

**The War on Tigray:
Geopolitics and the Struggle for Self-Determination**

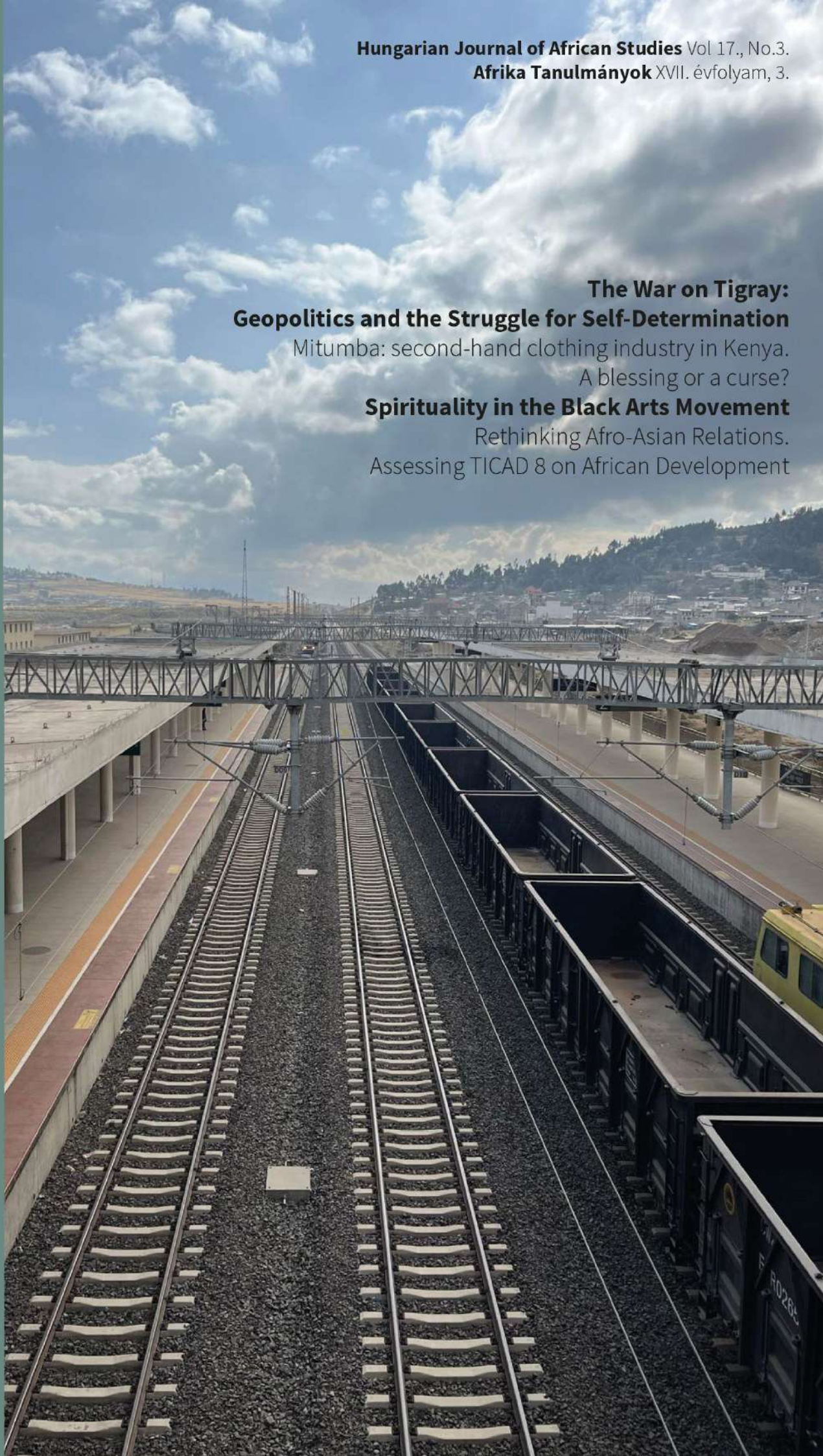
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THE WAR ON TIGRAY: GEOPOLITICS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

MERESSA TSEHAYE GEBREWAHD

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND SECURITY STUDIES

MEKELLE UNIVERSITY, ETHIOPIA

MERESSA21T@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

Tigray continues to be a unique case among ancient kingdoms, Westphalia nation-states, post-colonial Africa, and post-Cold War national liberation struggles. It is one of the oldest civilizations (Aksumite Kingdom) and the historical, cultural, and political soul of ancient and modern Ethiopia. But it was made to be an ‘oppressed nation struggling for regional autonomy and survival from genocidal aggression’ by the empire state of Ethiopia and the ‘garrison state’ of Eritrea. It also survived Egyptian and Mahdist expansionists, and Italian colonialism, though it lost ‘Bahre-Negash’ (Eritrea) to Italy due to the Wuchale Agreement (or Treaty of Wichale) in 1889. Eritrea was handed over to Italian colonialists by Menelik II of Shewa-Amhara in order to weaken Tigray’s geopolitical power base. Tigray was also the hotbed of the first Woyane rebellion in 1943 which sparked the idea of ‘land to the Tiller, fair taxation, and self-rule,’ and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) led the second Woyane rebellion (1975–91) that restructured the empire state of Ethiopia into a federation with the 1995 constitution. Since 2018, after 27 years of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)-led federal experiment, Tigray again became a victim of a ‘genocidal war’ led by the Ethiopian federal army, Amhara forces, Ethiopian regional forces, and Eritrean army, supported by UAE and Turkey drones, and the Somali army. The international community and the African Union supported Abiy Ahmed and Issaias Afewerki’s genocidal war in the name of “maintaining the territorial integrity of Ethiopia” by neglecting the principles of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), people’s self-determination rights, and the prevention of genocide. Tigray, therefore, is a rare case in the vicious cycle of violence. The Tigrayan ‘two-year’ survival war (from November 2020 to November 2022) against those who practice genocide was destined to break Tigray’s historically vicious cycle of violence perpetrated by Ethiopia and Eritrea. The paper aims to investigate the historical, geopolitical, and security reasons that have trapped Tigray into facing the post-2020 genocidal war.

Keywords

genocidal war, geopolitics, Tigray liberation struggle, TDF, referendum

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“The (Ethiopian) military rulers failed in one of their principal missions: the preservation of the state’s territorial unity. The Ethiopian state was historically forged by war, and by war it has been broken up.” Professor Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa*, 2009: 6.

“Tigray elects”, “Tigray will prevail”, and “Tigray will decide its destiny via referendum” – The legendary slogans of the people of Tigray during “the historic regional election held in September 2020; two years’ armed resistance against the genocidal war; and the Tigray’s quest for referendum respectively.

1. Introduction

On November 4, 2020, the federal government, in alliance with the Eritrean army, Amhara expansionists, and other Ethiopian regional special forces, collectively known as the “Joint Forces,” declared war on Tigray. The Tigray War has been branded as the largest and deadliest conflict (Merewe, 2022) in the world in the early 21st century. It was notable because of the scale of human rights atrocities committed by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), Amhara regional forces, Afar regional forces, and the special forces of other Ethiopian regional states in Ethiopia against Tigray regional forces. The magnitude of death has been reported to be nearly one million Tigrayan (Ibid). The Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) were engaged in the war to defend Tigray’s rights to self-rule and self-determination, restore Tigray’s territorial integrity, and confront existential threats posed by the two-year genocidal war declared by the Joint Forces (Gebrewahd, September 2022; Plaut, March 2021). Geopolitically, the war on Tigray, alongside the war on Ukraine, is a recent example of geopolitical rivalries between superpowers: the USA on one side, and China and Russia on the other. At the outset of the Tigray conflict, key UN Security Council (UNSC) members, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres and African Union Commissioner Moussa Faki, sided with the Ethiopian government against Tigray, citing territorial integrity and sovereignty while downplaying the unprecedented atrocities committed by the Joint Forces (Girmay, 2022). Russia and China consistently supported the Ethiopian government’s war on Tigray and repeatedly vetoed UNSC resolutions aimed at stopping the conflict. Western powers, however, eventually shifted their stance, calling for a cessation of hostilities, unhindered humanitarian access, and an end to the de facto two-year siege, and finally declared that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing were committed in Tigray by the Joint Forces (Blinken, March 2023). Additionally, regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, the UAE, and China supplied support to the Ethiopian federal government during the conflict (Roblin, November 2021; Zwijneburg, January 2022).

Furthermore, the war on Tigray was also a new case in Africa where modern technologies, including war drones from the UAE, Iran, Turkey, and China, were employed and changed the course of the war by weakening the armaments of the

Tigrayan forces (Ibid). The war has also used siege and blockage and Humanitarian Aid (food and medicine) as a major weapon of war and human security crisis.

What makes the war on Tigray unique is that the Ethiopian federal government, which was expected to protect its own citizens from human rights violations, human security threats, and external aggression, instead formed a “tripartite joint force” with Eritrea and Amhara regional forces. This coalition aimed to annihilate Tigrayans and jointly occupied the Tigray region. Moreover, Eritrea’s participation in the war has resulted in the worst human rights violations, human security crises, as well as geopolitical crises (Tronvoll & Martin, 2021; UN News, 2021).

Though the African Union continues to claim an “African solution to African problems” and “Never again to the Rwanda genocide mantra” (Figuremariam, 2008), the Union was believed by many to have a very sluggish endeavour to stop the war against Tigray. The international community’s complicity that failed to stop the two years’ war clearly exposed the African Union’s and the international community’s geopolitical primacy of superpowers and regional powers over human rights and human security (Ibid).

2. Stating the paradoxes of international order: Tigray a new precedent

Abiy Ahmed and Issaias Afewerki’s war against Tigray (Girmay, 2022; Volodzko, 2022), along with the Ukraine–Russia conflict, continue to dominate international politics, reshaping the global order and contributing to the Horn of Africa’s emerging ‘new (dis)order’ (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023). The Ukraine–Russia war has transformed the post-Cold War era’s East-West bloc dynamics and the post-9/11 anti-terrorist narratives into a clear division between a “coalition of democratic communities” and the Russian bloc. This war, characterized by profound implications for global order, significantly impacts both continental and supranational institutions.

The war against Tigray, however, has been between the coalition of the Horn of Africa’s authoritarian regimes, and one of the oldest nations in the world, Tigray, a nation striving for self-determination and struggling to defend its civilization, cultural heritages, and self-determination rights. It was a war between Tigray, a nation zealous to fulfill its vision for the fullest sense of self-determination, and the Joint Forces in collaboration with their international sponsors including UAE, Iran, and Turkey. The fundamental goal of the genocidal war perpetrated by the Joint Forces, as a *final solution* and based on ‘war makes state doctrine’ was to control and partition Tigray’s territory, eliminate the heritage, history, undying patriotism, and political establishments of one of the oldest civilizations in the world, to uproot the critical mass of the people of Tigray, and to destroy the civilization bearing and cohesively surviving nation of Tigray (Ateweberhan, 2020). Finally, their grand strategy was to eradicate the name of Tigray from the map through a three-fold method: redrawing the Horn of Africa’s establishment to fit Issaias Afewerki’s ambition of ‘Eritreanization of the Horn Africa- *reinventing the lost Singapore vision*’ (Ateweberhan, November 2020), to fulfill the ‘Ethiopianization of Eritrea and the Red Sea – *reclaiming “greater Ethiopia” (by the Ethiopian irredentist) which stretches up to*

the Red Sea,’ according to Abiy Ahmed and his Amhara elites’ irredentist rhetoric. And, internally, the Amhara elites are desperately hoping to *Amharanize* Ethiopia and then regain their ‘glorious past, i.e. *restoring Menelik II Ethiopia*’ by undoing the Tigrayan federalist nation building legacies. These three visions are mutually antagonistic and utopian in the absence of Tigray (Ibid). Tigray continues to be the unifying factor as it is the historical-cultural ancestor of both states and it is geopolitically situated between the three expansionists forces. Historically and politically, Tigray has been inherently anti-thesis to the assimilationist and expansionist nation-building projects of Issaias, Abiy, and the Amhara elites (Abbay, 2022). The war on Tigray, was thus to control Tigray first, and then project their expansionist policy to the greater Horn of Africa. For the stated visions to be successful, therefore, presumed “eradication of Tigray from the map, structure, history, and memory,” as Daniel Kibret, social advisor of Abiy Ahmed, shamelessly stated on the Ethiopian public media, the same ideas have also been systematically propagated by Abiy Ahmed and Issaias Afewerki.

The war against Tigray exposed the international community and institutions, including the African Union (AU) (ABC News, 2020), which advocates for humanity, popular sovereignty, the responsibility to protect (R2P), genocide watch, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, self-determination, gender violence prevention, and the condemnation of hunger as a weapon of war. Instead of upholding these principles, many either directly supported the war or remained silent in condemning this 21st-century genocide. Even worse, the international community failed to uphold its humanitarian principles, favouring authoritarian regimes under the guise of sovereignty (Gebrewahd, 2022). In the Tigray conflict, these ideals, including insincere statements by UN officials expressing that they were “gravely concerned” (UN News, 2021), have become mere “gentlemen’s jargon” or empty “words of statesmen’s briefings or press releases” that ordinary Tigrayans are tired of hearing. Consequently, the realist doctrine of world politics, emphasizing ‘military power,’ continues to dominate, and the international order remains a state-centric Hobbesian or anarchic establishment.

The Tigray war once again uncovers the ‘strategic mistakes’ of the major powers (USA, Russia and China) in their decisions to deal with the Ethiopian and Eritrean regimes and the genuine struggle of the Tigrayans for self-determination. For geopolitical ends, and without taking the genuine self-determination questions of the Tigrayans and other Ethiopian nations into consideration, the Western powers (mainly the UK and the USA) did their best to save Emperor Haile Selassie from the Tigrayans, first in the Woyane peasants’ protest in 1943, and through many other Ethiopian peasant and student struggles in the 1970s (Tareke, 2009). The former USSR also supported the military Derg regime’s 17 years’ war against the armed liberation struggles in Tigray and Eritrea. Both Ethiopian regimes, nevertheless, were defeated by the freedom fighters that raised the nation’s question of self-determination. The Ethiopian regimes, unfortunately, were at war against Tigray since the formation of modern Ethiopia by Menelik II (Ibid). The superpower’s support

for the monarchical and military regimes also failed to transform Ethiopia into a stable multinational democracy. As history repeats itself, Abiy Ahmed was at war against Tigray and, paradoxically, again Tigray was made a victim of the major powers' support of the regimes of Ethiopia and Eritrea in the name of territorial integrity and regional security.

Following the 1998–2000 Ethiopia–Eritrea war, the Algiers Agreement, signed in December 2000, involved the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the US. These entities intervened to save Issaias Afewerki from total defeat by the TPLF-EPRDF-led Ethiopian army under the pretext of safeguarding “territorial integrity,” not the Eritrean people. This intervention resulted in the emergence of an even more oppressive regime in Eritrea. Furthermore, the same actors committed a “strategic mistake” by rehabilitating Issaias from international isolation and lifting UN Security Council sanctions in the name of “rapprochement and regional stability.” This miscalculation enabled Issaias Afewerki to wage genocide on Tigray and destabilize Ethiopia (Gebrewahd, 2018). Similarly, in the name of maintaining Ethiopia's territorial integrity and seeking a negotiated settlement, the AU, UN, EU, USA, and other drone-sponsoring states saved Abiy Ahmed's federal government from collapse at the hands of the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) in the final months of 2021. The outcome was a repetition of the “Issaias Afewerki syndrome”: Abiy Ahmed's regime became increasingly authoritarian, plunging Ethiopia into the worst crisis it has ever faced.

The aggregate outcomes of the strategic mistakes of the superpowers, regional powers, and the AU are the same; Tigray unfortunately, and repeatedly, is victimized and the ‘Issaias Afewerki syndrome’ proliferates in the Horn of Africa. In the end, Ethiopia and the Horn of African security are, more than ever, becoming extremely volatile, and even the Tigray crisis could lead to a reconfiguration of Ethiopia and beyond. Following the Pretoria agreement signed in November 2022 between the Ethiopian federal government and the TPLF to end the war in Tigray, the crisis

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in Ethiopia transformed into a war between the Ethiopian federal government and Amhara forces of which the latter is allegedly supported by the Eritrean government and hence complicating the vicious cycle of violence in Ethiopia. Moreover, following Abiy Ahmed's official claim in October 2023 to have access to the Red Sea (Eritrean ports), Ethiopia and Eritrea are engaging in a propaganda war which could evolve into a full-scale geopolitical war in the Horn of Africa. Therefore, the Tigray war recalls that the orthodox mechanisms of the superpowers towards Ethiopia have been proven to fail and a fundamentally new mechanism of intervention is needed to address the historical problems of Tigray, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. An internationally observed referendum could be among the options to address Tigray's dilemma. After the atrocities perpetrated against Tigrayans, regardless of whether the people of Tigray will decide 'to remain in Ethiopia' or 'opt for independence,' they should be given the chance to express a 'vote of confidence' on Ethiopia via referendum.

3. The irony of pan-Africanism and the African Union against the self-determination of Tigray

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed continues to pretend to be a champion of pan-Africanism claiming Ethiopia to be, as the host of the African Union, the only country in Africa to escape European colonialism, and supports African independence struggles against colonialism and neocolonialism in mobilizing African leaders in the Tigrayan war. The African Union headquarter, which was built during the time of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, was placed over the notorious Red Terror prison camp of the Derg regime called '*Alem Beqagn*' to remember the victims and condemn crimes of Derg fascism. The Union was chanting the slogan "Never again to Rwandan genocide" annually remembering African resistance struggles that originated from the 1896 victory of Adwa from Tigray. The African Union envisaged by its constitution, determined to reinvent pre-colonial African identities and heritages, to recognize the family as the building block of African states, and rhetorically claim "African solutions to African problems" (Figuremariam, 2008). Unfortunately, the African Union, under commissioner Musa Faqi Mohammed (ABC News, 2020), declared its unwavering support to Abiy Ahmed and Issaias Afewerki's war in Tigray and lobbied members of the UN Security Council to not make the Tigray war an agenda point, nor to pass strong decisions in order to avert the ongoing atrocities. "Furthermore, the Union that had requested the UNSC to impose sanctions on Eritrea in 2009 for its destabilizing role in the Horn of Africa paradoxically turned out to be instrumental in rehabilitating the sanctioned tyranny and opened a Pandora's Box for Issaias Afewerki to destabilize the region (BBC, December 2018). The African Union in Addis Ababa, by supporting the war against Tigray, aggravated Ethiopia's crisis as the internal contradictions were becoming irreconcilable and the geopolitical crises were worsening.

The bold and irrefutable fact is that Tigray has been the origin of Ethiopia's cultural, historical, and religious identity. It has served as the 'software' or 'idea' for the Ethiopian state, the cradle of African patriotism and independence. The timeless

Tigrayan struggle once again exposes the absurdity of the notion that “African solution to African problems” can prevent recurring atrocities in Africa. After ‘Operation Alula’ in June 2021, which led the liberation of most parts of Tigray, the region’s agenda clearly became internationalized. By all standards, Tigray’s struggle for self-defense, self-determination, a referendum, and justice for victims of ‘genocide’ war cannot be reduced to merely Ethiopia’s internal affairs. These issues are too large and complicated to be handled solely by Ethiopia and the African Union. Ultimately, the responsibility fell to the leaders of democratic states who genuinely believe in the self-determination of peoples and nations and recognize that Tigray’s case was a unique and new phenomenon which required new interventions and a new conflict transformation framework.

4. Tigray: Victim of the Horn of Africa authoritarian regimes and their assimilationist nation-building resurrection

Ethiopia and Eritrea’s war against Tigray was waged in the name of the “state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and nonintervention” mantra and the hypocrisy of “the Horn of Africa’s regional integration” even though Abiy Ahmed, Issaias Afewerki, and Mohammed Formajo had no ‘legitimacy and capacity’ to execute such a huge regional project (Ateweberhan, 2020). The Tigray war was a new litmus test where the territorial integrity and sovereignty in Ethiopia and Eritrea were mockery ideals against the Tigrayan genuine self-determination struggle. Eritrea, which has been repeatedly called the African North Korea (Stavis & Parkinson, 2016) violates Ethiopia’s sovereignty indefinitely, and even after the Pretoria agreement, Eritrea continues to control Tigray’s territory even though the agreement calls for Eritrea’s withdrawal from Ethiopia’s Tigray territories. Thus, Ethiopia lost both moral and politico-security power to restrain Issaias Afewerki’s hegemonic ambitions. The Eritrean army committed unparalleled atrocities against the Tigrayan people, who are supposed to be citizens of Ethiopia. Shockingly, the Ethiopian government not only condoned but also celebrated Eritrea’s atrocities in Tigray, a member state of the Ethiopian federation. More than ever, Ethiopia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity were compromised, making its international borders vulnerable to violations by neighbouring states including Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, and the violent extremist organization Al-Shabab. The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), which was known as an African peacemaker, are now implicated in war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing against its own citizens in Tigray. The Tigray people, too weak to fight back external invaders, found themselves defenceless against the onslaught. Meanwhile, the ENDF struggled to control the proliferating insurgencies and youth militant groups found everywhere in the country except in Addis Ababa. This situation epitomizes the characteristics of a fragile and failed state (Weldegiorgis, 2018), as described in the words, “things fall apart, and the center cannot hold.”

The surprising aspect is that Ethiopia accepted violations of its territory by Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan. Ethiopia openly acknowledged that the primary objective of the collaboration between Abiy Ahmed and Issaias was to suppress

Tigray. Both leaders were committed to exert control over Tigray and eliminate its ‘historical-cultural-religious origins and legacies.’ Issaias Afewerki openly branded his aggression as “game over” and “*politica-Hisbo*” (political cleaning). Ultimately, their goal was to graft the nightmarish ‘greater Ethiopia’ and ‘greater Eritrea’ onto the ashes of Tigray (Al-mukhatar, 2018; Fisher & Gebrewahd, 2018).

The Tigrayan patriotic war has once again underscored the futility of the “Tigray-phobic,” assimilationist-expansionist, and anti-self-determination nation-building agendas projected by Ethiopian and Eritrean leaders. These genocidal wars waged against Tigray were doomed to fail from the outset, as the historical and cultural foundations of both states originate from Tigray. The military and diplomatic support mobilized from external powers by both states in the name of territorial integrity, regional security, statehood, and geopolitics to eradicate Tigray from the map, history, and structures can only prolong Tigray’s liberation struggle and worsen the security and politico-economic collapse in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Horn. Issaias Afewerki’s Eritrea and Abiy Ahmed-Amhara elites’ of Ethiopia proved to be ‘typical predatory African states’ impossible of economic and political reforms (regardless of international donor’s efforts), suffering from chronic regime security crises, overly militarized societies, religious and ethnic polarization, and the states’ survival being dependent on the ironfisted leadership. Economic support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the superpower’s and the regional powers combined, did not change the attitude and capacity of either leader to reform their regimes. In the medium and longer term, even if the ‘regimes change’ option is taken off the table by donors, the financial handouts will not avert ‘regime and state collapse, debt quagmire, and genocidal atrocities’ in the region.

Ethiopia was named as an ‘anchor and regional power’ in the Horn of Africa. Abiy Ahmed was untimely groomed as an ‘African reformer’ by those who failed to understand the complexity and fragility of Ethiopian politics. He became a winner of the “Noble Peace Prize” (Verhoeven & Woldemariam, 2022) for making peace with Eritrea in 2019. In November 2020, jointly with Eritrea and Amhara forces, he declared war on Tigray. Since July 2023, Abiy Ahmed’s federal army has been fighting against Amhara forces and in October 2023 he announced a propaganda war against Eritrea through reclaiming access to the Red Sea. The Tigray war starkly revealed that Abiy Ahmed’s Ethiopia, alongside his propaganda machinery “ESAT,” despite being a nation of over 100 million people, failed to effectively transition from conflict to peace. The rhetoric and campaign of mobilizing Ethiopians to eradicate the “5 million Tigrayans,” under the guise of the “95% to 5%” motto and the “drain the sea”(Tghat, 2021) strategy, proved to be militarily, diplomatically, and politically inadequate. This exposed the fragility of Ethiopia’s statehood, exacerbated by the polarization and militarization fueled by ‘assimilationist, secessionist, irredentist, and federalist’ tensions (Gebrewahd, 2019).

June 2021, when the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) executed the decisive ‘Operation Alula Abanega,’ obliterating more than seven divisions of the Ethiopian army in the lowlands of Temben, near the birthplace of Adwa Ras Alula Abanega, a revered

hero of the 1896 battle, and subsequently routing the retreating Ethiopian and Amhara forces at the towns of Weldia, Chifra, Dessie, and Kombelcha up to the Debreseina fronts, the TDF's advance towards Addis Ababa via the Amhara and Afar regions sent shockwaves through the Abiy regime and across Ethiopia. (Chulov, 2021). The determination, resilience, and patriotism of the Tigrayan fighters to defend their fatherland and defeat the aggressors forced Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the international community to rethink and recognize the place of Tigray in Ethiopia and the Horn as a pivotal political and military entity. Following the victorious military assertion of the TDF, including controlling the cities of Kombelcha and Dessie, the Ethiopian government conceded

that the ENDF alone could not withstand TDF advancement on Addis Ababa. Consequently, the Ethiopian people were called upon to mass mobilize against the TDF, and the survival of the federal army depended on external support from Turkey, China, and the UAE, particularly through drone assistance. External powers' diplomatic and military support (including the mentioned drones) saved the Joint Forces from total defeat, similar to Mengistu Hailemariam's fate in 1991. Subsequently, this led to the 'strategic withdrawal' of the TDF and externally imposed 'Mutually Hurting Stalemate' (MHS) or 'no war, no peace deadlock' since December 2021. Present-day Ethiopia is repeatedly likened to an 'African Yugoslavia,' situated between the 'failed state' of Somalia and the North Korea of Africa, namely, Eritrea. Abiy Ahmed (equated with Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia and Mikhail Gorbachev of the USSR) continues to say that Ethiopia will not be dismembered.

The Ethiopian saying 'Ethiopia without Tigray is unthinkable' again reiterates that Ethiopia without Tigray is simply historically, religiously, and politically incompatible. Against the expectations of procedural democracy and campaigners, the rhetoric of the federal army and the Amhara forces, the alliance failed to deliver democracy, development, or to uphold territorial integrity. Ethiopia's sovereignty is externally vulnerable and internally divisible between the federal army, the Somali irredentist, Balkanizing Southern nationalities, armed self-determination forces in Oromia, Tigray, Agew, Kimant, Afar, Gambela, Benshangul-Gumuz, and Amhara expansionist forces (Rowe & Gebrewahd, 2021).

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5. 'Neo-Ethiopianism', 'Barbarianism' and religious fiasco in post-2020 Ethiopia
The traditional axioms: "Ethiopia stretches its hands to God," "Ethiopia's name is mentioned several times in the holy bible," and "Ethiopia is the first country in Africa

where Islam and Christianity harmoniously coexist” are typically becoming socially and religiously inconsequential (Abraha, 2022). The Tigray genocide exposed that Ethiopian religious and cultural values were deteriorating to the unprecedented level of ‘barbarianism,’ and as a result, the religious institutions lost their legitimacy and integrity. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church with its bishops in the synods, categorically supported the war against Tigray and many of them were in the battlefield to mobilize the ENDF (Tghat, 2020). A bishop in the Amhara regional state declared to his followers that “it would be better to be governed by Satan than governed by the Woyane-Tigrayans” (Menberu & Chothia, 2021). The Ethiopian Catholic, Muslim, and protestant leaders also supported the war against Tigray (Theodros, 2022).

The Amhara elites publicly, notably by British Citizen Amhara Andargachew Tsiege, called Ethiopians in general and the Amhara, in particular, to attack Tigrayans with “the cruelest act of barbarism” by saying, “You must be merciless; you must act beyond what our [ethnic] Amhara or Ethiopian cultural values permit” (Abdi, 2021). He further called his followers to take barbaric actions: “... by showing no mercy, without any hesitation, with all means necessary, we should confront them with barbaric cruelty, with barbaric cruelty” (Plaut, 2021). Debebe Eshetu, a prominent Ethiopian journalist and artist, requested Abiy Ahmed to preemptively eradicate the Woyane (Tigrayan) and stated that such action is religiously permissible: “let’s eat hyenas and then repent” (Gebremeskel, 2022). Furthermore, an Amhara businessman named Worku Aytenew also publicly mobilized his supporters by saying, “let’s eat the Woyane like a roasted meat” (Tghat, 2021). As a result of such barbaric campaigns by dominantly Amhara religious and business leaders, intellectuals and artists, the Ethiopian government continues to destroy Ethiopian social and religious fabrics. Unprecedentedly, Ethiopia is engulfed in religious, communal, and ethnic conflicts and the state is overwhelmed by armed forces. Worst of all, Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopian religious leaders, and Amhara elites have been waging media propaganda and dehumanizing campaigns against Tigrayans labelling them as “weeds, cancers, day-hyenas, traitors, terrorists, anti-Ethiopianists and many more” (Collins, 2021). Many Tigrayans from all walks of life in different parts of Ethiopia were forced into humiliating imprisonments in concentration camps, cold-blooded killings, including being burned alive, being fired from their workplaces, and having their properties and businesses plundered. Therefore, Ethiopia was at war in Tigray to destroy its religious origins, including the “Aksum massacre” (Amnesty International, February 2021), Al-Negashi mosques and the destruction of several other significant pieces of the Tigrayan heritage.

