

Sudan: Truisms and Assumptions in a War  
in Search for Meaning, 2023–present  
**Towards the Decolonization of Intelligence Studies in Africa:  
The Role of Academia**  
Redefining Transnational Literature after the Ontological Turn  
in the Global South Decoloniality: African Perspective  
**Morocco's Migration Reform of 2013:  
A Geostrategic Move Beyond Human Rights**



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Hungarian Journal of African Studies

MOHAMED SALIH

## SUDAN: TRUISMS AND ASSUMPTIONS IN A WAR IN SEARCH FOR MEANING, 2023-PRESENT

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Since the war erupted (April 2023- present), Sudan has become a scene of gruesome killings, maiming, and wanton destruction of productive assets, infrastructure, and property on a colossal scale. While the visible consequences of the chaos are evident, the reasons behind the war remain shrouded in mystery, often shaped by wild assumptions and contested beliefs. In the case of Sudan's protracted conflict, there is a quest for understanding—not only to explain the origins of the war but, more critically, to comprehend why its leaders continue to pursue it with relentless brutality. Since gaining independence from British rule in 1956, Sudan has experienced only 17 years of peace, overshadowed by 60 years of conflict. One might assume that, given this history, war would have lost its significance. Yet, the reality suggests a deep struggle for a return to normalcy, where assumptions evolve into beliefs in the search for meaning behind Sudan's ongoing war. Five key truisms and assumptions shape the search for meaning in Sudan's ongoing civil war. These are: the war of the generals, the desperate attempts of the Islamists to regain power, the rise of the Baggara, a yearning for neo-Mahdism, the revenge of marginalized groups versus the notion of "cleansing a desecrated land and honor," the unfinished process of state formation and the quest for a new Sudan, and the idea that the civil war is externally orchestrated. None of these truisms or assumptions fully explains why war remains the method of choice for resolving disputes, with some protagonists fiercely advocating for the continuation of the chaos.

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This is a critical review of the Western-centric epistemology dominance in the intelligence studies in the African academic discourses which does not feature adequate African contributions and adjustments. Though intelligence is a relatively new subject in the world and especially in Africa, its teachings and presentation are more inclined towards western values and systems. This work, therefore, is a questioning body of the past and present inferences of the Western intelligence systems on African security studies and management. The research based a lot on historicist content analysis and determined the prevalence of American and Eurocentric models of intelligence studies within Africa. This fact has blurred the meaning and essence of the field on the continent. It is thus a call to completely decolonise the discipline and adopt models and modules of Afrocentricism. Based on a critical discourse analysis, this paper tries to reveal how academia can contribute to the emergence of indigenous knowledge/ information production, give alternatives to dominant hegemonic discourses, and develop certain African-grounded intelligence theories. In turn, the work suggests to maintain the curriculum reformation, productive and outcome-driven cooperative research, and sharing the knowledge, which will help to emphasize the decolonization of intelligence research in Africa.

ARTHUR K. MUHIA

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Contemporary twenty-first century literary and cultural studies are turning to ontology for both content and form. This multidisciplinary theoretical framework examines the nexus between the ontological turn in cultural anthropology, and transnational literary studies, with a keen focus on the African perspective. The analysis has an acute interest in epistemic violence and epistemicides in the decoloniality discourse anchored in a sociological contextualization of the ontological turn. Additionally, it proposes a change in basic assumptions regarding the prevailing transnational global ontology, as parts of the broader effort to recover alternative ontologies of inhabiting and conceptualizing the world. By alternative ontologies I mean worldviews in which the human, non-human, ancestral, and spiritual worlds are entangled, and shape both experience itself and the representation of experience. Part one outlines how alternative modes of being and knowing can emerge in narrative form. Second part address imperialism and coloniality epistemic violence against the ontology of the Global South. Part three focuses on the epistemic reawakening of the Global South's ontology via postcolonial criticism alongside decoloniality. Employing both linear and spiral modes of qualitative data exposition, the framework will contribute to a transnational interpretation of African, and African diasporic literary texts, beyond the postcolonial perspective that they have potentially been subjected.

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Morocco has gained global prominence in migration, evolving into a country of emigration, transit, and immigration. Reinforcing this prominence is its 2013 migration reform, which marked a departure from decades of restrictive policies. Previously, migration was governed by Law 02-03, which focused on security, regarding the entry (immigration), stay (residence), and movement of foreigners, as well as issues related to emigration and irregular immigration. In 2013, King Mohammed VI announced a human rights-driven and participatory migration policy, marking a shift away from security-based measures. While widely praised, this reform raised questions about its underlying drivers and motivation, given several structural and practical inconsistencies. Beyond the outlined social dynamics, this study examines Morocco's migration reform through Abdelmalek Sayad's theory of 'thinking the state' (1990), which links migration policies to broader geostrategic and diplomatic ambitions. It explores how Morocco's radical reform has been strategically instrumentalized to forge an international brand image and secure geostrategic and foreign policy goals, particularly in Africa. This study is based on fieldwork (semi-structured interviews) conducted in-person in Morocco and via teleconferencing tools with migration policy experts in Morocco and with Moroccan migration stakeholders, providing insights into the reform's underlying drivers and its role in shaping Morocco's regional influence. The fieldwork revealed that Morocco's migration reform, on the one hand, serves to portray the monarchy as a progressive and human-rights-driven regime, and on the other, enables Morocco to assume a leadership role on both continental and regional levels.

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THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND THE AFROCENTRIC  
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Historically, slavery as an institution has existed throughout both ancient and modern civilizations, while its peculiarities and nuances have varied in different societies. However, none has generated as much controversy as the trans-Atlantic slave trade due to the physical and psychological dehumanizing methods employed by the slave masters to subdue the minds of the enslaved. The relentless endurance of this atrocious trade during the centuries of its prevalence had debased and scarred the African identity not only on the continent but also in the diaspora. This paper will examine the complexities of the Atlantic slave trade and its impact on the Afrocentric personality since the 19th century. The crux of this paper, however, is to probe into how the residues of slavery have, over time, formed a continuum of mental incarceration among people of African descent in selected areas such as the United States of America, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. In addition, the keynote of the study explores psychological concepts such as psychodynamics, epigenetics, and trans-generational trauma and the multidimensionality of its impacts on the Afrocentric consciousness engendered by centuries of dilapidating prejudicial practices meted against people of African extraction. This paper will interpret historical evidence using secondary sources.

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# SUDAN: TRUISMS AND ASSUMPTIONS IN A WAR IN SEARCH FOR MEANING, 2023-PRESENT

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## Abstract

Since the war erupted (April 2023- present), Sudan has become a scene of gruesome killings, maiming, and wanton destruction of productive assets, infrastructure, and property on a colossal scale. While the visible consequences of the chaos are evident, the reasons behind the war remain shrouded in mystery, often shaped by wild assumptions and contested beliefs. In the case of Sudan's protracted conflict, there is a quest for understanding—not only to explain the origins of the war but, more critically, to comprehend why its leaders continue to pursue it with relentless brutality. Since gaining independence from British rule in 1956, Sudan has experienced only 17 years of peace, overshadowed by 60 years of conflict. One might assume that, given this history, war would have lost its significance. Yet, the reality suggests a deep struggle for a return to normalcy, where assumptions evolve into beliefs in the search for meaning behind Sudan's ongoing war. Five key truisms and assumptions shape the search for meaning in Sudan's ongoing civil war. These are: the war of the generals, the desperate attempts of the Islamists to regain power, the rise of the Baggara, a yearning for neo-Mahdism, the revenge of marginalized groups versus the notion of "cleansing a desecrated land and honor," the unfinished process of state formation and the quest for a new Sudan, and the idea that the civil war is externally orchestrated. None of these truisms or assumptions fully explains why war remains the method of choice for resolving disputes, with some protagonists fiercely advocating for the continuation of the chaos.

## Keywords

*SAF, RSF, civil war, neo-Mahdism, Tassis, state reformation*

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## 1. Introduction

The idea that war has lost meaning in Sudan stems from the brutal reality that, since independence from British rule in 1956, Sudan has only experienced 17 years of peace, punctuated by civil wars and brutal military coups. The first civil war (1955-1972) claimed the lives of about 500,000 people, displaced millions internally, and forced many to seek refuge outside Sudan. The casualties of the second war (1985-2005) were estimated at over 2.5 million people<sup>1</sup> (Concern International), ending in 2005 with the Nairobi Comprehensive Peace Agreement being signed by the Sudan government and South Sudan. The CPA ended with the independence of South Sudan in 2011. (CPA, 2005) In the 2003-2005 Darfur genocide, committed by the Sudan Armed Forces and the Janjaweed militia, it was estimated that over 200,000 people were killed. (USHMM, 2018)

Meanwhile, civil wars in the Nuba Mountains and Darfur erupted in 1988 and continue unabated to date, fought by dozens of armed groups, separately or in coalitions. For example, Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW), SLA-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM), Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), Sudan Alliance (SA), and Sudan Liberation Army/Transitional Council (SLA/TC), among several other communal armed groups. Some of these armed liberation movements will be referred to later. (Hamza, 2024)

Since the onset of the conflict in 2023, nearly 8.5 million people have been classified as internally displaced persons (IDPs), 4,228,067 were forced into refuge, and an estimated 150,000 lost their lives. These combined figures show that the number of forcibly displaced people as a result of the 2013 war was 11,758,838. (UNHCR, 2025)

Five key truisms and assumptions shape the narratives and competing meanings surrounding Sudan's war: 1) the war of the "Generals," 2) the Islamists' desperate attempt to regain power and control, 3) the rise of the Baggara and craving for neo-Mahdism, 4) the desire for revenge of the marginalized versus the aim to cleanse a "desecrated land and honor," and 5) an unfinished process of state formation and the quest for a new Sudan and 6) the war is externally orchestrated. These narratives combine common beliefs and assumptions, each of which may hold some truth, yet they often depend on one another. However, some of these narratives contradict each other, making it impossible for them to coexist without confronting these internal contradictions. As a result, Sudan's ongoing conflict is a search for a lost unifying meaning, constantly longing for peaceful coexistence.

## 2. 'The War of the Generals'

Sudan's latest war has been dubbed 'the war of the Generals,' pitting Abdel-Fatah Al-Burhan, Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, against General Mohamed Hamdan (Hemedti) Dagalo, Al Burhan's Deputy and Chair of the Rapid Support Force (RSF), during a short-lived military-civilian transitional Government (2019-2023). The background to their discord was the signing of the Framework Agreement (21 December 2021) to restore the transitional government after the military coup (October 2021), which ousted Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and led

to the arrest of a large number of anti-military-coup political activists. The Framework Agreement proposed a) ending the military's involvement in the government and economy, b) a 2-year transition period governed by civilian-led administration before elections, c) adopting a new constitution, and d) transferring power to a civilian administration within a month after signing the agreement. (Sudan Tribune, 5 February 2025)

The signing of the Framework Agreement with the SAF leadership represented in the Sovereignty Council and Abdalla Hamdok, the civilian prime minister, was considered by the social forces (i.e., the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) civilian coalition and the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA)), a betrayal of the Sudanese people's aspiration for establishing a civilian democratic government. (Adam et al., 2022)

The friction between the two Generals came to a head when General Abdel-Fatah Al-Burhan, Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, proposed a two-year transition period to integrate the Rapid Support Force into the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). On his part, General Hemedti proposed a ten-year transition period, which General Al Burhan rejected.



▲ Political map of Sudan. Source: Nations Online Project, [https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/sudan\\_map.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/sudan_map.htm)

The disagreement between the two generals intensified when Hemedti respected the Framework Agreement and endorsed Sudan's return to civilian governance within a two-year transitional period. It was also stipulated that RSF and SAF should withdraw entirely from politics. General Hemedti acted independently of any political organization, civilian or military, and accepted the proposed withdrawal of all armed forces from politics. On the other hand, General Al Burhan's affiliation with Al Bashir's defunct National Congress Party (NCP) and its Islamist military contingent within SAF, which formed the majority of the Transitional Sovereignty Council and SAF High Command, rejected the Framework Agreement and limited his ability to act independently. Under pressure from the Islamists, General Al-Burhan turned his back on the Framework Agreement and rejected General Hemedti's proposal to integrate RSF into SAF in ten, instead of two years. (Sudan Framework Agreement, 2022)

The assumption here is that had General Hemedti integrated RSF into SAF, he would have lost his bargaining power and leverage to remain politically influential in an army known for its strong affiliation with the Sudan Islamic movement, particularly the National Congress Party (NCP), which has long been considered a protégé of the militant Muslim Brotherhood. An allied assumption is that the 15 April 2023 war, which devastated Sudan, was a military coup gone wrong. According to this interpretation, the military coup orchestrated by General Al Burhan, in cooperation with the Broad Islamic Current, was established after the October 2021 coup to support the military contingent on the Transitional Sovereignty Council. (Middle East Monitor, 2022)

General Al Burhan and his Islamist backers claimed that General Hemedti overstepped his mandate by attacking the Egyptian Forces stationed in Meroe, Northern Sudan, in preparation for a military coup against the SAF. SAF early morning raids on RSF training camps in Omdurman and Khartoum Sports City were not a coup but a preemptive measure to thwart the RSF coup. (Amin, 2023) Both generals operate under assumptions so evident that they require no further proof. They understand that if they were to claim responsibility for a failed coup, it would also mean taking responsibility for the deaths and displacement of millions of Sudanese people, as well as the destruction of Sudan's infrastructure. Such an admission would endanger their chances of returning to power in any form.

The "war of the Generals" narrative captures what triggered the war. Still, it does not explain its structural social, political, and economic root causes, where the distribution of poverty and unequal development is geographically aligned with the stigma assigned to marginalized Sudan, particularly Eastern Sudan, Greater Kordofan, Greater Darfur, and the Southern Blue Nile.

### **3. The Islamists' Desperate Attempt to Regain Power**

The Broad Islamic Current, formed in the aftermath of the 2021 military coup, opposed the Framework Agreement, which called for a return to civilian rule but banned the defunct National Congress Party from participating in politics. It also opposed the United Nations' presence in Sudan.

The Broad Islamic Current comprises various Islamist groups, including the Islamic Movement, the Just Peace Forum, the Reform Now Movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the State of Law and Development Party. (Arab Observer, 20 April 2022; Sudan Tribune, 2025) On 10 September 2024, the Broad Islamic Current elected Ali Karti, a former foreign minister during Al-Bashir's regime and secretary-general of the Islamic Movement, as its president. The National Justice Alliance, the Renaissance Current, and the Unity of the Ranks Initiative later joined the Broad Islamic Current. The coalition's spokesperson, Hassan Abdel Hamid, said their stance in the ongoing conflict is to support the army against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and ensure the Islamists return to power. (Sudan Tribune, 10 September 2024)

During the first three months of the war (around July 2024), SAF sustained heavy losses, including large swathes of Khartoum, Sudan's capital; SAF HQ in Omdurman; Khartoum North; Wad Medani, the A-Jazirah Regional State capital; and parts of the Blue Nile and Sennar Regional States. As SAF was near total collapse, Sudan's Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (SAF) and President of the Sovereignty Council, Lt. General Abdelfattah Al-Burhan, called for a 'general mobilization' of all young and capable civilians to join the SAF to fight against RSF. (ACCORD, 5 February 2025) It began with recalling the Popular Defence Force (PDF) and the National Intelligence Security Service (IISS), which were dissolved in 2020 to join the campaign against the RSF. Those mobilized were code-named Al-Mustanfiriyn, or the mobilized civilian forces. Al-Mustanfiriyn included armed Islamist militants who joined the battle under the banner of the Islamist movement in coordination with SAF leadership, enabling them to promote their ideologically driven Islamist agenda. Al-Bara bin Malik Brigade is considered one of the primary militias supporting SAF. (Arab Weekly, 7 July 2023)

The Al-Bara'a Ibn Malik Brigade, named after a historical fighter from the early Islamic conquests, was originally part of the Popular Defence Force (PDF), which dissolved in 2020. The brigade has since been reactivated to participate in the campaign against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Radical Islamic groups like the Al-Bara'a Ibn Malik Brigade, also referred to as the Shadow Battalion during Al-Bashir's regime, have been called upon to lead the fight against the RSF. It is claimed that SAF's retaking of Omdurman, Khartoum, large swathes of A-Jazirah, and Sennar State was attributed to the Al-Baraa Bin Malik Brigade, contributing significantly to the war effort. Similarly, it helped the army retain the armored corps south of Khartoum from falling to the RSF during the intensified attacks between June and August 2023.<sup>2</sup>

The only truth that challenges assumptions and widely held beliefs is the Islamist anti-peace narrative. It is important to recognize that if the war ends in a victory for the RSF or if Sudan returns to civilian rule, the Islamists would likely face humiliation similar to what they experienced after their rule ended in 2019. During the transition period between 2019 and the October 2021 military coup, senior leaders of the National Congress Party (NCP) were detained, and their properties and wealth were confiscated. Some of these leaders were released after the coup they had

orchestrated in October 2021, while others escaped from prison when war broke out on 15 April 2023. (Kurtz, 2024)

It is not surprising that General Al Burhan, whose rule is supported and directed by Islamists, stated that they are ready to fight until victory, even if it takes the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) 100 years to win the war (Hendawi and Ahmed, 2024). However, it can be argued that the Islamists were among the last groups to support the establishment of a democratic system that would protect them from prosecution for past and current human rights abuses and corruption. In this context, their call to continue the war is a desperate attempt to regain power and control over Sudan's natural resources. This position would not be acceptable to RSF and their militarized armed groups (Sudan People Liberation Movement/Army-North led by Al Hilu and Sudan Liberation Movement/Army-Abdel Wahidnor), nor are the civilian opposition prepared to negotiate terms other than ousting SAF, the National Congress Party, and their militarized Islamist Jihadist groups and liberation movements (Jibril Ibrahim-led Justice and Equity Movement, Minni Arko Minnawi-led Sudan Liberation Movement-Minnawi).

#### **4. The Rise of the Baggara: A Craving Towards Neo-Mahdism**

The RSF is similar to the Mahdia army (1881-1898), as both are predominantly composed of the Baggara ethnic group, along with other groups from Western Sudan, Darfur, and Kordofan. The RSF is commanded by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, commonly known as Hemedti. At the same time, the Mahdia army was led by Abdullahi Ibn Mohammed Al-Taa'ishi, who became the Khalifa (or successor) of the Mahdi. Both Abdullahi Ibn Mohammed Al-Taa'ishi, hailing from the Taa'aiysha Baggara, and General Hemedti, from the Rizeigat ethnic group of Darfur, western Sudan, highlight this connection. This analogy suggests that the RSF may symbolize the Baggara's resurgence under General Hemedti, aiming to reclaim the lost glory of the Mahdia era, when they ruled Sudan, only to be displaced from power by the reoccupation of Sudan by Anglo-Egyptian rule, as explained below.

Before his death in June 1885, the Mahdi (Muhammad Ahmad Ibn Abdalla, a Dunglawi from northern Sudan), who defeated the Turko-Egyptian occupiers of Sudan (1820-1881), conferred on Abdullahi Ibn Mohammed Al-Taa'ishi the title Al-Khalifa al-Siddig, resembling Abu Bakr Al Sidig, the second and closest Khalifa to Prophet Muhammad. Al-Abdullahi Ibn Mohammed Al-Taa'ishi is not from the Ashraf (the Mahdi's family) or northern Sudan (known as Awlad Al-Balad (sons of the soil)). This rivalry continued until the defeat of the Mahdist army led by Abdullahi Ibn Mohammed Al-Taa'ishi and the retreat of the remnants of the Baggara, who formed the backbone of the Mahdia in western Sudan. The Baggara lost political dominance in Sudan's rulership, but their representation in Sudan's civilian politics through the Umma Party, led mainly by the Mahdi's children and grandchildren, has continued. (Holt and Daly, 1993: 99-101)

Similar to the situation in Mahdia during the reign of Al Khalifa Abdullahi, the Baggara of western Sudan comprised the largest number of Rapid Support Forces

(RSF) fighting forces. They officially became part of the Sudan Armed Forces through an act of parliament in 2014. By March 2025, the RSF had lost most of the areas it had captured between 2023 and 2025. This decline was anticipated due to the RSF's lack of social and political support in northern, central, eastern, and riverine Sudan. The belief that the RSF symbolizes the rise of the Baggara and the promise of neo-Mahdism has created rifts within the Mahdi family and among the remnants of the Ashraf.

Those following social media would have noticed statements by RSF fighters describing SAF and its allied forces as remnants of "1956 Sudan." In their view, the 1956 Sudan is an extension of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan against whom their grandparents fought and lost the battle of Karari (also known as the 1898 battle of Omdurman), accusing the north and central Sudan elite of siding with the Anglo-Egyptian occupation force and having remained so through facilitating Egypt's continuing influence in independent Sudan.

The credibility of RSF's claim that the north and central Sudan elite dominated Sudan economically and politically lies in the historical asymmetry of power relations between the Baggara, on the one hand, and the Ashraf and Awlad Al Balad, on the other. The Mahdi family dominated the Umma National Party, led by the Mahdi descendants, who combined the Imamate of the Ansar (the Mahdi's disciples) with the Umma Party. The second truism assumes that Western Sudan (encompassing Greater Darfur and Greater Kordofan) has historically supported the Mahdist-based Umma National Party; however, this assumption has proven untenable during the war. Fadlalla Burma Nasir (2023 to present) was the first non-Mahdi descendant to assume the Umma Party (Deputy) Chairmanship after the death of Al Sadig Al-Mahi, former Sudan Prime Minister and leader of the Umma Party.

RSF, whose leadership belongs to the Janjawid, stands accused of committing the 2003 Darfur genocide. It estranged the Darfur Muslim African ethnic groups,

**Those following social media would have noticed statements by RSF fighters describing SAF and its allied forces as remnants of "1956 Sudan." In their view, the 1956 Sudan is an extension of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan against whom their grandparents fought and lost the battle of Karari, accusing the north and central Sudan elite of siding with the Anglo-Egyptian occupation force and having remained so through facilitating Egypt's continuing influence in independent Sudan.**

who feared being dominated by the Baggara, should they emerge victorious from the war. As will be explained later, the friction between RSF and the other parts of marginalized Sudan could be attributed to their fear of the rise of the Baggara and the emergence of RSF-led neo-Mahdism.

The neo-Mahdism discursive narrative has also been rendered futile by internal divisions and the emergence of pro-SAF allies from within. For example, the Mis-siriya have been divided between those supporting RSF and those who sided with SAF but did not necessarily support the Broad Islamic Movement (Nashed, 2023; Middle East Monitor, 2022). The Hawazma Baggara's loyalty remains divided. For example, they were sometimes attacked by SAF and other times by the RSF. (Sudan Tribune, 8 January 2024) However, the situation changed after SPLM-North (led by Abdel Aziz Al Hilu) joined the Sudan Founding Alliance (SFA). (UNOCHA, 2023) The reality on the ground does not support such a crude (Abbas, 2024) view that presents the Baggara as a unified ethnic military force, nor the contention that General Hemedti and his Deputy and brother (Abdelrahim Dagalo) mimic Abdullahi Ibn Mohammed Al-Taa'ishi's choice of his son as commander of his personal guard.

Concomitantly, the Baggara are far less united under Hemedti than during the Mahdia under Al Khalifa Abdullahi Al Taa'ishi, who used brute force to quell rebellion from within the Baggara ruling elite and northern and central Sudanese protagonists. (Green, 2007) Under the reign of Al-Khalifa, Abdullahi was treated as a defender against foreign invaders (i.e., the Anglo-Egyptian occupation forces). The narrative put forth by the neo-Mahdis lacks reliable evidence. It is loosely tied to assumptions and truisms that have not gained credibility among their supporters, and even less so among their critics. However, while it may be tempting to dismiss the assumptions and truisms regarding the rise of the Baggara and the exaltations of neo-Mahdism as irrelevant, such a dismissal is not warranted.

## **5. The War of the Marginalized versus the Islamist's "Land and Honor"**

The RSF claims that it is fighting for redeeming marginalized Sudan from the central and northern Sudan political establishment (also referred to as the 1956 state), which is responded to by SAF and its Islamist allies, claiming that they are fighting for cleansing the land of honour of Sudan, which is desecrated by the RSF. This section explores the efficacy of narratives that bolster these two truisms.

In 2015, the Sudanese government established the RSF as a paramilitary group. Its purpose was to fight alongside the SAF against the Darfur Liberation Movements, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/North (SPLM/SPLA-N), and to control illegal migration from Europe along Sudan's northwestern borders with Libya and Egypt. In 2017, pursuant to the provisions of Article 54(7) of the Regulation for the Affairs of the National Assembly 2015, the "Rapid Support Forces Act 2017" was decreed into law. The decree positioned RSF as part of SAF, the historical oppressor of the Sudanese peoples, claiming that it is fighting for impoverished, marginalized Sudan (referring mainly to Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, and Southern Blue Nile), but this claim does not hold sway.<sup>3</sup>

In the first three months of the war, there was a significant increase in atrocities committed by the RFS in Khartoum, Omdurman, and Khartoum North. These included the vacating and occupancy of civilians' homes, along with reports of rape by rogue soldiers. Two main narratives have emerged: the SAF, which also committed acts of violence, framed the conflict against the RSF as a battle to reclaim land – meaning civilian homes and territory – and to protect the honor of women and girls who were victims of rape by RSF soldiers. This description is a powerful graphic representation of RSF as an undisciplined, barbaric “militia.”<sup>4</sup> SAF lacks the moral authority to impose such harsh charges against RSF. At the same time, it is known for committing a genocidal war in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and South Sudan before its independence from Sudan in June 2011.

The RSF claims it is fighting for the marginalized people in Sudan, while the SAF asserts it is working to restore the land and protect properties occupied by the RSF, as well as to safeguard the honor of women and girls affected by the violence. However, this narrative is flawed. Ultimately, the RSF's primary goal is to gain power. The SAF, along with its Islamist political backers, is not fundamentally different in this respect. The main distinction is that the SAF is fighting for the National Congress Party (NCP) and, more broadly, for the ambitions of the Islamic Current to regain power and control over the state, its resources, and its personnel.

The decision by the Darfur liberation movements, which were initially established to fight for the rights of marginalized Darfurians, to support the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) – an oppressor responsible for genocide against the Darfurians – in their conflict against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) cannot be taken seriously. This move highlights two important truths that are often misunderstood:

1. as of November 2023, four member groups of the Darfur Coalition announced their support for the SAF. These groups include the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), led by Jibril Ibrahim, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) faction led by Minni Minnawi, who is also the Governor of Darfur, the Mustafa Tambour faction of the SLM/A, and a faction of the Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces (GSLF). (Hamza, 2024) Their move from neutrality to supporting SAF was prompted by intense ethnic-based clashes in West Darfur in June 2023, the RSF's capture of four out of Darfur's five regional states in October and November 2023, and mobilization to control El Fasher, the only Darfurian capital still in the hands of SAF and its allies at the time of this expose. (Bader, 2025)
2. The loyalty of large swathes of marginalized Sudan, particularly North Darfur and North Kordofan, has been divided due to their proximity to North Sudan, Khartoum, and the White Nile States.

RSF's competing discursive narrative was portrayed as the revenge of marginalized Sudan against SAF, whose brutality misconfigured Sudan's civilian politics since independence in 1956. SAF and the Broad Islamists frame the conflict as a fight to protect their “land and honor.” However, these narratives are based on assumptions and self-serving statements, often resembling a propaganda stunt designed to

obscure the truth. In reality, both factions represent a blatant struggle for power and resources within a military establishment divided between SAF and the Islamists on one side, and the RSF on the other.

## **6. From the RSF to Tassis!**

The war in Sudan that began on 15 April 2023 forces us to confront the painful reality that achieving liberation does not always lead to true liberty, especially in states shaped by authoritarianism and conflict. The Sudanese people's struggle to reestablish a competitive democratic government and free themselves from the oppressive rule of a militarized Islamist regime led to a brief transitional period. However, during this time, they experienced neither liberation nor genuine freedom. Although the brutal intelligence service and the Popular Defence Force were officially dissolved, systemic state violence persisted. The detention of vocal opposition figures was widespread, and the violent killing of peaceful protesters was both gruesome and tragic.

The Broad Islamic Current led a series of demonstrations and sit-ins, supported by the leaders of two Darfur liberation movements: the Justice and Equality Movement, led by Jibril Ibrahim, and the Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi, led by Minni Arko Minnawi. Together with civilian government members, they called for a return to military rule. Their demands were met with the military coup in October 2021, which not only derailed the transition period but also effectively brought it to an end. As mentioned earlier, the Framework Agreement, which sought to give the transition period a second chance, was aborted by the civilian forces that opted for SAF and RSF to return to their pre-existing practices in two years, hold elections, and transfer power to a civilian government. By rejecting the Framework Agreement, the civilian political forces fell prey to the Islamists, who followed suit and dismissed it, allegedly to prepare for reclaiming control of the Sudanese State. The military and the Islamists helped create the image that the civilian political elite was too divided and undisciplined. They could not agree to any political settlement that did not guarantee them leading positions in any government entrusted with overseeing the transition to democracy.

The 15 April 2023 war ensured Sudan's return to one of its predictable political diehard habits: war and military rule. In October 2023, a civilian organization, the Sudanese Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces (Tagadum, Arabic acronym), was established and led by Sudan's former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. Tagadum aimed to coordinate the civilian campaign for peace and return Sudan to a democratic path.<sup>5</sup>

In less than two years, internal bickering and disagreements arose over whether to establish a parallel government or remain neutral and continue their peaceful struggle to end the war and establish democracy. In February 2025, Tagadum split into two irreconcilable positions and was dissolved. One group, the Civil Democratic Alliance of the Forces of the Revolution (Sumoud, Arabic Acronym), was founded and headed by former Sudan Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. (Sudan Tribune, 10 February 2025)

In February 2025, the splinter group from Taqadam established the Sudan Founding Alliance (Tasees, Arabic Acronym), comprising 22 smaller rebel movements and political and civil society groups. Tasees declared itself an anti-military, Islamist government. It signed the founding Charter, which calls for the formation of a parallel Sudanese government to provide public services to populations in the liberated areas. SPLM-North, RSF, the National Umma Party, the Sudan Revolutionary Front, the United Civilian Forces Alliance, Trade Unions Coordination and Professionals Association, and various activists and civil society groups signed the Sudan Founding Alliance Charter.<sup>6</sup>

The objectives of the Sudan Founding Alliance (SFA, or Tasees in Arabic) are to build a secular, democratic, decentralized Sudanese state based on freedom, equality, and justice, and to be respectful of all Sudanese cultural, ethnic, religious, and regional identities. The Charter stresses the establishment of the Sudanese State on the principle of voluntary unity among its peoples and regions, ensuring just and peaceful coexistence, as well as freedom of choice.

The founding principles of Tasees have parted with any inclination to reconstitute along the values of old Sudan, described as a Sudan of war, destruction, oppression, and divisions. More revolutionary in Sudan's context is Tasees' stipulation that in the event of non-recognition or stipulation of secularism, which separates religion and state, in the transitional constitution and the future permanent constitution, or in case of a violation of any other supra-constitutional principle, all Sudanese peoples have the right to exercise the right to self-determination. One of the new provisions in Sudan's governance is the establishment of democratic self-governing subnational entities. This aims to create a democratic and pluralistic Sudan where the people have the power to choose their leaders through free and fair elections. The goal is to develop a truly decentralized system of governance that recognizes the inherent right of all regions to manage their political, economic, and cultural affairs, particularly at the local level. This approach seeks to ensure broad and equitable participation from local communities in all levels of government, promote balanced development, and ensure a fair distribution of power and resources, along with proper representation at the national level. Tasees began what John Garang, the founder of SPLA/SPLM, ended when he died in a helicopter crash under mysterious circumstances in July 2005. (Young, 2005) Establishing a new vision for Sudan marks a coming-of-age moment. Yet, the promise of the old Sudan remains unchanged: the ongoing war may continue for another 100 years, as General Al Burhan surmized (Hendawi and

**The war in Sudan that began on 15 April 2023 forces us to confront the painful reality that achieving liberation does not always lead to true liberty, especially in states shaped by authoritarianism and conflict.**

Ahmed, 2024 ) in an attempt to suppress the will of the Sudanese people. Proposing General Hemedti as Tassis's leader has shifted the RSF away from championing the rise of the Baggara and the neo-Mahdism narrative, moving instead toward the goal of building a new Sudan, as the following section explains.

## **7. Tassis Driving a Hardball: From State Formation to State Reformation.**

The principles and assumptions outlined in the Sudan Founding Alliance Charter frame their struggle not as a continuation of the state formation project under a new guise, but as the initiation of a new reform movement for Sudan. This movement aims to turn the page on the year 1956. In essence, they seek to build a new Sudan from the remnants left by the state, which was formed under Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule. This colonial legacy is often criticized for empowering the elite in North and Central Sudan, allowing them to dominate the country. They reject two definitions of state formation: 1) 'The moment of origin, the founding of states in time past, and 2) state as an object with a particular set of forms in terms of functions, institutional structures and capacities, boundaries, and how the state is justified' (Brooke et al., 2018: xvi).

Likewise, the Sudan Founding Alliance (SFA) charter emphasizes that state formation is not an ongoing process, referring to a moment of origin (i.e., 1956), but establishing a new state with new functions, institutions, structures, and capabilities, as discussed by Brookes et al. (2018, xvii). This concept views the state as continually being redefined through the constant reshaping of power dynamics within itself and not in relation to dominant social forces represented by parasitic political elites from all over Sudan that have benefited from the 1956 state, which served their political and economic interests.

In July 2025, the Sudan Founding Alliance (Tassis) formally inaugurated its civilian government in Nyala, South Darfur, the capital of the Peace and Unity Government. General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti) was sworn in as Chairman of the Presidential Council, alongside Vice President Abdelaziz Adam al-Hilu and Prime Minister Mohamed Hassan al-Ta'aishi, in accordance with Article 67(2) of the 2025 Transitional Constitution of the Republic of Sudan. The 15-member Presidential Council includes regional governors who, by virtue of their positions, serve as deputies to the President of the Council for their respective areas. The Peace and Unity Government is a parallel government to the Sudanese Government, led by General Al Burhan, the Commander of the Armed Forces and President of the Islamists-dominated Sovereign Council. The 15-member Peace and Unity Government and the Council of Ministers comprise political parties, civil society organizations, armed movements, and regional leaders not only from RSF but also from various political forces and regions of north and central Sudan.

The Sudan Government, headed by General Al Burhan and the Islamists, denounced the formation of the Tassis Government of Peace and Unity as a separatist government that aims at dismembering Sudan. Arguably, the present war has gone beyond state formation to state reformation, bringing the new Sudan debate to the

fore. Reformation implicitly means that Sudanese regions, which the military, militant Islamists, and xenophobic north and central Sudan elite consider ungovernable, could be forced to seek self-determination or allowed to form independent nation-states. This skewed logic reveals how far the ruling SAF military junta, jihadist, and Islamist political elite can go.

The Sudan Founding Alliance's proclamation of a de facto parallel state is based on a questionable assumption that the Sudanese people are united in its advocacy for peace and democracy, or in rejecting war as an extension of civil rule. The ongoing conflict has deepened both social and political divisions, not only between central and northern Sudan and the rest of the country but also among the so-called marginalized groups, some of whose political elite are fighting alongside the anti-democracy Muslim Brotherhood and SAF.

