems, universities are affected by contingencies in their environment, which they have to respond to in order to enhance their adaptability. New demands, especially complex demands, require some form of reconfiguration in order to be more responsive and adaptable (Cohen 1999).

The COVID-19 pandemic has arguably produced a 'new' world whose contours we still do not comprehend fully, but to which both universities and societies at large have to adapt. It has aggravated the challenges that universities are called upon to respond to, for example, poverty, inequality, and overall societal well-being, and has accelerated the adoption of digital technologies. The health crisis has thus produced a new context which requires that universities adapt and co-evolve accordingly. This is the focus of this paper. It is located in the broader context of the role of universities in the advancement of society given the interwoven nature of the broader challenges confronting society and the various digital transformations which have been accelerated by COVID-19. The next section provides an overview of the nexus between higher education and the advancement of society, followed by a section on COVID-19 and digital transformation. Then, the paper examines various adaptations by universities within the context of the ongoing digital disruptions and impact on society. The last section is the conclusion.

Higher Education and Societal Relevance

This section macro-contextualises the analysis. It highlights the societal relevance of universities, as a lead-in to understanding responsiveness by universities to external pressures characterised, inter alia, by the accelerating digital transformation in the context of COVID-19. It is impossible to discuss the societal relevance of universities without referring to ongoing technological advancements. The link between universities and the 4IR is intricate. Whilst universities, through their direct and indirect contributions to scientific and technological innovations, contribute to the burgeoning 4IR, the 4IR is simultaneously creating overarching conditions that have important implications for universities themselves and society at large. These include automation and its implications for jobs and the labour market, the demand for new skills and its implications for re-skilling and up-skilling, and the emergence of new industries.

Higher education contributes to the advancement of society mainly through human capital development, knowledge production, transfer and application. These roles have evolved over the years and are influenced by overarching societal mutations. Developing skilled labour (human capital) for both economic and social benefits is a role that universities have played since their inception, and studies have established a link between a country's higher education participation rates and levels of development (Muller, Cloete & Van Schalkwyk 2017; Pillay 2010). Factor-driven economies, for example, have lower higher education participation rates compared to efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies. Factor-driven economies compete mainly through their unskilled labour and natural resources while innovation-driven economies are underpinned by sophistication and innovation factors. In other words, knowledge and technological innovation are their most important factors of production (WEF 2017a). With higher education participation rates averaging 5 per cent, most African countries are classified as factor-driven economies.

Knowledge is a key driver of economic growth. Several models and theories, for example, the endogenous growth model (Romer 1990; Acs et al. 2008), the triple/ quadruple-helix model (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff 1995, 2000; Leydesdorff 2012), the entrepreneurial university model (Bercovitz & Feldman 2006), have illustrated the important contribution of knowledge to economic growth. By producing the knowledge required for technological innovation, universities have become key components of national and regional innovation systems. In the context of technological revolution, universities are expected to be central actors of scientific and technological change mainly by producing new knowledge and diffusing it (knowledge transfer). Universities, especially research universities, play an important role in embedding their countries in the global knowledge economy.

Yusuf (2007) details, in historical context, the important contribution of university research in several parts of the world. He gives the example of the role of German universities in the advancement of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries beginning in the late nineteenth century; the role played by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the growth of industry in Massachusetts; and the contribution to agricultural development by land-grant universities in America. In his study on the link between higher education and economic development, Pillay (2010) shows how universities in Finland, South Korea and North Carolina in America play a crucial role in their regions' innovation systems. Overall, as Yusuf (2007) argues, the most economically beneficial technological innovations can be traced directly or indirectly to universities – through training highly skilled individuals, through knowledge spillovers, or through actual research conducted.

Generally speaking, in Africa, the university is an underutilised agent for research-driven economic competitiveness. There has, however, been a significant improvement in research productivity. An analysis by Mouton et al. (2018) shows that the number of scientific papers produced by African universities between 2005 and 2015 more than tripled: from 15,285 to 49,015. This rate of increase exceeded the world average over the same period, with the result that Africa's share of world publication output nearly doubled from 1.5 per cent in 2005 to 2.8 per cent in 2015 (Mouton *et al.* 2018).