6. Tigray: victim of Horn of Africa geopolitics and security complex

The Horn of Africa is one of the hotspots for superpowers, Middle Eastern regional powers, and Eastern African geopolitical, geo-cultural, and geostrategic security complexes. As it is situated between the Red Sea, the Babel Mandab Strait, and the Nile River, the region continues to be a hotbed of geopolitics, hydro politics, and religious conflicts manifested in terrorist proliferation and socially protracted conflicts

(Clapham, 1998). Furthermore, the states in the Horn range from the failed state of Somalia, unrecognized Somaliland, closed and isolated Eritrea, and fragile and conflict-stricken Ethiopia. The states in the region are also mutually interventionist by hosting their neighbouring country's insurgence groups. The strength of one state increases the fragility of its neighbours. As a proxy centre for the geopolitical, hydro-security, religious and inter-state conflicts quagmire the Horn of Africa and beyond, Tigray became a victim of genocidal aggression. Ethiopia, therefore, became a pace-maker of geopolitical catastrophe as the Ethiopian government invited regional and international rivals to, directly and indirectly, become involved in the Tigray war and repeat the history of former Ethiopian regimes in treason against Tigray. As a result, though Tigray continues to be devastated without precedent, the timeless Tigrayan patriotic war, after the game-changing operation Alula Abanega equally tarnished Ethiopia's economic, diplomatic, political, and military image. Hence, Ethiopia became a new burden to Africa and the world.

7. The quest for self-determination of Tigray via referendum as a conflict transformation mechanism

Tigray holds a proud historical legacy as the ancient homeland of one of the oldest kingdoms, encompassing a literate civilization spanning the Da'amite, Yeha, and Aksumite Kingdoms. It stands as the first region to embrace the three Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As a political, cultural, and territorial entity, Tigray has endured and persevered through numerous international aggressions across epochs, including encounters with Egyptian expansion, Mahdist invasions, Italian colonialism in the 19th century, and Eritrean hostilities in 1990-1991, 1998-2000, and 2020-2022. Furthermore, internally, Tigray has been struggling against Shoa-Amhara assimilation and expansion, patriotically preserved its political existence, and waged a successful armed liberation struggle (from 1975-1991) to transform the feudal empire of Ethiopia into a multinational federation, *and as a last resort*, to address its historical "national and class" contradictions. As a result of the historical ups and downs, the oldest nation of Tigray, unlike other parallel civilizations, turned out to be an 'oppressed nation' within the empire state of Ethiopia (Rowe and Gebrewahd, 2021).

After 27 years of relatively stable political and economic developments, successful engagements in African peacekeeping operations under the TPLF-EPRDF leadership, with the coming of Abiy Ahmed and Amhara expansionist to power in April 2018, Tigray again became a victim of the Neo-Ethiopianist assimilationist policy. The Ethiopian government systematically framed its policies of segregation and humiliation of Tigrayans from all walks of life by labelling them as weeds, cancers, day-hyenas, traitors, contrabandists, terrorists, and anti-Ethiopianist.' Abiy Ahmed defined Tigray as a common enemy to his 'neo-greater Ethiopia' project and mobilized Ethiopians and Eritreans to crack down on the Tigrayan.

Recognizing the clear resurgence of imperialist sentiments under Abiy Ahmed's leadership, coupled with the glorification of past regimes such as Menelik II, Haile

Selassie, and the Derg, while marginalizing the significant contributions of Tigray during the previous 27 years, the people of Tigray, led by the TPLF, initiated legal and political campaigns. These efforts aimed to demand respect for constitutional norms, the acknowledgment of self-rule and self-determination rights of nations, and an end to genocidal campaigns targeting Tigrayans. Defiantly chanting “Tigray bows only to God,” they stood firm in their resolve to uphold their dignity and rights (North Media network, December 2018).

When the federal government illegally extended the 2020-Ethiopian national election, Tigray fiercely opposed the move and responded by establishing its own “Tigray Electoral Commission” by the proclamation 351/2012 to conduct the “Tigray regional council election” under the famous motto “Tigray Elects” (ትግራይ ትመርጥ!) (Addis Standard, September 2020). The author of this article was among the ‘five commissioners’ of the Tigray electoral commission. The election was fundamentally an expression of ‘defiance and rejection’ by Tigray people against any forms of unitary restorationist policies aimed at undermining Tigray’s hard-won self-rule and self-determination rights stated in the Federal 1995 constitution. The election, where approximately 2.78 million Tegarú voted, was considered as a referendum and the people of Tigray were unprecedentedly mobilized to make the election successful despite the COVID pandemic. Therefore, independently organizing regional elections was considered a minimum right of self-determination (Marks and Dahir, September 2020).

Following the election, the newly elected Tigray regional government was established by the TPLF on October 24, 2020. After a month, the federal government declared war on Tigray in the name of “Law enforcement operation” (Ahmed, November 2020) that resulted in the genocidal war against Tigray. In the eight-month occupation by Ethiopian and Eritrean armies, Tigray faced unspeakable genocidal atrocities. The author of this paper is an eye witness to the genocidal aggression. He was in the battle fields in Tigray, where he fortunately survived life-threatening attacks in the field, from the beginning of the aggression in November 2020 to the operation Alula and the liberation of Mekelle on June 28, 2021.

As a result, on one hand, the author personally observed the unprecedented magnitude of the aggression, the level of armaments used to annihilate Tigray, the brutality of the invaders to eliminate Tigray entirely, and the failure of the international community to avert the genocidal atrocities. On the other hand, the author also witnessed the heroic, resilient, patriotic determination of the people of Tigray and the TDF (both the *gedeli* and new generation of Tigrayan freedom fighters). Together they faced off against the massive Eritrean and Ethiopian armies in the cherished valleys and mountains of Tigray. This steadfast resistance reiterated the historical truth that Tigray stands as a bastion of independence and patriotism, serving as a timeless reminder that it is the graveyard of aggressors. The author also personally confirmed the old saying that “Tigray has not many friends but our freedom and patriotism relies on our valleys and mountains” (Plaut, March 2021). The legal, political, and armed struggles and sacrifices of Tigray boldly herald that Tigray’s right to self-rule

and self-determination was not compromised by any external political forces in any situation. The federal nation-building experiment of Ethiopia, which was enveloped out of 17 years of Tigrayan struggle, was considered the last attempt to democratize the age-old empire state of Ethiopia: *Amharanized-Ethiopia*, on the basis of ‘equality and unity.’

Cognizant of the historical treasons that Ethiopian rulers committed against Tigray; the timeless sacrifices of the Tigrayan people to defend Ethiopia; the ongoing genocidal war to eliminate “Tigray from map, history and memory as a final solution” (Daniel, September 2021), and the undying patriotic struggles of the Tigrayan to defeat the genocidal war and give a lasting solution to the vicious cycle of violence, boldly signals that the relationship between Tigray and Ethiopia is transformed to unprecedented level of contradictions with no possibilities to heal the genocidal atrocities as well as cultural and structural violence. The only option that remains on the table by international mediators to save Ethiopia from dismemberment and peacefully address the Tigray’s vicious problems is to allow Tigray to determine its fate through an internationally observed referendum. The new Tigray (post-2018) is fundamentally evolving to its destiny: from “Tigray elects” (in Tigrigna, Tigray official language-ትግራይ ትመርፅ!) to “Tigray prevails” (-ትግራይ ትስዕር!), and finally, the people of Tigray will continue to proudly herald: “Tigray decides its fate via referendum” (ትግራይ ትዉስን!). Tigray’s fundamental interests are more crystal clear than ever before: Self-defense (maintaining and modernizing TDF); restoring Tigray’s territorial integrity; self-determination via internationally observed referendum; reconstruction and building a secure and democratic Tigray; bringing genociders to justice; and receiving compensation (Gebrewahd, 2022).

8. Tigray and the post-Pretoria agreement dilemma

After two years of genocidal war and humanitarian siege, Tigray authorities signed the “Pretoria agreement” titled “permanent cessation of hostilities” with the Ethiopian federal government in Pretoria, South Africa, on November 2, 2022, brokered by the USA, EU, African Union, Kenya and South Africa. The main tenants of the agreement were “securing a permanent cessation of hostilities, DDR of the Tigrayan troops, restoration of Tigray territory as per the FDRE constitution, and unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray” (Permanent Cessation of Hostilities, November 2022). The deal also outlines an interim process before fresh elections are to be conducted in the Tigray regional state to facilitate a new regional assembly and political representation in Ethiopian federal institutions (Tronvoll and Meressa, 2022).

The implementation of the Pretoria peace agreement, however, faces significant challenges across various fronts. Of particular concern is the ongoing presence of Eritrean and Amhara military forces in Tigray, leading to continued violations of human rights and endangering the fragile peace. Despite Tigray’s fulfillment of its commitment to Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) the TDF forces, the Ethiopian government has failed to honor its obligations under the Pretoria agreement. These include the restoration of occupied western and

southern Tigray territories, the repatriation of Tigrayan internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their pre-war homes, the reinstatement of Tigray's representation in federal institutions, and the organization of regional elections in Tigray to reinstate constitutional order. Furthermore, the federal government has yet to officially demand the withdrawal of Amhara and Eritrean forces, identified in the agreement as non-ENDF forces, from Tigray's territory (Permanent Cessation of Hostilities, November 2022). Contrary to the Pretoria agreement, the federal government also announced, in November 2023, that the fate of western and southern Tigray's occupied territories will be determined through referendum though the Tigray interim government fiercely opposed the move. Moreover, humanitarian aid to Tigray has been cut off, despite the agreement stipulating unfettered access for such aid. These challenges collectively cast doubt on the durability of the Pretoria agreement and make the pursuit of lasting peace in the region seem elusive.

Moreover, conducting elections under the current political context may prove counterproductive to restoring a legitimate and just political order. More fundamentally, the agreement failed to officially recognize Eritrea's involvement in Tigray and to hold it accountable for the Eritrean army's genocidal atrocities committed in Tigray.

Moreover, conducting elections under the current political context may prove counterproductive to restoring a legitimate and just political order. More fundamentally, the agreement failed to officially recognize Eritrea's involvement in Tigray and to hold it accountable for the Eritrean army's genocidal atrocities committed in Tigray. The accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and rape was undermined by the international court of justice. Instead, the agreement stated that an African transitional justice mechanism would be employed to ensure accountability. However, Tigrayans opposed this, as they felt that the African Union had sided with the Ethiopian government during the war. The agreement also failed to address the key issue of the Tigray referendum, which was the primary motivation for many Tigrayans to fight. Consequently, Tigrayans perceive the agreement as a legal instrument used by the US and African Union to undermine Tigray's two-year struggle for self-determination in favor of Ethiopia's territorial integrity, despite Ethiopia's commission of war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and rape. As a result, Tigrayans are compelled to coexist with an Ethiopian regime that declared war and committed grave human rights atrocities, further jeopardizing the prospects of lasting peace in Ethiopia.

9. Conclusion

The war on Tigray has been characterized as the largest, most concealed, and deadliest conflict in Africa's 21st-century history. This genocidal campaign against Tigray has starkly exposed the international community and institutions, including the African Union, UN, and superpowers, all of which advocate for principles such as humanity, popular sovereignty, responsibility to protect (R2P), genocide prevention, war crimes accountability, ethnic cleansing prevention, crimes against humanity prevention, the "never again" to genocide slogan, self-determination, gender violence prevention, and the prohibition of hunger as a weapon of war. The above-mentioned actors either directly supported the war or remained silent to condemn this 21st-century genocidal war. Even worse, unlike in the case of Russia's war in Ukraine and other humanitarian international law practices, "humanitarian aids" and "humanitarian corridors" were employed as instruments of genocidal war in Tigray and the international community failed to uphold its humanitarian principles and practices in favour of authoritarian regime sovereignty. Tigray, drawing on its historical resilience against external aggression and internal conflicts driven by Ethiopian government policies of expansion and assimilation, stood patriotically and steadfastly throughout the two-year genocidal war and siege imposed by the joint forces of ENDF, EDF, Amhara expansionists, and Afar forces. However, despite its endurance, the fundamental issues plaguing Ethiopia, including irreconcilable nation-building narratives, authoritarianism, and genocidal campaigns, remained unaddressed by the Pretoria agreement signed between Tigray and the Ethiopian government on November 2, 2022, primarily brokered by the USA. Furthermore, the agreement failed to confront Eritrea's regional destabilizing foreign policy and Amhara expansionism. Moreover, it compromised the core objectives of the Tigrayan struggle, notably self-determination through a referendum, safeguarding Tigray's territorial integrity, ensuring international accountability for perpetrators of atrocities in Tigray, and seeking compensation for the victims.

Note

- ¹ In April 2021, Yemane Gebreab (political advisor of Issaias Afewerki) distributed a secret document entitled 'our mission in Tigrai war did not meet its stated goals', to the Eritrean military leaders in Tigrai clearly stated that the genocidal mission in Tigrai was, by that time, not successful to achieve its planned goals and ordered his military leaders 'to accelerate their military operations in order capture the TPLF military and political leaders, to mercilessly eliminate the Tigraian youths who could be potential fighters of the Tigrai Defense forces(TDF), to completely destroy the political economic bases and infrastructures of Tigrai, and finalize the genocidal war so that to escape the international community's mounting pressure'.

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MITUMBA: SECOND-HAND CLOTHING INDUSTRY IN KENYA. A BLESSING OR A CURSE?

JUDIT KISS

PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
SCHOOL/THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCKINGHAM
RESEARCH PROFESSOR, INSTITUTE FOR WORLD ECONOMICS, CENTRE FOR ECONOMICS AND REGIONAL
STUDIES

DR.JKISS@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

Kenya is one of the leading SHC importers in Africa. The aborted import substitution industrialisation, the liberalisation of the economy, and the failure of the domestic textile industry led to the SHC trade surge, which is the direct product of the global (ultra)fast fashion linear business model. SHC industry is beneficial for the economy and the people of Kenya due to job creation, income and revenue generation, and the provision of affordable clothing. However, it has detrimental impact on the environment and the local textile/fashion industry. To maintain the benefits and reduce the negative effects, it is important not to completely eliminate it. In the short run, quantity should be decreased, and the quality should be improved to reduce waste. In the long run, there should be a gradual decrease and eventually elimination of second-hand clothing imports, depending on the revitalization of domestic garment industry.

Keywords

Kenya, second-hand clothing industry, mitumba, waste colonialism, fast fashion

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Introduction

Since the 1990s, due to the rapid development of fast fashion, the second-hand clothing (SHC) trade has become an emerging industry, mainly in the less developed parts of the world. East Africa, especially Kenya, is simultaneously one of the fastest-growing destinations and export hubs. The main aim of this study is to a) reveal the leading causes of the SHC trade surge, b) highlight the significant economic, social and environmental implications with particular regard to the benefits and drawbacks, c) provide solutions to cope with the challenges and d) outline the prospects in the case of Kenya.

This fashionomics paper is based on the concepts of waste colonialism/imperialism, consumer colonialism, the core-periphery asymmetrical power relationship, neoliberal transformation, trade liberalisation with unequal bargaining power and the (ultra) fast fashion linear business model.

Apart from relevant theories, the article is mainly based on secondary sources: academic literature, books and articles, descriptive statistical data, and the reports of the *Mitumba Institute and Research Centre* (MIRC)¹ and the *Mitumba Consortium Association of Kenya* (MCAK)². The author made numerous attempts to approach both institutions to conduct in-depth interviews with the stakeholders. Even though the interviews did not happen, the effort was not wasted. In November 2023, Teresia Wairimu, the chairperson of the Mitumba Association, kindly invited the author to a webinar where the latest Mitumba report was launched, and some ongoing issues were discussed. We hope that the above event and the thorough qualitative content analysis of academic sources with the triple bottom line sustainability method focusing on the economic, social, and environmental impacts³ would result in meaningful and conclusive research findings. Additionally, the author's life experience while working, living, and travelling in Africa (Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia, Ghana, Togo, Benin, South Africa) contributes added value.

Stylized/basic facts

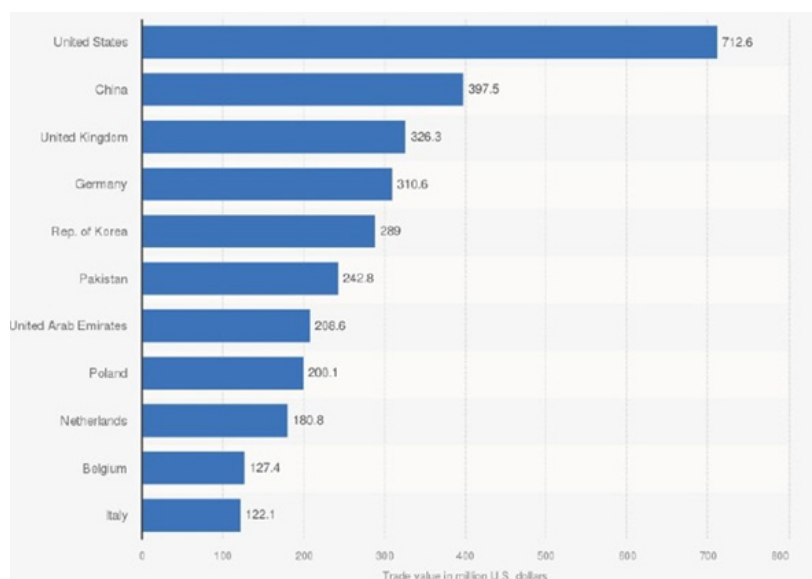
SHC, by definition, is the use/reuse of unused/used/pre-owned/discarded clothing and footwear. Since its widespread existence, different names have been used for covering the term: it is called *mitumba* (meaning bundles or bales, as SHC arrives in bundles from the West) which replaced the stigmatized term of *kafa ulaya* (clothes of the dead white man) in Kenya and Tanzania; *mivumba* (bundles) in Uganda, *mutunda* (bales) in Rwanda, *salaula* (selecting from a bale) in Zambia, *obroni wawu* (clothes of the dead white man) in Ghana, *mupedzanhamo* (where all problems end) in Zimbabwe, *okirika* (bend down boutique) in Nigeria, *sola* (to choose) in Congo (Brooks, 2015), *ukay-ukay* (to dig) in the Philippines or *türkáló* (digging) in Hungary. As women in the North tend to buy much more clothing and discard it more often than men, the world supply of used women's clothing is at least seven times that of men's (Prashar, 2022).

Though the SHC trade is only a tiny segment of officially documented (= legal) world trade in clothing⁴ (around 0.6%) (Brooks and Simon, 2012, p. 1275), or 2-4

million tons/year, trade value has increased rapidly, from USD 0.4 billion in 1980 to 1.4 billion in 2000, 1.8 billion in 2006, 3.7 billion in 2016 (Brady and Lu, 2018) and USD 4.2 billion in 2019 (UN Comtrade). Trade expansion has accelerated further in the 2020s as the trade value increased to USD 36 billion by 2021. It is expected to reach 77 billion by 2025 (Cobbing et al., 2022) and is predicted to grow to USD 218 billion by 2026 (ThreadUP, 2022).

SHC data should be treated with reservations (Brooks and Simon, 2012), especially in the case of Africa. Due to the shortcomings of the African statistical, registration, and border control systems, data lacks accuracy and completeness. Apart from legal and registered imports, some SHC shipments are traded semi- or entirely illegally (grey trade, smuggling, illegal import, illegal re-export) without any documentation. Sometimes, brand-new garments are registered as *mitumba* because of more beneficial customs treatment.

As the concept of SHC originates from donation, the main suppliers/exporters are the highly developed donor countries, namely the USA, the UK, the EU, and Germany. In 2016, the USA and the EU accounted for 65% of world SHC trade (Brady and Lu, 2018). However, the centre of the fast fashion industry has shifted towards the Far East and started to be practiced by the Asian tigers in the 1980s, followed by China in the 1990s. These countries, especially China, became emerging SHC suppliers: while in 2006, China's SHC exports were only USD 0.32 million, by 2016, it increased to USD 218 (!) million (Brady and Lu, 2018) and up to USD 382 million in 2020. In 2017, China banned the import of SHC because the country became more affluent, self-sufficient, and a clothing exporter.



▲ Figure 1. Leading exporters of used clothing worldwide in 2020, by country (in million USD). Source: Prashar, 2022, p. 9.

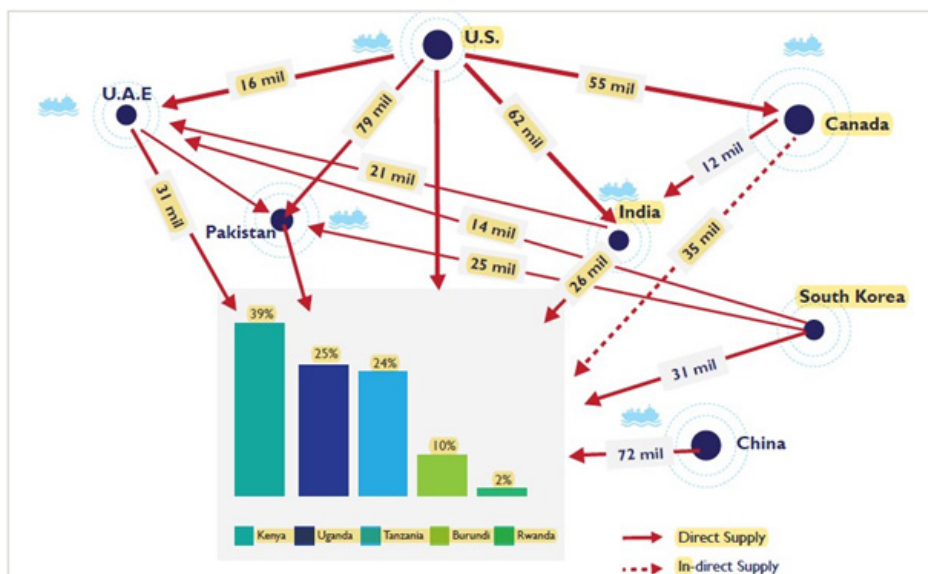


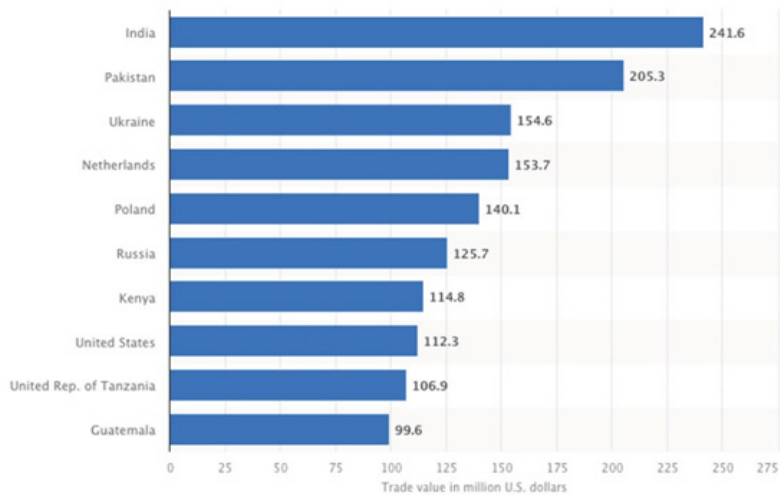
Figure 2. Imports of SHC from the USA to Kenya (2012-2016). Source: Overview...2017, p. 7

Apart from direct export between the producer countries and the final destinations, there is an increasing global circulation of SHC; for instance, the USA exports SHC to Africa mainly indirectly via Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and India (Figure 2).

Due to the nature of the phenomenon, the main markets for SHC are the less developed recipient countries. In general, more than 20% of SHC exports are directed to Sub-Saharan Africa (Fields, 2003), mainly to Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania, meeting a significant portion of the effective demand for clothing. According to Prashar (2022), four-fifths of the African population wears second-hand clothes. As per Brookes and Simon (2012), in many African countries, SHC meets more than 50% of clothing demand in terms of volume. In Tanzania, 540 million of 720 million pieces (75%) of clothing consumed are SHC; in Ghana, 90% of clothing used is SHC as Ghana is the second biggest SHC importer after Kenya; in Uganda, the share is above 80%. According to the latest report of the Mitumba Institute and Research Centre, four-fifths of the population in East Africa wears second-hand clothes (Diamond, 2023b, p. 7).

Theoretical background of SHC trade

The original idea behind SHC trade was a noble gesture, namely to donate unused and/or used garments to charity shops and to distribute them free of charge among those in need, as had happened in the Middle Ages or even in modern times among rural communities or within families⁵. In the mid-80s, foreign aid and international assistance evolved into a profitable endeavour for some donors. Donated clothing was no longer simply given away for free; instead, it became a commodity to be sold,



^ Figure 3. Leading importers of used clothing worldwide in 2020, by country (in million USD).
Source: Prashar, 2022, p. 13

with the best items being sold in the country of origin or abroad. Often, the majority of the collected garments, around 70-90%, were exported overseas after sorting and grading, with Africa being a common destination due to its less demanding market. As a result, these shipments typically consisted of clothing and footwear considered unwanted, out-of-fashion, lower quality, or overused in the West. This is how the gift was “poisoned”, referring to the title of the German Greenpeace report entitled *Poisoned Gift* by Cobbing et al. (2022). The respectable act of donation has been commercialised (monetised), and the gift has been turned into a commodity and charity, resulting in waste disposal disguised by donations. This is how *waste colonialism* has evolved, where high-income nations use their power and privilege to exploit the least-developed countries by overflowing the used clothes markets with cheap and poor-quality fashion items (Huang, 2022). Global North uses Global South to finance and manage its textile waste disposal assignment under the disguise of donation and circular economy, discrediting the concepts.

The charge of waste colonialism can be proven by the poor quality, the composition, and the environmentally harmful nature of SHC shipments from the Global North to the Global South. According to case studies (Cobbing et al., 2022), around half of SHC consignments can be (re)used and sold as garments on the domestic market or in third countries. The remaining half is worthless due to poor quality, design, size, fabric, etc., so they are pure waste. Waste disposal is now the responsibility and the burden of African countries. Are they able to cope with the problem? (See later.)

The increasing waste imperialism results from the fast and widespread growth of the fast and ultrafast fashion business model.⁶ This leads to oversupply, where profit is based on more and more production (Brooks, 2012, p. 54.); depressed prices are

associated with depressed wages and the avoidance of paying environmental costs. Oversupply and quest for profit result in forced and manipulated overconsumption, meaning that we are compelled to buy more clothing than ever⁷, purchase unnecessary goods, follow the frequently changing fashion, wear garments for a shorter time, and throw them away sooner, even before they are worn out. In order to get rid of surplus production and generate new markets and clean existing ones for the latest production - apart from a wide range of marketing means⁸ -, exporting SHC to less developed countries is an obvious solution.

In addition, the supply side pressure – based on the *centre-periphery* asymmetrical power *relationship* between North and South (Brooks and Simon, 2012, p. 21) – coincided with the neoliberal transformation of Africa. The Washington Consensus and the World Bank's structural adjustment programs in the 80s-90s obliged African countries to liberalize their economies and open their markets under unequal trade terms and bargaining power conditions. Consequently, trade liberalisation had a detrimental impact on the emerging domestic textile and garment industries, which were struggling with the symptoms of underdevelopment, such as lack of capital, shortage of energy, deficiency of infrastructure, and lack of skilled labour and expertise. Consequently, they could not fully meet domestic demand, let alone conquer export markets. The SHC industry discovered the emerging market niche. For a significant part of the population, SHC has become the primary affordable, cost-effective source of clothing (Wetengere, 2018, p. 18) due to the deteriorating economic situation and low living standards. However, more affluent customers also opted to buy SHC due to the fashion's Western hegemony or "*white imperialism*" (Wetengere, 2018, p. 4). The demonstration effect transmitted via media, TV, Facebook, and the internet results in the preference and imitation of Western fashion and dress style, which is a sort of consumer colonialism.

Main features of SHC industry in Kenya

Kenya is the biggest SHC importer in Africa and the 8th largest in the world (Hungary is the 15th). In 2021, the yearly import was 185,000 tons (= 8000 containers); between 2005 and 2021, SHC imports grew by over 500%, from USD 27 million to USD 172 million (see Figure 4). However, it accounts for only 1% of total imports. In comparison, the sector contributes 7% to the country's export earnings (Diamond, 2023b, p. 20), as Kenya is a global hub due to its geographical position (Prashar, 2022). Kenya exports SHC mainly to the neighbouring countries (Uganda, Tanzania, Congo Brazzaville, DRC, Somalia, Zambia and Lesotho).

China is the leading supplier, followed by Pakistan, Canada and the UK (see Figure 5). Between 2012 and 2016, the import of SHC from China increased from \$723,513 to \$28,757,351, which is almost 40 (!) times in 4 years (Overview...2017, p. 27). In 2017, China banned the import of SHC as the country became more affluent and a clothing exporter. In 2021, the leading EU exporters to Kenya were Poland, Germany, the UK and Hungary. Nearly 900 million SHC items were sent to Kenya from around the globe in 2021, and almost 150 million items came from the EU and the UK.