The Sudanese war teaches a costly lesson: state formation in Sudan is not yet complete, particularly if we take a cue from Tilly's (1985) contention that "war makes the state" or war unmakes the state to form a new one. That was the case of South Sudan, and history may repeat itself with the emergence of a new state under the influence of Tassis and the Islamic movement championed by the Muslim Brotherhood.

This time around, a xenophobic minority from the dominant northern and central Sudan seeks to dismember Sudanese regions, particularly Darfur, which is considered unruly and should be separated from the rest of Sudan. In other words, this time around, the dominant northern and central Sudan leads the charge for dismembering Darfur.

Arguably, the present war has gone beyond state formation to state reformation, bringing the new Sudan debate to the forefront. State Reformation in this new trajectory implicitly means that Sudanese regions, which the military and Islamists considered ungovernable, could be allowed to form independent nation-states, following the example of South Sudan. This skewed logic reveals how far the ruling military, Jihadist Islamists, and a dominant self-seeking Sudanese political elite can go.

## **8. Sudan civil war is an Externally Driven Narrative**

All Sudan neighbours (Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, and beyond (for example, Somalia, UAE, and many more) are directly or indirectly involved in the war. This real or perceived external involvement has contributed to truisms and assumptions portraying the Sudan war as an externally driven disaster. In this section, I explore SAF and RSF narratives on the role of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt in supporting their protagonist. For example, in October 2024, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo accused Egypt of being involved in airstrikes on the RSF's troops. (Reuters, October 2024) Again, in October 2025, after the fall of Al-Fasher, General Dagalo (Hemedti) threatened to strike a neighbouring country, claiming that warplanes had taken off from its territory to attack RSF forces, and described those sites as legitimate targets. (MEM, October 2025) In both cases, the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs denied that Egypt's air force is supporting SAF in the ongoing war in Sudan.

On the other hand, the Sudanese government accused the United Arab Emirates of supporting the RSF. In April 2025, the Sudanese government accused the United Arab Emirates of complicity in genocide. It raised the issue in the United Nations session, which was explicitly held to discuss the Darfur crisis at the International Court of Justice (ICC). (Wintour, 2025; Sayal, 2024)

SAF and RSF discursive narratives invite an understanding of the geopolitical interests that have influenced the external, involving Ethiopia through the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), and the quest for sovereign access to the Red Sea, which has infuriated Eritrea and Somalia. In this context, a brief mention will be made of the growing rapprochement between RSF and South Sudan. The focus of this section is intentionally narrow, as a comprehensive picture of the regional dynamics of the war cannot be fully depicted within the space allocated to a section of a journal article. It divides the externally driven war narrative into two parts: a) it commences with elucidating the political axis involving Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, and Somalia vis-à-vis Ethiopia and its security ramifications, and b) the United Arab Emirates and the RSF axis based on gold-for-weapons arrangements.

First, the political alliance axis, involving the governments of Egypt, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan, and two rebel groups: the TPLF and Fanno, the armed rebel groups fighting against the Ethiopian Government. Each member of this Egypt-led Horn of Africa axis has its own grievances against Ethiopia. There are allegations that Egypt provides military support to Sudan for two main reasons: a) to gain assistance in its dispute with Ethiopia regarding the management of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), and b) ‘With Egypt facing a raft of problems, including inflation, it is trying to leverage its burgeoning refugee community to secure financial support from the international community, especially Europe, which shudders at the prospect of millions of refugees crossing the Mediterranean’. (Emam, 2025)

Egypt’s pro-SAF stand was aggravated by the RSF’s attack on its forces in Marawi, Sudan, on the eve of the 15 April 2023 war in Sudan, as mentioned earlier. Another factor is that Egypt considers RSF’s control of Al Fasher, northern Darfur, since October 2025, a direct threat to its national security. (Ibid.)

Speaking to members of the House of People’s Representatives (HoPR) during the second regular session of the sixth parliamentary term on 28 October 2025, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed underscored that there exists “no official record or institutional decision” documenting how Ethiopia lost its access to the Red Sea. “Ethiopia’s loss of sea access was not decided by the cabinet, parliament, or the public through any legal or consultative process, calling attention to what he described as a “gap in the historical and legal record” surrounding the country’s maritime sovereignty”. (IFA, 28 October 2025)

Somalia needs Egypt’s support against Ethiopia’s quest for sovereign access to the Sea, following the signing in January 2024 of a Memorandum of Understanding with the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, which is *de jure* part of Somalia. (Heritage Insititute, 2024) Somalia was quick to approach Egypt to deploy part of its Navy to Somalia in October 2024. Ethiopia considers the presence of the Egyptian

navy in neighbouring Somalia a national security threat, given the proximity of the Somali border to GERD. (Abera, 2025)

Eritrea responded to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's statement that Ethiopia cannot remain landlocked and expressed a commitment to gain access to the Red Sea, whether through peaceful means or, if necessary, by force. (Eritrea Red Sea Taskforce, 2025; Bereketab, 2024; Tekuya, 2024) Eritrea interpreted Ethiopia's stance as a direct threat to its sovereignty over the Assab port on the Red Sea, which is a point of contention since Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia. Similar to Somalia, Eritrea, and Egypt, the three countries agreed in October 2025 to establish a strategic partnership with three priorities: the Horn of Africa, Sudan's crisis, and the security of the Red Sea. (Masrie, 2025)

Second, Minerals have increasingly become among Sudan's most lucrative sources of revenue. In February, the state-owned Sudan Mineral Resources Company said gold production in army-controlled areas reached 74 tonnes in 2024, up from 41.8 tonnes in 2022. The Central Bank of Sudan reported that in 2024, nearly 97% of official gold exports (from areas under army control) were sent to the UAE, earning \$1.52 billion. Official exports are a drop in the ocean, however. An estimated 90% of Sudan's gold production, amounting to approximately \$13.4bn in illicit trade, is smuggled out of the country, often passing through transit routes in Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda, and South Sudan before reaching the UAE. (Wintour, 2025)

According to C4ADS (2025, 12), the RSF largely controls gold mines in southwestern Sudan and Darfur, in addition to pockets of control in Sudan's northwest and southeast. Darfur is home to extensive and growing artisanal mining operations, including the Sungo mining area, which the RSF-affiliated company Al Junaid exploits for conflict financing. SAF gold concessions include Alliance for Mining, Ariab Mining Company, Manub for Mining, and Orshab, which are located in the River Nile State, Northern State, and the Red Sea State (C4ADS, 2025: 13-14).

Sayal (2024 reported that 'the UAE's support of the RSF is motivated by a desire to extract raw materials, namely agricultural crops and precious metals, from the prosperous Sudanese land. The current Sudanese government, the primary opposition to the RSF, has rejected multiple agricultural and land agreements with the United Arab Emirates due to exploitative and unfair terms that yield substantial profits for the Emirati government while providing little protection for local workers and landowners. The Rapid Support Forces, thus, signify a new opportunity for Abu Dhabi to solidify its influence and extend its reach further into the region. (Sayal, 2024)

**Somalia needs Egypt's support against Ethiopia's quest for sovereign access to the Sea, following the signing in 2024 of a Memorandum of Understanding with the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, which is de jure part of Somalia.**

However, between assumptions and truisms, the United Arab Emirates is not the only investor or beneficiary of Sudan's minerals, particularly gold. Shipments of Precursor chemicals, such as Sodium cyanide used in gold and chromite processing, are imported from China, the U.A.E., UK, Germany, and raw Carbon from India (C4ADS, 2025, 15-6). It also reported that there is further evidence, based on human-sourced reports, that Advanced Mining Works, the alleged owner of the mine, exports chromite to Russia and Turkey. As such, the SAF is likely deriving conflict funds from chromite exports to China, Russia, and Turkey (C4ADS, 2025, 24). The Sudanese government focuses its diplomatic campaign against the UAE, including accusing it of participating directly in the civil war because of the UAE's disdain for the Muslim Brotherhood, direct and indirect relations with RSF, and being the main importer of Sudanese gold.

## 9. Conclusions

The five truisms and assumptions presented here underscore my argument that none of them can stand on their own without referencing the others. However, when combined, they can create discursive narratives that address various audiences differentiated by ethnic and regional interests, as well as historical and post-independence divides. Firstly, the "war of the Generals" metaphor illustrates the beginning of the conflict, but does not delve into the historical depth of the structural social, political, and economic root causes of the war. Tensions between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) intensified as the deadline for establishing a civilian government approached, with a focus on how the RSF should be integrated into the regular armed forces. The plausibility of the counter-narrative cannot be affirmed or denied, as most assumptions and truisms would suggest. It pertains to General Al-Burhan's anger about RSF's assassination attempt on his life and besieging him and the SAF General Command in a bunker for five grueling months. (Amin, 2023)

The belief that 15 April 2023 marks a final attempt by Islamists to regain their lost influence following the December 2019 uprising is an assumption worth examining. It can be argued that this narrative is mainly embraced by the more radical factions of the Broad Islamic Current, rather than by the lower ranks of the Islamic movement. Those low-ranking Islamists have far less to fear, therefore opting for a political settlement that safeguards Islam's presence in the political and public space but with limited influence. The assumption and truisms that RSF is the incarnation of the Mahdia and General Hemedti, and that Al-Khalifa Abdullahi resembles them, cannot be completely dismissed or affirmed in totality. Still, the current context of Sudan's political development defies established historical facts and affirms others. What can be affirmed is that the Baggara formed the majority of the Mahdia army. Similarly, the Baggara comprise the majority of the RSF fighting force under the leadership of General Hemedti. However, these parallels of path dependency are misleading. Today, the Baggara comprise diverse, internally divided interest groups and loyalties, not only to RSF or the Umma Party, but also to the Islamic movement, which is fighting against RSF.

The competing narratives surrounding the issues of vengeance in marginalized Sudan, the restoration of the homes occupied by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to their rightful owners, and the honor of women raped by RSF fighters are oversimplifications lacking sufficient evidence. Neither the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) nor the RSF can be considered innocent. Both groups contain renegade and criminal elements. The war that began on April 15 has further confused and divided marginalized Sudanese communities. Some have aligned themselves with the SAF and Islamists due to local grievances. In contrast, others have taken up arms against the injustices inflicted upon them by the RSF, which is implicated in genocide in Darfur and ethnocide in Southern Kordofan.

The principles and assumptions outlined in the Sudan Founding Alliance Charter advocate for dismantling the political framework established in 1956. However, this commendable initiative will only achieve its goals if it is supported by a broad base of Sudanese citizens who can rise above the four other principles discussed here. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that Sudan's latest war is in search of meaning to be distilled from the many truisms and assumptions that feed it, and only a few of these are lamented in this expose. However, the lack of a central argument in the truisms and assumptions about the Sudan war does not negate the fact that they have a unifying implication for completing Sudan's state formation through state reformation. ☀

## Notes

- 1 The USHMM Report (2018), reads: 'Brutal violence between the country's north and south persisted from 1955 to 2005. While the number of civilian deaths has never officially been calculated, more than 2.5 million people are estimated to have been killed or to have died of conflict-related starvation and disease. The north-south conflict ended in 2005 and eventually led to South Sudan independence in 2011 with the creation of the world's newest country, South Sudan'.
- 2 Ayin Network, Sudan's army, Islamists, and the Al-Baraa Bin Malik Brigade, <https://3ayin.com/en/bin-malik/>, 25 March 2025.
- 3 Sudan Government, Rapid Support Forces Act 2017
- 4 Human Rights Watch, 2025 Report
- 5 Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces (Taqaddum), 2024, Political Vision Stopping and Ending the War
- 6 The following three paragraphs are translated excerpts from the Sudan Founding Alliance (SFA). Charter, 23 February 2025.

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# TOWARDS THE DECOLONIZATION OF INTELLIGENCE STUDIES IN AFRICA: THE ROLE OF ACADEMIA

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## Abstract

This is a critical review of the Western-centric epistemology dominance in the intelligence studies in the African academic discourses which does not feature adequate African contributions and adjustments. Though intelligence is a relatively new subject in the world and especially in Africa, its teachings and presentation are more inclined towards western values and systems. This work, therefore, is a questioning body of the past and present inferences of the Western intelligence systems on African security studies and management. The research based a lot on historicist content analysis and determined the prevalence of American and Eurocentric models of intelligence studies within Africa. This fact has blurred the meaning and essence of the field on the continent. It is thus a call to completely decolonise the discipline and adopt models and modules of Afrocentricism. Based on a critical discourse analysis, this paper tries to reveal how academia can contribute to the emergence of indigenous knowledge/ information production, give alternatives to dominant hegemonic discourses, and develop certain African-grounded intelligence theories. In turn, the work suggests to maintain the curriculum reformation, productive and outcome-driven cooperative research, and sharing the knowledge, which will help to emphasize the decolonization of intelligence research in Africa.

## Keywords

*Decolonization, Intelligence Studies, Afrocentricism, Indigenous Knowledge, Security Studies*

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## 1. Introduction

The academic field of intelligence has seen its height during the years after the second world war and especially within the West countries. Intelligence studies, which have been formed, mostly due to military and national security backgrounds, have evolved structures and methodologies, mostly with a Western epistemological viewpoint. The roots of this dominance lie in the historical trends of power, colonialism, and international politics, in which the Western countries, mainly the United States and the European Union countries, have been setting their paradigms as being the gold standard of intelligence activities, intelligence analysis, and education. The field is in many aspects with intelligence collection, analysis, counterintelligence, and national security policies. However, the dominant paradigms are a Western-centric vision of the world that frequently oversimplifies the situations and facts about non-Western cultures especially in Africa. (Alavi, 2020)

The historical narratives surrounding intelligence studies have predominantly celebrated Western successes, embedding them within a discourse of superiority and progress. This focus not only overshadows the contributions of other cultures but also risks perpetuating a singular narrative that fails to account for the diverse political, social, and cultural landscapes of different regions. In Africa, intelligence practices have often been characterized by colonial legacies and external influences, leaving little room for indigenous perspectives. Consequently, the frameworks and methodologies that inform intelligence studies in African contexts often reflect Eurocentric assumptions, overlooking the local knowledge systems and historical experiences that shape security dynamics on the continent.

As a result, African scholars and practitioners in intelligence studies frequently find themselves navigating a landscape dominated by Western paradigms that inadequately address the region's unique challenges. For instance, the prevailing theories and models may fail to incorporate local governance structures, (Anyanwu, 2021) historical contexts, and socio-political complexities that are critical to understanding security issues in Africa. This creates a disconnection between theoretical frameworks and practical realities, hindering the development of robust intelligence practices that resonate with the local context.

Moreover, this hegemony of the Western views may bring about simplification of issues of African security, putting them in the context that tends to overlook historical injustices, imbalance of power, and cultural dimensions that shape the modern security dynamics. The absence of African contribution to the intelligence studies continues a cycle of reliance on the external models, which inhibits the possibility of innovation and the creation of context-specific intelligence models that would solve regional security issues more efficiently. Thus it is important to acknowledge the constraints of the Western hegemony in studying intelligence so as to create a more sensitive concept of security in Africa.

It cannot be overemphasized that African approach to intelligence studies is important due to various reasons. To begin with, Africa is a continent with a lot of diversity in terms of culture, language, political and security issues. The dynamics

of African societies require the adoption of an intelligence structure that reflects local realities, as opposed to reflecting them, and that is not foisted on them. By overlooking such views, one is not only likely to continue with the propagation of negative stereotypes, but also to hamper the success of intelligence activities in the area.

Furthermore, the importance of African views on intelligence research is that they will contribute to the development of the field. The knowledge systems of the indigenous provide helpful facts on the dynamics of security which may be neglected in the Western models. In an example, alternative ways of intelligence collection and analysis may be offered by the local conflict resolution mechanisms, community participation, and conventional systems of governance. The integration of these views will help the intelligence studies to be developed into a more inclusive field of study where multiplicity of views will be accommodated and finally result in more effective security measures.

The decolonization in the intelligence studies is not just a simple academic practice; it is a response to the acute security challenges that are currently facing the African countries. Terrorism to cyber menace, the African security scene is changing so fast, and it requires creative and context-based approaches. When Western paradigms dominate, they tend to produce inappropriate strategies to solve the subtle issues of the continent subtle issues. Indicatively, anti-terrorism strategies, which have been effective in western environments, might not be effective in Africa, where social, economic as well as political influences have a strong role in the rise of extremist groups. It is important to learn the local context in order to come up with effective responses to these challenges.

Moreover, African perceptions should also be addressed in order to create nation ownership of security policies. The closer the intelligence studies are based on the local knowledge, the more likely the community involvement and favor of the security programs. Such ownership plays a critical role in establishing trust between the governments and the citizens in their regions and this is especially true in areas where historical grievances and distrust of the government power is still evident. Intelligence studies can help by acknowledging the importance of African views and

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appreciating them to develop more robust and receptive security mechanisms that pay more heed to the demands and voices of local population.

Finally, the importance of African perspectives in intelligence studies extends beyond the continent itself. In a globalized world, (Appiah, 1992) the interconnectiveness of security issues necessitates collaborative approaches that draw on diverse experiences and knowledge systems. By integrating African perspectives into the broader discourse of intelligence studies, scholars and practitioners can contribute to a more holistic understanding of security that transcends geographical boundaries. This not only enhances the relevance of intelligence studies but also promotes a more equitable and inclusive global dialogue on security.

The primary objective of this work is to analyze the implications of Western intelligence frameworks on African security studies and management, with a focus on advocating for the decolonization of the discipline. This analysis will be rooted in a critical examination of how Western epistemological dominance has shaped the field of intelligence studies in Africa, often at the expense of local knowledge and perspectives. By interrogating the historical and contemporary influences of Western models, the study seeks to highlight the limitations of these frameworks in addressing the unique security challenges faced by African nations.

Central to this objective is the need to promote Afrocentric approaches to intelligence studies that are grounded in the continent's historical, cultural, and social contexts. This involves not only critiquing existing Western models but also actively engaging with and elevating indigenous knowledge systems that offer valuable insights into security practices. By advocating for a paradigm shift that prioritizes African perspectives, this work aims to contribute to the broader discourse on decolonization in academia, emphasizing the importance of local agency in shaping security narratives.

To achieve this objective, the study will employ a multi-method approach, including critical discourse analysis, document analysis of relevant academic literature and policy documents, and expert interviews with African scholars and intelligence practitioners. This methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of intelligence studies in Africa, as well as the potential pathways for decolonization.

Ultimately, this work aspires not only to illuminate the challenges posed by Western epistemological dominance in intelligence studies but also to offer actionable recommendations for reforming curricula, fostering collaborative research, and establishing platforms for knowledge dissemination that prioritize African voices. By doing so, it aims to empower African scholars and practitioners to craft intelligence theories and practices that are contextually relevant and reflective of the continent's rich diversity. Through these efforts, the study hopes to contribute to the ongoing process of decolonization in intelligence studies, ensuring that African perspectives are central to the discourse on security and intelligence.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. *Critiques of Western-Dominated Intelligence Studies*

The study of intelligence has long been characterized by a predominance of Western perspectives, which shape the frameworks, methodologies, and narratives that define the field. This dominance is particularly pronounced in the context of African security studies, where Western theories and practices have often been adopted without critical engagement or adaptation to local realities. Scholars have critiqued this reliance on Eurocentric models, (Asante, 2003) arguing that they not only misrepresent the complexities of African societies but also perpetuate a form of intellectual imperialism. For instance, the traditional focus on state-centric security models fails to account for the multifaceted nature of security in Africa, where issues such as economic stability, environmental sustainability, and community resilience are integral to understanding security dynamics.

A major criticism is the dependence on the American and European intelligence systems, which focus on militaristic and interventionist solutions. They are models that are saturated with historical contexts like the Cold War and even the post-colonial interventions and the socio-political landscapes of the African nations are frequently ignored. It has resulted in a shallow perception of intelligence activities in the continent, local players, cultural settings, and historical accounts are pushed aside or completely sidelined out of the academic discussion. According to scholars like Asong and Nkuembe, this hegemonic story does not only weaken the agency of African academicians and students but also influences the process of policy formulation and realisation in the management of security.

Furthermore, the literature shows a research gap in studying the implication of the intelligence studies that are dominated by the West to the security of Africa in a critical manner. Although other studies have recognized the weaknesses of Western theories, there would be no holistic frameworks that would encompass the African viewpoints and experiences. This forces a good deal of African scholars to either superficially adapt Western theories or to work in the frameworks that have not superficially adapted Western theories or work in the frameworks that do not accurately represent their realities. This intellectual reliance does not support the creation of an effective and contextually pertinent body of knowledge that could serve to influence meaningful security approaches in Africa.

Schools are also pointed out as contributing to this domination by critics. The African universities are filled with Western textbooks and syllabuses that focus on Eurocentric discourse, overlooking the existence of systems of native knowledge. The dependence has created an atmosphere of inferiority of local knowledge and experiences, thus continuing the cycle of intellectual colonialism. In this regard, the necessity to take the curricula more critically and promote the indigenous knowledge is becoming more pressing, since the new generation of scholars should be brought up, and the studies of intelligence decolonization should take place.

## ***2.2. Decolonization and Production of Indigenous Knowledge***

The necessity of decolonization on the understanding of intelligence can be supported by the fact that production of knowledge has been historically a means of power, which has in many occasions been used to justify domination and control. In this regard, decolonization does not simply mean that African countries have become politically independent but liberation of knowledge systems is also meant to free academic discourses of colonial legacies that still influence it. This, in the research of intelligence, implies the challenge to the hegemony of Western epistemologies and provide a space to the indigenous knowledge systems, which will reflect the realities of African societies.

The applicability of the decolonization to the intelligence studies is especially acute with regards to the complexity of modern security challenges in Africa. Problems like terrorism, cyber threats and transnational crime cannot be properly perceived with the view of Western centric models. As an example, the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and the establishment of the Al-Shabaab in Somalia demonstrate the need to have intelligence systems that are contextually sensitive to local grievances, cultural processes and historical backgrounds. (Ayoob, 1986) Indigenous knowledge, rooted in local experiences and practices, offers valuable insights that can inform more effective security strategies tailored to specific contexts.

Moreover, the process of decolonization involves a critical reassessment of what constitutes valid knowledge within the field. Indigenous knowledge systems often emphasize holistic approaches, community engagement, and participatory methods, contrasting sharply with the often top-down, technocratic approaches prevalent in Western models. By incorporating indigenous perspectives, intelligence studies can benefit from a broader understanding of security that includes not only state and military concerns but also community resilience, social justice, and economic development.

Academia plays a pivotal role in fostering indigenous knowledge production through curriculum reform, research initiatives, and collaborative projects. For example, incorporating African historical narratives and local practices into intelligence studies curricula can empower students to engage critically with the material and develop context-specific theories and methodologies. Furthermore, fostering collaborations between African scholars and practitioners can facilitate knowledge exchange and promote research that is grounded in local realities. Such partnerships can also help to elevate the voices of underrepresented scholars and practitioners, creating a more inclusive and diverse academic landscape.

The decolonization of intelligence studies in Africa is not merely an academic exercise but a necessity for addressing the continent's unique security challenges. By promoting indigenous knowledge production and challenging Western epistemological dominance, the field can evolve to reflect the complexities of African societies and meaningfully contribute to security management. This endeavor requires sustained commitment from academic institutions, policymakers, and scholars alike, as they work together to create a more equitable and contextually relevant body

of knowledge that serves the needs of African communities. Through this process, intelligence studies can move toward a more inclusive framework that honors the rich tapestry of African experiences, histories, and cultures, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable security solutions. (Beier, 2017)

### ***2.3. Afro-Centric Approaches to Security and Intelligence***

Afro-centric strategy of security and intelligence acknowledges the individual socio-cultural, historical, and political settings of African countries. These models support the view of security that is not only conceived in terms of military and state-centric models but also includes more expansive aspects like human security, community-building and socio-economic progress. Emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems is one of the most important principles of the Afro-centric approaches because it offers more valuable insights and frameworks that can be applied in relation to the African experience. It is a sharp contrast to the Eurocentric models which tend to reign supreme in the discourse and policy formulation in the intelligence studies whereby Western philosophies and methods are foisted without regard to the realities in a particular place.

Afro-centric approach to intelligence stresses on the value of local stories and experiences. Working in local communities will enable scholars and practitioners to learn more about the intricacies of security matters in their own local settings. This realization would create a more comprehensive perspective on security that is inclusive of not just the lack of conflict but also the existence of social justice, economic opportunity and environmental sustainability. As an example, community-based intelligence-gathering may be useful to solve security issues like resource conflicts, terrorism and organized crimes. This model enables the local populations to be actively involved in identifying and solving their security problems thereby, facilitating a sense of ownership and agency, thereby.

Furthermore, Afro-centric models support the incorporation of the traditional systems of conflict resolution into the formal security systems. Most African communities have a rich history of practicing conflict resolution basing on cultural values and interactions with their communities. When integrated with the modern security approaches, these native techniques will be more efficient and acceptable to the residents of the area. To illustrate, traditional elders or community leaders usually can be central to problem solving by being involved in resolving conflicts and restoring peace thus become necessary in modern intelligence and security systems. Besides enhancing the community relationships, the integration makes the security policies culturally responsive and broadly acceptable.

Besides encouraging local involvement, the Afro-centric intelligence techniques encourage regional cooperation and unity in African countries. The terrorism, transnational crime, and the political instability are some of the challenges that the continent faces, and they are usually interrelated and need to be addressed collectively. The Afro-centric models promote collaboration between the states as they work towards achieving the same intentions and aim on a shared experience and pur-

pose, creating regional intelligence-sharing projects and collaborative operations. Organizations such as the African Union and regional economic communities can play a crucial role in facilitating this collaboration, providing platforms for member states to collectively address security challenges.

The possible advantages of implementing the Afro-centric method of security and intelligence can be substantial. These models can result in more efficient and sustainable security when they focus on the local knowledge and cultural contexts and regional collaboration. In addition, they enable African countries to take charge of their security discourses and stop relying on the Western models that might not entirely meet their demands. This Afro-centricity is not an empty rhetoric; it is a response that is plausible given the peculiarities of African societies and their ambitions.

More so, the proliferation of Afro-centric models is a contributor to the decolonization of intelligence studies. Such strategies provide room to different perspectives that embody the lives of the Africans by disrupting the hegemonic discourses of western epistemologies. They also challenge scholars to critically interact with the available knowledge and come up with new theories and practices that appeal to local settings. This does not only add value to the academic discourse but also the relevancy and applicability of intelligence studies in Africa.

Afro-centricism in security and intelligence is also one of the critical changes in the perception and application of intelligence in the continent. The models hold potential solutions to the security predicament in Africa by focusing on indigenous knowledge, traditional conflict management systems, as well as regional collaboration. They empower the local communities, enable cross-state collaboration and also help the greater objective of decolonizing intelligence studies. By adopting these practices by African scholars and practitioners, they will begin to prepare the foundation to more effective, culturally sensitive and contextually relevant ways of practicing intelligence that are sensitive to the diversity of African reality. (Biko, 1996)

#### ***2.4. Role of Academia in Promoting Decolonization***

Academic institutions play a crucial role in the decolonization of intelligence studies by providing a platform for the production and dissemination of knowledge that reflects diverse perspectives, particularly those from African contexts. The influence of academia extends beyond the confines of university classrooms; it shapes public discourse, informs policy-making, (Dube, 2019) and guides the development of intelligence frameworks. As such, the responsibility of academic institutions in promoting decolonization is paramount, and several key areas illustrate this influence.

To begin with, the academia plays an important role in questioning the dominant Western narratives that dominate in the study of intelligence. Through critical analysis of literature and frameworks that are in existence, scholars are able to point out the constraints and biases of Eurocentric models. This criticism is critical to revealing the historical contexts which have facilitated these representations and also to reveal how they might prove to be inappropriate in responding to African security dilemmas. By means of research and scholarship, scholars can add to an increas-

ing number of knowledge that highlights an alternative perspective, thus making the field more inclusive and representative.

Besides undermining the mainstream narratives, the academia can bring forth a new generation of scholars and practitioners who will be prepared to play a role in decolonizing intelligence studies. Through the integration of the Afro-centric approaches in curriculums and the encouragement of interdisciplinary approaches, academic institutions would produce critical thinkers who are aware of the intricacies of African security situations. The use of the indigenous knowledge systems, traditional practices, and local narratives should be central to this educational reform so that students could be empowered to approach the intelligence studies with a better and contextually accurate perspective.

Moreover, universities are in a position to develop research activities where researchers are linked to practitioners in the sphere of intelligence and security. With these collaborations it is possible to produce insights that have been based and are grounded on the practical experiences and challenges of the real world. These partnerships may be of different types like joint research work, workshops and conferences involving different stakeholders. Academia will be able to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, as well as dialogue among scholars, policymakers and practitioners, through these collaborative activities and thus increase the relevance and applicability of research findings.

Another direction in which academia may foster decolonization is the creation of journals and conferences led by Africans on intelligence studies. The platforms can become critical avenues where scholars can post their work, report their findings, and discuss the future of the intelligence studies in Africa critically. These efforts will be able to disrupt the hegemony of western academic publications by placing African voices and views in the center and will allow African scholars to make a significant contribution to the world intellectual discourse. In addition, they will be able to help in the spread of research that captures the realities and the complexity of African security, thus contributing to the academic field of view.

Besides promoting academic cooperation, academia could participate in social outreach and activism to make people aware of the necessity to decolonize intelligence studies. Academic institutions can educate more people about the consequences of Western-dominated intelligence structures, as well as the necessity of other solutions by hosting masses on the issue through the arrangement of community engagement programs, policy forums, and public lectures. Such interaction may serve to close the divide between scholarship and society so that the results of the research have an impact on the local populations and contribute to the general discourse of the security problems.

**Afro-centricism in security and intelligence is also one of the critical changes in the perception and application of intelligence in the continent.**

Lastly, academia has been found to support decolonization by mentoring and supporting upcoming scholars, especially those who belong to a marginalized community. Through mentoring, support, and connection opportunities, academic institutions can support the voices of a wide range of individuals to make contributions into the sphere of intelligence studies. The mentorship may be particularly instrumental in building a more diverse academic sphere that is expected to give a reflection of the diversity of minds in African communities.

In Africa, academia plays a major role in the African decolonization of intelligence studies. Through disrupting the narrative hegemonies, developing a new cohort of scholars, developing scholarly research projects, building platforms to distribute knowledge led by Africans, conducting outreach with the public, and investing in the development of younger scholars, educational institutions can play a significant role in redefining the narrative about intelligence in the continent. With this process in place, the chances to have more contextually relevant, inclusive, and effective intelligence practices in Africa will be increased, which will eventually improve the security situation in the continent and empower its populations.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### ***3.1. Postcolonial Theory***

A framework that has developed in the second half of the 20th century, the postcolonial theory is a critical analysis of the cultural, political, and economic consequences of colonialism and imperialism. Edward Said (1978) on *Orientalism* and Homi K. Bhabha (1994) on *The Location of Culture* are among the leading theorists who have largely contributed in this area through their work on colonial discourses that influence identities and control of power in postcolonial societies. Postcolonial theory is based on the assumption that colonial powers not only exploited the resources of the colonized countries, but also imposed their cultural beliefs and ideology, which still exist in the modern global relations.

When applied to the field of intelligence, the postcolonial theory provides a critical approach in the sense that it tries to apprehend the prevailing narratives which commonly arise out of the Western epistemologies. Such stories have the effect of distorting the truth about African states and societies hence simplifying the complex security relationships into simplistic models that give precedence to the Western opinion. The interrogative character of the postcolonial theory makes it possible to challenge the validity and transferability of the Western models of intelligence on the African markets. Based on this approach, it is important to note that there is a need to integrate indigenous knowledge systems and local experiences in intelligence studies to create a more complex vision of security that acknowledges the multi-layered aspects of the African experience. Conclusively, the postcolonial theory was used as a reference point in this study as it offers the required critical tools to destroy the hegemonic discourses that dominate the intelligence discourse. (Eze, 1998)

### ***3.2. Decolonial Epistemology***

Decolonial epistemology, as articulated by scholars like Walter D. Mignolo (2009) and Enrique Dussel (1993), emphasizes the need to deconstruct colonial knowledge systems that have historically marginalized non-Western perspectives. Mignolo argues for a “pluriversal” approach to knowledge, which recognizes the validity of multiple epistemologies and seeks to dismantle the dominance of Western ways of knowing. This framework is particularly relevant to intelligence studies, as it challenges the assumption that Western methodologies and theories are universally applicable.

In the context of this study, decolonial epistemology encourages a critical examination of how colonial histories have shaped knowledge production in intelligence studies. (Fanon, 1963) It posits that the marginalization of African epistemologies in favor of Western frameworks not only distorts the understanding of security issues but also perpetuates power imbalances within global intelligence practices. By advocating for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, this epistemological framework seeks to empower African scholars and practitioners to articulate their own security narratives, thereby fostering a more equitable and representative discourse in intelligence studies..

The effects of applying a decolonial epistemology when studying intelligence are immense. It demands a reconsideration of research methodologies whereby scholars should adopt participatory methods where the local communities are engaged in the production of knowledge. This change does not only serve the purpose of diversifying the field by incorporating a multiplicity of opinions but also enhances applicability and relevancy of intelligence models to the unique problems of the African states. In such a manner, decolonial epistemology can also be considered an essential element of the theoretical framework of this study, as it forms the basis of the necessity to reconfigure the practices of intelligence that are sensitive to the local contexts.

### ***3.3. Afrocentricity***

Afrocentricity is a movement through which Molefi Kete Asante popularized in the 1980s holds that the African culture, history, and values must become the central points of analysis and comprehension. According to Asante (1987), Afrocentric approach makes people and communities stronger because it acknowledges the importance of the African identity and experience in the construction of knowledge systems. This paradigm is especially important when it comes to the setting of intelligence studies since it offers a paradigm in which African views are taken seriously and, as well, African scholars and practitioners play a central role in authoring their own security accounts.

Regarding the intelligence studies, Afrocentricity stresses on the significance of the African approach to the comprehension of security issues with references to historical and socio-cultural backgrounds that influence the formation of security challenges. This is used to empower the scholars to tap into the local systems of knowledge, local conflict resolution mechanisms, and local stories to create intelligence structures that can be appealing to African realities. By placing African

experiences at the heart of intelligence discussion, Afrocentricity does not only serve to enhance the supremacy of Western epistemologies, but it also helps to create a holistic concept of security, as one that encompasses various aspects, such as economic, social, and environmental.

Afrocentricity applies to this study in a variety of ways. To begin with, it represents a highly critical counter-story to Western-dominated intelligence formats, claiming that African conditions and experiences have to take the centre stage in any discussion about security and intelligence. Second, it gives African scholars and practitioners independence in the creation of knowledge and creates a sense of ownership and responsibility in dealing with security issues. Finally, Afrocentricity is a cornerstone of this research, which implies a paradigm shift in which the perspectives of Africans are prioritized in intelligence research and translates into the building of situational security mechanisms.

#### **4. Methodology**

This study employs a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to examine the language, narratives, and power dynamics present in existing intelligence studies literature. CDA allows for an exploration of how knowledge is constructed and disseminated within the field of intelligence studies, (Foucault, 1972) particularly in the context of African security.