The emerging digital landscape has implications for universities and their role in society. A 2017 report by the Mckinsey Global Institute (2017), which measured the likelihood of automation in 54 countries and covered 78 per cent of the global labour market, showed that 50 per cent of current jobs in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, representing 328.9 million employees, are potentially automatable. For manufacturing, 64 per cent of current jobs are automatable, representing 237.4 million current employees. For retail trade, 54 per cent of current jobs, representing some 187.4 million current employees are automatable. A study of African countries by the World Economic Forum (WEF 2017b) estimates that 41 per cent of work activities in South Africa are susceptible to automation, compared with 44 per cent in Ethiopia, 46 per cent in Nigeria, and 52 per cent in Kenya.

This section has highlighted the broad pathways through which universities can demonstrate their societal relevance. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused and exacerbated significant social, economic, political, and technological disruptions, which have resulted in turbulence, uncertainty, and complexity which universities have to adapt and respond to. In other words, universities have to demonstrate their responsiveness and relevance in the context of the emerging milieu. The next section examines a key feature of this emerging milieu – rapid digital transformation, especially as it has been accelerated by COVID-19 and related trends – which call for adaptation and coevolution by universities.

COVID-19 and Digital Transformation: A New Landscape

The world was in the throes of a technological revolution long before the outbreak of COVID-19. This revolution is regarded as the successor to three previous distinct phases of technological revolution. The first technological revolution (in the late eighteenth century) was characterised mainly by the harnessing of steam power for mechanical production; the second technological revolution (in the late nineteenth century) was characterised by new manufacturing technologies based on electricity, and the third industrial revolution (beginning in the 1970s) was powered by computerisation and web-based interconnectivity. All these technological revolutions had significant implications for higher education. The 4IR, the most recent technological revolution, is described by Schwab (2016:1) as 'characterised by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres'. The 4IR is powered by a wide range of technological breakthroughs which include artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the internet of things (IoT), autonomous vehicles, 3D-printing, nanotechnology, the development of synthetic organisms, cyber-physical technologies, and biotechnology. Equally important are advances in fields such as genetic engineering, regenerative medicine and blockchain technology. In short, we are witnessing unprecedented advances in science and technology.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and its disruption of businesses, supply chains, manufacturing, education, travel, workplaces, amongst others, has spurred on technological responses aimed at managing the disruption, including constraints to human interaction. These responses, characterised mainly by the use of digital technologies, communication platforms, and information systems and technologies, have resulted in the rapid adoption and maturation of new technologies across all sectors. Karr, Loh and Andres (2020) posit that the pandemic hastened the uptake of 4IR technologies that could automate certain jobs. The McKinsey Global Institute (2021) identifies the following three COVID-19 accelerated trends that could persist after the pandemic: hybrid remote work, e-commerce, and automation and AI. These trends have implications for the future of work, inter alia, the loss of jobs to automation, the need to switch occupations and job growth in in-demand skills (McKinsey Global Institute 2021; WEF 2020).

The pandemic's impact has catalysed the proliferation of digital technologies in the health sector, including expanded use of telehealth and virtual care, rapid advancement of artificial intelligence with regard to detection and diagnosis, monitoring the effectiveness of treatment, contact tracing, modelling of virus spread and mortality projections, increased application of 3D-printing in the production of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other medical equipment, and adoption of robots in health care (Clipper 2020; Attaran 2020; Ting, Carin, Dzau & Wong 2020). Similarly, business processes and practices have experienced major transformations, such as the use of digital communication platforms, transitioning to remote working, and adoption of productivity-enhancing technologies. A survey of businesses in the United Kingdom by Riom and Valero (2020) found that 60 per cent of firms adopted new digital technologies and around a third invested in new digital capabilities largely in response to COVID-19. The study also found that 90 per cent of the surveyed firms intended to continue with the digital innovations after the health crisis has subsided. Similar findings are reported in a study by McKinsey Global Institute (2020), which found that companies across the world had significantly accelerated the digitisation of their customer and supply chain interactions, internal operations and the share of digital or digitally enabled products in their portfolios.