Unit: \$million USD

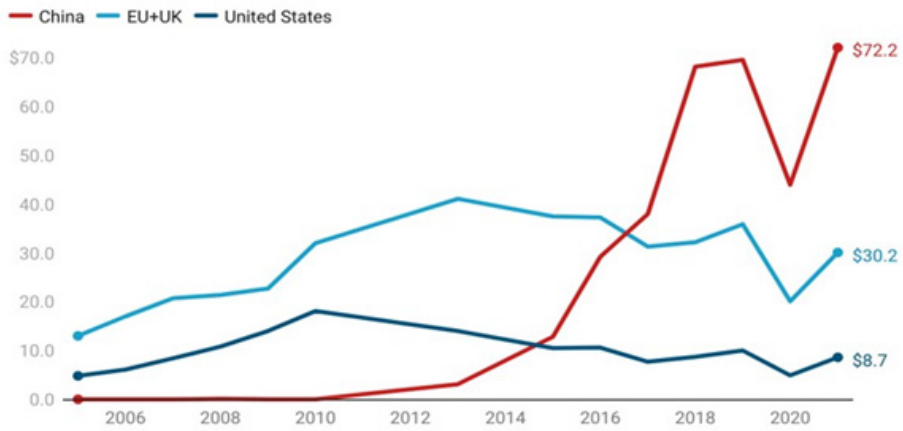


Figure 4. SHC inflow to Kenya.
Source: <https://shenglufashion.com/2023/02/26/used-clothing-trade-debate-continues-in-kenya/>



Figure 5. Top 10 countries which exported secondhand clothing to Kenya between 2016-2020 Q1.
Source: Bhanushali, 2021, p. 3.

SHC industry in Kenya: benefits and drawbacks

a) Meeting domestic demand for affordable and trendy garments

In 2019, 2.5% of private income was spent on clothing and footwear in Kenya (Bhanushali, 2021, p. 7; The state of..., 2021, p. 4), meaning that clothing is not a top priority. In principle, there are four options to meet the demand for domestic garments: homemade apparel, locally manufactured garments, imported manufactured clothing, and second-hand clothing.

Though Kenya is the most developed country in East Africa and has achieved significant development, it is still a low-middle income country with an income of 1940 USD per person (2019); the standard of living is low, and poverty is widespread (36% of the population, that is, almost 17 million people live below the poverty line), particularly in the rural areas. Consequently, a significant part of the population, especially rural dwellers, and low- and middle-income earners, cannot afford to buy new garments, irrespective of the origin of the product. The only product segment they can afford to buy is SHC. So for them, buying SHC is not an option to locally produced and/or imported goods; it is a necessity (Hansen, 2014). SHC is a staple primary source of clothing (Wetengere, 2018). Though large SHC markets are in large towns (like Kigoma market in Nairobi), there are also easily accessed SHC markets both in the urban and rural areas. As SHC-buyers are not conscious consumers in the Western sense of the word, they do not have any nostalgia for old clothes (vintage, retro) and probably the term “circular economy” is unfamiliar to them, however, they also are attracted by well-known brands and international labels⁹.

As this segment of the population is basically price-conscious¹⁰, they care less about the quality, fabrics, design, etc. They only look for affordable, acceptable quality, long-lasting, and fashionable products, preferably brand name (Wetengere, 2018, p.8). However, there is a more affluent and cosmopolitan strata of the population which prefers to buy trendy, good quality, durable, unique, and exclusive clothes, especially brands produced for more demanding Western customers (Brooks, 2015; Hansen, 2000; Wetengere, 2018, p. 8). They also buy SHC instead of purchasing new but less trendy, poorer quality, and less durable domestic or imported, mainly Chinese garments. That is why many Chinese vendors deliberately “degrade” their brand-new products to SHC¹¹ or mix new clothing with SHC. Albeit the most demanding and affluent customers go for imported branded western products. Sometimes they travel abroad to shop or ask their relatives living abroad (the diaspora) to meet their desire for the latest fashions¹².

b) Job creation for the unemployed masses

Though the official unemployment rate is not very high in Kenya, it was a bit above 5% in 2022, however, it was as high as almost 14% in the case of young people¹³, especially in urban areas due to outmigration from the rural areas. If we include the underemployed, then the unemployment rate is even higher. That is, Kenya, like other African countries, is struggling with joblessness, especially among urban youth, so

all industries with meaningful job creation are welcome and supported. From this point of view, the SHC industry seems rather valuable as it “employs” around 2 million people¹⁴ (The state of... 2021, p. 3), more than the entire local textile industry (Diamond, 2023b), and 10% of the total labour force (The State of... 2021, p. 10), with a high share being women¹⁵. A long chain of people are involved in the SHC business (Chalhoub, 2012; Imo and Maiyo, 2012) such as importers, exporters, clearing and forwarding agents, wholesalers, brokers, medium and small retailers, distributors, merchants, formal and informal traders, transporters, loaders, sorters, market/street and food vendors, hawkers, security agents; value addition people who clean, dry, iron, tailor, sew, mend, alter, remake the clothes; helpers preparing tea and food for traders, and finally, *fagia* (waste textiles) workers and dumpsite waste pickers.

c) Income and government revenue generation

The SHC industry is a lucrative business as it provides jobs for around 2 million people and creates small businesses. Consequently, it contributes to the country’s GDP, generates income for the participants, and increases purchasing power. However, one should note that SHC business is quite risky due to currency fluctuation, instability of effective demand, and the unpredictable content of the consignments. That is why sorting upon opening the bales is crucial. In the East African Community, three quality levels and grades (*camera*-s) are applied: Grade A (first *camera*) – new or as good as new; Grade B (second *camera*) – stained, dripped strides, some bruises; Grade C – spoiled, serious bruises, holes, tears and stains (Katende-Magezi, 2017), while the rest is the *fagia*, meaning the lowest quality items destined for rags or fuel¹⁶.

Official income generation is modified by the fact that a significant part of the participants – being active/operating in the informal sector – are not registered employees, or they are self-employed; consequently, they do not pay income taxes, and their customers do not pay value-added tax either¹⁷. In the rural areas, trading is seasonal. However, the formal/registered SHC industry does increase budget revenues in the form of customs duties, import tax, turnover tax, sales tax, value-added tax, income tax, corporate tax, levies (import declaration levy), licencing and rental fees, and business permits.¹⁸ According to the Mitumba Association of Kenya, SHC trade produces around 1 billion shillings in government revenue per month (The state of 2021, p. 9), and in 2021, SHC trade generated \$112,460,975 in government tax revenues (Diamond, 2023b, p. 20).

d) Impact on the domestic garment industry and African fashion

The most controversial issue is the interplay between the SHC industry and the domestic textile industry.¹⁹ There are two main strands in the literature. According to one, the decline of the domestic garment industry is mainly caused by the increasing inflow of SHC and cheap imports, largely from Asian countries (Koyi, 2006; Majtenyi, 2010; Patel, 2004; Webster, 2003, cited by Brooks and Simon, 2012, p. 1284; Brooks, 2015; Frazer, 2008²⁰; Wetengere, 2018). However, Prashar states that

“it is a myth that the second-hand clothing industry weakens the domestic production” (Prshar, 2022, p. 2) as the two sectors can work together for mutual benefit.

The other strand states that the local textile industry is doomed anyway due to decline and a great number of deficiencies such as lack of capital, raw materials,²¹ inputs, skilled labour force, technical skills and management expertise, use of outdated technology due to expensive machinery imports (Hansen, 2004, p. 7-8), and unavailability of foreign currency, poor supportive infrastructure, unreliable energy supply, inefficient operation, poor management, low productivity, lack of tax and non-tax incentives, and poor business environments (Diamond, 2023b; Mangieri, 2006; Wetengere, 2018). The truth seems to be somewhere in between.

After independence, Kenya, like many African countries, decided to industrialize the economy in order to reach a higher level of development. In order to decrease dependence on external sources of supply, import substitution industrialization was a plausible option in the case of labour-intensive light industries, including textile and garment industries (Mangiere, 2006). Natural and economic endowments, like the availability of raw materials (cotton), an abundance of labour force, and an expanding domestic market, were conducive to building up and developing these branches of manufacturing. In the 60s and 70s, the process of industrialization started, and the contribution of manufacturing to GDP and employment increased significantly as the labour force moved from the less productive agriculture to the more productive manufacturing and services sector. By the early 1980s, the textile industry (mainly traditional African print textile production, *khanga* and *kitenge*) became Kenya's leading manufacturing sector in terms of employment and size, involving over 200,000 households and 30% of the industrial labour force (Mangiere, 2006, p. 5).

However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the structural transformation process was halted by the oil price explosion, the deteriorating world economic situation, and the debt crisis of the African countries leading to austerity measures, declining living standards, and shrinking domestic effective demand. In addition, the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank further aggravated the situation due to the liberalisation of the economies, including foreign trade and the neoliberal industrial development model (Brooks, 2015). The inflow of more competitive import products started to weaken the position of the “premature” domestic industries, leading to the process of deindustrialization and decay of local industries (Kiss, 2017), so the two parallel, simultaneous processes led to the decline of the domestic garment industry and opened the way for garment imports.

In the mid-1990s, the Kenyan textile industry faced challenges due to the increasing imports of clothing, including SHC. This influx of imports, both new and second-hand (Mangieri, 2006), outcompeted locally produced goods, leaving the industry with limited options for recovery. At that time, only 30% of the domestic clothing demand was being met by local production, while 20% was fulfilled by imports, and 50% was already being met by second-hand clothing²² (Field, 2004; Imo-Mayo, 2012). So, by the 1990s Kenya became a clothing importer (Hansen, 2009) due to the failure of industrialisation. Since then, the share of local produc-

tion in meeting domestic demand decreased further,²³ all the more as larger textile firms owned by foreign (mainly American and Asian – Indian, Chinese) capital moved from impoverishing domestic to affluent export markets (Brooks and Simon, 2012, p. 1280; Mangiere, 2006) capitalizing on preferential trade agreements (like the multi-fibre trade agreement until 2005, or the AGOA (= African Growth and Opportunity Act) of the USA²⁴).

We have concluded that the influx of SHC did not cause the failure of the domestic textile industry. The decline of local garment industries had actually started earlier. According to Brooks (2015, p. 61), the decline began even under colonialism, as cotton and ginned cotton started to be exported to the UK as an input into early industrialization. This opened the way for SHC influx, which accelerated the industry's decline. However, cheap import is a bigger challenge for the domestic textile industry as in 2019 SHC represented only 12.5% of the total imports of textiles (Diamond 2023a, p. 12).

Apart from the economic impact on the domestic garment industry, one should not ignore the subverting impact of SHC trade on *local fashion* and customers' behaviour. Imitating and giving preference to Western fashion crowds out traditional authentic fashion, design, and natural fabrics²⁵. The oversupply of SHC promotes the bad habit of fast fashion and wasteful consumption, and it also destroys and/or distorts native societies' own fashion²⁶. Fortunately, this is not the case everywhere and all the time. For occasions, like weddings, ceremonies, and diplomatic or international events, traditional African outfits reappear. It even happens that members of African high society wear luxurious, exclusive, sophisticated, and graceful traditional garments abroad. While travelling to Ghana recently, I met some young Ghanaians wearing beautiful, long, white silk robes (costing more than my air ticket) with genuine patent leather shoes with a matching suitcase (probably bought in Gulf-states).

e) Environmental impact and health hazard

The SHC industry's environmental impact is a hotly debated topic at both local and global levels. SHC products travel long distances from places like the USA or China before reaching Africa and circulating extensively (see Figure 2). The transportation of low-value but voluminous consignments has a relatively high negative impact on the global environment. Supporters/advocates of SHC trade (Diamond, 2023b; Farrant et al., 2010; Katende-Magezi, 2017; The state of...2021, p. 4. and p. 27) argue that importing SHC is less harmful to the environment than producing garments locally²⁷ because of high water and energy consumption, pollution, and high carbon emission.²⁸ The textile industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world, ranking just after food, housing, and transportation (Diamond, 2023b, p. 14). Many developed countries that claim to be environmentally conscious have shifted a significant portion of their garment production to emerging countries such as China, Turkey, Indonesia, and Bangladesh. These countries often have lower environmental standards, less strict regulations, and undervalued human life. As a result, the environmental impact of the textile industry is no longer a priority for these devel-

oped nations. Another issue is the excessive importation of garments, far surpassing what the market needs or can handle,²⁹ instead of supporting domestic production.

In the case of Africa, the environmental implications of the SHC trade are caused by the quantity/volume, the quality, and the decomposition of consignments. Though there is an increasing effective demand for SHC, it cannot keep pace with the oversupply of the linear business model of fast fashion production. Moreover, in order to reach higher profits for the salesmen, rapid stock turnover is needed. All the more, about half of the inflowing SHC is physically worthless (damaged, dirty, spotted, spoiled, ripped), unsaleable, and unsuitable for wearing by Africans due to the style, design (dress length, tightness) (Hansen, 2014), non-compliance with African tradition, religion (culturally inappropriate style), size (different body shape), and fabric (not

suitable for hot and humid climate), etc. Consequently, every second item, 450 million out of 900 million items in Kenya, is *textile waste*. As there is no organised waste disposal system in Kenya, half of the second-hand clothing imports end up in landfills, dumpsites,³⁰ or rivers³¹ causing contamination, and water and air pollution because most of the materials are oil-based, non-biodegradable synthetic materials full of harmful and toxic substances. This phenomenon is rightly called *toxic colonialism* (Trashion, 2023).

In Kenya, 1 out of 3 pieces of SHC (300 million pieces out of 900 million) is made of synthetic, plastic fibres (mainly polyester) with hazardous chemicals (Trashion, 2023)³². To dispose of textile waste, it is often burned, which results in harmful air pollution. This pollution includes methane and greenhouse gas emissions, which can lead to various health issues such as cancer, birth defects, respiratory diseases, and skin problems. It is ironic that Africa used to export natural raw materials like cotton and animal skins to the global North for the garment industry, but now many people in Africa are forced to wear unhealthy clothing made from non-natural materials and are exposed to contaminated water and smoke from burning synthetic clothes, leading to significant health risks (Wetengere, 2018).

In sharp contrast with the above findings, according to the latest report of the Kenya Mitumba Association (Diamond, 2023a), textile waste is *negligible* in Kenya, as “waste in imported SHC in the retail trade is no more than 2%” (?) (ibid p. 9), that is “4-12 pieces of clothing of SHC out of 350-600” is waste (ibid p. 9). This

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incredibly minimal clothing waste is explained by the fact that “SHC imported into Kenya meets the required quality standards” (ibid p. 8) as importers follow a series of quality control processes and measures (like sample inspection at the sorting centres) to ensure that they import only suitable and quality items. In addition, the sporadically occurring textile waste (that is 1-2% of total SHC inflow) is recycled (used as cleaning rags, stuffing, patching, etc.). The findings of the report are in full contradiction with the visible reality, but the arguments are rather weak as they are based on personal interviews with importers and retailers, who are the major stakeholders interested in continuing the SHC business. The other source of evidence is the household surveys, according to which “textile waste accounts for approximately 0.39% of the total household waste generated in east Nairobi” (ibid p. 10). The issue is that textile waste is created in the supply chain between importers/retailers and households, and ends up in landfills and riverbanks as unsold or unusable items. It is also a misconception that importing second-hand clothing replaces the environmentally harmful production of new clothing: it is unlikely that Africans would and could ever buy such a huge volume of new clothes.

Solutions – for shorter and longer terms

The SHC industry has a strong presence in Kenya due to two main factors. Firstly, there is a high demand for affordable and trendy garments in the South, which also creates job opportunities and generates income. Secondly, the pressure of fast fashion overproduction, unsustainable overconsumption, and clothing waste accumulation in the North also contribute to this presence. However, it is important to consider the negative consequences of this phenomenon, such as increased dependence on the North, delayed structural transformation and re-industrialization in Africa, negative impact on local fashion, and escalating environmental degradation.

a) Short terms remedies: to ease supply pressure

Due to the high profitability of the fast fashion industry, the oversupply of SHC and the escalating waste issue in the North, it is unlikely that supply-side pressure will significantly subside in the coming decades because of the unequal North-South power relationship. However, there are some options in Kenya for easing supply pressure by curbing the SHC inflow:

1. The most obvious and widely debated option is to *ban SHC imports*. All the more as banning is not without precedent in Sub-Saharan Africa: Zimbabwe prohibited SHC imports from 2015 to 2017, but later lifted the ban as the local textile industry could not meet the demand; Nigeria also had bans in place; in 2016, there was a ban proposition by the East African Community for boosting domestic textile industry and for health reasons, but the idea was abandoned; there are only two countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where SHC import bans are in place: Rwanda and South Africa.

In Kenya, the SHC import was banned between the 1960s and early 1980s when the government pursued import substitution industrialisation (Mangieri, 2006).

In the 1980s, SHCs were allowed into Kenya as long as they were donations for refugees from neighbouring countries, which gradually led to trade in SHCs. In the early 1990s, the government lifted the ban on SHC because of trade liberalization and export promotion. By 2000, most of the domestic textile companies had collapsed due to increased competition from SHC and Asian imports. As a result, there have been calls from the private sector and government to reintroduce the ban. Between March and mid-August 2020, Kenya banned SHC imports to prevent the potential spread of coronavirus. However, the high reliance on SHC by the majority of the citizens as affordable clothing and income for stakeholders has prevented the government from extending the ban. Currently, the government is considering eliminating SHC imports progressively over a longer period, however, there are serious reservations.

It is obvious that placing bans would be an unpopular measure among the consumers and all the beneficiaries as it would negatively impact the supply of affordable clothing, the income of the 2 million stakeholders (mainly traders), and the livelihood of many, in addition to government revenues (tax and tariff losses). Furthermore, unilateral banning – even if it is justified – is against the free trade principle of the envisaged African Free Trade Area and the preferential trade agreements (AGOA and the Economic Partnership Agreements of the EU) and implies a risk of loose preferential treatment³³ and resistance from the parties concerned. Additionally, the primary unintended beneficiaries would be the low-cost Asian textile exporters, mainly from China. Furthermore, an import ban would be ineffective due to inadequate customs control, fraudulent practices, malfunctioning registration systems, high levels of corruption, and a widespread informal sector. This would result in illicit trade and smuggling. Therefore, if a ban is implemented, it is crucial to establish strong *border control* to prevent uncontrolled, illegal, informal importation and smuggling of goods..

2. A more feasible option is a *slow, progressive phasing out* of SHC imports (over a 5 to 10-year period) (Wetengere, 2018) by imposing a gradual ban on all SHC or *selectively* (Katende-Magezi, 2017), meaning that first the poorest quality (Grade C and B) products will be banned. These measures in the transition period should be accompanied by subsidizing local apparel, textile, and leather industries (Brooks, 2016) which would boost domestic production and generate jobs³⁴ and incomes while maintaining a reasonable degree of SHC import until the emerging local industries are capable of meeting a part of domestic demand.
3. Another possibility is to introduce *import quotas, quantitative restrictions*, and/or *voluntary export restraints* in order to moderate the volume of SHC imports³⁵ because the problem is not with the inflow of SHC *per se* – as it meets real effective demand and provides a livelihood for a wide range of people – but with the unregulated, sometimes illegal, massive inflow of poor quality and worthless foreign garments (= waste). To introduce a *waste ceiling threshold* and/or *ban waste import* would be desirable. It is impossible to separate useable clothing from waste as they arrive, not by chance, in the same closed containers and bales.

4. To *increase tariffs/tax* on all SHC and/or only the best items (Grade A) (Katende-Magezi, 2017) and/or on the environmentally most harmful clothing (plastic tax) (Trashion, 2023) is also an option with the main objective being a restriction on SHC import.³⁶ However, it would increase the price of SHC, making it less affordable and less competitive vis-à-vis imports and/or domestic production. Furthermore, a unilateral tariff increase is against the stipulations of preferential trade agreements and might cause protests and countermeasures from signatory parties.³⁷
5. In order to enhance the quality of SHC inflow and to decrease the share of waste, strict *quality inspection* and thorough, tailor-made *pre-sorting* prior to uploading the consignment should be applied. While the Mitumba Association agrees with the pre-sorting principle, they would prefer to do the job in Kenya after arrival. In the pre-shipment activity, migrants working abroad at the sorting hubs might be very helpful as they know the composition of local effective demand as far as style, size, fabric, design, shape, etc. are concerned. A well-organized pre-sorting for quality and suitability at the place of departure might moderate the volumes of shipments, increase the quality of goods, reduce waste (if, for instance, synthetic plastic clothing would be sorted out) and meet domestic demand better by avoiding mismatch. In order to reduce *waste* and *environmental* pollution, the inflow of dumped, unusable, unsaleable, toxic garments should be minimized, and compliance with sanitary requirements should be ensured.

The above agenda, however, cannot be accomplished without the consent and the action of the North. The “addiction” of the North to the (ultra) fast fashion linear business model and mega-consumption (Brooks, 2015, p. 33) and the consumption arms race (Brooks, 2015, p. 42) should be abandoned. Fewer, though better quality, long-lasting, repairable, and reusable clothes should be produced. In addition, take-back systems and services to maintain, repair, and share clothing items should be established. Slow fashion would reduce production leading to less oversupply and less pressure on consumers to purchase more and change their wardrobe frequently. Consequently, less excess waste would accumulate. As African countries are still suffering from asymmetrical power relationships, they will not be the first beneficiaries of any paradigm shift. Only *fair fashion* might provide a pleasing remedy.

b) Medium-term solution: enhancing domestic clothing and fashion industries

Even the regulated, controlled, restricted and upgraded SHC industry is not meant to substitute the domestic garment industry; rather it is supposed to supplement it as the two industries target different consumer groups. It is beyond doubt that SHC imports meet the effective demand of the less affluent segment of society and can generate jobs, income, and revenues. However, it cannot contribute to the diversification, structural transformation, and development of the economy as it has not been integrated into the domestic economy and lacks backward and forward linkages, though it is linked to transport, finance, insurance, and warehouses (*godowns*). Fur-

thermore, it is not capable of decreasing asymmetrical dependence. To revitalize and enhance the domestic textile and garment industry could help the country meet both domestic and export demand for garments. This could also lead to benefits such as improved backward and forward linkages, spill-over effects (Diamond, 2023b) on agriculture and agro-processing (cotton and skin producers), access to raw materials and labor force, technological development, increased GDP, economic diversification, job creation, and higher budget and export revenues.

As the main constraint to enhancing the domestic textile and garment industry is the lack of capital, the inflow of foreign investment is welcome; however, this is an ambiguous process. Foreign capital, mainly Chinese capital, is primarily interested in producing not only for the domestic market with limited purchasing power but also for regional and Sub-Saharan African market, and overseas destinations, in order to capitalize on the opportunities of the planned African Free Trade Area and on Kenya's preferential trade agreements. Furthermore, there is a complex relationship between the growth of domestic textile industries, SHC trade, and preferential trade agreements. SHC exporters are eager to maintain the current status quo, regardless of its detrimental impact. Therefore, any ban or restriction on SHC inflow would jeopardize their eligibility for preferential treatment, as seen in the case of countries that have banned SHC imports, such as Rwanda. As duty and quota-free excess to foreign markets is a significant competitive advantage, without their existence, any export attempt is jeopardized, and the interest of foreign capital toward Kenya's textile and clothing industry would decline or vanish. Consequently, the industrial modernization project is rather vulnerable.

The other issue is whether the domestic textile industry will be capable of developing under the conditions of free trade without applying protectionist trade measures and controlling unfair competition as the re-emerging local textile industry should compete not only with SHC imports but cheap imports of new clothes, too. That is why Wetengere (2018) idealistically suggests the "banning of new but cheap products from Asia and the creation of conducive and competitive business and investment environment through which the intended industries would grow" (ibid. p. 121).

According to the *Vision 2030* program for Kenya's³⁸ domestic manufacturing – which is taken as an instrument for economic growth and social transformation – should be enhanced in order to reach 15% of the GDP (The state of...2021, p. 6). The "Buy Kenya, build Kenya" slogan of the Big Four agenda is based on a protectionist industrial and trade policy principle which does not exclude the ban of SHC imports, which would be counterproductive. However, the gradual phasing out of SHC import is not inconceivable (Wetengere, 2018), provided that domestic cotton, leather, textile, and apparel industries have reached a certain level of development. It should be a gradual process in order to keep the "well-being" effect of cheap clothing without killing the re-emerging domestic garment industry. For a while, the two sectors – the domestic textile industry and the SHC industry – must work together for mutual benefit (Diamond, 2023b).

Idealistically, the revitalization of the local textile and garment industry might provide an impetus to local fashion designers whose products are better suited to African circumstances, like tradition, religion, climate, physical body, and social expectations concerning style. Returning back to authentic African fashion and identity might lead to increasing self-respect and might even attract foreign customers. I remember while living in Tanzania, I was a frequent visitor at a boutique-type shop called “Nyumba ya Sana” in Swahili (House of Arts), where Europeanized traditional clothing made from traditional African fabrics (like *kitenge* or *khanga*) was sold. These dresses were more pleasant to wear in Africa than clothing that originated from Europe. Even in Europe they became my beloved garments, especially amidst global warming. Nowadays, there are promising signs that African designers are getting to be known in Europe and other parts of the world.

c) Handling environmental issues and health hazards

Even if the above-mentioned regulating measures and industrialization strategies were realized, the African countries still would face the environmental impact of SHC inflow. While the paradigm shift of the global fashion industry brings the first results, countries of the global North do their utmost to protect their environment of disposed SHC (Wetengere, 2018) and continue to forward waste to the SHC importer African countries, which remain dumping grounds. We do agree with Diamond (Diamond, 2023a; Diamond, 2023b) that dumping is not *intentional*, however, it is “consequential”; it is the product of a fast fashion linear business model. A slight change can be expected from raising the producers’ and consumers’ awareness about the environmental impact of fast fashion and limitless consumption. The producers’ responsibility would be to decrease the share of clothing made from plastic, and synthetic fibres, as even in 2030, 73% of clothing is expected to be made from synthetics (Cobbing et al., 2022; Trashion, 2023). However, this change is a double-edged sword, as producing and transporting natural (organic) raw materials (like cotton by the present SHC importers) is not without environmental consequences (depleting water reserves³⁹, use of chemicals for dyeing, deforestation, biodiversity loss). The consumers’ responsibility would be to abandon overconsumption, to turn more sustainable and eco-friendly patterns (self-made clothing, eco-design, down-cycling⁴⁰, recycling⁴¹, upcycling⁴², reuse, repair, remake, repurpose) and finally, to accomplish ethical consumption.

The African countries face challenges beyond their control, so the best option is to minimize the waste that has already accumulated. One possibility is *upcycling, restyling, and refashioning* (Dissanayake and Pal, 2023, p. 10), which involves turning high-quality waste into new garments through repairing, cleaning, tailoring, altering, decorating, and redesigning (Brooks, 2015, pp. 210, 212). This approach is already being practiced in some European countries. One of the latest Hungarian good practices is the *Hint of Africa* managed by the Hungarian *Close to Africa Foundation*, where SHC or any other used items, unwanted clothing (like T-shirts, jumpers, denims, dresses etc.) are transformed into new ones by decorating them

with colourful or printed African fabric. All designs are for sale, and the revenue supports African women via the foundation.

The other possibility is *reuse* or *recycling*⁴³ when the unusable, worthless SHC is used as an input for producing other goods than clothing. There are already some promising examples in Africa: in Tanzania, Anne Kiwia, under the motto “Every Queen deserves a Crown”, designs headbands from second-hand textiles; in Kenya, a bag company makes bags from SHC. In the case of reuse, textile lives are multiplied without causing any harm to the nature and environment, while recycling is less environmentally friendly as it might generate carbon emissions and requires resources (Diamond, 2023b). The circular production model in the case of the clothing industry might lead toward a climate resilient economy.

Health hazards are the other unwanted consequence of SHC import. In Kenya, health certificates issued by the health authority in the country of origin should accompany the consignment, which should be packed in transparent materials with a weight ceiling.

Conclusion

Kenya is one of the leading SHC importers in Africa. The aborted import substitution industrialisation, the liberalisation of the economy, and the failure of the domestic textile industry led to the SHC trade surge, which is the direct product of the global (ultra)fast fashion linear business model, resulting in overproduction and forced overconsumption.

It is beyond doubt that the SHC industry is noticeably beneficial for the economy and the people of Kenya due to job creation, income and revenue generation, and the provision of affordable clothing. However, one should not ignore the detrimental impact on the environment and the local textile/fashion industry, which might be the backbone of economic growth and social transformation.

To maintain the benefits and reduce the negative effects of the second-hand clothing (SHC) industry in Kenya, it is important not to completely eliminate it. In the short term, quantity should be decreased and the quality of SHC coming into the country should be improved to reduce waste. In the long term, there should be a gradual decrease and eventually elimination of the inflow of second-hand clothing, depending on the revitalization of domestic garment industry. However, even the less radical changes in the SHC industry of Kenya cannot be accomplished without a paradigm shift in the business model of global fashion, from (ultra) fast fashion towards less fast and later slow and sustainable fashion, meaning smaller volume, better quality, more durable, reusable, repairable, recyclable products plus shorter supply chains in order to produce less waste and lower environmental implications. The changing business model of production (slow fashion, sustainable and socially responsible fashion, circular economy) should be accompanied by a shifting pattern of consumption from overconsumption towards ethical, responsible consumption and, finally, post-consumption (Brooks, 2015), that is, responsibility should be equally taken by the producers and consumers.

