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The Teodorín Situation (Part I): Presidential Succession in Equatorial Guinea

The Teodorín Situation (Part II): The Geopolitics of China and the U.S. in the Gulf of Guinea

La Cooperación Española en África subsahariana. El caso de Guinea Ecuatorial

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THE TEODORÍN SITUATION (PART I): PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA

El caso Teodorín (Parte I): Sucesión presidencial en Guinea Ecuatorial

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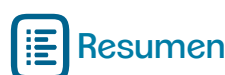


Autor



Abstract

The essay is divided and published into two parts: each separately assessing the main recent trends in the national and international politics of Equatorial Guinea — roughly between the Covid-19 crisis and May 2023. Part I profiles the current vice president, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangué, widely known by his moniker Teodorín. His dynastic succession seems practically set in stone and quite imminent, given that his father, the president, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, is an octogenarian and has recently shown many signs of an already effectively retired. Part I focuses on Teodorín's populist policy style, the demotion and persecution of contenders, and the punishment of anti-government figures both within and outside the country, which have served to display and consolidate his domestic ascension to power. The combined introduction in part I, and the conclusion in part II outlines the recent shifts across the domestic political, international geopolitical, and economic domains, that have marked and steered Teodorín's active and seemingly inevitable rise to the presidency of Equatorial Guinea.



Resumen

El ensayo se ha dividido y publicado en dos partes: cada una evalúa por separado las principales novedades en la política nacional e internacional de Guinea Ecuatorial —aproximadamente entre la crisis del covid-19 y mayo de 2023—. La Parte I presenta al actual vicepresidente, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangué, conocido por el sobrenombre de Teodorín. Su sucesión dinástica parece prácticamente inamovible y bastante inminente, dado que su padre, el presidente Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, es octogenario y, últimamente, muestra signos de su jubilación efectiva. La Parte I se centra en el estilo de política populista de Teodorín, la degradación y persecución de contendientes y el castigo de figuras antigubernamentales tanto dentro como fuera del país, que han servido para mostrar y consolidar su ascenso interno al poder. La introducción combinada en la parte I y la conclusión de la parte II describen los cambios recientes en la política nacional, la geopolítica internacional y la economía que han marcado y dirigido el ascenso activo y aparentemente inevitable de Teodorín a la presidencia de Guinea Ecuatorial.

Equatorial Guinea; Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangué; electoral autocracies; presidential succession. *Guinea Ecuatorial; Teodoro Nguema Obiang; autocracias electorales; sucesión presidencial.*



Key words

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Fechas

1. Introduction

Reliable data on Equatorial Guinea is sparse, and the political analysis of current developments is highly fragmented. All ongoing observations are provided by three distinct groups with multi-lingual and rarely interlinked publication channels. These three clusters consist of: first, the political exiles in Spain, who independently publish a stream of local news on social media or blogs, shared by scattered and persecuted anti-government activists, occasionally amplified and usually simplified by a variety of established international NGOs and newspapers; second, French and British energy journalists and intelligence consultants who generate mountains of lucrative gossip by sleuthing through company earnings reports, and by reaching out to party and diplomatic insiders; and third, the U.S. Department of State and the associated multilateral financing organizations who meticulously study all the correspondence and documents produced by the government, in order to furnish encouraging or discouraging guidelines for the ruling *Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial* (PDGE) as a form of political pressure. Among the regular stream of reports about the country produced by the U.S. State Department (2022, 2023), it is worth noting that its “Investment” report is especially thorough and prepared by the U.S. Embassy in Malabo, in contrast to the brief “Human Rights” report, compiled by its staff at the Office of Country Reports at the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. To accurately portray the political, geopolitical, and economic trends in Equatorial Guinea during the past few years, it is necessary to skip past the respective ideological and interest-laden pitfalls of these sets of sources.

There is a shared sense among the scholars and activists dedicated to Equatorial Guinea that the country has been suddenly reappearing on various political and media radars. This two-part article argues that the current resurgence of interest on various fronts is related to the imminent dynastic succession, practically set in stone, of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo’s first-born son, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, to the presidency of this republic — or electoral autocracy. Both the opposition and the government tend to refer to the president as “Obiang”, and to his son as “Nguema Obiang”. However, to avoid confusion, I will use his moniker, Teodorín, which translates to “Little Theodore” or “Teddy”, as he refers to himself on his active social media accounts. This resurgence of interest in Spain has been sparked by a high-profile case at the High Court (*Audiencia Nacional*) which is investigating the abduction of political exiles who also held Spanish citizenship. The Spanish judge has implicated Carmelo Ovono Obiang, chief of foreign security and another son of president Obiang, in the international crime. This ongoing case escalated into a European Parliament resolution on 16 February 2023 concerning “Violence against opposition activists in Equatorial Guinea, notably the case of Julio Obama Mefuman” — a Spanish citizen and legionary in the Spanish armed forces accused of participating in a 2017 coup attempt to assassinate Obiang at his hometown palace during Christmas 2017, who was then kidnapped in South Sudan in 2019 and declared dead in prison in Equatorial Guinea in January 2023.

In addition, Equatorial Guinea is currently among Africa’s top three liquefied natural gas (LNG) exporters — after Nigeria and Angola and excluding the long-standing gas giants connected by pipelines in North Africa. Until 2020, Spain and Portugal were the main European destinations for its oil and gas exports, however, for the first time in 2022, the new LNG terminals in Germany also received tankers shipped from the country. Approximately 10% of oil and 4% of natural gas imports to the European Union originate from the Gulf of Guinea, but the region’s share in the European gas market is expected to grow significantly in the medium term.

There is a shared sense among the scholars and activists dedicated to Equatorial Guinea that the country has been suddenly reappearing on various political and media radars

Equatorial Guinea also holds the presidency of OPEC and the “Gas OPEC”, the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), for 2023. This position was initially held by the long-standing hydrocarbon minister (2012-February 2023), Gabriel Mbagha Obiang Lima, often referred to as Gabriel MOL, who is Obiang’s son from his second wife. He no longer holds either of these roles. Recent developments have dispelled the commonly held dramatic conception of a King Lear-like rivalry between paternal half-siblings Teodorín and Gabriel MOL for the presidency, each backed by their own maternal kinsmen. His ten-year mandate steering the sale of hydrocarbons coincided with a collapse of oil and gas output and thus of the major source of government revenue — all caused by factors beyond his control in the depths of oil wells, and in the prices set by long-term contracts and futures markets. Furthermore, Bata, the country’s largest city, has emerged as an unusual stage for a revival of gunboat diplomacy between the U.S. and China in Africa, related to visits by the U.S. navy’s Sixth Fleet ships in the summer of 2021 and 2022 and the as-yet-unsubstantiated rumors, beginning in December 2021, about a Chinese plan to construct its first Atlantic naval base in the coastal city’s port. There are thus a variety of reasons to try to understand the specifics of these recent, country-defining situations. Figureheads are morphing, the economy is still in freefall, and empires are regrouping — all above the shifting sands of multiple “narratives”.

The oil boom that took over the economy led to a twenty-fold increase in GDP between the years 2000 and 2013. However, by 2017, GDP contracted by around 60% because of falling oil prices and depleting oil fields. From there, it plummeted by another 50% during the Covid-19 crisis, due to reduced demand from China, the primary destination of its exports. A year ago, the IMF (2022) forecasted an end to the nearly decade-long recession, thanks to gas windfalls. However, the estimates were generated before a massive incident at ExxonMobil’s Zafiro oil field in September 2022 halted operations temporarily — a small explosion left a large water-filled hole on the side of the rusty tanker repurposed as an oil production storage and offloading unit. Reuters (2022) reported that Exxon is decommissioning Zafiro and exiting the country before its license expires in 2026. Zafiro, Exxon’s avowed West African “jewel”, whose discovery and rapid exploitation single-handedly kick-started the oil boom in the mid-1990s with peak production in 2005 reaching 375,000 barrels per day (bpd), is in a dire state. By December 2022, Argus, the business intelligence data provider, estimated that total oil production in the country dropped to just 60,000 bpd, with Zafiro only able to produce 15,000 bpd after the evacuation of non-essential staff (Itayim, 2023). Such levels have not been seen since 1997 when oil output quickly skyrocketed above 50,000 bpd. After the Zafiro accident, the IMF revised GDP downwards for 2022, making Equatorial Guinea the only country on the African continent with negative growth. Despite the ongoing and catastrophic contraction, there have been almost no inroads toward economic diversification and political reform. Instead, as Ana Lúcia Sá and Edalina Rodrigues Sanches (2021, p. 99) recently noted — for the period up to around 2019 — the country has proved to be “remarkably resilient”, through an “astute” combination of the domestic and international leveraging of “its resources and geostrategic position”.

A strange and surprising mix of long-term political continuity and long-term economic volatility characterizes the Nguemist political regime, which has steadily seized state power for over 50 years. It is important to appreciate the historical pattern of how this one-party or one-extended-family-state can appear all over the ideological and geopolitical map. Empirical findings suggest that Teodorín has been ably, rather than blindly or crudely, navigating through various forms of external power, in addition to creating his own original political techniques, to consolidate

A strange and surprising mix of long-term political continuity and long-term economic volatility characterizes the Nguemist political regime

his rise and cement the inevitability of his becoming the next president. These conclusions arise from rigorously avoiding the ideological underpinnings of the three distinct clusters of contemporary coverage outlined in the first paragraph. The respective pitfalls of the three “observational-interventionist” genres, which constitute a kind of trinity of global “narratives” that produce the bulk of documentation around the country, are: first, the sympathetic belief in peaceful regime change, new beginnings, and good governance continuously derailed by irruptions of charismatic and physical power that set the tone and pace of new developments; second, the promotional and slightly delusional reasoning of hydrocarbon and open military prediction markets that complete narratives but rely on fragmented and unclassified information; and third, the positive management frameworks and diplomatic-technocratic views disconnected from historical and even local context.

The two-part essay is entirely empirical, and I owe the idea to Gustau Nerín who proposed the impossible challenge in 2012, by noting that the only way to understand politics in Equatorial Guinea is to map out kinship networks in an old-fashioned anthropological manner. The piece also serves as an ode to Max Liniger-Goumaz (1993, 2000), the esteemed specialist of the country who passed away in 2018, and whose lifelong profiling of the Nguemist regime makes it possible to assess current events with a historical sense. My methodology is based on a thorough historical examination, which straightforwardly simply involves perusing through all available documents at whatever collections and at whichever interval they are available — in reverse chronological order between two points in time, which is the way files are traditionally arranged in archives¹. This includes extensive scrolling through Teodorín’s various social media accounts.

The purpose of this two-part article is not merely to relate a series of little-known facts and give an idea about the goings-on, or to provide what Anton Smith, a one-time U.S. Chargé d’Affaires at the U.S. Embassy (2009, 2009b, 2009c) in Malabo, in a series of unique memorandums, called, “a ground-level view of one of the world’s most-isolated and least-understood countries to interested readers”. Every data point in the argument serves to trace a connection that supports the triple-shift thesis of this paper, which can be summarized as: from Obiang to Teodorín, from oil to gas, and back to the U.S.A. However, one main concept-lesson can be derived from the paradoxical realities central to this analysis: if the “state situation” of Equatorial Guinea can be understood through a set of extended family and affinal relations with impulses of unification, subordination, and fracture — and Obiang’s death will indeed cause a massive fracture — then the diplomatic stances and economic positions that flow through the country need to be studied in the same way. I should even say they need to be “ethnographically” de-

The triple-shift thesis of this paper, which can be summarized as: from Obiang to Teodorín, from oil to gas, and back to the U.S.A.

¹ For an account of the way discontinuous archival structure helps productive readings come through see Martino (2014, 2014b). I also integrate the most careful and informed readings of the country of the past years, which usually remain unpublished or semi-published or are only available in Spanish, for example those of Donato Ndong and Juan Aranzadi especially. I draw from the well-grounded visions of Ndong’s series of excellent interviews with the influential radio host Cesar Vidal in April and October 2022, and from Aranzadi’s unpublished book on post-colonial political culture in Equatorial Guinea, titled *Génesis y evolución del Estado cancerbero nguemista*. While they do not study Teodorín in any detail they provide a new analytical and historical attitude which is necessary to renew the understanding of the country (see Aranzadi & Martino, 2022). I also continuously rely on the immense knowledge of prolific exiles and independent researchers, such as Celestino Okenve and Mocache Massoko. Okenve is associated with the sprawling forum at guinea-ecuatorial.net and Massoko is the editor-in-chief of the productive online magazine *Diario Rombe*. I also want to acknowledge my reliance on the unique data and analyses at *Radio Macuto* regularly put out by its founder, Josimar Oyono Eseng. All draw, in turn, on their respective networks of friends, sources and informants. Most of these different sources are aggregated in a thematic, chronological and quite complete way by the incredibly helpful Spanish website ASODEGUE “Noticias de Guinea Ecuatorial” at <https://www.asodeguesundeta.org>

terminated: examining where they have been seen to be standing, and what their own internal accounts reveal about themselves. The main pitfall of my own type of “realistic” approach is the incessant relation of detail.