Estimates by the UNESCO Global Education Coalition (2020) indicate that, globally, more than 1.5 billion learners, across all levels of learning, were affected by the closure of educational institutions. The closure of universities, and the consequent inability to continue with face-to-face teaching and learning, led to the adoption of large-scale online teaching and learning, which often required the expansion of existing infrastructure and new infrastructure as well. COVID-19 has made online learning a necessity and, as Dhawan (2020) postulates, the crisis will expose previously reluctant institutions to the positive aspects of online education, inter alia, use of modern technology. Perhaps more importantly, is the opportunity presented by the health crisis to scale up both pedagogical innovations and modes of delivery, including peer learning, the flipped classroom, the use of simulations and games, and various blended learning models (Salmi 2020; Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe 2020).

As Kamal & Choudrie (2020) point out, prior to COVID-19, digitalisation was being encouraged, but now there seems to be rapid adoption of digital technologies in every sector – manufacturing, services, aviation, operations and supply chains, retail, leisure and tourism, education, health care, transportation, and social enterprises – and in society in general. Whilst it might be argued that the COVID-19-inspired acceleration of digital transformation may slow down once the pandemic has been curbed, the evidence suggests that the momentum will persist and these changes will be long-lasting as digital transformation increasingly pervades every aspect of the economy and society (WEF 2020; McKinsey Global Institute 2020; Riom & Valero 2020). The continued adoption of digital transformation post-COVID-19 will also be driven by changing consumer preferences for digital technologies, increasing familiarity of digital technologies, and increasing business confidence in digital technologies (Coombs 2020).

Towards Post-Coronial Futures

The dramatic changes occurring in the structure and scope of organisations has put a premium on responsiveness to change (Cohen 1999; Grobman 2005; Pinheiro et al. 2015). New demands, especially complex demands, require some form of reconfiguration in order to be more responsive and adaptable (Cohen 1999). The COVID-19 crisis, coupled with its complex consequences, such as accelerated digital transformation, can be described as a game-changer for university responsiveness given the need for robust strategies to deal with the emerging landscape and reposition for the yet unknown post-pandemic era. Universities have historically enacted reforms aimed at, amongst others, responding better to external pressures, and enhancing their relevance, quality, competitiveness and vitality (Pinheiro *et al*. 2015). This section highlights key adaptations and reconfigurations by universities to the emerging social, economic and technological milieu.

Automation and Jobs of the Future

As technology eliminates the need for routine labour, it is expected to open up new opportunities, especially in industries that leverage creativity and innovation (Araya & Lamb 2017). According to Araya & Lamb (2017), AI-driven society will entail, amongst others, teaching skills that will augment and complement AI to meet the impact of machine automation. Given the limitations of machine learning, especially with regard to managing challenges associated with judgement, decision-making, and interpretation, the humanities have an important role to play in the 4IR alongside the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines. Thus, fusing technology with the humanities is critical for navigating the 4IR. This is perhaps better manifested by the STEAM (science, technology, arts and mathematics) movement, which seeks to encourage students to combine STEM and art subjects at secondary school and university, and the growing demand for the arts and humanities in STEM fields (Burnard, Colucci-Gray & Sinha 2021). Araya & Lamb (2017) predict that new disruptive technologies like 3D-printing and robotics will provide significant opportunities for artists and designers who are innovative and have an understanding of human experience.

The displacement of especially low-skilled jobs has profound implications, particularly in Africa where unemployment levels remain high and university participation rates are low. Research shows that employment possibilities are strongly influenced by education. Thus, the challenge for Africa is to significantly increase participation rates. Probably the greater challenge for African universities is to 'robot-proof' students both in terms of the programmes they enrol in and the attributes that will put them in good stead to thrive in a 4IR-shaped post-COVID-19 society. It is in this context that Aoun (2017:xvii) makes the point that 'to ensure that graduates are "robot-proof" in the workplace, institutions of higher learning will have to rebalance their curriculum'.