Even if all the above idealistic changes were to take place, the African countries would not be the first beneficiaries of any paradigm shift as they are still the victims of asymmetrical power relationships. Only *fair fashion* (the equal distribution of the benefits of technological development and economies of scale, the minimization of waste production, handling environmental implications on the spot and not exporting to third countries etc.) might provide a pleasing remedy.

Notes

- 1 MIRC is an independent and academic-led research institute commissioned by the Mitumba Association of Kenya to investigate the economic, social and environmental effects of the second-hand clothing sector (known as *mitumba*) in Kenya and the wider African continent.
- 2 MCAK was formed to protect the interest of its members and to promote and develop trade in SHC.
- 3 Dissanayake and Pal, 2023.
- 4 In this article the term clothing, garments, apparel are used interchangeable, meaning men, women and children clothing, footwear and accessories. Code 6309 is used for SHC by UN Comtrade.
- 5 For the century-old history of SHC see the famous book of Brook (2015), *Clothing poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-hand Clothes*
- 6 Which is rightly called a „waste making machine” (Trashion, 2023).
- 7 60% more clothing has been bought than 15 years ago and has been worn for half as long (Why giving, 2022).
- 8 One of the latest and most successful means has been the widespread use of online shopping accompanied by home delivery, especially during the years of COVID pandemics.
- 9 Herjanto et al. (2016) provide a comprehensive overview about the consumers’ behaviour towards SHC on the basis of 131 researches published over the years 1990–2014.
- 10 In Kenya SHC is 3 to 5 times cheaper than brand new clothes and shoes (Katende-Magezi, 2017).
- 11 The other, more tangible reason, is to pay less taxes (Brooks, 2015, p. 166.)
- 12 When I was living in Tanzania and returned home for a holiday, I was always asked by the university staff – from the secretary till the faculty – to bring clothes from Hungary which was not a fashion country at that time, but was located in Europe.
- 13 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/808608/unemployment-rate-in-kenya/>
- 14 Between 2013 and 2021 the number of jobs in Kenya’s SHC industry increased from 577 000 to 1,38 million (Diamond, 2023b, p. 10).
- 15 Nearly 60% of the traders of used clothes are women in several African nations mainly because trade is accessible to anyone without formal training or initial capital, and thus entry barriers are low (Chalhoub, 2012).
- 16 For boiling water, washing clothing, drying and roasting peanuts at the mitumba market.
- 17 About the informal sector – which “employs” 70% of the working population in Kenya – see Chalhoub (2012).
- 18 That is why the Vison 2030 program of Kenya suggests the formalization of informal sector.
- 19 In this paper the term apparel, textile, garment, clothing, fashion industry is used interchangeable, covering the production of yarn, fabric, manufacturing of clothing, garments (including shoes), research and development, design and distribution.
- 20 According to Frazer’s econometric model 1 percent increase in SHC imports resulted in 0.61 percent reduction in apparel production over the period 1981–2000 (Frazer, 2008, p. 1780). Consequently, used clothing imports have a negative impact on apparel production in Africa,

- explaining roughly 40% of the decline in production and 50% of the decline in employment (Frazer, 2008, p.1767 and 2008).
- 21 Unavailability and/or shortage of cotton, raw hides and skins because 75-80% of the raw materials produced in the East African region is exported (Katende-Magezi, 2017).
 - 22 In Zambia – where domestic textile industry was less developed than in Kenya – in the mid-90s already 75% of clothing demand was met by SHC.
 - 23 In the early 1990s there were 110 large-scale garment manufacturers in Kenya. By 2006 their number dropped to 55 and by 2016 to 15.
 - 24 The AGOA (2000-2015) provided duty- and quota-free access to the US market for apparel items from Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2015 the agreement was extended till 2025.
 - 25 In Ghana the authentic *kente* cloth made by traditional weavers (and costing a fortune) is getting to be crowded out by *kente* pattern typically mass produced in China.
 - 26 A good example is the clothing of Masai tribes in Kenya and Tanzania. Though they still wear their toga type traditional cloth, the „shukas” (sometimes made in China) over their shoulder, they wear it with plastic shoes and synthetic T-shirts. The most astonishing outfit I have ever met was in Tanzania in the 90s, when a young masai put in his cell phone to his pierced and enlarged ear lobe.
 - 27 “The purchase of 100 second-hand items of clothing would save ... 60 to 85 new garments” (The state of...2021, p. 4).
 - 28 10% of all global carbon emissions are generated by the textile industry (Diamond, 2023b, p. 14) “Every 1 kilo of fabric produced generates 23 kilos of greenhouse gases” (Diamond, 2023b, p. 15).
 - 29 Every *week*, around 15 million items of SHC from Western countries arrive in Ghana, where the entire population is only 30 million www.cbsnews.com/news/ghana-fast-fashion-environmental-disaster
 - 30 In the case of Ghana, 40% of SHC arriving to the country ends up in landfills.
 - 31 Nairobi river – which passes Gikomba market – is full of textile waste.
 - 32 Synthetics are the backbone of fast fashion industry as they account for 69% for all the production (Trashion, 2023).
 - 33 In Rwanda AGOA has been suspended after banning SHC import (Brady and Lu, 2018).
 - 34 Kenya textile industry once employed 500 000 people, now it has only 20 000 workers (Brooks, 2016).
 - 35 According to Frazer (2008, p. 18) less than 0.1 kg per capita SHC import do not have detrimental impact on the receiving countries.
 - 36 It should be noted that the present tariff rate (35%) is rather high and in principle could discourage SHC legal (documented) import.
 - 37 In 2016 the East African Community intended to increase the Common External Tariff (CET) rate for SHC from USD .20/kg to USD .40/kg or 35%, whichever is higher. The USA immediately questioned the further eligibility of the AGOA (Overview...2017).
 - 38 This is Kenya’s development program, launched in 2008 with the objective of transforming Kenya into a middle-income country, providing a high-quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030.
 - 39 11 000 litre water is needed to produce 1 kg cotton (Brooks, p. 29).
 - 40 Downcycling means the transformation of recycling textiles into products of lower value or utility compared to the original item. For example, use of SHC as wiping rags, stuffings, raw materials for other industries or fuel.
 - 41 A good example is the case of the South African PEPCO retail chain operating in Europe which nowadays offers t-shirts made from recycled fabric under the label „beloved”.
 - 42 Upcycling means the transformation of worn-out or old clothing items into higher-value products or garments.
 - 43 Recently not more than 1 percent of new clothes are recycled into new clothes.

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SPIRITUALITY IN THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

NADJIBA BOUALLEGUE



PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF 8 MAY 1945 GUELMA, ALGERIA

BOUALLEGUE.NADJIBA@UNIV-GUELMA.DZ

Abstract

The article investigates the significance of spirituality in the works of the Black Arts Movement poets. By examining the poetry of Amiri Baraka and Maya Angelou, the study uncovers the various facets of spirituality that African Americans embrace, including “Africanized” Christianity, jazz poetry, and Islam. The article aims to show if spirituality is merely a way to celebrate cultural diversity or a vehicle for social change. It draws on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theory of minor literature to demonstrate that the Black Arts Movement is a minor literature, whereby cultural markers such as spirituality are politicized. Because spirituality endows the Black Arts Movement with a political value and a collective enunciation, this movement becomes a revolutionary force that aims to enact social change. This politicized spirituality is symptomatic of a desire to foster a strong, positive bond with Africa, which is an antidote to the strangeness of mainstream society. The remembrance of the African past through Afrocentric spirituality is a tool for defining and redefining one’s sense of belonging. It is also a quest for an essentially black aesthetic.

Keywords

Spirituality, The Black Arts Movement, Maya Angelou, Amiri Baraka, Christianity, Islam, Minor Literature, Jazz Poetry

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Introduction

The Black Arts Movement (BAM) emerged in the 1960s, an era that witnessed the rise of minorities' voices that decried invisibility and called for recognition. Writers of different minority groups produced many literary works to inform the mainstream reader about the experience of belonging to a minority group in the United States. The BAM gave the struggle of African Americans a new zeal that distinguished this movement from other African American movements. The African American critic and playwright Larry Neal (1968) points out:

The Black Arts Movement represents the flowering of a cultural nationalism that has been suppressed since the 1920's. I mean the "Harlem Renaissance"-which was essentially a failure. It did not address itself to the mythology and the life-styles of the black community. It failed to take roots, to link itself concretely to the struggles of that community, to become its voice and spirit. (p. 39)

To Neal (1968), the BAM is profoundly linked to the African American community; it voices its concerns and conveys its spirit. In the BAM, a work is deemed aesthetic because of the consciousness it nurtures and the power it instigates. Because the BAM is a committed art, the black artist's claims become "a necessity," "not a luxury" (Fanon, 1991, p. 210), to borrow Frantz Fanon's words. The revolutionary dimension of the BAM is emphasized in Neal's (1968) definition of the movement as: "the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept" (p. 29). The line that divides art and politics is completely blurred since BAM is the artistic manifestation of the Black Power.¹

Neal's (1968) two quotes stress the spiritual aspect of the BAM. He unveils another important characteristic of the movement in addition to the artistic aspect. For him, spirituality constitutes a crucial mark of the movement.² To Neal, the social liberation of the oppressed minority can be achieved through connectivity to a higher, unearthly source. The Black Arts writers create an art that is both revolutionary and transcendent. It evokes real issues faced by the African American community and touches deeper layers of the human existence through the spiritual aspect, which emanates hope and optimism. In his first quote, Neal (1968) attributes the failure of other movements to their inability "to take roots." Here, the word roots refers to the African past, origin, and heritage. The popularity of the BAM owes to its writers' stance of "psychologically extricating themselves from white attitudes about African spiritual traditions" and embracing African sensibilities by "explore[ing] themes of African spirituality, historical traumas, resilience, and perseverance" (Mitchell & Davis, 2019). Claiming "roots" activates a glorification of Africanness, including African spirituality. This article shows that the choice of the trope of spirituality in the works of BAM writers designates a desire to reconnect to Africa. It demonstrates that the recollection of the African past is deemed important because it aims at redefining one's sense of belonging and identity. Given this valuable role of spirituality,

the article reveals that in the BAM, spirituality is politicized; it serves as more than a mere cultural marker. Spirituality is a weapon to enact social change by pushing against racial inequalities and advancing liberty and equality. This study also shows that the political dimension of spirituality renders the poetry of the BAM a minor literature.

The Black Arts Movement: Toward Minor Literature

In their theory of minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari (1986) considered the work of the Czech-born German novelist and short story writer Franz Kafka as minor literature. For them, Kafka's work manifests the three characteristics that embody minor literature: the deterritorialization of the language, the political value, and the collective voice (pp.16-17). The approach of this section is thus concerned with studying BAM writing as minor literature. Deleuze and Guattari (1986) suggest that minor literature's "cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics" (p.17). The BAM is imbued with a political value because of its strong connection to the revolutionary, political, and social movements such as the civil rights movement and the Black Power struggle. The political mark of the movement is prevalent in many works, such as Sonia Sanchez's (1970/2021) *We a BaddDDD People*, which calls for a revolution. Experimentation with the form of the poem-repetitions of letters and phrases, nonstandard American English, no punctuation and capitalization, and slash marks-instantiate a rejection of white traditions:

who's gonna give our young
blk/people new heroes
(instead of catch/phrases)
(instead of cad/ill/acs)
(instead of pimps)
(instead of wite/whores). (pp. 27-28)

Sanchez's poem revolutionizes poetry's form. The disruption of these rules, as the rejection of Standard English in favor of Black vernacular speech, categorizes the poetry of the BAM as minor literature. Deleuze and Guattari (1986) define minor literature as the writing that "is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (p.19). A deterritorialized language is a language whose vocabulary, syntax, and accent are affected by another language (1986, p. 23). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1986), deterritorialized English can "be compared in another context to what blacks in America today are able to do with the English language" (p. 17). Black vernacular speech, with its African origin, is an act of reclaiming the ancestral roots and an effective tool to impoverish English; it thus undermines the authority of the 'major culture'.

Sanchez's poem (1970/2021) also calls for a revolution in the African American community. Sanchez addresses her black people who are in need of more than just clichés and empty words. Her black people need new real heroes who will save

them from racial and sexual oppression, from drugs, slums, and pimps. This call for revolution testifies to Sanchez's collective voice and indicates her awareness of her community's needs. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1986), the strong link that ties the writer to the community is a major characteristic of minor literature. They explain, "what each author says individually already constitutes a common action . . . literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation" (p. 17). Sanchez's poem is a committed piece of art that aims to raise the social consciousness of her community. The political and collective values that Sanchez's poem reveals are reminiscent of Neal's words (1968): "The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community" (p. 29). Sanchez's verses demonstrate that BAM's artists and writers are the voice of their community that powerfully articulates communal concerns.

Perhaps one of the most serious concerns of the African American community is the sense of alienation endured by the African American man. In "Notes for A Speech" (1961), Amiri Baraka pictures the estrangement of the African American man whom white America rejects:

My color
is not theirs. Lighter, white man
talk. They shy away. My own
dead souls, my, so called
people. Africa
is a foreign place. You are
as any other sad man here
american. (Baraka, 1961)

Being a minor writer renders Baraka's art non-individualist. What seems to be an individual concern is actually a collective utterance. In the poem, the speaker represents any African American who looks towards the mainstream society and the ancestral land for a home he cannot inhabit. His skin color signifies his black race, yet by birth and experience, he is American. The African American is a sad man who mourns a lost homeland from which he feels historically severed since Africa "is a foreign land." This sense of estrangement can be surmounted through the search for the root, Africa.

The Return to Africa: The Ancestral Homeland

The feeling of estrangement minorities endure in the US propels this act of looking back to the ancestral homeland. This search is indicative of minorities' propensity towards the US; White America is a locus of confinement for them. In her essay "The African Influence on Afro-American Art," Jones (2009), a painter and educator, suggests, "The influence of African Art permeates the entire contemporary Black art scene . . . In art, in music, in literature, Black Americans are returning to their Afri-

can roots and utilizing this heritage as the basis for their artistic and political expression in the United States” (p. 66). Africa serves as an inspirational source to accentuate the specificity of Afro-American art as well as an inalienable home; it is the homely, hospitable home which offers acceptance and maximizes Afro-Americans’ feelings of belonging. To fight against racial discrimination, minorities are engaged in the process

of “alter[ing] the landscape of belonging to the adopted country by offering new modalities of belonging which defy the conventional ways based on exclusionary or assimilationist attitudes” (Bouallegue, 2021, p.3). This new modality of belonging gestures toward a celebration of Africa. Incorporating Africanness into the American life nurtures a feeling of belonging for African Americans enveloped in an atmosphere of hostility. This sense of belonging lies “beyond the limits of an actual, concrete place;” this type of belonging is “nonspatial” (Bouallegue, 2021, p. 1).

In his essay “On National Culture,” the West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher, Fanon (1961/1991), tackles the colored intellectuals’ desire to reclaim their ancestral home. Fanon highlights the similarity between the colonized subject and African Americans. He explains, “The whites in America had not behaved any differently to them [African Americans] than the white colonizers had to the Africans. We have seen how the whites were used to putting all “Negroes” in the same basket” (p. 153). Whites otherize blacks through “discourses such as *primitivism and cannibalism*” (Ashcroft et al., 1989, pp. 154-155). For centuries, Africa has been told in a single story, to borrow the words of the Nigerian writer Adichie (2009) in her talk, “The Danger of a Single Story” (Adichie, 2009). Before the sixties- the era of the Civil Rights Movement and cultural plurality, Africa was depicted as the land of cannibals and savage animals; it was the home of disgrace and ignorance. This discourse led to the demonization of Africa and the creation of a rift between African Americans and Africa. Malcolm X (1965) is awakened to the reason behind the crisis of belonging that African Americans endure, he notes “And since we all originated in Africa, you can’t make us hate Africa without making us hate ourselves. And they [whites] did this very skillfully” (p. 9). He explains the outcome of African Americans’ disengagement from Africa:

They ended up with 22 million Black people here in America who hated everything about us that was African . . . We hated our hair. We hated our nose, the shape of our nose, and the shape of our lips, the color of our skin. Yes we did. And it was you who taught us to hate ourselves simply by shrewdly maneuvering us into hating the land of our forefathers and the people on that continent. (p. 9)

Being a minor writer renders Baraka’s art non-individualist.

What seems to be an individual concern is actually a collective utterance.

Similarly, Cook (2005) explores the myriad ways in which some African Americans refuse their “Africanness.” She believes that for some, “it is quite all right to have African blood if it does not show. The more Caucasian the person looks, the more readily he will boast to a black foreigner of his “Negro blood” (p. 191). Blacks have to push back against this simplistic image of blackness; they have to write back by creating other versions of the single story. In his poem “Ka’Ba” (1969), Baraka reacts to this image by disrupting the Eurocentric beauty standards, which are deeply rooted in the past of many African Americans:

We are beautiful people
with african imaginations
full of masks and dances and swelling chants
with african eyes, and noses, and arms,
though we sprawl in grey chains in a place
full of winters, when what we want is sun. (*Genius*)

These verses testify to self-love; Baraka accepts and celebrates his African origin. Baraka accentuates the beauty and creativity of Africans; Africans are not brainless creatures, but they have an imagination that transcends the barriers and limitations set by the white man. In the third verse, “full of masks and dances and swelling chants,” Baraka delves deep into African culture to emphasize the importance of some of its most special marks. The masks and the dances have always been a symbol of ambiguity for the white man. The masks and the dances constitute essential elements in African religious and artistic performance. Amankulor (1993) suggests that the mask’s wearer is endowed with a sacred power that morphs him into a spiritual being. Through the mask, the African transcends the material world to become a spiritual creature. According to Amankulor, the colonizer was unable to fathom the power of the mask. He explains, “In the contact with the colonial administration the mask was a symbol of both mystical and political authority” (p. 140). The colonizers’ inability to understand African customs developed into scornful and harsh opposition to these rituals. Similarly, the colonizer could not view the African dance as “the main avenue of communication and is the expression of life and all its emotion” (Pittman et al., 2015, 245), but it was a mere symbol of barbarity. The African mask, which is imbued with a spiritual significance, is demonized along with all forms of African spirituality. This demonization is symptomatic of the asymmetrical relationship between African spirituality and white Western religion; while African spirituality is equated with backwardness, white religion is aligned with civilization. This otherization of African spirituality dates back to the 19th century’s accounts of missionaries, which described African spirituality as “‘pagan’ practices and ‘animist’ beliefs of the African peoples” (Olupona, 1993, 240). The colonizer branded African spirituality as “barbaric” (Boaz, 2010-2011, 219). However, when they returned to Africa, African Americans were able to undercut the facile claims about their past permeating the mainstream culture. Fanon (1961/1991) describes this process as follows:

Since perhaps in their unconscious the colored intellectuals have been unable to come to loving terms with the present history of their oppressed people, since there is little to marvel at in its current state of barbarity, they have decided to go further, to delve deeper, and they must have been overenjoyed to discover that the past was not branded with shame. (p.148)

African Americans realized that African culture and African past are not tainted with disgrace; they rather embody pride and dignity. African Americans' adherence to spirituality is their way to show pride in their African culture, remember the atrocities endured by previous generations, ignite the spark of rebellion, and dwell in the safety of their home. African Americans embrace different forms of spirituality, which, for them, will carry them back home, such as Yoruba religion, the spirituals, 'Africanized' Christianity, Jazz music, and Islam. African Americans turned to the Yoruba religion of West Africa, "their spiritual homeland" (Olupona, 1993, p. 10) as "a resistive act against the historical erasure of the slave trade" (Olupona, 1993, p. 7). Spirituality enables African Americans to remember the transatlantic slave trade and the pain of displacement. Thus, Yoruba religion relocates African Americans in that past and fills them with the drive to avenge humiliation. African Americans believe in the ability of African religion to provide them with "the sense of power and control necessary to generate the desire for rebellion, for revolution" (Timothy, 2002, p. 134). They also trusted its capacity to offer them "the cultural and spiritual sustenance" (Harding, 2007, p. 267) the way the spirituals, traditional songs sung by slaves, healed their ancestors "in a difficult new land" (Harding, 2007, p. 269). African Americans also adopted African traditional religions to feel a sense of unity with people who share their pains and hopes; a solidarity that defies the borders of nationality and encompasses all blacks around the world. Yoruba religion, for example, transcends Nigeria to Brazil, Cuba, and North America (Olupona, 1993). In an interview with Marvin X and Faruk X (1994), Baraka who claims that along with Islam, he is also inspired by Yoruba religion (p. 51), reveals in the following verses that the goal of BAM is the unity of all Africans all over the world:

All over the world
Sweet Beautiful Afrikans
NewArk Afrikans (Niggers too)
Harlem Afrikans (or Spooks)
Ghana Afrikans (Bloods)
Los Angeles Afrikans (Brothers)
Afrikan Afrikans (Ndugu)
West Indian Afrikans (Hey Man)
South American Afrikans (Hermano!)
Francophone Afrikans (Monsieur)
Anglophone Afrikans (Mister Man)
Anywhere Africans. (Baraka, 1979, p. 230)

These verses evoke Baraka's Pan-African feelings, which articulate the unified sentiment or consciousness of all people of African ancestry against their oppressors. This unity is not only symbolic of a connection to Africa and its past, but it also carries a hope for political, economic, social, and cultural liberation.

Maya Angelou and the 'Africanized Christianity'

As minor literature, BAM is a revolutionary force that seeks social change; according to Deleuze and Guattari (1986), "There is nothing that is major or revolutionary except the minor" (p. 26). Maya Angelou is one of the BAM writers who through her art, aims at supporting and uplifting the black community. In an interview with Tate (1999), Angelou tackles the theme of protest in her works. She states, "Protest is an inherent part of my work. You can't just not write about protest themes or not sing about them. It's a part of life. If I don't agree with a part of life, then my work has to address it" (p.155). The quote emphasizes the link between the writing of BAM and minor literature. Here, Angelou stresses the inevitability of representing protest themes in her writing. Angelou's volume of poetry *Just Give me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Diie* (1971) is considered a strong addition to the BAM's creativity for its strong and blatant opposition to racism. One of the strongest expressions against racism is Angelou's poem "My Guilt" from her volume *Just Give me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Diie* :

My guilt is "slavery's chains," too long
the clang of iron falls down the years.
This brother's sold, this sister's gone,
is bitter wax, lining my ears.
My guilt made music with the tears.
My crime is "heroes, dead and gone,"
dead Vesey, Turner, Gabriel,
dead Malcolm, Marcus, Martin King
They fought too hard, they loved too well.
My crime is I'm alive to tell. (Angelou, 1994)

In the first stanza of the poem, Angelou returns to the past of slavery to unveil the pain of this experience. Angelou's powerful words paint a vivid picture of the continued struggle for freedom and equality, inspiring reflection on the ongoing effects of this dark chapter in history because "slavery's chains" are very long. Her remembrances harbor sorrow; she is filled with the pain of all African Americans who endured slavery. She hints at the distressing outcome of this experience; the disunity of African American family is the bitterest consequence of slavery. In recalling slavery, Angelou feels guilty; it is a feeling of guilt that stems from a sense of helplessness. Angelou who still carries the burdens of racism, underestimates her efforts in breaking its chains. In the second stanza of the poem, Angelou bitterly articulates her powerlessness. Her efforts pale in comparison with the sacrifices of

African American heroes such as Gabriel, Malcolm, and Martin Luther King; these African Americans fought fiercely against injustices. She realizes that she must accurately and credibly portray the struggles of the heroes who have paved the way for change. With unwavering determination, she commits herself to capturing the essence of their battles and triumphs through her writing.

In her struggle against injustices, Angelou employs spirituality as a political weapon. She undoubtedly thinks that the liberation of African Americans can be “made possible and sustained by a firm belief in God and the undaunted practice of spirituality and culture as forces for liberating and effecting positive reality” (Stewart, 1997, p. 3). Angelou is a writer who valorizes religion, “When I found that I knew not only that there was God but that I was a child of God, when I understood that, when I comprehended that, more than that, when I internalized that, ingested that, I became courageous” (*Maya Angelou Quote*). The quote illustrates the centrality of religion and spirituality in Angelou’s life, it demonstrates the fact that religion and spirituality are an integral part of Angelou’s life and that they are the fuel of her bravery. Spirituality also fuels her art; in her poem “The Mothering Blackness,” Angelou employs spirituality to paint a beautiful image of the African American family:

She came down creeping
here to the black arms waiting
now to the warm heart waiting
rime of alien dreams befrosts her rich brown face
She came down creeping

She came home blameless
black yet as Hagar’s daughter
tall as was Sheba’s daughter
threats of northern winds die on the desert’s face
She came home blameless. (Angelou, 1994)

The poem presents the family as a source of support, love, and cultural heritage for African Americans. It narrates the return of the African American girl to her mother to seek help and relief from social pressures. The black girl carries neither blame nor fear because she is in the presence of a strong mother. Here, Angelou departs from Western literature’s idealization of individualism. In her poem, the family is not deemed a handicap to the individual’s emancipation; rather, it is a force that nurtures and toughens the individual. In the last stanza, Angelou praises the black mother’s strength and beauty by comparing the African American woman and two exceptional women in the bible. The African American mother has the power of Hagar.³ In *Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible*, Junior (2019) suggests that, “In some instances, given its emphasis on the African presence in biblical lands and people, such research identified Hagar as African, and by extension, as a Black woman” (p. 101). Angelou highlights the similarity between the story of Hagar and

the fight of the African American woman. The similarity between these two women goes beyond black skin; both endured the pain of rejection, yet they showed strong resilience. Despite the suffering, these women did not surrender the role of empowering the family; the black mother nurtures her daughter the way Hagar feeds Ishmael love and warmth in the wilderness of the desert. The beauty and the courage of the black mother are also evoked through a reference to the Queen of Sheba. The Queen of Sheba is an important story featured first in the Bible, the Quran, and later in the Ethiopian work, *Kebrä Negast*. In the Bible, the Queen of Sheba travels to Jerusalem to test the wisdom of King Solomon and offers him precious gifts before returning home. Uncertainty surrounds the exact location of the Queen of Sheba's home, the possibilities hover between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Southern Arabia (Mark 2018). The Queen of Sheba's story is a tale that highlights the

power of women; therefore, Angelou employs this story to accentuate the power of black women. As an African American woman, Angelou feels that she needs the power of the women of her heritage. She uses the Queen of Sheba as a source of inspiration; she is a female model that Angelou presents to her audience to remind African American women of the glories of their female ancestors.

Angelou wrote "The Mothering Blackness," after her trip to Africa, which shows that the mother-daughter relationship is not the only relationship the poem pivots around. It also explores the return of the African American woman to her roots and to her home. Africa is the loving, welcoming mother who bestows love and support on her offspring. The choice of these religious figures – Hagar and the Queen of Sheba – whom Angelou sees as African ancestors, is indicative of Angelou's metaphorical return to Africa in the poem; it is a trip that strengthens the bond between African Americans and Africa. Angelou's poem shows that BAM writers and artists carry Africa in their arts the way the snail carries its home, to borrow Norman Manea's (2008) description of Franz Kafka's writing. Manea believes that Yiddish in Kafka's works is emblematic of a home that soothes the strangeness of the German language (p. 2). BAM writers and artists carry the ancestral home to heal the wounds of rejection and empower the oppressed.

Angelou's *And Still I Rise* volume of poetry (1978) is another work that aims to empower African Americans. It evokes a sense of racial pride and a strong anger

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against racism through the vehicle of spirituality. In her poem, “Just Like a Job” from the volume of *And Still I Rise*, Angelou connects to God and complains:

My Lord, my Lord,
Long have I cried out to Thee
In the heat of the sun,
The cool of the moon,
My screams searched the heavens for Thee.
My God,
When my blanket was nothing but dew,
Rags and bones
Were all I owned,
I chanted Your name
Just like Job. (Angelou, 1994)

Amidst the pain and loneliness, the speaker cries out to the Lord for help, she is conscious that God can hear her cries and soothe her pain. She reports the crimes of the white man against her community. Although poverty and inequality mark her world, the speaker trusts God, “You said to trust in Your Love/ And I’m trusting/ You said to call on Your name/ And I’m calling” (Angelou, 1994). She trusts His power to ease her suffering. Christianity plays a crucial role in shaping Maya Angelou’s art; however, the way Angelou employs Christianity echoes the portrayal of Christianity in the works of many African American women writers.