2. From Obiang Nguema to Nguema Obiang

The reappearance of rumors about president Obiang’s ill health are still unfounded. Nevertheless, Teodorín’s active presence on Twitter (@teonguema) and Instagram (@teddynguema) and his flashy new website, www.lavicepress.org, managed by over a dozen press officers, are attempting to showcase who is acting as the current center of state affairs, with constant interventions directing and overruling domestic and partly also foreign policy². The focus everywhere was the re-election of Obiang on November 20, 2022, for another seven-year term, which, if completed, would mark half a century of Obiang’s rule. Behind the ostensible absurdity that the National Electoral Commission initially reported 94,9% of the vote going to Obiang, and by the end of the month revised the figure to 99% when proclaiming him the “elected candidate” (405,910 of the 411,081 “valid votes”) and the resulting complete control of all parliamentary, senatorial and municipal council seats by the PDGE (2022), lies a more hidden yet significant story about the effective transfer of power that occurred. All eyes should now be fixed on Teodorín. The influential pan-African magazine, *Jeune Afrique* (2022), reported that the unexpected announcement in September 2022 to hold the presidential election a year early was due to a compromise brokered by Jerónimo Osa Osa Ecoro, the general secretary of the PDGE — and kingmaker. He channeled the impatient aspirations of Teodorín to accelerate the “transition” and he obtained “assurances from his father that the latter will step down”, though not until “a year or two” after the election. This would give the almost 55-year-old prodigal son more time to improve his “credibility” before taking up the reins — and indeed, Teodorín has actively embarked on a spree of domestic noblesse oblige and dramatic international statesmanship.

The sitting president has primarily appeared in scripted ceremonial events and has noticeably been absent from significant diplomatic engagements and the public eye, sometimes for months. Rumors suggest that Obiang has already “lost” the capacity to assert his authority. The meetings Obiang did attend included private sit-downs with Olusegun Obasanjo, who traveled to Malabo in August 2022 outside of his role as A.U. High Representative, and with Joe Biden at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in December 2022 (PDGE, 2022b). According to the prominent exiled politician, Severo Moto, Obiang was asked to step down and hand over power, as he had promised in the previous 2016 elections when he announced it would be his “final term”. Under the constitution or *Ley Fundamental de Guinea Ecuatorial*, revised in 2012, either stepping down or dying in office would constitutionally result in an automatic ascension of the vice president. In addition to his nomination to the vice presidency before the last election in 2016, Teodorín had been bumped up to second vice president in charge of defense and state security in 2012 — a move that initially seemed to simply shield him from prosecution for corruption in a French court. The police at the Ministry of National Security, and the military

The impatient aspirations of Teodorín to accelerate the “transition” and he obtained “assurances from his father that the latter will step down”

2 There was a previous now defunct website at “teodoro-nguema.com” titled, “A man, a leader, a vision for Equatorial Guinea”. <https://archive.is/20140613205007/http://teodoro-nguema.com/?q=en/node/58>; The YouTube channel of La Vice Press, @lavicepressguineaequatorial, is a great source for footage, while the Economist magazine (2017) made a video montage profile a few years ago, clocking millions of views.

at the Ministry of National Defense still report directly to the vice president, and this concentration of power has spilled over into all domains.

Teodorín's imminent succession should probably involve a new election at some point. However, even in a more regulated election, he is highly likely to win outright due to his evident possession of a newfound populist touch that resonates in a country devastated by a steady ten-year recession. Many exiles have noted the reminiscence of "Macias" in Teodorín, precisely because of this parallel of spontaneous and "captivating" speech. Francisco Macias won the 1968 election that granted the country independence from Franco-led Spain in a U.N. mandated and supervised constitutional referendum in 1968 — by a clean landslide due to his popular anti-colonial rhetoric and non-elitist charisma (Álvarez Chillida and Pardo Sanz, 2022). This was the only free and fair election in the country's history. Obiang, who has a distinct unemotive and monotonous style of speech, has also picked up on this quality that he and all his other sons, or potential successors, lack. In an interview with *Jeune Afrique* (2016), Obiang described Teodorín as a "political aficionado" who counts on the support of the "majority of young people" and stated that it would "be unfair if his talent was not rewarded". While Equatorial Guinea has held elections every seven years since 1989, they mainly serve as a spectacle of "re-enthronement", as many critics point out. Even Obiang recently confided to the French ambassador, Christian Bader, that "an election is not an election, it's a *fête*" (Hugeux, 2021).

Teodorín's defining strength stems from his unique ability to speak freely and extrapolate the PDGE's enduring and effective rhetoric of "foreign interference" within the country

3. The tragedy and the farce

Teodorín's defining strength stems from his unique ability to speak freely and extrapolate the PDGE's enduring and effective rhetoric of "foreign interference" within the country. Teodorín was appointed as the election campaign manager for the PDGE's 2022 election "*fête*". He regularly spoke with and interacted with the party base and civil servants in a spontaneous and lively way, responding to cheers rarely documented abroad. He even makes light of his international notoriety for what he calls "luxury living", which helps root his charismatic appeal and is not seen as a source of shame or illegitimacy. He is effectively in charge of government messaging and propaganda through his highly active Twitter account — sometimes posting up to a dozen tweets a day — which exhibits distinct populist, even Trumpian flavors. Indeed, Donald Trump's Twitter account seems to be the first and almost only political figure he follows — aside from a long list of international musicians, celebrities, news agencies, and private jet companies. There is a new dissensus amongst exiles regarding Teodorín, who until recently mainly fed and reflected the international media's image of him as an airheaded playboy. However, they now express sentiments such as "what's going on with Teodorín, everyone wants to get into his jacuzzi" or, alternatively, hope that "they will surely get rid of him once Obiang dies".

Obiang is an unquestionable and even supernatural figure of power, distant, and quasi-royal. Despite having also practically served as the Comptroller of the country as well in the past, as he "proudly" mentioned to a U.S. official, he "personally maintain control of the checkbook", "even for routine expenses" (U.S. Embassy, 2009, 2009b). These qualities and capacities are not directly transposed to his first-born son. Instead, even though Teodorín is better known as a bon vivant who has spent at least \$200 million in luxury assets abroad — a significant portion of which has been confiscated by Western legal authorities over the past decade — he is now emerging as a gauche entrepreneurial strongman. His education ended in the 1980s with a high school degree from a prestigious French boarding school and lacks discernible military training

or rank. In 1991, he received a modest sponsorship to study English in Malibu, funded by the first American oil and gas company to establish itself in the country successfully. Once the oil and gas proceeds started gushing in the late 1990s, Teodorín returned to Malibu to, amongst others, start a failed rap music label, date the actress from the hit film “Booty Call”, and have his diamond-studded Michael Jackson memorabilia and \$30 million mansion confiscated by a Californian court when Obama’s Assistant Attorney General expanded the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative (Silverstein, 2011)³.

Teodorín’s strength obviously also emerges from his significant funds, which are an order of magnitude higher than what other officials can access. However, he has consistently been seen as a usurper in quite a few circles of the regime, and firmly out of place in international diplomacy. While after the Malibu scandal the USAID contractor stationed at the U.S. embassy insisted on the “devolution of spending authority from the President” (U.S. Senate, 2008), there is evidence suggesting that Teodorín has had close contact, at least in name, with the notorious network of international bank accounts and shell-companies of the ruling family already since the early 1990s. In the mid-1990s, an Equatorial Guinean diplomat visiting their embassy in Washington inspected the accounts and jotted down a “current account with more than 100 million U.S. dollars in the name of Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue”, stemming “from Equatorial Guinea’s oil royalties”. This information was recorded in a diary of Joaquín Alogo (n. d.), published in 2000 by his widow after he was executed and his body was left in a ditch following a meeting with fellow cocaine traffickers in Medellín, Colombia. Between 1997 and 2011, Teodorín seems to have been primarily living in Paris before leaving the country after his prosecution for corruption, which began in 2008, along with the confiscation of his luxury vehicles and assets. Part II of this essay — published in this same journal issue — will delve into the developments of this significant case in greater detail.

The most striking demonstration of Teodorín’s newly acquired paramountcy was his commandeering of an anti-corruption commission set up in May 2022, known as the CNPCC (*Comisión Nacional de Prevención y Lucha Contra la Corrupción*), established by a presidential decree in 2020 to fulfill the requirements of a 2018 IMF loan. The anti-corruption law excludes private companies, the president, and the vice president as “figures of interest”. Over the past year, Teodorín has transformed this commission into a personal “drain the swamp” instrument to target a network of PDGE officials, including his half-brother Ruslan Obiang Nsue, who allegedly sold an airplane from the national airline Ceiba in the Canary Islands and received the proceeds directly into his bank account, as leaked images show. Teodorín (2022) tweeted: “There is no room for corruption. The people must know who is behind the sale of the ATR 72-500 aircraft”.

The commission’s sessions, televised by the national broadcaster TVGE, began in 2023 and contained all the elements of a show-trial. Teodorín can be seen vehemently quizzing Ruslan Obiang regarding the disappearance and sale of the Ceiba airplane. As Ruslan stands up to defend himself, he implicates other high-level officials and extended family members. From his single seat at the head of a gilded table, Teodorín calls upon seven company directors only to hector them on the need to “make reforms”. When the current Ceiba director attempts to ex-

Teodorín has transformed this commission into a personal “drain the swamp” instrument to target a network of PDGE officials, including his half-brother Ruslan Obiang Nsue

3 The proceeds for this forfeiture were returned to Equatorial Guinea primarily in the form of 600,000 Covid-19 vaccines in 2021, while some assets such as a Gulfstream jet and Michael Jackson’s famous white glove were kept after a 2014 settlement. His Malibu mansion famously had Mel Gibson and Britney Spears for neighbours and was the reported site of many “drug binges”, “escort service girls”, “and even a tiger”.

plain the new auditing procedures, Teodorín accuses him of “taking all the money”; and claims: “you have changed nothing”. Chuckling, he remarks: “when I first met you, you looked shabby”; “because of how you look now, I can tell [smiles], you have been handling and manipulating lots of money”; “sit down”. His chief of police then reads out an evidentiary trail of embezzlement, and Teodorín calls upon a witness, the director’s humble office secretary, who testifies about being summoned at all hours of the day to facilitate payments from the company’s checkbook for various expenses (La voz de los sin voz, 2023).

The constellation of figures seated in the front row of his palatial table included Tito Garriga — the husband of Obiang’s daughter and a major general of the air force and the regime — as well as Marcelino Owono Edu, who quickly denied any association after being implicated as well. Owono Edu previously served as the minister of hydrocarbons until 2012, then as finance minister, and has been a direct mentor to the high-level followers of Gabriel MOL. Owono Edu has been a “target” for some time and even publicly defended himself on the PDGE (2020) party webpage following popular accusations linking him to the 2017 Christmas coup. Despite being appointed as a presidential adviser on “budget and financial control” in March 2023 (Equatorial Guinea, 2023), he has been obviously unable to halt the ongoing related “investigation” targeting all the key leaders of the large Teodorín-skeptical faction. A surprising number of veterans have been placed under house arrest, apparently for forging Obiang’s signature for various projects and salary supplements amounting to \$20 million. Among those implicated is included most prominently the minister of finance until February 2023, Valentin Ela Maye, son of Florencio Maye Ela, Obiang’s first vice president after the 1979 coup against Macias — whose daughter Virginia Maye is married to Gabriel MOL.

The at least 50-strong mercenary forces of the 2017 coup attempt were mainly from Chad and northern Cameroon

4. Teodorín’s other populist policies

Teodorín regularly launches into tirades against “invading” francophone African immigrants, accusing them of “draining” the country’s wealth. Amnesty International and the neighboring African press have highlighted cases of prolonged detentions. In the lead-up to the elections, hundreds of undocumented immigrants were deported across the border to Cameroon, where they were received by the Red Cross. This vital commercial border is often closed during elections or crises and plans to “build a wall” were discussed and prepared by officials in 2019, abandoned, and later revived in 2022 (La Vice Press, 2023). The at least 50-strong mercenary forces of the 2017 coup attempt were mainly from Chad and northern Cameroon. Most of them were tied up by the Cameroonian police before they could cross the border and have since been sentenced to over 30 years by a Cameroonian military tribunal for conspiracy, possession of illegal arms, and munitions. However, during the mass-trial in Bata of over a hundred suspected “coup plotters” in March 2018, several Francophone immigrants were also sentenced and claimed that they were following a promised job in Mongomo, unaware of any “plot” (Mendez, 2019).