The phenomenon of graduate unemployment, which is pronounced in many African countries (British Council 2016), suggests that the immediate challenge for African universities is simply to produce employable graduates, irrespective of automation. As enrolments have grown, so is the widening skills mismatch. A 2011 International Labour Organization (ILO) report cited in Oanda and Sall (2016) indicates that Egypt's private sector firms could not fill 600,000 vacancies yet the country had 1.5 million unemployed graduates. Oanda and Sall (2016) also cite a study by the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) (2014) which shows that about half of the graduates from universities in East Africa lack employability skills, technical mastery and basic work-related capabilities. It should, however, be emphasised that the problem of graduate unemployment in Africa cannot be attributed solely to a skills mismatch, but a convergence of factors, including pervasive informality, structural inequalities that shape access to stable employment, and the structure of African economies which do not provide expanded opportunities for highly skilled work (Fox *et al.* 2020).

Curriculum Transformation and Graduate Attributes

The envisaged pervasiveness of automation puts a premium on the need to educate students to fill needs in society that even the most sophisticated artificial intelligence agent cannot fill. While AI agents work like human beings, they do not, as yet, have the ability to invent, to create and to discover (Aoun 2017). The realisation of these important attributes is linked to pedagogical approaches that engender active learning. In other words, rote learning is an outmoded form of education because machines are more adept at memorising information. In this regard, blended learning, digital pedagogies, project-based pedagogies, and other pedagogies that stimulate creativity, working in teams (collaborating with people and intelligent machines), and social perceptiveness, among others, are critical.

Aoun (2017) identifies the following three literacies (graduate attributes) as vital for navigating the 4IR: data literacy, technological literacy, and human literacy. Students require data literacy to make sense of big data and information flowing from their devices; technological literacy to know how their machines work and navigate disruptive technologies, and human literacy – the humanities – to function as human beings. The last one – human literacy – is particularly important. With the automation of work, AI experts have observed that 'it is that which makes us human, our emotional intelligence and creativity, that will be in demand when this transition to automation is complete' (Gleason 2018:147).

The humanities and social sciences have an important role to play in realising the emotional intelligence and creativity required to thrive in the workplace. They are also crucial with regard to thinking, writing and communication skills. The tendency globally, however, is to de-emphasise the humanities and social sciences, ignoring not only their contribution to societal well-being, but also the increasingly fluid boundaries between natural sciences and the humanities as research increasingly becomes inter- and multidisciplinary. In Africa, where higher education enrolments are concentrated in the humanities, studies on employability and graduate attributes (see for example, IUCEA (2014) cited in Oanda & Sall (2016); British Council 2016) suggest that the humanities have not achieved their promise in terms of students acquiring the skills associated with the humanities, for example, communication skills, interpersonal skills and team work.

The rapid and far-reaching changes taking place in science and technology, especially in fields such as genomics, biotechnology, data science, AI, robotics and nanomaterials, have created the impetus for continually re-examining and updating the science, engineering and technology curriculum to ensure these remain aligned with rapid scientific and technological changes. The 4IR also has implications for curriculum change and innovation in the humanities, firstly, to grasp the evolution and manifestations of the phenomenon, but perhaps more importantly, to effectively examine its impact in political, economic, social, and environmental terms. It has been argued that the technologies and scientific advancements associated with the 4IR have the potential to intensify complex social challenges, for example, disruption of labour markets (technological unemployment), widening inequalities, social dislocations, multiple ethical conundrums, and challenges to the fundamental ontological assumptions about human existence. These developments would have to be addressed in a new and decidedly inter-disciplinary curriculum, especially in the humanities and social sciences.