In an essay titled “On the Issue of Roles,” the influential member of BAM, Bambara (2005), casts light on the role of the black woman in the struggle. Bambara claims that the well-defined, demarcated roles assigned to men and women are a creation of Western society. She clearly rejects the definition of the man as the sole “breadwinner” and the woman as “the helpmate.” Bambara urges her readers to transcend these rigid definitions of “manhood and femininity” towards a broad concept of “blackhood.” Bambara, who explores the woman’s role in ancient societies, such as African society, argues, “prior to the European obsession of property as a basis for social organization, and prior to the introduction of Christianity, a religion fraught with male anxiety and vilification of women, communities were egalitarian and cooperative” (p. 126). According to Bambara, Western and Christian teachings were the means that justify the subjugation of women. Before the coming of the colonizer, the African society sustained a flexible concept of womanhood. The African woman was “neither subordinate nor dominant”; she was a participant in decision making (Bambara, 2005, p. 126). Many female black writers such as Carolyn Rodgers in her *Songs of a Black Bird* (1969) and Gwendolyn Brooks’s “God works in a mysterious way” (1945) view Christianity from a different perspective. These writers adopt Christianity but adapt it to their lives and concerns, whereby they ascribe a revolutionary Africanness to Christianity. Angelou’s view of Christianity aligns with that of Bambara and other African American writers. She expresses this opinion in her volume *And Still I Rise* through the poem, “Thank you, Lord”:

I see You
 Brown-skinned,
 Neat Afro,
 Full lips,
 A little goatee.
 A Malcolm,
 Martin,
 Du Bois.
 Sunday services become sweeter when you're Black,
 Then I don't have to explain why
 I was out balling the town down,
 Saturday night. (Angelou, 1994)

In these verses, the speaker refuses the image of God as a white male. She is conscious that a white God cannot understand her and would not attend to her needs as a black woman. A white God will never answer her prayers and will not support her the way Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and W.E.B. Du Bois would sustain African Americans. The black God is not a vision that is strictly embraced by Maya Angelou, the Black Arts poet Nikki Giovanni (1992) also asserts that "God has to be black." Through this vision, Giovanni claims a kind of spirituality that corresponds with Blackness. In a conversation, Giovanni tackles the issue of Christianity:

Many poets deal with the religious experience, in one form or the other. Does Nikki Giovanni? 'I'm spiritual. I can't negate religion (established). I believe in God I believe that God is everywhere. God is love. I believe that God has to be black . . . I believe that the Church is a great archive of black music. I wouldn't go to a church that didn't have black music'. (Giovanni, 1992, p. 4)

In these words, Giovanni reshapes religion to serve African American needs. The Black church has always been more than a space to worship God; the music played in the church, such as the Negro Spirituals, and the black gospel are uplifting and strengthening; they embody hope and resistance to racial oppression.

Amiri Baraka and Jazz Poetry

Doubtless, there is a powerful connection between spirituality and music in the African American community that warrants further investigation. The importance of music to African Americans owes to African Americans' attachment to their African culture where music plays a pivotal role in all aspects of life, particularly spirituality. Roberts (1994) notes, "music is at the center of life for Africans and their descendants in the New World. Music is also at the heart of African and Afro-American religious experience. Blacks carry the rhythm of their music with them to church" (p. 121). This fusion of music and spirituality becomes a powerful tool for African Americans to convey their message of resilience, resistance, and cultural pride. The

combination of music and spirituality creates a unique and compelling artistic form that not only resonates with the African American community but also serves as a testament to the enduring legacy of African cultural traditions. The Black Arts poets' incorporation of jazz into their works solidifies the connection between their art and spirituality. The rhythmic cadence of their poetry often mirrors the musicality of jazz, creating a dynamic and immersive experience for the audience.

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The incorporation of jazz into poetry dates back to the 1920s in the writing of “Langston Hughes and Sterling Brown” (Phalafala, 2017, para. 8). On the work of Hughes, Phalafala (2017) thinks that, “By working within the tradition of orality, black music and related forms, Hughes achieved a collective voice of tradition” (para. 9). One could argue that another element that makes literature of the BAM a minor literature is jazz music. The collective voice of orality, which stems from the collective memories of the minor community, nurtures the bond between the artist and the minor community; minorities cling to their racial and ethnic traditions to counter the pressure of assimilation to the prevailing culture. The fusion between the oral and the textual is a form of deterritorialization of genres. In their definition of deterritorialization, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that it is “the movement by which ‘one’ leaves the territory” (p.508). Accordingly, BAM does not only deterritorialize linguistic territories through the use of Black vernacular English, but it also deterritorializes the literary genre of the poem through the use of jazz to create what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as “something new” (p. 280). This “new thing” is an experimental poetry that is an imitation of jazz. A Jazz poem is “is any poem that has been informed by jazz music. The influence can be in the subject of the poem or in the rhythms, but one should not necessarily exclude the other” (Feinstein, 1997, p. 2).

This experimentation with poetry is “part of the quest for an essentially black aesthetic by Black Arts writers” (Phalafala, 2017 para. 12). This experimentation enables Black Arts poets to create a unique artistic voice that stresses the specificity of African American art. As a member and a founder of BAM, Baraka is known for his experimentation with poetry, whereby “his performances of poetry with jazz would help set the stage for the emergence of hip-hop” (Teague, 2016, p. 1). On his experimentation with poetry, Baraka claims, “I wanted to go from rhythm and blues to new music, to Africa at will” (Baraka, 2003, as cited in Teague, 2016). Baraka creates a new poetry that takes him to Africa through a spiritual voyage. Black Arts poets claim Africa through the literary device of “Nommo.” It is believed that some African Americans, many of whom belong to BAM, employ the device of “Nommo,” a jazz characteristic (Harrison, 1972, para. xiv). Asante (2003) defines the Nommo as follows:

[T]he generative and productive power of the spoken word, in African discourse with respect to resistance to the dominant racist ideology. In the oratorical experience, much as in the jazz experience, the African person finds the ability to construct a discourse reality capable of calling forth nommo in every instance of communication. (p.51)

To African Americans, Nommo refers to the sustaining power of the spoken word; it is a power that can alter reality by provoking a spiritual state. According to Asante (2003), creating Nommo requires an interactive atmosphere. In my opinion, characteristics of jazz music, such as the improvisation and the call and response technique, which strengthen the oneness between the performer and the audience, can generate an instance of communication whereby Nommo creates a new social reality for blacks. In “The True Import of Present Dialogue: Black vs. Negro” (1968), Giovanni converses with the audience; she employs the question-response technique, “Can you kill nigger Huh? nigger can you kill,” to incite a revolutionary action which aims at killing the hegemonic forces of White supremacy:

Nigger
Can you kill
Can you kill
Can a nigger kill
Can a nigger kill a honkie
Can a nigger kill the Man
Can you kill nigger
Huh? nigger can you
kill. (Giovanni, 1968)

The combination of jazz and poetry metamorphoses the poet into “the leader of rebellion against postwar conformity and the spiritual agent of the politically powerless” (Thomas, 1992, p. 291). On the spiritual dimension of music, Baraka (2009) explains, “Music is the feeling as thought as feeling raised or transformed into a less static entity. Music goes into the spirit deeper because it has physical properties that carry intellectual and spiritual correspondences not limited by its physical properties” (p. 141). In other words, music allows for spiritual communication; physical boundaries do not limit the spiritual state that music creates. For Baraka, music is a means to defy and transcend racial barriers in the physical world. Like Giovanni, in his poem “Wailers,” Baraka is a leader of rebellion who seeks to activate the spirit of his audience through the power of jazz:

Wailers are we
We are Wailers. Don't get scared.
Nothing happening but out and way out.
Nothing happening but the positive. (Unless you the negative.)
Wailers. We Wailers. Yeh, Wailers.
We wail, we wail. (1996, p. 21)

The similarity between these verses and jazz music is too powerful as the word morphs into a musical instrument. Ellison (1994) suggests that Baraka's poetry has the same structure as jazz music; it is marked by the combination of formal and unstructured sounds, and it "is basically dialogic" (p. 117). Like jazz music, Baraka's poetry also has an "elastic improvisational form" (Ellison, 1994, p. 123). However, the musicality of his poetry does not obscure the revolutionary aspect of his art. In his poem "Wailers," a eulogy to Larry Neal and Bob Marley, Baraka's musical dimension sharpens the power of his words. In this poem, Baraka celebrates the struggle of Larry Neal and Bob Marley in defying oppression. The speaker, who, through the use of "we," assumes a collective voice, wails loudly about racism and injustice. The speaker embodies the voice of the African American community which laments a painful past. Yet, the complaint ends on a far more hopeful note than it began, "Nothing happening but the positive. (Unless you the negative.)". There will be a brighter day on the horizon. Like a preacher who promises heaven, the speaker instills a sustaining hope in his audience. The poem's message is empowered by the use of Jazz music's techniques. Baraka (1996, p. 21) uses the call and response technique to provoke an audience to think about the possibility of change, "Call Me Bud Powell. You wanna imitate this?/ Listen. Spree dee deet sprree deee whee spredeee whee deee." The transcription of sounds establishes the impression of spontaneity and immediacy. Baraka also employs improvisation "(Unless you the negative.)" and repetition "Wailers. We Wailers. Yeh, Wailers./ We wail, we wail" which are also regarded as important marks of jazz music to accentuate the meaning of his words. In these verses, "Be We. We Wailers. Blue Blowers. The Real Rhythm Kings./We sing philosophy. Hambone precise findings. Image Masters of the syncopated." (1996, p. 21), the speaker refers to the technique of syncopation.⁴ This reference to jazz is indicative of Baraka's unwavering devotion to jazz.

Islam and the Black Arts Movement

The marriage between jazz and poetry has allowed Black Arts poets to return to Africa in a journey deemed inevitable to shun the disillusionment of the exclusionary world. This sense of belonging to Africa, which is, as mentioned above, nurtured by African American's embracing of their ancestors' religions, such as the Yoruba religion, is also nourished by Islam. Islam is also a form of spirituality that has molded Black Arts poets' work and enabled them to reclaim Africa. There is a misbelief that Black Africans are new converts to Islam. Africa has been introduced to Islam since the seventh century. As early as the eighth century, the Islamization of sub-

Saharan Africa began when North African merchants spread Islam through trade expeditions, “Islam developed in the zones that long-distance commerce opened” (Salvaing, 2020, p. 19). Black Arts artists’ return to Africa has awakened them to the power of Islam, because their “political struggle” is also a “cultural struggle,” a different form of spirituality is requested (McAlister, 1999, p. 638). On African Americans’ rejection of Christianity, Timothy (2002) argues, “the consciousness of having gods other than those possessed by the enslavers was of course tremendously mentally liberating, and served to inspire the desire for revolt” (p. 134). Islam was another form of spirituality that some BAM artists and poets embraced because it is believed to be “the natural religion of the Black Nation” (Muhammad, 1973, p.80). To McAlister (1999), the power of Islam was not strictly affecting poets and artists who were Muslims; Islam has also caressed the soul of non-Muslims within BAM (p. 641). For some members of BAM, Islam was a potent religion and a marker of African culture.

Baraka is one of the members of the BAM who honor Islam in their writing.⁵ McAlister (1999), who focuses on his status as a playwright, regards his plays “A Black Mass” (1965), the anthology, *Black Fire* (1968), and his collection, *New Plays for the Black Theatre* (1969) as a projection of a strong fondness for the new religion. In Baraka’s interview with Marvin X and Faruk X (1994), he states that the presence of Islam in his writing owes to the atmosphere that marked Harlem from 1964-1965. In this era, Both Islam and the Yoruba religion have powerfully affected Baraka. (p. 51). Despite his support of all religions, Baraka views Islam as the most certain route to truth. He explains that Islam is similar to science in leading an individual to understand “all phenomena,” thus, he rejects Christianity since “it tends to cover truth rather than reveal it” (Marvin X & Faruk X, 1994, p.52). Baraka accentuates the connection between art and Islam, “The artist’s words, the signs, the symbols, the artifacts are magic things, they’re supposed to be able to suggest the presence of Allah (God). Just by hearing them (words), showing them, they’re supposed to place you in close contact with the Divinity” (Marvin X & Faruk X, 1994, p.55). To Baraka, the line between art and religion is completely blurred since both art and religion seek to manifest the existence of divinity. This quote emphasizes the link between Islam and creativity in Baraka’s works. It is worth mentioning that Baraka’s treatment of Islam in his writing reveals a new vision of this religion.⁶ In Baraka’s poem “Ka ‘Ba” (1969), the last stanza powerfully shows the impact of Islam:⁷

We have been captured,
and we labor to make our getaway, into
the ancient image; into a new
Correspondence with ourselves
and our Black family. We need magic
now we need the spells, to raise up
return, destroy, and create. What will be
the sacred word? (*Genius*)

In this verse, “We need magic now we need the spells,” Baraka refers to the power of the Quran since the term ‘magic’ has often been linked to the Quran. In the Quran, the chapter of “Ahqaf”- “The Dunes,” the seventh verse, Allah says, “When Our revelations are recited to them, plain and clear, those who disbelieve say of the truth when it has come to them, ‘This is obviously magic’.”⁸ Because they were unable to grasp the power of the Quran, disbelievers regarded the Quran as a work of magic. Allah’s words show that the Quran transcends humans’ knowledge and challenges their minds. Rassool, a professor of Islamic psychology, claims that Islam teaches Muslims that one of the ways in which they can protect themselves from “the evils of envy, jealousy and Jinn [demon] manifestation [and] black magic” is through reading the Quran. Rassool also argues that the Quran “promotes healing and spiritual cure” (Rassoul, 2019, as cited in Rassoul, 2021, p. 475). The Quran’s ability to protect humans from different sorts of evil, such as, witchcraft or evil eye, as well as its healing function, could powerfully explain the link between Quran and magic.⁹ Through “the sacred words” of the Quran, African Americans will be able to rise against oppression; they will return as a powerful and creative race. Islam’s strong message of acceptance nourishes African Americans’ pride and self-love.¹⁰

Conclusion

In Hazel’s interview (2022) with the Black performance artist and activist Tricia Hersey, the importance of spirituality is emphasized; Hersey asserts, “At the heart of us as human beings, I believe that it’s our divinity to create and invent. In the seat of our creativity is spiritual practice” (para. 23). The spiritual impulse is a hallmark of the BAM, it is a force that spurs African Americans’ growth. Through the works of Black Arts literary artists, we can see how spirituality is imbued with a greater value. It is not only a cultural marker, it is an affirmation of the cultural and racial African American identity. Spirituality enables African Americans to reconnect to African sensibilities, reclaim black glory and disrupt Eurocentric definitions of Black identity. Although the BAM faded away by the mid-1970s, spirituality still occupies a central position in the African American community. Farrag (2018) notes that spirituality is inherent in the movement of Black Lives Matter; it is embodied in “the chants in front of the Los Angeles court house declaring “summon our ancestors,” and grassroots organizations’ use of spiritually infused tools to heal those directly impacted by state violence” (p. 77). These words show that spirituality and the political protest conjoin in black political and social movements.

Notes

- 1 Black Power is a revolutionary movement founded in the 1960s and 1970s. The movement is concerned with “racial pride, economic empowerment, and the creation of political and cultural institutions. During this era, there was a rise in the demand for Black history courses, a greater embrace of African culture, and a spread of raw artistic expression displaying the realities of African Americans” (*Black Power*, 2021, para. 1).
- 2 Spirituality and religion share similarities, yet there are differences between them. While spirituality “is not connected to any particular religious tradition or institution. Instead it refers to characteristics like interest in the divine, transcendence, ultimate meaning, etc., which can be filled in very different ways . . . Religion then refers to institutionalized religion, to religious communities and hierarchies, most often with a fixed creedal and moral system in the sense of dogma”(Dowling & Scarlett, 2006, p. 121).
- 3 Hager’s story features in the first book of the bible, Genesis. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. However, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had a childless marriage. Thus, Sarah resolved to grant him a wife to bear him a child. Sarah chose her Egyptian servant Hagar who gave birth to Ishmael. When Sarah also became pregnant and offered Abraham Isaac who would fulfill God’s promise to Abraham, tension escalated between the two women. Out of fear for Isaac’s inheritance, Sarah asked Abraham to force Hagar to leave. Hagar and her son “face death in the wilderness until God rescues them. The deity promises Hagar and her child will become a great nation” (Russell& Tribble, 2006, 3).
- 4 Syncopation in jazz music is “the placing of accents unexpectedly on the upbeat rather than the downbeat” (Robey, 2023, p. 4). In jazz poetry, the technique becomes a literary device when the poet alters the changing of the accentual stress pattern and the number of syllables.
- 5 Amiri Baraka was born Everett LeRoi Jones and became Amiri Baraka after the assassination of Malcolm X, a prominent Muslim member of the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam is an Islamic and Black nationalist movement established in Michigan by Wallace D. Fard Muhammad in 1930. It is a combination between Islam and Black nationalist ideologies, the Nation of Islam achieved popularity among African Americans who were drawn to its promising message of racial equity (*Black Arts Movement (1965-1975)*, 2021, para. 1).
- 6 There are differences between the Nation of Islam’s vision of Islam and the mainstream, Sunni Islam. The idea that Fard Muhammed is the personification of the last prophet Muhammed (Gibson, 2012, p.18) is a striking difference. Sunni Islam does not believe in humans’ personification of God or the prophet.
- 7 “Kaaba” is a sacred building made of a black stone. The Ka ‘Ba is considered as the center of the Islamic world, it is situated in the courtyard of the central mosque in Mecca. For Muslims, Ka ‘Ba was established by Abraham and his son Ishmael to answer God’s order.
- 8 The translation of the Quran verses are taken from Talal Itani’s *Quran: Arabic and English in Parallel* (2005).
- 9 “We send down in the Quran healing and mercy for the believers, but it increases the wrongdoers only in loss” (Chapter Israa, verse 82).
- 10 In his last sermon the Prophet Muhammed said, “All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white-except by piety and good action” (*The Last Sermon of Prophet Muhammad(SAW)*, n.d.).

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ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF INDUSTRIAL SYMBIOSIS ON THE MICRO-LEVEL IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA. A CASE STUDY FROM UGANDA

GERGELY BUDA

PHD STUDENT AT CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST, JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE GLOBAL INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY OF THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY AND JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC AND REGIONAL STUDIES, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY
BUDAGERGELY@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

Sub-Saharan Africa faces serious challenges related to waste management due to increasing population, consumption, and industrialization ambitions pursued by governments seeking economic development. This paper contributes to research on waste utilization in the region through a case study of industrial symbiosis in Uganda. More specifically, it focuses on the different cost items of waste suppliers of an eco-farm based on a fitness condition equation, including costs of landfilling, transportation, handling, pre-processing, storage, and the waste selling price. Uncovering these elements on the micro level may inform policymakers on how to incentivize industrial symbiosis and help its implementation in an economically feasible way. Data for this research was collected via company visits, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations during two research trips in 2021 and 2022. The results indicate that the additional revenue from selling waste is the least important item in the rationale for IS. In most cases, the potential for reducing landfilling costs motivates companies to participate in IS. The high difference in the other cost items calls for a case-by-case rather than a standardized policy intervention.

Keywords

waste, industrial symbiosis, integrated farming systems, circular economy, Sub-Saharan Africa

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1. Introduction

Older and newer generations of scholars have produced numerous papers touching on how to change or break out from the take-make-use-dispose logic of the linear economy (Erkman, 1997; Korhonen, 2004; Nielsen, 2007; Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Homrich et al., 2018). Many argue that the functioning of the linear economy is unsustainable. As one potential alternative, the circular economy has recently received intense scholarly and popular attention and has already been put into practice by many entrepreneurs worldwide.

However, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been relatively underrepresented in these efforts. This provides essential opportunities, not only because of the region's 'underdevelopment' but also because many argue that Africa has better chances to adopt circular economy practices due to its lower embeddedness and dependency on linear models (Lemille, 2020). This neglect is also problematic as the continent faces numerous worrying trends. Increasing population (UN, 2019), consumption and waste generation (Kazat et al., 2018; Hornweeg et al., 2013), low economic and agricultural productivity (Bationo et al., 2006), combined with climate change vulnerability (Baarsch et al., 2020), result in severe risks for food security, societal stability, and environmental and economic sustainability (HLPE, 2013). In addition, African governments pursue economic development through industrialization ambitions. Since 2008, the majority of African countries have adopted formal industrial development strategies (WIR, 2018, p. 128). Uganda, for example, introduced a new national industrial policy in 2020 that aims to increase the industrial contribution to GDP by 2030 (MTIC, 2020, p. XII). Consequently, further industrialization seems inevitable, with increased waste generation. Therefore, a better understanding of how industrialization could occur with less waste generation and more efficient resource use is essential; thus, it is the scope of this study.

One common pattern of existing research about waste utilization in SSA is that they do not consider the role of economic factors and incentives. This is a clearly noticeable and unfortunate research gap, especially because the micro-level dynamics of waste utilization have already been conceptualized and modelled as industrial symbiosis (IS) (Chertow, 2000; Boons et al., 2011; Despeisse et al., 2012; Demartini et al., 2018 and Bertani et al., 2019). Its deeper understanding can inspire policy-making on the local level. Moreover, several ongoing experiments with circular models and waste utilization in SSA exist, but these efforts are not documented and analysed sufficiently.

Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to the research on ways to produce cleaner products in SSA. This case study of Amelia Agro Africa Ltd., a Ugandan farm, presents the further economic utilization of different non-hazardous and non-infectious waste materials (hereafter industrial waste) by using the models of IS and integrated farming systems (IFS). For analysis, the paper applies schematic modelling of IS fitness conditions for companies, revealing the actors' organizational motivations and financial gains. Data was collected through two field visits in May 2021 and June 2022, which included participant observation and twelve qualitative interviews with existing and potential partners.

The results also indicate that further research on the economic fitness conditions of industrial symbiosis may deliver valuable inputs for policymaking and regulation on enhancing resource efficiency. For instance, landfilling taxes represent the most important cost items for the nine supplier companies analysed in this study. This indicates that policy measures aimed at reducing waste generation and increasing resource use efficiency may become less effective as these taxes increase. Instead, policy should focus on helping companies reduce or avoid disposal and related costs. Understanding the cost structure of waste resale is crucial for considering these alternatives, as explained below. The findings can also assist farmers in discovering alternative methods to boost productivity and provide industrialists with best practice examples to generate additional revenue and save money through waste materials.

Beyond these practical implications, the paper contributes to the literature in three ways. First, the literature covers IS and IFS but barely touches on combining the two with the presentation of such abundant materials utilized in SSA. Thus, this insight into Amelia Agro farm's functioning provides an excellent two-in-one learning opportunity. Second, the paper is one of the first attempts to analyse the economic determinants of IS on the micro level based on primary data. Through this, the role of potential incentives can be better understood, conceptualized, and applied in policymaking. Finally, as most articles focus on the potential benefits to gain *if* these practices were implemented, the paper has a gap-filling character since it examines these practices as *already implemented*.

The paper is structured as follows. The upcoming section is a literature review on IS and IFS in general, and specifically, in SSA. This is followed by the research methodology. The subsequent section presents the results: Amelia Agro Farm's IFS model; IS relationships with its suppliers, the supplier companies' analysis based on a fitness condition equation; and further observations. Finally, lessons learned, limitations, and directions for further research are discussed and followed by brief conclusions.

2. Literature review

Based on Stahel (2016), the circular economy can be summarized in six fields of action: take, make/transform, distribute, use, recover, and *IS*. Industrial symbiosis can be described as a relationship in which one company's waste is used as production input by another company. In other words, IS focuses on closing pre-consumer loops by capturing the residues from one entity as the input for another (Chertow, 2000). Companies participating in this special form of synergy can save on inputs, transportation and landfilling costs, and gain additional revenues from selling waste and by-products (Neves et al., 2019). Henriques et al. (2021) differentiated four levels of IS: internal exchange, external exchange, eco-industrial parks and urban industrial symbiosis. This paper focuses on the former two: internal exchange, which refers to the development of synergies within one certain organization, and external exchange, referring to the exchange of waste among two or more companies.

There is a limited number of studies about industrial symbiosis in SSA. Brent et al. (2008) reported findings on seven cases of eco-industrial parks in South Africa. Oguntoye et al. (2019) reflected on the Gauteng Industrial Symbiosis Programme run in 2014. The Ellen McArthur Foundation (2020) mentioned the case of the Western Cape Industrial Symbiosis Programme as the first African IS programme. Mbuligwe and Kaseva (2006) assessed industrial solid waste management and resource recovery practices in Tanzania. Alfaro and Miller (2013) analysed the potential of integrated material and energy flows in a smallholding farm in Liberia, including IS and IFS approaches, similar to this paper. Furthermore, Oliyade (2015) identified sixteen factors that contribute to the success of industrial ecology in SSA. Mauthoor (2017) analysed the potential of IS in three industries (slaughterhouses, edible oil refineries, and scrap metal recycling) in Mauritius. Rweyendela and Mwegoha (2020) explored IS forms in the sugar industry, using the case of the largest sugar factory in Tanzania and involving physical exchanges of bagasse, molasses, filter cake, boiler ash and utility sharing among seven co-located units. Kisha and Onyuka (2018) presented an analysis of the potential greening of special economic zones and industrial parks in Kenya, specifically speaking about the need for the up-take of IS practices, while Jensen (2020) presented cases for the garments sector in “eco-industrial” parks in Ethiopia. Finally, Oni et al. (2022) thoroughly analysed the challenges and prospects of industrial symbiosis in the African continent based on the availability and characteristics of waste materials, some already existing IS networks, and the local regulatory environment.

IFS considers small-holder farms as a system that connects and integrates its different units to increase agricultural productivity (Simmonds, 1985). In brief, it combines two or more fields of agriculture and employs a recycling biological concept while also focusing on low external input utilization. It is most commonly implemented through the utilization of crop waste, animal manure, and fish waste to increase farming productivity and maintain environmentally friendly conditions (Mukhlis et al., 2018). Referring back to the above categorization of IS levels, IFS’s approach fits into the internal exchange category. The FAO (2001) also describes integrated systems as an alternative to diversified models with only co-existing but not interconnected livestock and crop cultures. The products or by-products of one component serve as a resource for the other, and this integration helps maximize the use of resources. According to Chan (1985), integrated farming systems can help address food problems in the “Third World” by dealing with rising fuel, industrial feed, and fertilizer prices.

Although the concept of IFS has been embraced and disseminated, research on IFS in SSA is relatively scarce. Dessie (1997) analysed scavenging poultry in IFSs in Ethiopia. Harris (2002) focused on the usage of IFS methods, including manure and cereal residues in the semi-arid Sahel region. Agbonlahor et al. (2003) concluded that a poultry-based integrated food production system could increase soil productivity in Southern Nigeria. Ruddle and Prein (2006) presented an assessment methodology for the impacts of an integrated agriculture-aquaculture system in Ghana. FAO

(2009) reported on enhancing crop-livestock systems in Burkina Faso. Singbo and Lansink (2010) demonstrated the production efficiency increase when applying an IFS approach in rice-vegetable farming in Benin. Obi (2013) presented statistical evidence of small-holder farmers potentially benefiting from IFS in South Africa. Ezeaku et al. (2015) shed light on how cereal-legume-livestock integration can contribute to soil fertility and overall food productivity improvement in the savannah areas of Nigeria. Agosson et al. (2016) described the model of the Songhai farm in Benin as employing integrated farming techniques.

The studies of IS in Sub-Saharan Africa often overlook the economic factors that determine the feasibility of the symbiotic relationship for businesses. However, existing literature widely agrees on the significance of regulations and economic incentives in enabling IS (Boons et al., 2011; Lethoranta et al., 2011; Neves et al., 2019; Lybaek et al., 2020; Bertani et al. 2019; Henriques et al., 2021). In most cases, landfilling taxes, subsidies on logistic or operational costs and material prices are identified as economic factors and incentives. Economic incentives promote cost effectiveness, service efficiency and the generation of revenue. Moving waste up the hierarchy towards minimization, reuse and recycling can be achieved through economic instruments and incentives, provided they are appropriately designed and implemented (Nahman and Godfrey, 2012). Finally, economic incentives create connections between the macro and the micro/meso levels. Thus, understanding the role of certain microeconomic factors could provide inputs for sustainable IS policymaking.

3. Methodology

This paper aims to present and analyse waste materials' utilization in the SSA context. To do so, the research operated with a case study method, since "a case study is best defined as an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena" (Gerring, 2004, p.341).

Amelia Agro Africa Ltd. is a small-scale organic farm in Jinja, Uganda. They grow several varieties of plants, raise animals (chicken, fish, pigs, cows, goats, rabbits), and produce organic fertilizer (compost) for the local market. The farm uses several waste materials for composting, feeding animals, and plant protection due to a great number of IS relationships both internally and externally. This makes it perfect for a case study to: a) present a variety of waste and by-product materials suitable for further economic utilization in SSA and b) enable the research to examine the economic factors, gains and costs of the farm's IS partners, and thus inform the conceptualization of a local incentive policy. This latter element is even more significant, as the farm's IS clientele represents nearly one-third of the Ugandan manufacturing sector's portfolio¹ (MTIC, 2021, p.5).

Amelia Agro was first visited in May 2021 (Buda, 2022) based on experts' recommendations at the Uganda Cleaner Production Centre and National Planning Authority. This trip was motivated to answer the research question (RQ1) "How

can industrial and agricultural waste be utilized in Sub-Saharan Africa?” Therefore, the farm’s operation was observed and studied, and the IS and IFS aspects were discussed with the farm’s managing director. This also included identifying supplier companies for further company visits and interviews. The description of different material utilization practices, presented below, enables a partial answer to this first research question. Following this initial fieldwork, the waste materials utilized and practices applied through IS by the farm were researched via a literature review.

After, a second research question (RQ2) was formulated: Why is IS worth it for participating companies? This enables capturing the role of economic factors. To theoretically conceptualize this research question, two fitness condition equations based on Boons et al. (2011) and Bertani et al. (2019) were applied to model the positive and negative costs of supplier and buyer companies in IS.

For simplicity, there are two assumptions: 1. suppliers carry out necessary waste treatments and bear related costs, and 2. the transportation of input materials generates costs for the buyers. Thus, economic factors for suppliers and buyers are different, which needs to be considered explicitly.

