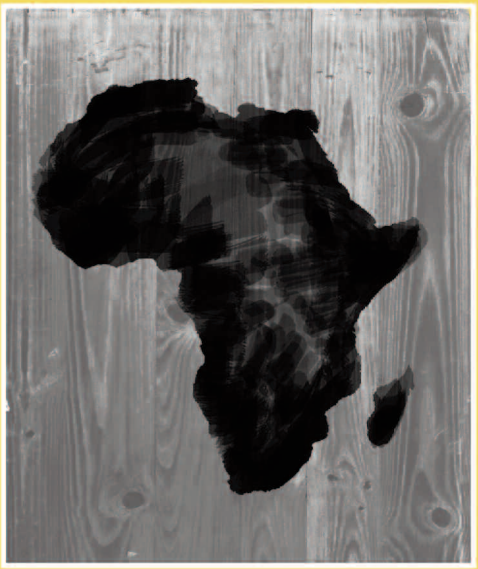
booklets

FROM «TRAGEDY» TO «MIRACLE»?
Africa in the new multipolar context



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Oscar Mateos

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AFRICA IN THE NEW MULTIPOLAR CONTEXT

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This booklet was the result of group reflection carried out in the framework of the Seminar on Sub-Saharan Africa by CJ between 2009 and 2011, which included, among others, the following participants: Josep F. Mària (Cristianisme i Justícia), Àlex Prats (Intermón-Oxfam), Luis Sols (Cristianisme i Justícia), Neus Ramis, Dani Gómez (Observatori del Deute en la Globalització, ODG), Carles Gil (Servei Solidari), Nani Vall-llosera (Cristianisme i Justícia), Miguel Ángel Prieto, Carles Ibáñez (Farmamundi), Eulàlia Reguant (Justícia i Pau) and Oscar Mateos (Cristianisme i Justícia).

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of Eduard Soler, a friend, a person close to Cristianisme i Justícia, and a onetime member of the Seminar on Africa.

INTRODUCTION

In many of the conferences and forums in which African issues are discussed, it is customary to begin by making reference to two famous cover stories that *The Economist* dedicated to Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years. In the first, in May 2000, an armed guerrilla appeared within a map of Africa, and against a black background it was possible to read the following headline: «The hopeless continent». In the article of the same name, the weekly journal described the miseries of the continent, engulfed in wars it told us, in corruption, in natural disasters and starvation. A decade later, specifically in December of 2011, the same journal again dedicated its front cover to Africa, with the photo this time showing a child holding up a comet in the shape of the continent and painted in the colours of the rainbow. Above this image was a headline stating: «Africa rising. The hopeful continent». In the subsequent article, *The Economist* predicted, with a notable change in its language, a prosperous and promising future for the African continent.

This turnaround regarding the vision of and discussion surrounding Africa has not just been seen in this influential magazine, but international organisations and other media, as well as academic quarters have also reinforced this wave of so-called «Afro-optimism». For those who are not so familiar with the daily reality of Sub-Saharan Africa, and whose notions are heavily influenced by the tragic discourse on the future of the continent, this change can seem a little disconcerting. What is going on in Sub-Saharan Africa to have caused such a radical change in vision? Is Africa moving towards a new and hopeful future, in contrast to its history of wars, starvation and poverty, which is the image we have always been given?

Another common issue looked at when discussing the present and future of Africa is how the presence of emerging countries, particularly China and India, is changing the correlation of powers on the continent and creating a new reality of political and economic relations between African countries and the rest of the world. In this new reality which we have already defined as being «multipolar», (that is, an international system in which different powers coexist and in which the power is more evenly distributed), Africa could have achieved a new position, perhaps more significant and relevant than it has held in the past. South-South Cooperation, (cooperation between countries we would generally call «developing»), together with the political, economic and even existential crisis of the western world, demonstrates that this change in mind-set is linked to the new global backdrop which exists, in which the rules of play have clearly changed.

In light of this changed narrative on Africa, and in the face of this new global reality, this booklet will be specifically aimed at analysing which aspects characterise the political, social and economic reality of Sub-Saharan Africa. Is this a radical turnaround? What now determines the present and future of Africa? In order to do this, we will be looking at three main areas which will structure the different sections of this booklet:

– Firstly, we will be examining the reasons for the transition from an «Afro-pessimist» narrative which permeated the outlook on Africa since its decolonisation in the sixties, to the new «Afro-optimist» narrative. We will then be aiming to establish a more balanced view of the current situation on the continent from a perspective which many authors have called «Afro-realist». From this last perspective it will become clear that, far from any overly simplistic narrative (whether it be completely «tragic» or totally «euphoric»), light and shade coexist in equal measures in modern day Africa.

– Secondly, and within this new multipolar context in which developing countries have redrawn the global correlation of powers, we will be analysing the aspects that characterise the relationship between African countries and the rest of the world from different perspectives, proving that both continuities and discontinuities exist in relation to the past.

– Finally, and as a way of reaching a conclusion, we will try to reflect on some issues to consider when promoting the welfare and the quality of life of African societies, based on the idea of leaving behind those international agendas that usually impose a political and economic model on the continent.

There is one final introductory point which is almost mandatory to make. Speaking of Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, (by which we mean the 49 states below the Sahara), carries with it the risk of reducing the great diversity and historical, political, social, cultural and linguistic complexity into one single generalisation. We must also not forget that Europe, the USA and China[1] would fit into the vast African territory. This fact in itself alerts us to the reductionism we can fall into when talking about «Africa» and the effort we need to make so as to always approach this reality from a perspective which appreciates its complexity.

1. FROM «AFRO-PESSIMISM» TO «AFRO-OPTIMISM»

As I dey say before
E dey happen to all of us every day
We Africans all over the world
Now listen
Suffering and smiling!

FELA KUTI

The example of the front cover of The Economist which we quoted earlier in which it describes Africa as the «hopeful continent» is not an exception by any means, but instead reflects a shift in the narrative on Sub-Saharan Africa. The following section aims to look at the basic reasons for this sudden change from «Afro-pessimism» to «Afro-optimism», so as to ultimately contrast them with the emergence of a third narrative, that of «Afro-realism», which tries to acknowledge the light and shade of the current context of the African continent.