Life-long Learning, Re-skilling and Upskilling

The predicted redundancy of skills as a result of AI and the rapid proliferation of new technologies and industries make lifelong learning, re-skilling and upskilling essential elements for success in the era of digital transformation. Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, the WEF (2018) estimated that by 2022 over 50 per cent of all employees would require significant reskilling and upskilling. The quickly moving skills landscape, therefore, requires that learning continues beyond the initial qualification in order to adapt to these rapid changes. 'As machines continue to surpass their old boundaries, human beings must also continue to hone their mental capacities, skills, and technological knowledge' (Aoun 2017: xx). In this context, universities have to produce what Castells (2001) refers to as 'self-programmable' workers, that is, skilled individuals with the 'ability to change and adapt to many different occupations and new technologies all through one's professional life' (Cloete & Maassen 2017:98). This reality necessitates a shift in the delivery of education, mainly the provision of flexible life-long learning opportunities to enable people to continuously improve their knowledge, acquire new skills, enhance their working possibilities and improve their quality of life.

The outbreak of COVID-19, and the need to overcome constraints to physical human interaction, has put a premium on a number of skills, amongst them, remote diagnostics, remote and online teaching, working with – as 'co-workers' - humanoid robots in areas such as care giving and healthcare; digital skills, and social skills required for non-face-to-face working. The intensive use of digital technologies during the COVID-19 health crisis and the continued utilisation of these technologies after the pandemic, coupled with unstable labour markets, are key drivers for re-skilling and upskilling with regard to digital competences. WEF (2018) estimates that by 2022, a significant number of companies would have expanded their adoption of technologies such as IoT, app-and web-enabled markets, cloud computing, machine learning, and augmented and virtual reality, and that 54 per cent of all employees will require significant re-skilling and upskilling. What this growing wave of new technologies means is that the skills required to perform most jobs is rapidly shifting, and universities and other tertiary institutions must respond equally rapidly.

Other than driving demand for new skills, technological advancements have also enabled multiple possibilities for rapid and flexible re-skilling and upskilling through, for example, online courses, flipped classroom and immersive learning. Many African universities offer various opportunities for life-long learning, through evening and weekend programmes (for example in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Mozambique), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) (for example, the University of Cape Town in South Africa and the National Open University of Nigeria), e-learning and short courses/capacity building programmes (mainly provided by business schools, campus companies and, increasingly, private companies), and through web-based learning resources such as Lynda.com (for example, the University of Pretoria in South Africa). The development of MOOCs and web-based learning in Africa can be described as nascent. This is mainly due to lack of access to the requisite technological infrastructure and facilities, and inadequate Internet connectivity.

Research

As already mentioned, whilst factor-driven economies compete on the basis of unskilled labour and natural resources, innovation-driven economies, in which rapid digital transformation is an important feature, are underpinned by knowledge and technological innovation. As is well known, knowledge has become a critical factor of production and a key driver of sustainable competitive advantage, and is linked with the idea of the knowledge economy (Pinheiro *et al.* 2015; Heng *et al.* 2012; Pillay 2010; Rooney *et al.* 2008), which is generally understood as an economy 'that is driven by the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information' (Heng *et al.* 2012:531). Knowledge is not only important for driving the economy but also for addressing societal challenges, some of which have been described as 'wicked' challenges, for example, climate change, poverty and the search for sustainable development.

The COVID-19 pandemic can be described as a 'wicked' problem given the turbulence, uncertainty, and complexity that it has caused. The need to combat the spread of the disease, challenges in treating patients, the need to continue vaccine development to deal with new variants, as well as the many challenges that have been exacerbated by the health crisis, such as widening inequalities and health and well-being of people, have not only reified the importance of research, as well as the need to build both basic and applied research capacity in critical research fields. The health crisis has several implications for the future of research. One of them is the pursuit of research that matters in transforming lives and communities and addresses complex societal challenges. Such challenges include health, the environment, climate change, food security, poverty alleviation, and all the challenges related to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

The inherent complexity of societal challenges such as COVID-19 has given great impetus to transdisciplinary research (Moradian et al. 2020; El-Hani & Machado 2020; Wangenge-Ouma and Kupe 2022). As reported by Moradian *et a*l. (2020), multiple disciplinary approaches are required to control the pandemic, manage its consequences and prevent the outbreak of similar pandemics in future. They give the example of mathematics and computer science as crucial for predicting, anticipating, and controlling present and future epidemics; physics, engineering and computer sciences in designing and designing PPE structure and function to inhibit the spread of the disease; biological sciences, especially molecular and computational biology, for providing a deeper understanding of complex pathogen-host interactions; and social and economic sciences for understanding the immense socio-economic implications of the pandemic.