Hence, the IS fitness condition for a supplier company is as follows:

$$c_{st} + c_p - p_w \leq l + c_{trl} \quad (1)$$

where

- c_p is the pre-processing and/or handling cost of waste;
- c_{st} is the cost of storing waste;
- p_w is the waste selling price;
- l is landfill tax;
- c_{trl} is the transportation cost to the nearest landfill location.

Therefore, IS fits supplier companies as long as their costs of waste selling are lower than those of landfilling.

For a buyer company, the IS fitness condition can be described as follows:

$$p_w + c_{trw} \leq p_v + c_{trv} \quad (2)$$

where

- p_w is the waste selling price;
- c_{trw} is the cost of waste transportation;
- p_v is the price of virgin material;
- c_{trv} is the virgin material transportation cost.

So, IS is suitable for buyer companies as long as their costs related to using waste materials are lower than their costs related to using virgin materials.

Following this conceptualization, a second field research was carried out in June 2022, through which data was gathered from the suppliers' side. Nine companies whose waste materials are utilized by the farm were visited and interviewed. This data collection method was chosen against other ones, such as anonymous online surveying, because informants may require guidance and explanation of certain questions, and additional information and further observations can also be gained. These nine informants represented more than two-thirds of the farm's suppliers and were selected based on their availability and willingness to respond. Furthermore, the researcher also visited two other companies as potential future suppliers and one agro-waste distributor company selling materials to the farm. In accordance with the IS fitness condition (1) for suppliers, the semi-structured interviews focused on the following aspects:

1. supplier's primary motivation to participate in the IS relationship;
2. landfilling costs saved;
3. transportation costs to landfill saved;
4. storage costs realized;
5. handling or pre-processing costs realized;
6. whether Amelia Agro pays for the received material;
7. whether Amelia Agro pays for the transportation of waste received;
8. the value of these cost items relative to each other.

In line with the above-mentioned logic, the paper applies the model of IS and equations (1) and (2) as its theoretical framework. The results presented in the following section should be seen as snapshots from the two field visits in May 2021 and June 2022. Amelia Agro is continuously experimenting with the utilization of new industrial materials to broaden its supplier portfolio, improve economies of scale, and elaborate best practices. Based on the low sample number, these results are not representative and not statistically significant, yet they serve to deepen the understanding of the research topic.

4. Research Results

This section first presents the in-house circularity of materials on the farm, reflecting on IFS. This is followed by the farm's IS relationships with the nine suppliers. The gains and motivation of the supplier companies are then analysed, and further research observations are presented.

4.1. Integrated farming model – within-unit circularity of materials

The farm has a circular model of materials, demonstrating a perfect example of IFS. Everything, including animal manure, weeds, or other plant remnants, is utilized for feeding or composting. The manure from pigs, cows, goats, and rabbits is used as an input for vermicompost and windrow compost. Urine is an input for liquid fertilizer. Cow manure is also used to feed black soldier flies. Chickens are located right above a fishpond; thus, their manure drops directly into the water, which serves as feed for

tilapia fish and water hyacinth. This practice is also mentioned by the FAO (2001). The maggots of black soldier flies serve as protein-rich fodder for the pigs and fish. The water hyacinth is fed to pigs and chickens and provides input for the windrow compost and liquid fertilizer. Plant and vegetable off-cuts and weeds are fed to the animals on the farm (pigs, cows, goats, rabbits, chicken and fish), while some plants are specifically grown as fodder, such as moringa, calliandra, gliricidia, mulberry and duckweed. The three types of organic fertilizer (vermicompost, windrow compost, liquid fertilizer) serve to increase soil fertility. The model is visually presented in Figure 1.

This in-house circularity of materials enables the farm to realize cost reductions for the necessary production input materials and improve soil fertility. Furthermore, CO₂ emissions from open-air waste decomposition are minimized, as animal and plant-based materials are kept in the production circle. However, maintaining this continuous circularity is very labour-intensive and thus generates additional labour cost burdens for the farm. In one sense, this represents a meaningful social benefit via the jobs generated, but it also raises serious questions regarding economic sustainability and economies of scale.

4.2. Industrial symbiosis

The following section presents nine suppliers' by-products that the farm utilizes as waste materials. It also includes information about how each material is used on the farm and additional research findings about similar applications. Additionally, Figure 2 illustrates the primary destination of the farm's waste materials.

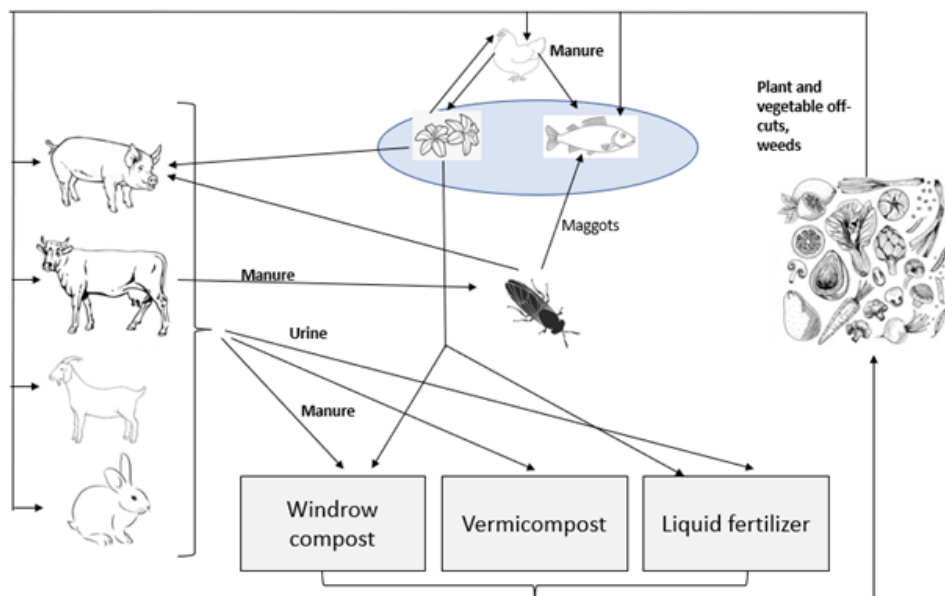


Figure 1. Within-unit circularity of materials at Amelia Agro farm. Source: author's construction

OBN Produce and Supply Ltd. is a rice mill in Jinja that sells rice husk to the farm for use as chicken bedding, fodder, and compost input. Otherwise, the company would simply “dump or burn” this material, so its further utilization clearly generates environmental benefits. Zhao et al. (2022), for example, demonstrate how rice husk can be an important component of organic fertilizer mixtures.

Bagasse is received from GM Sugar Ltd. and used as mulch. It is applied to the soil surface to maintain the soil moisture, improve the soil’s fertility and health, and reduce weed growth. Another purpose of bagasse is to supply the pigs with protein-enriched feed (Pandey et al., 2000). GM Sugar also uses this waste in-house. Seventy percent of the bagasse goes for power generation for its factory.

The Jinja City Abattoir, a slaughterhouse, supplies the farm with blood, intestines, and flesh off-cuts. Other flesh residues are also received from a fish producer, Nyanza Perch Ltd., and a tannery, Mekah Leather Ltd. Composting of meat/fish processing waste such as dung from the lairage, ruminal and intestinal contents, blood, meat trimmings, floor sweepings, hair, feathers, hide trimmings, as reported by Kharat (2018), produces a very good quality bio-manure which may be utilized as fertilizer. Furthermore, slaughterhouse waste has been reported to be a significant source of proteins and fats that are convenient raw materials for processing proteinaceous animal feeds (Okanović et al., 2009). Regarding the utilization of fish waste as compost input, Kusuma et al. (2019) show that the level of organic carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium makes fish waste-based compost applicable as organic fertilizer. Similarly, Ahuja et al. (2020) also reveal that fish waste-based fertilizers are rich sources of nitrogen and phosphorus for plants and positively affect soil quality by improving soil microbial activity and soil structure and stimulating root growth.

The by-product of a local paper company, East African Packaging Solutions Ltd., carbon-rich boiler ash is another valuable source for improving soil fertility; thus, it is used by the farm as a windrow compost input, mixed with other organic materials. Focusing on forest-lands in the USA, Vance (2000) concludes that paper mill boiler ash can be beneficial for plant (tree) productivity, as it is mainly comprised of oxides and carbonates of potassium and calcium but also contains significant amounts of phosphorus, magnesium, and some other micronutrients. As a soil amendment, one of the most essential characteristics of ash is its effect in raising the soil’s pH value, as demonstrated by its effective substitution for agricultural lime. Moreover, boiler ash generally has low concentrations of heavy metals, organic compounds, and other constituents of concern, and it is environmentally benign when used in reasonable quantities. This is in line with many other studies (Vance, 1996; Wang et al., 2006; Brotodjojo and Arbiwati, 2016) concluding that boiler ash can be applied as an agricultural liming material, soil conditioner, fertilizer or even plant resistance enhancer against insect pests. Besides boiler ash, other paper production by-products, such as sludge, can also be applied as organic fertilizer (Fahim et al., 2018).

Spent grain, spent yeast, and malt dust from Nile Breweries are fed to the pigs and fish and then used as compost components. Assandri et al. (2020) conclude that

brewers' spent grain is not suitable for direct composting, therefore, it should be mixed with livestock manure, as it is done in practice at the farm. Another potential utilization form is to feed these residues to animals (Ajila et al., 2012; Karlovic et al., 2020). The brewing process is one of the most waste-producing ones in proportion to the end product and includes wastewater, spent grains, spent yeast, spent hops, and germs (Amoriello and Ciccoritti, 2021).

Distillate spent wash from Buwembe Brewers and Distillers Ltd. is also used as an input to liquid fertilizer. Distillery effluents represent a significant agro-potentiality by positively affecting the moisture and mineral content of the treated soil (Chopra et al., 2013), and thus, if used in lower concentration, can positively affect seed germination and yields of several plant species, such as wheat, pea, okra (Pandey et al., 2007), rice (Arora et al., 1992), maize (Ramana et al., 2002), and Chinese cabbage (Kumari et al., 2016).

Bidco Uganda Ltd. produces cooking oil from palm. As a by-product of palm oil extraction, between 200 and 400 tonnes of kernel expeller are produced every month. This material is utilized by the farm as animal feed input, as it is a quality stock feed containing high levels of crude protein and medium energy levels, thus safe to feed as a supplement for most classes of livestock (van Wyngaard et al., 2015; Thompson-Morrison et al., 2022).

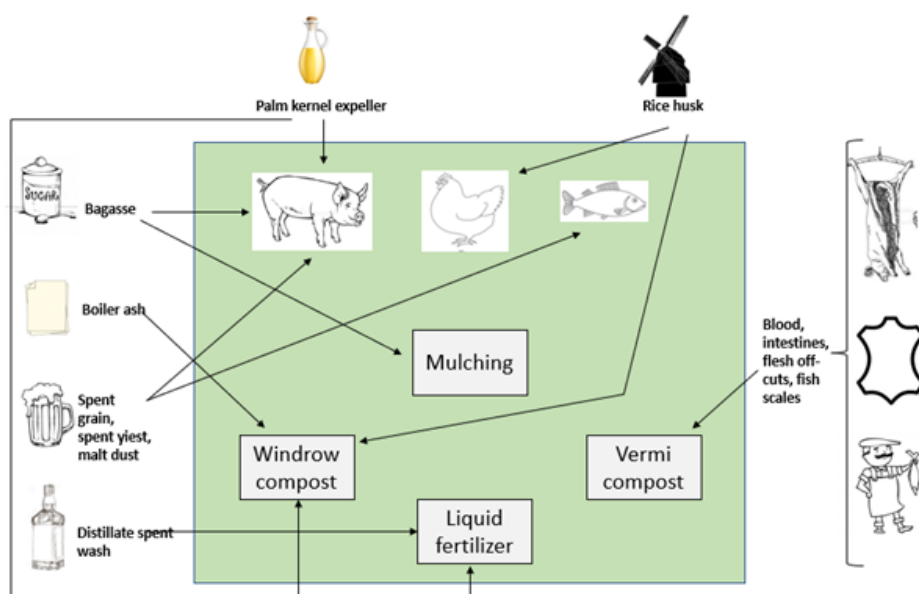


Figure 2. Waste materials received by Amelai Agro. Source: author's construction

4.3. Suppliers analysis

This section briefly presents the research results regarding the main motivating factors and the cost items based on equation (1) for the nine supplier companies presented above. Table 1 summarizes the results.

Five of the nine companies interviewed mentioned the generation of additional revenue as the primary motivation. The other four highlighted the existing or potential saving of landfill and waste management costs as their most important incentive, including the avoidance of special taxes.

Only three companies stated that they are already saving *landfilling costs* with the ongoing relationship, while the other six did not, due to different reasons such as the small quantity taken by the farm relative to the total quantity of waste or irrelevant landfilling cost in case of no purchase, such as free usage of the landfill, simple dumping, releasing to natural water bodies or giving-away for free to company workers.

Five companies realized savings on *transportation costs to the landfill*; this aspect was irrelevant for four other firms. The number of companies realizing savings in landfilling costs and those realizing savings in transportation costs do not overlap. This is because some companies still have to transport much of their waste or by-products to the landfill, or even if they do not have to pay for the landfill, they still have to bear the transportation costs.

The interview questionnaire was formulated to probe the potential savings in *storage costs* if the farm (or any other customer) takes the provided materials. Of the nine companies, only three mentioned savings of storage costs (in one case, espe-

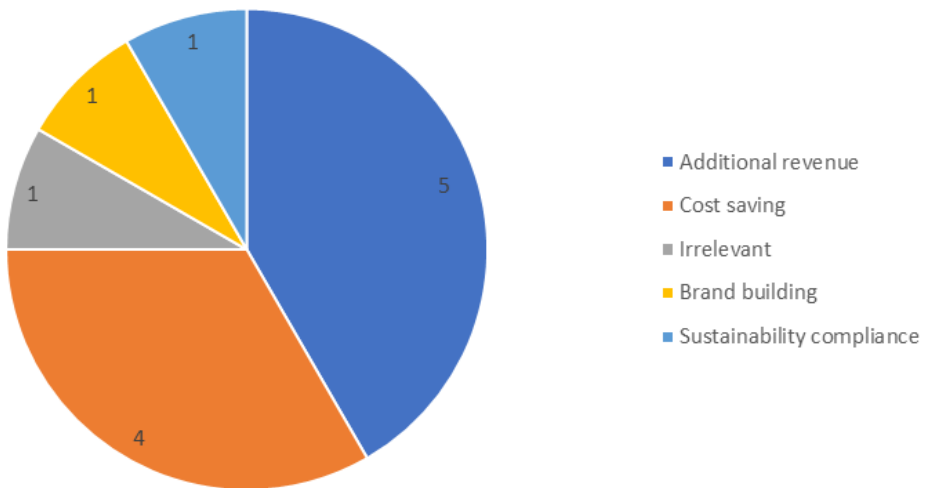


Figure 3. Motivations in waste/by-product supply of the nine suppliers of Amelia Agro. Source: author's construction

cially high due to obligations around special storage conditions). For six companies, this was irrelevant.

Handling and pre-processing costs are realized as positive cost items for the companies and refer to additional treatments before giving away the waste or sending it to the landfill. Four companies mentioned these costs as relevant, and the other five do not face such additional costs. From the IS point of view, these costs were important for analysis since they can mean additional costs in case a special client needs them or potential savings if these treatments are not necessary for the partner. However, none of these two cases occurred in the research.

The farm *pays for the waste materials* to six of the nine companies and, in each case, pays for waste transportation. This indicates that only a minority of the companies are motivated to “simply get rid of” the waste materials. Even if they let the farm take them for free, they do not want to incur additional costs (for transportation).

As a last point in the data collection process, interviewees were asked to estimate a ranking among the cost items of the supplier fitness condition equation (I) to find a **relative relationship among these cost items**. Unfortunately, not every respondent was able to give an estimation to this question, and these cost items differ significantly depending on the exact activity and technology. In the sample of these nine companies, it seems that the waste selling price (p_w), the only negative cost (i.e. revenue), is by far the least important item for the supplier companies in this equation. It is followed by the cost of transportation to the landfill (c_{trl}) and storage costs (c_{st}). The costliest items are pre-processing or handling costs (c_p) and the payment for landfilling (I). Thus, in this sample of nine companies, the relative relationship can be expressed as follows:

$$(p_w) < (c_{trl}) < (c_{st}) < (c_p) < (I)$$

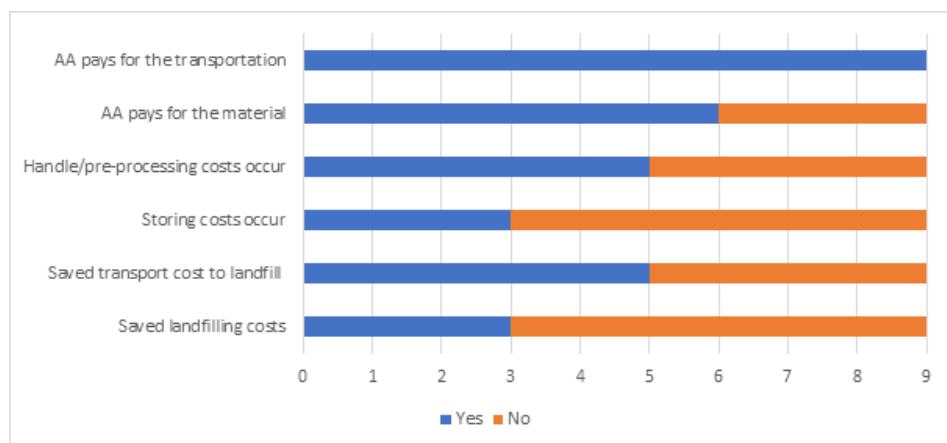


Figure 4. Occurrence of cost items by the nine suppliers of Amelia Agro.
Source: author's construction

4.4. Further observations

This final subsection shares additional information gathered during the research, which may contribute to the broader understanding of waste utilization in SSA. These insights are informed by visits to further companies that are not included in the supplier analysis above.

First, the sugar industry has great potential and, in many cases, already has an applied practice of in-house utilization of waste and by-products. As mentioned above, GM Sugar uses around 70% of the bagasse for power generation. Other big sugar companies, such as SCOUL (Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited, visited as a potential new partner for the farm), reported similar practices. Besides power generation, SCOUL also makes use of molasses by operating a distillery, and sells CO₂, another by-product generated in the process.

Second, Uganda Tea Corporation Ltd. in Kasaku Estate was also visited as a potential partner for the farm. Several by-products of tea processing, such as micro-fined tea dust, winnowings, floor sweepings and tea seeds, can also be utilized as valuable inputs for composting and feeding (Guil-Guerrero et al., 2016).

Third, in many cases, waste and by-products are re-distributed by middlemen to the farm and other customers, such as spent grain from Nile Breweries or other suppliers not included in the analysis above. These intermediaries include Jose AF, a dealer of spent grains and a company contracted by Eskom, the operator of the Jinja Damm, to clean off water hyacinth from the water surface and solve its disposal by selling it to farmers as pig fodder. The role of intermediary companies in IS may form the subject of consideration to modify the fitness condition equations above, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Fourth, one can detect some “low-hanging fruits” for regulation to facilitate industrial symbiosis. Certain materials, such as boiler ash or distillate spent wash, are produced in huge quantities, that potentially add value to compost production and organic fertilization. Their storage, handling and disposal can be extremely costly for the producer and harmful to the environment. Sometimes, the realized costs have already incentivized companies to look for waste-selling opportunities. In contrast, primarily due to the poor enforcement of environmental laws, the cost of disposal is still less than the cost of selling the waste, which holds companies back from being interested in further utilization of waste. This implies that supporting waste material utilization in production might require subsidies on the cost of waste selling, as it is the least important cost item for most companies and/or for related storage, handling, or pre-processing activities.

5. Discussion, limitations and further research

This paper aimed to find answers to the utilization opportunities of waste and the costs and benefits of companies in IS relationships. The former topic was easier to identify because one can describe the processes based on interviews and company visits. For the latter part, the paper modelled negative and positive cost items in equations (1) and (2). Even though the model seems appropriate, gathering data for it

was problematic. Costs and income items are very sensitive; companies generally do not like to share this information. Thus, one faces a serious limitation when applying this model: data for a quantitative model needed to be gathered using qualitative methods. Hence, to address this problem, the questionnaire contained yes-or-no questions regarding certain cost items and a ranking to see the extent of these items relative to each other. This enabled testing the fitness condition equation. However, the issue can still be the subject of further research using different data collection methods.

Another important limitation point is the question of external validity due to the small sample size. The paper contains much information regarding the kinds of waste or by-products and how they can be utilized. It may deliver valuable ideas and practices for other companies in Africa. However, it is still a question to what extent the research findings for the cost items can represent the broader phenomenon of waste material utilization, as these factors are strongly dependent on technology, industry, and regulation. This calls for further research, which may include other industries and activities, and gathering more data for testing and developing the equations.

Furthermore, this research did not focus directly on the role of regulation and policy-making. Rather, it focused on the nuclear elements of IS. Nevertheless, the findings may inspire policy-making on how to incentivise economic actors to utilize or sell waste and by-products. One can already see a pattern in the above results. The most important cost item was the landfilling tax, while the lowest was the selling price (revenue). The three other cost items (landfill transportation, storage, handling and/or pre-processing) differ greatly according to the given technologies and materials. This means that a standardized policy intervention related to these latter three cost items may be difficult; rather, a case-by-case method would be preferable if such institutional capacities are available.

Thus, in line with the IS literature, policy-interventions can most easily focus on the landfilling taxes and waste selling prices. For instance, increased taxes can motivate companies to avoid waste disposal and look for ways to sell their waste materials. However, this approach may result in failure and illegal waste disposal due to the following reasons. In many cases, only some part of the waste materials is sold as a production input, therefore, the increased tax paid for the not-sold amount is an additional burden on companies. Furthermore, if supplier companies need to increase the amount of waste for sales, their necessary storage and handling/pre-processing costs may also increase or even exceed the amount of tax paid, thus breaking the equation (1). Additionally, the avoidance of illegal disposal and the enforcement of higher tax payments require strengthened institutional capacities to control and effectively punish, which can lead to additional regulatory costs higher than the overall benefits. This aspect was not included in the above research, but one may assume that the local authorities in Uganda and in the region have limited resources to operate such an effective system. An increase in the selling price of waste could strengthen the IS equations. This could be achieved through two

methods: subsidizing the price of waste materials or imposing taxes on virgin raw materials. The former option seems preferable as it directly encourages the use and reuse of waste materials, reducing their disposal. On the other hand, increased taxes on virgin raw materials could have a negative impact on industries that rely on these materials and do not have access to sufficient or regular amounts of waste materials.

Finally, this research applied the approach and tools of economics and the broader social sciences. Some insights from the natural sciences were included, but the examination of actual natural effects, such as decomposition, addition to nutritional value, and technological barriers, just to mention a few, will need interdisciplinary research.

6. Conclusion

Sub-Saharan Africa faces serious challenges in agricultural productivity and potential future industrial waste generation. To address these combined issues, this paper aimed to answer two research questions through the case study of Amelia Agro Africa Ltd. in Uganda: (RQ1) *“How can industrial and agricultural waste be utilized in Sub-Saharan Africa?”* and (RQ2) *“Why is industrial symbiosis worth it for participating companies?”* Data was collected via two research trips in 2021 and 2022 and through desk research.

To answer the first question, the research focused on the models of IFS and IS. Regarding IFS, the within-unit circularity of organic materials from seven animal species and several plant species was presented, as these elements are used as inputs for three different types of compost (windrow, vermin, liquid) and animal feed. For IS, the utilization of animal feed, compost input or organic pesticides of industrial waste or by-product materials coming from nine companies was analysed (such as rice husk, bagasse, animal blood, intestines, flesh off-cuts, fish remainings, boiler ash, brewery by-products, distillate spent wash and palm kernel expeller).

Regarding the second research question, the research applied an IS fitness condition equation to detect factors influencing the positive and negative costs of the companies supplying waste materials to the farm. These are landfilling costs, transportation costs to the landfill, storage costs, handling and pre-processing costs, waste selling price and transportation to the buyer. In line with IS literature, the main motivations of these supplier companies were additional revenue generation and savings on landfilling costs. On average, the most significant cost items were landfilling, followed by handling and pre-processing costs, while storage and transportation to landfills were less important. The waste selling price was minimal relative to the other cost items. One common point among the nine companies was that the farm solves and pays for the transportation of the given material in each case.

This paper is part of a larger research project and aims to inspire further scholarly work on the economic use of waste or by-product materials in Sub-Saharan Africa. To gain a deeper understanding of the potential facilitating or hindering factors of industrial symbiosis, we need many more similar case studies from various African countries, preferably in an interdisciplinary approach. Ideally, these studies should

include larger sample sizes to support the external validity of results and provide input for local policymaking and regulation.

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Note

- 1 According to the Ugandan Green Manufacturing Strategy, the local manufacturing sector comprises mainly manufacture of food products, beverages, tobacco products, textiles and clothing apparel, leather and eather products, wood and wood products, paper and paper products, chemicals and chemical products, pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemicals and botanical products, rubber and plastics products, basic metals and fabricated metal products, cement and bricks. The presented IS relationships in this paper cover nearly one-third of this portfolio.

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RETHINKING AFRO-ASIAN RELATIONS - ASSESSING TICAD 8 ON AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

PAMELA JEPTUM CHEMELIL

PHD STUDENT AT THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS,
INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS
CHEMELLIL@PTE.HU

Abstract

Africa has become a significant focus for many international partners, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to changes in how the continent engages with its partners. With numerous countries in Asia, external partners have made consistent efforts to establish their presence on the continent. Japan is one such Asian country that has sought to expand its influence in Africa, especially in response to China's significant presence on the continent. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected different sectors of the African economy; hence, there is a focus on creating future policies that allow resilience related to such pandemics and any unpredicted future global crises like the current one caused by the Ukrainian war. Similar to others, Japan is prepared to strengthen its engagements with African countries as they align their interests with Agenda 2063, differentiating them from China's debt approach. Despite Japan being in the region well before the COVID-19 pandemic, it continues to make efforts to increase its presence following the recent Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Tunisia. This has reaffirmed Japan's intentions and goals despite the competitive presence of China in the continent. This paper aims to analyse TICAD 8 and its consequences on African development. What promises has Japan made, and how will they lead to a developed Africa? How is Japan's approach to bringing development to Africa different from that of other Asian partners?

Keywords

African Development, The COVID-19 pandemic, Tokyo International Conference on African Development, Afro-Asian relations, Japan

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Introduction

Asia and Africa have a common history, with the Indian Ocean being a hub for trade and cultural exchange between the two continents. Historically, cultural exchanges between the continents were substantial, but colonialism disrupted this and in the mid-20th century, solidarity movements against colonialism led to closer ties culminating in the Bandung Conference in 1955 (Harsch, 2004). They presently face similar challenges and work together to find common solutions. Asia has been growing strong economically, and Africa is on a similar path. India has been involved in development cooperation in Africa through programs like the Pan Africa e-Network, which depends on its engagement with the continent (Puri, 2017). More partnerships are being forged by African countries and developing nations with several Asian business centres across Africa. They also contributed to resolving armed conflicts in Africa and participated in a significant portion of UN peacekeeping missions on the continent. Many African policymakers are concerned Western countries are adopting more insular policies and are looking towards alternative partners, particularly in Asia. The major Asian economies, including China, India, and Japan, are more assertive and have increased interest in Africa. This interest is evident in the series of summits held by these countries to strengthen ties with African nations (Gopaldas, 2018). Table 1 illustrates the key summits and their focuses.

The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), established by Japan in 1993, has significantly influenced other countries, including China, Russia, Turkey, the United States, the European Union, India, and Brazil, leading to similar summit meetings focused on Africa (Cornelissen, 2016). The influence between Japan and China goes both ways. China has influenced the conduct and outcomes of Japan's meetings, and vice versa. This influence is evident in changes such as the frequency and location of summits. For example, Japan used to hold summits every five years within Japan but has since adjusted the frequency and location to compete with The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Some underlying similarities include infrastructure development, which is similar in approach, the only difference being the concessional and non-concessional elements of aid, which is more pronounced in China's approach (Brautigam, 2009). TICAD has significantly influenced Japan's involvement in Africa. The initiative has elevated Japan's role by utilizing its aid capabilities and shaping the development agenda in line with its resource and security interests (Cornelissen, 2016).