Other recent policies bearing Teodorín’s name, designed to alleviate the severe economic crisis, include reducing 3G data tariffs for mobile phones by half and imposing price caps on 40 essential goods. However, despite this 50% reduction in prices for items such as rice and eggs, their prices remain higher than pre-Covid levels. Practically all food is imported, primarily from Cameroon. In the case of more upscale retailers controlled by various Spanish and Lebanese wholesalers, an ongoing scandal has emerged involving the relabeling and selling of expired goods. Teodorín showed up at supermarket chains and, in speeches, publicly accused foreign

business of poisoning the population and repatriating profits and added to their list of wrongdoings their lack of provision of consumer credits. In early 2023, he also made a notable display of distributing cargoes of food supplies received from Serbia, which he secured after meeting the Serbian president in Belgrade in June 2022.

The launching of Teodorín's *Operación Limpieza* (Operation Clean-up) was of significant import in May 2022. Over 800 police officers were deployed to impose night-time curfews on adolescents in response to a series of domestic burglaries and gruesome murders committed by street gangs such as 8 *Machetes* and *Los Malos*. Up to 500 youths were arrested, and over a hundred were imprisoned without trial or explanation to their families. In June, a leaked death certificate of an arrested 21-year-old Bruno Mangue Eyang listed "anorexia and dehydration" as the cause of death (Somos+, 2022). Teodorín then tweeted (2022a) that over a hundred of these "youths" individuals would be sent to a Ugandan "useful trade" military training camp. It appears that he has quickly recognized the populist utility of cracking down on gangs from Nayib Bukele, the equally Twitter-active president of El Salvador and self-declared "world's coolest dictator". Both leaders also share a similar fashion sense, altering between tailored Italian suits and a "start-up founder" aesthetic of jeans and t-shirts — though Teodorín never goes without his thick-framed tinted glasses. Just as Bukele has counted on the crucial support from the Archbishop of San Salvador due to his "legal" actions against abortion and gang violence, Teodorín has mobilized similar allies and sentiments in the country — probably one of the most officially Catholic countries in the world, with around 90% of the population identifying as Catholic. Teodorín even met Pope Francis after the large munitions explosions at the Nkoantoma military barracks in Bata in March 2021, which killed over a hundred people and devastated the city. Teodorín visited hospitals, handed out essential goods on the "front-line", and assigned the task of city reconstruction to the Archbishop of Malabo, Juan Nsue Edjang Mayé. He handed him \$3,6 million in front of the cameras for this purpose. Nevertheless, Teodorín is famously unmarried and not very pious as he is better known as a regular patron of exclusive local discotheques and a connoisseur of the "high life", both in Malabo, and abroad.

Extinguishes any hopes the opposition may have to compete directly against the more divisive Teodorín in a future election

5. The opposition party

The violent incidents leading up to and the subsequent reshuffling of ministers after the November 2022 elections suggest that the "fête" primarily served as a display of further power concentration that dampens and even extinguishes any hopes the opposition may have to compete directly against the more divisive Teodorín in a future election. In April 2022, the PDGE announced a "democratic coalition" of 14 parties for the scheduled local elections. This coalition consisted of parties with very few members, sometimes just one, and most of these were either recently formed or with leaders already working in government or at SOEs (state-owned enterprises). The only legalized true opposition party with a longer history is the CPDS (*Convergencia Para la Democracia Social*), which received less than 10,000 votes. The only other legalized opposition party, the PCSD, received less than 3,000 votes, with their main noteworthy feature and campaign activity being their acronym similarity to the CPDS. The PDGE introduced a new electoral quota requiring at least 35% of all candidates to be women, and in early 2023, it was announced that the new prime minister would be a woman for the first time. Manuela Roka Botey, who, while previously at the ministry of education, had not made any newsworthy appearances or statements in the past years, and her appointment seemed to be designed to

guarantee that no shadows are cast on Teodorín — who took to Twitter (2023) to highlight his country's "commitment to gender equality".

The leader of the CPDS, Andres Esono Ondo, stated that his party was effectively prohibited from campaigning. He retracted their only attempt at electoral canvassing, a call for party members to meet publicly in Malabo, after the PDGE's general secretary labeled such gatherings a "threat to public order", receiving further threats from the interior ministry commission responsible for banning parties, the *Comisión de Vigilancia y Seguimiento de los Acuerdos del Pacto Nacional Vinculante* (CPDS, 2022). The CPDS is excluded from broadcasting through TVGE, and the only other more popular private channel is Asonga TV, founded and owned by Teodorín. When Esono proposed a televised debate between the candidates, Teodorín (2022c) responded in a tweet to "amuse himself by debating with a goat". In early November 2022, Esono launched the CPDS electoral program to a small audience that mainly included the ambassadors of Spain, France, and the U.S. sitting in the front row. The CPDS (2022b) manifesto is an elaborate and lengthy academic document that begins with a theory of the state and institutions in general, and then provides a blueprint of the entire legal and administrative structure of a new state during and after the "transition" out of the dictatorship. Andres Esono was the founder of the local socialist party (PSGE), which had competed as an opposition party in previous elections, but whose other leaders have since been integrated into the ruling party "coalition" — the socialist party co-founder was the public health minister. The remaining exiled and local opposition is united in desperately lobbying for the regime to disappear, modeled in the language and expectations of the peaceful Spanish "transition" to a liberal democracy after the death of Franco.

Despite obvious instances of fraud, the CPDS's poor electoral results, which were even lower than in previous elections, can largely be attributed to the weighty and widespread social pressures that compel people to conform and accept the PDGE as the primary or only source of direct and indirect income. The CPDS also had to defend itself against verbal attacks from some exile groups, who again resorted to their preferred insult: the "grateful stomachs" whose participation in "farcical" elections helped "legitimize" the government to international observers (Nsue, 2022; Miko Abogo, 2022, see also Nse & Micó, 2016). In February 2022, a union of the most important exiled parties and leaders sent a direct letter to Obiang expressing their desire to participate in the elections, but only under the following condition: amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles, the legalization of all political parties, and the establishment of a biometric electoral census⁴. This union, emerging from the letter, came to be known as COLIPGE (*Coalición para la Liberación de los Pueblos de Guinea Ecuatorial*). Another meeting held in March 2022 at the headquarters of a socialist trade union (*Unión General de Trabajadores*) in Madrid saw a further expansion of this opposition coalition, incorporating local rights groups founded or based in the country, such as *GENuestra* and *Somos+*. They formalized a *Pacto de*

Esono launched the CPDS electoral program to a small audience that mainly include the ambassadors of Spain, France, and the U.S.

4 Signed by Celestino Okenve Ndo, Partido Union Popular (UP); Severo Matías Moto Nsa, Partido del Progreso de Guinea Ecuatorial (PPGE); Justo Bolekia Boleká, Movimiento para la Autodeterminación de la Isla de Bioko (MAIB); Agustín Meseguer Nzambi, Movimiento de Liberación de Guinea Ecuatorial-III Republica (MLGE III3); Jesús Mitogo Oyono Andeme, Ciudadanos por la Innovación (CI) [and member of the Nacionalistas por el Interés de Guinea Ecuatorial [NIPGE]; Manuel Osa Mba, ex-Ayudante de Campo del Presidente de Guinea Ecuatorial [based in the U.S.]; Trifonia Adela Mba, Fuerza Nueva Alianza; Juliana Dolores Obono Nguema, Barrenderas de Guinea Ecuatorial; Aquilino Nguema Ona Nchama, Unión para la Democracia y el Desarrollo Social (UDDS); Loreta Bindang Nguema, Foro Solidario por Guinea Ecuatorial (FSGE). (2022, February 18) "Carta al presidente Obiang exigiendo el cumplimiento de condiciones para poder participar en unas futuras elecciones generales": https://www.guinea-ecuatorial.net/documentos/carta_al_presidente.pdf. In June 2022 other signatories were added to including the Partido de la Libertad Nacional (PLN) based in Houston.

Concordia — aimed at stopping infighting amongst exile groups — and a *Pacto Político*, a pact that sought to coordinate a government in exile, demand a peaceful transition, renounce all political violence, and renew the call for a boycott of any elections until the legalization of all parties (Abaha, 2022). The prominent exiled politician Severo Moto, leader of the PP (*Partido del Progreso*), reiterated his patience in awaiting the regime's implosion.

6. The last elections

The cycle of repression, fear, and intimidation intensified over the summer of 2022, leading up to the announcement of the presidential election. The chain of deaths, alerts, arrests, and detentions without trial are often erroneously labeled “arbitrary” by international actors. Systematic police harassment and coercion, forces commanded by Teodorín, are entirely designed to add to the inviolable weight of his succession. The series of events began with the disappearance of Rubén Mayé Nsue Mangué in early August 2022, a former minister of justice and ambassador in Washington who turned pastor. He was arrested after a viral recording of him denouncing that the devil had taken over the country circulated via WhatsApp groups. This was followed by the undignified death of the imprisoned Salvador Alogo Nvono Mokuy, a member of the banned COLIPGE coalition, whose tortured corpse was deposited in the public square of his family village by the police on August 17, 2022. The following week, street vigils in Malabo with large banners condemning “state terrorism” commemorated his death. Two weeks after this gathering, a well-known rapper called Adjoguening disappeared after holding a one-man anti-government protest regarding the confiscation of his passport. Recordings of his screams from a torture room inside the notorious Black Beach prison circulated widely as an audio file in WhatsApp groups. A few days later, several notable podcasters were also arrested, known locally as *audistas* as they spread political commentary via WhatsApp audio files (such as Luis Nzo Ondó, who broadcasts under the name *David contra Goliath*). On September 16, 2022, the government emitted a nationwide “terrorist alert”. A TVGE (2022) reporter announced live on television that a cross-dressing terrorist wearing a blue dress and a suicide belt was planning to blow up the five-star Sofitel at Sipopo. The details of this threat were gathered through a bewildering interview with the hotel's front desk clerk, who received this “anonymous” threat by phone. TVGE further broadcast a self-implicating confession by an alleged member of COLIPGE regarding an additional plot to torch eight gasoline stations, supposedly conceived by a stranger in a bar who approached the COLIPGE member and said it was time to “take action” and force the “intervention of the UN blue helmets”. A government news outlet quoted another claim by the internal security minister about another foiled plot to attack foreign embassies and kill high officials “in cold blood” in their homes (Revista Real Guinea Ecuatorial, 2022).

On September 19, 2022, attorney general Anatolio Nzang Nguema summoned seven opposition figures, mainly local leaders of banned political parties, including Severo Moto's PP and Celestino Okenve's UP (*Unión Popular*), to appear at his court in relation to this bizarre terrorist alert. The summoned leader of the CI (*Ciudadanos por la Innovación*), Gabriel Nsé Obiang Obono, sent his lawyer but failed to appear personally. As a result, a judge issued an arrest warrant for him on September 29, 2022, and his home and party headquarters were assaulted with tear gas and smoke grenades to force an evacuation. Gabriel Nsé was hosting a meeting of hundreds of CI members at the time, and the police surrounded the compound, cutting off the water and electricity supply. After an almost week-long siege, local media and the Spanish newspaper *El País* (2022) reported

The series of events began with the disappearance of Rubén Mayé Nsue Mangué in early August 2022, a former minister of justice

that the storming of the compound resulted in the deaths of three to nine CI members and one police officer by tear-gas inhalation and/or small arms gunfire. Up to 170 supporters, including children and the elderly, were bussed off to the police headquarters, and 53 were transferred to Black Beach prison, where they remain, including Gabriel Nsé. In May 2023, their mass trial began. The CI was banned in 2018 by the attorney general after being accused of participating in the 2017 coup attempt. Gabriel Nsé, director general of Obiang's military council in the early 1990s before going into exile in 2001, returned from Spain, and his party contested the 2017 legislative elections. They won the only seat held by an opposition party in the parliament. His relatively large and loyal support base can be attributed to his military pedigree, which contrasts with the academic style of the CPDS, whose leaders are mostly highly educated professionals trained in Spanish universities but seen as ineffective in terms of popularity. Teodorín (2022d) repeated that the assault was necessary to arrest Nsé's plans to "spread terror in the country". A prominent activist, Anacleto Micha Ndong, founder and member of the local human rights associations *GENuestra* and *Somos+*, was and remains detained after attempting to provide bottles of water to the besieged opposition party. The founder of *Somos+*, Joaquín Eló Ayeto, known as "Paysa", who has been tortured and imprisoned in the past, was again arrested on December 11, 2022, for organizing a private "Human Rights Day" event.