1.1. «Africa, a modernist nightmare»: the hegemony of the «Afro-pessimist» narrative

«Afro-pessimism» is the narrative that has dominated discussion surrounding Sub-Saharan Africa since its decolonisation in the sixties, with the brief exception of its early years of independence in which some of its countries experienced a period of quite notable economic and industrial growth. However, aside from that almost anecdotal interlude, international organisations and more specifically, the media, presented Africa as being a «non-place», in which starvation, recurring wars, humanitarian disasters, poverty and corruption were elements that unfortunately characterised this territory condemned by human history. This narrative became even more accentuated in the nineties with the launch of Asian economies as it became clear that while a substantial part of the so-called «Third World» was advancing socially and economically, Africa remained endemically mired in its own serious problems.

What were we doing wrong that meant that Africa remained cursed by its own history while other places

seemed to be experiencing a period of growth? What strange curse was affecting the future of this land? According to the official story, and from the collective point of view based on the tragic vision of the continent, Africa, as the economist Serge Latouche explained, had become «the dark side of our future», in «the dream of modernity which had become a nightmare»[2].

This is because the official story was based on an analysis of Africa that emphasised this apocalyptic view of the continent, reinforcing the words of Hegel himself who in his day said that «Africa was an ahistorical continent, showing no progress or development», whose history could only be explained through the journey of the Europeans that traversed it.[3]

This narrative has always been present and has had huge repercussions for the way Africa has been understood. «Africa's tragedy lies in the fact that the African man has never really made his mark in history», said the then French president Nicolas Sarkozy, while visiting some African countries. In the same controversial speech, the French president said: «The African countryman, who for centuries has lived in accordance with the seasons, and whose ideal it is to live in harmony with nature, has only known the eternal passage of time through the endless repetition of his actions and words. In this mentality, where everything happens in a cycle, there is no place for human adventure, nor space for the notion of progress».[4]

Of course, more progressive voices have tried to emphasise the importance of giving a voice to the African people, and to leave behind this clearly racist narrative which figures like Sarkozy and others have proclaimed without any understanding of the complexities involved. Tony Blair, for example, often talks about the African continent as «a scar on the conscience of the world»[5]. However, beyond the nuances of speeches, the construction of the myth of «the African tragedy» was spread far and wide. The main differences between left and right were over how to determine who was responsible for the African tragedy and when and how it had happened.

For the historian Stephen Ellis, in this regard he sees two opposing narratives. On the one hand, the «incompetent Africa» narrative, largely developed by neoliberalism, which has attributed the responsibility of the postcolonial situation in Africa to African leaders themselves, considering that with their widespread and almost pathological corruption, they have condemned their societies to live in a constant state of social, political and economic backwardness. On the other hand, there has also been the «Africa as victim» narrative, in which structuralist and Marxist thought has had a big influence in emphasising that Africa has always suffered systematic exploitation at the hands of the West. In order to tackle this situation, both sides have offered solutions, though obviously different and opposing ones: while the first side has emphasised good governance or good budgeting as solutions to most of the problems, the structuralist narrative for its part and as a result of a specific socio-international context, insisted

that the solution would come through the industrialisation of the continent and above all, through confronting the power of the West.

The problem is that both narratives, in their analysis and solutions, neither explain nor resolve anything by themselves. In this sense, these appraisals are both simplifying and ethnocentric. On the one hand, issues such as corruption or a nation's «fragility» –as many Africanist voices will insist– have always been looked at from a Western perspective, which did not wish to tackle African cultural and social complexities when it came to understanding how Africa operates differently in these areas. This is what Patrick Chabal and Jean Pascal Daloz examined in their popular work «Africa works», which looked at using the «logic» of the different societies of the African continent.[6] On the other hand, the structuralist perspective has tended to remove the historical responsibility of the African elite for exploiting their own societies, instead ignoring the responsibility of the African people themselves or their capacity for resistance and resilience.[7] In fact, the involvement of the African elite goes back to the so-called «treatment of slaves» (during which time it is estimated that tens of millions of slaves perished over the course of three centuries),[8] right through the colonisation period and up to the present day. It is clear that African history over the last five centuries can only be understood in the light of the presence and role of western powers (particularly significant for example in the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo and in this case, Belgium)[9], but again, this narrative does not explain the whole story. Thus both narratives, as some Africanist critics point out,[10] share an inability to understand Africa as a subject, due to a clear tendency to view it as a single object.

1.2. «Africa rising»?: the sudden appearance of the «Afro-optimist» narrative

Discussion on Africa suddenly and substantially changed in recent years. Alongside journals like *The Economist*, other significant voices joined in like *Time* magazine, as well as reports like the «Commission for Africa» set up by the government of the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and there have also been numerous academic works in the intellectual sphere which shared this «Afro-optimism», thus supporting a new en vogue narrative surrounding the African continent: the story of «Africa rising»[11].

1.2.1. The emergence of the new «African lions»

So what elements underpin this new perspective? Generally speaking, the Afro-optimist perspective makes reference to the various transformations that are taking place on the continent in recent years, although all revolve around a particular epicentre, that is, the significant macroeconomic growth of African countries. If during the period 1980-2000 the average GDP growth rate experienced by Africa was 2.4%, during the decade of 2000-2010 this statistic reached 5.7%, a rate higher than the

average growth rate of Latin America (3.3%) and even that of Europe (2.5%). According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), between 2001 and 2010, 6 out of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world were African (Angola, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Chad, Mozambique and Rwanda).

Growth expectations of many of these countries, even joined by others like Sudan or Sierra Leone (the latter recorded a growth rate of 17.2% in 2012), according to international financial institutions, continue to be promising. While the average growth rate of African economies in 2014 was 4.8%, in the coming years, the African Development Bank (ADB) estimates an average growth rate of 5 or 6%, which is clearly in contrast to the growth crisis being suffered among western countries.[12] All of this has even led to some international organisations and media groups to refer to these countries as «African lions», a clear comparison with the economic growth experienced during the nineties by some countries in Asia known as Asian «tigers» or «dragons».

It is however clear, as we will see pointed out by Afro-realist voices, that this growth is directly dependent on the price of raw materials and the growing demand for natural resources among emerging economies like China or India, but it is also dependent on the need for internal business development: since 1998, some 500 African companies have been growing at a rate of 8%, some of which have already spread throughout the world. Of all the natural resources exported by Africa, minerals are the most important: the African continent holds 95% of the world's reserves of platinum metals, 90% of the reserves of the mineral chromite ore and 85% of the phosphate rock reserves, as well as half of the world's cobalt, and a third of the world's bauxite reserves. Furthermore, known oil reserves in the continent have increased by 40%. African agriculture is also increasing due to the growth in demand for food by growing countries with increasing populations.