Despite its agenda being different from that of its counterpart China in the past few years, Japan's desire to grow its international economy in Africa has been consistent. Both nations have strongly desired and committed to integrating Africa into the global economy by improving their domestic production capabilities. This move is not only economically motivated but is also seen by Africa as potential support in the international arena. A deeper examination reveals that economic interests do not solely drive Japan's involvement in Africa but also position Africa as a potential ally in the international arena (Tarrósy, 2012). Both countries recognize the importance of Africa, not only for its diplomatic, political, and economic significance in the

Feature	TICAD	FOCAC	KOAFEC	India-Africa Forum Summit
Inception Year	1993	2000	2006	2008
No of summits since inception	8	8	7	3
Primary Focus	Startup investments, green growth, human resource development, private sector, food assistance	Infrastructure, investment, trade, debt relief, renewable energy, food security	Industrialisation, Energy access and mineral security, trade, climate change, technology	Education and capacity building, trade, digital and physical infrastructure
Main Stakeholders	Japan - Japanese government and business community and JICA Africa - African Union, African leaders, and governments International Organisations - UN, World Bank Civil society organisations Partner countries Private companies	China - Chinese government and business entities Africa - African Union, African leaders and governments, Africa Development Bank	South Korea - Korean government communities Africa - African governments, African Development Bank Group Civil society representatives Business representatives Academic representatives	India - Indian businesses Africa - African Union, AU member states, African leaders, African businesses
Frequency	3 years (changed from every 5 years from 2013)	3 years	3 years	3 years (9 years gap since the last one in 2015)
Last summit	2022	2021	2024	2015
Attendance (Recent)	48 African countries	53 African countries	48 African countries	54 African countries
Financial Commitment (Recent)	US\$30 billion	US\$40 billion	US\$14 billion	US\$10 billion

 Table 1: Key Summits Between Major Asian Economies and African Nations. Sources of data: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, African Development Bank Group and Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

international system but also for building relationships with national elites to be used at multilateral levels (Cornelissen & Taylor, 2000). However, Japan's distinctiveness in its cooperation with Africa is seen in the private sector's role; it has established its presence in all 54 African countries. Japan harnesses innovation, entrepreneurship, and business creation through these firms, contributing to economic growth. The government's focus has shifted towards business rather than purely aid activities, striving to balance being donors and promoting their private companies in African markets (Tarrósy, 2014). It offers China an advantage, focusing more on infrastructure development (Atlantic Council, 2022). Japan distinguished itself from China by emphasising the quality of aid over quantity, by adhering to international standards, and through capacity building rather than importing their workers like China does (Pajon, 2022) but remains cautious, acting as an observer (Tarrósy, 2012) and open to alternative offers (Pajon, 2022).

The TICADs summit's agreements are implemented through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). JICA, under the authority of the Japanese government and in line with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs objectives, plays a critical role as the primary channel through which Japan provides support to African countries through the bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) program. By co-hosting these summits with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB) and the African Union Commission (AUC), JICA seeks to contribute to the fostering of cooperation with development partners in diverse fields to bolster development in developing countries (*TICAD 8 - Official Website* -, n.d.).

Over the years, JICA has maintained and deepened its engagement on the continent. Its role increased in 2008 after it merged with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), making it one of the largest bilateral aid institutions worldwide (*Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) – DCED*, n.d.). Since the merger, the institution has implemented development policies that focus on helping countries help themselves by taking responsibility and making efforts towards their development (Antil, 2017). Japan's continued efforts have been demonstrated through training African professionals to run their economies and contributing to financing both private and public sectors, amongst other pledges discussed in the preceding paragraphs. However, it may be debated if these efforts result from the Chinese actions through FOCAC (Nyabiage, 2022).

The next section of the paper will analyse the most recent Japan-Africa summit, TICAD 8, particularly examining its significance in the development process in the continent with its advocacy in upholding the principles of ownership and partnership. It has been nearly a year since the TICAD 8 summit, and studying its outcomes is important for its role in African development and its relations with Africa. By analysing these outcomes, African researchers can understand the areas that require improvements and how to explore opportunities for mutual benefits. Besides, it is crucial to analyse the new promises expected to drive development to verify their effectiveness in improving the lives of Africans. This analysis will address the fol-

lowing research questions: What pledges has Japan made at TICAD 8, and how do stakeholders think these promises will help make Africa a developed continent? Moreover, how does Japan's strategy for supporting African development differ from other Afro-Asian summits? How is TICAD perceived by African countries, and what are their responses to TICAD initiatives? By examining these inquiries, the paper seeks to pinpoint areas that require enhancement while concurrently investigating avenues for shared advantage.

Furthermore, the African voices need to be heard; their response towards the initiatives of TICAD is important. This will be crucial in knowing the anticipated direction of this relationship. It would be important to capture the beneficiaries' views, expectations, and experiences to ascertain whether these promises have been felt on the ground and if it is a good deal for the Africans. Looking at the actual groundwork will help develop more inclusive policies that meet Africa's needs in line with Agenda 2063 (Union, 2015). A one-year period is sufficient to assess the progress of the development works and tackle any challenges in implementing the TICAD 8 pledges, which could be handled more efficiently.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach

This section discusses the sources and the theoretical framework used for this study. This paper used secondary sources. The data was retrieved from recorded interviews, speeches, news TV channels, newspapers, web articles, reports from the media (both International and African media), officially published reports and articles, academic journals, and books. The recorded interviews include African development experts, academics, project beneficiaries, and ministerial officials. The officially published reports were retrieved from JICA annual reports and their respective websites, individual government documents, TICAD's final documents, ODA reports from OECD (Organisation for Economic-operation and Development), the African Development Bank (AfDB) reports, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) impact reports and its related websites. To understand the African voices on the ground, the recorded interviews conducted by the media were analysed, which gave a glimpse into the thoughts, impacts and experiences felt by the beneficiaries. The final TICAD documents and previous progress reports were examined and analysed to understand the development philosophy on the three key pillars that have been consistent in the past summits to give a picture of the past and ongoing projects as well as an analysis of any inconsistencies in the Japanese trend. The official reports from AfDB and OECD outlined the policies, financial allocation, and disbursements to specific projects on the field and their impacts reported on the UNDP reports. These data have made it possible to understand and see the attitudes, opinions, views, objectives, and interests towards Africa and vice versa.

The article uses international relations theory to explain Japan's involvement on the African continent. In his book, *Japan's Foreign Aid to Africa*, Raposo (2013) elaborates how Japan's foreign aid policy shifted after the Cold War, which has been evident since the beginning of the TICAD process, offering insights into Japan's pur-

suits in Africa. Realism easily explains these endeavours. When looking at history, the international system has influenced the organization of the summits as Japan seeks to protect its interests, as noted by Raposo (2013). Japan shows its relevance by entangling itself with African development as a natural resource supplier and its expansive market by increasing its diplomatic engagements, firstly, to gain as many resources as possible (Raposo, 2013).

The frequent visits to Africa by high-level Japanese officials and prioritising foreign aid and loans to the continent is a strategy for maintaining its leading force in African development (Tarrósy, 2014), considering the increasing number of counterparts sharing similar interests. The increased presence of China on the continent has provoked a simultaneous response from Japan, as observed by the increased ODA pledges through the TICAD summits. Japan has used this to differentiate itself from the West and bases conditionalities on “good governance,” while China uses a mercantilist approach to gaining African resources (Hughes, 2016). Realism has been a dominant aspect in the TICAD process. However, Takeuchi still believes that idealism is vital to these relations. This is because Japan has not exclusively pursued its interests intensively (Takeuchi, 2022).

TICAD 8: Japan’s Pledges

In a joint press release in July 2020, Japan announced that the next summit, TICAD 8, would be held in Tunisia in 2022 (World Bank, 2020b). This announcement was made when the COVID-19 pandemic had hit the world hard, and Africa was expecting devastating effects from the aftermath, given the vulnerability of its systems. Setting the groundwork for the main event, the event organisers held a high-level meeting, which signified its importance (UNDP, 2022b). Before this, the Japanese foreign minister, Yoshimasa Hayashi, had engaged in discussions with the delegates from fifty different African countries. During the meeting, he expressed his commitment to continue supporting Africa after raising his concerns about the vulnerabilities Africa was experiencing, especially after the pandemic, the Ukraine-Russian aggression, and the increasing dependency on China (Ford, 2022).

Tunisia hosted the TICAD 8 summit from 27–28 August 2022, where twenty presidents and prime ministers were in attendance along with 48 delegates among the 5,000 participants (*TICAD 8 - Official Website* -, n.d.). An online interview with the TICAD Ambassador, Jun Shinmi, conducted by the Japan Times, confirmed that the central theme will uphold the three pillars of the economy, societal resilience, peace and stability, and the principles of “ownership and partnership.” He also emphasised the importance of collaboration in the development journey and explored opportunities for dealing with the far-reaching impact of COVID-19 (The Japan Times, 2022).

During the event, the Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, who attended virtually, articulated his vision of a prosperous growth partnership with Africa and a focus on the people (JICA, 2022). What do Africans want? At the ministerial meeting, Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa, the Regional Director for Africa, expressed Africans’ concerns regarding the consequences of the Ukraine war on food insecurity, the

vulnerability of Africa to its dependence on raw materials for exportation, and its degradation to the environment. She also voiced her concerns about how these occurrences could potentially undermine democracy and peace and that partnership would be the only way to fix this predicament effectively (UNDP, 2022). Discussions with the participants affirmed the necessity of improving foreign investments through private sectors to tackle the digital landscape issues and promote the continent's blue and green economies. The potential for growth opportunities, diversified economies, and increased intra-Africa trade under the fully implemented African Continental Free Trade Area agreement was also emphasised (AfCFTA, 2023). Fragile healthcare systems and achieving universal health coverage, especially given population growth projections, were discussed at great length, as the pandemic demonstrated the urgent need to strengthen these systems to ensure resilience for future challenges.

The support extended during the COVID-19 era by availing vaccines to Africa, and the contributions to the COVAX facility were highly appreciated, showcasing the fulfilment of their pledges even post-COVID (Hanspal, 2022). The participants also highlighted the significance of peace and security, demonstrating their efforts to address root causes and their impacts on development. The importance of democracy and the rule of law in fostering a stable and conducive environment for progress was emphasised (African Union, 2022). African countries prioritise economic transformation and conflict resolution guided by Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns 2030. During TICAD 7, Japan committed to supporting conflict resolution in specific regions, which is essential for development. The participants acknowledged the significance of preventing unclear debt financing from impeding development and emphasized the importance of global solidarity in addressing global issues such as pandemics and climate change. As a result, the continent is expected to embrace this partnership, and Japan's financial support is crucial for managing debts and infrastructure, leveraging its influence in the Group of Seven (G7). According to Nantulya (2022), Japanese companies should boost investments by enhancing value addition to enrich the quality of African exports. This could also be achieved by capitalising on JICA's strength, building on human resource development and technology transfer, and creating a conducive environment.

The Japanese government pledged \$30 billion USD in the next three years for both public and private investment to boost the development of human security, food security, debt management, and green growth (MOFA Japan, 2022). This was a bold step considering no amount was promised by the late Prime Minister Shinzō Abe during TICAD 7. Making this commitment displays its dedication and relevance,

The frequent visits to Africa by high-level Japanese officials and prioritising foreign aid and loans to the continent is a strategy for maintaining its leading force in African development.

highlighting the difference in China's practices in the region (Pajon, 2022). At the plenary sessions, Kishida announced its commitment to support Africa's resilient economy after the impacts it had after the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Ukraine-Russian aggression. He emphasised the importance of having quality livelihoods by focusing on health, education, and the environment to ensure steady growth. Lastly, he pledged to support Japan in promoting the rule of law by building institutions to achieve democracy and improve community infrastructure.

This enables Japan to emphasise its relevance in partnership and make the most of its strengths in human development and human security amidst the food crisis resulting from the Ukraine war, climate change, and the aftermath of the pandemic (Pajon, 2022). This reiterated the commitment to boosting private business, aligning with the African Union's 2063 development agenda (Morreale, 2022). Japan reiterated this after Foreign Minister Hayashi outlined it in a previous event before TICAD 8, the Second Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum held in Nairobi (METI, 2022). Japan also promised to bolster training amongst Africans across different professions to support the needs of the future (JICA, 2022).

The summit led to the adoption of the Tunis Declaration, which focuses on the themes of economy, societal resilience, and peace and stability (United Nations, 2023). It was also determined during the ministerial meeting that strengthening international collaboration is crucial to support development, especially in recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 (UNDP, 2022b). The pandemic has led to a recession in Africa, halting the continent's consistent development progress over the past 25 years (World Bank, 2020a) and causing approximately 38.7 million Africans to fall into poverty in 2020-2021, likely increasing inequality levels (AfDB, 2021). Japan aimed to differentiate itself from China and position itself as a key partner in Africa (Atlantic Council, 2022). Kishida pledged to advocate for a permanent African seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Al Jazeera, 2022).

From Promises to Impact on the Ground

The African Centre hosted a subsequent conversation in October 2022, a month after the TICAD 8 summit, discussing the importance of Africa to Japan and its initiatives on the continent. In attendance was the Ambassador of Japan to the United States, H.E. Amb. Koji Tomita, who reiterated that Japan continued to support Africa's recovery post-pandemic. The Ambassador of Tunisia to the US, H.E. Amb. Hanène Tajouri Bessassi reiterated three key pillars discussed at TICAD 8, and the TICAD general presented TICAD's ongoing initiatives in Africa. Recent developments were highlighted by the African centre fellow Hannah Ryder, who expressed her dissatisfaction with the pledged amount of \$30 billion USD, saying it is important but only a small proportion of what Africa needs (Mittrick, 2022).

In Zimbabwe, JICA increased the number of volunteers from Japan after the decline in numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, these participants have made a difference in the host institutions. These institutions do not need to pay for their services, and they still contribute to development in such countries by trans-

ferring skills and experiences (Njanjangezi, 2023). The Ministry of Agriculture and JICA promotes capacity building in Swaziland and other countries. The recent training sessions were conducted in June 2023, during which participants developed agricultural action plans to empower farmers to increase their yields (PAEPARD, 2023).

Considering the improvement of environmental conditions, the UN World Water Development Report (United Nations, 2023), published in March 2023, demonstrates the partnership between UNDP and JICA in improving water supply and sanitation in Africa. Through this partnership, JICA supports capacity building and infrastructure projects using primarily local resources. This enables the improvement of water quality in both rural and urban areas, focusing on affordability, better maintenance, and the promotion of hygiene education and practices. Meanwhile, the UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre (ABC) is currently focused on developing groundwater resources in pastoral regions of East Africa. This effort is in response to the significant impact of climate change on rainfall patterns, which has affected food security in the region (UNDP, 2023a).

In April 2023, Japan took an important step in supporting the private sector by signing a \$350 million USD agreement with the African Development Bank (AfDB) through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This marks the eighth non-sovereign loan agreement under Japan's Enhanced Private Sector Assistance for Africa (EPSA). The aim is to contribute to economic growth and poverty alleviation in Africa. Japan will collaborate with the AfDB to address these issues using the private sector (AfDB, 2023).

JICA co-hosted the second Dakar Financing Summit for Africa to foster infrastructure development. This event supports African infrastructure development by the African Union Commission (AUC) in partnership with other development partners that depend on resources for its success. In February 2023, JICA participated in co-organising this summit and was in partnership with AUDA-NEPAD in the collection of data to devise a report that highlights achievements over the past years and addresses potential future challenges during the implementation of the African-led projects (JICA, 2023b).

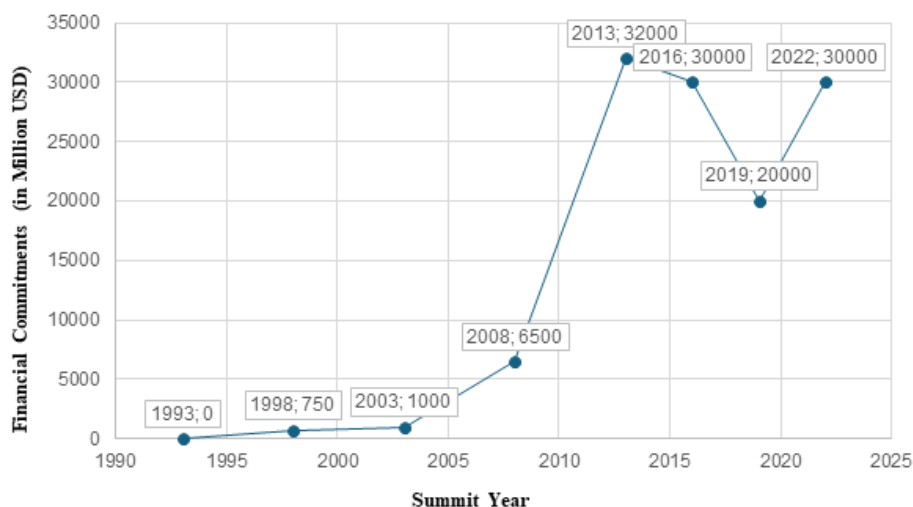
In June 2023, the JICA provided 6.8 billion JPY as a grant for Ghana's Assin Praso-Assin Fosu road project. This project involves the rehabilitation of the road and the reconstruction of drainage structures along the route. These improvements will significantly enhance water management and transportation for commuters in the region and neighbouring countries (The Ghanaian Standard, 2023).

To realise the development of a digitised Africa in 2025, JICA signed a four-party Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with parties in Ethiopia in July 2023. The main objective of this collaboration is to develop digital infrastructure and systems, strengthen e-government services, promote digital transformation in all sectors and capacity building to digital professionals in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 (Union, 2015), which will contribute to the overall socio-economic growth in Ethiopia and Africa as a whole (JICA, 2023d).

In March 2023, the Egyptian parliament signed an agreement between JICA and the Government of Egypt to offer a loan for Egypt's Universal Health Insurance System (UHIS) amounting to 44 billion yen. This comprehensive system provides broad coverage of health services to expand its reach (The North Africa Post, 2023). In Djibouti, JICA and the government signed an agreement on May 2023, providing grant aid of 590 million yen for a project that will improve medical equipment in the medical facilities across the city. Considering 72% of the population in Djibouti lives in the urban centres (Worldometer, 2023), this project will serve an important role in availing medical services, which will contribute to SDG 3 and Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 of good health and well-being and the promotion of universal health coverage (JICA, 2023c).

The preceding initiatives show evidence of the projects that have been ongoing on the ground, which have had a profound impact on the lives of people since TICAD 8. In an attempt to give a comprehensive perspective, various regions of Africa have been showcased, spanning from east to west and north to south, illustrating the widespread presence of Japan's support across the continent. It is crucial to note that these initiatives represent only a portion of the ongoing engagements but provide insight into fulfilling their promises. Progress may take time, but these strides give hope for a better future.

Graph 1 indicates the financial commitment made by the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) from its inception in 1993 to 2022. The commitments are shown in millions of USD for each TICAD conference year. The significant increase in commitments over the years highlights Japan's growing investment in African development, but there has been a notable decline since 2013. This can be attributed to economic conditions and global aid competition, such as



Graph 1: TICAD Financial commitments (1993-2022). Data sources: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The Diplomat

the growing influence of other major players like China through its Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

African voices from the Japanese initiatives

Conventionally, Africa's perspective in Japan has been that of a reliable partner, unlike other global partners' involvement in African development, and Japan has tried to differentiate its approach. Their approach has not involved using big infrastructure projects or opaque tactics; however, Japan has been taking small steps to ensure it is efficient and effective. However, despite this move, Africans have different perspectives on their experiences of Japanese initiatives.

Ethiopia's prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, stated that despite Japan's long-term positive engagement, it still falls short of the new players on the continent (African Business, 2016). African scholars such as Jean-Claude Maswana, a professor at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, believe phasing out of the TICAD process will bolster connections between African and Japanese businesses and professionals; he goes on to argue that economic transformation drives business and not development aid (Fabricius, 2022).

In an interview with Scarlett Cornelissen regarding infrastructure development and TICAD 8 pledges, she expressed concerns about the available funds to support these initiatives. She emphasised the importance of conducting impact assessments to measure the impact of such projects. Reflecting on TICAD 7, she highlighted that thousands of people received healthcare training, demonstrating the TICAD initiatives' positive implications. Although she noted that achieving impact takes time, she recognised that TICAD 8 is taking steps for the future. Cornelissen further pointed out that Japan is different from other donors in that it focuses on improving people's lives through education and healthcare. She stressed the importance of building diplomatic partnerships between Japan and Africa based on mutual trust, respect, and consultation with the African nations and regional partners. She believes such an approach will go a long way in pursuing common interests, especially in the changing geopolitical environment (Cornelissen, 2023).

Mitsugi Endo from the University of Tokyo said it has been challenging to understand Japan's intentions, unlike China, whose objectives are clear from the get-go (Ninivaggi, 2023). The president of Afdb, Keizai Doyukai, praised Japan's efforts in venture capital investment and stressed the importance of understanding markets, being present on the ground, and gathering information to make sound investments. (Ninivaggi, 2023).

In an interview with Ambassador Fayza Aboulnaga, the National Security Advisor to the President of Egypt, she highlighted the positive impact of the Egypt-Japan Education Partnership (EJEP), which has transformed student behaviour. She also mentioned that the success of this partnership has resulted in its implementation in other schools across Egypt and has garnered support from educators, parents, and communities, leading to the expansion of schools in various parts of the country because of its positive impact and successful partnership (JICA, 2023a).

In a speech, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Samia Suluhu Hassan, said that TICAD has played a huge role in fighting Malaria, Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and Tuberculosis. She stated that partnerships with Japanese companies have saved lives, promoted economic development, and built resilient structures for unpredicted events (The Global Fund, 2023).

African leaders have viewed TICAD positively; for example, H.E. Mr. Takeshi Osuga, during the 11th African Conference on Sexual Health and Rights (ACSHR), highlighted Japan's role in advancing key development priorities in addressing pressing health challenges. His remarks emphasized the incorporation of the TICAD 8 summit outcomes, showcasing Japan's commitment to its collaborative approach and the importance of partnership in contributing to positive development outcomes (IPPF, 2024).

According to African panelists at the TICAD 30th Anniversary Event in August 2023, there was recognition that Japan needs to leverage TICAD to expand its economic activities onto African markets due to the diverse forms of African businesses. They stressed the need to support infrastructure development for effective matchmaking between African and Japanese companies. Overall, they saw TICAD as a driver for promoting mutual growth and economic partnership while acknowledging the need to accelerate relevant measures (MOFA, 2023).

During the TICAD 8 side event, Ms Ahunna Eziakonswa further highlighted the need for concerted efforts in Africa's emerging complex challenges while acknowledging JICA for their commitment to recover from the recent global shocks (UNDP, 2022a). Other stakeholders on the ground, such as Ayoub Mkhantar, Besma Hadj Kacem, and Yosr Ghazzi, have been beneficiaries of the innovation and scientific research in Africa following TICAD 8. This enabled the African youth to showcase their talents and entrepreneurial skills; through their inclusion, they emphasized the significance of such projects, underscoring the importance of TICAD initiatives in the African development agenda (AfDB, 2022).

In the parallel convening sessions, Mr Malek Ezzahi and Mr Ali Mrabet, the Ministers of Social Affairs and Health, respectively, had positive perceptions of TICAD 8. They both emphasized the significance of the conference, especially convening it in Tunisia as an Arab country, which reflected trust. They highlighted the importance of trilateral cooperation particularly in promoting the integration of vulnerable groups and advancing the health sector (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2022). During the discussions, the role of the next generation of leaders and professionals in Africa at the TICAD Advocacy Dialogue Series held in 2023 was discussed. There were needs arising to nurture future successful leaders, as articulated by Ms Delphine Mukahirwa, who stressed the importance of mentorship and addressing the negative perceptions of the continent. The collective views expressed during the dialogue highlighted that TICAD 9 should serve as a platform for African youth empowerment in the future (UNDP, 2023c).

Ampiah also noted that despite the declarations on ownership and inclusiveness by Africans in the development agenda, many of the grants were returned to Japan.

This has been observed through procuring materials from Japan and getting their consultants for projects, leading to designing and devising these projects with Japanese companies. Therefore, only the Japanese companies gain from these projects, depriving the local companies of the benefits of these grants (Ampiah, 2005).

According to research (Antil, 2017), JICA has a wide range of experts and academics in research, humanities, and agriculture. However, they lack knowledge of the regions in Western and Central Africa, especially in the French-speaking countries, and they also lack Japanese professionals with the language skills required to work in these areas. Additionally, it is important to understand the political climate of most African states to anticipate any changes in fiscal policies.

The sentiments above highlight direct encounters with Japanese partners. It is not an exhaustive compilation of the on-the-ground impacts; however, most of the individuals appear to favour Japanese initiatives regarding their experiences. In contrast to the large infrastructural projects offered as aid or loans, Japan's initiatives evoke appreciation and leave a mark on the lives of the people they touch.

Conclusion

The dynamics of TICAD have been changing over the years, particularly evident in the most recent summit, TICAD 8. Its scope has broadened beyond its initial interests; it is more thoughtful of African demands, especially with its firm involvement in building human security, and this approach sets it apart from its competitors. The analysis shows that Japan has significantly contributed to Africa through TICAD by implementing development projects, providing capacity building, and aiding in finance for peace and security matters. However, there is little information on its direct involvement in peace and security projects despite its insistence on peace to achieve development. African governments should also prioritise their agenda more by learning from the actions of Africa-China working groups before FOCAC8. Japan's potential as one of the largest technology infrastructures could be leveraged by African governments exploring their young population, which can contribute to these infrastructures by increasing investments to boost digital infrastructure globally. Japan is a significant player in Africa and has an ambitious blueprint for the continent. However, the policies originating from Japan lack African expertise, which limits the realization of their full potential. Reflecting on Japan's commitments at TICAD 8, it shows a thorough plan to support Africa's development by addressing immediate needs and fostering long-term resilience. Japan presents itself as an important partner in Africa's journey towards development by emphasising sustainable growth, high-quality investment, and democratic governance. This aligns with the objectives of Agenda 2063 and fosters mutually beneficial cooperation. Japan's strategy through TICAD emphasises sustainable development, human resource development, and broad stakeholder engagement in contrast to other summits that emphasise large-scale infrastructure projects and direct financial commitments, positioning itself as a trustworthy partner. In terms of African perception of TICAD 8, African countries have viewed it positively and value the quality investment and

sustainable development but they also call for a more inclusive and transparent procedure to get the most out of these programs.

Africa has allowed Japan to offer its strategies as a non-Western country. Its involvement brings diversity and competition to the region, setting it apart from its competitors and making its contributions more impactful to the developments in Africa. Priorities should be a joint effort designed by professionals who support implementation for individual countries and flexible experiences tailored to Africa. TICAD 8 has reaffirmed Japan's commitment to the continent, aiming to ensure its approach promotes African needs. To conclude, the future of the Japanese and African partnership is uncertain, but the TICAD 8 outcomes show signs of hope and promising developments. The upcoming TICAD 9 summit set for 2025 reflects an evolving partnership between Japan and Africa with key elements on Japan's plan to leverage ODA Investments on infrastructure, increase public-private financing, and develop an Indo-Pacific network providing a strategic alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (East Asia Forum, 2023).

Future TICAD research could focus on evaluating the long-term impacts of TICAD initiatives on African development, which would provide insights into improving sustainable development outcomes. Additionally, investigating Japan's direct involvement in peace and security projects would provide an understanding of how to foster stability and resilience in Africa.

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CHEETAH CONSERVATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA – NOTES AND THOUGHTS IN THE LIGHT OF FIELD EXPERIENCES

BALÁZS BALOGH

MSC GEOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

JAZZ MUSICIAN, CONSERVATIONIST

BALAYSKA@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

The future of many of the emblematic species of the African continent is facing enormous challenges in our modern, tumultuous world. Yet, there is a growing number of conservation participants whose perseverance and dedication show an excellent example for the coming generations. This article intends to present the cheetah as a flagship species of the African landscape, to provide a general overview of its conservation, and to introduce the work of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), the major organization committed to protecting the species. It aims to do so based on personal field experiences in CCF's facility in Somaliland, putting the conservation effort in the political-economic context of the Horn of Africa.

Keywords

cheetah; conservation; Somaliland; Hargeisa; CCF

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Introduction - About the cheetah

Predators in the African wilderness play a crucial role in regulating the ecosystem by controlling the number of herbivores. As they are at the top of the food chain, they are sensitive to environmental changes and serve as good indicators of overall ecosystem health. Among all predators, the cheetah is perhaps the most delicate. With its slender and light body, long legs, non-retractable claws and small head, it is designed for short bursts of high-speed chases on the open plains, which makes it perfectly suitable to occupy a niche, albeit at the very end of the predator-hierarchy. The same characteristics that make the cheetah so attractive, elegant, and a successful hunter also make it highly vulnerable not only to other predators such as lions, spotted hyenas, and leopards, but to larger prey species as well. The tusk of a warthog or a kick from a zebra during a hunt can cause serious, sometimes even fatal injuries. Cheetah numbers vary in the wild according to available suitable environments, prey animal density, and lion population sizes. The cheetah faces many challenges, including habitat loss, hunting, persecution, and illegal wildlife trafficking. Its population has continuously declined, with over 90% of its historic range lost and only around 7,000 individuals remaining in the African savannahs (Durant et al., 2017). Additionally, there is a small and fragile population of Asiatic cheetahs in Central Iran. Due to these factors, the IUCN classifies cheetahs as vulnerable.