The first and most prominent international response to the announcement of the election results on November 26, 2022, came from the former Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) foreign minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos, who congratulated President Obiang on winning a "free and democratic election". Moratinos is currently employed as a UN High Representative and added in his filmed oral message delivered in front of the Secretary-General of the UN that he, the "entire international community", as well as the "people of Equatorial Guinea are satisfied and happy" (El Diario, 2022). *El País* (2022), a week after the election, first reported on the many frauds in the electoral process, including cases of single-family members voting for all members, an electoral census that lowered the minimum voting age, the availability of only one ballot paper at polling stations, and footage of municipal authorities threatening staff with consequences for not voting the PDGE — based on reports compiled by the CPDS. Coincidentally, in late November, after Moratinos made his statement, Esono was traveling to Madrid to the PSOE party headquarters to attend the Congress of the Socialist International, which António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the UN, previously headed. The only public support Esono could successfully solicit from this quadrennial congress seems to have been a timid statement published on December 6, 2022, on the PSOE (2022) party website. This statement, explicitly not issued by the ruling PSOE government in Spain, was encouraged the PDGE to enter into a "dialogue" with the CPDS. The PDGE (2022c) immediately responded with a statement accusing the PSOE of a "neo-colonialist and supremacist stance" and pointing to the suppression and exile of its own "dissenting groups", such as those from the Catalan independence movement.

7. Coups, fast and slow

EU officials consider the country a "tough nut" (Corlin, 2023), and the political positions of Western European governments appear primarily through parties, courts, parliaments, and the branches of international NGOs or UN Agencies. A bombshell development unfolded in Spain in connection to the abduction of two Spanish citizens in South Sudan in 2019: Feliciano Efa Mangue, a former paratrooper, and Julio Obama Mefuman, a legionary in the Spanish armed

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forces — who were kidnapped along with two Guineans residents in Spain, Martín Obiang Ondo Mbasogo and Bienvenido Ndong Ono. All of them were leaders and members of the MLGE3R (*Movimiento para la Liberación de Guinea Ecuatorial - III República*) and had been sentenced in absentia by the government for participating in the foiled Christmas 2017 coup. On January 3, 2023, *El País* (2023; Irujo, 2023) broke the story that on December 10, 2022, a judge from the Spanish High Court had issued a secret arrest warrant for Carmelo Ovono Obiang, Obiang's head of foreign security, for abducting the MLGE3R leaders. In a surprising twist, when police had surrounded the Madrid hotel where Carmelo Ovono Obiang was staying over the Christmas holiday in 2022 while visiting his family in Spain, the judge, Santiago Pedraz, quickly revoked his order and instead peacefully summoned him with a letter advising him to appoint himself a solicitor. The prosecutor in the case, Vicente González Mota, tried but failed to proceed with the arrest. Carmelo Obiang then fled to Malabo before the new year.

In April 2023, the Spanish state attorney once again requested the judge to issue an international arrest warrant after Carmelo Ovono Obiang failed to appear in court. This happened after Pedraz invited him to assist to a videoconference for questioning, along with other accused figures from Obiang's security cupula, including Nicolás Obama Nchama, the minister of national security, and Isaac Nguema Endo, the director of presidential security. According to judicial sources cited in *El País* (2023), the accused apparently lured their victims via a double agent who promised them an important meeting with leading African politicians in Ethiopia, via South Sudan. However, they were "clandestinely transferred in a private plane, tortured and forced to apologize to the leader of the Equatoguinean regime under pressure in front of Equatorial Guinea's public TV". One of the Spanish citizens, Obama Mefuman, died in custody at some point in the first half of January, which various Equatorial Guinean government sources seemed to claim was due to a pre-existing medical condition, apparently diabetes. After the story broke, Teodorín accused the Spanish government of humiliation and interference, which he framed in the metaphorical image of Spain amassing troops at the border with the intention to "invade our country". This reference was not related to the former presence of Spanish troops in Libreville until 2019, when the so-called *Destacamento Mamba* was involved in the peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (Masoliver, 2023). Instead, it evoked the 2017 coup attempt and a revelation of ongoing fears of real or imagined coup attempts where bands of foreign-sponsored mercenaries crossed the border.

It is worth noting that the Spanish judge, Santiago Pedraz, is somewhat of a celebrity socialite in Spain due to having dated an even wealthier and glamorous model, the young widow of a Marqués. It does not seem to be a coincidence that Pedraz was also the judge that issued the arrest warrant for the exiled Severo Moto in April 2008, accused of trying to ship arms contraband from the port of Valencia. This 2008 warrant issued by Pedraz is widely rumored to have been issued just a week after Moratinos, then the Spanish Foreign Minister, met with Obiang. It was one of the conditions Obiang is said to have imposed before the establishment of a mythical "foundation" aimed at "tightening" relations between Spain and Equatorial Guinea — or at least some of their politicians. When Moratinos was just a young head of the Africa section of the Spanish foreign ministry in 1993, Spanish development aid accounted for a third of Equatorial Guinean GDP (Montayà, 2020). Between 1993 and 2007, according to the IMF country reports, government revenue in the hands of Obiang increased from around \$2 million to \$3.9 billion (Yates, 2017, p. 351). In the current financially deflated Teodorín conjuncture, it seems that an old guard of Spanish politicians is seeking to grasp political developments in the coun-

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try — if only to set an outer limit to the new regime and its persistent attempts to reach into Europe to persecute their exiles⁵.

The MLGE3R is the most complex exiled group. They are the successors of the *Fuerza Democrática Republicana* (FDR), who since at least 2001 have been trying to stop the succession of the “crown prince”, which they consider a “monarchical forgery” (FDR, 2001). After years of lobbying different governments, in September 2022, the MLGE3R prepared and submitted a dossier of evidence to the Spanish High Court. The dossier included testimonies of the kidnapped victims and other protected witnesses, which the investigative branch of the Spanish police deemed as compelling evidence for the kidnapping and torture of Spanish citizens (Europa Press, 2023a). Based in Spain, the MLGE3R is primarily composed of exiled magistrates previously active in Equatorial Guinea’s legal system, as well as military figures from the Mongomo region, particularly from the area of Macias’ village of Nzangayong. It is also partially linked to the pan-Africanist movement in Spain. The group was founded in December 2018 by Martín Obiang Ondo Mbasogo, who is a kind of “second cousin” of Teodorín and who was kidnapped in November 2019 in South Sudan (Abaha, 2020). He had been living intermittently in Spain since the early 2010s, and after being named the principal organizer of the December 2017 coup attempt, he was sentenced in absentia. Nevertheless, until 2017, he was a magistrate in Malabo and was in charge of imprisoning Gabriel Nsé for slander against the PDGE. There is a long history of disputes amongst exiles, including Gabriel Nsé of the C.I., who is vocally against the FDR, other opposition figures, and the government.

Importantly, Martín Obiang Ondo Mbasogo is the son of Felipe Ondo Obiang, a former president of the parliament, who was allegedly promised the presidency or a leading role in a real democratic “transition” floated by Obiang in the mid-1990s. Frustrated at ending up in an entirely symbolic role, Felipe Ondo Obiang co-founded the FDR. Obiang calls Felipe Ondo Obiang his *verno*, or son-in-law, and along with the current FDR leader Guillermo Nguema Ela, they had both similarly been kidnapped by the Obiang government during their exile in Gabon in 1997. They were accused of organizing coup attempts in 1986 and again in 2002 and have been in and out of Black Beach prison for many years or under house arrest near Mongomo. It is important to highlight that the co-founder of the FDR in 1995 was the towering figure of Bonifacio Nguema Esono Nchama, who passed away in 2015 (PDGE 2020b; Diario Rombe, 2014). He had served as the foreign minister under Macias and as his last vice president in 1979 and was instrumental in organizing the successful August 1979 coup that carried Obiang to power as president of a new supreme military council. Spain is said to have favored and pushed for Bonifacio Nguema Esono Nchama to become the new post-Macias leader, while France, through Gabon, is said to have

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5 There is also a complex politicized dimension to the case, internal to Spain. The February 2023 European Parliament resolution was co-signed by the Spanish Conservative Party’s (*Partido Popular*, PP) former foreign minister, José Manuel García-Margallo, and the Member of Parliament who spoke most forcefully on the need to crack down on “African dictatorships” and their “European enablers” was Hermann Tertsch, from the Spanish far right-populist party Vox – whose general secretary, Ignacio Garriga, is half Equatorial Guinean on his mother’s side, but also his fathers since his paternal family were settlers in the late colonial period. Further, in April 2023 members of the MLGE3R met with the PP spokesperson to try to push for an international arrest warrant against Carmelo Ovono Obiang and bring the case to the attention of the Spanish Parliament. This led to a forum where all the main non-governing parties, led by the left party, Podemos, pushed a proposal to have the Spanish government “condemn human rights violations in Equatorial Guinea”. The PSOE representative in this discussion was the Senegalese-born Luc André Diouf, who suggested that Spanish foreign policy should be channelled via the EU, and confirmed his party subscribes to the “pillars of democracy” (*The Diplomat in Spain*, 2023). The overall aim seems to be to underline the unusual behaviour of Moratinos and the ongoing silence of the Spanish government on a seemingly sensitive postcolonial question.

backstopped Obiang, whom they saw as a more aligned and amenable potential leader (Ndongo, 2019, pp. 261-532). This older generation of opposition figures birthed in the upper echelons of the Macias regime and the younger generation, self-acknowledged “sons of the regime”, share a common mission to bring an “end” to the Obiang and Teodorín government, whom they consider illegitimate successors (Pordomingo Perez, 2019).

8. Contenders and brothers-in-law

The final and “last hope” of an alternative to Teodorín has been rooted in a dramatic idea of royal strife within the sprawling and divided Obiang family. The image of Gabriel MOL as a potential leader in waiting is based on a long-standing rumor that Obiang allegedly once privately said that Gabriel MOL was his favored successor-son, in accordance with the preferences expressed by various American oil executives in the country. Gabriel MOL has an evident corporate-friendly competence and holds an economics degree from an American liberal arts college. The “alternative” candidacy is widely presumed to have been supported by key Teodorín-averse figures, including Obiang’s younger brother, Armengol Ondo Nguema. Intrigue has even surrounded a creeping “palace coup” masterminded from the inside by “Armengol” — who appears to be a simple “enforcer”, as the former head of the presidential security detail who also independently accumulated wealth by running a private security contracting firm with American oil companies as its main clients. The “drama” narrative has gained popularity amongst exiles and has been heavily promoted by employees of French Foreign Ministry — supporting think tanks, such as Benjamin Augé of the *Institut Français des Relations Internationales* (IFRI) and founder and author at the “Africa Intelligence” newsletter.

In retrospect, it was quite clear: already in the 1990s, Teodorín was the head of the large youth association of the PDGE, the so-called Sons of Obiang (*Asociación Hijos de Obiang* or ASHO), out of which many of the younger generations of ministers and directors have emerged from. For decades, almost every year Teodorín has distributed millions of gifts and toys to low-income families, many personally, the day before Christmas. In contrast, Gabriel MOL promotes playing golf to a dozen young people at the golf course next to a luxury hotel and conference center in Sipopo, a kind of distant suburb of Malabo. Gabriel MOL is also decidedly un-geopolitical: during his talk at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in December 2022 (Enonchong, 2022) he echoed his talking points that were more forcefully delivered earlier that year in Houston at the world’s premier energy conference, CERAWEEK. Gabriel chanted the slogan “drill, drill, drill”, and dampened the mood with an impromptu statement that Africa does “not care” where financing comes from, “US, Russia, China, I don’t care”, he simply wanted to “monetize gas”. There are no other candidates in the family, such as Teodorín’s twin younger brothers, one is a pastor in Mozambique, and the other serves as Obiang’s personal assistant.