1.2.2. An African «middle class»?

At the same time, organisations like the World Bank have pointed out that Africa «may be supporting a middle income class of some 100 to 300 million people» (which according to this organisation would be anyone with an income of between 2 and 20 dollars per day)[13]. The boom of the so-called «African middle class», with its growing purchasing and consumer power, is significant in that it is already linked with the effervescence of the private sector. These new professionals are particularly active in the industrial sector, they have bank accounts and they use conventional methods of loans and savings, they consume goods –generally imported ones– in substantial quantities, they travel, they read the papers, they watch television…

There is also a huge demand for banks across the whole continent, while the impact of mobile phones and technology is increasing, not just in large enterprises but also in small businesses. The 15 million mobile telephone users that were registered in 2000 in the continent grew to 500 million in 2010, while

internet use grew by 2500% compared with a global increase of around 480%, (in Nigeria for example, the most populated country in Africa, the number of Internet users leapt from 200,000 to 44 million in the same period). Some countries like Rwanda have even started to make their own mobile phones and in many other contexts they are seeing a return of some of the diaspora who are coming back in order to do business and cultivate links with their respective countries.[14]

1.2.3. Beyond the economic plan

This new Afro-optimist discourse is also based on other transformations that go beyond the economic plan, for example: the democratisation of the majority of African countries; the improvements in governance indicators recorded in several countries, highlighted by study centres such as the African Mo Ibrahim Foundation; regional integration, particularly the growing relevance of the African Union (formerly the Organisation for African Unity) which reformed in 2003 and popularised the notion of «African solutions to African problems», with the intention of tackling the conflicts and security issues that have plagued the continent from within. There have even been improvements in some socio-economic indicators which seemed impossible only a few years ago, (access to basic education has tripled, life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa has increased by eight years in the last four decades, there has been a significant reduction in infant mortality with falls of between 4% and 8%, depending on the country, and 41 countries have seen improvements on the Index of Human Development).

All of these statistics feed the majority of commentaries on Africa by major international organisations today, and although they remain cautious about certain aspects, they generally tend to envisage a hopeful future for the whole continent. A future which, in the actual words of some of these documents, should be considered as a «miracle»:

> The general impression is that Africa is taking off and it is the most recent group of emerging economies that is knocking on the door of the global markets. There is political and business confidence in Africa at the moment which is reminiscent of the euphoria generated by its independence over more than fifty years ago. Africa is now the place to be and certainly not a place to avoid. [...] Not long ago, the continent was seen as a place that was lagging behind, a dysfunctional place full of violence, hunger and disease, a constant threat to global stability, and a disposable continent. However, its image today is hopeful, and it has become a focal point in the new geopolitical reality of this multipolar world.[15]

1.3. The «danger of a single story»: towards an «Afro-realist» narrative

In contrast to this Afro-optimist perspective, in recent years other voices have emerged that have tried to critically analyse what the motivations behind this commentary are. One essential as-

pect is linked to what the writer Chimamanda Adichie of Nigerian origin calls «the danger of a single story», in other words, creating, once more from outside the continent, a homogenous and closed commentary, albeit an optimistic one, about the present and future of Africa in which yet again the role of African societies and their capacity to act and express themselves are denied: «So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again and that is what they become […] It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person», said the author at a conference that has since been widely circulated on social media.

1.3.1. Growth without redistribution

Another problematic aspect of this narrative is its clearly economic essence, which thus obscures the dynamics hidden behind this purported African «macroeconomic miracle». This generic snapshot of the continent hides, for example, the fact that the economic growth is mainly concentrated in no more than ten countries that are producers of raw materials, without taking into account the extensive economic reality of the rest of the continent. In this way, the new dynamics of inequality that still characterise many African countries remain forgotten. The case of South Africa is the most paradigmatic: the wealthiest 10% of South Africans have seven times the income of the poorest 40%, a change from the statistics at the beginning of the nineties when the highest incomes were «only» five times greater.[16] The benefits of this wealth will in many cases then turn into foreign capital, and will only affect a limited number of local areas. In some cases, the wealth belongs to large state-owned companies, which allow local politicians, their families and their entourage to claim earnings for their pockets. This is particularly prevalent in places like the Equatorial Guinea of Teodoro Obiang or in the Angola of José Eduardo Dos Santos, whose political regimes have been in place for decades.[17]

The growing African inequality is comparable to what is happening in the rest of the world, highlighting the fact that economic growth is not synonymous with social welfare per se if it is not accompanied by the redistribution of that wealth. This fact is significant, as we will go on to explain, given that in the Afro-optimist narrative, a victory for the neoliberal side is implicitly understood («Africa is growing and developing because it has finally understood and is implementing the recommendations that we prescribed»), when the reality is in fact the opposite: Sub-Saharan Africa has clearly been decimated by policies of structural adjustment imposed from the end of the eighties and which contributed to the fact that today, for example, the nations do not have tributary systems in place that are capable of wealth redistribution.

1.3.2. A present and future with great social challenges

Beyond the problem of growth without redistribution, there are other issues

that oppose the current optimistic narrative. This is not to say that the socio-economic development or the improvements in governance of many African countries are not good news, but rather that it is necessary to establish different perspectives of a new situation instead of making sweeping generalisations with no regard for nuances or opposing viewpoints, in the same way that the Afro-pessimist narrative did only a few years ago.

From this more balanced perspective, we hear more about the «challenges» and not just generalised promising projections. Many of these challenges in this new context of economic growth are essentially social ones, as we already mentioned with the problem of growing inequality, and they are linked to at least three problems in the future which we will look at briefly now:

a) *Youth, social frustration and accelerated urbanisation.* Africa's population is growing in an exponential way: there are currently one thousand million inhabitants, a figure which will have doubled by 2050, according to the UN, overtaking India (1,600 million people by 2050), and China (1,400 million). By then, one out of every five people in the world will be African. As a result of the increased life expectancy, the future of the continent will be characterised by very young sectors of the population: while in Europe the average age is 40.1 years old and in Asia it is 29.2, on the African continent this figure stands at 19.7 years.