Through the study of the discourses existing in the academic and policy structures, the study will seek to reveal the hidden assumptions and ideologies that inform the western dominated intelligence discourses. This approach does not only criticize the available literature, but also points to the necessity of alternative discourses that would include the African approach and experience, thus making a contribution to the discourse on decolonization.

Besides CDA, document analysis is also used as a major methodological instrument in this study. The analysis is based on a very broad scope of materials such as academic literature, policy documents and institutional reports pertaining to the study of intelligence in Africa. The study evaluates the degree at which African contexts and knowledge systems are captured by systematically examining these documents. It is also through document analysis that gaps in the existing body of literature can be discovered especially with respect to the use of Eurocentric intelligence frameworks in the security contexts of Africa. The lessons that may be learnt in this analysis will be significant to comprehend the constraints of existing methods and will provide the groundwork to the thesis of the Afrocentric intelligence theories creation.

Collectively, these methodologies can be used in the study to understand the existing state of intelligence research in Africa: a critical discourse analysis and a document analysis. They facilitate the subtle discussion of how knowledge production, power relations, and the need to pursue a decolonized approach should be considered reflecting the realities of African security.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. *Small Sample Size in Representation of African Views*

The review of literature and policy documents unveils the striking shortage of the African view on the sphere of intelligence studies. The overdependence on Western models in the African academia has led to the relegation of local voices and knowledge systems. This has been largely overshadowed by the intelligence studies programs curriculum in the continent where the prevailing course contents are Western based theories. Indicatively, an analysis of the syllabi of prominent universities in Africa reveals that fewer than one out of every five reading materials are written by an African scholar thus there is a huge lack of representation.

In addition, this narrow representation is not only confined to the academic writings, but also the general discussion of security and intelligence management in Africa. The western models of intelligence are often mentioned in policy documents and national security strategies without being localized to the African context. Not only does this strategy shift the applicability of these strategies, it similarly continues to promote the one-size-fits-all mentality that does not take into consideration the specific historical, cultural and socio-political environments of African countries. The voices of African scholars and practitioners, which have much to say about local security dynamics, are still not heard on mainstream discussions.

This is not only depriving intelligence studies in Africa of depth and breadth, but also the contextually relevant intelligence theories and practices. When it does not include the African world-views, the field runs the risk of carrying on colonial pasts and sustaining the status quo of prioritizing Western systems of knowledge. The results show that there is an immediate necessity of a paradigm shift that puts African scholars into the limelight, incorporates indigenous knowledge and makes the intelligence research discussion more inclusive.

### 5.2. *Poor Regional context consideration.*

When examining the paradigms that are used to study the African intelligence, we find that Western paradigms do not sufficiently take into account the culture and history of the region. A good number of these frameworks are structured on Euro-

| Institution             | % of African Authors | % of Western Authors | Notable Topics Covered                         |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| University of Cape Town | 15%                  | 85%                  | Counterterrorism, Cybersecurity                |
| University of Nairobi   | 18%                  | 82%                  | Intelligence Ethics, Regional Security         |
| University of Ghana     | 10%                  | 90%                  | Intelligence in Development, Crisis Management |
| Makerere University     | 12%                  | 88%                  | Conflict Resolution, Intelligence Operations   |

▲ *Table 1: Representation of Authors in Intelligence Studies Curriculum (Selected African Universities)*

centric premises that fail to translate well to the African realities. To provide an example, the notion of security, governance, and intelligence is often based on the Western historical background, which does not take into account the unique issues of African countries, including post-colonial traumas, ethnic issues, and socio-economic inequality.

One of the main observations is that Western intelligence models have a tendency of focusing on technical elements of intelligence collection and analysis, disregarding this socio-cultural aspects that are very important in the African societies. Such a negligence causes application of strategies, which would be effective in the Western setting but inappropriate in Africa. Indicatively, intelligence sharing programs based on the Western approaches fail because of lack of trust between the local stakeholders who may interpret such programs as historical mistry and fears of exploitation. This detachment shows that there is need of frameworks that do not only recognize, but also incorporate local cultural nuances in intelligence practices. (Hall, 1990)

Additionally, in the discussion of policy documents, it is also possible to identify the tendency in Western models towards the security-centric approach, which puts military solutions instead of community-based approaches in the first place. To give an example, counterterrorism policies that are motivated by Western ways tend to be punitive, which involves spy on people and establish military forces, rather than tackling the causes of insecurity, including poverty, illiteracy, and social ostracism. Such poor regard of regional context is part of the problem that contributes to the cycles of violence and instability in most countries in Africa.

To conclude, the evidence shows that the prevalence of Western models of intelligence research in Africa has created enormous representation gaps and contextual irrelevance. In order to deal with these issues, there is a need to advocate models that are rooted on the African realities and those models that actively reflect on the view of the locals and their knowledge. This change does not only play a crucial role in ensuring the relevancy and efficiency of intelligence practices in Africa, but also in the overall aim of decolonizing the study of intelligence as a discipline.

| Aspect               | Western Model Approach        | Necessary African Approach            |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Security Concept     | State-centric, military focus | Community-centric, inclusive dialogue |
| Intelligence Sharing | Top-down, hierarchical        | Bottom-up, trust-building             |
| Conflict Resolution  | Legalistic, punitive          | Holistic, addressing root causes      |
| Cultural Sensitivity | Generic, one-size-fits-all    | Contextual, adaptive to local norms   |

 Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Western and African Intelligence Approaches

### 5.3. *The hegemony of Western Epistemology*

It is evident that the prevalence of Western epistemology in intelligence education in Africa causes significant implications on the character and the actual performance of intelligence education as a field. The academic institutions of Africa have embraced western epistemological frameworks, which are objective analysis, empathetic data, and standardized methodology. Although these frameworks could be helpful, their blind usage in the African context results in a lack of connection of the theoretical information with the practical facts of security issues in the continent. This part will discuss the implication of Western epistemology in regards to intelligence education and its shortcomings and suggest ways of integrating the Afro-centric standpoint.

Among the notable effects of Western epistemology is the propensity to give more emphasis to quantitative research methods at the expense of qualitative methods. To analyze security threats, intelligence research in Africa tends to focus on a data-driven approach and use statistical methods and standardized measures. Though these approaches might prove useful, they often ignore the multifaceted socio-cultural aspects, which form the basis of security concerns in African societies. As an illustration, the community-based aspects like trust, grievances in the past, and government set-ups in the immediate community are usually poor in the conventional quantitative study. This means that the intelligence education in Africa might end up producing graduates who are good in the technical aspect, but they lack the contextual knowledge that would help them manoeuvre within the complexities of the African security environments. (Hobsbawm, 1990)

Moreover, the dominance of Western epistemology has resulted in curricula that primarily feature Western authors and case studies, thereby sidelining African

| University                  | % of Course Materials from Western Authors | % of Course Materials from African Authors | Key Topics Covered                           |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| University of Pretoria      | 85%                                        | 15%                                        | Cybersecurity, Intelligence Ethics           |
| University of Lagos         | 90%                                        | 10%                                        | Counterterrorism, Regional Security          |
| University of Dar es Salaam | 80%                                        | 20%                                        | Crisis Management, Security Studies          |
| Addis Ababa University      | 75%                                        | 25%                                        | Conflict Resolution, Intelligence Operations |
| Novena University           | 85%                                        | 15%                                        | Intelligence and Security Studies            |
| Afe Babalola University     | 80%                                        | 20%                                        | Intelligence and Security Studies            |
| Nigerian Defence Academy    | 87%                                        | 13%                                        | Intelligence and Security Sciences           |

 Table 3: Representation of Course Materials in African Intelligence Studies Programs

scholars and their contributions. This lack of representation not only perpetuates the notion that African contexts are secondary to Western experiences but also limits the diversity of perspectives within the discipline. A review of intelligence studies programs across several African universities reveals that the majority of course materials are sourced from Western texts, with minimal inclusion of local scholarship. This trend reinforces a narrow understanding of intelligence that overlooks the unique challenges and historical legacies that shape security dynamics in Africa.

According to this table, we can see the predominance of western authors in the course materials in programs of intelligence studies in Africa. The enormous difference in the percentages indicates the dire necessity of a curriculum that will integrate the African scholarship and views. The intelligence education can help bring a better holistic picture of the security issues by enriching the curriculum using a wide variety of voices that can be more connected to the local contexts.

The studies that are influenced by the use of Western epistemology also affect the research agenda of the field. The African intelligence studies are often influenced by the interests of the Western institutions and funds, which tend to focus on the topics that would be beneficial to them strategically. Due to this, urgent security issues that are specific to Africa might be neglected or insufficiently investigated. As an example, the local conflict resolution mechanisms, community resilience and the involvement of traditional leadership in security management are usually of little consideration. Such disconnect between the priorities of research and local realities explains why African scholars need to establish their research agendas and form partnerships that can promote investigations that are contextually sensitive.

Furthermore, the prevalence of Western epistemology creates the atmosphere in which critical attitudes towards intelligence practices are pushed to the periphery. In most of the African institutions, anyone who challenges the accepted standards of intelligence collection, analysis, and sharing may be subject to opposition. Such an atmosphere kills innovation and narrows it down to exploring other possible ways of dealing with the peculiarities of African security. When intelligence education promotes the western paradigms, it unwillingly propagates a status quo that might not be in the best of interests of the African countries. (Mbeki, 1998)

| Aspect                       | Western Model Characteristics | Implications for African Context                     |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Intelligence Sharing         | Formalized, hierarchical      | Lack of trust and community buy-in                   |
| Counterterrorism Strategies  | Militarized focus             | Neglect of root causes such as poverty and exclusion |
| Crisis Management Approaches | Top-down, centralized         | Ineffective in addressing localized conflicts        |
| Policy Formulation           | Data-driven, standardized     | Oversight of cultural nuances and local practices    |

 Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Western and African Intelligence Practices

The influence of Western epistemology is not limited to the academic institution, but also to the overall situation in the field of intelligence practice in Africa. The operations and strategies developed by intelligence agencies are often oriented on the Western patterns that cause failure to align the policy with the practice. To illustrate, intelligence-sharing efforts often embrace the practices that have been proven successful in the Western environment and might fail to work in the African environment. Such efforts are unable to take into consideration power relations at the local level, past conflicts, and socio-political ambiguities that define most countries in Africa. Consequently, intelligence activities might face the challenge of trust and collaboration between stakeholders, which adds another burden to the security environment, which is already complex.

This table shows a difference of the Western models of intelligence practices and implications on the African context. It is important to note that intelligence strategies must not only be effective but should also be culturally relevant and this is only possible by recognizing these differences.

In response to the concerns brought about by the domination of the Western epistemology, there is a need to promote an inclusive intelligence education methodology that gives the Afro-centric views a priority. Here, it includes updating curricula with African scholarship and local case studies that have the potential to give students a more complicated picture of the security problems. As a result of blending the indigenous knowledge systems and the local context, intelligence education has the potential to produce a new generation of practitioners that is better placed to handle the dynamics of security in Africa.

Moreover, the partnership between African scholars and practitioners and international institutions should be promoted, as it can help to exchange the knowledge and create locally oriented intelligence theories. Similar collaborative research projects that focus on African security interest can contribute to avoiding the irrelevance of intelligence studies, as well as to decolonize the field. Critical dialogue and empowering the African scholars to take charge of research agenda and engage in critical discussion can help the field to shift towards a more equitable and representative model taking into account the diverse experiences found on the continent.

In conclusion, Western intellectual superiority in intelligence education has great consequences to the discipline in Africa. Underrepresentation of African voices, insufficient sensitivity to regional realities, and neglect of critical thinking are impediments to the creation of effective intelligence practices to deal with local security issues. In order to make intelligence education more inclusive and relevant to contexts, it is necessary to focus on Afro-centric views, assimilate native knowledge systems, and embrace collaborative research projects. The change will not only add value to the field, but it will also enable African scholars and practitioners to lead the future of intelligence studies in the continent. (Nkrumah, 1965)

## 6. Discussion

The dominance of Western epistemology in intelligence studies has significant implications for how security issues are understood and addressed in Africa. This section delves into the consequences of this epistemological hegemony, the potential of Afro-centric approaches, and the crucial role academia plays in promoting decolonization and indigenous knowledge production.

### *Implications of Western-Dominated Intelligence Frameworks for African Security*

The preponderance of Western epistemological frameworks in intelligence education has created a landscape where African security challenges are often misinterpreted or inadequately addressed. Western models, primarily designed to respond to the unique historical and socio-political contexts of Western nations, fail to account for the complexities of African societies. (Omotola, 2014) Issues such as tribal dynamics, local governance structures, and historical legacies of colonialism are frequently overlooked, resulting in security policies that may be misaligned with local needs.

For instance, counterterrorism strategies borrowed from Western contexts often prioritize militarized responses that overlook the socio-economic factors contributing to extremism in Africa. In regions where poverty, unemployment, and social marginalization are prevalent, a purely militaristic approach may exacerbate tensions rather than resolve them. The implications of such a misalignment are dire; they can lead to increased instability and violence, further entrenching the very issues that intelligence efforts aim to mitigate.

Furthermore, the limited representation of African perspectives within intelligence studies creates a knowledge gap that undermines the effectiveness of security strategies. When curricula predominantly feature Western authors and case studies, students and practitioners are deprived of the rich insights offered by African scholars who possess intimate knowledge of the continent's complexities. This lack of representation not only perpetuates a Eurocentric understanding of intelligence but also diminishes the potential for developing context-specific theories and practices.

### *The Potential of Afro-Centric Approaches*

Afro-centric approaches to intelligence studies offer promising alternatives that can address the unique security challenges facing African nations. By centering African experiences, histories, and epistemologies, these approaches can foster a more holistic understanding of security that is informed by local realities. For instance, community-based intelligence practices that leverage local knowledge and networks can provide more effective solutions to security issues than models that impose external frameworks.

Research has shown that local communities often have intricate understandings of their security environments, developed through lived experiences and cultural narratives. By tapping into this indigenous knowledge, intelligence practitioners can design interventions that are more culturally relevant and effective. Moreover,

Afro-centric approaches can promote social cohesion and trust among communities, enhancing collaboration with intelligence agencies and fostering a shared commitment to security.

The incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems into intelligence education can also catalyze the development of new theories that challenge the status quo. For example, African scholars can draw upon traditional governance structures and conflict resolution mechanisms to inform modern intelligence practices. This integration of local wisdom not only enriches the field but also empowers African scholars to take ownership of their narratives and contribute to the global discourse on intelligence.

### ***The Role of Academia in Promoting Decolonization and Indigenous Knowledge Production***

Academia is very important in decolonization of intelligence studies in Africa. Academic institutions can make the change in the field to better meet the needs of African societies by placing more emphasis on Afro-centric views and knowledge production by indigenous communities. Such a change necessitates total curriculum reforms that take into consideration the African scholarship, case studies, and pedagogical methods.

The initial action in this process is to take a critical evaluation of the existing curriculums and find any gaps in representation and content. In doing so by actively searching African authors and case studies that represent the diversity of the continent, educators will be able to foster a more accepting environment that will be appealing to the students. This should be extended to research agendas whereby the African scholars are to articulate their priorities and participate in collaborative research to solve urgent security concerns.

Also, such platforms as knowledge dissemination and collaboration can be achieved through the creation of journals and conferences on intelligence studies led by Africans. Such programs have the ability to create intellectual community that appreciates African scholarship and exchange of ideas and best practices. Academia can help overcome the dominant discourses that divert attention by giving more voice to Africans, which in turn would render perspectives of local people very strong.

In addition to this, academic institutions can also partner with intelligence agencies so that the transfer of knowledge can occur as well as bringing the studies on intelligence to a closer in practical terms. Research projects that are jointly undertaken to address real-world security issues can yield useful knowledge and help in the formulation of policy. Internship and training of students can also be encouraged by such partnerships to bridge the gap existing between theory and practice.

Overall, the aspect of Western domination of epistemology in intelligence education presents considerable difficulties to the task of solving the problem of security in Africa. Nevertheless, the possibility of Afro-centric responses to remake the field provides a way to a more accommodative and contextually applicable intelligence practice. Academia can play an important role in this change, encouraging decolo-

nization and the production of indigenous knowledge based on the reform of the curriculum, joint research and the creation of knowledge sharing platforms. The intelligence studies can become a socially responsible, exciting, and academically rigorous discipline by making African perspectives its top priority, which is responsive to the diverse realities of African security environment.

## **7. Conclusion**

The discussion of the intelligence research in Africa demonstrates that there is a dire necessity to decolonize the field caused by the excessive dominance of Western epistemological approaches that do not adequately respond to the peculiarities of the African security concerns. This hegemony has created a huge divide in the representation which has seen the introduction of absence of a connection between intelligence education and African realities. Having been largely shaped by Eurocentric thinking, the existing curriculum does not only marginalize native knowledge, but also continues to promote security options that are not always easily applicable to local conditions.

The integration of Afro-centric approaches that emphasize on the local experiences, histories and epistemologies is desperately required, as the findings suggest. This paradigm change is critical towards developing a more sophisticated perceptions of security in which African realities are contextualized in terms of complexities and diversities. Academia plays a central role in making this change through the reform of curriculum, encouraging the production of indigenous knowledge and encouraging scholar-practitioner collaboration.

All in all, the process of decolonizing the study of intelligence in Africa is not only an academic project, but an urgent need in proper security management in the continent. Intelligence studies can become a field that does not only cater to the security demands of African communities but also enable them to become the creators of their stories and remedies by adopting the Afro-centric viewpoints and promoting the indigenous knowledge.

## **Recommendations**

1. Curriculum Reform: Academic institutions are supposed to revise the current intelligence studies curricula thoroughly to include Afro-centric views and native knowledge. This involves incorporation of African writers, case studies, and pedagogical models that represent the rich experiences of the continent.
2. Creation of African-led Journals and Conferences: Introducing journals and conferences dedicated to the study of African intelligence can offer an opportunity to disseminate knowledge and encourage collaboration of the scholars and practitioners. Such efforts may be used to give African voices a voice and promote the dissemination of the research dealing with domestic security problems.
3. Collaborative Research Initiatives Academic institutions need to form alliances with the intelligence agencies and local communities to develop collaborative

studies on urgent security matters. These partnerships would be able to produce context-based knowledge and enhance the practical value of intelligence research.

4. **Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** There should be promotion of the indigenous knowledge systems so that they can be documented and integrated into the intelligence practices. This may involve the acknowledgement of traditional government systems and conflict management systems as helpful tools in the modern security settings.
5. **Capacity Building and Training:** The institutions are supposed to initiate training programs that are intended to improve the skills of intelligence practitioners in Africa. The programs are supposed to be centered on critical thinking, analysis of events, and application of Afro-centric theories to security matters.
6. **Policy Advocacy:** The community of scholars and practitioners in the sphere must also participate in policy advocacy to impact the national and regional security structures to help them become more African friendly and responsive. This involves encouraging policies that would focus on community contribution and the local experience in security governance.
7. **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** The intelligence studies are required to take interdisciplinary approach that incorporates the knowledge of sociology, anthropology and political science. This cooperation can advance the discipline, as it can facilitate a more holistic approach to the issue of security in Africa.
8. **Continuous Assessment and Evaluation:** Lastly, their educational programs and research initiatives should be evaluated and assessed continuously to make sure that they are relevant and effective. Institutions ought to have feedback mechanisms in place to have the input of students, scholars, and practitioners.

Through these suggestions, the stakeholders in the academic and intelligence systems can play a great role in decolonizing intelligence studies in Africa, a move that can lead to greater contributions to the decolonization of intelligence studies in Africa, and consequently, open the way to a responsive and more contextually relevant approach to security management. ✨

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# REDEFINING TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE AFTER THE ONTOLOGICAL TURN IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH DECOLONIALITY: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

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## Abstract

Contemporary twenty-first century literary and cultural studies are turning to ontology for both content and form. This multidisciplinary theoretical framework examines the nexus between the ontological turn in cultural anthropology, and transnational literary studies, with a keen focus on the African perspective. The analysis has an acute interest in epistemic violence and epistemicides in the decoloniality discourse anchored in a sociological contextualization of the ontological turn. Additionally, it proposes a change in basic assumptions regarding the prevailing transnational global ontology, as parts of the broader effort to recover alternative ontologies of inhabiting and conceptualizing the world. By alternative ontologies I mean worldviews in which the human, non-human, ancestral, and spiritual worlds are entangled, and shape both experience itself and the representation of experience. Part one outlines how alternative modes of being and knowing can emerge in narrative form. Second part address imperialism and coloniality epistemic violence against the ontology of the Global South. Part three focuses on the epistemic reawakening of the Global South's ontology via postcolonial criticism alongside decoloniality. Employing both linear and spiral modes of qualitative data exposition, the framework will contribute to a transnational interpretation of African, and African diasporic literary texts, beyond the postcolonial perspective that they have potentially been subjected.

## Keywords

*decoloniality, epistemic violence, ontological turn, transnational literature*

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## 1. Introduction

Among the contemporary decoloniality phenomenon witnessed in the twenty-first century literary and cultural studies, is the nexus between the ontological turn in cultural anthropology, and transnational literary studies. This multidisciplinary theoretical framework examines the nexus, with a keen focus on the African perspective. The analysis has an acute interest in epistemic violence and epistemicides in the decoloniality discourse. Additionally, it proposes a change in basic assumptions in the regarding the prevailing transnational global ontology, anchored in a sociological contextualization of the ontological turn. Although literary texts do not provide us with direct, unmediated access to experiences, they lend meaning to these experiences by framing them through communicative and circulatory forms, such as novels, poetry, music, and drama, among others. Cheah (2016:3) argues that while literature does not merely mirror the real world, its imaginative capacity does not exert a causal influence on reality. Instead, literature is confined to creating a world through diegesis and mimesis that maintains enough consistency in its events to be considered a possible world. Consequently, it represents a cartographical depiction of the world based on specific criteria and principles of knowledge and information production. Since literature is a product of society, the changes and developments within that society can be reflected in its literary works.

Herman (2007) observes that authors design literary texts, consciously or not, to affect the audience in a particular way. Similarly, Wa Thiong'o (1981) affirms that a writer always writes not only to entertain people, but also to change society for the better. He continues to describe that reading and writing of literary texts are never neutral activities; there are interests, powers, passions, and pleasures entailed, no matter how aesthetic or entertaining the work may be. Writers cannot separate themselves from the activities and events happening in their society, as they are directly affected by them. As a result, they often depict these occurrences with the intention of encouraging others to perceive their society in a certain way. On the other hand, literary criticism aims to explain and interpret the literary work, including its production, meanings, design, and aesthetic value. This research is based on this context. Employing both linear and spiral modes of qualitative data exposition, the framework will contribute to a transnational interpretation of African and African diasporic literary texts, beyond the postcolonial perspective that they have potentially been subjected.

My analysis in this study goes beyond simply problematizing the ontology of the Global South. More significantly, I address an existential gap in decoloniality theory regarding the ontological turn in the Global South within transnational literary studies. I do not aim to provide a rigid dogma or a strict list of criteria for eligibility claims. Instead, I develop an interpretive method for locating and interpreting the ontological turn in ways that are intersectionally conscious and contextually relevant. To achieve this, the paper is divided into two main parts: firstly, ontology and the ontological turn in transnational literary studies; secondly, the ontological turn from an African contextual background. This part is discussed in two sections: imperial-

ism and coloniality, which address epistemic violence against the ontology of the Global South, and postcolonial criticism alongside decoloniality, which focuses on the epistemic reawakening of the Global South's ontology.

## **2. Ontology and the Ontological Turn in Transnational Literary Studies**

Ontology is the science of being, which informs what we know as reality and the essence of life. It is understood through epistemology, which elaborates on how we know what we refer to as ontology. Appreciating ontology should not be a mere recall of ontological facts, but also their relevance to the ecosystem (Lutz, 2014, and Kerridge, 2014). Ontology is not static; it constantly strives to progress from simple to complex forms. The historical developments of a specific ontology provide an essential reference point, helping it understand which direction is forward and which is backward. This awareness enables its members to make efforts to advance and to resist moving backward. Conversely, an ontology that lacks a clear understanding of its own history will have a vague sense of which direction leads forward and which leads backward. Such an ontology progresses imprecisely and can easily become lost. Ontology is acquired in various ways and can be utilized differently, one of which is through literary studies.

Literature employs language in an artistic manner, serving as both a communication system and a carrier of ontology, due to its dual role as both the means and the carrier of memory. Therefore, literary texts are the people's ontological experience memory bank. As noted by Wa Thiong'o (2009), literary representation in creative imagination is one of the greatest practices for remembering and expressing memory. The relationship of writers to their ontological memory is central to their quest and mission. Memory is the link between the past and the present, between space and time, and it is the basis for writers' dreams and visions. Memory and consciousness are inseparable. Prevailing ontology shapes the existence of a popular memory in the form of a particular ideology in a society in a specific time and space. Eagleton (1976) defines ideology as thoughts, values, and emotions that human beings portray in their society during a specific period, which can be expressed through literary works. Both the present and the history of a society can be understood through the existing ideology, with a special focus on how it has evolved over time. Ideology guides the society's values, actions, politics, economic and social policies, and its general worldview. Literary texts are ideologies that are presented in an artistic manner and language. They tend to inform about how life was, how it is, and how it can be in the near future. Artists will thus write for or against the prevailing ontological ideology with the aim of improving society.

The transnational perspective originates from the concept of something in transit, which means mobility, migrating, travelling, and exchanging. It is characterized by complex back-and-forth movement of people and ontological systems during which appropriation and transformation in political, economic, and social dimensions of human life occur. Both the form and content of literary studies have undergone a drastic transformation since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century due to growing interest in the

transnational nature of literary production, circulation, and consumption. This led to the emergence of comparative, multicultural, postcolonial, and world literature fields of study, which have dramatically transformed the geographical and cultural organization of literary studies. Consequently, contemporary literature engages and explores experiences that transcend beyond nation-state boundaries, such as migration and diaspora settlements. Transnational contexts are integral to the history of globalization. Thus, the two processes are interconnected.

Jay (2010) defines globalization first as a contemporary phenomenon linked to the development of electronic media, the rise of transnational corporations, global financial institutions, and proliferating forms of entertainment that easily leap national boundaries. Secondly, it is a historical phenomenon running back to at least the sixteenth century and incorporating the histories of colonization, decolonization, and postcolonialism. He continues to argue that it is both a political phenomenon that ought to be analyzed from a materialist viewpoint, and a cultural phenomenon, particularly the homogenizing effects of cultural globalization. Harvey (1990) further elaborates that mechanization and technology increasingly diminish the constraints space puts on time. With the invention and growing sophistication of shipping, railways, motor, and air transport, the time it takes to move across space has continually shrunk, accelerating the collapse of boundaries and borders, and facilitating economic and cultural globalization.

According to Giddens (1990), globalization should be understood as the intensified worldwide social relations that connect distant localities in such a way that local happenings are influenced by activities and events occurring many miles away, and vice versa. Moreover, economically, globalization is characterized by the dominance of transnational corporations, which turn the world into a single market for commodities, labour, and capital. What Giddens fails to examine fully is whether the world-wide transnational influence is on an equal basis or is skewed. Something that this research intends to explore from an ontological perspective, guided by Gikandi (1996), who recognizes that the liberatory effects of transnationalism produced in globalization are largely based on a Global North ontology-the metaphorical Western Europe ontology, with traces of coloniality.

From the discussion above, the twenty-first-century transnationalism in literary studies is propagated by globalization objectivism. It has assigned the Global North ontology superiority of being the singular, totally accurate center of describing transnationalism. Transnational literature assumed the Global North ontology as the standard measure of transnationalism. To advance coloniality, literary studies were qualified as a specifically Global North achievement. A mark of greatness and civilization meant a literary expression of the Global North (Lutz, 2014). On the other hand, the ontological turn advocates for subjectivism in the social reality of human consciousness, projections, and interpretations of transnationalism.

In this research, the Global South ontology is the metaphorical ontological ideologies associated with specific regions of the world, namely African ontology and African-American ontology. Additionally, it incorporates the transnational

effects on these ontologies, as made possible through migration and diaspora experiences. This kind of intersectional approach is only possible when there is a plurality of ontologies; hence, the need to shift the ontological center. As a result, the transnational material being studied becomes activated, allowing it to define its own terms of existence and engagement. This process enables us to perceive aspects of a phenomenon that we had not anticipated or imagined. Thus, the ontological turn is not merely about viewing something from a different perspective; it also encompasses the exploration of different elements related to the phenomenon.

Althusser (1981) asserts that in a socially stratified society, the ruling class maintains dominance by employing two main approaches. Firstly, through governance agencies such as government officials, the army, police, prisons, and courts of law, among others. These agencies propagate the ideology directly and sometimes forcefully. Secondly, dominance is maintained through ideological agencies such as religion, education, literary texts, media, and cultural practices. These agencies are key in the socialization process of members of society. The ruling class strives to ensure that the ruled class agrees to be socialized according to their ideological beliefs. Althusser's approach is a Marxist one, which is a general perspective. In my study, the class struggle is between the dominant Global North ontology and the oppressed Global South ontology.

The oppressed ontology is deeply entangled in the concept of its contamination, over which it may have no control, and the dominant ontology is involved in the superiority of its purity, which it can only exert through the inferiority of the dominated. The ontological turn has crossed and destabilized the North-South geopolitical transnational border in the opposite direction, from South to North. The border had been enjoying the monopoly to regulate the traffic of ontological models. Still, the Global South ontology in this study does not pretend to discard the Global North ontology. New rationalities that were once suppressed are reemerging, leading to the creation of hybrid and diverse ideas. In the future, we may see a transnational ontology following the ontological turn—a framework in which various ontologies can engage in democratic communication and sustainable cooperation for the common good. Within this context, the ontological turn in the literary representation of women will be explored through a more focused intersectional and transnational perspective.

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As noted by Holbraad & Pedersen (2017), the ontological turn is a theoretical and methodological approach that resonates with wider developments in contemporary philosophy, anthropology, science, and technology, among other disciplines in recent years. As an analytical method, it originates from the historical development of anthropological inquiry of ultimate reality or essence that may ground it in a substantive sense. The ontological turn shifts the focus from epistemological questions to ontological ones in order to address epistemological problems. Instead of asking how one perceives things, it asks what actually exists to be perceived. This approach in literary criticism encourages the development of new ways of thinking. From an ontological perspective, critical attention moves away from the universal to the particular, from the center to the periphery, and from broad generalizations about what makes people the same to a more nuanced understanding of what makes people different. It puts in question the universal, the pure, and the homogeneous, especially when defined from or in terms of a Western globalization perspective. It is fundamentally grounded in the principles of Global South ontological self-determination, yet transnationally elastic enough to have global relevance.

The ontological turn in literary studies redefines transnational literature. Bulson (2018:1-3) defines the novel as “a prose text in which an author explores and examines, by means of experimental selves (characters), the great themes of existence. It is one of the few places, in fact, that human beings can go to find other voices, other stories, other locations that help them contemplate who, what, and where they are, and it all happens, strangely enough, with plots and characters that are fictional, in places real and imagined, and they exist in our minds long after the last page has been turned. It transports us somewhere else to encounter people we have never met and places we have never been. In a narratable form and combining it with the fictional lives of characters, novelists make it possible for us to understand the unity of the past, present, and future in our own lives.” He continues to assert that the novel has a global reach; it not only travels around the world over time, but also undergoes internal transformation along the way. This transformation often responds to specific literary traditions and both print and non-print cultures.

In this study, the term ‘transnational literature’ refers to any literature addressing contemporary global concerns, such as climate change, democracy, the politics of the human body, spirituality, tourism, migration, and diasporic experiences, among others, regardless of the language used in writing or the author’s nationality. These literary works circulate beyond their original language, either in their native form or in translation. They represent experiences and the complexities of life, and interrogate them. This text serves as a form of literary cartography, providing a way to navigate information about a world characterized by ontological diversity. The perceptions of different ontologies shape literary texts based on what specific ontological frameworks reveal about various transnational themes. Since literary texts reflect societal realities in an artistic manner, a systematic analysis of how women are portrayed in literature can shed light on the ontological shift within transnational discourse.

Artistic expressions, including literary works, mirror societal conditions. Every character and narrator in a literary text reflects the writer's perspective on various societal issues. They convey the worldview of the society in which they exist. For instance, the experiences of female characters and narrators should be critically examined, as these experiences are not merely a representation of what happens to women. Instead, they encompass how these characters interpret and respond to their circumstances. Some experiences are chosen by them for various reasons, while others are imposed upon them, often against their will or because they seem unavoidable. These experiences may become deeply ingrained in their sense of identity. Furthermore, discourse is shaped and limited by prevailing ontological structures. To understand how meaning is constructed within a text, we must analyze its structure with consideration of both linguistic and ontological dimensions.

### **3. Imperialism and Coloniality Epistemic Violence Against the Global South Ontology**

This section is divided into two historical periods: imperialism, and coloniality, which address tools used to dominate the ontology of the Global South. These concepts reveal a common thread of Eurocentric epistemic violence, which creates an epistemic hierarchy favoring the ontology of the Global North over that of the Global South. This hierarchy has been institutionalized within global transnationalism. This systematic manifestation of epistemic injustice takes into account the historical context of colonization and the ongoing effects of coloniality.

#### ***3.1. Imperialism Epistemic Violence***

Essentially, imperialism, also referred to as colonialism, is a geopolitical phenomenon whereby a state seeks to extend its control forcibly beyond its own borders over other states and peoples. Such control is usually not just political, but also economic and cultural. A ruling state, the colonizer, will often impose not only its own terms of trade but also its own political ideals, cultural values, and often its own language upon a subject state, the colonized. Although imperialism has several phases dating back to human civilization, this research draws heavily from the geopolitical phase of the Global North's (Western Europe) dominion over the Global South (Africa) during the last half of the nineteenth century, the colonial period, and the postcolonial period.

Habib (2005) identifies three main motives behind Global North imperialism. First, there are economic reasons, such as the need for raw materials and the search for markets to sell surplus production during the Industrial Revolution. Second, social Darwinism plays a role, viewing the competition among nations as a natural struggle for survival, where stronger nations are perceived as having the right to subjugate weaker ones. Third, there is the Global North's Enlightenment belief in civilization and progress, which justifies bringing the benefits of a so-called superior civilization to the Global South and liberating its people from their supposed ignorance. Thus, imperialism became a mode of incorporating the Global South into a skewed

transnationalism. Building on this argument, Mignolo & Walsh (2024:75) assert that the colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught certain aspects of their culture selectively, in a way that aimed to recruit some of the dominated peoples into their own power structures. European culture was transformed into a seductive means of access to power. This cultural Europeanization became an aspiration for many. It served as a pathway for individuals to participate in, and ultimately to attain, the same material benefits and power enjoyed by Europeans; it was a way to conquer nature for development. This dualism laid the foundation for the Global North's perspective to be presented as the universal ontological model, overshadowing all non-Global North ontologies.