The portrayal of Gabriel MOL that emerged in the media and even amongst exiles in the 2010s as a politically stable economic genius must have surely irked his predecessors at the hydrocarbon ministry, who are now back in charge of the key economic ministries, as well as Teodorín himself. As Josimar Oyono Eseng at Radio Macuto (2021) has perceptively speculated, the image of Gabriel MOL as an amenable and friendly outward-facing leader seemed to be a concerted campaign that complemented the simultaneous international discrediting of Teodorín in the U.S., Swiss, and French courts, which produced the “fallacy” of a “favorable political opinion of MOL, aimed at perpetuating the current military dictatorship, through a government led by MOL”. The drop in oil and

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gas output he presided over seems to have convinced Obiang that a slick corporate-friendly style can also translate into being a charming but unproductive pleaser (Africa Intelligence, 2023).

The post-election cabinet reshuffle announced in early 2023 saw Antonio “Tony” Oburu spectacularly replace Gabriel MOL as the crucial minister of mines and hydrocarbons. Despite this change, Gabriel MOL kept the hydrocarbon minister tag in his profile for weeks after, and his international promoters and brokers, in disbelief, still referred to him as the acting OPEC President. Towards the end of 2022, news circulated that Gabriel MOL would assume the presidency of both OPEC and the “gas OPEC”, the GECF. The news was alluded to by Moratinos after he faced widespread criticism for congratulating Obiang on the elections. He told *El Diario* (2022b): “who doesn’t know that Equatorial Guinea will play a key role in the energy context?”. For the Middle East-based global energy cartels, it makes sense to have an African lead with the opportune slogans of “monetize gas” and “make energy poverty history” in the face of competing international demands to transition away from and divest from fossil fuels. They did not back or push to keep Gabriel MOL as he quickly disappeared from the sector, and Oburu is already preparing for the GECF ministerial meeting that will convene in Malabo in October 2023. In March 2023, Gabriel MOL (2023) tweeted out an image with the words “Amor Fati” emblazoned on a golden coin being engulfed by a fire, a Nietzschean refrain — “love of one’s fate” — that according to its clear Wikipedia entry that he likely checked before posting, expresses “an attitude in which one sees everything that happens in one’s life, including suffering and loss, as good or, at the very least, necessary”.

Gabriel MOL has since been rotated out into the largely still fictitious Ministry of Economic Planning and Diversification — under the supervision of Teodorín’s loyal former chief of staff, Santiago Casto Nvomo Bibanga, who now serves as the vice minister in that small, newly created ministry, separate from the Finance Ministry. Gabriel MOL has a meager three directors associated with national accounting under his authority, and his primary responsibility is to interface with and handle the IMF and World Bank, which have returned to the country after a long absence during much of the oil boom. Gabriel MOL remains keen on implementing his brand of “reforms” or, as he typically phrases it, “cutting red tape”. He has prioritized challenging new regulations introduced by the Bank of Central African States (BEAC). These regulations, which have not yet been implemented in the country, aim to compel foreign companies to manage their export proceeds through local bank accounts and pay their contractors in the CFA currency (Kilian, 2019). The BEAC is effectively the Central Bank of Equatorial Guinea, although its headquarters are in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and above that in Paris and the EU, as Equatorial Guinea uses the CFA franc as a currency, which is pegged to the euro. Boosting oil and gas exports is undoubtedly the priority of Teodorín’s new shadow government.

The actual Economic Ministry, or Treasury, the *Ministerio de Hacienda y Presupuestos*, is now in the hands of Fortunato Ofa Mbo Nchama, a crucial ally of Teodorín (Diario Rombe, 2023). A glimpse into his social media profiles reveals that he is a true believer in Teodorín — in between tweets about Catholicism and anti-communism, he retweets Teodorín’s populist messages and sends him warm personal reply-tweets. He is the only national government figure that Teodorín follows back. Fortunato Ofa Mbo Nchama had been the all-important economic minister during the oil boom take-off (1998-2003). He also served as the president’s chief of staff (2006-2008) when Obiang was undergoing cancer treatment and had to consider Teodorín’s succession seriously. Additionally, he was also the assistant secretary general of the PDGE when Teodorín was elevated to vice president. He received education in Spain and from the IMF at its Capacity

Towards the end of 2022, news circulated that Gabriel MOL would assume the presidency of both OPEC and the “gas OPEC”, the GECF

Development Institute in Washington and, more recently, has had a career as a successful banker in Brazzaville while the Gabriel MOL faction was running the country's finances to the ground. In a revealing tangent, he was also named the provisional president of the national airline company, Ceiba Intercontinental, in November 2022, just before all the crucial paperwork leaked from the airline, implicating a series of ministers and officials who were averse to further promoting Teodorín.

The Finance Ministry also operates the primary state “fund” for investment — *Holding Guinea Ecuatorial* — which since May 2023 Teodorín has officially commandeered as well. Equatorial Guinea is a small country with a single-minded leadership and a single-sided economy. Mineral fuels and organic chemicals account for the overwhelming share of foreign exchange earnings — an extreme export dependency on raw materials, even for the region. Nevertheless, in the past year, significant developments have been announced regarding the reactivation of long-running projects regarding the expansion of national and regional energy infrastructure and “downstream oil” projects, such as refineries. These initiatives were delayed and even dismissed during Gabriel MOL's tenure at the hydrocarbon ministry, which focused exclusively on accelerating the granting and exploitation of oil and gas concessions. In August 2022, Teodorín presided over the ceremonial announcement of an industrial deal involving two Chinese companies developing two refineries to produce petrol, asphalt, and plastics. These refineries were planned to be located in Luba and Cogo, on the island and mainland respectively, though at an earlier point planned to be in Riaba and Mbini. This large financing and construction agreement represents 5% of the \$10 billion investment promotion program for Africa announced by Xi Jinping in 2021. The deal was brokered by Antonio Oburu Ondo, then director of the state oil company GEPetrol, and Teodorín's cousin-in-law.

Before his recent promotion to replace Gabriel MOL, the young Oburu had been in charge of GEPetrol since 2015, the year he married the daughter of Teodorín's mother's brother. His wife, Candida Okomo Nsue Mensa, is an R&B singer whose father is the First Lady's brother, Teodoro Biyogo Nsue Okomo — who, in turn, is Obiang's chief of staff and in charge of the ministers (*Jefe de Protocolo* and *Jefe de Gabinete*). Teodorín's mother, Constanca Mangue Nsue Okomo, is one of, if not the most, influential real estate tycoon and philanthropist in the country, attracting political loyalty. What seems to be a “gossipy” story about Oburu paying Biyogo Nsue Okomo a record bridewealth of 2 billion CFA or over 3 million euros in 2015 (Diario Rombe, 2015) is the most revealing sign of alliance. Oburu even replaced Constanca's brother, Candido Nsue Okomo, as the head of GEPetrol in 2015. In a sub-plot worthy of a complete study that I will only briefly sketch out here, Candido Nsue Okomo also had an international arrest warrant issued against him in 2021 while living in Dubai. He has been clearly linked to payments made around 2012 to a corrupt Spanish police inspector, which were widely believed to be intended to concoct a kompromat against Gabriel MOL that could be leaked to the Spanish press. However, the ongoing trial in Spain against the police inspector and his organized crime network involving the Spanish intelligence agency (CNI), the so-called “Caso Villarejo”, suggest that the kompromat against Gabriel MOL was merely a cover story for the invoices issued by inspector Villarejo, who received about €30 million from GEPetrol for this forged purpose. Instead, it appears that the GEPetrol funds were sent to Spain to be laundered into property purchases. Aside from the commissions received by Villarejo, the services he rendered to Equatorial Guinean officials seem to have been limited to facilitating the travel into Spain by “government VIPs” landing in Madrid's airport. The Guinean connection served only as an entry point to this massive ongoing investigation, as the

This large financing and construction agreement represents 5% of the \$10 billion investment promotion program for Africa announced by Xi Jinping in 2021

Spanish tax authorities began to scrutinize the financial movements of GEPetrol's legal consultant in Spain, Francisco Menéndez Rubio, to extract a series of confessions that allowed them to reach into Villarejo's own accounts (Público, 2021).

9. Conclusion to Part I

Teodorín's long-term residence abroad and his lack of control and allies in the key finance and hydrocarbon ministries during the decade-long economic crisis have allowed him to present his slow, then fast, ascendancy as a radical "nobleman" leading the charge against the "corrupt" establishment, thereby laying his claim to enthronement. He is "royal", in the sense of the famous Lacanian definition of "what is a king" — it is when others treat or defer to you as a "king" — and because of his ability to exist outside of the Constitution by decreeing orders into existence or simply taking them over and directing them. A brief conceptual detour into "kingship" is necessary because the consensus perception of the brazen undemocratic nature of the ruling family misses the surprising ways in which sovereign figures can more effectively present their inevitability by being perceived as coming from the "outside" (Sahlins, 2017). In contrast to the common idea that politics comes from and represents the "inside" of a society or its peculiar fears, beliefs, or social structures, or that political power in oil "rentier states" derives from simply taking hold of a sovereign border and taxing the difference between the resulting inside and outside, there is a stranger and additional dimension of "kingship". To be sure, there are non-stop attempts to fit and insert Teodorín, as dynastic inheritor, into the "internal" backbone of "national defence", to guard against "sedition", "treachery" and "foreign interference". In addition, opposition members and exiles are effectively treated as persecuted "outsider" non-citizens — their passports are confiscated, or their return prevented, their houses are raided, they are imprisoned without trial, killed without consequence, and kept in a state of fear.

However, I refer to the proper "external" dimension, which is mythical. The rulers are "undomestic" — for example, many exiles insist that Obiang was "really" born just across the border in Gabon. Their notorious exploits and reputation for amoral and even monstrous crimes, in many instances simply unbelievable, are also part of their "undomestic" nature. The many local rumors of political elites practicing ritual cannibalism, as well as the tendency to profile Obiang as a cartoonish torturer and focus on Teodorín's jet-setting extravagances, contribute to the elevation of their mythical "kingship". Furthermore, the capacity to display or simulate independence in decision-making around preparations for "war", in the form of the international politics of naval bases, is ultimately what sets kings-as-sovereigns apart. In the next section of this two-part article, I turn to the geopolitical reality or "fiction" surrounding the purported plans for a Chinese naval base Bata, with the view that the inordinate promotion of the idea of a "new Chinese base" by the U.S. foreign policy establishment represents an underpinning — from abroad — of Teodorín's imminent ascendancy to the presidency.

[...] to present his slow, then fast, ascendancy as a radical "nobleman" leading the charge against the "corrupt" establishment

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THE TEODORÍN SITUATION (PART II): THE GEOPOLITICS OF CHINA AND THE U.S. IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

El caso Teodorín (Parte II): La competición geopolítica entre China y EE. UU. en el Golfo de Guinea

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The essay is divided and published into two parts: each separately assesses the main recent trends in the national and international politics of Equatorial Guinea — spanning roughly between the Covid19 crisis and May 2023. Part II examines the so far unfounded claims regarding the Chinese Navy's plan to build its first Atlantic base in Equatorial Guinea, which has been widely publicized by the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Moreover, this piece delves into the origins and ongoing developments of international legal disputes between France and Equatorial Guinea, specifically concerning the prosecution of Teodorín for corruption in a Paris court. Part I profiled the current vice president, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, widely known by his moniker Teodorín. The resolution of and tensions within both the U.S.-China and French geopolitical and international dimensions provide the main global frames for Teodorín's succession, which is practically set in stone, and quite imminent. The combined introduction in part I and in the conclusion in part II outlines the recent shifts across the domestic political, international geopolitical, and economic domains that have conditioned Teodorín's active and seemingly inevitable rise to the presidency of Equatorial Guinea.



Abstract

Equatorial Guinea; Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue; U.S.-China tensions in Africa; Chinese Naval Base; oil and gas.



Key words

Guinea Ecuatorial; Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue; tensiones en África entre China y Estados Unidos; base naval china; petróleo y gas.

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Fechas

El ensayo se divide y publica en dos partes: cada una de ellas evalúa por separado las principales novedades en la política nacional e internacional de Guinea Ecuatorial, que abarcan aproximadamente desde la crisis del covid-19 hasta mayo de 2023. La Parte II examina las afirmaciones, hasta ahora infundadas, sobre el plan de la Armada china de construir su primera base atlántica en Guinea Ecuatorial, que ha sido ampliamente publicitado por el establishment de la política exterior estadounidense. Además, este artículo profundiza en los orígenes y la evolución actual de las disputas jurídicas internacionales entre Francia y Guinea Ecuatorial, concretamente en relación con el procesamiento de Teodorín por corrupción en un tribunal de París. En la Parte I se presentó al actual vicepresidente, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, conocido por el sobrenombre de Teodorín. La resolución de las tensiones dentro de las dimensiones geopolíticas e internacionales de Estados Unidos, China y Francia proporcionan los marcos globales para la sucesión de Teodorín, que es prácticamente un hecho inamovible e inminente. La introducción combinada en la parte I y la conclusión de esta segunda parte describen los cambios recientes en la política nacional, la geopolítica internacional y la economía que han marcado y dirigido el ascenso activo y aparentemente inevitable de Teodorín a la presidencia de Guinea Ecuatorial.