Furthermore, living and working conditions are very poor and becoming increasingly precarious. A recent report by the African Progress Panel urged African politicians to focus on job creation, justice and equality, in order to secure equitable and sustainable growth that would benefit all African men and women. If this objective were to fail, something that the authors of the report call a «demographic disaster» would occur, which would be characterised by high levels of youth unemployment and would lead to social disarray, generating further hunger and social conflict on the continent.[18] The younger sector of Africa (15-24 years old), would go from 133 million at the start of this century to 246 million by 2020, which means that at least 74 million new jobs need to be created to prevent youth unemployment from rising further.

It is also important to take into account the rapid urbanisation that the continent is experiencing and the social challenges that this brings with it: if 40% of Africans live in urban suburbs at the present time, this figure will increase to 50% by 2025.[19]

b) *Multidimensional poverty.* The progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in Africa is positive in some respects. Nevertheless, even though poverty has decreased proportionally in absolute terms, due to the increased population the number of people living below the poverty line (in receipt of less than 2 dollars a day), is higher today than it was in previous decades.[20] Meanwhile, according to the new multidimensional Poverty Index developed by the UNDP (which shows the nature and the scale of the poverty on an individual level in relation to three basic areas like health, education and

quality of life), the ten poorest countries in the world are still African ones. Furthermore, seven out of every ten people suffering with HIV in the world are from Sub-Saharan Africa.

c) *The tendency to view the continent in a dualistic way concerning governance and development.* The research centre known as the Mo Ibrahim Foundation highlighted one aspect which really needs to be taken into account: they have noticed that a tendency for a dualistic view of the continent is taking place, between what people consider to be a «group that is out in the lead» in terms of political improvements (Botswana, Mauritius or Ghana), and others that are clearly «lagging behind» with very serious structural problems (Somalia, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Chad or Guinea-Bissau).[21] This dualistic view can also be observed in terms of political violence and social conflicts, with countries in which armed confrontations continue to cause havoc, (particularly notable is the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, the recently independent South Sudan and Nigeria and the terrorist group Boko Haram), or in countries where political and electoral violence have worryingly become more acute (Zimbabwe, Kenya, etc.).[22]

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In summary, the various transformations that have taken place across the African continent are extraordinary and they paint a new panorama that we need to be able to interpret. The challenge raised by Afro-realism is being able to read reality through different lenses, lenses that are capable of getting away from the generalised snapshot, that is the essentially exogenous portrait offered to us by the new wave of Afro-optimism, with the main objective of knowing how we can effectively contribute to the African people, and not just to the economic growth of their governments.

2. AFRICA IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

«When an emissary wanted to convince him of the altruistic desire of the British crown to bring the benefits of civilisation to their Kingdom, King Ashanti replied: «This cannot be your motivation. In the arts and in industry, you are superior to us. We ourselves maintain relations with another people, the kong, who are inferior to us just as we are inferior to you. Still, you will not find a single one of my inhabitants that would be ready to abandon their home in order to go and civilise the kong. So, how do you hope to convince me that you have left a prosperous England behind for such an absurd reason?» (Jean-François Bayart)[23]

In the first part, we tried to look at the predominant narratives surrounding the present and future of Africa, highlighting the substantial turnaround that has taken place in recent years as well as the limitations of the Afro-optimist perspective. This second part aims to analyse the elements that characterise the relationship between Sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world, taking into account the big international changes that have taken place. All these changes point to a world that is no longer unipolar and dominated by one figure alone (that is, the USA), as has been the case in the last two decades, but instead point to a world with new centres of power, which have led to the creation of an increasingly multipolar world.

2.1. Africa in the new multipolar context

The unipolar world of the USA, inherited from the Cold War, has been formally closed. Countries that are growing, particularly the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), together with the so-called «Next-11» (among which are Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam) are, according to the major international financial institutions, countries with huge economic potential, whose new influence (many of them have grouped together to form new decision making groups), is completely redrawing the correlation of powers at an international level. In this new multipolar world, in which the USA and China stand out (to the point that many prefer to understand the current international scenario in terms of a new «bipolarity» instead of multipolarity), Africa is also present, as these new sets of acronyms demonstrate (BRICS and Next-11), with the inclusion of South Africa and Nigeria.

2.1.1. New South-South Cooperation and new decision making forums

Many of these emerging countries are also characterised by the fact that they are taking a special interest in the African continent and are currently disputing the hold that western countries had over Africa on a political and economic level. According to the political commentator Ian Taylor, the presence of all of these countries, which is nothing new but significantly more intense, has caused Sub-Saharan Africa to be viewed as the most important experiment of the South -South Cooperation.[24] It would be worth looking at some statistics that back this up:

– Between just 2003 and 2008, trade between Brazil and Sub-Saharan Africa quadrupled until it reached the figure of 26,000 million dollars.

– Russia, which in the post-Soviet era had been characterised by a certain disconnect with the entire African continent, has relaunched its trade links since 2009, especially with countries like Nigeria and Angola.

– India has also followed this trend, multiplying its trade with both areas tenfold, and reaching the figure of 30,000 million.

– All these statistics are nevertheless far behind the expansion of China across the whole continent, which just in commercial terms doubles the trade of the other three countries together. Chinese political and economic expansion across Africa, which has led to some calling it «Chinafrica», should be considered as the most important event to have taken place on the continent since the Cold War.[25]

This new reality, which does not strictly pertain to economic issues, but also includes significant political and aid contributions, has brought about a new institutional architecture among the countries, whose greatest supporters are among the BRICS and the so-called IBSA. The BRICS, as much as they are a forum for periodically arranging meetings and conferences with specific

objectives, believes it is setting itself up as a political and economic power to rival the western world. The South African presence and undoubtedly that of the whole continent, is not the only evidence: Africa continues to be a major market of raw materials and minerals, to such a degree that the other emerging economies could only aspire to achieve such a stronghold. For its part, the so-called «India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum» (IBSA), officially formed in 2003, has set itself up as a forum in which its members intend to assert greater economic, commercial and political independence and strengthen their policies of cooperation and interchange.

All these developments point to one incontestable fact: emerging markets have carefully eroded the economic, political and commercial monopoly that western nations had over the whole continent of Africa. The European Union (EU), with France and the UK at the head, along with the USA, and the important institutional presence of the United Nations in the context of the Cold War, are now competing with countries that have established very different political and economic criteria to their own, as we will go on to discuss.