The call for transdisciplinary research is not new. It has, however, been heightened by pressure to solve complex societal challenges as well as the participation of multiple stakeholder collaboration in research (including social actors) and team science (Klein 2015; OECD 2020). As O'Rourke, Crowley & Gonnerman (2016: 62) proclaim, 'meeting grand challenges requires responses that constructively combine multiple forms of expertise… it requires cross-disciplinary expertise'. The narrow scope of disciplines is simply inadequate to address complex societal challenges, especially those such as COVID-19 that are characterised by uncertainty and unpredictability. These challenges encompass multiple dimensions that disciplines handle separately (Klein 2015; OECD 2020). In other words, complex challenges have to be met with complexity in response (O'Rourke, Crowley & Gonnerman 2016). Some of the most impactful transdisciplinary research projects include the Human Genome Project, the Large Hadron Collider and the Square Kilometre Array.

The drive towards transdisciplinarity has similarly been intensified by the 4IR, whose main driver is the convergence of the physical, biological and digital sciences, leading, inter alia, to the emergence of new study fields such as bioengineering, green chemistry, neurotechnology and cognitive informatics. Transdisciplinarity has similarly been accelerated by both the development of 4IR technologies such as AI, big data analytics, deep learning systems, blockchain technology, robotics and IoT, and their deployment to address societal challenges such as sustainable food systems, climate change, epidemics and pandemics, widening inequalities, security, rapid urbanisation, and transportation.

Overall, COVID-19 has underscored the crucial need for multi-stakeholder scientific collaboration and partnerships, locally and internationally: international collaboration, trans-disciplinary collaboration, inter-university collaboration, and collaboration between universities, government, industry, business, and communities. Collaboration is not antithetical to competitiveness, institutional autonomy, or differentiation (Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe 2021); it is essential for post-pandemic reconstruction, research excellence, and an effective response to the various disruptive trends that have an impact on the ability of higher education and communities to navigate the complex, ever-evolving and, at times, contradictory relationship between higher education and its key publics.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has exacerbated various trends which require that universities adapt their roles and functions in response to the emerging landscape. This paper has especially focused on rapid digital transformation which has been accelerated by the pandemic. The paper argues that adapting to and optimising this rapid digital transformation is central to universities demonstrating their societal relevance. Universities have to adapt their roles and functions to accommodate the emerging external demands and expectations. As highlighted in the paper, the transformations associated with the 4IR, even though many of them remain unknown, require a revitalisation of higher education with regard to pedagogical approaches that engender creativity, innovation and team work, reform of curricula to align with the changes, and engendering of transdisciplinary research, amongst other reforms.

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The Life of a Great Marxist: Aijaz Ahmad (1941–2022)*

Aijaz Ahmad (1941–2022) died at home on 9 March, surrounded by his books and papers and by the warmth of his children and friends.

Vijay Prashad
Executive Director, Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research

Aijaz Ahmad was born in Muzaffarnagar, in British India. He read extensively from an early age and allowed his mind to drift out of the *qasba* of his childhood. His father shared some radical books with him, which helped him to understand the world outside the Doab region of the Indo-Gangetic Plain and the world beyond the confines of the capitalist system. From an early age, Aijaz began to dream of internationalism and socialism. He studied in Lahore, Pakistan, to which his family had migrated after Partition in 1947–48, but these studies took place as much in college classrooms as they did in cafés and the cells of political organisations. In the cafés, Aijaz met the finest minds of Urdu literature, who schooled him in both lyric and politics; in the political cells he encountered the depth of Marxism, a boundless view of the world that gripped him for the rest of his life. Fully immersed in the leftist political unrest in Pakistan, Aijaz came to the attention of the authorities, which is why he skipped the country for New York.