1. Introduction

To the outside world, Equatorial Guinea is situated between settled geopolitical “zones”. In the eyes and words of an Obama-era ambassador, Equatorial Guinea was exceptional and up for grabs because, as a former Spanish colony and not part of the Anglophone, Francophone, or Lusophone blocks in post-colonial Africa, it was “an outlier or orphan in search of a powerful master or patron” (Fernández, 2021). The well-known branding campaign in the 1990s of the country as the new “Kuwait of Africa” was government-sponsored and directed at the U.S. public in the hope that the regime would receive a welcome, or at least an acceptance, analogous to other non-African oil-rich small states. Journalists continue to rely on derivate imagery, such as an “African sultanate” in the Gulf of Guinea or the “last enclave for American Big Oil in Africa”. Given the reliable position of the country in the portfolios of various U.S. oil and gas firms, exiles also tend to use terms such as the “Emir of Malabo” to refer to President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo or even just the “Satrap”, in reference to the corrupt, tyrannical, and ostentatious provincial governors of the Achaemenid Empire.

In the first part of this two-part essay, published as a separate article in this same journal issue above, I profiled the Nguemist family regime of Equatorial Guinea. Critics are inclined to place the ruling family into an “axis” of secular rogue dynasties, miniatures alongside the Kims and Assads, or at best, as part of an unremarkable regional pattern of the new military kingships of Bongo, Gnassingbé, and Déby in Gabon, Togo, and Chad. The U.S. foreign policy establishment tends to treat president Obiang as a shameful version of Pinochet but is increasingly trying to handle Teodorín, Obiang’s first-born son and soon-to-be successor, as a tiny bin Salman. They show little to no democratic imperialist urge to eliminate the reign of a military junta or a corporate revival of “royalism” that is entirely economically aligned with Texan oil companies and quite uniquely provides visa-free travel to the hundreds of American employees based in or traveling to the country on chartered flights from Houston. Nevertheless, the new commander of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) has bestowed upon Equatorial Guinea the dubious

status of being a new potential source of “change” that upends the “whole calculus of the geo-strategic global campaign plans” of the U.S. Army — in relation, of course, to the rumors that Teodorín wishes to host some sort of refuelling and refitting station in Bata for an expanding Chinese navy (U.S. Central Command, 2023).

Teodorín has made seemingly unpredictable moves along wider geopolitical rifts, playing off the only foreign powers which show and shape deep interests in the country, the U.S. and China, to cement the inevitability of his becoming the next president. The main European power in the country is certainly France, which for over a decade has been hosting a targeted quasi-sanctions campaign against Teodorín. Publicly, he tends to ignore his personal prosecution in French courts for corruption, but Teodorín is certainly pushing back via various international channels. These two geopolitical and international dimensions are the leading global horizons necessary for Teodorín’s “stable” rise to power and are interconnected. This nexus is the focal point of this second part of this two-part essay on recent political developments in Equatorial Guinea. The argument posits that the U.S. is effectively offering a hand to assist Teodorín out of the deep hole of reputational damage caused by the U.S. in the early 2000s, as detailed in part I when discussing Teodorín’s prosecution in a California court as part of the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative — an initiative continued in France. The wildcard story about a Chinese naval base in Bata’s new port has been widely publicized in the U.S. and has become agenda and relation setting. The government of Equatorial Guinea has consistently denied the scheme, even though it was likely drawn from private and provisional chatter. Teodorín (Nguema Obiang Mangué, 2021) took to Twitter to express appreciation for China as a “friendly” and “strategic partner” and dispel, with some uncertainty, that “for now, there is no such agreement”. He continues to post images on social media of back-to-back meetings held on the same day, with, alternately, the U.S. Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea, and with representatives of Chinese state-owned enterprises operating in the country.

The preponderance of the U.S. in the country is made most evident in the fact that it is the only foreign government that permits itself to speak openly and candidly. For example, after the November 2022 presidential election, the U.S. State Department spokesperson (2022) noted the “credible allegations of significant election-related irregularities” and cast “serious doubts about the credibility of the announced results”. The statement proposed that elections, and any new elections, should be seen as an “opportunity” to “tangibly demonstrate” a “commitment to democratic principles”. In contrast, a statement by the EU’s Foreign Affairs spokesperson, made after the U.S. statement, asked the government of Equatorial Guinea to conduct an “exhaustive” investigation into any allegations of “abuse and irregularities” (Rival Times, 2022). Nevertheless, in early December 2022, shortly after both these statements were issued, Molly Phee, the head of the U.S. Bureau of African Affairs and thus Biden’s top diplomat for the continent, cheered Obiang’s “success” and welcomed their “close collaboration”, pointing to a “shared future” where the two countries would “act together” by seizing “opportunities to strengthen” and “enhance our mutual security” (Ntutumu, 2022). The primary backdrop for the new U.S. dynamic “narrative” circling around Equatorial Guinea is the imperative to establish a “contest” where fending off competing Chinese patrons becomes the overriding priority. This is a very necessary expedient to the renewed involvement by Texan oil and gas firms in a dictatorship that is notorious in domestic American media and politics. Even *Foreign Policy*, Washington’s agenda-setting-and-supporting magazine, has published condemnations and democratic appeals to the U.S. government by Tutu Alicante (2022). Alicante is an Ameri-

The wildcard story about a Chinese naval base in Bata’s new port has been widely publicized in the U.S.

can-trained lawyer originally from the island of Annobón in Equatorial Guinea and perhaps the regime's most prominent international "detractor" through his role as the executive director of the Washington-based human rights lobbying NGO "EG Justice", which is primarily financed by the U.S Congress's National Endowment for Democracy.

2. News of a Chinese Atlantic naval base – the U.S. view

The news of China's purported quest for its first military base on Africa's Atlantic coast was first reported on the front page of the Wall Street Journal (2021) — under the headline "China Seeks First Military Base on Africa's Atlantic Coast". The newspaper claimed it received the "exclusive scoop" on a spoon from "classified" intelligence sources at the American embassy in Malabo. Stephen Townsend, the then head of AFRICOM, who is reputed to be a cautious representative of the military consensus, spread the story across prestigious outlets following special briefings in the U.S. Senate and Congress on national security challenges in March and July 2022. For example, the article by AFRICOM's director of intelligence titled "More Chinese Military Bases in Africa: A Question of When, Not If" was published in *Foreign Policy* magazine soon after, which in turn, was followed by the magazine's security staffers own take, titled "Biden Plays Nice with Equatorial Guinea to Spoil China's Atlantic Ambitions" (Miller, 2022; Gramer et al., 2022). A director at the Brookings Institution (2022), commented that while the story was tinged with "suspicion about Chinese motives and motivations" the concern over military use of ports in the Gulf of Guinea "is going to be very real" — echoing the life's work and future career of a former director of the Brookings China Strategy Initiative, Rush Doshi, the author of *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*¹. This book is his reworked Harvard PhD from 2018, and he currently serves as Biden's National Security Council Director for China. *The Long Game* projects a new phase of Chinese foreign policy that started apparently in 2016 with the Trump presidency and the perception in China that the West is in "decline", which "will" be followed by a new outposts of the People Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) the world over. Doshi's conclusion (2021, p. 319), a series of policy initiatives conveyed in certain terms, recommends that it be made clear to "countries that are considering hosting Chinese facilities" that "bases could be targets".

While at least the floating of the "idea" of a base in Bata does not seem to be entirely invented, it does have an inventive function as it takes what seemed like a clinched ally, or better vassal, and returns them to the fold. The port of Bata was inaugurated in 2019, though it was largely completed in 2014 by the main Chinese state-owned contractor for Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative projects. There is a frantic certainty that "more bases seem sure to come", and much speculative talk about China building out port piers capable accommodating aircraft-carriers and nourishing nuclear submarines with limited missile ranges that would need to be fired from somewhere along the Atlantic to reach the U.S east coast and pointing to Equatorial Guinea as "a logical candidate. Piracy is a scourge in the Gulf of Guinea, giving China a pretext" (The Economist, 2022). An exhaustive report on Sino-Equatorial Guinean military relations published by the top American defense think tank — alarmingly titled "Is China Building a New

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¹ Rush Doshi's (2022) *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* was reviewed in the *Comillas Journal of International Relations* no. 23. Available here: <https://revistas.comillas.edu/index.php/internationalrelations/article/view/18418/16224>.

String of Pearls in the Atlantic Ocean?” (Lin et al., 2021), concludes with the phrase that a “new era” of a growing non-economic presence of China in the Global South, has “already arrived”. All Western security analysts and outlets are in complete accord, thereby generating the American foreign policy agenda they report and rely on. They play into the fear in the American imaginary of Chinese expansionism and of overseas bases as symbols of “global power” or “force projection”. Hawkish pieces are characterized by an educated use of military planning terms that turn open expressions by the Chinese Foreign Ministry on the need to fight piracy and protect its citizens overseas, into a new “domino” theory — recalling the dominant geopolitical metaphor of a pre-Vietnam War Cold War.

The Biden administration holds a clear adversarial vision of China in Africa, which it identifies as the “only competitor with the intent and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order”. The Biden administration announced an expanded pivot to Africa after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan during Antony Blinken’s maiden Africa tour in November 2021. In a statement following Blinken’s visit, which an Equatorial Guinean official could have made, the Nigerian foreign minister is quoted by The New York Times (2021) as saying: “Regarding U.S.-Chinese competition in Africa, I mean, I don’t want to sound almost — well, cynical”, but “it’s a good thing for you if you’re the attractive bride and everybody is offering you wonderful things”, he added. “So you take what you can from each of them,” he said. Already in October 2021, before the story broke out, Jonathan Finer, Biden’s Deputy National Security Advisor, visited Malabo. He was accompanied by State Department officials and relayed the message that “the administration has made clear” to “the leaders of the Equatorial Guinea” that a “foothold” advancing China’s “military goals” would “raise national security concerns for us,” and accused China of using “economic leverage” for a scheme that would not “contribute” to the “betterment of security stability” and was not in “the interest” of Equatorial Guinea (U.S. Department of Defense, 2021; Olander, 2021). The U.S. Department of Defense (2022, pp. 144-145) creates the “observation” that the “PRC’s overseas military basing will be constrained by the willingness of potential host nations to support a PLA presence” — that is, “host nations” need to “perform an essential role” in “regulating” any potential “PRC’s military operations”.

It is worth noting that Jonathan Finer was a key advisor to Biden and Kerry when they respectively chaired the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the late-Bush and early-Obama years. Finer also held the prestigious position of Director of Policy Planning at the State Department from 2015 to 2017. During the lull of the Trump years, he worked as the head of political risk at private equity firm Warburg Pincus LLC. This firm, amongst other ventures, has financed all the main operations of the independent Texan oil company Kosmos Energy in West Africa, including its 2017 majority acquisition of the existing Ceiba FPSO (Floating Production Storage and Offloading Unit), situated off the coast of Bata. The network of oil wells surrounding the Ceiba FPSO produced over half of the oil output in the country in 2022, producing 35,000 barrels per day (bpd). It is also worth noting that Kosmos’s stock price quintupled in 2022 compared to the previous year’s lows. Kosmos is a small company with approximately 200 employees, known for discovering and exploiting the prized Jubilee oil field in Ghana (net production of 31,900 bpd in 2022), and it only has a few other ventures elsewhere.

The new AFRICOM Commander, Michael Langley, appointed in the summer of 2022, has made further overtures, stating that the Chinese Navy still has “aspirations” to “build capacity” on the “West Coast” of Africa and that only in a non-public “closed session” he would “be able to lay that out” — while repeatedly noting that “we can’t let them have a base on the West Coast”.

The Biden administration holds a clear adversarial vision of China in Africa

Langley, nevertheless, fears submarine reach “beyond the Indo-Pacific” and senses an “urgency especially in West Africa”. His clear warning came in the form of advising governments in the region not to make “wrong choices in siding with either the PRC or Russia” (U.S. Central Command, 2023). A former Pentagon official welcomed that finally, the “Biden administration” now takes “Chinese inroads in the Atlantic more seriously”, although he considers Angola a more likely initial foothold and suggests that AFRICOM may itself be considering building a base in Equatorial Guinea instead. However, the official warns that if “Obiang dies tomorrow, China might play dirty” and “bribe their way to the top, essentially creating a situation in which the Pentagon builds a base only for Obiang’s successor to hand it over to the People’s Liberation Army”. The only other location in the region that is considered more likely for a new U.S. base is, of course, in the more traditional American stronghold in the region, Liberia, though it is considered significantly less “stable” (Rubin, 2023).