2.1.2. Analysing the interactions of Africa in a multipolar context…

One main question raised by this change of circumstances is if all of these changing dynamics and the use of new criteria is good or bad news for Africa. In order to analyse the characteristics of this multipolar context and the impact it has had on the African continent, this section is going to focus on three approaches which have historically characterised the interactions of Africa with the rest of the world and which remain relevant today:

– the *politically strategic agenda* (political, institutional and strategic aims of other countries in relation to Africa), represented by many authors in the form of a «soldier» or «diplomat»;

– the *commercial agenda* (economic or business interests), represented in the form of a «businessman» or a «multinational» corporation, and

– the *civilising agenda* (humanitarian agendas or attempts to cooperate in a nation's development), represented by the «missionary», or the «humanitarian diplomat».

These three approaches and their respective representatives will help us to understand the *continuities and discontinuities* that characterise foreign involvement in Africa, taking into account the new issues raised by the multipolar context. In this sense, we will observe how although emerging markets –with particular reference to China– have had a more discreet presence on the political and social front, it is on the commercial and economic front where most of the changes are happening, thereby indirectly affecting the other two areas mentioned.

2.2. Today's «soldier»: neoliberalism and the «securitisation» of Africa

Since the colonisation of Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, different

countries, in this case European ones, promoted different political models. While the UK pushed for the idea of indirect government (giving government decisions to the elite in local areas that were supported by the cities), France was characterised by direct mentoring as well as a desire to assimilate the people of their colonised countries, considering them to be French citizens. Since the decolonisation of the sixties, (with the exception of the Portuguese colonies that gained independence in the mid-seventies), many of these countries tried to develop nation states around strong leaders often trained in their respective cities.

During this first stage of decolonisation, different African political projects tried to shore up State structures that soon began to suffer from serious problems like corruption or the growth of authoritarian personalism from some of its leaders, leading to situations of internal political instability and even armed conflicts. This last stage was then characterised above all by the presence of two new players, the USA and the Soviet Union, who used some African countries as a platform for confrontation in the context of the Cold War (Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, etc.).[26]

In recent decades, particularly since the eighties and after the end of the Cold War, the politically strategic agenda of the western world (the presence of the «soldier»), has mainly been characterised by two important aspects which we will explain briefly using various examples. Firstly, the ways and means by which the neoliberal project came to be replicated in the majority of African countries. Secondly, we will look at the growing «securitisation» that the whole continent has experienced since September 11th 2001.

2.2.1. The dominance of the neoliberal project in Africa: from Rwanda to Sierra Leone

Since the eighties, international financial institutions, the UN and the West have promoted the support of projects based on structural and macroeconomic adjustment (which we call «austerity policies» today) and so-called «good government». Sub-Saharan Africa, like Latin America, have in this sense been «guinea pigs» of neoliberal doctrine, which looked at the country in question (and the elite Africans in particular), as a problem, thus encouraging privatisation and deregulation (with the idea of encouraging the market and the economy to take off in these countries), as well as encouraging policies of transparency to encourage the struggle against corruption.

This plan (which in economic terms is more or less based on the «Washington Consensus»), was mainly put forward by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and it had huge repercussions on the structure of what we know today as the African states, many of them having very weak public health and education systems. Even though several NGOs and research centres criticised what was happening, this plan had concrete repercussions for human and social development in many countries, to such an extent that many consider the nineties –when the neo-

liberal plan in Africa intensified– to be the «lost decade».

But just how did neoliberalism become the plan that was imposed across the majority of the African continent? Just as with the modern day policies of austerity, the majority of African governments were given «conditions» in recent decades, where they had to apply budgetary measures in order to continue receiving aid and credit. In other words, there was generally no alternative remedy offered other than to apply policies that were already drawn up by Brussels or Washington. Nevertheless, authors like James Ferguson[27] or Graham Harrison have pointed out that these conditions imposed were largely unnecessary, since the African elite that were put in charge of implementing policies were already schooled in neoliberal «common sense». In countries like Rwanda or Tanzania, politics have ended up becoming a technical exercise, in which the measures that needed to be applied in order to secure «macroeconomic success» or indeed to become a country with greater «transparency», are policies that have been drawn up externally, over which there has been no political or ideological debate between, for example, the government and the opposition of the country in question, because at the end of the day they are considered as being the only policies possible. Furthermore, in many cases, elite governors (presidents, ministers, local representatives, etc.) carry out their work alongside «consultants» and «international assessors» sent by international organisations that have a huge influence on internal decisions.

This same dynamic has also been observed in other post-war countries like Sierra Leone or Liberia. There, international institutions push all types of policies to try to launch countries that have been devastated by war. Then the elite and ordinary society end up participating very little in the design and implementation of all these measures, leaving the main part of any economic or political decision making in the hands of international players. In this way, in countries like Tanzania, Rwanda, Sierra Leone or Liberia, politics has become an exercise in «social engineering», in which international players are the ones who form African nations and states to suit their own interests and vision.

2.2.2. Africa as a threat to international security?

Another of the elements that expresses the presence of the figure of the «soldier» in modern Africa is the growing militarisation of the continent. Since the attacks of September 11th 2001, in which the role of Afghanistan was highlighted, so-called «fragile states» or «failed states» have been viewed by the West as potential threats to international security. Generally these politically «fragile» contexts are the perfect breeding ground for jihadist terrorist networks that can then target western interests. They also become contexts in which it is more difficult to control migration or the increased drug trafficking which is taking place between Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe.

All this has sprung from increased international intervention, particularly from the West, which aims to «securi-

tise» (make more secure) those «fragile» or «failed» states. A first example is the famous initiative AFRICOM, a unified military mandate created by the USA which is present in practically all of the African countries. AFRICOM's objective is to strengthen the security strategies across the continent under the supervision of Washington. France is another of the countries that has carried out extensive work on this front. Its military intervention in Mali in 2013 and 2014, with the help of various African countries and the UN, aimed to halt the advance of Islamist rebels linked to Al Qaeda who, since 2012, practically rule the northern half of the country. On the whole, international military activity has intensified throughout the whole Sahel area, which is considered to be a very unstable region, where jihadist terrorist activities are rife.

Drug-trafficking has also become a major concern. In recent years for example, the trafficking route of cocaine which had always gone through Madrid has now been diverted to western Africa due to new controls. Countries like Guinea Bissau are now strategic points along the trafficking route (to such an extent that many now consider the country to be a «drug -State»). This has led to international organisations today trying to strengthen the security systems of these countries, in other words, by improving the army and the police, in the hope that they would be better able to handle these types of transnational problems. The problem is that much of the aid earmarked to go towards military security does so to the detriment of aid for social and development policies. The same thing happens with the migratory phenomenon. In order to guarantee that countries in western Africa are more effective in controlling migration, the EU and countries like Spain in particular, commit part of their development budget towards security. In recent times, it has been noticed for example that the Spanish government allocated development funds to Senegal in order to buy technological precision equipment (radars, etc.), used to better control migratory movements.