The two passions of Aijaz Ahmad — poetry and politics — flowered in New York. He took his immense love for Urdu poetry to the most renowned poets of his time (such as Adrienne Rich, William Stafford and W.S. Merwin), reciting Ghalib to them, pouring them wine, watching them recover from Ghalib's language and Aijaz's explanation of the meaning of the poems. This innovative work resulted in Aijaz's first book, *Ghazals of Ghalib* (1971). At the same time, he was involved with Feroz Ahmed with whom he produced *Pakistan Forum*, a hard-hitting journal that documented the atrocities in South Asia, with a special focus on the military dictatorship of Yahya Khan (1969–1971) as well as the civilian possibilities of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1971–1977); on Pakistan, Aijaz mainly wrote about the insurgencies in East Pakistan (which became Bangladesh in 1972) and Balochistan. It was in this period that he began to write about South Asian politics for such socialist journals as *Monthly Review*, with which he collaborated for the next several decades.

In the 1980s, Aijaz Ahmad returned to India, taking up residence in Delhi and teaching at various colleges in the city (including at Jawaharlal Nehru University). He settled into a rhythm of critique that produced substantial work on three different areas of inquiry: postmodernism and postcolonialism, Hindutva and liberalisation, and the new world order centred around the United States and US-driven globalisation.

Based on his great appreciation for culture and literature, Aijaz developed a powerful analysis of the casual way in which the cultures of the Third World were being assessed by metropolitan universities. This work widened outwards to include a strongly negative assessment of postmodernism and postcolonialism, informed by the work of the leading Marxist literary critic, Fred Jameson, and the main critic of Orientalism, Edward Said. At the heart of Aijaz's criticism of postmodernism and postcolonialism was their disavowal of Marxism. 'Post-Marxism', he told me, 'is nothing other than pre-Marxism, a return to the idealism that Marx went beyond'. For this comment, Aijaz had in mind the highly influential book by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), which viewed the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci as a postmodern thinker. It is in this context that Aijaz began studying Gramsci's work. Aijaz's critiques were published in his classic book, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (Verso and Oxford University Press, 1992). It is difficult to describe in a few sentences the impact this work had on scholars across the world. When Marxism was under attack, Aijaz was one of the few thinkers who produced a sophisticated account not of its relevance, but of its necessity. 'Postcoloniality is also, like most things, a matter of class', he wrote with the kind of sharpness that defined his prose. *In Theory* taught an entire generation how to think about and write theory. In this book, and in essays published by *Monthly Review*, Aijaz mounted an important defence of the Marxist tradition. 'Marx is boundless', Samir Amin wrote, a line that Aijaz discussed with me when we produced a book of Samir's later writings with a foreword from Aijaz. That boundlessness exists because the critique of capitalism is also incomplete until capitalism is overcome. To reject Marx, therefore, is to reject the most powerful set of tools that have been produced to explore the capitalist system and its grip on humanity.

'Every country gets the fascism it deserves', is a sentence that can be found in Aijaz's writings from this period, when his reading of Gramsci helped to illuminate for him the rise of Hindutva in the period just before and after the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992. An entire generation in India, bewildered by the rapid acceleration of the twin phenomena of liberalisation and the growth of Hindutva, took refuge in Aijaz's clear prose, which identified the character of the rise of the Indian hard right. His thoughts, many of them collected in *Lineages of the Present: Political Essays* (Tulika, 1996), described in precise theoretical and historical language the growth of the hard right. These considerations would never leave Aijaz. In the last decade of his life, he studied with great carefulness the oeuvre of the hard right. These readings became the Wellek Lectures, which he delivered at the University of California (Irvine) in 2017, and which will be collected and published by LeftWord Books. One of Aijaz's contributions in his critiques was the way he insisted on the hard nature of Indian culture — rooted in the wretchedness of the caste system and the hierarchy of patriarchy. That's what he meant in the aphorism about every country getting the fascism it deserves. To understand the roots of Hindutva, one had to grasp the taproot of hard culture, understand the way in which the privatisation agenda brutalised labour even more, and created the conditions for the rise of the political Hindu right. These writings, many of them delivered as lectures across India during a time of great political confusion, remain classics, necessary to read and re-read as we continue to face an assault on human dignity from these fascistic forces. Aijaz gave us confidence when the eclipse of hope seemed almost complete.