Colonization of Africa began with the activities of explorers from the Global North, such as Vasco da Gama, who explored and captured the East Coast of Africa with the help of Portugal's King Henry II, also known as the Navigator. His actions were accompanied by a wave of Christian missionaries who sought not only to spread their faith but also to dominate and challenge the humanity of those they conquered. This is the sort of Christianity championed by colonialists like King Leopold II of Belgium, as evident in his 1883 speech to colonial missionaries and articulated in the letter below:

“Reverends, Father, and Dear Compatriots: The task that is given to us to fulfill is very delicate and requires much tact. You will go certainly to evangelize, but your evangelization must inspire above all Belgium interests. Your principal objective in our mission in the Congo is never to teach the niggers to know God. Thus, they know already. They speak and submit to a Mungu, one Nzambi, one Nzakomba, and what else I don't know. They know that to kill, to sleep with someone else's wife, to lie and to insult is bad. Have courage to admit it; you are not going to teach them what they know already. Your essential role is to facilitate the task of administrators and industrials, which means you will go to interpret the gospel in the way it will be the best to protect your interests in that part of the world. For these things, you have to keep watch on disinteresting our savages from the richness that is plenty in their underground. To avoid that they get interested in it, and make you a murderous competition and dream one day to overthrow you.

Your knowledge of the gospel will allow you to find texts ordering, and encouraging your followers to love poverty. Like happier are the poor because they will inherit the heaven and it's very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. You have to detach from them and make them disrespect everything which gives courage to affront us. ...Your action will be directed essentially to the younger ones, for they won't revolt when the recommendation of the priest is contradictory to their parent's teachings. ...”

This quotation describes how the colonizer's economic interests, hidden in religion, aimed at turning the Africans against the African spirituality ontologies. The spirituality is largely connected to the environment, more so the natural resources in the ecosystem. Perhaps this letter explains the paradox of Africa being the natural resources richest continent in the world, but the African people are the economically poorest of the global poor.

The letter goes on to explain why it is crucial to target children who find themselves in a dilemma between obeying the beliefs of their biological parents and those of their spiritual parents, the priests. Furthermore, the primary aim of the education provided in mission schools, as described in the letter, was to teach students to read the materials presented to them without encouraging critical thinking. This method ensures that they remain submissive to the colonialists and refrain from rebellion. The letter concludes with a paragraph that encapsulates the concept of epistemic violence:

“...Institute a confessional system, which allows you to be good detectives denouncing any black that has a different consciousness contrary to that of the decision-maker. Teach the niggers to forget their heroes and to adore only ours. Never present a chair to a black that comes to visit you. Don't give him more than one cigarette. Never invite him for dinner even if he gives you a chicken every time you arrive at his house.”

(This letter is courtesy of Dr. Vera Nobles & Dr. Chiedozie Okoro in <http://allafrica.com/stories/200510060035.html>)

This letter was exposed to the world by Mr. Moukouani Muikwani Bukoko, born in the Congo in 1915, who, in 1935, while working in the Congo, purchased a second-hand Bible from a Belgian priest who had forgotten that the speech was in the Bible. From the letter, it is evident that during the colonial era, the spread of Christianity was a process of ontological emptying of the colonized, spearheaded by the missionaries. Mazrui (1978:11) notes that colonialism essentially replaced African indigenous knowledge with European memory. The church and the school played a pivotal role in this transformation, shaping how people perceived themselves and their relationship with the world.

In this study, I emphasize the colonial ontological question more than the economic aspects. The radical epistemic violence prioritizes the control of ontology over the control of the economy. This perspective aligns with Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 137), who argues that during the rise of imperialism and colonialism, colonial invaders targeted not only land and human resources but also the mental universe of the people they colonized. The mental universe of the colonized experienced profound epistemological violence. One long-term consequence of this invasion was the imposition of the debilitating Hegelian master-servant dialectic, which portrayed Europe as the home of knowers (teachers/civilizers of the world) and Africa as a land of ignorant and primitive sub-human beings. Europe was seen as the originator of

knowledge, while Africa was relegated to a position of imitation; Europe was viewed as the source of science and rationality, and Africa was perceived as the 'Dark Continent', consumed by magic and superstition. However, I am not ignoring the Marxist colonial matrix of power in the expropriation of land and the exploitation of labor in an economic context. As Quijano (2007) correctly observes, the colonial will to power, mediated by ontological knowledge, becomes the infrastructure, while the economy becomes the instrumental superstructure to implement the colonial will.

Some imperialists invaded Africa in response to losing some of their territory in the Global North. For example, the French occupied West Africa after losing their mineral-rich provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. After the Turks denied the countries of the Global North access to Asia and the Far East for spices and other goods through Turkey, they sought an alternative sea route through Africa. France, Britain, and Egypt jointly constructed the Suez Canal, which opened in 1869. However, Britain later monopolized the ownership of the canal and subsequently occupied Egypt as a colonial power in 1882. To compensate for its losses, France occupied several African territories, including Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Additionally, France threatened to divert the Nile's waters, potentially turning Egypt into a desert by seizing territories to the south. Feeling threatened by these actions, the British quickly occupied Uganda and Sudan to secure the source and path of the Nile River, which is the primary water supply for Egypt.

Realizing that Uganda is a landlocked country, the British went further with their occupation, acquiring Kenya to link Uganda with the Indian Ocean coastline. This led to the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway to ease the administration of the vast territory. To recoup the costs of railway construction, European settlers were encouraged to engage in farming. As a result, Africans lost their land to settler plantations and were forcefully settled in concentration reserves, which were akin to modern-day slums. Some became squatters on these plantations. For the first time in history, many Africans became homeless. Colonial governments then began taxing them to ensure they provided cheap labor for the settler plantations, thereby raising tax revenue. The Kipande (pass) system was introduced to control the movement of Africans in lands they had freely inhabited for generations.

As the Industrial Revolution in the Global North grew, the increased demand for raw materials, cheap labor, and a market for industrial goods, along with the realization of the availability of deep pockets of minerals in Africa, led to invasion and a scramble to acquire various parts of Africa during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. King Leopold II of Belgium endeavored to create a personal empire in Africa. In 1876, Leopold convened the Brussels Geographical Conference, where he established the International African Association, a business company comprising explorers and traders with a mission to civilize Africa, abolish the slave trade, and promote free trade. As a result of the activities of his agent, Henry Morton Stanley, who created the Congo Free State colony, Leopold established a personal empire in 1884. The scramble almost led to war in the Global North, which was resolved through an organized policy

known as the partition of Africa. It was the activities of King Leopold II, which led to intense rivalry among European nations over the rich natural resources endowed in the Congo, that led to the convening of the Berlin Conference in 1884.

In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, and Portugal were competing in Africa for colonies to boost their social, economic, and political standing. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 was convened by Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor, where representatives from the Global North divided Africa without considering the needs or rights of its inhabitants. This event marked the beginning of the invasion and colonization of African land and people. By 1914, with the exceptions of Liberia and Ethiopia, the entire continent was colonized. Ethiopia successfully resisted Italy's invasion, while Liberia was established as a state for freed slaves by the same colonizers. Ex-slaves were repatriated to Africa, where they founded an independent republic on a colonized continent.

A colonialist mindset denigrates and dehumanizes the colonized subjects, making it easier for the colonizer to exploit, abuse, or even kill the subalterns. It victimizes the colonized, while simultaneously stunting the colonizer's intellect and blocking their capacity to accept the indigenous ontology of the colonized. In agreement with this idea, Makuba (2007) and Ogutu & Kenyanchui (1991) describe how the German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831) claimed that Africa has no civilization to exhibit. He argued that the spirit of civilization originated in the East (Asia) and then migrated and matured in the West (Europe), much like the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. According to Hegel, Africa did not come into contact with

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this spirit; therefore, when discussing civilization, Africa should not be included. He posited that Africa has no historical significance or development to showcase, describing it as having an “unhistorical, undeveloped spirit” still caught in a state of mere nature, not worthy of being presented at the threshold of world history. This misconception was used to justify the establishment of colonial rule.

As recently as the 1960s, the distinguished historian Hugh Trevor-Roper (1914-2003), then a professor at Oxford University, repeatedly told his students that Africa was a “dark continent” with no history. He suggested that perhaps, in the future, there would be African history to teach, but in the 1960s, he believed only the history of Europeans in Africa existed. To him, the rest was largely unknown, much like the history of pre-Columbian America. He argued that darkness is not a suitable subject for historical study. Both scholars, Hegel, and Trevor-Roper, overlooked the unique ancient civilizations that flourished in precolonial Africa, such as the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, the Kingdom of Aksum in Ethiopia, and the 10th-century Swahili Coast City-States in East Africa, among others. The classification of precolonial Africa as a “dark continent” stem from a misconception rooted in deliberate ignorance. Santos (2007) articulates this ignorance as “abyssal thinking,” a mindset that relegates certain human beings to a subhuman status, suggesting they possess no knowledge worth acknowledging. As Nangoli (2002) affirms, those who claim Africa is a dark continent must have visited the continent after sunset and left before dawn, as that is when Africa can be naturally dark. In this research, the term “dark continent” will be used symbolically to refer to the epistemic violence inflicted upon the continent’s ontology.

Moyo (2009) observes that imperialism has caused ontological misery in the Global South, which has led to the establishment of beggary and charity as transnational institutions, primarily through aid and grants, respectively. In a situation where the colonizer exploits the colonized for the supply of raw materials, the former will want the latter to internalize the ontology that claims that the nature of their unequal relation is divinely willed and nothing can be done about it. Through religious dogmas, the colonized are made to believe that they have sinned, and they should endure because in heaven they will find plenty (Kenyatta, 1938). Consequently, the colonized develop values of self-doubt, self-denigration, and a slave consciousness, looking up to the values of the superior colonizer (Wa Thiong’o 2009, 1983). Imperialism perpetuates and sustains negative associations with Blackness, using terms such as “black spot,” “black sheep,” “black market,” “blacklist,” and “black Satan.” In contrast, it promotes positive associations with Whiteness, exemplified by the white wedding dress as a symbol of purity, white representing peace, and the depictions of white angels and white Jesus. This civilizing mission was based on a false notion of racial and epistemic superiority held by the colonizers.

Wa Thiong’o (1986:9) joins this discussion, arguing that the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 was imposed through the sword and the bullet. However, the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of

coloniality in the formerly colonized states' education systems. The primary consequence of this process is ontological alienation. It involves a dislocation of the minds of the oppressed from their familiar context into a foreign, unknown territory, which ultimately leads to self-doubt. This continuous alienation separates individuals from their cognitive foundation, resulting in a persistent need to view oneself from an external perspective or through the eyes of a stranger. Consequently, one may begin to identify more with this foreign cognitive framework than with their own, shifting from a sense of self to an understanding of others (Wa Thiong'o, 2012: 39). In this context, epistemicide involves more than just the accidental displacement of different ontologies. By its very nature, epistemicide involves the intentional silencing, devaluing, and violent destruction of knowledge systems (Mignolo, 2011). Consequently, imperialism establishes and maintains an unequal relationship between the colonizer and the colonized ontologies. It is this ontological inequality that is being referred to as epistemic violence in this study.

Africans employed three primary approaches in their interactions with the imperialists: resistance, collaboration, or a combination of both. Through an armed struggle in 1957, Ghana, the first African country to gain independence, achieved its political independence. Other countries followed with the highest number gaining political independence in the 1960s. The last country was South Africa in 1992. However, the end of colonialism did not liberate the Global South ontology. It was immediately followed by neocolonialism and hegemonic coloniality as observed by Ake (1996: 3-4), who states that:

“...with a few exceptions, independence was not a matter of the nationalists' marshaling forces to defeat colonial regimes. Often, it was a matter of the colonizers' accepting the inevitable and orchestrating a handover of government to their chosen African successors who could be trusted to share their values and be attentive to their interests.”

This claim is supported by Said (1995:8), who correctly contends that “the history of post-colonial states in Africa is a very sad history; which begins in a period of independence and liberation with a lot of hopes.” Hope here is a foreshadowing of the contemporary ontological turn aiming at total emancipation from imperialism and coloniality.

### ***3.2. Coloniality Epistemic Violence***

Coloniality is a distinct concept from that of colonialism, although the two are linked. The latter refers strictly to a hegemonic structure of domination and exploitation in which control over a given population's public authority, production resources, and culture is held by another population of a different nationality, whose geopolitical centers are located in a different territorial authority. Quijano (2007) establishes that coloniality is constitutive of modernity-there is no modernity without coloniality. Therefore, it results from the long-term consequences of modernity, which replaced

colonialism, and hegemonically placed the people of the Global South in a situation where they will continue to be agents of reproducing the very Eurocentric ideologies that they struggled to abolish during the uprisings against colonialism. Coloniality views modernity as the Europeanization of the Global North and the subalternization of the Global South (Mignolo & Walsh, 2024).

The Global North-centered modernity establishes, organizes, and determines the center of hegemonic global power. Mignolo (2011:19) backs up this argument by examining its geo-linguistic context. He contends that modernity is founded in two classic languages: Greek and Latin. It is then unfolded in the six imperial and coloniality European Renaissance languages: Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese (the languages of the Renaissance and early foundation of modernity/coloniality) and French, German, and English (the languages that have dominated from the Enlightenment to the present day). The linguistic hierarchy that exists between European and non-European languages favors communication, knowledge, and theoretical production in the former, while marginalizing the latter as mere producers of folklore or culture, rather than as sources of knowledge and theory. This situation has resulted in an ontological linguicide in the Global South. Wa Thiong'o (1986:28) eloquently described the crisis of alienation through linguicide, which is anchored in the deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, thinking, formal education, and mental development from the language of daily interaction in the home and in Global South communities. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they occupy two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a large social scale, it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies. He concludes that this situation is achieved through the alienation aspect of the Global North-centered education systems operating in the Global South.

Linguicide as a key aspect of reproduction of coloniality amounts to what Fanon (1968) termed 'repetition without change,' that is, itself a product of the pitfalls of consciousness. This is possible because coloniality is not simply a process of conquest, annexation, occupation, settlement, domination, and exploitation. It entails the emptying of all indigenous knowledge form and content from the dominated brain. Moreover, it commits epistemic violence through distorting, disfiguring, and eventually destroying the ontology of the colonized.

Initially, literacy education in colonial Africa was primarily conducted by missionaries before being reinforced by colonial administrators. The education provided was basic and focused on a few main subjects, including Christianity, particularly the memorization of the New Testament from the Bible, as well as reading and writing in colonial languages. It also included some basic arithmetic and agricultural skills related to settler farming. It did not encourage critical thinking, but instead it rewarded rote memorization of basic literacy concepts and indoctrination. To ensure that Africans remained stagnant at the literacy level, the education system in colonial territories was racially segregated. This segregation was rooted in the belief that Africans were racially inferior and would never be accepted as equals to Europeans, even if they acquired a literacy education. The education system strongly

condemned both the theory and practice of African ontology. Before being admitted, individuals were required to renounce their cultural beliefs. Key achievements necessary for graduating from this literacy education with excellent grades included converting to Christianity, learning the colonial languages, and adopting the mannerisms associated with the colonizers, such as their naming conventions, eating habits, and clothing styles.

Even after colonialism, the effects of this literacy education in neocolonial Africa are evident in the form of education that is coloniality-appropriate. A coloniality-appropriate classroom teaches that Africa has approximately 40% of the world's natural resources and that its tropical climate offers the greatest biodiversity in the world. Therefore, Africa is a paradise on earth in every sense, but the African people live in hellish conditions because they are uncivilized. They comprise around 18% of the world's population and are poor, underdeveloped, and entirely dependent on loans, grants, and aid from the Global North for their survival. Coloniality-appropriate education ends there! Any student who can memorize and reproduce the appropriate information on a piece of paper is celebrated as an 'excellent scholar' of African studies. If we go just a little beyond the coloniality appropriate education, we can clearly see there is something wrong here. How can 18% of the world population, owning 40% of the world's natural resources, which are required by the rest of the globe, be the poorest of the global poor? If God created Africans rich by giving them the vast natural resources, who makes them poor? Who benefits from Africa's vast natural resources? The answers to these troubling questions rest in the ontological turn.

#### **4. Postcolonialism and Decoloniality in the Epistemic Reawakening of Global South Ontology**

"He's always fretting about how his books don't do well. I've told him he needs to write terrible things about his own people if he wants to do well. He needs to say Africans alone are to blame for African problems, and Europeans have helped Africa more than they've hurt Africa, and he'll be famous and people will say he's so *honest*!" (Chimamanda Ngozi (2013: 302), in *Americanah*)

Postcolonialism is rooted in the history of imperialism. It brings awareness of the geopolitical power struggle between the Global North and the Global South. Postcolonial literature and criticism emerged both during and after the struggle of many nations in the Global South for independence from colonial rule. The struggle can be dated to the period after the end of the Second World War in 1945, during which a large-scale process of decolonization of the territories subjugated by imperial powers occurred. Although postcolonial literature is the product of a complex set of transnational forces rooted in the cultural nature of colonization, decolonization, and migration of people from independent countries to Western European countries, Jay (2010) asserts that there is a distinction between postcolonial and transnational lit-

erature. Transnational is a broad concept that refers to any entity whose production, reception, and impact extend beyond national borders. This encompasses corporations, films, humanitarian organizations, literature, and more, and it has its roots in the broader study of globalization. In contrast, postcolonial pertains to a more specific set of historical and political forces related to colonization, resistance to the domination it entails, decolonization, and the pursuit of independence.

Habib (2005) and Young (2001) assert that the fundamental aims of postcolonial criticism are to: reexamine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized; determine the economic, political, and cultural impacts of colonialism on both the colonized peoples and the colonizing powers; analyze the process of decolonization; and, more importantly, participate in the goals of political liberation. This includes advocating for equal access to material resources, challenging forms of domination, and articulating political and cultural identities. Early voices of anti-imperialism stressed the need to develop or return to indigenous literary traditions to exorcize their cultural heritage from the specters of imperial domination. Other voices advocated for adapting Western ideals to serve their own political and cultural purposes. This struggle of postcolonial discourse extends to the domains of gender, race, ethnicity, and class.

Key publications for this discourse include: *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon (1952), Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel, *Things Fall Apart*, George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile*, published in 1960, followed by Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961. According to Young (2001), the crucial moment in postcolonial theory was the launch of the journal *Tricontinental* in 1966. It initiated the first global alliance of the peoples spanning three continents (Africa, Asia, and Latin America), against imperialism. Additional notable works are *Orientalism* (1978) and *Orientalism Reconsidered* (1986) by Edward Said. More recent work includes *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. Gayatri Spivak's *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), as well as contemporary works by Abdul Jan Mohamed, Benita Parry, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, among others.

Fanon argues that imperialism works to define the present and future of the colonized people and to destroy their identity through cultural (ontological) estrangement and defamiliarization. Therefore, cultural nationalism is a prerequisite for restoring confidence and creating a sense of identity. He asserts that imperialism destroyed the cultural life of the colonized people and that every "effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture ... to recognize the unreality of his nation, and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure" (*Wretched of the Earth* p. 236). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon vividly described how skin color is the most obvious outward manifestation of race differences and how it has been used to judge humanity. Instead, he proposes that a person should be recognized beyond the biological manifestation of their skin color, as quoted below:

As soon as I desire, I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here and now, sealed into nothingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity” (*Black Skin, White Masks* p. 170).

The ontological turn in transnational literary studies is in response to the above-mentioned call, making Fanon’s philosophy relevant to this study.

Edward Said’s works draw on Marxism and Foucault’s analysis of discourse as a form of power. He extends this analysis to elaborate on the role of cultural representation in the construction and maintenance of Orientalism. This concept refers to the relationship between the Orient and the Occident. The people of the Orient can only define themselves based on how the Occident categorizes them, often portraying them as less privileged and silenced “others.” In Oriental discourse, the Orient is depicted as mysterious, irrational, uncivilized, and exotic, and its people are unable to represent themselves independently. Therefore, it falls to the virtuous, rational, and civilized Occident to represent them. My study aligns with Said’s call for a decentered consciousness and the dismantling of systems of domination, which aims to deconstruct narratives and highlight the ontologies of the Orient.

Bhabha’s mode of postcolonial criticism is grounded in how the colonized context facilitates the emergence of mimicry, leading to the development of hybridity in cultural identity. Hybridity constitutes a cultural displacement, a fragmentation of the self, and a sense of alienation. Due to the unequal power relations, the colonized mimics the colonizer, resulting in an unrecognizable and inferior culture. In my research, I equate Bhabha’s concept of culture to ontology. Thus, the inferior culture is an inferior ontology. A traumatized ontology. Furthermore, mimicry represents an ironic compromise that suppresses one’s own ontological identity, leaving one in a state of ambivalence and confusion. The ontological turn in transnational literary studies aims to address the aforementioned confusions and traumas.

In addition to deconstruction, Gayatri Spivak draws on Marxism and Feminism. Her thoughts are vital in my research due to her special interest in factors of ethnicity, class, and gender. Unlike Spivak’s subaltern, who cannot speak or achieve self-legitimation, my research is based on the hypothesis that the subaltern is speaking through the ontological turn in transnational literary studies.

Decoloniality, in general, is the struggle for epistemic freedom, and specifically, the ontological liberation. Decoloniality emerged in response to the promises of modernity and the realities of coloniality, as introduced by Quijano (2007). He proposed that decoloniality requires epistemological reconstitution. Additionally, epistemological reconstitution cannot be accomplished by relying on the assumed universal model of the Global North. Instead, it must emerge from the diverse ontologies that have been disrupted by the coloniality of power through epistemicide, which refers to the systematic eradication of different ontological systems. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 52-54), decoloniality originated in the Global South after the Bandung Conference of the Non-Aligned countries in 1955, during the Cold

War, and subsequently spread worldwide. Representatives from twenty-nine governments of Asian and African nations gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, to discuss peace and the role of the Third World in the Cold War, economic development, and decolonization. They revealed the hidden face of modernity, namely, coloniality. Therefore, decolonization became a choice for those who needed to delink, rather than a decision made by those who were in a position to marginalize. From the perspective of the Non-Aligned states, decoloniality is their determination to detach themselves from both capitalism and communism. Decoloniality, therefore, means both the analytic task of unveiling the logic of coloniality and the prospective task of contributing to building a world in which many worlds will coexist.

In Africa, decoloniality has generally been understood to have begun with political decolonization, which reached its climax in the 1960s. However, contemporary epistemic violence has provoked a need to rethink decolonial trajectories beyond the attainment of political sovereignty, with a keen interest in the epistemological aspects of decolonization. Epistemic freedom serves as the foundation for the ontological turn in transnationalism because it addresses the fundamental issues of building critical consciousness. This is essential for achieving both political and economic freedom. Quijano (2007: 169) emphasizes this perspective by arguing that epistemological colonization—essentially, the colonization of the mind and imagination has significantly impacted African modes of knowing, knowledge production, and the creation of perspectives. Having performed these epistemicides, the constructors and drivers of global coloniality, which included Christian missionaries, proceeded to establish their own patterns of producing knowledge and modes of knowing as the only legitimate and scientific ways of understanding the world. They mystified their own patterns of knowing and knowledge production. However, they also attempt to consistently place these Euro-North American-centric patterns far out of reach for the dominated Global South.

The ontological challenge facing Africans is how to overcome epistemological coloniality as part of their effort to create decolonial futures. This vision for an African future is articulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063. However, the agenda is still grappling with how to empower Africans to take control of their own ontology and to position themselves as equal partners in transnational prosperity. Santos (2007: 78) contends that they should avoid the common trap of seeking solutions to coloniality within the confines of coloniality itself. It also demands the unpacking of the Cartesian notions of being and its relegation of African subjectivity to a perpetual state of becoming.

Lutz (2021) argues that a significant mental barrier to learning from the Global South is the concept of enlightenment as understood by the Global North, specifically the Cartesian principle “*cogito, ergo sum*” (I think, therefore I am). This is a concept that is entirely isolationist and shockingly solipsistic. It constructs the thinking subject as removed from any relations with the surrounding world, from time and place, from social relations and the ecosystem, and even from their own physical being. The “*ego*” in *cogito ergo sum* needs no body (nobody!), no land, no emotions, no oth-

ers, regardless of whether they are finned, winged, scaled, mineral, rooted, four-legged, or human. The Cartesian logic and rationality characteristic of the Enlightenment have created a disconnect between learning and the ontologies of the Global South. Lutz challenges the long-held global stereotype that all valuable knowledge worth teaching primarily originates from institutions of higher learning, such as universities. This narrative suggests that knowledge was first developed by the Greeks, then appropriated by the Romans, and subsequently spread throughout Western Europe. Through colonialism, this knowledge was purportedly introduced to the rest of the world, implying that other cultures were passively waiting for enlightenment.

The ontological turn in Cartesian discourse can be examined through the Ubuntu philosophy and the African sage philosophy, which resonate with many other ontologies worldwide. The Ubuntu axiomatic principle is “I am because we are”. The human being is essentially a relational, interdependent, and interconnected being who exists in and through relationships with other humans and the broader ecosystem. Individual identity and contributions are not denied but are seen as part of the whole. A successful individual is defined as someone who is committed to supporting others with integrity. Mbiti (1989) summarizes this as, “I am because we are, since we are therefore, I am”. Ubuntu focuses on the inclusivity of everyone within a community, their responsibility to others, and to the well-being of the ecosystem to ensure success for the present and future generations. Therefore, it is timeless in the sense that its ontology and epistemology have been passed down from previous generations and continue to apply to even the yet unborn generations. It goes beyond interpersonal connections. It also highlights the intimate connection between human beings and all other forms of existence in the universe. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of the natural and supernatural realms, as well as the physical and metaphysical, and both visible and invisible dimensions of existence. All entities-current human and nonhuman beings, ancestors, future generations, and the natural world-are interconnected (Ramose 2005; Mbiti 1989).

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Ubuntu argues that the Global South ontology's capacity to represent non-humans is integral to understanding it as a human endeavor. It asserts that non-human species in the ecosystem have always played a crucial role in ontology. This has been represented in ancient oral traditions, as well as in contemporary written and electronic works. The Global South ontology examines literary representations of non-human entities to reveal how these depictions significantly influence human culture and our understanding of what it means to be human. As a result, the relationship between humans and non-humans challenges the Cartesian dichotomy that is often associated with the Global North. Examining the nexus between literature and animal studies, Robles (2016) challenges the traditional boundaries between humans and non-humans, questioning the ethical implications of human dominion over animals and highlighting the ways in which animals influence human society and culture. By investigating the roles animals play in various contexts, Animal Studies seeks to understand the mutual influence between humans and animals, promoting a more equitable and compassionate relationship between species within the ecosystem.

Robles's perspective quite agrees with that of Kerridge (2014) regarding ecocritical approaches to literary form and genre, which asserts that, for human beings to be able to curb the contemporary global climate challenges, literary studies have the responsibility of getting people to urgently care and make the environment a real, practical priority. For this to be achieved, a strong ontological approach in ecocriticism should depart from the Cartesian Enlightenment's dualism, which separates mind from body and humanity from nonhuman nature. This will, in turn, allow for an ontological fluidity perspective, which would build up a principle of the human self as constituted and maintained by the ecosystem, as advocated in the Global South Ubuntu philosophy discussed above.

African sage philosophy, or philosophical sagacity as coined by Odera Oruka (1991), expands the etymological definition of philosophy as love of wisdom to an Ubuntu-like ethical development of the ecosystem. It represents the thoughts of indigenous sages-wise men and women who critically engage with the established cultures and ontologies of their respective societies. Oruka argues that it is important not only to love wisdom, but also to possess and practice it. For him, a philosopher (or sage) is someone who consistently seeks wisdom, making this pursuit an essential part of life rather than just an occasional interest. In the field of the historiography of philosophy, sage philosophy examines both written and oral sources to reconstruct the history of philosophical thought. Recently, there has been an increased focus on oral philosophical inquiries expressed through various forms of art, indigenous spirituality, songs, dances, and stories. These mediums embody ontologies, epistemologies, metaphysics, ethics, and the science of being in the world, and they have begun to receive attention from a philosophical perspective. Philosophy in Africa is undoubtedly leading the way in this field. Although it is generally acknowledged that philosophy also manifests itself in oral practices, such as conversation or instruction,

the question remains as to how oral philosophical traditions can be incorporated into the history of philosophy. This is subject to several methodological questions from a global perspective (Graness, 2022).

Accountability in orality is a vital aspect of African sage philosophy, in the sense of both gaining ontology and transmitting it orally from one generation to another. Before the development of the art of literacy, all human languages existed in oral form. Any given society uses its indigenous language, or the language it has acquired, to convey what it is, what it does, and the worldview it holds. Language conveys the society's social, political, cultural, and economic endeavors. Language is not a mere string of words. It has a suggestive power that extends well beyond its immediate and lexical meaning. It is the repository of values that have evolved within a society over time and are transmitted from one generation to another. Therefore, language is the main carrier of ontology. Making someone despise their language in favor of another is essentially making them despise the values inherent in their own language, and ultimately, the ontology of their society that utilizes that language. On the other hand, they will admire the favored language of the one initiating the humiliation, and hence the values and ontology carried by it.

With the development of literacy, global systems like colonialism led to the languages of the Global North, such as English, being viewed as superior to the languages of the Global South, which largely remained in oral form. This position still exists in contemporary transnational literary studies, where English is often regarded as the natural language for transnational literature, thereby disqualifying a whole set of ontologies contained in languages positioned lower on the hierarchy. They are associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, uncivilization, humiliation, and punishment. In some parts of the Global South, English has become more than a language; it is the language, and all the others must bow before it in deference. English has become the measure of intelligence and ability in the human experience, culture, and the perception of reality (wa Thiong'o, 1981, 2009). On the other hand, the transnational turn advocates for accountability in orality and in other languages worldwide. This discourse is being spearheaded by decolonial theorists such as Santos (2014) and Mignolo & Walsh (2024), who are calling for the equal treatment of previously marginalized and suppressed indigenous knowledge traditions from the Global South. A liberation of the oral traditions of formerly colonially oppressed peoples from their marginalized position in the scientific system is one of the central concerns of decolonial theory. Its representatives demand that orality be recognized as a quality and not devalued as a deficiency. It is argued that the integration of orally transmitted philosophical traditions is indispensable and an essential aspect of decolonization. With the help of technological inventions such as recording media that reproduce sound and images, as well as oral aspects like gestures, facial expressions, and the rhythm of the language, among other extra-linguistic components, the redefinition of transnational literature is conveniently

facilitated. Before technological advancements, the ontologies of the Global South were underrepresented in transnational contexts. When they began appearing through writing only, they were always accompanied by losses of the extra-linguistic components highlighted above. The ontological turn in transnational literature is striving to ensure that the orality aspects of Global South ontologies are adequately represented, even in written texts, through various literary techniques.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of the nexus between the ontological turn in cultural anthropology, and transnational literary studies in this study has gone beyond a simple historical discussion of the issues surrounding the ontologies of the Global South. Instead, it has developed a decolonial interpretive discourse aimed at understanding the ontological shift, as parts of the broader effort to recover alternative ontologies of inhabiting and conceptualizing the world. This analysis is divided into two main parts. The first part has examined how imperialism and coloniality serve as tools that have dominated the ontology of the Global South, highlighting their shared Eurocentric epistemic violence. This creates an epistemic hierarchy that favors the ontology of the Global North over that of the Global South, a hierarchy that has been institutionalized within global transnationalism. This systematic manifestation of epistemic injustice considers the historical context of colonization and the continuing coloniality. The second part has elaborated on how postcolonial criticism and decoloniality have facilitated an epistemic reawakening of the Global South's ontology, considering the Ubuntu philosophy and the African sage philosophy, which resonate with many other ontologies around the world. Epistemic freedom serves as the foundation for the ontological turn in transnationalism because it addresses the fundamental issues of building critical consciousness. This is essential for achieving both political and economic freedom.

The redefined transnational literature encompasses any literature addressing contemporary global concerns, such as climate change, democracy, the politics of the human body, spirituality, tourism, migration, and diasporic experiences, among others, regardless of the language used in writing or the author's nationality. These literary works circulate beyond their ontological origins, whether in their original language or in translation. They represent experiences and complexities of life while also interrogating them. Thus, they create a literary cartography that transports information about a world unified in ontological multiplicity. ✨

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# OFFSHORING'S IMPLICATIONS IN ICT SERVICES FOR LABOR AND MIGRATION IN MOROCCO AND TUNISIA, 2010-2024

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## Abstract

The paper examines the impact of offshoring in information and communication services on employment and migration in Tunisia and Morocco, two economies that are increasingly integrated into global production networks. The objective is to assess whether offshoring has contributed meaningfully to job creation and influenced migration trends in both countries over the past 14 years. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines empirical analysis of sectoral employment and net migration data with a review of national policies and structural labor market characteristics. The findings reveal that while offshoring has led to some increase in service sector employment, its overall impact on total employment remains limited due to persistent structural constraints and limited integration into knowledge-intensive sectors. Moreover, no significant impact was found on migration rates due to structural factors such as human development, irregular migration, and state policies that actively promote emigration as a means of development. Thus, it can be further explored with additional factors and over longer periods. The findings imply that for offshoring to become a more effective lever of development, Tunisia and Morocco must implement policies that foster higher-value employment, invest in skills training, and create more balanced incentives between offshore and onshore investment regimes.

## Keywords

*offshoring, employment, migration, policy impact*

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. *Issue and Background of the Topic*

In the age of digital globalization, the rapid expansion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly transformed global labor markets, particularly through offshore outsourcing, which redistributes production processes across borders. Over time, lower-middle-income countries (OECD, 2025) have shifted their role in the global value chain, from initially focusing on low-skill production of intermediate goods to becoming centers for business services, and more recently evolving into manufacturing hubs for high-skill tasks such as IT, software development, and other ICT services (Basu & Chau, 2022).

In the Francophone world, the Maghreb region stands out as the most accessible nearshoring destination for French companies, with Morocco and Tunisia emerging as key hubs for offshoring (Kearney, 2023). Morocco, in particular, has significantly strengthened its global position, climbing 12 spots to rank 28 in outsourcing competitiveness as shown by the Kearny Global Services location Index of 2023, whereas in 2024, the city of Tunis was ranked by the Kearney Global Cities index at 123 from 156 cities recognized as internationally connective and influential metropolitan areas (Kearney, 2024). The country's emphasis on digital upskilling has further solidified its position as a strategic hub for tech-driven business services. Backed by government initiatives, the country is channeling major investments into the outsourcing sector, with plans to generate approximately 5,000 new jobs by 2026. Tunisia, on the other hand, has been paying attention to offshoring since 1972 by creating a specific regulatory regime that offers firms tax and duty incentives (Baghdadi et al., 2019). Between 2010 and 2022, the number of offshore enterprises in Tunisia grew steadily, with an average annual growth rate of nearly 5%. While some fluctuations were observed, such as a decline in 2018, the overall trend indicates a sustained expansion, reflecting Tunisia's strengthening position as an attractive offshoring hub.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with this changing reality of job migration, offshoring to new emerging areas raises the issues of its socioeconomic impact on the labor market, labor rights,<sup>2</sup> and economic migration. Precisely, competing in the Global Value Chain today exerts a powerful disciplinary force on both governments and private sectors, by means of establishing financial pressures to guarantee adherence to market-friendly policies (Gill, 1998). Economic migration has accompanied the strengthening of offshoring trends due to the continuous gap between the 'core' home countries, from which offshoring emerges, and host countries (Žuk, 2020). For instance, in these host countries, also referred to as 'peripheral' countries, governments often create deregulated economic zones to attract foreign investment, leading to a weakening of labor protections, environmental standards, and fiscal regulations, fostering the phenomenon of social dumping (Matešić & Omazić, 2023).<sup>3</sup>

Cheaper labor costs, besides other factors like the country's position in migration chains and the regulatory framework surrounding outsourcing, influence its attractiveness to foreign investment and the type of tasks offshored to it, as well as the potential impacts of this process on their migratory profiles. For instance, the

promotion of investment and encouragement for export-oriented labor have been prioritized in the preface of the Moroccan Labor Code since 2003 ((Moroccan Labour Code, 2003). For Tunisia, the existence of a special regime for offshoring started in 1972, supported by different investment-related regulations, recently promulgated in a unified version in 2016 (Law n° 2016-71 of September 30th, 2016).