In this way, a continent like Africa, which in the nineties was essentially seen as a «problem of under-development», is now seen as a «problem of global security». This has also impacted the internal budgets of every African country. According to research, Africa is the continent which has most increased its spending on arms over the last decade (even more than the Middle East), particularly in the countries Chad, Ghana, Angola or Malawi.[28]

2.3. The "businessman" today: a new scramble for Africa?

The new presence of emerging markets in Africa is particularly significant at a commercial and economic level, from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view. On the one hand, in recent years, Africa has experienced the greatest capital investment of its entire history.[29] On the other hand, relations between emerging markets and African governments come from substantially different starting points. While the EU, through its economic agreements, has systematically forced the opening up of African

markets, thus creating a very unjust type of competitiveness, emerging markets have created their own set of rules.

2.3.1. New rules in Africa

Brazil, for example, is considered by some to be the country that seems to want to establish more balanced commercial and economic relations with all African countries, (they have a particularly strong relationship with Lusophone countries like Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau), but it is clear that their economic agenda is designed to fulfil their own objectives and commercial and economic interests.

India, for its part, has also increased its presence on the African continent, particularly in the private sector. The «India-Africa Forums» which have been held periodically for some time, have highlighted the Indian desire to leave its mark on the continent, competing with China and the West for control of energy resources and other raw materials with the aim of ensuring economic growth. To this end, there are numerous programmes of bilateral cooperation that stand out in the field of technology, and there is also the role of the Indian diaspora, whose presence on the African continent has been historically important. The Indian automobile corporation Tata is already manufacturing vehicles in South Africa and Senegal.

Nevertheless, and as we have already pointed out, the presence of China is by far the most important international development that is taking place today in Sub-Saharan Africa. China has become Africa's main commercial contact (even overtaking the USA), and is the greatest creditor and investor to the whole continent.[30] This relationship became even more significant since the start of 2006, when the Third Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) took place, a meeting which has taken place every three years since 2000. At this meeting, the principles which would guide the commercial relationship between the two powers were set out, among which stands out: «respect for the development model chosen by African countries», «reciprocity and mutual benefits», «interactions based on equality» and even «consultation and cooperation on global affairs».[31]

Since then, the Peking government, mainly through its State-owned companies, has established a type of economic relationship without conditions, in which investment, credit and aid is not linked to the improvement of human rights or the calling of elections. The Chinese strategy is generally based on a type of agreement that sees African governments either accept money or build up infrastructure, (motorways, public buildings or dams like the one in Merowe, Sudan, the largest in the whole of Africa), instead of exploiting them for decades –in some cases, for up to 99 years– over land or mines, (China uses these for monoculture or for economic gain, depending on the circumstances). This modus operandi, which clearly contrasts historically with the western approach, has been baptised the «Beijing Consensus», in opposition to the «Washington Consensus» which we already mentioned.

2.3.2. Land grabbing

In recent times there has also been a rise in the policy of African «land sales», in which Chinese and Indian companies are playing a huge part. It is estimated that Africa currently holds around 80% of land available for agriculture, much of which is concentrated in just a few African countries like the Congo, Angola and Sudan.[32] According to a report by Oxfam International, since 2001, the governments of developing countries have rented out, sold or given up 2.27 million square kilometres to the West, to China, to India or to other countries like Saudi Arabia and South Korea. More than 70% of these agreements have taken place in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in countries like Ethiopia (where in the region of Gambela alone the Ethiopian government has rented out 2,500 square kilometres of fertile land to more than 36 different countries), Mozambique, Zambia and Madagascar, to give just a few examples.

These acquisitions usually bring with them significant damage to the African people: a greater concentration of corporations interested in the land; the expulsion of local communities that live on the land (which is treated as a commercial end and used for the production of bio combustibles or in the growing of basic foods such as cereals or rice); a greater risk of sacking workers due to the increasing mechanisation of agricultural work; a deterioration in the quality of the land through the use of huge quantities of chemical fertilisers and pesticides; the monopolisation of seeds by a small number of corporations (usually foreign ones); and a decreasing access to water, which often favours large landholders at the cost of smaller farmers. Local farmers are also encouraged to enter into production systems that are tied into contracts with larger transnational landholders. For their part, corporations are increasingly trying to get the laws on the land changed, since in many African countries the land belongs to the State, by projecting great business opportunities out of the commodification of the land.[33] The phenomenon of «land hoarding», in which emerging markets like China and India and some businesses from these countries, have a notable dominance, has also contributed to the food crisis affecting some African regions.

2.3.3. Is the glass half full or half empty?

The debate over the possibilities and contradictions of this new model has continued for some years in the academic sphere and in the domain of social activism. For some, the presence of China and India represents a logical «win-win» situation and is a welcome sign of emancipation from the West, which has imposed so many restrictions and left so few benefits. For others however, it is interpreted as a form of «new colonialism», «pillaging» or like «a new scramble» for African resources (*A new scramble for Africa*), which answers the needs of countries like China to expand into new territories in order to secure raw materials for their energy industry, just as Europe did in the nineteenth century.

In the short term, this new model may seem to make good business sense

for African leaders who can show their electorate the improvements in basic infrastructure, which not only improve transport within the country, but also help push business and the economy –in the long term however, the «barter» may not be so profitable after all. Many African countries, some report, are mortgaging away their land and, in fact, their wealth. Furthermore, much of the «made in China» infrastructure is usually made with Chinese materials and their own workforce (in some cases by «slaves», who are Chinese prisoners sent over to carry out forced labour in African countries), thus making the profitability of the partnership even more questionable.[34]

For their part, organisations like Human Rights Watch have denounced the terrible working conditions which many Chinese businesses subject the majority of their African workers to. The case of Zambia has been particularly significant, where four subsidiaries of the Chinese CNMC (a state owned company), were reported for systematically violating worker's rights in the copper mines.[35]

2.4. The «missionary» of today: limits and contradictions to cooperation and development

When we talk about international aid or cooperation and development it is important to distinguish between the different figures that support it. In this area, western governments, often through agencies of cooperation (DfID in the UK, USAID in the USA or AECID in Spain), have encouraged aid that is linked to the politically strategic agenda, in other words, their domestic interests on the continent. The case we analysed of the increasing «securitisation» of Africa is paradigmatic, given that in recent years, one aspect of cooperation and development offered by the donors is channelled through policies that promote the building of strong states that would, for example, be capable of regulating migration, or combating the trafficking of drugs that have been arriving in the West or even to have greater mechanisms to fight against the terrorist networks that are setting themselves up in African countries.