The geopolitical policy-setting independent agency of the U.S. government, the so-called U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC, 2022), has already and immediately in late 2021 noted the need to track the apparent international “attempts” and “efforts” of the PLAN, such as “those seen in the UAE and Equatorial Guinea”. They recommended the creation of a new “report” with a “non-public addendum” that would identify “methods for legislative, legal, diplomatic, and if necessary, physical actions to address PRC encroachment in areas identified as key energy security interests of the United States and its allies”. More recently, the USCC (2023) has expanded its hawkish frame by considering all new ports built out through the Belt and Road Initiative as part of “Chinese-owned and -operated commercial infrastructure” that can provide the PLAN with “leverage” and “control” of “maritime flows” in “peacetime”; “in wartime, the implications are unknowable”. Following these USCC recommendations, the U.S. Congress passed a “National Defense Authorization Act” explicitly tasking the Pentagon to produce a report (“Reports on effects of strategic competitor naval facilities in Africa”). While the report is not public, in May 2023, it was circulated internally to the relevant Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, and Intelligence committees in the U.S. Congress and Senate. It is supposed to contain a “detailed description” of “any agreement entered into between China or Russia and a country or government in Africa” regarding a “naval facility in Africa”, as well as an account of the many “efforts” of the Pentagon to “force” a change in “posture” onto local governments regarding any naval facilities. Only the information contained in this report can further reveal the status of the still entirely imaginary “Chinese naval base” in Bata.

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3. The U.S. Embassy in Malabo

It is unclear to whom this open notice about the Chinese naval base was directed to — mainly at the Chinese foreign ministry itself. Nevertheless, the primary public is domestic, internal to the American establishment, and this configuration needs to be closely considered. The discretion the U.S. enjoys in the country was pointed out by Anton Smith, the Chargé d’Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Malabo (2009, 2009b, 2009c) — whose observation then is arguably even more valid now: the U.S. has “all” “the cards”, “after all, we (via U.S. oil companies) pay all the bills - and the EG leadership knows it”. In his series of internal reports proposing a new policy of “engagement” with Obiang, Smith says the U.S. must bypass both the “specter of a reluctant Capitol Hill” and “opponent human rights N.G.O.’s” — which he dismisses as “dedicated and vicious” “noise”, or, at best, “outdated”. He conceives of the “state” in Equatorial Guinea to be

“rudimentary” rather than “rogue” and considers Obiang as having “reasonably good intentions” and a “benign leadership” and a leader who can steer “the country in the right direction”, but only with the “hands-on engagement” of the U.S Embassy. Following these reports, Smith’s superiors “reprimanded” him during his annual review for “failing to take policy direction from Washington”. Consequently, he was demoted to the position of the Consul General in Halifax, Canada, in 2010. His initially shelved reports have resurfaced as the new unofficial U.S. stance in the country, though it is unclear how the current staff at American Embassy perceives the rise of Teodorín — some former U.S. officials at least consider a “breakdown” possible in light of declining revenues and the unforeseeable consequences of the non-payment of military personnel. Smith himself was promoted around 2015 to the head of the trade and business section of the U.S. Embassy in Madrid. He regularly travelled to Malabo from there, as his wife is from Equatorial Guinea. Writers who have directly interviewed U.S. diplomats and oil executives have observed that “Smith’s arguments” and “recommendations” — including an “upgrade” of the Malabo Embassy by appointing “an experienced ambassador” as well as a “defense attaché from the Pentagon” — seem to have been increasingly “prevailing” (Coll, 2012, p. 995).

Even from an external perspective, one can infer that this putting in motion of this “new” diplomatic strategy was most likely devised by Susan N. Stevenson, who served as the U.S. Ambassador until September 2021. Stevenson’s fluency in Chinese and her previous experience as the press attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and the State Department’s Bureau of Public Affairs, an entity responsible for articulating the U.S. government’s primary foreign policy objectives, likely informed her strategy. By the end of 2021, Stevenson was promoted to an executive role in the U.S. State Department’s intelligence agency, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. The Biden administration named David Gilmour as the successor to her ambassadorship. Gilmour’s prior assignments in Chad and Togo involved overseeing analogous scenarios, where he had to “monitor” the dynastic successions of the presidency from father to son. Additionally, he has had significant experience in Chad, supporting the ambivalent strategies of major U.S. oil firms, including ExxonMobil. Gilmour’s inaugural task in Malabo was to coordinate a February 2022 trip by Molly Phee, Biden’s lead envoy for Africa. Phee held separate meetings with Obiang and Teodorín, accompanied by a general from AFRICOM (Wall Street Journal, 2022). She presented Obiang with a symbolic “compass” as a gift. Following this meeting, the Washington desk officer role for Equatorial Guinea was taken up by Martin Regan, a former U.S. Army Major and conflict specialist, possessing the highest security clearance level “above Top Secret”. In late 2022, Teodorín even hosted the deputy director of the CIA at his palace in Bata. By February 2023, Blinken had officially called Obiang to discuss the small and contained outbreak of the “Marburg virus disease”. Needless to say, the transcripts of all these meetings are not public, but one imagines that other “issues” were discussed as well. It has been decades since high-ranking U.S. executive and military officials have visited the country — not since the early 1990s when they were securing the offshore oil and gas fields. These recent high-profile meetings are likely being interpreted by the Equatorial Guinea government as an indication that the U.S. is pursuing a rapprochement with their “new” administration.

During Stevenson’s ambassadorial nomination hearing in the Trump years, she stated that her mandate would serve to “strengthen commercial ties” with Equatorial Guinea in line with Trump’s “Prosper Africa” initiative. She responded to the question about her “philosophical understanding” of the “balance” between supporting human rights and “supporting American firms involved in the oil and gas sector” with the guiding idea that “as long as the oil is flowing”

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there is a “perceived less urgency to address” such delicate balances, as is the case with other oil rich one-party or one-family states. She also had to disclose that her personal “investment portfolio includes funds that may have investments in companies that operate in Equatorial Guinea”. After preparing for the job by presumably reading the internal cables of her predecessors, she says her strategy will include pulling at the heartstrings of the regime by setting up the idea of the “world stage”: “This is important [to] them, the international status” (U.S. Senate, 2019). She does not seem to suggest that U.S. officials should somehow attempt to clean up the reputation of the ruling family abroad — an impossible task attempted and botched in the past by Washington-based private political marketing consultants who tried to compare Teodorín to George W. Bush, who also “had reportedly been a drinker and partier as a younger man before becoming more serious” (Silverstein, 2011). Rather, her self-declared strategy is to “use what is clearly a desire for international recognition” as “a lever to push the government” (U.S. Senate, 2019). The diplomatic pattern of what Anton Smith called “engagement” and “invitation” has now morphed into a genuine appeal to and accommodation of Obiang and Teodorín’s statesmanship.

The Economist (2022) suggests this new strategy is rooted in an American belief that “it can offer what China cannot: a veneer of respectability. For a pariah dictatorship, embarrassed by accusations of corruption and human-rights abuses, that might be tempting”. The Economist itself illustrates this strategy by simply referring to Obiang’s regime as a “pariah dictatorship” without the common and repetitive list-like allusions to the unpolished evils committed by the long-standing regime. They then cite a “U.S official”, who is likely Stevenson herself, who claims that the Obiang regime stated to them “unequivocally that they have no plans to move forward” with a Chinese base. More recently, even though Stevenson is no longer on duty in Malabo, she met with a “friend” for an informal lunch in Washington, who was none other than Teodoro Biyogo Nsue Okomo himself — Obiang’s chief of staff and Teodorín’s uncle (Ntutumu, 2022b). The image and tweet in question was shared by Miguel Ntutumu Evuna Andeme, the current Equatorial Guinean Ambassador in Washington and the son of Alejandro Evuna Owono Asangono, a notable PDGE intellectual and regime propagandist, who oversees all diplomatic missions at the presidency and whose wisdom and experience seem to be appreciated by Teodorín.

In an apparently happenstance act, Teodorín announced in various instances in 2022 that he was revoking approximately 350 licenses used by container ships frequently flying the Equatorial Guinean national flag and called for international collaboration to detect such vessels. This measure is almost certainly related to the ongoing investigation by the U.N. Security Council (2022, p. 334) into the evasion of sanctions by a North Korean coal and fuel importing shipping enterprise, with at least one known representatives “based and operating in Equatorial Guinea”. The Lloyd newsletter, the “established leader in accurate shipping news”, confirms that progress has been made on de-registration under the flag of Equatorial Guinea (Meade, 2023). While there is no publicly available evidence linking such measures to a type of counter-gesture of rapprochement by Teodorín, the timing and sequence is indicative. It is worth noting that the U.N. Security Council investigation also established that there is a relatively recent presence of North Korean technical assistants in the country, primarily involved in IT infrastructure and the establishment of secure government communications. Current government officials fear surveillance due to a profound distrust of the French company Orange, that still operates the country’s only internet rails through the Africa Coast to Europe cable system. In 2018, Huawei was contracted to build a new communication line between Malabo and Bata. Nevertheless,

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there was a massive breach of internal government emails dating from 2017 to early 2022, with approximately 120 gigabytes of data hacked from the government's centralized servers, via a vulnerability in Microsoft software. This data cache has selectively been shared by the anonymous wikileaks — like organization DDosSecrets (2022). What is certain is that the U.S. now possesses an x-ray of the administration's communication.

4. The powers of debt and industry – China's view

While I have tried to establish the current status of the base based on all available public information, the practical reality is that the Chinese Navy is the largest in the world by number of ships and has confined itself to a single overseas base, a small logistics support base in Djibouti opened in 2017, with the first port call by a supply ship only occurring in March 2022. The base was announced in 2015 and approved by Xi Jinping as Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the PRC in 2013, after the evacuation of 30,000 Chinese citizens from Libya in 2011 proved challenging for the PLAN. China's primary concern is being able to support and evacuate its citizens in West Africa in the event of a local conflict or to combat piracy, especially against Chinese fishing vessels in the Gulf of Guinea — which raked in considerably more piracy incidents than the Gulf of Aden. In any case, in the past years, piracy in both gulfs has been drastically reduced to an almost insignificant amount by deployments of other naval forces, principally European. Any PLAN vessels, when crossing into the South Atlantic, usually call on commercial ports of friendly nations for replenishments, especially at Cape Town. The PLAN has conducted sporadic escorts in the Gulf of Guinea — in 2018, it held an antipiracy exercise with the navies of Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, and Ghana (Martinson, 2019).

It seems rather likely that this mirage of a Chinese plan for a naval base in Bata is similar to the media alarm in 2015, now totally subsided, regarding a “potential” base at the Chinese-built Walvis Bay port in Namibia (USCC, 2020). Only Alex Vines (2023) from the Chatham House think tank based out of London — who knows the country well as he was the main author of various Human Rights Watch reports on Equatorial Guinea for many years — has deviated from the U.S. “narrative” and proposes that while there may be an obvious interest in the PLAN wanting “berthing rights” in the commercial or “mixed-use” port of Bata for its vessels, there is really very “little evidence of plans for a full-fledged base so far”. An anonymous Chinese military official simply said the Wall Street Journal report “is not true” and noted that the U.S. has “frequently hyped information about China building overseas military bases to bloat the ‘China threat’ theory”, while simultaneously noting that “even if China plans to build an overseas support base”, “it is normal for China to build a support base somewhere out of humanitarian rescue reasons”. He added: “if China is going to build its second overseas base, it will release information openly and in advance” (Global Times, 2021).