Despite the clear upward trajectory in offshoring activities to Morocco and Tunisia, and the regulatory reforms surrounding it, there remains a limited understanding of how these transformations affect labor and migration flows in host countries and policy responses to these changes (Gurtu et al., 2016). Furthermore, the study of offshoring in North African countries remains limited due to the emerging aspect of these countries as offshoring locations (Baghdadi et al., 2019). Therefore, this research aims to answer the following question to study the impact of offshoring activities in ICT services on Tunisia and Morocco: What are the socioeconomic consequences of the rising offshoring intensity in Tunisia and Morocco, particularly regarding employment and migration trends and policy?

### ***1.2. Novelty compared to existing literature***

Outsourcing has been defined as the process by which a company delegates specific tasks or functions to an external provider rather than handling them in-house. This allows businesses to optimize resources, focus on core activities, and leverage external expertise. Offshoring, on the other hand, involves relocating business operations or services to another country. This can be done through a fully owned subsidiary, known as a captive unit, or by partnering with a third-party service provider. While outsourcing primarily addresses the question of whether a task should be performed internally or externally, offshoring focuses on the geographical aspect, determining whether an operation should be conducted domestically or internationally (Sharma & Loh, 2009). Besides the geographical dimension in defining offshoring, the legal qualification of this business strategy<sup>4</sup> depends on other factors, such as the level of control and partnership between parties (Troacă & Bodislav, 2012). Hence, offshore outsourcing falls under the umbrella of outsourcing, while incorporating a geographical element (Sreedevi & Tanwar, 2018).

The commodification of information technology services has significantly driven the rapid expansion of outsourcing practices. As information technology functions become increasingly standardized and less differentiated, organizations have turned to outsourcing as a strategic approach to concentrate on core, high-value activities while minimizing operational costs. This evolution has given rise to specialized outsourcing, wherein distinct service providers manage specific IT operations, including data center administration, client/server infrastructure, and technical support services. Consequently, outsourcing has evolved beyond traditional IT infrastructure management to encompass integrated digital business solutions, playing a pivotal role in shaping the future dynamics of global enterprise operations (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2000).

Defining offshorable tasks is challenging due to the variety and evolution of activities and ICT. However, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has tried to identify these tasks based on their telemediability, that is, the capacity to be performed remotely via telecommunications networks. From a sectoral perspective, tasks can be either within ICT-producing sectors, such as data processing or software services, or ICT-using sectors like finance (Huws & Dahlmann, 2004). The determination of tasks on the basis of services is proxied, from the Nomenclature of Economic Activities of the European Union, by NACE sector K.72, relevant to computer-related activities, and sector K.74, related to other business activities (European Commission, 2025).

Research on outsourcing has been developed around focal questions, such as the factors that encourage and weaken outsourcing, the object and the extent of it, the type of this operation (ie, whether captive firms or offshore third-party), and the outcomes of offshore outsourcing (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2000). The study of these outcomes includes, first, the offshoring decision, regarding the location (Stoian & Filippaios, 2014), and factors like political and regulatory conditions that might influence these decisions, besides the availability of competencies (Kearney, 2023).

The impact of offshoring in the literature was addressed in the context of job creation and brain drain (Khan & Islam, 2006), besides concerns about the role of working conditions, inequality of income, and the development of poverty in various countries (Auer et al., 2005). In fact, research, especially in the context of offshoring economies, has consistently found that offshoring tends to have uneven effects across the labor market. While high-skilled workers may benefit or remain largely unaffected, medium- and low-skilled workers often experience job displacement or wage pressure. These effects are more pronounced in sectors where tasks can be easily outsourced, reinforcing labor market polarization and contributing to rising income inequality in some regions (Keuschnigg & Ribi, 2009).

Offshoring and migration, on the other hand, have been studied as outcomes of globalization that influence labor market outcomes (Beverelli et al., 2011). The main lines of focus are related to the productivity effect, referring to the increase in productivity in complementary roles due to the loss of certain offshored jobs. The latter is discovered under the effects of displacement. Another outcome discovered in the literature on offshoring and migration is the task sustainability effect, where natives and offshore workers perform either similar or different, yet complementary, functions (Beverelli et al., 2011).

This study advances the literature by shifting attention to the underexplored perspectives of host countries in lower-to-middle-income countries, specifically Tunisia and Morocco. Unlike existing research that largely focuses on labor market effects in home countries, this paper evaluates how offshoring reshapes the labor market effects in host economies. This paper assesses how offshoring influences employment and migration trends within host economies. Furthermore, combining macroeconomic indicators with sociological analysis it offers an interdisciplinary framework for understanding the broader societal impacts of offshoring. Lastly, it

addresses the interconnected dynamics between offshoring, employment, and migration, which are domains often examined in isolation, while grounding the analysis in the specific regulatory framework of these countries and their employment and migration profiles.

### ***1.3. Research structure and methodological overview***

This study is structured into four sections. The introduction outlines the study's background, scope, and contributions relative to existing literature. The main body comprises two sections analyzing the impacts of offshoring in the ICT sector on employment and migration, respectively. Each section includes theoretical and empirical background, data description, descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and a discussion of results in light of regulatory and labor/migration trends in Morocco and Tunisia. The conclusion summarizes the findings, highlights policy implications, and discusses the broader potential benefits and drawbacks of offshoring in both contexts.

To examine the impact of offshoring in the ICT sector on labor and migration outcomes in Morocco and Tunisia between 2010 and 2024, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining descriptive data analysis with qualitative data analysis. Quantitative data are sourced from secondary databases, including UNCTAD, ILO, and the World Bank, which cover indicators related to trade in services, foreign direct investment, employment, and migration. Due to the absence of direct measures of offshoring, the study uses ICT service exports as a proxy. Two fixed-effects panel regressions are furthermore applied: one analyzing the effect on employment in services, and the other on net migration, controlling for macroeconomic and demographic variables such as inflation, minimum wage, and technology readiness. The analysis enables a comparative evaluation of how digital offshoring influences domestic labor markets and migration dynamics in the two countries, supported by a contextual analysis of regulatory frameworks surrounding offshoring and migration, as well as triangulation with the literature.

## **2. Theoretical background**

In the Global Value Chains context, firms no longer operate as isolated entities producing entire goods or services within national boundaries. Instead, they participate in globally integrated networks where each stage of production, from research and design to manufacturing and service delivery, is performed where it can be executed most efficiently. Offshoring contributes to this global modularity by enabling firms to optimize their input-side operations across borders, aiming for cost efficiency, access to talent, and innovation capacity (Schmeisser, 2013). Hence, countries' competitiveness is no longer only measured by their export performance but also by how much they have integrated international production networks. In this context, offshore zones refer to specific jurisdictions that offer legal, fiscal, and administrative incentives intended to attract foreign capital, often facilitated by labor and regulatory arbitrage (Lutsyshyn et al., 2019).

In labor-market-related theories, the neoclassical idea of a unified market should be set apart, as it fails to capture the real dynamics of the market today. Instead, the labor market can be envisioned as a network of dispersed, decentralized spaces where firms and job seekers independently search for each other. In this context, studies examining the relationship between offshoring and unemployment frequently draw on search and matching models, particularly those inspired by the Pissarides framework of equilibrium unemployment (Pissarides, 2000). Theoretical extensions of search-and-matching models have demonstrated that labor market institutions, such as collective bargaining frameworks, recruitment costs, and social protection policies, can significantly mediate the effects of offshoring on wages and unemployment (Ranjan, 2013).

The impact of offshoring on employment was introduced in a task-based framework by Grossman and Rossi-Hansberg on three distinct but interconnected channels: productivity, relative price, and labor supply effects. In fact, offshoring low-skill tasks can lower production costs and raise demand for domestic labor in the short term—a productivity effect—especially when it complements rather than replaces local workers. However, this is offset by the relative price effect, where global competition reduces prices and puts downward pressure on wages. Additionally, the labor supply effect may flood the market with displaced low-skilled workers, further depressing wages. These impacts are uneven, with high-skilled workers often benefiting, while low-skilled workers face greater adjustment costs (Grossman and Rossi-Hansberg, 2008).

When assessing the impact of offshoring on migration, the literature often begins with economic migration, initially drawing on traditional trade theory. For instance, traditional international trade models, particularly the Heckscher-Ohlin framework and its extension by Samuelson, assume that labor is immobile across borders. For instance, a labor-rich country will specialize in and export labor-intensive products. Complementing this is the Factor-Price Equalization theorem, which states that, under free trade, the prices of factors, such as wages for labor and returns to capital, should converge across countries, even in the absence of actual migration. In this sense, trade in goods can mimic the economic effects of the labor movement, with exports of labor-intensive goods functioning as a proxy for exporting labor itself. Migration, in this view, is simply another channel through which international economic integration occurs; it can be seen as an alternative mechanism for achieving factor price convergence (Borjas, 1989). However, this model does not appear to provide predictive power on the size and composition of migrant flows, especially with the increasing complexity of migration.

On the other hand, Harris and Todaro's neoclassical migration theory suggests that migration is guided not by absolute income differences but by expected income, factoring in job probabilities. The model examines migration that occurs when expected urban income exceeds rural earnings, even in the presence of urban unemployment (Harris & Todaro, 1970). However, within a broader framework, the dual labor market theory suggests that migration is not primarily driven by individual cost-benefit

analysis, but rather by structural needs in advanced economies. According to this theory, richer countries have a segmented labor market, with a primary sector offering stable, well-paid jobs and a secondary sector characterized by low wages, instability, and poor working conditions. Native workers avoid these “secondary” jobs, creating a persistent demand for migrant labor to fill them (Piore, 1970).

The relationship between offshoring and migration is further illuminated by the migration-development nexus, a critical lens for understanding the complex, non-linear ways in which development processes and migration interact (De Haas, 2007). Traditional migration theories, such as the Harris-Todaro model (Harris & Todaro, 1970) and Piore’s dual labor market theory (Piore, 1979), primarily focus on economic differentials and structural demand for labor. However, the migration-development nexus, particularly as articulated by Hein de Haas (De Haas, 2021), moves beyond simple push-pull factors by introducing the aspirations-capabilities framework. This framework posits that migration is a function of both the aspiration to migrate (driven by relative deprivation, social comparison, and perceived opportunities abroad) and the capability to do so (determined by resources, networks, and legal constraints). In the context of ICT offshoring in Morocco and Tunisia, the limited job creation and persistent structural unemployment fail to reduce the aspiration to migrate. Crucially, however, the offshoring sector may inadvertently increase the capability for migration. By providing high-skilled ICT workers with internationally recognized skills, professional networks, and higher, albeit still relatively low, salaries, the sector equips them with the human and financial capital necessary to overcome the costs and risks of international mobility. This dynamic suggests that a growing, yet structurally limited, ICT offshoring sector may not act as a “brain gain” mechanism, but rather as a “brain circulation accelerator”, facilitating the emigration of its most skilled workers. Over time, migration becomes self-reinforcing, leading to diaspora formation. This outcome is primarily explained by the causation theory, which suggests that as more people from a community migrate, social networks form, reducing the costs and risks of migration for others and creating a feedback loop that sustains and expands migration flows, regardless of initial economic conditions (De Haas, 2021).

**Harris and Todaro’s neoclassical migration theory suggests that migration is guided not by absolute income differences but by expected income, factoring in job probabilities. The model examines migration that occurs when expected urban income exceeds rural earnings, even in the presence of urban unemployment.**

In conclusion, taken together, these theoretical frameworks highlight how offshoring reshapes both employment structures and migration patterns through interlinked channels. While task-based models emphasize shifting labor demands and wage dynamics, migration theories reveal how labor mobility responds not only to economic signals but also to institutional and structural forces. In the context of Morocco and Tunisia, these dynamics are further shaped by national labor markets, offshore and investment policy regimes, and the countries’ position in regional and international migration dynamics. The following sections examine these interactions empirically, using panel data analysis with qualitative regulatory and policy analysis to evaluate the specific labor and migration outcomes of ICT offshoring in both countries from 2010 to 2024.

### 3. Data and Methods

Data are collected for both countries from 2010 to 2024, from secondary sources, covering labor and employment, migration, demography, and macroeconomic indicators. The purpose of this collection is to conduct descriptive statistical analysis, as well as regression analysis. Two separate regression models were employed to examine the direct impacts of employment and migration. To measure the impact of offshoring on employment, the paper employs Fixed Effects to account for the differences between entities. In contrast, the migration impact model employs a regular pooled OLS model because there is not enough variation between countries. Below is a specification of the indicators used, their sources, and the rationale behind their selection.

| Variables             | Indicators                                                                   | Source                                                         | Justification                                                                |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dependent variable    | Employment in services (% of total employment)                               | International Labour Organization modelled estimates database. | Represents shifts in labor toward services as a result of offshoring.        |
| Independent Variables | Exports in telecommunication, computer, and information services as % of GDP | UNCTADstat                                                     | Proxy for offshoring in the ICT sector.                                      |
|                       | Inward FDI as % of GDP                                                       | UNCTADstat                                                     | Represents foreign involvement in the economy.                               |
| Control Variables     | Frontier Tech Readiness Index                                                | UNCTADstat                                                     | Measures countries’ capabilities to adopt and benefit from digital services. |
|                       | Inflation, consumer prices                                                   | World Bank                                                     | Controls for macroeconomic volatility affecting labor markets.               |

 *Table 1: List of indicators to measure the impact of offshoring on Employment in services. Source: Author’s conceptualization*

| Variables             | Indicators                                                                   | Source                          | Justification                                                    |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dependent variable    | Net migration rate                                                           | World Bank                      | Represents the overall migration balance                         |
| Independent Variables | Exports in telecommunication, computer, and information services as % of GDP | UNCTADstat                      | Proxy for offshoring in the ICT sector                           |
|                       | Inward FDI as % of GDP                                                       | UNCTADstat                      | Represents foreign involvement in the economy.                   |
| Control Variables     | Unemployment rate                                                            | ILOSDG Labour Market Indicators | Captures labor market pressures that may push emigration         |
|                       | Real minimum wage <sup>11</sup>                                              | ILOSDG and World Bank           | Captures purchasing power and wage pressure on low-skilled labor |
|                       | Human Development Index                                                      | UNDP                            | Reflects development conditions                                  |

▲ Table 2: List of indicators to measure the impact of offshoring on Net Migration Source: Author's conceptualization

Given the limited cross-sectional variation in the panel data, the appropriate regression model was determined by comparing a Fixed Effects panel regression with a Pooled Ordinary Least Squares model. To determine the most appropriate regression model for the panel data structure used in this study, we apply the Fixed Effects “Within” Estimator and conduct an F-test to assess the joint significance of the individual, cross-sectional effects. The F-test compares the restricted model, in this case the Pooled Ordinary Least Squares model without country-specific effects, to the unrestricted model, which includes country-specific Fixed Effects. The test assesses whether the unobserved heterogeneity across countries is jointly significant and should be controlled for. In RStudio, this is implemented using the *pFtest()* function from the *plm* package. The output, including the F-statistic, degrees of freedom, and the p-value, is reported below:

| Model               | Test                                  | F Statistic | p-value   |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Employment outcomes | F test for individual effects (1, 22) | 26.539      | 0.0000365 |
| Migration outcomes  | F test for individual effects (1, 21) | 3.4394      | 0.07776   |

▲ Table 3: F-test for individual effects results (Fixed Effects Vs Pooled OLS). Source: Author's calculation

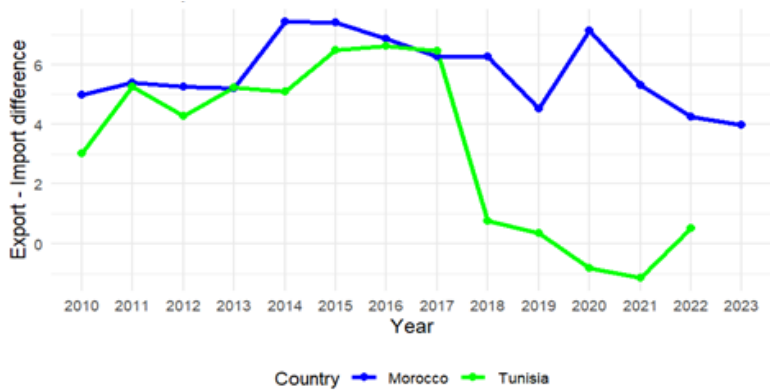
The very small p-value ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the employment outcomes regression test leads to rejecting the hypothesis of no individual effects. That is to say that the test supports the use of a Fixed Effects model, as it indicates the presence of significant unobserved heterogeneity between the entities. However, in the migration-related test, the result of the test for individual effects ( $p > 0.05$ ) seems to be marginally significant and does not reject the Pooled OLS model.

#### 4. Results

Offshoring decisions are influenced by various factors, with cost-effectiveness being a central theme in much of the literature. In this regard, Tunisia and Morocco remain attractive destinations due to their relatively low labor costs, which enhance their comparative advantage, particularly when contrasted with other emerging offshoring hubs such as those in Central and Eastern Europe (Zoltán Gál, 2014). Labor costs appear to be higher in Morocco between 2010 and 2023. For instance, real minimum wage levels during this period were, on average, 53.41% lower in Tunisia than in Morocco.<sup>5</sup> Other factors also make offshoring activities attractive, such as the labor force. In fact, from 2010 to 2024, both countries experienced steady labor force growth, at 9.4% for Morocco and 9.72% for Tunisia.<sup>6</sup>

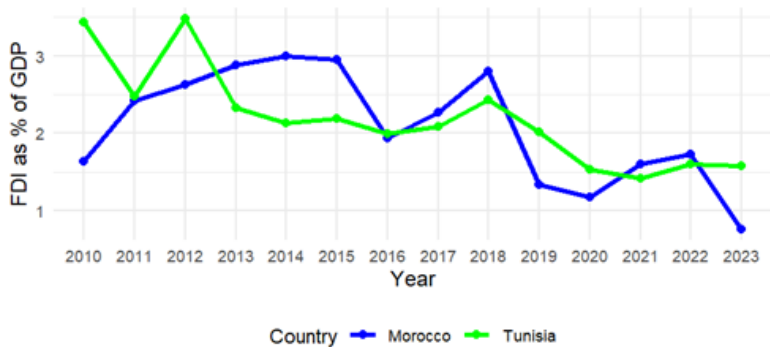
Both economies' focus on development has led to a prioritization of export-led growth and the enhancement of infrastructure for improved ICT adaptation and digital transitions. Figure 1 shows that exports of telecommunication, computer and information services exceed imports due to a positive balance in the ICT services trade. The difference between exports in ICT and imports in ICT, as a percentage of trade in services, has been positive from 2010 to 2023, with the exception of negative values for Tunisia between 2021 and 2022. Furthermore, Morocco has undertaken several strategic measures to foster digital transformation and encourage offshoring in the ICT sector. The establishment of key institutions like the Digital Development Agency and the National Commission for the Protection of Personal Data marks a strong commitment to enhancing the digital infrastructure and ensuring data security, especially with the establishment of national digital strategies, including the "*Maroc Numeric 2013*" and "*Maroc Digital 2020*" plans, aiming to position it as a leader in North Africa (MAA Fettouma, 2023). In Tunisia, similar policies have been taken. The ICT sector in Tunisia has experienced significant growth, fueled by the government's Smart Tunisia strategy, launched in 2015, and the National Strategy for Digital Transformation 2021-2025, both of which aim to drive IT innovation and tackle graduate unemployment. A prime example of this development is the Elgazala Technopark, the first dedicated technology park in Tunisia and the entire North African region. Remarkably, most of the park's production is exported, and it is home to several high-profile multinational corporations, including Alcatel, Ericsson, Huawei Technologies, STMicroelectronics, StoneSoft, and Kromberg Schubert (Ministry of Technologies and Communication of Tunisia, 2025).

Although there is no direct indicator of offshore intensity to Tunisia and Morocco, the growth in Telecommunications, computer and information services exports



Source: The author's calculation based on UNCTAD data on exports and imports by service category

Figure 1: ICT Services Export-Import Difference (% of Trade in Services)



Source: Author's calculation based on UNCTAD data on FDI and GDP

Figure 2: FDI as a Percentage of GDP in Tunisia and Morocco

indicates increasing demand for digitally deliverable services, often provided by offshore enterprises. As such, the upward trend in ICT-related service exports can be viewed as a proxy for the expansion of offshoring activities into the region. The increase in Inward investment goes hand in hand with the increase in ICT exports, showing the increasing relevance in international trade, as shown by Figure 2.

Despite the growth of ICT service exports and the positive evolution of inflows of FDI, high amounts of unemployment are present in both countries. Over the observed period from 2010 to 2024, Tunisia consistently exhibited a higher unemployment rate than Morocco, as indicated by a consistently positive difference between the unemployment rates in the two countries. On average, the unemployment rate in Tunisia exceeded Morocco's by 6%,<sup>7</sup> which signals structural labor market issues. In Tunisia, the real minimum wage is nearly twice as low as that in Morocco, being 53.41% lower.<sup>8</sup>

Demographic data indicate that both countries are primarily exporters of emigrants, with very high negative net migration rates. From 2010 to 2023, Tunisia experienced an average net migration rate of negative 62.28% relative to its combined migration rates.<sup>9</sup> This indicates the lower amount of emigration from Tunisia compared to Morocco, with the possibility of higher immigration inflows. On the other hand, between 2010 and 2023, Tunisia’s Human Development Index was on average 9.38% higher than Morocco’s, relative to their combined HDI levels,<sup>10</sup> reflecting relatively stronger performance in health, education, and income over time.

To assess the impact of offshoring on employment in services, a Fixed Effects Regression model was estimated using panel data for Morocco and Tunisia from 2010 to 2023, with the employment in services (% of total employment) being the dependent variable. The results, as shown in Table 4 below, using robust standard errors, indicate that ICT exports have a strong and statistically significant positive effect on employment in the services sector, suggesting that increased offshoring in the ICT sector is associated with higher service sector employment. Conversely, FDI inflows are negatively associated with service employment, potentially reflecting the importance of sectors other than services. The Frontier Technology Readiness Index also has a significant positive impact, implying that digital preparedness enhances labor absorption in services. Overall, the model explains 76% of the variation in service sector employment outcomes, supporting the hypothesis that digital offshoring and technological readiness are key drivers of service sector employment.

On the other hand, to assess the impact of offshoring and employment indicators on migration, a Pooled OLS model was applied for Tunisia and Morocco between 2010 and 2023, with the net migration rate as the dependent variable. The model

| Variables                                                                   | Coefficient | Robust Std. Error               | t-value | Prob.           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Exports in telecommunication, computer and information services as % of GDP | 5.094       | (0.594)                         | 8.58    | 1.8e-08         |
| Inward FDI as % of GDP                                                      | −1.062      | (0.306)                         | −3.47   | 0.002           |
| Frontier tech readiness index                                               | 17.988      | (7.214)                         | 2.49    | 0.020           |
| Inflation                                                                   | 0.293       | (0.006)                         | 48.28   | 2.2e-16         |
| Model Summary                                                               |             |                                 |         |                 |
| R <sup>2</sup> = 0.808                                                      |             | Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.765 |         | F-ratio = 23.20 |

 Table 4: Fixed effects regression model results relative to employment in services.  
Source: Author’s calculation

| Variables                                                                   | Coefficient | Robust Std. Error | t-value | Prob.   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|---------|---------|
| Exports in telecommunication, computer and information services as % of GDP | -0.34       | 18.82             | -0.02   | 0.986   |
| Inward FDI as % of GDP                                                      | -3.26       | 8.54              | -0.38   | 0.708   |
| Unemployment Rate                                                           | 0.71        | 0.15              | 4.79    | < 0.001 |
| Real Minimum Wage                                                           | -0.06       | 0.07              | -0.90   | 0.380   |
| HDI                                                                         | 338.51      | 6.68              | 50.69   | < 0.001 |

#### Model Summary

|               |                        |                 |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| $R^2 = 0.869$ | Adjusted $R^2 = 0.765$ | F-ratio = 19.97 |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------------|

 *Table 5: Pooled OLS regression results relative to net migration rate.*  
Source: Author's calculation

explains approximately 76% of the variation in the net migration rate, supporting the significant impact of the Human Development Index on net migration rates. This indicates that improvements in development are strongly associated with more positive rates, which means less emigration. Exports in ICT-related services and unemployment, as well as real minimum wage, do not seem to have explanatory power in their relationship to net migration rates, indicating that migration decisions in this context are more sensitive to broader development indicators than to short-term economic or labor market factors, as shown in Table 5.

In conclusion, the models indicate that ICT offshoring, as proxied by exports of telecommunication, computer, and information services, has a positive and statistically significant impact on employment in services across both countries. This suggests that the increased integration of these countries in the global production chains in the ICT services sector is associated with job growth in services. In contrast, Migration appears to be more strongly influenced by other structural factors than ICT services trade, as there is no significant relationship between the offshoring proxy and net migration rates.

## 5. Discussion and contextual analysis

Since the mid-2010s, North African countries such as Morocco and Tunisia have increasingly repositioned themselves within a wider African and Euro-Mediterranean political economy. In recent years, both countries are “are increasingly turning

their attention towards sub-Saharan Africa”, for security, migration and economic reasons (Dworkin, 2020). This shift reflects efforts to act as connective hubs between Europe and the African continent in the context of renewed industrial policy debates, nearshoring strategies, and the restructuring of global value chains following the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this context, the African Union has emerged as a key reference point for national development and industrial strategies, particularly through its Agenda 2063 and the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020–2030, which frame digitalization, industrialization, and skills development as central pillars of Africa’s structural transformation (African Union, 2020). In parallel, the AU-EU partnership has prioritized digitalization, innovation, and infrastructure as areas of interregional cooperation, notably through the EU’s Comprehensive Strategy with Africa (European Commission, 2020).

Within this evolving landscape, digitalization, particularly in relation to manufacturing, services, and knowledge-intensive activities, has emerged as a central axis for competitiveness and integration into regional and global value chains. While digital technologies can enhance productivity and facilitate the participation of firms from North Africa in European production networks, they also intensify competitive pressures and deepen skill selectivity within labor markets, potentially reinforcing differentiated mobility outcomes (Schwab, 2016; Tanchum, 2021). Importantly, although AU-EU digital cooperation initiatives acknowledge the transformative potential of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the intersection between digitalization, industrial upgrading, and labor mobility remains underdeveloped at the intergovernmental level (EU-AU Digital Economy Task Force, 2019). Situating ICT offshoring within this regional African context thus highlights how national strategies in Morocco and Tunisia are embedded in broader continental ambitions to build regional value chains, while simultaneously shaping the conditions under which skilled labor is produced, retained, and channeled into transnational mobility circuits (Tanchum, 2021).

To fully interpret the empirical findings, it is crucial to contextualize them within the broader regulatory, policy, and socioeconomic environments of Morocco and Tunisia. The increasing tradability of services and the emergence of both countries as regional offshoring hubs underscore the importance of institutional frameworks in shaping these dynamics. Since gaining independence, both countries have pursued trade liberalization as a core economic strategy, aiming to integrate more deeply into the global economy. A pivotal moment in this trajectory was the signing of Association Agreements with the European Union, which facilitated greater economic cooperation and market access (Official Journal L 070, 2000; Official Journal L 97, 1998). Today, more than half of Morocco’s and Tunisia’s trade is conducted with the EU (European Commission, 2025). Both countries are aware of their roles in international production chains. They aim to enhance their attractiveness while achieving their development goals. To do this, they are establishing various criteria to regulate investment flows. These include identifying sectors of economic priority, ensuring job creation, and promoting equitable regional development (Morocco,

Investment Charter Law No. 03-22, 2022; Tunisia, Investment Law No. 2016-71). The legal definitions of investments, despite their focus on national development, seem to vary between the countries. For Morocco, there is a project- and production-centered perspective that focuses on the tangible conditions of goods or service production and job creation (Decree No. 2-23-1, 2023). The Tunisian legislator focuses more on border economic development, with the condition of risk assessment, and recognizes two forms of investment: direct and participatory investments (Law n° 2016-71, 2016). This suggests that, in the case of Tunisia, the legal framework permits a broader range of foreign investment, which can be either capital-intensive or labor-intensive in nature.

Regarding investment tax incentives, both Tunisia and Morocco have established competitive fiscal frameworks aimed at attracting foreign and domestic investors, despite some divergence. Tunisia, pursuant to Tax Incentives Law No. 2017-8, provides a full exemption from corporate income tax on export-derived profits, in services and industry sectors, for the first year, followed by a graduated deduction thereafter, reaching 25% in the fourth year (Law n° 2017-8, 2017). Morocco, on the other hand, offers exporting companies, excluding those dealing in scrap metals, a preferential corporate income tax rate of 20% and can reach 10% when lower net profits are present. In addition, goods and services destined for export are fully exempt from value-added tax, with full deduction rights, provided that the export is substantiated through official documentation, such as transport receipts, customs declarations, and evidence of foreign currency payment. Besides, exporting companies in the Industrial Acceleration Zones benefit from a full CIT exemption for the first five years of operation, followed by a reduced fixed rate of 15% (Ministry of Economy and Finance and Administrative Reform, Morocco, 2021).

A preferential regime for enterprises operating in special zones is also present in Tunisia, as well as in economic activity parks. The regime offers full income and corporate tax deductions for export-related earnings for the first ten years of activity. Companies can also freely import production equipment, benefit from reduced VAT rates, and are allowed limited sales on the local market, with a maximum of 30% of their previous year's export turnover. Recruitment of foreigners in export companies is also exempt from common rules: companies can hire foreign managers or specialists without needing to follow the regular administrative authorization

**While digital technologies can enhance productivity and facilitate the participation of firms from North Africa in European production networks, they also intensify competitive pressures and deepen skill selectivity within labor markets, potentially reinforcing differentiated mobility outcomes.**

procedure (Law No. 93-120, 1993). However, this does not include other regular foreign workers.

The existence of export-oriented regimes justifies the increase in exports in offshoring activities in both countries. However, the different approaches also highlight the possible variations, especially when it comes to the impact on the labor market and country competitiveness. For instance, sectoral differences in investment are a result of different focuses: Morocco focuses on practical job creation, while Tunisia focuses on broader economic development. The setting of economic priorities and equal development between regions further tightens both countries' position in the Global Value Chain, making them more attractive for offshoring in labor-intensive sectors such as textiles, manufacturing, and automobiles, rather than knowledge-intensive sectors. This implies, as also proven by the empirical data, a limited impact of offshoring in ICT services and inward direct investment on economic and employment indicators, despite their importance as a percentage of GDP.

The extensive tax incentives in both countries and the major focus on exportation can have a reverse effect of a race to the bottom, offering benefits for businesses to the detriment of others, and resulting in more informal employment (Williams, 2015). For instance, labor markets in Tunisia and Morocco have high informal employment rates, especially in Tunisia. The causes of this phenomenon can vary due to local regulations and systems, but both countries struggle with poor access to credit and judicial inefficiencies, making it difficult for small firms to scale or integrate into formal value chains (Lopez-Acevedo, Ranzani, Sinha, & Elsheikhi, 2023). Therefore, other control factors, relative to labor market challenges and social security systems, indirectly impact the success of offshoring in these countries due to productivity and informality gaps. That is to say that offshoring can be more successful in comparative locations, such as Central and Eastern Europe, despite the lower labor costs in North Africa, due to these challenges.

While the impact of offshoring on employment is empirically supported and moderated by structural labor market challenges, the empirical analysis did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between offshoring and net migration rates. Instead, the findings align with existing literature that highlights the stronger influence of broader structural factors, unemployment, and economic opportunities on individuals' decisions to migrate in the cases of Tunisia and Morocco. To contextualize the impact of offshoring on migration, the country's migratory profiles also broaden the explanation of migration beyond mere economic activity.

Migration patterns in both Tunisia and Morocco are shaped by a complex interplay of economic, demographic, and historical factors, particularly in relation to their ties with European destination countries. In Tunisia, relatively high literacy rates and a larger pool of educated individuals have led to migration flows that are more strongly influenced by education-driven and skill-based incentives. In contrast, Moroccan migration tends to be more responsive to structural pressures, including high youth unemployment, rapid urban population growth, and broader demographic strain. As a result, while Tunisian migration is often characterized by a 'brain drain'

characteristic, Moroccan migration reflects more socioeconomic challenges (Gubert and Nordman, 2009).

However, more recently, both countries have become a transit destination for sub-Saharan migrants. These changes in migration patterns, coupled with the need for cooperation with the EU to limit irregular migration and to encourage development, have led to policy changes in both countries. In fact, migration and border management have become a means of conditionality in their partnerships with the EU. Transit migration has often been explained within the unintended policy impact of increasing EU policies. This means that, due to increasingly restrictive entry policies in Europe, countries in North Africa, particularly those in the Maghreb and Mashreq regions, have become de facto staging grounds for migrants hoping to cross into the European Union, largely because of their proximity (Sørensen, 2006). Other factors contributing to the persistence of challenges can also be rooted in national migrant integration policies and challenges to development, such as unemployment and poverty rates.

The main implication of these challenges is the encouragement of emigration as a means of development, through diaspora engagement policies. In fact, in Morocco, the diaspora has historically been seen as a development asset, leading to the creation of two main institutions in 1990: the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and the Foundation for Moroccans Living Abroad. The first focused on monitoring migration, reintegration, and diplomacy, while the latter addressed cultural and educational matters. Relative to these institutions' approaches to diaspora is a homeland-centered rationality focusing on instrumental values of the diaspora-homeland tie, which can manifest mainly through remittances or investment (Mahieu, 2018). Following the same approach since 1998, Tunisia has consistently emphasized the importance of diaspora in skill development and economic growth through remittances and investment (IOM Tunisia, 2025). To further encourage this engagement, the Tunisian government has granted preferential fiscal treatment to Tunisians residing abroad who wish to create or participate in investment projects. This includes exemptions from import duties and taxes on equipment, materials, and one transport truck, whether imported or purchased from bonded warehouses. Additionally, purchases made in the local market from VAT-registered suppliers benefit from suspended VAT, consumption duties, and turnover taxes (Briki, 2022).

Concluding with the impact of offshoring activities in Tunisia and Morocco on migration, it is clear that while offshoring alone does not significantly drive migration trends, they are better understood through the lens of other labor market, demographic, and policy-related factors. While the impact of offshoring on employment and even FDI is more visible, it is also nuanced by control factors related to labor market conditions and policy incentives, allowing us to draw conclusions and implications for both employment and migration.

## 6. Conclusions

This study set out to examine the socioeconomic consequences of rising ICT offshoring intensity in Tunisia and Morocco, with particular attention to employment and migration trends. The findings indicate that offshoring produces selective and uneven socioeconomic effects: it generates sector-specific employment gains without broad labor market upgrading, while indirectly reinforcing skilled emigration rather than reducing it.