It is clear that this strategic agenda also has a desire to civilise, something that has persisted since colonisation. Europe, the USA and the USSR, have always tried to mould African countries according to their own political and economic vision, pointing to a veiled attempt to bring modernisation to areas they considered to be uncivilised.

This mission to civilise, commented authors like Stephen Ellis, was enhanced by the «aid industry», among which you can also find some non-governmental organisations, multilateral aid agencies, several of which belong to the UN (UNICEF, PNUD, …):

> The professionals of the development industry of rich countries persist in one single simplistic idea which has prevailed for the last 200 years: that Africa needs to be improved, and that Europeans and Americans are singularly equipped in order to guarantee that this happens due to the superiority of their technical knowledge, as well as their quasi scientific understanding

of how societies evolve. At the current time, they are using less arrogant expressions, although irrespective of the words chosen, they tend to reduce everything to the same belief: that Africa is still living in the past, but that with a good dose of technical knowledge the continent can come into the present day».[36]

This desire to civilise has on many occasions turned cooperation and development into a process of social engineering and not exactly an experience of cooperation and interchange, and has affected all those who promote this model of cooperation, NGOs included, although some of them have worked on so-called bottom-up strategies, which look at social and community work or show willingness to listen to the voices and interests of the affected people, thereby recognising the leadership of the African people themselves. Nevertheless, generally speaking, cooperation and development uses a top-down approach often leading to negative or unsatisfactory results, which generate frustration on both sides. In reality, Stephen Ellis points out, «it is not that African countries have failed to develop, but rather that they have developed in ways that the international agenda did not foresee or did not know how to record in its official indicators».[37]

This is why for some years the international agenda for development, particularly since the so-called «Paris Declaration» of 2007, has tried to encourage cooperation based on principles like «local ownership» or «harmonisation» between donor and receiver, which contributes to a greater efficiency of the use of aid, offering more leadership to locals. While the results of this new agenda are still difficult to evaluate, what it does highlight are the limits of a model of cooperation which originated from a very ethnocentric view of development and did little to encourage participation.

The agenda of emerging markets on the aid front is somewhat different. In the framework of what we have defined as «South-South Cooperation», and perhaps because these emerging markets were previously at the receiving end of aid themselves, the dynamics that exist are more horizontal ones. For example, Brazil promotes cooperation by sending medical personnel to train local staff, while the Chinese aid of «infrastructure on the ground», with all the limitations that we have already discussed can still be considered innovative. Nevertheless, we should still avoid idealising «South-South Cooperation», given that it is still basically made up of people seeking to maximise their political and economic interests.

2.5. On the role of the elite and a brief look at African resistance

This second section aimed to examine two important aspects. Firstly, the world in which Africa finds itself today, characterised as a multipolar context in which new dynamics exist between the international community (states, multinationals, international organisations, NGOs, etc.), and African countries. Secondly, the three types of approach that have characterised the relationship

between the world and Africa over the last few centuries (politically strategic, economic and commercial, and with the mission to civilise), which we represented by three figures (the soldier, the businessman and the missionary), and which raise issues of continuity and discontinuity in relation to the past. On the one hand, Africa continues to be regarded as an object, (instead of as a subject), in many of these partnerships, which highlights the double standards on the part of international players, who at times say they would like to help Africa, but actually end up putting their own domestic agenda before everything else. On the other hand, the presence of new emerging markets, more likely to have an agreement without conditions, albeit a one-sided agreement, has ended the monopoly of the western presence and agenda in Africa, generating a new reality.

Nevertheless, in this treatment of Africa as an object by international partners it is important to go back and insist upon the «involvement» of African partners and societies, in other words, on the capacity of African people to be proactive. Faced with the dynamics that characterise the three approaches looked at, the African elite, as well as their societies and the people that belong to this group (traditional authorities, civic organisations, communities, etc.), have not remained passive, not now and not ever. While the elite have historically shown a great capacity to adapt and survive in different political and socio-international contexts, their societies have also responded to the different projects implemented in their respective countries, to such a degree that many authors insist upon understanding the African nations as «hybrids» of international policies, by the way in which the societies ended up internalising these policies and Africanising them.

In recent years there has also been a growing number of protests by workers and social activists in the face of the social or ecological impact that many transnational companies are having on different African countries, as we saw in the case of Zambia. In the middle of all of these international agendas, there has still been a constant desire on the part of African societies for social emancipation, a desire which has often translated into conflicts, revolts and social mobilisations.

3. BEYOND THE «RECIPES FOR AFRICA»

It's not a question of thinking about the good activities we should be doing in Africa, but instead reflecting on the bad activities we should stop doing.

ROYAL AFRICAN SOCIETY[38]

This last section aims to look at what aspects could contribute to improving the wellbeing and quality of life of African societies.

Taking into account that international agendas have significant limits, failures, serious contradictions and double standards (many of them, western countries as well as emerging markets, prioritise domestic agendas), it is right to wonder exactly what is necessary to really boost the type of aid that strengthens African societies and improves their wellbeing. In this sense, it is also important to highlight the need to leave behind «formulas» or unique «recipes», which, as has been done up to now, tried to implement the same model in every country, encouraging a dynamic of social engineering that ignores the cultural, historical and political vicissitudes of each context.

We will therefore be highlighting two important aspects which have been covered in critical literature in the last few years and which emphasise the need, on the one hand, to give back the voice and leadership of development activities to locals, (particularly to ordinary society and local communities), and on the other hand, the importance of establishing some rules of play which would manage to tame and regulate neoliberal globalisation which is causing democratic, social and ecological havoc in Africa and the rest of the world.