As commonly known, the cheetah is a member of the order Carnivora, whose ancestors can be traced back to the Miacids (genet-like small mammals) in the early Paleocene era. This group soon split into the known sub-orders of Caniformia and Feliformia, the latter having given birth to the true cats to which the cheetah belongs. It is, at present day, the only existing predator that is specialized for sprinting. Still, its skillset is not without precedent in the evolutionary history of the felids: according to fossil findings, the striking resemblance of the skull of the *Dinaelurus* led experts to think that this species that emerged approximately 30 million years ago – though not a member of the cat family, but the extinct branch of the *Nimravidae* – may have been a “proto-cheetah” with very similar physical features. The global trend of gradual cooling and the opening-up of closed habitats in the late Miocene and Pliocene eras may have helped give rise to a predator more adapted to a cursorial lifestyle. The modern cheetah appeared approximately 1,9 million years ago, and its fossils are restricted to East Africa (Van Valkenburgh, 2018). Still, there were multiple cheetah species present across the globe at the time: the giant European cheetah (*Acynonix pardinensis*) weighed almost twice as much as its present-day counterpart, and the North American *Miracynonix* retained the ability of fully retracting claws from their common *Pseudaelurus* ancestors (Adams, 1979). It survived up until the dawn of the Holocene era. This animal may be important for understanding the seemingly surprising results of molecular analyses that group the cheetah in close relation with the puma (*Puma concolor*) and the jaguarundi (*Puma yagouarundi*) - providing an argument for the possible American origin of the present-day cheetah (Hunter, 2007). The wave of extinction in the late Pleistocene era that washed away the European and American megafauna, including the European cheetah and the

Miracynonix, resulted in a genetic bottleneck on the sole surviving cheetah species, causing increased genetic fragility and elevated level of exposure to the detrimental effects of diseases (Menotti-Raymond, 1993).

The cheetah's historical range spread over the African continent (except for the Congo Basin and the Sahara Desert) and stretched from the Arabian Peninsula to Eastern India. They were easily tamed and showed little aggression towards humans. Because of these traits, combined with their speed and effectiveness as predators, they became ideal hunting companions. Ancient Egyptians tamed and used cheetahs for hunting and as pets. This practice was popular among noblemen from Genoa and Venice, the Middle East, and China (Allsen, 2006). The tradition pinnacled in 16-17th century India, where cheetahs and caracals were used for hunting, and Akbar, the ruler of the Mughal Empire, is said to have kept over a thousand cheetahs at a time. He had nearly 40,000 "khasa" for coursing during his half-a-century reign. To keep their "sharp" hunting skills, they were not bred but were continuously taken "fresh" from the wild instead; the constant removal of individuals in such large numbers was a contributing factor to the decline of the species in the Deccan (O'Brien, 1986).

Large-scale human persecution of wildlife – including the cheetah and other cats – on the African continent started as a result of the shift from a traditional lifestyle to an agricultural one, which was magnified under European colonial rule (Schreber, 1775). Even in protected areas, such as national parks (the first of them being the Kruger in the 1890s), large carnivores were heavily persecuted as vermins that threaten protected game (Linnell et al., 2001; Woodroff & Ginsberg, 1997). In addition, the demand for the supply of animals for zoos put pressure on cheetah populations due to their poor breeding success in captivity (Marker-Kraus et al., 1996). It wasn't until the 1970s when the first efforts of cheetah conservation took place, following the results of the studies on wild cheetahs published by George Schaller (Schaller, 1968), Randal Eaton (Eaton, 1974), and Norman Myers, who had already voiced his concerns over the exponential growth of human population in Africa, and the gravity of human-wildlife conflicts resulting from it (Myers, 1975). The cheetahs threatened livestock, so farmers trapped and killed them whenever possible. To protect cheetahs captured in these conflicts, Pretoria Zoo, in partnership with Anna Van Dyk, created the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Center in 1971, which later became one of the most successful breeding centers for the species (Marker-Kraus, 1990). IUCN's CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) in 1975 prohibited sourcing cheetahs from the wild for zoo exhibits; as a consequence, zoos started to pay more attention to breeding programs, promoting conservation and educating the public. Safari parks were established in the United States and strived to provide more suitable, better environments for captive cheetahs, thus increasing their lifespan, quality of life, and breeding success. In the 1980s, genetic research discovered the loss of gene diver-

It wasn't until the 1970s when the first efforts of cheetah conservation took place.



sity – due to the infamous ”bottleneck” – in the cheetah (O’Brien et al., 1983), and a species survival plan (SSP) was developed by the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Meanwhile, studies of wild cheetahs continued in Africa, conducted by Tim Caro, David Drummond, and others. Throughout the next two decades, several states native to the cheetah started to pay more attention to the conservation of the species - Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Botswana introduced projects or conservation programs dedicated to the cause (Marker et al., 1998). NGOs were established that have been relentlessly fighting for the survival of this emblematic animal: the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) was born in 2001, the Cheetah Outreach near Cape Town in 1997, yet the forerunner to all was the Cheetah Conservation Fund established in 1990 by Dr. Laurie Marker in Namibia, a country that had just proclaimed its independence from South Africa.

Cheetah Conservation Fund

CCF is now one of the world’s longest-running conservation NGOs, whose goal has been to tackle issues that threaten the survival of the cheetah, raise awareness worldwide of these issues, develop tools to help mitigate human-wildlife conflicts in the cheetah range, educate local communities and the general public about conservation, contribute to genetic research, fight illegal pet trade, and provide care for cheetahs rescued from wildlife trafficking.

With an extended network of affiliates worldwide (Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, UK, US), its primary field headquarters are situated on the opposite ends of the African continent – Namibia and Somaliland, respectively. Both centers focus on different tasks according to the specific issues in and around their locations. The Conservation Center in Namibia was established adjacent to

the Waterberg Plateau Park, a national park in the central part of the country. Here, their programs are focused mainly on human-wildlife conflict and habitat loss. The organization tries to help rural communities gain solutions that benefit all parties – farmers, domestic animals, and wildlife. It is essential because livestock and game farmers halved the cheetah population of Namibia in the 1980s, in a country that still serves as a stronghold for free-roaming cheetahs due to its low density of people and vast unfenced semi-arid areas. Since 1994, CCF has been breeding livestock guard dogs – Anatolian shepherds – at their model farm to help local farmers protect their herds and improve their attitude towards predators by reducing preventive or retaliatory killings (Rust, et al., 2013). The program has proven successful, reducing livestock loss to predators by up to 90% (Marker, et al. 2021).

The model farm focuses on researching and promoting predator-friendly livestock and wildlife programs. It includes a creamery producing goat cheese from goats guarded by the facility's guard dogs. Additionally, there is a Biomass Technology Demonstration Center on-site. The complex is known for its research center, veterinary clinic, and Africa's only in situ genetics laboratory at a conservation facility. This laboratory plays a crucial role in understanding cheetah gene flow and geographical patterns of genetic variation. The research at CCF covers a wide range of activities, including studies on cheetah populations and densities, other carnivores such as caracal and brown hyena, as well as large herbivores like elephants, black rhinos, and buffalo. The research also involves international collaborations, disease studies on babesia and amyloidosis, illegal wildlife trade, and scat analyses using scat detection dogs to locate cheetah scat in the field.

To fulfill as many of the goals of CCF's mission as possible, an education center and a cheetah museum are open to visits from students and school groups; moreover, the organization's facilities provide specially designed programs for youth officials, teachers, health officials and farmers.

The Cheetah Conservation Fund and Dr. Marker have been reaching out from Namibia to cooperate with conservation organizations in other countries covering the cheetah range, such as Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Iran, and even India, where a plan has been formed with the help of the Wildlife Trust of India and the government to reintroduce the cheetah to certain protected areas of its former range.

CCF in Somaliland

CCF's second African facility in Somaliland has to face quite a different political-economic environment and tackle issues accordingly.

The Horn of Africa has been a turbulent region throughout modern history (Molnár, 2014; Marsai, 2016; Marsai & Tarrósy, 2022). Muslim kingdoms were already established in the early Islamic period (Lewis, 1955), and independent sultanates controlled the area of modern-day Somalia until the arrival of European colonizers. One of them, the Isaaq Sultanate, was established by a clan of the same name, and the Isaaq is still the dominant clan of Somaliland, making up 80% of its population (Wiafe-Amoako, 2018). Being a challenging environment, a rough and bare desert,

the region did not raise much European interest for a long time. It was only after the Berlin Conference in 1884 that European powers felt entitled to colonize the region, just like the whole of Africa, on a 'first come, first serve' basis. The British, expanding from their ports across the Red Sea, established the British Protectorate in the north, while Italy took hold of the southern territories (Ledesma, 2020). France was marginally present in the region as well, controlling Djibouti. The very different approaches of the colonizers to managing colonial administration and the conflict between the idea of 'statehood' and the loose, clan-based understanding of kinship, territory, and culture of the Somali people led to (not so) invisible divisions that are felt today. They made it extremely difficult after the formal withdrawal of the Europeans to maintain a united Somali state. The first half of the twentieth century saw numerous bloody conflicts in the region, from the Dervish Wars through the East African Campaign of the Second World War to Sheikh Bashir's rebellion (Jama, 1996). The wave of independence of African nations in 1960 brought along the merging of the Trust Territory of Somaliland and British Somaliland (more precisely, the 5-day-old State of Somaliland) to form the independent Somali Republic. After a few relatively peaceful years, Mohammed Siyad Barre took power through a coup d'état and held on to it for 22 years. Gerard Prunier describes in his book 'The Country That Does Not Exist – A History of Somaliland' the social-political-ideological context of the conflict between the general and the Isaaq clan of Somaliland due to the targeted persecution of the latter (Jeng, 2012), which led to a bloody civil war culminating in the „Isaaq genocide,” also known as the „Hargeisa Holocaust” between 1987-1989 (Igiriis, 2016), which claimed tens of thousands of lives. After



Somaliland self-declared its independence from Somalia in 1991, armed conflicts still flared up between the two sides throughout the decade. Still, the northwestern territory avoided being caught up in extreme Islamist insurgencies and managed to create a relatively stable socio-political background for – as stated in its constitution – a presidential republic and multi-party democracy. The international community does not recognize its sovereignty, but – and this is where we connect to the topic of this article – with foreign investment flowing into the country, and due to Somaliland's willingness to seek international relations and cooperate with civil organizations, allowed CCF to settle in the relatively safe side of the Horn of Africa, and deepen the collaboration with the government regarding conservation tasks.

The relationship with its southern border state is still heavily conflicted to this day. In January 2024, Somaliland leased a 20 km long coastline to Ethiopia in exchange for an expected recognition of statehood, which upset the Somali government and further deteriorated the relationship between the sides involved.

Forming the north-northwestern part of Somalia, Somaliland has a long coastline along the Gulf of Aden, near the Bab-al-Mandab strait, which has long served as a major trade hub between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Connecting the interior of the Horn of Africa with the Arabian Peninsula, the ports of Somaliland, such as Berbera, lie on a "popular" smuggling route that is used for trafficking wildlife, where the demand for exotic pets in the Middle East meets with extreme poverty in the source country.

Each year, the number of cheetah cubs taken from the wild is still around 300. Between 2010 and 2019, nearly 500 cubs were taken from Northeast Africa and sold across the Gulf of Aden according to Schmidt-Künzel et al. (2023), which indicates a significant issue. Moreover, the number of adult cheetahs capable of reproducing in the region is estimated to be no more than 500, making the situation even more concerning. The same study, based on extensive data collection, reveals that most of the sellers are indeed from the Arabian Peninsula, and most of the advertisements for pet cheetahs land on popular social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook.

When the cubs are separated from their mother at a young age (6-10 weeks), they are extremely vulnerable and not cared for properly during the journey. As a result, 3 out of 4 cubs do not survive, and the majority of those who do will not live longer than two years.

The cheetah has four subspecies: the nominate *Acynonix jubatus jubatus*, populating Southern Africa; the Asiatic cheetah (*A. j. venaticus*); the Northwest African cheetah, *A. j. hecki*, which occurs in Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger; and the smaller Northeast African subspecies (*A. j. soemmeringii*) that lives in fragmented habitats from South Sudan to Ethiopia. Genetic analysis of confiscated cubs in Somaliland showed that they all belong to the latter (*A. j. soemmeringii*), so it is not exaggerating to say that trafficking poses a serious threat to the subspecies' very survival (Tricorache et al., 2021).

The CCF in Somaliland has been working collaboratively with the government of Somaliland since 2018 to combat the illegal trafficking of cheetahs. The aim of the project is severalfold: to preserve cheetah habitat and biodiversity, disrupt trafficking networks, increase law enforcement capacity in Somaliland, and give the best possible care for the cheetah cubs confiscated by the government.

I joined the team of CCF's Somaliland facility to contribute to the latter, having had the good fortune of spending three months with a group of seven cubs, gaining insight into the dedicated work of staff and animal keepers alike.

My plane landed early on Christmas Eve at the Hargeisa airport. Xamse, the tireless operations manager, was waiting for me as I stepped into the worn-down room kindly dubbed „arrival hall.” He led me to a land cruiser with an SPU unit in it – a Special Protection Unit assigned to accompany any foreigners. We were not permitted to leave the camp without a rifle guard. We travelled out of the city on wide sand and dirt tracks designated as the main road to CCF's new facility. Only later did I have the chance to drive through Hargeisa in daylight to experience its ambiguity first-hand. The capital of Somaliland is a sprawling city with over a million inhabitants, located in an enclosed valley of the Ogo highlands at 1,334 meters above sea level. Despite its significance, the city displays many characteristics of a third-world semi-rural environment. It has dirt roads running through slum-like districts and more decent-looking streets with simple but characteristic architecture typical of a generally poor Islamic country. Minarets tower over the skyline, while second-hand cars imported from Japan and Dubai crowd the dusty roads. The city's urbanized terrain is minimal compared to its size, as it sits – using David Kilcullen's words – at the core of a vast social, political and economic ecosystem, which includes the city's diaspora living in Europe, North America, Australia, the Gulf States, and elsewhere (Kilcullen, 2019). Somalilanders abroad who have access to better jobs, education, and higher social status contribute significantly, despite not being physically present, to the human and communication networks and financial flows centered in the city. This is an aspect that may help the observer understand the duality of Hargeisa. In the era of the modern information society, with easier access to air travel, money transfer, smartphones, and the internet, the ties between the diaspora and the hinterland at home could be pulled tighter, stimulating modernization and economic growth. In contrast, the fabric of the society of Somaliland – both in the city and outside of it – is deeply embedded in its tribal roots. Nomadic pastoralism is the traditional lifestyle defining Somali trade and culture, and live animal trade to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States is the country's only significant export. The four noble clans of the ethnic Somali region are all pastoralists who control the trade of camels herded through the desert following rainfall patterns – the Somali way of life is still closely tied to the prestige of camel and clan (Kilcullen, 2019) – as Ioan Lewis writes: "nomads are not cut off from the life of urban centres or culturally and socially separated from the majority of urban residents ... from the President downwards, at all levels of government and administration, those living with a modern lifestyle in urban conditions have brothers and cousins living as nomads in the interior and regularly

have shares in joint livestock herds” (Lewis, 2008). Since markets are in the city, herds of camels are frequently seen in everyday traffic. On my way to the airport in the early morning, we patiently waited at a crossing while a herd of 50 camels had the right of way heading downtown.

The two-faced nature of Hargeisa is further apparent through its insufficient urban infrastructure. The private, largely informal economy – in no small part due to the remittances sent home from abroad – is thriving, but the public sector is lagging behind. There are few decent tarmac roads, even downtown, and vehicles must navigate mostly on gravel or dirt. These roads are sometimes paved by well-constructed, camera-protected houses or businesses that further highlight the contrast. Needless to say, the quality of the roads can cause significant economic loss as well through the time and effort needed for transportation.

Situated in an arid area without decent rivers or lakes around, limited water access is a major issue that puts enormous pressure on Hargeisa’s dense and growing urban population. Only a small minority of households have access to running water in the city’s heart; most people purchase it from donkey-drawn water carts that roam the streets all day. The amount of time urban residents have to spend on basic tasks such as hauling water or supplying household generators with petrol or diesel naturally burdens economic productivity and urbanization (Kilcullen, 2019).

In 2018, CCF established three safe houses within the city of Hargeisa for rescued animals and international staff. However, by the summer of 2023, a new, spacious facility was completed in Geed Deeble, located at an hour’s drive from the capital. The site covers 800 hectares within a protected area of acacia thorn-scrub vegetation. The location sits on weak, rocky soil with a granite base rock underneath, where the government plans to establish the country’s first national park. Here, away from the city noise, cheetahs now have the opportunity to live in large enclosures within a naturalistic environment, surrounded by wildlife such as spotted hyena, black-backed jackal, dik-dik, Hamadryas baboon, scrub hare, spurred tortoise, a wide variety of birds, and more. That is where we were heading.

The camp was comfortable, with friendly-looking houses and a kitchen plus dining room over-looking a vast plain of acacia bush and cheetah enclosures. I quickly learned about the tough realities of the job the very first morning, as a truck drove

The two-faced nature of Hargeisa is further apparent through its insufficient urban infrastructure. The private, largely informal economy – in no small part due to the remittances sent home from abroad – is thriving, but the public sector is lagging behind. There are few decent tarmac roads, even downtown, and vehicles must navigate mostly on gravel or dirt.



in at 6 a.m. with the weekly delivery of 80-90 goat carcasses for the cheetahs. They are butchered according to halal, skinned and gutted, but the rest has to be done by the staff of CCF. Keepers clear the carcasses of fat, and the vets assess and select the usable internal organs. They are to be processed and/or portioned for the cheetahs of different enclosures, with their occasional special needs considered. The whole process takes approximately 4-5 hours. It's probably not the most ideal Christmas Day that comes to mind.

The facility cares for over a hundred cheetahs, all "refugees" from confiscations over the years. They usually arrive at CCF very young, between 7-12 weeks. Despite thorough and dedicated veterinary care, many of them do not survive the trauma of being separated from their mothers and the negligent care of the smugglers. Additionally, the establishment takes care of a leopard and a caracal because cubs of other cat species are often mistaken for cheetahs at a casual glance and sold on the black market just the same way. A qualified veterinary and animal keeper team – mainly from overseas – oversees (pardon the pun) the general health of the animals and the daily tasks (feeding, collecting and analyzing faeces, changing water, checking fences, etc...) around them. The political situation in the Horn of Africa is often unstable. There was an armed incident in February near the camp, and we were prepared to leave if the situation worsened. Fortunately, it didn't escalate, but a few days later, we heard intense shooting from the neighboring property. It alarmed both the staff and the cubs, but we were told it was just a training drill of a private military unit belonging to a presidential family member. These events highlight the need for trained local staff who can manage the facility and care for the animals without relying on international supervision. For that reason, a group of dedicated local employees were being trained to become fully capable cheetah keepers – a mission

that not only safeguards the facility's future but hopefully lays the groundwork for broader education of local communities and their acceptance of cheetah conservation as well.

It soon became clear to me that learning to recognize and distinguish 90 adult cheetahs is a task close to impossible for such a short period of time, so instead, I was scheduled to work mainly in the clinic building and its attached yards with different groups of cubs confiscated not long before my arrival – it proved to be a very rewarding, sometimes tedious, and other times, a truly emotional experience.

Conservation and animal welfare – a side note

In a natural setting, yet still in captivity, there are over a hundred cheetahs, which are many mouths to feed and care for. The population is growing due to frequent confiscations. From a holistic, ecological perspective, is it worthwhile to invest significant financial and human resources to ensure a high quality of life for these animals, even though they won't be released back into the wild and won't contribute to the survival of their species in their natural habitat? Ethical rescue centers and sanctuaries, in most cases, do not open their facilities to public tourism, so they will not profit directly from their animals – they need to manage their finances by other means – donations, sponsorships (or selling "christening rights" for thousands of dollars: as a result, cheetahs end up being called 'John Cheeto', or 'Miss Behave'...). Rescued and captive cheetahs are vulnerable to many infectious diseases, some of them treatable, some with more serious consequences: Feline Herpesvirus (FHV), Feline Parvovirus (FPV), Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV), and Feline Coronavirus (FCoV), to name a few, can equally pose a threat on the sensitive cheetah populations of sanctuaries and breeding centers (Ziegler-Meeks, 2009). Once they are exposed to any of these, their release can no longer be taken into consideration to spare the wild population the risk.

Many people consider mainly the economic aspect when discussing this issue – I've encountered a strong opinion among those involved in the guiding and hospitality industries of game reserves in South Africa. They believe that the money spent on supporting ecologically 'sterile' individuals (rescued animals that cannot be reintroduced into the wild) could be better invested into protecting natural habitats and reserves, restoring and maintaining a healthy ecological balance. The debate has been ongoing. Conservation science has set out to look at the bigger picture (Soulé, 1985), while animal welfare, as such, focuses on the quality of life of individuals (Fraser, 2008). Opinions may still differ today, but the CCF is proof that these two should not exclude each other. The organization strives to provide the best possible life for every animal it rescues while also being dedicated to preserving or restoring healthy habitats worldwide. This is important for the animals' well-being and for fostering a mutually beneficial coexistence between animals and humans in our modern world.

Conclusion

The cheetah, like many other African megafauna species, is facing a serious threat to its survival due to shrinking and fragmented habitats, human persecution, and exploitation of its environment. Three out of four cheetah subspecies have fewer than a thousand individuals in the wild, and the species is genetically fragile, which adds to the risk. Various NGOs such as the Cheetah Conservation Fund and the Cheetah Outreach are working to save the species in different ways: by protecting natural habitats and prey species, educating farmers and the public about the cheetah's ecological role, addressing human-wildlife conflicts, combating illegal wildlife trafficking, and providing care for rescued or injured animals. They are collaborating with protected areas like national parks, game reserves, and national governments across the cheetah range to establish conservation policies that support their efforts. A considerable part of the cheetah's remaining wild habitat lies in economically poor and/or politically unstable countries (such as Chad, Niger, South Sudan, Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa) where such policies are non-existent or ineffective. Regions that experience frequent armed conflicts and social unrest make conservation work, including monitoring, habitat protection, research, and rescue, much more difficult, if not impossible. This endangers the survival of the species in those areas and also highlights the areas where conservation organizations face fewer hindrances due to stronger governmental dedication to conservation or economic interests. This makes CCF's presence in Somaliland valuable – it operates from a relatively stable socio-political background amid a highly conflicted region, which made possible the establishment of a stronghold for cheetah conservation in the Horn of Africa, intercepting wildlife trafficking towards the Middle East and maintaining a refuge for rescued animals.



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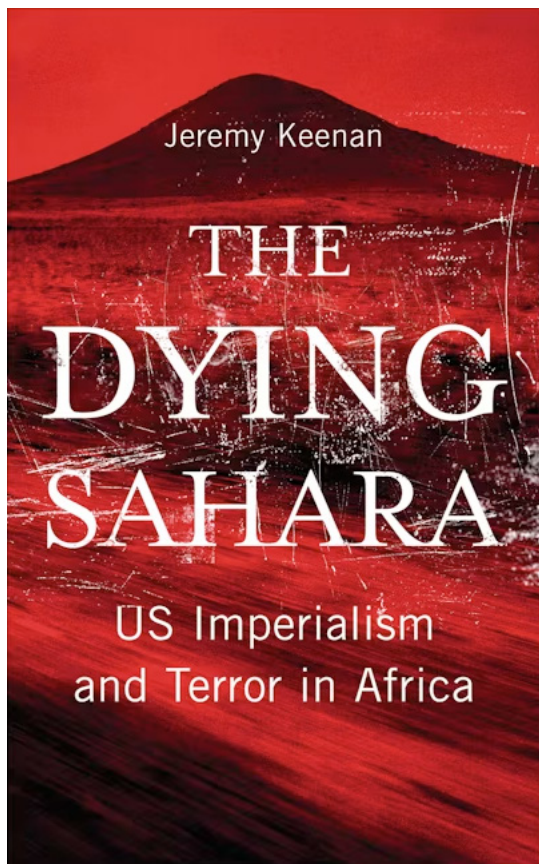
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THE DYING SAHARA US IMPERIALISM AND TERROR IN AFRICA

JEREMY KEENAN

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REVIEW BY: AYOUB EL ALAQUI

PHD STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS, HUNGARY

E-MAIL: ELALAOUI.AYOUB@PTE.HU

The Sahel region is a desert belt in Africa stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, crossing or including parts of Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Sudan. The region is facing numerous issues ranging from climate change, desertification, widespread conflict, to food security. The regional Sahel Alliance aimed to tackle these issues; however, a series of military coups combined with rising terrorist activities led to the creation of another alliance, the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS), in 2023, including Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The Sahel region is marked by a historical struggle with colonization, regional conflicts, and terrorism, and stands as a focal point of intricate challenges. Despite their seemingly disparate nature, a closer examination reveals the interconnectedness of these issues, stemming from either natural developments or deliberate actions. In his comprehensive work, “The Dying Sahara: US Imperialism and Terror in Africa” (Keenan, 2013), the author delves into a detailed exploration of terrorism in the Sahel region, aiming to unveil concealed truths derived from his research. Keenan’s analysis explicitly delineates how certain countries orchestrate terrorism in the region as a means of securing economic and military dominance.

“The Dying Sahara: US Imperialism and Terror in Africa” addresses the ongoing turbulent tensions in the Sahel region. Keenan divides the book into 20 chapters, each dedicated to a specific theme, conundrum, or perspective. Despite addressing different aspects, the chapters are interconnected and cohesive, contributing to the author’s overall message. By organizing the book into multiple chapters and sub-chapters, Keenan effectively addresses the specificities of each issue without losing the overarching narrative. Additionally, the chapters appear to follow a chronological order, guiding the reader through the timeline of the relevant and crucial conundrums that have impacted the Sahel region. While the book predominantly focuses on external interference from the US and, to a lesser extent, Europe, a significant portion of the content is dedicated to the African nations themselves that form part of the Sahel puzzle.

Although European countries are not directly implicated, Keenan’s emphasis predominantly rests on the United States, shedding light on the multifaceted reasons underpinning its presence in the region. Nevertheless, France, as a primary and key player in the overall situation of most African states, is also addressed in relation to Uranium, its monopoly, and its goals in the region. The chapters dedicated to France’s involvement remain relevant, as tensions between Niger and France persist due to the latter’s greed for Uranium.

Jeremy Keenan, in “The Dying Sahara: US Imperialism and Terror in Africa,” compares the situation with El Para to the Bay of Pigs incident in Cuba (p. 5). On page 92 of the same book, Keenan explains the ongoing Tuareg rebellions and sheds light on the connection between these rebellions and the infinite exploitation of Uranium in Niger and Mali by international companies, including French companies (p. 92).

Within the pages of the book, the author skillfully presents a tapestry of evidence, claims, and statements that collectively suggest the fabrication of terrorism in the region, ostensibly geared toward achieving economic and military hegemony.

While the focus primarily centers on the US and the Bush administration as central figures, Algeria emerges as a significant player in this intricate geopolitical landscape. Moreover, Keenan meticulously weaves together the threads of Tuareg rebellions, tourist kidnappings, and widespread acts of terror, establishing links to these two nations. Despite occasional concerns about the overstated nature of the evidence, it is important to note that the author relies on the art of connecting the dots rather than providing substantial presentations. On a positive note, Keenan's exploration extends beyond a mere temporal snapshot from the 1980s to contemporary times. Through an examination of various rebellions in the Sahel region and the corresponding responses of different governments, the author successfully paints a comprehensive picture, offering a nuanced understanding of the prevailing themes in the region. Keenan further focuses heavily on Algeria and its secret services, relating those to AQIM and providing valuable information about the orchestrated terrorism pushed by the US and assisted by Algeria.

The author highlights a series of events, managing to relate them to Algeria's aspirations in the Sahel and its international goals. Although Libya, under Muammar Gaddafi, was also keen on gaining leverage over the Sahel region, it is only mentioned as a counterpart to Algeria or a country that managed to threaten Algerian ambitions. Algeria's alleged orchestrated terrorism, the fabrication of El Para's death, the creation of AQIM, and its efforts to destabilize neighboring countries for the goal of having the upper hand mirror the situation with the Polisario Front and the relationship with the other non-Sahel region neighbor, Morocco.

Additionally, the book addresses the rebellious situation in Mali as part of this sequence of events in the Sahel. Keenan notes the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) willingness to seek the UN and intervene militarily in Mali. However, this would be an infringement of international law, as the organization would need to be invited by the country in question to intervene militarily – a condition not met. Although the African Union (AU) does include an article enabling other member countries to intervene should the need arise in any of the other member countries, Keenan fails to point out the necessary legal framework governing this dilemma (p. 247).

Although European countries are not directly implicated, Keenan's emphasis predominantly rests on the United States, shedding light on the multifaceted reasons underpinning its presence in the region. Nevertheless, France, as a primary and key player in the overall situation of most African states, is also addressed in relation to Uranium, its monopoly, and its goals in the region.

The book is a masterpiece. The author successfully incorporates crucial details, important information, and relevant factors concerning a series of multi-layered and multi-faceted issues affecting the Sahel region. The author's ability to address the numerous Tuareg rebellions, the coup d'état in Mali, and the agendas of the US, France, Algeria, and Libya, while providing comprehensive value, is impressive.

However, this publication is not without its shortcomings. One might argue that all chapters somehow relate to the US agenda, and the evidence provided is a mere fabrication of the mind. While it is true that some information is not clearly proven but rather referred to as exclusive insights obtained by the author, Keenan still manages to present a series of undisputed pieces of evidence supporting many of his arguments. Additionally, a notable drawback is the frequent reference to the first volume, Keenan, J. (2009) "The Dark Sahara: America's War on Terror in Africa," without sufficient elucidation (Tarrosy, 2014). This presents a challenge for readers seeking a standalone comprehension, as the main ideas are often intertwined with the prior volume. In several chapters, the book seems to lean heavily on its predecessor, lacking the autonomy to stand alone and provide a self-contained narrative.

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