In regards to employment, the increase in service sector employment due to offshoring does not translate to a broad, generalized improvement in overall employment, largely because of challenges like informal unemployment and regulatory restrictions that limit the potential of the offshoring model. The confined role of both countries in labor-intensive sectors has kept them in lower positions within the Global Value Chain, preventing them from transitioning into knowledge-intensive industries, and cannot provide a solution for graduate unemployment, hence, for brain drain.

The limited impact of offshoring on migration is primarily driven by structural factors, as evidenced by the significant role of the Human Development Index in explaining migration trends, and by policy choices that promote emigration as a means of development. Both governments view emigration as an opportunity for economic growth through remittances and investment, with diaspora engagement policies actively encouraging the involvement of nationals abroad in the development of their home countries. In this context, ICT offshoring may indirectly reinforce migration by increasing the capabilities of skilled workers to access international labor markets, rather than anchoring them domestically. This dynamic challenges policy narratives that present offshoring as a straightforward “brain retention” mechanism.

These findings open several avenues for future research. First, there is a need for micro-level, qualitative investigation into the role of offshoring as a potential brain circulation accelerator. Longitudinal studies tracking the career trajectories of ICT graduates, particularly those who transition from domestic offshoring firms to international labor markets, would allow for a more precise assessment of how skills acquisition, professional networks, and income effects translate into migration capabilities. Second, further research should examine how national digital and ICT strategies in Morocco and Tunisia interact with continental frameworks, notably the African Union’s Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa. Comparative analysis could assess whether current policies facilitate a diversification of partnerships toward intra-African digital trade and services, or whether they continue to reinforce EU-centred nearshoring models. Third, longitudinal and distributional analyses are needed to evaluate the long-term consequences of regulatory dualism between offshore and onshore regimes, particularly with regard to wage polarization, labor market segmentation, and the persistence of informal employment.

At the same time, the study highlights several structural obstacles and policy challenges. A central constraint remains the mismatch between the high-skilled

labor supply produced by national education systems and the relatively limited technological and functional upgrading of the offshoring in ICT sector. Without a transition toward more knowledge-intensive activities, offshoring risks reproducing a development model based on skill underutilization and outward mobility. In addition, the lack of coordination between economic policy, largely oriented toward attracting foreign direct investment, and migration policy, often centered on managing emigration and leveraging diaspora resources, creates internal inconsistencies. These policy domains frequently operate at cross-purposes, simultaneously fostering skill formation and facilitating the externalization of human capital. Finally, the continued over-reliance on the European Union as the primary economic and migration partner constrains the potential for deeper integration into African regional markets. Aligning offshoring and digitalization strategies with AU-level objectives would require a strategic shift toward South-South cooperation and the development of regional value chains in digital services.

Looking ahead, policymakers in Tunisia and Morocco may benefit from expanding offshoring strategies to include knowledge-intensive sectors, which could enhance their global competitiveness and generate higher-value employment opportunities. However, this is strongly related to the need for skill matching, thus, to training programs initiatives and human capital investment. Meanwhile, the problematic challenges faced in labor markets and migration management can be further addressed to prevent a race to the bottom by easing access to onshore sectors. In fact, to achieve a positive spillover effect from the offshoring regime, a more balanced approach seems necessary between highly incentivized offshore and onshore regimes. Ultimately, achieving the sustainable development that these countries aim for will require aligning labor market reforms, migration policies, and incentives for offshoring. ✨

## Notes

- 1 Data on the number of offshore enterprises in Tunisia from 2010 to 2022 was collected from the National Institute of Statistics of Tunisia (*Institut National de la Statistique*), under the section “Number of Enterprises by Regime: Offshore,” available at: <https://www.ins.tn/>. The annual growth rate was calculated as the year-on-year percentage change in the number of offshore enterprises. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over the entire period was computed using the formula:  $CAGR = (ending\ value / beginning\ value)^{1/n} - 1$  where the beginning value is 19,269 in 2010, the ending value is 34,317 in 2022, and  $n=12$  years. This results in a CAGR of approximately 4.93%.
- 2 In this sense, ‘labor rights’ is used in a generic context, referring to the broader International Labor Standards as developed by the International Labour Organization. Central to these rights are the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the elimination of discrimination in employment, and the right to a safe and healthy working environment.
- 3 Social dumping describes a situation where companies benefit from weaker labor protections or lower working standards in one country to outcompete others unfairly. It involves sidestepping fair employment practices to cut costs, gaining an advantage in the market by using cheaper labor without respecting proper social or labor norms. The Court of Justice of the EU

recognized in different cases potential situations of social dumping and prioritized the right of collective bargaining motivated by combating social dumping over the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services.

- 4 Outsourcing has become an essential business strategy in response to globalization and increasing market competition. Companies are constantly seeking ways to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and adapt to rapidly evolving consumer demands. The growing complexity and expense of developing and managing information systems, coupled with the need for highly specialized skills, make outsourcing a practical solution. By delegating certain operations to third-party providers, especially in developing countries with abundant human capital, businesses can cut costs, accelerate project timelines, and focus on their core strengths. Globalization has also contributed to lowering barriers to international competition, leading to cost savings in production and distribution. This strategy not only reduces overhead costs but also allows businesses to diversify their product and service offerings, increasing flexibility in a competitive market.
- 5 Based on the author's calculation of percentage difference of real minimum wage of Tunisia compared to Morocco from 2010 - 2023. The average is the sum of the percentage difference divided by the number of years.
- 6 Labor force averages were calculated using yearly data from 2010 to 2024 for Morocco and Tunisia from the World Bank, World Development Indicators database. Annual growth rates were derived by calculating the year-over-year percentage change in the labor force for both countries.
- 7 Average unemployment difference calculated by the author from the difference between unemployment rates between Tunisia and Morocco based on ILOstat data for the selected period.
- 8 Based on the author's calculation of percentage difference of real minimum wage of Tunisia compared to Morocco from 2010 - 2023. The average is the sum of the percentage difference divided by the number of years.
- 9 Based on the author's calculation of difference percentages of net migration rate data of Tunisia opposed to Morocco, as collected from the World Bank database, from 2010 to 2023.
- 10 Based on the author's calculation of HDI difference percentage between Morocco and Tunisia from 2010-2023, based on data from UNDP.
- 11 Real minimum wage was calculated by the author through nominal minimum wage data collected from 2010 – 2023 for Tunisia and Morocco from ILOSTAT, adjusted to purchasing power. Purchasing power is represented by Inflation, consumer prices (annual %) data from the World Bank data portal for the same period. Real minimum wage = nominal minimum wage / (1+ inflation/100).

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# MOROCCO'S MIGRATION REFORM OF 2013: A GEOSTRATEGIC MOVE BEYOND HUMAN RIGHTS

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## Abstract

Morocco has gained global prominence in migration, evolving into a country of emigration, transit, and immigration. Reinforcing this prominence is its 2013 migration reform, which marked a departure from decades of restrictive policies. Previously, migration was governed by Law 02-03, which focused on security, regarding the entry (immigration), stay (residence), and movement of foreigners, as well as issues related to emigration and irregular immigration. In 2013, King Mohammed VI announced a human rights-driven and participatory migration policy, marking a shift away from security-based measures. While widely praised, this reform raised questions about its underlying drivers and motivation, given several structural and practical inconsistencies. Beyond the outlined social dynamics, this study examines Morocco's migration reform through Abdelmalek Sayad's theory of 'thinking the state' (1990), which links migration policies to broader geostrategic and diplomatic ambitions. It explores how Morocco's radical reform has been strategically instrumentalized to forge an international brand image and secure geostrategic and foreign policy goals, particularly in Africa. This study is based on fieldwork (semi-structured interviews) conducted in-person in Morocco and via teleconferencing tools with migration policy experts in Morocco and with Moroccan migration stakeholders, providing insights into the reform's underlying drivers and its role in shaping Morocco's regional influence. The fieldwork revealed that Morocco's migration reform, on the one hand, serves to portray the monarchy as a progressive and human-rights-driven regime, and on the other, enables Morocco to assume a leadership role on both continental and regional levels.

*Migration, Morocco, diplomacy, sub-Saharan Africa, geopolitics*

## Keywords

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## 1. Introduction

Prior to the enactment of the migration reform known as ‘New Migration Policies’ in 2013, Morocco’s governance of migration was channelled through a security-focused and highly restrictive legislation, the so-called Law 02-03. Enacted in 2003, the law governs the entry (immigration), stay (residence), and movement of foreigners, as well as issues related to emigration and irregular immigration (IOM, 2017). It establishes that illegal border crossing to or through Morocco is punishable under the country’s criminal law. This placed the law under substantial criticism from both national and international analysts. For instance, Gazzotti (2018) argued that the law 02-03 in its design is not only an emblematic of a hostile institutional stance but it also spreads seeds of systematic violence and does not make any reference for migrants’ rights. Other political scientists (see Lahlou, 2015; Khachani, 2011; Belguendouz, 2003) have often characterized the law as a product of the European migration policy imperatives, pushing Morocco to play ‘Europe’s gendarme.’ Üstübici (2015) also emphasized that the Law 02-03, in essence, represents an “attempt to govern migration in the EU sense of the term and a way to improve relations with the EU” (p. 246).

A major turning point took place in September 2013, when the King Mohammed VI announced a ground-breaking step, initiating the New Migration Policy. This policy framework did not only recognize Morocco as an immigration nation, but also shifted the country’s migration governance from a predominantly security-oriented framework to one grounded on human rights and humanitarian principles (Naama, 2017). It introduced major reforms, including two unprecedented regularization campaigns implemented in 2014 and 2017 targeting irregular migrants, the enactment of law 27.14 on anti-trafficking, and the establishment of inter-ministerial institutions namely the Directorate of Migration Affairs within the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs. Moreover, a National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum Seeker (henceforth SNIA) was developed to facilitate migrants’ integration in Morocco (Gazzotti, 2022).

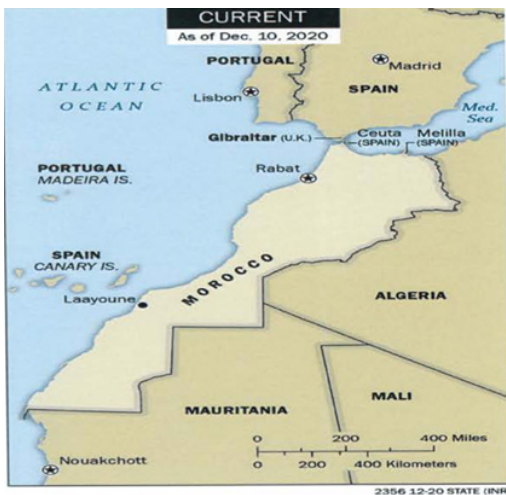
Despite these robust reforms, major constraints continue to restrict sub-Saharan Africans’ integration and undermine the rather holistic and forward-looking integration model Morocco strives to establish (Berriane, 2015; IOM, 2017). This perceived mismatch between policy ambitions and practical outcomes constitute the core concern of the present study. It specifically attempts to answer a major question which is: What prompted Morocco to overhaul its migration policies? An answer to this question requires examining Morocco’s migration governance, focusing on their underlying drivers and impacts. To this end, the study employs a qualitative approach, guided by semi-structured interviews conducted in Morocco with sub-Saharan African migrants, Moroccan stakeholders, and to a lesser extent with civil society actors. The interviews were conducted in Tangier and Rabat. The choice of these two cities is justified by their attributes that reinforce their significance to migration within the kingdom. Rabat is the capital city of Morocco and hosts a wide range of administrations and institutions providing services to migrants. The city hence is an important stopping point for immigrants in Morocco to fulfil administra-

tive procedures such as applying for residence permits, etc. Tangier on the other hand, is a city situated in the Northern region renowned for its proximity to Spain at only 14 Kilometres. Due to this proximity, Tangier is home a sizeable number of sub-Saharan African migrants, especially those tried to cross to Europe but ultimately failed. In terms of time frame, this study focuses primarily on the period 2013 onward, which is widely recognized as a turning point in Morocco's migration governance. It marked the launch of the NMP, signalling Morocco's alleged break with its past of migration governance and control which was predominantly framed through a security lens.

## 2. Background

Morocco has long been a site of complex mobility making it a compelling case within global migration systems. Historically the country's geographical and geopolitical positioning-situated as the crossroad of Europe, Africa and the Middle East has shaped the patterns of movement into, from, and through the country.

In earlier centuries, Morocco served as a hub for trade, pilgrimage, and education, attracting individuals from across the African continent and beyond. In recent decades, particularly since early 2000s, it has evolved into a transit country, facilitating the movement of sub-Saharan Africans towards Europe- perceived as 'European Eldorado'. Several factors underpin this trend, notably Morocco's geographical vicinity to Europe separated by only 14 Kilometres (see the map below). Morocco is bordered by Algeria to the east the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Mauritania to the south, and Spain to the north (Fitzhugh, 2005). This strategic positioning enhances the country's prominence within contemporary mobility trajectories, particularly those linking the Global South to the Global North.



▲ Map 1: Morocco in the World. Source: Office of the Geographical and Global Issues, Department of State. Guidance Bulletin No.38, December 16, 2020

Although it remains a country of transit, Morocco has gradually transformed into a destination on its own promoted by its economic evolution, political stability, and the country's proactive expansion southwards, through tightening its relations with sub-Saharan African countries (El Ghazouani, 2019). These shifting dynamics paved the way for substantial institutional and legal responses. In 2013, Mohammed VI announced Morocco's overhaul of its migration policies by introducing a comprehensive, human rights-driven, and participatory framework, moving away from its restrictive and security-driven approach. This reform "launched a liberal migration agenda, the so-called 'New Migration policy (NMP),' structured around three pillars: migrants' regularization, a set of integration measures and legal reforms, as well as an intensified migration diplomacy" (Natter, 2019: 86). The inception of this unprecedented migration reform has been widely celebrated. However, numerous structural and practical inconsistencies within this policy prompted several analysts to question the real drivers and underlying motives behind this comprehensive overhaul. This becomes particularly evident when examining the components of the New Migration Policy. The latter sought to establish a new migration law known as Law 72.17 aimed to replace the Law 02-03 on immigration. This policy shift seemingly attests to Morocco's genuine commitment to transiting its migration policy directions from repression, security and 'blockage', which characterized Law 02-03 to a more open, inclusive and humanist migration governance (Natter, 2013). The implementation of the Law 72.17 has not materialized into forceable law. To date, no immigration legislation has been enacted to amend Law 02-03 (Zaanoun, 2023).

This policy inaction and lack of progress in swiftly adopting the draft Law 72.17 means that "the legal framework on immigration remains mostly untouched" (Natter 2019, 114). The law 02-03 remains the only legislation governing migration in Morocco, undermining its desire to rupture with its inhumane migration management past. There is an underlying ambiguity around the reasons for this policy deadlock. Natter (2019) attributed this to the structural deficiencies among relevant institutions. She emphasized that the Moroccan migration policy is characterized by diverging institutional visions, and a lack of coherence, which, as a consequence, significantly limit the application of several migration reforms. Benjelloun (2020), in a similar vein, noted that this ambiguity stems from Morocco "competing interest that are often very difficult to reconcile" (p. 882); On the one hand, Morocco wants to secure a strong and advanced status with the EU by showing its active engagement in migration, but this ambition is confronted by the kingdom's growing interest in expanding its role continentally. Stuck between these strategic ambitions, Morocco opts for a delicate balance that will satisfy both its European and African partners.

### 3. Theoretical framework

Scholars such as Natter (2019), Adamson, and Tsouparas, as well as Perrin, have argued that migration policies are integral to a country's geopolitical positioning. Abdelmalek Sayad is particularly influential for his theory of 'thinking the state.' This theory suggests that migration is a *social fact* best understood through a socio-

logical lens. Expanding on this idea, Boudou (2023) argued that Sayad's approach uncovers the social conditions that shape migration policies, state assessment, and political discourse. Though grounded in sociology, Sayad's theory incorporates insights from multiple disciplines, rendering it mainly relevant for political theorists by virtue of its emphasis on exposing drivers for migration policies (ibid).

Sayad's theory of 'thinking the state' provides an invaluable framework for understanding migration policies. It highlights that immigration policies serve as a reflection of "how the State thinks of itself" (Sayad, 1999: 6) and that interrogating immigration policies inherently entails interrogating the state's underlying principles and structures (Sayad, 2010). Applying this to Morocco, Benjelloun (2024) argued that immigration policies are strategically instrumentalized to "forge an international brand image" (p. 237), rather than aiming solely to provide a genuine pathway for migrants to integrate. This is amply reflected in the inconsistencies within several migration frameworks, such as the SNIA, where only one of three draft bills has been formally adopted (Cherti and Collyer, 2015). This strongly suggests that migration reform is not primarily a matter of internal factors, although it played a crucial role, but rather part of a broader geopolitical agenda in which Morocco reorients itself towards Africa (Natter, 2019).

#### **4. Civil Society Pressure?**

The first trend links Morocco's migration reform to internal social dynamics, pushed by civil society and migrant groups (Bendra, 2019). Moroccan Civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) reported that sub-Saharan Africans lived in precarious conditions (GADEM, 2013), extreme poverty, and police brutality (Moroccan Association of Human Right, 2015; 2019), exacerbating their vulnerability (Doctors Without Borders, 2013), and exposing them to violence both along the Moroccan borders and/or within the territory (National Platform for Migrants' Protection, 2016). Although the reform was announced following the publication of several reports, it appears to reinforce the position of many analysts who argued that the reform was primarily influenced by pressure from civil society organizations and migrant advocacy groups. Officials from the Ministry of Moroccan Residents Abroad and Migration Affairs (MCMREAM) have acknowledged this influence, stating that "there has never been a public policy like this [in Morocco] executed with such a high level of coordination with civil society. We do nothing without coordination with civil society" (Norman, 2016: 429).

This narrative describes the reform as a neo-institutionalist, bottom-up process, whereby civil society organizations gained visibility and influence (Norman, 2016). The monarchy, which has always been seen and represented itself as a key agent of change (Natter, 2018), was receptive to these organizations' demands, particularly those concerning the human rights of migrants. Notably, prior to the King's announcement of the comprehensive reform, several organizations, such as GADEM, published critical reports warning against the precarious status and the mistreatment of migrants in Morocco. One such report, published in August 2013, led to further

condensed reports, including a remarkable report by the CNDH. This report was discussed in a closed session with the Moroccan Parliament in September 2013, just days before the King publicly announced the reform on September 10, 2013. This timeline has reinforced the narrative that civil society lobbying directly influenced and eventually led to the reform. Further emphasizing the role of civil society and migrant groups is Jacobs' (2014) statement, which highlights that the work of several Moroccan organizations in documenting abuses against migrants has been critical in bringing the issues to the forefront, both nationally and internationally. This has eventually prompted Morocco to radically change its migration governance.

Countering this narrative, GADEM, along with other civil actors, stressed that the reform was less about their mobilization and more about Morocco's fear of international condemnation and shaming. Morocco invests heavily in cultivating a positive global reputation, projecting a discourse of 'exceptionalism' that highlights its role as an example of modernization, democratization, and economic liberalization (Jacobs, 2014). Nevertheless, when several reports, particularly GADEM's, were publicized, Morocco's favourable image, which it had tried to showcase, was strongly challenged. A respondent involved in Morocco's discussion during the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Implementation Monitoring Committee of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members in Switzerland stated that:

"GADEM's presentation of its report in Geneva was certainly seen as a shame and humiliation to Morocco on the international level. Morocco has always given paramount importance to its international image, which is now distorted by GADEM's report. This has eventually propelled the King to hastily announce the country's adoption of the new comprehensive reform." (Informant11)

Further reinforcing this view, the same respondent added that the reform announcement was unexpected:

"We were informed of the reform just the moment the king was preparing to make his speech." (ibid)

These accounts suggest that civil society played a vital role in bringing migration issues to international attention. A respondent from the IOM mission in Morocco affirms this influence, stating that "Although [our] work is crucial in bringing migrants' in-country conditions to the public, it would be erroneous to assume that Morocco's migration policies are a direct result of our work. Rather, it is a vision" (Informant 14). This view suggests that the global scrutiny and reputational damage, or shaming, ultimately motivated Morocco to act. Two key accounts are pertinent in tackling this global influence. First, Morocco has consistently aspired to foster strong relations with the European Union (EU), and one way of achieving this is through reforming its policies, particularly those related to human rights (Lowe et al., 2020). Although this article acknowledges this influence, it is beyond its scope to explore the impact of this relation on migration policies in significant depth. A second account pertains to Morocco's shift towards the Global South, motivated by geopolitical imperatives (Natter, 2019).

Norman (2016) argued that the government's collaboration with civil society organizations was not a genuine commitment to their cause but more a strategic move "thereby limiting their ability to defy the state" (p. 432). In this regard, Arbaoui noted that despite civil society organizations being involved in discussions and consultations, their role remains extremely limited. This is evident in several initiatives, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which Morocco adopted on December 10, 2018, in Marrakech (UNHCR, 2018). Although civil society organizations participated in the consultation rounds leading up to the adoption of the Compact, they were unable to influence any changes to it, despite raising several important issues. For instance, GADEM claimed that the final draft of the GCM not only failed to enhance migrants' rights but also failed to uphold pre-existing ones, such as the UN Migrant Workers Convention (Arbaoui, 2022). This emphasizes the notion that while civil society may play an active role in drafting migration policy initiatives, its involvement often does not lead to meaningful changes. Instead, it may simply serve as a 'show' (Arbaoui, 2022). This highlights the pressing need to examine in depth key factors influencing migration policy development in Morocco, allowing us to answer the question: why did Morocco launch the reform at this specific moment?

**Morocco invests heavily in cultivating a positive global reputation, projecting a discourse of 'exceptionalism' that highlights its role as an example of modernization, democratization, and economic liberalization.**

## **5. Geopolitical Leadership in Africa**

An alternative approach ties Morocco's migration reform to pressing geopolitical ambitions on a continental level. Informant 11 emphasized that migration functions as a "a geopolitical currency used by states to negotiate geopolitics, and Morocco is no exception". This view argues that the migration reform was part of a broader strategy to secure geopolitical gains on the continent, particularly in relation to the territorial dispute over the Sahara. Norman (2016) argued that the timing of the reform coincided with a period in which Morocco's efforts were directed towards assuming a leadership role on the continent, both economically and geopolitically, by deepening its relations with many African states and re-joining the African Union (AU) (Benjelloun, 2024). Lowe et al. (2020) also noted that Morocco's geopolitical considerations are a strong background against which its migration policies are formulated. This policy ambition shapes the welcoming approach that Morocco expressed to migrants from the rest of Africa.

This ambition was reinforced by a series of unprecedented, high-profile diplomatic efforts, exemplified by King Mohammed VI's official visits to more than thirty-five

sub-Saharan countries, including Senegal, Nigeria, and Mali, to establish new trade partnerships and expand Morocco's sphere of influence (Norman, 2016). Daher observed that "Moroccan economic diplomacy is no longer satisfied with a simple policy of trade agreements but also relies on the creation of economic networks and direct and personal contacts between Moroccan and African economic actors" (2018: 4). Consequently, over 500 bilateral agreements have been signed across a wide spectrum of fields encompassing "trade and the promotion of investments, infrastructure, transport and projects related to human development" (Hasnaoui, 2017: 11).

For instance, in Senegal, Morocco signed two bilateral agreements, "one increasing cooperation on international land transport of goods and persons, and one related to mining, hydrocarbons, electricity, and renewable energies." (Norman 2016, 435). Similarly, during a visit to Mali, Mohammed VI attended the inauguration of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, a move interpreted as a "stark and brash" attempt to reshape power dynamics in North Africa and the Sahel. This visit has been a driving force, allowing Morocco and Mali to further boost trade and foster commercial relations (Morocco Ministry of Trade and Commerce, 2018). It also strengthened investment ties in the mining and hydrocarbon sectors (Norman, 2016). With Nigeria, Morocco pursued a win-win partnership, as demonstrated by the official visits of King Mohammed VI to Nigeria in 2016 and the visit of Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari to Morocco in 2018. These visits laid the groundwork for a groundbreaking partnership between the two nations, exemplified by the launch of the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline Project.

Beyond economic interests, Morocco's geostrategic strategy towards the global South has extended to its long-standing territorial conflict over the Sahara – a central issue and a key determinant in the country's foreign policy since independence. Given the relatively stagnant UN-led efforts (Pothoven, 2002), Morocco has relied heavily on the support of other African nations to support its claim of 'self-governance' over the region, making its engagement with the continent crucial to its broader geopolitical strategy. However, the country's withdrawal from the Organization of African Unity (OAU)- the AU's predecessor- in protest of the organization's admission of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as a member state, significantly weakened its diplomatic position (Rawhani, 2018). This "empty chair policy" (Hasnaoui 2017, 2) was widely criticized as a strategic miscalculation, limiting Morocco's continental outreach to a very few West African states (El-Katiri, 2015) and hampering its chance to serve any meaningful political roles on the continent (Bennis, 2021). On the other hand, Morocco's absence, for more than three decades, provided free rein for Algeria, Morocco's traditional rival and the main SADR's backer, to 'freely' extend its influence within the OAU, implementing its territorial agenda. By 1982, 25 African countries<sup>1</sup> had recognized the SADR as a sovereign state (Naldi, 1982).

These rapidly evolving dynamics among African nations served as a catalyst, prompting Morocco to reassess its African policy and reconsider its decision to leave the AU. In January 2017, King Mohammed VI formally announced Morocco's return to its "home," the AU (Mohammed VI, 2017). Following this 'Grand Return,'

Morocco intensively mobilized its institutions and diplomatic apparatus towards two objectives: first, countering Algeria's influence by breaking African nations' recognition of the SADR (Hasnaoui, 2017), and second, to extend its outreach beyond West Africa to include East and Southern countries (Bennis, 2021). This active diplomacy bore fruit, culminating in Morocco's securing positive neutrality from Nigeria and Ethiopia. Moreover, 28 states called for the immediate suspension of the SADR's membership in the AU (Rawhani, 2018), signalling a substantial turn in Africa's power dynamics.

To consolidate these diplomatic victories, Morocco coherently blended economic incentives, like debt cancellation for several African countries (Hasnaoui, 2017), with a humanistic approach that "prioritizes actions that have a direct impact on the daily lives of populations" (Saaf, 2017: 3). This humanistic orientation was exemplified by Morocco's 2013 New Comprehensive Migration Policy, which primarily targeted mainly sub-Saharan African populations.

Analysts argue that this welcoming migration policy has profoundly contributed to fostering Morocco's ties with sub-Saharan nations, allowing it, at least in part, to garner support for its autonomy plan over the disputed territories in the South (Norman, 2016). Echoing this argument, Benjelloun (2024) contends that Morocco's driver behind the overhaul of its migration legislation was primarily driven by foreign policy objectives, particularly concerning its territorial sovereignty over the disputed Southern territories. By enhancing the living conditions of sub-Saharan Africans within its borders, Morocco sought to garner diplomatic backing from their home countries.

Morocco's evolving migration policies have played a substantial role in realigning its diplomatic relations with African nations. This is especially evident in its evolving relations with several African states before and after its migration policy shift. For example, Cape Verde, Togo, Sierra Leone, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Eswatini, Zambia, and Chad- countries that had previously recognized the SADR before 2013- have since opened consulates in Laayoune and Dakhla, two major cities situated in the southern territories of Morocco. This shift reflects a broader trend across African states towards supporting Morocco's territorial integrity and legitimacy over the disputed territory (MDCMREAM, 2022). By 2024, "32 countries and regional organizations had opened consulates in these cities, affirming the irreversible recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over its territories in the Sahara" (Abba, 2024: 5)<sup>2</sup>, marking a significant success for Moroccan diplomacy (Wust and Nicolai, 2023). Commenting on this shift, Natter observed that Morocco's management of migration has been characterized by a double approach: a 'selective opening' for migrant groups from countries supporting Morocco's sovereignty, and a 'restrictive opening' for migrants from countries supporting the SADR.

## **6. Morocco's Migration Policies and Diplomacy in Africa**

Morocco's migration policies are intricately aligned with broader international diplomatic strategies. In line with this strategy, Morocco has shifted from its restric-

tive migration policies towards a more welcoming approach, positioning itself as a “regional model of responsible management of migration” (MDCMREAM, 2018). One of the respondents affirms this by stating that “the new migration policies stem from the monarch’s will. There certainly would not have been such a policy without his consent/willingness” (Informant 11).

Natter (2019) argued that this shift aims to strategically portray the regime as a ‘liberal’ and progressive both on national and international fronts. Initiatives such as the SNIA and various integration policies are not ends in themselves, but rather instruments pursued to bolster the monarchy’s legitimacy- essentially “crafting a liberal monarchy” (Natter, 2019: 104). Similarly, Morocco’s anti-human trafficking law serves as a symbolic commitment to international norms, reinforcing its progressive image (Natter, 2019). Law 27-14 represents Morocco’s first legislative effort to establish a clear and comprehensive definition of trafficking in Persons (TIP). This law brings the country’s domestic legal framework in line with the international Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children, which Morocco ratified in 2011 (MCMREAM, 2021).

The theoretical framework provided by Abdelmalek Sayad offers an invaluable lens through which to analyse how migration policies are utilized as a means of securing diplomatic leverage. Sayad’s concept of ‘thinking the state’ (1999) posits that immigration policies serve as a reflection of state ideology. By examining immigration policies, one simultaneously gains insights into the state’s structures and geopolitical orientation (Sayad, 1999). According to Sayad, “immigration is undeniably a subversive factor to the extent that it reveals in broad daylight the hidden truth and the deepest foundations of the social and political order we describe as national” (2004:280). Sayad’s statement underscores that immigration policies, though produced by states, should not be viewed solely as internal processes, “but must be related to the international elements of a state’s self-image” (Cherti and Collyer, 2015). This argument is echoed in Adamson and Tsourapas (2019) concept of migration diplomacy. Defined as “the use of diplomatic tools, processes and procedures to manage cross-border population mobility, including [...] the strategic use of migration flows as a means to obtain other aims” (2019: 116), migration diplomacy becomes a diplomatic resource, deployed strategically to support broader political aims. Following this logic, Geopolitical culture, what Sayad terms ‘how a state thinks of itself’, profoundly shapes migration policy directions, including immigration (Cherti and Collyer, 2015).

Morocco’s migration policies, particularly towards sub-Saharan Africans, illustrate the way in which immigration becomes highly integral to the state’s self-conception internationally. By virtue of their presence in the country, sub-Saharan

■ **Morocco’s anti-human trafficking law serves as a symbolic commitment to international norms, reinforcing its progressive image.**

African immigrants become inextricably linked to the country's diplomatic and geopolitical engagement with their countries of origin. For instance, Morocco's regularization campaigns of 2014 and 2017 were essential tools in consolidating Morocco's political standing within the AU (Martin, 2015). These initiatives reinforced Morocco's position as a capable influencer of the conditions of migrants in Africa, thereby enhancing its diplomatic standing.

It is worth noting that prior to the adoption of these regularization campaigns, sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco were mostly in an irregular situation. Data from the Moroccan High Commission for Planning (HCP) indicate that, as of the 2014 national census, 86,000 sub-Saharan Africans were residing in Morocco. Over 65% of these immigrants were regularized by the two regularization campaigns. Despite these campaigns being harshly criticized for their overly restrictive measures, mainly requiring a five-year residency permit, Natter (2021) argued that they function as mechanisms by which the Moroccan regime constructed a liberal outlook. As a consequence, Morocco has garnered recognition from the African Union for its unique and advanced approach to migration governance on the continent. This acknowledgement is evidenced by Mohammed VI's appointment as "champion" of African migration governance (Baida, 2020).

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This article discusses the impulses prompting Morocco to shift away from its overly restrictive migration approach towards a more human-centered framework. It outlined internal drivers, shaped predominantly by the civil society's lobbying for a human rights-based approach, given the vulnerability and the precarious living conditions many migrants face. Civil society and migrant focused groups highlight the harsh conditions, such as police brutality and human rights breaches, faced by many migrants, leading to intense international and national media coverage. No doubt, these have substantially contributed to Morocco's decision to enact reform. Despite this achievement, it would be erroneous to suggest that Moroccan migration reform resulted primarily from them. Rather, external factors, such as geopolitical ambitions and foreign diplomacy, emerge as two significant factors that have influenced the development of migration policies.

- *Diplomatic and Geostrategic Ambitions:* Morocco withdrew from the African Union in 1984, in protest to the admission of the SADR. Ever since, the country has focused its diplomacy on the North, mainly the EU. This is evident in several initiatives undertaken by Morocco and the EU, focusing on security and migration. Not only that, but Morocco has submitted an application to join the EU. Though not accepted, Morocco's aspiration culminated in securing an advanced status with the EU. Notwithstanding this status, Morocco's foreign diplomacy has been characterized by imbalance. Acknowledging this, Morocco engaged in rebalancing its foreign diplomacy by turning towards Southern nations. This has been driven by an intensive diplomatic visit, culminating in the country's eventual re-joining of the AU in 2017 and securing numerous bilateral partnerships

with African countries, including support for its territorial dispute. Part of this diplomatic strategy was carried out by Morocco's reform of its migration policies, realigning them with its strategic diplomatic ambitions toward African nations.

- *Crafting a Liberal Image*: Morocco's migration reform serves to bolster the country's international standing as a progressive and human-rights-driven nation. Morocco is recognized as a key regional and global actor in migration governance (Belamghari, 2024). It has earned credits from the African Union, led a major migration forum, and hosted the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). These achievements underscore Morocco's success in migration diplomacy, consolidating its leadership role in human rights and migration management on both regional and global stages (Benjelloun, 2024). ☀

## Notes

- 1 Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Laos, Lesotho, Libya, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Eswatini (Swaziland), Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
- 2 Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Laos, Lesotho, Libya, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Eswatini (Swaziland), Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

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## Appendix:

### List of Interview Informants:

| <b>Interviewee Code</b> | <b>Country of Origin</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Profession</b>                                                                                     | <b>Mode of interview</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Informant 1</b>      | Senegal                  | Male          | President of Association                                                                              | In person                |
| <b>Informant 2</b>      | Guinea                   | Male          | President of NGO                                                                                      | Online, Teams            |
| <b>Informant 3</b>      | Ghana                    | Male          | Doctor at Military Hospital in Rabat                                                                  | In person                |
| <b>Informant 4</b>      | Mali                     | Male          | Student                                                                                               | In person                |
| <b>Informant 5</b>      | Mali                     | Male          | Student                                                                                               | In person                |
| <b>Informant 6</b>      | Sudan                    | Female        | Refugee                                                                                               | In person                |
| <b>Informant 7</b>      | Sudan                    | Male          | Refugee                                                                                               | In person                |
| <b>Informant 8</b>      | Somalia                  | Male          | Student                                                                                               | In person                |
| <b>Informant 9</b>      | Niger                    | Male          | Student                                                                                               | In person                |
| <b>Informant 10</b>     | Rwanda                   | Female        | Student                                                                                               | In person                |
| <b>Informant 11</b>     | Morocco                  | Female        | Former staff at Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Human right consultant, IOM                     | Online and in-person     |
| <b>Informant 12</b>     | Morocco                  | Male          | Policy expert and University Professor, Rabat                                                         | Online, Teams            |
| <b>Informant 13</b>     | Morocco                  | Male          | Project Manager, Migration and Mobility and Communication coordinator at Heinrich Boll Stiftung Rabat | Online and in person     |
| <b>Informant 14</b>     | Morocco                  | Male          | Project Assistant on Policy research at IOM                                                           | Online, google meets     |
| <b>Informant 15</b>     | France                   | Male          | Pope and activist                                                                                     | Online, Teams            |
| <b>Informant 16</b>     | Spain                    | Male          | Consultant, researcher and University Professor                                                       | Online, Teams            |
| <b>Informant 17</b>     | Spain                    | Male          | Director of a research Network on Migration                                                           | Online, Teams            |



# THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND THE AFROCENTRIC IDENTITY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN SINCE THE 19TH CENTURY

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## Abstract

Historically, slavery as an institution has existed throughout both ancient and modern civilizations, while its peculiarities and nuances have varied in different societies. However, none has generated as much controversy as the trans-Atlantic slave trade due to the physical and psychological dehumanizing methods employed by the slave masters to subdue the minds of the enslaved. The relentless endurance of this atrocious trade during the centuries of its prevalence had debased and scarred the African identity not only on the continent but also in the diaspora. This paper will examine the complexities of the Atlantic slave trade and its impact on the Afrocentric personality since the 19th century. The crux of this paper, however, is to probe into how the residues of slavery have, over time, formed a continuum of mental incarceration among people of African descent in selected areas such as the United States of America, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. In addition, the keynote of the study explores psychological concepts such as psychodynamics, epigenetics, and trans-generational trauma and the multidimensionality of its impacts on the Afrocentric consciousness engendered by centuries of dilapidating prejudicial practices meted against people of African extraction. This paper will interpret historical evidence using secondary sources.