3.1. Returning to local leadership

For Serge Latouche, seeking another way of doing things in Sub-Saharan Africa means, in one way, recognising the failure of external projects in Africa. It also demands an analysis of other-

ness, and an ability to distinguish its specific uniqueness, an enquiry that is necessary both in theory and practice.[39] It is true that talking about failure at a time when the Afro-optimist narrative is en vogue and when there are good returns on the macroeconomic front, is not as easy as it was a few years ago, when the tragic discourse about Africa dominated discussions, and it was considered a «modernist nightmare». However, as we explained in the first section, accepting a commentary on the present and future of Africa which is superficial, homogenous and exogenous, would send us back to square one. Although the economy is growing, we know that inequalities and the general precariousness of life are still prevalent in African societies; while some social indicators such as life expectancy and infant mortality are improving, we also know that this is due to global development in science, which has, albeit partially, benefited African countries. Otherwise, how can we explain the fact that thousands of people are still dying every day in Africa as a result of AIDS when in the West it still only has the impact of a chronic disease?

Yet, emphasising the involvement of African societies in their own future is only putting the spotlight on processes that are actually already taking place. For example, in debates on peace and conflict that have taken place in recent years, several authors have pointed out that in some countries, some attempts at brokering peace or mediation in local conflicts (the Tiv people in Nigeria or those taking place in Somaliland)[40], offer evidence as to how truly positive learning experiences occur at a local level and from within an indigenous worldview. Experiences that give a voice to traditional authorities or to local community organisations, or to practices that are based on a much more social and relational dynamic, often contrast with exogenous peace deals or negotiations sponsored by international organisations and which usually have a verticalist structure.

From the perspective of development, this should also be particularly significant at a time when there is a crisis of civilisation, in which we are realising the impossibility of universalising the capitalist model, not just for ecological reasons but also for ethical ones. From this complex juncture which is affecting the history of humanity, it should be even more relevant to learn from other ways of life and other models of social and political organisation which will not only contribute to the wellbeing of local communities, but can also teach us about other ways of life that go beyond the neoliberal cycle of the last thirty years.

All of this does not mean, however, that we should idealise the local perspective in an almost *Roussonian* way and take everything as pure and valid… Instead it is a question of encouraging ethical practices which are carried out with dignity and are at the same time practical, if we are to take into account, as we mentioned earlier, that all historical attempts to impose a way of life and social structure on Africa have ended with unsatisfactory results. This has now reached such a point that the international agenda has finally recog-

nised the need for allowing «local decision making» as a way of achieving a more effective aid solution for the whole continent.

3.2. Governing globalisation (for the benefit of everyone)

Some years ago now, the Royal African Society (a British research centre on Africa), highlighted the need to «not focus so much on what we can do for Africa but above all on what we should stop doing because it is harming Africa».[41] This is an interesting turnaround, because having been obsessed by the need to civilise Africa, we often forget that elements of our international relations have a much greater negative impact than any positive action we might do for Africa. Basically, it has to do with what some have called «anti-cooperation», in other words, those actions or policies which, originating from the global North, negatively interfere with the way of life of the global South.[42] If we analyse these types of «anti-cooperative» actions on the African continent, the list is extensive. Here we are only going to mention a few examples, such as:

– *the impact of external debt*, which transfers ten times more resources from Africa to the North as payment of interest on the debt (sometimes contracted decades ago), than the North gives to Africa as official aid towards development;

– *the arms trade*, of which the five permanent members with veto powers on the UN Security Council (USA, China, Russia, UK and France) are the main drivers, with the growing presence in recent years of private security companies (many of them British, American or from Eastern Europe), which are contracted by local authorities, armed groups and even western governments in order to combat military opponents;

– *corruption and the illicit flow of money*, which since 1970 until 2008 according to the Global Financial Integrity (GFI), it could be estimated that some 854,000 million dollars[43] had gone to tax havens, a figure which is double that of the aid received by Africa in the same period and which is the consequence of a very unregulated international financial system, or

– *the flight of academics* that the continent has suffered in recent decades and which, according to some data, has meant that at least 30 per cent of university graduates live outside the continent (for example, it is often said that there are more doctors from Sierra Leone in the city of Chicago than in Sierra Leone itself), and in recent years there has been a new exodus of the workforce to work in factories in China.[44]

These are only some examples to which we could add the *fragile tributary systems* in existence because of the policies of structural adjustment, the new dynamics of *land hoarding* and the expulsion of the local rural inhabitants, or the *privatisation of many sectors* which have made the development of a

basic public health and education system impossible.

All these examples form part of the hegemony of a globalisation which is neoliberal and which permits and encourages these types of situations, due to the absence of controls or rules of play. The urgency of regulating this globalisation does not just affect African populations, but more than ever, is tied in with the future of democracy, of the planet and of the wellbeing of the whole of humanity.

3.3. Epilogue: Africa and the paradoxes of the Ebola crisis

In 2014 the «Ebola crisis» broke out which particularly affected three countries in western Africa: Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. The alarming spread of this lethal virus led to the death of more than 9000 people in just a few months, as well as the crippling of the health systems in the respective countries, which had a huge impact and caused a crisis of confidence among the different populations. This crisis revealed some of the contradictions that we have been analysing over the course of these pages. On the one hand, large international organisations and countries did not listen to the warnings of organisations like Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), which warned of the seriousness of the epidemic and the repercussions it could have. Only when the first cases reached countries like the USA and Spain did the crisis begin to receive attention in politics and the media. The solutions were to offer little aid with some of this aid being militarised, given that in some areas it was decided to strengthen the presence of the army so as to ensure that quarantine measures dictated by the different countries were observed. On the other hand, researchers from the University of Cambridge[45] reported in a polemical study in the late stages of the Ebola outbreak, that one of the factors which clearly contributed to the spread of the virus and to the collapse of health services in these countries, were the measures of structural adjustment pushed on Africa since the late eighties by organisations like the IMF.[46]

In the «Ebola crisis» many of the contradictions of the modus operandi of the international agenda towards Africa become clear. In this booklet we have tried to present an X-ray, albeit a generic and incomplete one, of how Africa faces up to its complex reality of light and shade, which goes far beyond the black and white narratives which show no awareness of the real situation. Thus, we have observed how the new multipolar world has brought about a substantial change in the rules of play and with it, new dynamics that break with those that have dominated over recent decades. Be that as it may, and as we explained in the last section, we need to reach a point whereby instead of just imposing recipes, we are accompanying processes of indigenous social change, from within a truly horizontal and cooperative framework. This last element will not be easy, due to the inertia which has always accompanied the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the new global reality and increasing interdependence teaches us, as Latouche pointed out, that change in the

world firstly begins with a change in the way we look at the world,[47] to which we should add that this change needs to begin with us looking, then trying to understand and then trying to relate to Africa in a different way.

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