Those were rough years. India liberalised in 1991. The United States opened up a cruel assault on Iraq in that same year. The next year, 1992, the forces of the hard right destroyed a sixteenth-century mosque in Ayodhya. Two years later, in 1994, the World Trade Organization was established. The resources of socialism were much depleted. During this decade, Aijaz's writings and speeches — often published in small magazines and party publications — were widely circulated. In Delhi we had the good fortune to listen to him regularly, not only in public venues but at such places as Kutty's tea house at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library — where he was a Senior Fellow — and at the many Students' Federation of India events that he attended as a speaker.

In 1997, when Arundhati Roy published her novel *The God of Small Things*, Aijaz read it with great care and enthusiasm. I was at a meeting with N. Ram and Aijaz around that time, when they spoke of the book, and Ram asked Aijaz to write about it for *Frontline*. That essay — Reading Arundhati Roy Politically — is a gem of literary criticism and one that was, oddly, not anthologised in either Aijaz's collections or in books on Arundhati's work. The essay began a long relationship with *Frontline* that endured till the very end. Aijaz would write for it long articles to orient readers to the conjunctural events in the world, in particular the devastating turn of events after 9/11, the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, the wars in Syria and Libya, and then the growth of the left in Latin America led by a man that we all admired, Hugo Chávez. These essays, once more circulated widely, became the basis for Aijaz's book, *Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Imperialism of Our Time* (LeftWord, 2004).

In the mid-1990s, after the fall of the USSR, it became evident that Marxism was suffering in the battle of ideas as neoliberalism entered not only the vocabulary of popular culture (with individualism and greed at the centre) but through postmodernism also entered the intellectual world. The lack of a serious left-wing publishing project dismayed us all. It was in this period, in 1999, that the publishing house LeftWord Books was set up in Delhi. Aijaz was one of its first authors, writing a sizzling essay on the *Communist Manifesto* in the book edited by Prakash Karat, *A World to Win*. Aijaz was on the publisher's editorial board and encouraged us right through the past decades with the direction of our work. Towards the end of his life, Sudhanva Deshpande, Mala Hashmi and I spent some days with Aijaz to interview him at length about his life and his work. The interview was eventually published as *Nothing Human is Alien to Me* (LeftWord, 2020). During his last two years, Aijaz planned to write a series of introductions to Marx's political writings. 'Marx is thought of too narrowly for his economic work, which is important', he would say, 'but his political writings are key to understanding his revolutionary vision'. We did a series of interviews about some of these texts (*Communist Manifesto*, the first section of the *German Ideology*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx's writings on the Paris Commune), which we will convert into the introductions he imagined, as well as produce a collection of his writings on Marx.

In 2009, Prabir Purkayastha and others started *Newsclick*, a web-based news portal to discuss the important issues of our times. Aijaz was one of its early guests and continued to be a regular voice on the *Newsclick* channel. He would explain with precise detail the wars in West Asia and North Africa as well as the political developments in the United States and China, South America and Europe. These conversations are an archive of those times. They also bring out Aijaz's wit, his smile alerting one to a sharp comment. Between the *Frontline* columns and the *Newsclick* interviews, a generation of people learned not only about this or that event but also how to think of the world as a structured whole, how to understand events in relation to the great processes of our time. Each of these interventions was like a seminar, a gathering to learn how to think as much as to learn about what was happening.

Aijaz taught at universities in India, Canada and the United States, and lectured at many institutions, from the Philippines to Mexico. Towards the end of his life, he became a Senior Fellow at Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, where he advised a new generation of intellectuals on the boundlessness of Marxism. He was eager to spend some time on popular education, on building up the confidence of new intellectuals in our long-term battle of ideas.

When a person such as Aijaz leaves us, his voice remains in our ears. It will be with us for a long time yet.

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CODESRIA Bulletin

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