## Keywords

*Afrocentric identity, trans-Atlantic slave trade, African diaspora, Black people, epigenetics, transgenerational trauma*

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## 1. Introduction

Since the epoch of the Atlantic slave trade, Black historical records have been interwoven with captivity, causing the discrimination and interrogation of Black humanity. As a result, some Black people, it seems, have learnt to unconsciously despise their Blackness, leading to the attempt to whiten their body, mind, and perhaps their soul. In the diaspora, people of African descent sometimes downplay the degree of Black ancestry they have in an attempt to identify as mulattoes (persons of mixed European and African descent). In some cases, mulattoes identify as Whites or pass as White depending on their skin tone and facial features in an effort to escape the discrimination that accompanies having Black ancestry. In the Americas, several countries have made calculated attempts to whiten their population by restricting the immigration of persons of African descent in the hopes that future generations will include people of lighter complexion who would easily deny their African heritage while appearing and identifying as Caucasian.

W. E. B. DuBois stated that “the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the problem of the colour line,” (DuBois 2007: 2), a statement that holds a grandiose truth to it, as the tensions of racial discrimination in Africa and the Americas took on a whole new dimension in that century. These were not just mere words impassionedly expressed, but the realities of the Black experience globally. The impact of the Atlantic slave trade has been crucial in shaping a flawed ontological perspective of the Afrocentric identity as sub-human or non-human. This paper will examine the intersectionality linking the slave trade with the overlapping by-products of Black racial discrimination. It will also explore the concept of Blackness and what it means to be Black in contemporary times. The core objective of this research is to examine the effects of the Atlantic slave trade on Black people in the United States of America, the Dominican Republic and Cuba since the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the trade had ended. It further examines the legacy of this human captivity on Black people, and assesses the patrimonial patterns of the trade which has had indelible implications on the political, economic, cultural and social architecture of Black people in contemporary times. It also connects the dots on how the footprints of the slave trade laid the frameworks for the justification of scientific race theories and discriminatory policies structured against Black people in the diaspora.

In an attempt to understand the past, this research employed historical research design in its analysis while using secondary sources to adequately uncover the past as well as discern modern patterns linking past experiences to the present. This study aims to emphasize the beauty, vibrancy, and Afrocentric essence of the Black spirit with the view that the appreciation of the permutations of Blackness is the antidote to the poison of racial discrimination in a global milieu that abhors dark skinned persons of African descent while denying the ingenuities of their various forms of intellectual utterances and cultural articulations.

## 2. The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Incapacitation of Black Humanity

The Atlantic slave trade, also known as the triangular trade, was a trade in human beings from Africa that emerged as a result of the need for cheap labour used in the newly established European colonies in the Americas. The ‘acclaimed’ discovery of the Americas in 1492 by Christopher Columbus was a momentous event in history, transforming the cultural, economic, political, and demographic landscape of three distinct and separate continents. These three groups of people, separated by continental geographical space but linked by the Atlantic Ocean, formed a connection, and with this encounter, destinies were disrupted and identities were formed. As these three worlds collided, cultures, foods, and people interacted, leading to a unique blend of cultural diffusion for all involved. The outcome of this pivotal interaction is known as the Columbian Exchange. The intercourse of these three continents, namely: Africa, Europe, and America, set in motion centuries of exploitation and debasement of not just the Native Americans but primarily that of the Africans by European settlers.

The simulated discovery of the New World was, by all means, a period that yielded unprecedented gains for the Old World. The New World held tremendous prospects, particularly in terms of its vast geographical space. Eric Williams posits that, according to Adam Smith, the prosperity of a new colony depends largely on one important economic factor, which is plenty of land (Williams, 1944:4). Africa, as mentioned above, supplied the human labour for the South Atlantic system. Defined by the historian Philip Curtin, Uya explains that the South Atlantic System refers to the system of large-scale plantation agriculture, which, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was firmly established in the New World. Curtin states thus, “a complex economic organism centered on the production in the Americas of tropical commodities for consumption in Europe, and grown by the labour of Africans” (Uya, 2005: 62).

According to Basil Davidson, the first slaves stolen from Africa were taken from the coastal area of what is now Mauritania in 1441 by a Portuguese sea captain called Anthony Gonsalves. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the slave trade took off in earnest, and European powers sailed to the coasts of Western and Central Africa to buy slaves who were exchanged for valueless commodities such as mirrors, rum, hats, guns, gun powder, metals, cowrie shells, manila, and textiles. African middlemen from the interior captured these enslaved persons and then forced them to embark on long marches to the coastal towns, where they would be sold at slave markets. Barracoons or slave forts were built at the coast, where these slaves were stored in what could be described as a form of ‘human storage facility.’

Many died in the forests while making the long marches, as well as in the forts. After transactions were carried out, the White man and his purchase would set sail for the Americas in the most dreadful voyage of the triangular trade called the Middle Passage. Here, slaves were stacked as goods in very cramped spaces. Alex Haley in his book *‘Roots’*, gives an outstanding literary reconstruction of the experience of his ancestor Kunta Kinte, he thus states, “naked, chained, shackled, he awoke on his back between two other men in a pitch darkness full of steamy heat and sicken-

ing stink and a nightmarish bedlam of shrieking, weeping, praying and vomiting” (Haley, 1976: 144).

The slaves were chained to one another and allowed on deck only for a few minutes per day for fresh air and exercise, but when the weather was bad, they were denied these few minutes of relief. To add to their woes, the food they were given was often spoiled. Additionally, the water was stagnant, and their quarters were filthy due to the large number of people in such small spaces, which were originally designed for cargo. In addition to this deplorable state, the effluvium was often unbearable due to excrement, urine, vomit, blood, and other fluids that commonly emanate from the human body. This came to characterize the hellish cubicle, which was now their abode for weeks or even months. The devastation of being uprooted from their homeland and forever separated from kith, including the psychological depredation of being at sea en route to an unknown land, was indeed a traumatizing and torturous experience that could never be fully understood except among those who experienced it.

Life in the Middle Passage was horrendous, with females being molested as they made the treacherous transoceanic journey, which lasted between 6 and 8 weeks or more, depending on the weather conditions and destination of the voyage. Though many scholars argue back and forth on the actual estimation of the number of slaves taken from Africa, the consensus establishes that between 12.5 million and 15 million Africans were taken out of the continent. It is, however certain that millions of Africans were deracinated in a trade that lasted for more than four centuries.

On arrival in their new homeland, slaves would often work from dusk to dawn in large plantations from a very early age until their limbs could no longer withstand the toils and travails of plantation life. In addition to these hazards, there was the unfair expectation bestowed on them to adopt a new identity, which definitively caused protracted harm to the psyche of the enslaved. The labour of the enslaved was exploited to the maximum from birth to death, while the status of slavery was passed from generation to generation, mostly without compensation. The change from slavery to freedom was to have an ineffaceable impression on the minds of not just the enslaved but the enslaver and their descendants in the centuries following the trade.

### **3. Racialization and the Debasement of the Black Personality in the United States of America**

As a result of the Atlantic slave trade in West and Central Africa and the prevalence of the Trans-Saharan trade in Eastern Africa, slavery began to take on a semblance that was determined largely by race. The selling of Black Africans for centuries across these two regions of the continent began a trajectory of racism that supported the debasement of the identity of people of African descent. The United States of America has a long history of racism which stemmed from centuries of brutality carried out on Foundational African Americans during and even after the Slave system had ended. The legacies and aftermaths of this institution lingers in plain

sight to this day and this reality informed this evaluation and selection of the United States as a study area. James Baldwin ascertains that “this is what racism means, to be denied one’s humanity” (Bell, 2002: 50). Enslaved, colonized, or discriminated against, groups placed in such disadvantaged scenarios by historical antecedents and imperial misadventures are very likely to lose their history and the cultural vibrancy attached to it. However, in order to rationalize why Black slavery was so brutal and immensely inhumane, it can only be best understood by analyzing the brutality of this heinous institution.

On the continent, Africans were traded for inanimate objects that held no real value. Because they were exchanged for these worthless items, they were often disregarded as human beings. Being bought in exchange for valueless commodities led their captors to regard them as mere cargo or property, without recognizing their inherent humanity. The dehumanization of the African identity during the Atlantic slave trade began on the mother continent as they made the long marches walking hundreds of miles, naked and barefoot. Countless died in the interior and in the forts, both in Africa and the Americas. Those who were either sick, dead, or dying during the Middle Passage were thrown into the Atlantic Ocean, allowing sharks to gnaw and devour them. Sometimes, with some mishaps at sea, enslaved persons still alive would be thrown off board by the hundreds in a bid to make the ship lighter and to allow the captains and their sponsors to claim insurance since they were regarded as goods.

The harrowing case of the *Zong* on November 29, 1781, where 132 out of 470 slaves still alive were thrown overboard, exposed the agonizing facts that enslaved persons were mere commodities (Walvin, 2019). It is believed that sharks became acquainted with the smell of human flesh from slave ships and so would often follow these ships for when the routine overthrow of the enslaved took place. Davidson and Castillo assert that about 10 percent of all Africans shipped to North America did not survive the Middle Passage (Davidson et al, 2000: 45). According to Langston Hughes, for each five slaves that arrived safely in the Americas, one slave died on the way (Hughes 1983, 12). Walter Rodney estimates the number of casualties to be within the range of 15 to 20 percent (Rodney, 2009: 110).

The condition of the enslaved was as pitiful in the Americas as it was in the Middle Passage. A graphic description was illustrated by the Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval as he describes a cargo of slaves on arrival in the port of Cartagena in New Granada, where enslaved persons lay dead on the floor, naked, with flies in their mouths in conditions no better than animals (Hayes et al, 2000: 115). At this point, the African was considered a mere beast of burden to be exploited entirely for profit. This is best described in this Portuguese saying, which states, ‘trabalho e para o cachorro e o preto,’ which is interpreted to mean “manual labour is for the dog and the Black” (Bender, 1978: 14). Ade states what James Baldwin asserts, “In order to buy and sell men like cattle, one had to pretend they were cattle” (Ade, 1996: 237).

In slave markets where auctions took place, Africans were paraded naked as would be buyers and onlookers examined the conditions of their bodies. The first

slaves that entered what is now the United States of America arrived on August 20, 1619, aboard a Dutch ship in the Southern state of Jamestown, Virginia. It dropped a cargo of twenty Africans, who were traded to the settlers in exchange for fresh provisions. These Africans were the first to land in the English Americas (Hughes, 1983: 10). As the centuries pushed forward, slavery in the United States became associated with race. Two hundred years later, in 1819, the South Carolina courts held that a Negro was a slave or subject to becoming a slave and that a slave was ipso facto a Negro. The Mississippi Supreme Court states that in the eyes of the law, “a Negro is prima facie a slave” (Ibid: 58).

In an attempt to expand the wealth of America, the government sought to expand the enslaved population. A slave owner himself, President Thomas Jefferson implemented the Protectionism policy in 1808, which prohibited the importation of African labour from Africa. The purpose was to increase domestic trade within the United States in order to boost its local economy. The westward expansion driven by the doctrine of “Manifest Destiny” reinforced the belief that the United States was destined to expand across the continent. This expansion led to an increase in the production of labour, as the policy enabled the U.S. to acquire vast amounts of land that were forcefully taken from Native Americans. To meet the growing demand for laborers on this newly acquired land, some scholars believe that farms began to be established that bred enslaved people like livestock. Though an extremely controversial discourse, many scholars are torn on this subject, but it is pertinent to probe the



▲ Map 1: United States Showing States and Capitals. Source: <https://ontheworldmap.com/usa/>

possibility of its existence and its effects on the destitution of the family unit of many African American communities in recent times.

In an attempt to enlarge the domestic economy of the United States without the importation of slaves, the Slave holders introduced the system of stock breeding, which depended on the scheme of ‘natural increase’ as described by Eric Foner (William, 2019). Stock breeding was a system anchored on the use of forced reproduction. The sexual violation of the enslaved population knew no limits during these times or even prior to them. Richard Dunn, in his work, described the contrasts between slavery in the British Caribbean and the United States. He explained that though slave experiences in the two areas differed, the real difference was that in the Caribbean, slaves were worked to death like machines, then replaced with another from Africa, while in the United States, slaves were treated like breeding machines (Dunn, 2015). Similarly, Smithers, a Professor of History, affirms that slave breeding farms did exist, despite attempts to erase their existence from historical records. Researching beyond the documents of White slave holders, he expands the boundaries of his historiography to unexplored territories such as folklore, oral histories, religious sermons, political and abolitionist speeches, plays, and other similar sources to explain and uncover the deep, dark secrets of antebellum America (Smithers, 2013).

According to Ned and Constance Sublette, Richard Sutch identified forty-seven suspected breeding farms in 1972, where women and children outnumbered men. One example was a farm in Drew County, Arkansas, which had only two men, twenty-two women, and twenty-seven children. A similar farm was located in Wake County, North Carolina, which had twenty-eight men, thirty-eight women, and 120 children (Sublette et al., 2016: 27). Although some historians dispute the existence of breeding farms, it’s important to recognize that prior to 1808, male slaves were in higher demand than women or children. This was largely due to their physical strength and vitality, which made them more effective as field hands on plantations. As a result, scenarios involving the breeding of children would not have been profitable for planters, as children were not able to work as efficiently as men or women. Similarly, women were unable to perform the same level of work as men. For the disproportionate number of women and children compared to men on farms, particularly in the Wake County case, the most logical explanation is that these farms were breeding operations for enslaved individuals. Women were specifically encouraged to give birth to as many children as possible to be sold in domestic slave markets across the country. The Federal Writers’ Project interviewees referred to the men on these farms as “stock men.” One such stockman was Jephtha Choice, a seven-foot-tall enslaved man born in Texas in 1835. Another notable breeder was Luke Blackshear, the grandfather of Ida Blackshear Hutchinson, who was known as the “giant breeder” for fathering fifty-six children across different plantations. Additionally, there was Wilson, who is believed to have fathered hundreds of children at various plantations, including the infamous salt-making mansion at Hickory Hill, which was known as the Reverse Underground Railroad (Ibid: 28).

One thing the breeders had in common was their extraordinary height. These ‘stocks’ were men of great imposing stature who were handpicked by the slavers to routinely have intercourse with enslaved women with the sole purpose of making tall, strong, and able-bodied offspring who would be as physically fit as their parents and would fetch sufficient money at the slave markets. A practice in the United States that had the trappings of Eugenics. Eugenics is a scientific theory that asserts that humans can be improved through the selective breeding and preservation of specific groups within the human population.

It was coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, an English statistician, ethnologist and demographer (who was a cousin of Charles Darwin). Its ideologies were not far from the concept of natural selection as entrenched in the doctrines of Social Darwinism affirmed by Charles Darwin in his book ‘Origin of species’. Described as “the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial equalities of future generations either physically or mentally”. Methods such as involuntary sterilization, segregation and social exclusion were used to rid society of individuals or groups considered inferior or unfit (Genomics, 2022). Practiced by enslavers in the United States in the form of slave breeding, they often castrated enslaved individuals with smaller physiques to prevent the reproduction of their kind. This was recalled by a formerly enslaved woman named Cornelia Andrews (Ibid: 33). Oral histories such as the one told by Charlotte Martin, an eighty-two-year-old in Live Oak, Florida, explained that her master, Judge Wilkerson, “selected the strongest and best male and female slaves and mated exclusively for breeding”. Further atrocities include pregnant women who were sold for higher prices while the ones who were unable to bear children were sold off, as she was worth nothing. As Thomas Johns puts it, “kill a nigger, breed another, kill a mule buy another” (Ibid).

On slave breeding farms, male and female enslaved individuals were forced to engage in sexual intercourse as often as possible, to the point where some of them died from sexual exhaustion. Spivey reports that hoods were placed on the enslaved to conceal their identities during these forced mating, which could involve familiar individuals, such as siblings or other family members (William, 2019). According to Hacker, estimates indicate that between 1620 and 1865, over 9.3 million enslaved people were born in the United States, with 5.6 million, or 60 percent, born after 1830. He suggests that researchers generally agree that birth rates among the enslaved population in the 19th century were exceptionally high, nearing the biological maximum for humans (Hacker, 2020). This data helps to explain why the number of enslaved individuals increased rather than declined after 1808, despite the extreme cruelty and life-threatening conditions they faced daily. The enslavers deliberately bred those deemed fit and sterilized those deemed unfit.

Both male and female enslaved individuals were subjected to various forms of sexual violence and exploitation. In many instances, enslaved people were forced to participate in the depraved orgies of their masters. Enslaved women were often raped by White males in the household, including their masters, leading to many of them bearing children. These children, considered the offspring of their masters, did not escape

the harsh realities of slavery. According to the Virginia Hereditary Slave Law enacted in 1662, known as Partus Sequitur Ventrem, a person's status as a slave was determined by that of their mother (Morgan, 2015). Women in these circumstances were often victims of violent outbursts and physical assaults from their mistresses. These mistresses directed their anger and feelings of betrayal towards the slave women, sometimes resulting in horrific acts where the children of the enslaved were violently killed. Enslaved individuals were compelled to perform explicit sexual acts in front of their masters, mistresses, and house guests, whose depraved desires often knew no limits.

Enslaved males were not exempt from the sexual assaults prevalent during this time, but were victims of 'buck breaking.' The latter was an extreme practice used to torture and break the mind, spirit, and will of enslaved males who were deemed as rebels or deviants. During buck breaking, these males were tied, hanged for days, and whipped to the point of unconsciousness or even death while naked. This was intended to serve as a deterrent against those planning insurrections. Other licentious acts carried out on the enslaved males during buck breaking include methods where the male is stripped naked and asked to bend his buttocks in front of all the members of the household and enslaved persons on the plantation including his family. The White males in some cases, would proceed to rape the Black male slaves in these situations, sometimes in full view of the public. Also, White homosexual owners used these heinous acts as opportunities to live out their homosexual fantasies during a time when such sexual preferences and practices were viewed as deviant or taboo. This method broke the spirit of the enslaved males who had to endure the ignominy in front of their families, along with the physical and psychological trauma that came with buck breaking.

White females were not exempt from the inapt pervasions and the power dynamics that prevailed in the slave system. White females who owned slaves frequently engaged in forced relationships, rape, threats, coercion, and other forms of sexual humiliation with the enslaved males they owned. A married slave owner, Katherine Watkins, a Virginian woman, was known to exert sexual dominance over her enslaved persons, usually by assaulting, raping, groping, and using other forms of

**One thing the breeders had in common was their extraordinary height. These 'stocks' were men of great imposing stature who were handpicked by the slavers to routinely have intercourse with enslaved women with the sole purpose of making tall, strong, and able-bodied offspring who would be as physically fit as their parents and would fetch sufficient money at the slave markets.**

sexual coercion against them. White women in the South were known to sexually dominate and exploit the Black males on their plantations (Woods, 2022: 55-56). Stephanie E. Jones Rogers asserts that, based on a wide range of sources, White women inherited more enslaved people than land, making enslaved individuals their primary source of wealth. Often refusing to cede ownership of enslaved people to their husbands, these women employed management methods that were both shrewd and brutal, similar to those used by men. Rogers highlights that they were active participants in the commercialization of human labour, which became a defining feature of American capitalism in the 19th century (Rogers, 2019: 205). An example of a blood thirsty White female slave holder predator was Marie Lalaurie from New Orleans, an evil serial killing machine who tortured and murdered numerous of her enslaved individuals using unimaginable and unprintable methods that surpass mortal comprehension.

The institution of slavery was established on a culture of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse that attempted to destroy the humanity of enslaved persons and reduce their worth to that of less than a mule. Sadistic male and female slave holders who relished in inflicting pain while possessing an unnatural thirst for blood and affliction, perpetuated brutalities on their enslaved individuals that even the lowest of beasts would never be subjected to. They were allowed to carry out these atrocities because they were supported by a system that aided and abetted these morally reprehensible behaviours.

The constant selling of children, mothers, and fathers to different plantation owners led to the separation of families, which effectively destroyed the fabric of African American family structure. Laws prohibiting solidarity, community, and camaraderie among enslaved individuals, such as the 1723 Virginia Anti-Assembly Law, were enacted to prevent any form of family cohesion among the enslaved. The internal practices of slavery, particularly the breeding farm system, severely disrupted family bonds between spouses, children, and their parents for generations to come. The family unit within Black society was so fragmented that its remnants remain remarkably visible today. President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 stated that “Its influence radiating to every part of life, is the breakdown of the Negro family structure. For this most of all, White America must accept responsibility. It flows from centuries of oppression and persecution of the Negro man. It flows from the long years of degradation and discrimination which attacked his dignity and assaulted his ability to produce for his family” (Foner, 2014: 281).

Historians like Ulrich Bonnell Philips tried to romanticize and portray slavery as a licit institution, buttressing the idea that no rational economic motive existed for slave breeding. Du Bois explained that “the mere fact slavery left to the world today a heritage of ignorance, crime, lynching, lawlessness and economic injustice to be struggled with by this and succeeding generations is a condemnation by Mr Philips and unanswerable.” Smithers poses the question: how can the increase in the Black and mulatto population be explained? Historians from his time, including Philips and Claude G. Bowers, argued that the rise in the African American

and mixed-race population was a result of the sexual immorality and promiscuity attributed to Black women. In 1929, he argued that Black women were debauched at the Union camps and so these whores gave birth to a new nation during the Civil War and Reconstruction (Smithers, 2013). Immoral and uncontrolled sexual behaviour by Black women was offered as the reason for the increase in African American and biracial populations. No accountability has been taken for the dehumanization and centuries of sexual and commercial exploitation of Black people. Furthermore, the defamation of their character, especially that of Black women, has been perpetuated within Eurocentric scholarship.

Enslaved persons in the United States worked an estimated total of 410 billion hours over the centuries that slavery endured (Hacker, 2020). Even after slavery ended in the United States, its abolition did not end the enslavement and expropriation of Black people. The general attitude of the confederacy in the South was “The Yanks freed you, now let the Yanks feed you”. After emancipation and generations of labour exploitation without compensation, formerly enslaved individuals were left without resources. They were sent away empty-handed, without land and any form of financial or moral support from the system that had built its unparalleled wealth from their labour, blood, and sweat. As a result of their predicament, President Lincoln termed them “A labourless, landless and homeless class”. In March 1865, Congress established the Freedmen’s Bureau, which aimed to create a structure for the newly emancipated people through education. Believing that the economic and political emancipation of enslaved persons would topple their hegemony, the White population reacted by killing many Black and White teachers alike who were involved in the education of the Freedmen (Hughes, 1983: 198).

In many Southern states, Blacks were prohibited from participating in politics or the judicial system. Black witnesses could not testify against Whites in courts over the abuses they suffered. However, because Blacks were generally prohibited from jury services, the practice of peonage (also called debt slavery or debt servitude) emerged and was encouraged by police courts, which sentenced Blacks to work for planters who paid their fines. Often, excessive fines were levied against African Americans with impunity over very minor offenses. Through the system of peonage, a new forced labour system was born after slavery was abolished in 1865. Hundreds of forced labour camps were littered throughout the South, operated by large corporations, small-scale entrepreneurs, state and county governments, and provincial farmers. Douglas explains that these bulging slave centers became a weapon of suppression against Black aspirations and racial repression.

By 1900, the judicial system in the South was designed primarily to coerce Black individuals into complying with the labour demands of White employers. This system, often referred to as neo-slavery, included practices such as convict leasing and debt peonage, which generated tens of millions of dollars for the treasuries of Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, where seventy percent of the Black population resided. Wrongfully accused people and so-called ‘dissidents’ were sold to giant corporate prison mines

that further leased a larger number of Blacks to local farmers, even as more Black labourers were acquired by courtrooms and given to Whites who required labour of various capacities (Blackmon ,2008: 21). In Alabama alone, hundreds of thousands of documents corroborate the arrests, subsequent sales, and delivery of Black people into quarries, farms, lumber camps, mines, and factories. More than thirty thousand pages related to debt slavery cases are stored in the files of the Department of Justice at the National Archives. Millions of entries in public records detail the forced labour system, documenting the capture and recapture of thousands of impoverished citizens who fell victim to a flawed judicial system (Ibid: 22). Douglas estimates that the total number of victims from this system exceeded one hundred thousand and could potentially be double that figure.

According to Bowman and Forde from *The Washington Post*, between 1885 and 1913, Standard Oil founder Henry Flagler built an industrial empire in Florida by constructing hotels, steamships, railroads, resorts, and cities from Jacksonville to Key West. He constructed Palm Beach and Miami from the ground up by utilizing two labour systems that existed in the South for fifty years after the Civil War: convict leasing and debt peonage. Established to maintain White supremacy, the system targeted African Americans by exploiting their labour and ensnaring them in involuntary servitude sanctioned by the state. Florida and Flagler criminalized Blackness and free Black people by arresting them for trivial pseudo-crimes and misdemeanors, then forcing them into free labour. The convict leasing system generated significant revenue and served as a means to control African American citizens. Those forced into this labour endured brutal treatment and often worked beyond their physical limits. The system was particularly violent, employing methods such as whips, hounds, chains, sweat boxes, and even suspending individuals by their thumbs. Sick laborers faced threats of death if they refused to work; these were just some of the punishment methods used against them. Even with gruesome injuries sustained during the work, they were still required to continue with little or no medical attention in very unsanitary conditions. Some drowned while others died from diseases, gunshot wounds, and other fatal injuries. Black women were frequently sexually assaulted by their White taskmasters, while young Black children were not exempt from the horrors and hazards of these diabolical jobs operated by ruthless, profit-driven capitalists. When convict leasing was insufficient, debt peonage was introduced, which further exploited Black labour (Bowman et al, 2018).

During slavery, slaves in antebellum societies not only worked on plantations but also in mines, railroads, factories, quarries, and in many other forms of labour. The same individuals who constructed these railroads using slave labor in the 1850s were among the first to employ African American labor in the 1870s. The practice of leasing enslaved people, which involved transferring them from one farm or railroad to another, persisted alongside traditional slavery and evolved into the leasing of convicts during the decades of the 1870s and 1880s. The harsh treatment applied to enslaved individuals in 1840 was mirrored in the treatment of prisoners in 1910. Douglas argues that the anger expressed by white individuals in the 1920s stemmed

from a deep-seated bitterness that had persisted since 1866. This new wave of racial prejudice and hostility became a tool used to suppress the freedom and aspirations of millions of Black individuals in the 20th century (Blackmon 2008, 24).

Another area where Black labour was unjustly exploited was sharecropping. The system of sharecropping also evolved from the slave system, where former slave owners employed former enslaved persons to work on their plantations, but this time, they were required to pay for their services. Sharecropping can be seen as a form of neo-slavery, where White employers often exploit sharecroppers by withholding their wages. Any efforts to form unions aimed at advocating for fair and equitable treatment of African American laborers were quickly crushed through extreme violence. A good example of such repression was the infamous Elaine Massacre of 1919, where more than two hundred and fifty Black people were massacred in Elaine, Arkansas. The events leading to the massacre occurred as a result of White suspicion over meetings held by Robert Hill and a few Black sharecroppers who attempted to organize a union that sought to end unfair and exploitative payment methods as well as promote better working conditions for sharecroppers.

This massacre turned out to be one of the bloodiest race wars in American history, while playing out the intersection between race and labour aspirations controlled by power dichotomies of the bourgeoisie-proletariat realisms of Western capitalism. It further silenced the voice of a people who had been subdued and dehumanized by an agenda that attempted to sabotage the proliferation of Black independence and optimism. Even after slavery was defeated, many forms of neo-slavery emerged that further tightened the manacles of socio-economic permutations that had long characterized Black existence in America. Other structural issues, such as institutionalized racism, emerged from the Southern segregation system, causing Black people to be segregated in public spaces such as employment, housing, schools, restaurants, theaters, public facilities, public service, religious institutions, participation in jury duties, etc. Racism in the United States is monolithic as it has remained strongly impenetrable in the North and the South, though changing its appearance at different points in the nation's history.

Long-term prejudice towards the Black personality has left behind a wreckage of mental slavery. Frantz Fanon, in his analysis of colonial Algeria, explains that colonialism, which is a systematic negation of the colonized and a furious determination to deny the latter all attributes of humanity, forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question, 'In reality, who am I?' (Fanon, 1967: 200). Fanon's assertion implies that discrimination leads to low self-worth. Marginalized groups placed in such disadvantaged scenarios by historical antecedents stirred by imperial misadventures are very likely to lose their history and the cultural vibrancy that accompanies it. Any race or group forcefully stripped of their identity faces the long-term effect of this wear and tear, often leading to 'self-deprecation.' The harsh treatment and racial brutality faced by Black individuals in the diaspora have created a legacy of embittered people struggling to find their identity and prove their humanity to a global system that once held them in physical captivity. It is important to recognize that

slavery today is no longer confined to physical chains; it has evolved into a modern form in which the former captives are incarcerated in a psychological prison. This prison's walls are constructed from historical frameworks, with its foundations supported by centuries of racial debasement. These prolonged periods of oppression play a significant role in the discrimination experienced by people of African descent, both in Africa and the diaspora, long after the chains of enslavement have been removed.

#### **4. The Psychodynamics of Mental Slavery: The Black Experience**

The concept of psychodynamics is best understood within the context of the study of psychology as a set of theories developed by Sigmund Freud. Based on his writings from the 1890s to 1930s, he developed the former with information derived mostly from his patients during therapy (McLeod, 2024). Freud believes that the unconscious mind is the primary source of human behavior, and just like an iceberg, it is the most important part that is not visible. Wilson further explains that the unconscious mind comprises mental processes that are inaccessible to conscious awareness but strongly influence judgments, feelings, and behavior. The psychodynamic theory believes that feelings, motives, and decisions are strongly influenced by past experiences and are then stored in the unconscious mind, which then shapes our character (McLeod, 2024).

The psychodynamics of the human mind can be quite complex, often shaped or formed by one's life experiences. Who we are currently and will be in the future is determined by the collective and diverse experiences springing from the wells of our past. This invariably shapes the present and affects the future, respectively. That is to say, our opinions, thought processes, and personalities are a result of the cumulative experiences we have garnered over time. While the psychodynamics of an individual's mind form the collective experience that affects behavioral patterns, it can be argued that the aggregate of people's mental and psychological configurations stems from two factors, which significantly affect human character: nature and nurture. The circumstances in which people are raised coalesce into the subconscious that later forms an active part of the conscious mind. Psychodynamics states that early childhood experiences, such as trauma locked in the subconscious mind, often trigger and shape conscious actions. Racism against Black individuals and its various intersections has often resulted in deeply rooted feelings of inferiority among Black people, particularly regarding skin tone, hair texture, and cultural identity. To exacerbate this issue, enslaved individuals were routinely subjected to indoctrination, leading them to believe they were docile, unattractive, unintelligent, and incapable of making rational decisions, serving only as laborers and objects of sexual exploitation. Centuries of slavery, combined with persistent racism, have created a cycle of intra-cultural and intra-racial conflict that has significantly impacted the identity and essence of people of African descent.

Scholars of Atlantic Studies such as Joseph Harris analysed the slave trade and its effect by examining its global impact. He states that several millions of Africans were taken across the Sahara to Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Americas and

this contributed to an enormous amount of capital around the world regardless of the inhuman operations of the trade. These global footprints impressed by the Atlantic and trans-Saharan slave trades in the different geographical areas around the world where Black people were dispersed, caused the shift in how Black people are collectively perceived as a race. Harris posits that “the era of the slave trade further entrenched and indeed extended the concept of Black inferiority” (Harris, 1987: 89). William Safran discusses the Black experience and the African diaspora using the approach of a different argument which has been criticized by other scholars. Though recognizing the experience of Africans and how they were unwillingly dispersed and uprooted from their homeland, he however pointed out that Black Americans can no longer have a clearly defined African cultural heritage to preserve but rather have chosen to maintain and rationalize their ethno-racial distinctness by creating a culture representing their new reality, which according to Safran is a hindrance to social mobility (in the case of Black English such as Ebonics) or an artificial graft as in the case of Black Islam which lacks a convincing connection with the Black experience. Safran’s ideas concentrated on the disconnection of the African diaspora from the homeland explaining that a specific homeland cannot be restored to the American Blacks and thus the homeland myth is translated into solidarity with African liberation struggles (Safran, 1991: 81-90).

**Udo rather expounds that though Africans were physically removed from Africa, they still maintained their spiritual connections to the motherland.**

Udo rather expounds that though Africans were physically removed from Africa, they still maintained their spiritual connections to the motherland. Using the Yoruba experience as the main focus of its argument, Udo’s argument on culture preservation in the diaspora by people of African descent discusses how Blacks in the Americas particularly those of Yoruba extraction have preserved their African heritage in the form of religious practices such as Candomble practiced in Brazil and Santeria in Cuba (Udo, 2020). Falola on the other hand affirms that “certainly the trans-Atlantic slave trade was one of the causes of negative Western stereotypes about Africa.” He added that imperialism was an additional factor, as many European writers regarded the partition of Africa as a small price for a ‘barbaric people’ to pay for receiving civilization” (Falola, 2018: 638).

Slavery and colonialism, which are two intertwined evils, may seem like distant historical events, but their impacts are still evident in the Black experience today. These realities are reflected in how people of African descent are treated around the world. Some Eurocentric reductionists argue that individuals of African descent should have moved on from these historical experiences and should stop complaining about the past. However, it is important to recognize that long-term trauma, especially the kind endured by Black people over centuries, cannot simply be erased.

## 5. Epigenetics and Transgenerational Trauma in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Though the debate still persists, experts have argued whether trauma can be inherited or not. Though some disprove the existence of trans-generational trauma, it was first discovered among children of those who lived through the Dutch Famine during World War II. A 2018 review suggests a link between inter-generational trauma and depression. This could be passed down to generations epigenetically, meaning that trauma experienced by an ancestor may affect the way one's genes are expressed (Yehuda et al., 2018: 243-257). To explain this phenomenon, recent studies have developed the science of epigenetics. According to the Harvard Center on the Developing Child, epigenetics is an emerging area of scientific research that demonstrates how environmental conditions and children's experiences affect the expression of genes. Epigenetics explains how early experiences can have a lifelong impact. During development, the DNA that makes up genes accumulates chemical marks that determine how much or little of these genes are expressed. Experiences, whether good or bad, leave a unique epigenetic signature on the genes (Harvard, 2019).

Going further to understand people who have experienced historical trauma, experts like Bezo explain the effects of trans-generational trauma on traumatized people. He illustrates this by explaining that the Ukrainian population, as a result of the Holodomor mass starvation (1932-1933), carried out by Joseph Stalin's regime, had a profound effect on future generations. Conducting research on families directly affected by the Holodomor, he noticed trans-generational impacts such as shame, anxiety, risky behaviours, food hoarding, overeating, high emotional neediness, distrust, cohesiveness, and authoritarian parenting styles all manifested in one aggregate called 'survival mode' (Bezo et al, 2018). Danieli argues that massive traumas, such as those experienced during the Holocaust, impact societies in complex, multifaceted ways. Focusing her research on the children of Holocaust survivors, she observed certain behaviours among them, such as being overly protective of their parents and exhibiting a strong need for control. She described these reactions as "reparative adaptational impacts." Her theory outlines a pathway connecting the initial trauma, the family's history, and the socio-cultural environment after the trauma, along with the adaptational styles of survivors and their children and grandchildren (Danieli, 1998). A similar pattern was noticed among children and grandchildren of Native American families who were survivors of cultural oppression. Behaviours such as anxiety, depression, suicidal attempts, and susceptibility to drug use were all observed by Amy Bombay. Trans-generational effects are not only psychological but also social, neurobiological, familial, cultural, and possibly genetic (Ibid.).

Although this area of research is still in its early stages, experts believe that epigenetic pathways and environmental processes influence how genes are expressed. Dora L. Costa explains that trauma can be transmitted to the human body, illustrating it through the research carried out on Prisoners of War. He found out that children of those POWs (Prisoners of War) who faced harsh conditions died at younger ages than children of the POWs who lived in better environments. Though not widely studied, the impact of slavery on the African diasporic population is no doubt quite

similar to that of other traumatized groups, such as Native Americans and Holocaust survivors. However, the Afrocentric experience is unique and could arguably be far more profound than any of these groups mentioned above since the Black personality has had to grapple with a plethora of life-changing alterations that have had annihilating outcomes on their culture, psyche, security, physical, political, and economic freedom for an extended period of time spanning centuries. Juxtaposing the possibility of the transmission of trans-generational trauma and the pathways of epigenetics in communities with historical trauma, we can better assimilate and empathize with the struggles of Black people. The pathways of these historical experiences have become palpable through the manifestations of epigenetics, which have taken the form of psychodynamic trappings that have affected many in Black communities for centuries (Danieli, 1998).

## **6. The Impressions of the Atlantic Slave System on the Afrocentric Personality in the Dominican Republic and Cuba Since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

One of the most prominent impressions of the slave trade on the Afrocentric personality is racial discrimination against people of African descent, which was and is still institutionalized and ingrained in many societies around the world. The struggle for racial equality and economic emancipation, created by colour compartmentalization, has been widely publicized in the United States and constitutes a very significant aspect of the American narrative. In the Dominican Republic and Cuba, the flotsam of the trans-Atlantic slave trade has insistently impacted the anthropological tapestry of these nations.

The need to strengthen White hegemony led to the development of Western ideologies and idiosyncrasies supporting White supremacy and its innuendos. In the heart of the culture of the African diaspora are the residues of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which continues to mark its imprints on Black societies. To meet Western standards of beauty, Black people have bleached their skin, processed their hair, and altered their appearance to appear 'white' or at least 'near white.' It is evident that, though emancipated from physical captivity, a fraction of people of African descent still live in a bubble of psycho-mental slavery, which has unconsciously entrapped them in a conundrum of socio-cultural bondage that is being enabled by Eurocentric sentiments. One of the physical legacies of slavery and colonialism is colourism. This is a practice whereby people with a lighter skin tone are given special preference over those with a relatively darker skin tone. This form of prejudice occurs among people of the same race. Within Black communities in Africa and the diaspora, this can be determined as a byproduct of centuries of hate projected by the dehumanization of the race, which has created disunity among Black people of diverse skin tones worldwide.

It is conspicuous that people of lighter shades are more favored for employment, marriage, beauty pageants, romantic relationships, and are considered better looking by the media. Light-skinned persons are generally given far more preference in post-colonial societies than their dark-skinned counterparts. This form of intra-race

conflict creates division by categorizing Black people into certain groups, where a specific group is considered to be superior to the other because they are of a lighter skin hue. This is not only peculiar among Black people, as colourism is equally obtainable among other non-Caucasian societies around the world. The world's preference for and fascination with light-skinned persons is an age-old phenomenon that has persisted through modern times.

As the second island in Hispaniola in the Greater Antilles in the East (Dominican Republic), after Haiti in the West, it was also the first site where Christopher Columbus landed in 1492. This imperial discovery led to the Spanish occupation and colonization of the area. One of the stamps of Spanish influence in the area were ideologies supporting White supremacy against other racial groups especially Black people within the Dominican demographic contexture. In the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean, the concept of colourism looms in devastating ways as racial identities are not determined by lineage or ancestry, but rather along the lines of hypodescent sentiments. According to Lamb and Dundes, a significant number of people in the Dominican Republic self-identify as “Indio.” They note that the demographic breakdown includes 73% who are mulatto, 16% who are White, and 11% who are Black. Despite this distribution, 82% of the population identifies their race



▲ Map 2: Dominican Republic Showing National Borders, Provincial Borders, Provinces, Provincial Capitals, National Capital, and Major Cities. Source: <https://ontheworldmap.com/dominican-republic/>

as Indio, while only 4% identify as Black. This is somewhat misleading, as the self-identified Indio population is predominantly phenotypically Black, and their Indian ancestry constitutes only about 9%. The above scholars assert that the use of Indio allows the nation to avoid the acknowledgment of their Black heritage, which is why the usage of Mulatto is often omitted in the designation of their racial demography.

In fact, in an attempt to eliminate the appearance of the Black phenotype, the inherent cultural strains advocate the concept of ‘adelantar la raza,’ which literally means ‘improve the race. This phrase is so commonly used that it has been integrated into the lexicological apothegm of the local Spanish language and has, over time, become part of the cultural folklore in the Dominican Republic. It is safe to say that the practice of Eugenics is a part of the social practices in the Dominican Republic where the notion supports that people with darker complexion should marry or commingle with those of a lighter tone or someone of the White race in order to improve the appearance and beauty of the dark-skinned Dominican. So romantic or even social association between dark skinned people is blatantly discouraged. The term blanqueamiento, on the other hand, connotes socio-economic advancement through gaining acceptance from those classified and self-identified as White (Lamb et al., 2017). Additionally, Black physical traits are often derided. For instance, the pajon (afro) is often referred to as pelo malo, which means bad hair, while straight hair is widely accepted as the best texture. All these are legacies of racial colonization, where Whiteness is appraised and Blackness is abhorred, allowing the establishment of racial dichotomies imposed by racial prejudice. Racial discrimination and hatred for Black people continue to affect race relations between people of African ancestry and other groups in the island. In spite of all these racial tensions, the existence of racism is still denied in the Dominican Republic making race tolerance an impossible reality. This denial of systemic racism informed the selection of this island country as a case study in this research.



Map 3: Cuba Showing Islands, Provinces, Province Capitals and Major Cities. Source: <https://ontheworldmap.com/cuba/>

Another Caribbean country in denial of the existence of systemic racism which continues to eat deep into the fabric of its society is Cuba. In a bid to protect the economy in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cuban government introduced the Cuban Convertible Peso or CUC and the Cuban Peso, the CUP, in 1994. This dual monetary system created a distinction in class that divided people along racial lines. The Whites with access to the tourism industry enriched themselves while the Blacks with little or no access to the engine room of the nation's economy remained at the bottom of the totem pole. The CUP is primarily used by the Cuban residents, especially the Afro-Cuban population. In contrast, the CUC is used by tourists and the White population that controls the tourism industry. The CUC was worth about 25 times more than the CUP and is pegged to the dollar (Forde, 2021). Many Afro-Cubans found it difficult to secure jobs in the tourism industry because they are often not considered for employment in that sector. Without access to dollars, it is very challenging to start a decent business. However, on January 1, 2021, the two currencies were unified.

In Cuba, the way the Census categorizes people based on self-identification presents a challenge regarding population numbers. In many cases, some Black individuals in Latin American societies identify as mulattoes, while others identify as White. Additionally, mestizos often choose to identify as White as well. This practice complicates the ability to determine the actual number of Black people on the island. According to The Washington Post, the official Cuban Census posits that people of colour make up about 35 percent of the population. However, the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami puts the figure at 68 percent. Though the statistics from multiple sources vary between 33.9 and 62 percent, at this point, one can only speculate that the answer may lie somewhere in between (Paul, 2021).

In Cuba, Afro-Cubans are more likely to face criminalization, violence from law enforcement, and longer sentences in court compared to their White counterparts. Economically, they are at a disadvantage as well. Approximately 70 to 80 percent of small businesses in Cuba are funded by remittances from abroad (Williams, 2016). While 60 to 90 percent of White households have relatives living abroad, only 30 to 40 percent of Afro-Cuban households do (Paul, 2021). Additionally, 83.5 percent of Cuban households abroad self-identify as White. It is estimated that \$680 million out of a total of \$800 million in remittances ends up in the hands of White individuals, making self-employment more attainable for them due to their greater access to capital.

The implication of this for Afro-Cubans is that they have very little access to capital for establishing businesses. The development of small businesses that are run out of homes (Paladares) has been an advantage to the White Cubans because they live in bigger and better housing facilities. The use of paladares by Afro-Cubans has proven to be a challenge because many Afro-Cubans live in small, dilapidated homes in densely concentrated neighbourhoods, which limits their opportunities for owning businesses at home. These factors and the lack of capital continue to

create disproportionate economies between the White and Afro-Cuban populations. Afro-Cubans have also endured discrimination and segregation in public and private facilities, jobs, economic and political sectors, which continues to inhibit their progression. Afro-Cubans have suffered at the hands of violent racist groups as extreme as the Ku Klux Klan Kubano. Though the major problem with racism in Cuba remains the continuous denial of its existence, the rise in the Afro-Cuban hip hop movement has been crucial in the advocacy and struggle for equality. Although they had been previously silenced, the use of rap as an instrument for change and a channel of communication has helped elevate the voices of many Afro-Cubans (Glassman, 2011).

Any form of Black consciousness or political assertion exhibited by Black activist groups is often suppressed and swiftly removed before it takes root. The most copious problem the Afro-Cuban faces is the silence of Black expression or consciousness, and the people's lack of knowledge of African and Afro-Cuban history. Also, the somewhat deliberate exclusion of Afro-Cuban history from the nation's educational curriculum points to subtle racism against Black people. The silence surrounding the discussion around race or race-related issues in some Latin American countries has been a weapon used as a tool to cripple Black movements of any kind, even as many Black people continue to be victims of hate crimes perpetrated against them as a result of the colour of their skin. Discrimination based on skin tone has allowed the cascade of colourism, as discussed earlier, to thrive in many Black communities around the world, thereby inhibiting the unity of Black people. This trajectory of discrimination, which has manifested over centuries and decades, stems from a sea of hatred and disdain effectuated by the vestiges left behind by the Atlantic slave trade and the anathema attached to Black slavery.

The three nations namely: the United States of America, the Dominican Republic and Cuba examined by this study all have one shared experience, resulting from the Atlantic slave system which had persisted in these nations for centuries. The elongated period of slavery and brutalization of the Black character have laid the layers of systemic racism which exists to this day. Though experiences may seem similar, but historical and contemporary manifestations differ in variant ways across the landscapes of these nation states being affected by social, cultural, demographic, economic and political factors peculiar to each clime.

In the United States the subject of racism is well discussed and many African American leaders have been outspoken about the existence of racism in the United States. Also the history of the United States is gravely reliant and intrinsically connected to the slave trade and the institution of slavery. The nation also has a well-documented history of resistance and struggle for freedom by Foundational Black Americans dating to a period as early as the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831 to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s. However in the Caribbean, countries such as the Dominican Republic and Cuba the discussion surrounding race struggles are barely acknowledged and racism is assumed to not exist. These case studies were selected by this research due to the subjective peculiarities prevalent in these areas.

## **7. Pan-Africanism and the Reawakening of Black Consciousness and Camaraderie Across the Diaspora and Africa**

This study has confirmed that the root of prejudice against Black people can be traced back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This four-century-long institution, marked by inhuman degradation, has left an indelible scar on Black identity that continues to resonate today. Given the magnitude of this issue, it is essential to note that the negative perceptions built up over centuries about Black people can only be changed by Black individuals themselves. For significant changes to be achieved, Black communities in Africa and the diaspora would greatly benefit from the establishment of systems rooted in African ideals and customs, rather than those influenced by Eurocentric ideologies. This study reviews several ideologies developed by people of African descent that have, in contemporary times, explored the Black experience and its complexities. These Afrocentric ideas can provide tailored solutions to indigenous challenges, specifically addressing the needs of the contemporary Black world.

Referred to as Falolaism, Bangura offers Toyin Falola's intellectual perspective on advancing the course of a united Africa. Falola proposes that Pan-Africanism should be constructed to advance political consciousness and build close ties among people of African extraction globally by placing Africa at the center. He explains that the schism that occurred among Pan-African intellectuals in the 1960s was a mistake; therefore, each fragment needs to be assembled into a cohesive whole in order to achieve its goal of uniting people of African descent. He recognizes that the African diaspora is a vast and diverse people, and so Pan Africanism should serve as a motivator for Blacks to utilize the ideas of nationalism, tradition, and modernity in order to reimagine Africa by employing both local and external knowledge. This reflects the global linkages and the diversity of the African diaspora, where both traditional and modern ideals converge, thereby demonstrating the many representations of the ethical dynamism of the culture and identity of the people. He postulates that Pan Africanism goes beyond the enclaves of wearing African clothing and performing sacred African rituals. As a result, its many components should be used to advance the race as a whole. Falola emphasized that modern Pan Africanism should promote communality, the positive politicization of culture and identity, and its capacity to promote unity, military and religious integration, and economic cooperation between Black nations and communities, which involves movements and exchanges of culture. Finally, he maintains that advancing contemporary Pan-Africanism necessitates a rich understanding of shifting African identities, hybridity, and transculturation (Bangura, 2019: 192-195).

Walter Rodney, another Pan-Africanist regarded as one of the most brilliant minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, suggested ideas that would help build bridges of growth and sustainability in many Black communities. The fulcrum of Rodney's political thoughts posits that the vestiges of colonization can only be undone when Africans recognize their past through the knowledge of history, while their leaders work towards reconstructing their societies by severing ties and socio-economic dependence on the continent's former colonizers. He buttresses that the loss of Africa's

power to European superpowers in the centuries that followed during and after the slave trade had relegated Africa and her people to a state of chronic underdevelopment and irrelevance, unraveling a continent and people grounded on their knees. Rodney determined that in order to emerge from this conflagration, the decolonization of the continent and the regaining of control from the capitalist West held the solution to complex issues that seemed unsolvable for most of Africa.

Udo and Akpan suggested collaboration and partnership programmes between Africans in Africa and Africans in the diaspora that would aid in building human capacity projects thereby establishing bridges where Black people on both sides of the Atlantic would meet each other halfway. They postulate that pillars of these bridges should be erected by African governments on the Motherland as it is important that Africa is the initiator of this interface which would assist in healing wounds and creating strong alliance systems between Black people everywhere (Udo and Akpan, 2025:90).

Building Black communities in Africa and the diaspora presents significant challenges due to centuries of trauma and dehumanization that continue to hinder progress. The effects of trans-generational trauma, including its epigenetic impacts, are evident in the genes of many people of African descent, making it difficult to achieve unity and advancement. It is essential to advocate for the teaching of African and African American history in countries with significant Black populations, both in the diaspora and on the continent of Africa. This education would be especially beneficial for the younger generation in helping them understand and appreciate the uniqueness of the Black experience, including the struggles and triumphs throughout different periods of Black history, both before and after slavery.

## **8. Conclusion**

The depreciation of the Black mind is indeed traceable to the captivity of the Atlantic slave trade, and to date, this colonized mentality perennially lingers in the subconscious of the people. In the words of the Jamaican reggae icon, Bob Marley, in his thought-provoking anthem “Redemption Song,” he states, “emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.” These words logically imply that the expedited solution to this dilemma is to believe in Pan Africanism and its principles of African unity and communalism. People of African descent must blatantly refute Eurocentric racist claims of Black inferiority by liberating their minds, as this would redefine the ratiocination, self-worth, and unity of Blacks in Africa and the diaspora.

The proclivity of this paper is not to apportion blame to any group, but to stress the need for unity and cooperation between Black people in Africa and the diaspora. The scars Black people bear today are emblems heralding our victories over the sordid truth, which depicts the role some African ancestors played in the existence of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. However, through reconciliation, the foundations of collaboration can be established, which would heal the piercing wounds of the Afro-centric identity and, along with it, the manifestation of trauma that had for centuries

characterized the Black past and has been a symbol of Black identity for centuries. The implementation of a cultural, economic, and political alliance between Africa and the African diaspora will bring together the ancestral ties that bind the people and, in the long term, foster a collective future that shines brightly for Africa and her descendants in the motherland and across the Atlantic. African governments should be the instigators and drivers of the vehicle of unity and collaboration between Blacks in Africa and the diaspora. Rather than embezzling African resources that find their way into Western banks, projects promoting economic growth should be advocated for by African leaders. Bridges rather than barriers should be built by exploring the similarities between diasporic cultures, which affirm Black greatness and the uniqueness of these two groups, who, despite being separated by the Atlantic, are still linked by blood, genetics, and shared experiences. ✨

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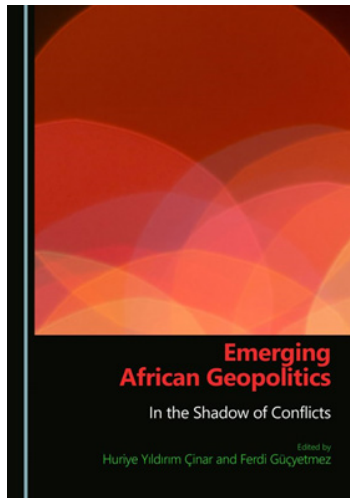
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## BOOK REVIEW: EMERGING AFRICAN GEOPOLITICS: IN THE SHADOW OF CONFLICTS

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*Emerging African Geopolitics: In the Shadow of Conflicts*, edited by Huriye Yildirim Cinar & Ferdi Güçyetmez (2025), conducts a multidimensional analysis of Africa's geopolitical position in this changing global order. The volume bravely sketches how Africa's internal realities, intertwined with external pressures, can determine the continent's geopolitical relevance. In this era of multipolar competition, this volume is not only timely but also a comprehensive resource to explore Africa's strategic significance in the international geopolitical game. It is recommended for those interested in studying African geopolitics and international relations.

The volume is originally organized across nineteen chapters. However, for the sake of this review, it can be dissected into two major dimensions: internal (themes explaining Africa's domestic and continental realities) and external (themes explaining external powers' rivalry). While the internal dimension of the volume discusses geography, internal politics, security, and Africa's self-definition, the external dimension examines how other powers are defining Africa. In between, however, there are internal bridging concepts that link internal African realities with external geopolitical rivalries, such as energy security, maritime power, security and terrorism, regional integration, neo-colonialism, and multi-polarity concepts.

As the volume's main argument is that the interaction between Africa's internal realities and external rivalries shapes the continent's geopolitical future, the review heavily applied the internal bridging concepts to analyze the internal and external geopolitical linkage of the volume. Thus, the energy security, particularly in Algeria and Egypt (pp. 36-52), enabled the EU to consider North Africa as part of its post-Ukraine war energy diversification strategy (p. 47). This demonstrates how Africa's resources bridge local capability with external necessity, positioning the continent as an indispensable energy collider. Maritime power is the other bridging concept between the two dimensions of the volume. The idea of Africa's closure to the seas and Oceans brought both great benefits and serious threats (pp. 56-65), connected to the second dimension of anti-piracy campaigns, which has created a good opportunity for major global powers to regularize their naval force presence in the region. Security and terrorism are the other bridging concepts in which the existence of border instability and terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Shabaab on the continent (pp.67-76) helped superpowers to justify their military clustering in Africa, notably in Djibouti (pp.59-60). This link of the dimensions clearly shows how Africa's internal fragility creates an opportunity for external powers to intervene on the continent.

The regional integration concept, which describes intra-African economic cooperation and Afro-Asian solidarity and development paths (pp. 22-33), is linked to the realization of Afro-Asian cooperation through BRICs (pp. 178-181). Neo-colonialism is another key concept, explaining the new scramble for Africa, resource extraction, and dependency (pp. 5-16), as well as Africa's debt trap and aid dependency (pp. 80-82). This is directly connected to France's continuation of colonial structures via economic and military control (pp. 235-238) and China's debt-trap diplomacy and neo-imperial infrastructure influence (pp. 267-272), both of which demonstrate how

economic dependency and weak governance in Africa allow neo-colonial leverage by former colonial and emerging powers.

Multi-polarity is a key concept that helps explain the internal fragmentation of Africa's regional organizations after the Cold War, as well as the continent's energy dependency, which makes it vulnerable to external influence. To navigate this multipolar world (pp. 11-13), Africa must focus on maintaining internal unity and strategic autonomy. This need for unity is linked to Africa's engagement with BRIC nations (pp. 178-181) as a platform to challenge Western dominance. The volume treats BRICs as the external response to Africa's internal call to escape its traditional Western dominance. However, Africa becomes the epicenter of multipolar competition between the traditional Western powers and emerging powers, all competing for strategic assets, resources, political alliances, and market infrastructure.

Theoretically, the editors' courageous attempt to integrate the historical geography with contemporary global power theories is amazing. While the internal dimension uses the historical geographic framework to demonstrate how Africa's geographic environment and historical colonial legacies continue to shape its geopolitical relevance, the external dimension uses contemporary theories of realism to explain how major powers are pursuing their strategic interests in Africa through security, infrastructure, and shifting alliance strategies. From this, one may argue that the analysis favors external power logics over internal epistemologies, positioning Africa as reactive rather than as a producer of geopolitical meaning. The analysis of a "New Scramble for Africa" (p. 12), which examines middle-power rivalries such as India, Brazil, Iran, Japan, and Turkey for influence in Africa, clearly shows that Africa remains an object of competition rather than a geopolitical agent. Furthermore, the application of Wallerstein's World System Theory (p. 7) and power transition theory (p. 10) is used effectively, but insufficiently critiqued, for they weaken the decolonial potential of Eurocentric epistemology, which explains Africa's geopolitical progression through Western epistemic categories rather than allowing Africa to articulate its own geopolitical formula. Although the volume sought to promote the perspectives of Afro-Asia and the global South in its second chapter (pp. 22-25), the foundation laid in the first chapter, with Eurocentric hierarchical power theories, undermines that effort. To a certain extent, the theories may provide a derivative African agency, emerging from competition among external powers (China, India, and the U.S.), rather than an original African agency that enables Africa to develop its own strategic agenda. It would have been beneficial for the volume to incorporate Afrocentric and Southern perspectives, such as Ali Mazrui's (1986) concept of "Global Africa," which suggests that African cultures and ideas shape global politics. Additionally, including Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2018) idea of "epistemic freedom," Aníbal Quijano's (2000) theory on the "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," and Walter Dignolo's (2011) exploration of "the Dark Side of Western Modernity" could enhance Africa's geopolitical position. This would encourage a deeper appreciation of endogenous African thought.

The volume explains global powers' interventions in Africa by analyzing the engagement of the United States, including AFRICOM and Prosper Africa diplomacy (pp. 123-128), Russia's Wagner-style resource securitization (p. 137), and China's infrastructure statecraft (pp. 262-272). This analysis is dominated by realism, reinforcing a materialist perspective of competition rather than acknowledging Africa's geopolitical agency. Furthermore, the volume's comparative discussions on foreign

power interventions in Africa, such as India (pp. 98-115), Israel (pp.184-197), Iran (pp. 198-209), and the South-South cooperation manifested by BRICs (pp.170-183), demonstrate the de-Westernization of Africa's geopolitics, yet it confuses multipolarity with true emancipation of Africa's geopolitical agency. For instance, if we look at the volume's analysis of how BRICs, as a South-South cooperation, provide an opportunity (pp. 178-180) for diversifying partners, this may not automatically provide true African agency; instead, it may reproduce new dependencies. As such, it would have been better if the volume had shown how African states can strategically navigate power asymmetries and maintain agency in this multipolar global order.

In sum, connecting classical geopolitical theory with contemporary African realities, the volume portrays the continent not as a passive periphery but as a central arena of global multipolar competition. While the interdisciplinary richness and empirical depth of the volume are impressive, its analytical center remains constrained by a realist orthodoxy that maps how others perceive Africa, rather than how Africa perceives the world. Africa's geopolitical significance is indeed increasing amid various conflicts. However, it is important to ask: from whose perspective is this importance rising, and for whom? The next volume, edited by the authors, should aim to develop genuine African geopolitical agency rooted in African epistemology, and I hope this will be achieved.

As a strength, the volume is a very timely and ambitious contribution to redefining Africa's geopolitical position. Integrating diverse perspectives and regions is its greatest achievement. The inclusion of Algeria's Pipelines, Egypt's EastMed Project, and the geopolitical cluster of foreign bases in Djibouti, and China's BRI across Africa in the discussion makes the volume empirically strong. The inclusion of Western, Eastern, and Middle Eastern engagements that demonstrate how Africa serves as a pivotal nexus of global competition makes the comparative scope of the volume equally impressive. The introduction of fresh analytical frameworks, such as eco-geopolitics, global South-South financial autonomy, and Afro-Asian solidarity, into the discussion makes the volume conceptually innovative and equally important for challenging Eurocentric narratives of geopolitical power.

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However, the volume does not escape some limitations. The significant limitation comes from its actor-centric analytical approach, which frames Africa's role through the strategies of external powers that undermine the continent's indigenous geopolitical voice. There is a large dominance of external perspectives. For instance, if we look at the third chapter on North Africa's energy collider, it heavily relies on the Euro-Mediterranean and Eurasian security frameworks, less emphasizing the African-led perspectives on energy transition. The same is true for the fourth chapter, which discusses African Maritime geopolitics and is the victim of external perspectives that focus on interpreting African maritime importance through the Indo-Pacific and foreign strategic lenses rather than the AU maritime policy discourse. The other limitation of the volume stems from a lack of empirical data, which limits its originality and fresh analysis. For example, the fifth chapter makes an informative presentation on terrorism and border issues, yet it relies on historical and secondary data rather than field data.

Despite these limitations, the volume makes a pioneering contribution and provides a foundational framework for redefining Africa's position in the context of multipolarity. As such, the volume can serve as a critical reference for scholars and policymakers seeking to examine Africa's evolving geopolitical role. Finally, the review would like to suggest that future African scholarship must move from a mere descriptive analysis of the geopolitical relevance to developing an African-centered geopolitical theory that can transform the continent from a site of external rivalry into a producer of global geopolitical thought. As Africa's geopolitical relevance and Africa's geopolitical agency are two different things, future African scholars should focus on the latter. For this, the *"Emerging African Geopolitics: In the Shadow of Conflicts"* lays the groundwork, inviting deeper reflection on how Africa can redefine its place in the global geopolitics through conceptual autonomy and strategic self-definition.

## Notes

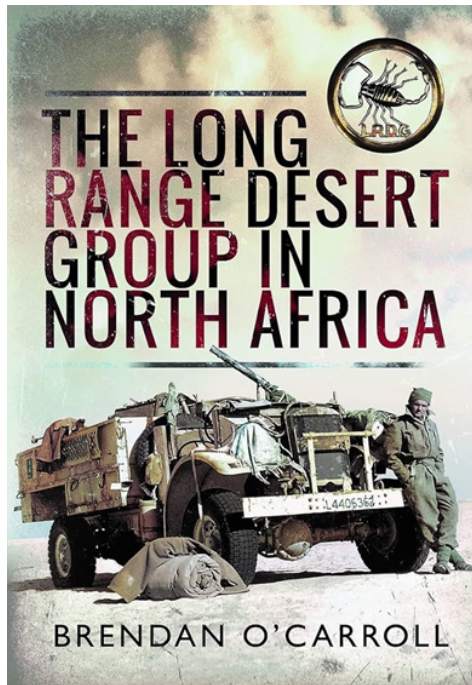
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## BOOK REVIEW: THE LONG RANGE DESERT GROUP IN NORTH AFRICA

BRENDAN O'CARROLL.

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Brenda O'Carroll, the author of *The Long Range Desert Group in North Africa* (2023), has sojourned the worlds of military research; a process that enabled him to transition from a Custom Officer in New Zealand into juggling roles of Military Historian, Editor, Collector, Exhibitor, Author and Specialist in the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) during World War II (WWII). His many decades of researching the LRDG lend authority to the book, enabling the author to craft a simple yet engaging narrative on the subject. Prior to this publication, O'Carroll had published six books on LRDG, namely: *The Kiwi Scorpion: The Story of the New Zealand in LRDG* (2000); *The Beaded Brigands* (2002); *Barce Raid: The LRDG's Most Daring Exploits in World War 2*; *Long Range Desert Group in Action, 1940-1943* (2020); *The Long Range Desert Group in the Aegean* (2020); and *Fighting with the Long Range Desert Group: Merlyn Craw MM's War, 1940-1945* (2022). The one being reviewed is the seventh, but not the last, of his publications in the LRDG series. The book is an addition to the historiography of the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) aspects of WWII in North Africa.

The LRDG was a British Special Forces unit formed in July 1941 and operated until the end of 1943 in the North African Desert Campaigns during World War II. The LRDG, operating from Egypt, carried out ISR operations around the southern borders of Libya and Tunisia. In fact, one may wonder about the significance of the LRDG to the overall outcome of the war. It is essential to note that the LRDG's success in the campaign marked the first major Allied land victory, which turned the tide of the war and enabled the Allies to launch further offensives into Europe. The LRDG was primarily formed for reconnaissance and intelligence gathering behind enemy lines. During the campaign, it gained a reputation for penetrating deep into territories held by German and Italian forces in North Africa, gathering vital information while risking their lives through daring exploits and raiding missions. These efforts played a crucial role in securing Allied victory in World War II. The LRDG exemplified success in maneuver and tactical warfare, characterized by excellent leadership, troop organization and discipline, resilience, and individual acts of heroism. Their achievements reaffirmed the importance of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) in warfare.

The book attempts to depict the resilience of soldiers caught between two challenging alternatives, reminiscent of the mythological Scylla and Charybdis. These alternatives involve fighting against Axis forces and enduring the severe conditions of the Sahara. However, both the introductory section and the subsequent chapters soften these challenges, suggesting that some LRDG (Long Range Desert Group) soldiers actually considered this campaign to be one of the most enjoyable compared to other battlefronts they had served in (see p. xi). This idea of soldiers' "enjoyment" conveys the impression that the LRDG soldiers were on holiday in North Africa, particularly when contrasted with their counterparts in Europe, who were trapped in trenches facing continuous enemy bombardments, the threat of disease, and the unsanitary conditions prevalent in those environments.

The LRDG faced significant challenges during the North African campaign, and it was far from easy. The twelve chapters of the book vividly describe two major difficulties they encountered. The first challenge was the harsh desert terrain, which could be extremely hot and uncomfortable. It was often infested with flies, snakes, and scorpions, and was sometimes hit by severe sandstorms. These conditions negatively impacted the LRDG's efficiency and constantly jeopardized their missions. The second challenge involved combat, as the LRDG was frequently targeted by enemy aerial strafing and bombing. They also faced dangers from landmines and direct combat operations in their desert strongholds and forts. This warfare resulted in casualties, including deaths, injuries, permanent disabilities, and prisoners of war (POWs).

The chapters also describe the LRDG's responses to various challenges. These responses included a well-organized structure divided into Reconnaissance Patrol groups and supported by aerial assistance from the Royal Air Force (RAF). The LRDG established Heavy and Vehicle sections to transport food, fuel, personnel, and equipment to forward bases. They implemented efficient weapon systems for both offense and defense, and a signal group that kept General Headquarters (GHQ) updated with Situation Reports (SITREP). To support their operations, the LRDG ensured a constant supply of food for soldiers, utilized navigational equipment for survival and topographical information, and employed military paraphernalia for identity and protection against the harsh desert conditions. Additionally, they created a taxi service mission, known as the Libyan Taxi Service, which was responsible for guiding, supplying, rescuing, and recovering wounded LRDG members, undercover agents, downed aircrew, and prisoners of war (POWs). They also established a road watch to provide detailed observations and reliable intelligence on enemy movements along the Tripoli-Benghazi Road. As a result of these measures, the LRDG successfully achieved its military objectives and effectively frustrated the strategies of the Desert Fox, Erwin Rommel, and his Afrika Korps. Over the years, many instances of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations during World War II have come under scrutiny. Notable examples include the intelligence failures that preceded the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941, Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, the German Blitzkrieg against the Maginot Line, and the launch of the Ardennes offensive in December 1944. However, the LRDG operations

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in North Africa not only demonstrated the strategic and tactical significance of ISR in warfare but also significantly influenced the outcome of World War II.

The book not only weaves a fascinating narrative of the everyday life of the LRDG troops in the desert operation, but also employs a technique that combines transcriptions of the original LRDG operational reports, oral interviews, and pictorial evidence mostly taken from private cameras of the LRDG. The sources combined to animate the realities of operating in such difficult terrain. The copious number of pictures used is carefully chosen to give a balance between the author's analysis and the operational report. In doing so, the author, while sensitive to the needs of both scholarly and lay audiences, presented a narrative that extensively relied on primary evidence, allowing facts to speak for themselves.

While the author has done an excellent job of utilizing primarily primary sources to recount the LRDG operations in North Africa, it is difficult to conclude that O'Carroll exhibits complete historical objectivity. The story told predominantly reflects the perspectives of the LRDG, with the voices of enemy forces rarely represented. In the chapter on "Enemy Encounters," the sources used by O'Carroll primarily include accounts from New Zealand members of the LRDG. This focus likely stems from the author's intention to create a straightforward narrative centered on the experiences of the LRDG. However, incorporating additional perspectives from German and Italian troops could have provided new insights into the campaign and enriched the overall account. Moreover, a comparative analysis of Allied and Axis ISR operations in the North African campaign invokes possibilities of future scholarship. Although his sources may be one-sided, he provides a generally reasonable account that will have a considerable impact on a wide readership, especially those interested in the tactical details and personal experiences of LRDG troops in WWII. However, a fairly sizeable number of pages devoted to explanatory analysis compared to those devoted to pictures may indicate the author's intention of reaching both professional and casual audiences. Given the nature of the evidence utilized, the book can serve as an authoritative secondary material for Military Historians.