The idea of a Chinese naval base in the country can, I think, be traced back to a former Equatorial Guinean Ambassador in Beijing, as already reported over half a decade ago by Jin Hao (2016), the military correspondent for the state-owned Phoenix News. In the article, the journalist quotes “military sources” who told him that an unnamed country “on the West Coast of Africa and facing the Atlantic Ocean” was “interested in having China build a military base a few years ago”. Nevertheless, at least at that point in time, “China ultimately rejected the proposal, a clear signal that it has no intention of confronting the US in the distant oceans”; though it was certainly considered “strategic” that “if China were to build a naval base there” it

China's primary concern is being able to support and evacuate its citizens in West Africa in the event of a local conflict or to combat piracy

would “also act as a sharp knife straight into the Atlantic Ocean, the backyard of the US Navy”. It is unclear whether the new “intelligence” from the U.S. Embassy in Malabo dates back to this public report published by the Chinese press, in Chinese, quoting Chinese military officials, or to more recent communications between, for example, President Obiang and Marcos Mba Ondo, the former long-time Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea to China until 2015, and currently the President’s delegate at his own Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Alternatively, any new information may have been picked up from informants or from heavily used lines of communication during the pandemic — for example, during the meetings held in the summer of 2021 between the PDGE secretary, Osa Osa, the first lady, Constanca Mangue, and the Chinese Ambassador in Malabo, Qi Mei. These meetings were held to discuss an upgrading and “enrichment” of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Currently, Equatorial Guinea sits on the relatively low third-tier status of a “comprehensive cooperative partnership” with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These initial contacts led to an in-person meeting between the Chinese Ambassador and Obiang and Teodorín in August 2021, as well as phone call between Xi Jinping and Obiang in late October 2021 (Chinese Embassy, 2021).

Previous high-level meetings in Beijing between Obiang and Xi Jinping were held in 2015 at the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation and in 2018 after a new “bilateral cooperation agreement” was established between the two countries during the China-Africa Defense and Security Forum, the first of its kind, hosted by China’s Ministry of National Defense. In early 2015, the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, visited Malabo to inaugurate the new Equatorial Guinean Foreign Ministry building financed with Chinese aid and presided over the ceremony that elevated Equatorial Guinea to its current third-tier status with China. China has had continuous relations with, and an embassy in, Equatorial Guinea since 1970, and there is no open sign of change in Chinese activities in the country. Apart from some military aid in the final years of the Macias regime, during which it was also the country’s largest aid donor (Jensen, 2019 p. 714), “cooperation” has revolved entirely around infrastructure and on “trade and investment”, including on various industrial and “economic diversification” projects in the forestry and fisheries sector, and crucially in the energy sector.

Key projects include the Djibloho hydroelectric dam, which has made Rio Muni energy-independent and a potential energy exporter in the region. The dam on the Wele River is adjacent to the giant and delirious construction site for the new administrative capital city, Djibloho, also known as *Ciudad de la Paz* (“City of Peace”). Notably, this construction site consumed half of the government budget in 2016, and work was paralyzed due to an accumulation of arrears owed to Chinese construction firms. From 2013 to 2017, public revenue contracted by 45%, and public expenditures fell in the same proportions. This situation was precipitated by a historical low of oil prices, not seen before the invasion of Iraq, and forced the government to seek out an emergency loan of almost \$300 million from the IMF by 2018, which represents a kind of bailout of Obiang by the U.S.

Debts are certainly escalating, but how they are being forgiven, compounded, or transformed is unclear. Chinese state-owned banks are still by far the largest creditors in the country, though official figures are unavailable, it is widely estimated that this sovereign debt amounts to 50% of GDP, one of the highest rates for any country in relation to Chinese creditor banks. The most recent data indicates that in 2017, a Chinese bank made an additional loan of \$772 million to complete the still-unfinished city of Djibloho. According to the “Chinese Loans to Africa” database, this marks the largest individual loan disbursement to date. Starting in 2012, Equatorial

A new “bilateral cooperation agreement” was established between the two countries during the China-Africa Defense and Security Forum

Guinea commenced repayment on an at least \$2.5 billion debt, primarily repaid through regular oil shipments — approximately 11,000 bpd managed by the Sinochem Corporation for The Export-Import Bank of China (Exim Bank) and an “Unspecified Chinese Government Institution”. These loans were secured via deposit accounts opened by the Government of Equatorial Guinea at the Exim Bank, into which the government is also obligated to deposit proceeds from its share of hydrocarbon exports (Boston University Global Development Policy Center, 2023). This is part of a complex global network of so-called “dark debt” that is not recorded as external public debt, and quite secretive “loans for oil” arrangements that suit “resource-rich but cash-poor states” “permanently teetering toward bankruptcy” (Oliveira & Vallée, 2021).

Speculation is rife that China could exert pressure on its debtor nations. The idea is explicitly part of a semi-designed Pentagon “narrative” or, at the very least, a prescribed “talking point”. The guidelines for the drafting of the new report created by the U.S. “China Commission” outlined above emphasize the need to give as much public exposure as possible to “PRC involvement” in “financial transfers to, and facilitation of corruption and/or financial influence activities in key oil and gas-exporting countries” (USCC, 2022). Think tanks, such as the Carnegie Council, often refer to the controversial strategy of “debt-trap diplomacy” — where Chinese loans are issued to deliberately saddle countries with debt to turn them into a political advantage — an accusation which has been a source of controversy and debate among academics and analysts in recent years (Chilufya & Saldivar, 2023). In any case, Teodorín seems to have reached a settlement, as Chinese contractors have resumed their work in Djibloho on an array of new ministerial and residential buildings and a vast presidential palace and parliament in early 2023. The city already has a functioning new university, the Afro-American University of Central Africa (AAUCA), now majority owned by German-Turkish former Kickboxing champion Sakir Yavuz, via his company “Perfect Timing Holding” operated out of Las Vegas and headed up since 2022 by the former Brazilian Minister of Education under Dilma Rousseff. Equatorial Guinea is very much interested in elevating itself to an “international” as well as “strategic” plane, as the U.S. ambassador Stevenson duly noted.

During the UN General Assembly in September 2022, the Equatorial Guinean Foreign Minister, Simeon Oyono Esono Angue, openly welcomed a new Chinese global security “architecture” while very publicly meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. In early 2023, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs published its “Global Security Initiative Concept Paper” which, at point 12, simply calls for a strengthening of “maritime dialogue” to tackle piracy and “safeguard maritime peace and tranquillity and sea lane security” (China, 2023). Wang Yi’s term ended in early 2023, and he had a reputation in Western media for promoting an aggressive and expansionist “wolf warrior diplomacy”, a term that the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of China called a “narrative trap”: “those who coined the term and set the trap either know little about China and its diplomacy or have a hidden agenda [and] disregard of facts” (China, 2023b). In Beijing, in March 2023, Oyono then met with Qin Gang, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs who was promoted from his position of ambassador in Washington. Oyono, discussing relations with China and the West but implicitly extending the idea to his own country, opposed “interference in China’s internal affairs under the guise of human rights” and added that “nothing can stop the deepening of friendship and cooperation with China”. During their meeting, Qin Gang repeated the official stance of supporting “Equatorial Guinea in independently exploring a development path suited to its national conditions” and upholding “high-quality development and expand high-level openness”. He also cited Xi Jinping’s agenda-setting speech from November

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2021 at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Dakar about a new “China-Africa community with a shared future in the new era” (China-Lusophone Brief, 2023).

Xi Jinping concluded his Dakar speech by quoting Leopold Senghor, the Senegalese poet and first president of Senegal, who once wrote: “let us answer ‘present’ at the rebirth of the world” and finished on a note about combining the “mighty strength of the 2.7 billion Chinese and Africans”. To be sure, the rhetorical “soft-power” of this seemingly pan-African-Chinese vision has limited reach beyond their appearance as translated texts on the Chinese Foreign Ministry website and as booklets available at Chinese embassies. Only ideologically aligned newspapers tend to quote these elaborate visions at length, something Qin Gang remarked on as well: “we make trending topics and find ourselves in the spotlight more often. But we don’t have enough microphones, and our voice is not loud enough. Some are still hogging the microphones, and there are quite many noises and jarring notes about China”. The Chinese Foreign Ministry continues to perceive the monopoly and dedicated focus of the international consensus as part of the American-led revival of a “Cold War mentality” aimed at creating a “new Cold War to contain China”. At a press conference with Qin Gang, in reply to a question about the “widening conflict of interests” in the “China-US relationship”, he immediately provided the example of the U.S. fighter jet shooting down a Chinese high-altitude surveillance balloon over California in early 2023: “even the United States did not believe it posed a physical threat. However, in violation of the spirit of international law and international customary practices, the United States acted with a presumption of guilt. It overreacted, abused force, and dramatized the accident, creating a diplomatic crisis that could have been avoided”. His message that “the US perception and views of China are seriously distorted” due to its own “domestic politics” of “hysterical neo-McCarthyism” would seem to apply also to the Chinese naval base in Bata story (China, 2021, 2023b).

The imaginary creation of a new geopolitical frontier is the opposite of the previous entirely indirect and distant approach of the U.S. towards Equatorial Guinea

5. Corporate and soft power

The imaginary creation of a new geopolitical frontier is the opposite of the previous entirely indirect and distant approach of the U.S. towards Equatorial Guinea. Even recently, the U.S. “diplomatic footprint in Equatorial Guinea” was “miniscule”, with less than a handful of staff and a remarkable lack of “soft power” activities (U.S. Senate, 2008). There was no resident ambassador for over a decade after an “incident” in early 1994 when John Bennett, the U.S. Ambassador, apparently overheard a death threat while driving in his car with his windows down after visiting a cemetery, after which he was accused of both witchcraft and interfering in a previous election. While Bennett was quite insistent that “there is no rule of law” in the country, his critique of recent U.S. policy is aimed at its commitment to maintaining the “fiction that there should be a rule of law here”: “there was a Constitution, it had to be followed, that type of thing” (Voice of America, 2016). During the almost entire oil boom period, the outpost was left vacant, and the embassy was even closed in 1996. The Bush administration reopened it in 2004 without a resident ambassador for several years afterwards, as relations quickly soured during the infamous collapse of Riggs bank in 2005. The bank’s collapse was precipitated by a massive money laundering scandal that obviously implicated its largest depositor, Obiang, and publicly exposed his family’s network of assets in the U.S. It was widely reported that Obiang’s account held up to \$700 million, deposited in many instances in suitcases of 100\$ bills (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. 165; Oliveira, 2022).

In this period, the U.S. government delegated its “policy” to the oil companies, which “painstakingly laid the groundwork for U.S. influence”, according to a 2008 study of Equatorial Guinea by Antony Blinken, titled “The petroleum and poverty paradox”, which he wrote while serving as the staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Joe Biden. Blinken adds that despite the absence of diplomats, the U.S. could rely on the oil executives to be their “effective advocates”, due to their “familiarity” with the “Equatoguinean government”. He commended the actions of the “reputation-conscious oil majors”, especially ExxonMobil and its then CEO, Rex Tillerson, for pushing Equatorial Guinea to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) — a standard for publishing otherwise secret data on contracts, licenses, revenue collection and spending. For various reasons Equatorial Guinea’s candidacy for EITI membership in 2010 was cancelled, and while the supporters of Gabriel Mbaga Obiang Lima, the former Hydrocarbons Minister, reapplied in 2019, the EITI Board rejected the country again in 2020 because of a lack of “commitment” to civil society “stakeholders”.

Anton Smith’s unease was rooted in the divide he saw between the reality of Texan companies, who practically monopolized oil and gas exports, and the Chinese, who received most of the “credit for assisting the country’s development by undertaking high-profile projects” of infrastructure and development such as the semi- to well-functioning energy and water supply in the cities. He wanted the U.S. to provide an alternative, a “moral compass”, to the “econo-colonialism of the Chinese” and painted the picture of a “door” that was “wide open” for “additional American involvement, both official and private” — warning that “by remaining aloof we cede a fertile field to others (e.g., the Chinese)”. Smith also notes that the C.I.A. liaised with the Obiang government directly, including to warn him of the movements of pirates and mercenaries, for example in 2009 when Niger Delta militants raided the Presidential Palace in Malabo (U.S. Embassy, 2009c). It is likely that Obiang was also given advance notice of the coup attempts that were arrested long before mercenaries reached the country, such as the 2004 Wonga coup financed by Mark Thatcher. I would speculate that this was the case as well in the still obscure 2017 attempt, as Obiang, in an interview with France 24 (2018), claims his “own sources” indicated to him that the coup attempt was coming “out of France” and Chad. In the Bush and Obama years, military support to Obiang was rerouted through Israel and Ukraine, primarily in the form of “services”, especially of military training and foreign military personnel, rather than in the shape of hardware and equipment which was almost entirely Russian (Coll, 2012). It is worth noting that more recently Obiang has additionally relied on military support from Zimbabwe and Uganda, who enjoy a first and second-tier diplomatic partnership rankings with China.

Following the “Smith report” recommendations has been a steep uphill, and primarily, narrative battle. This is because already a quite popular and prestigious media genre covering Obiang’s and Teodorín’s misdeeds has grown and withered for two decades. Most notable these include writings by Peter Maas, now editor at the Intercept, by Ken Silverstein, a former Harper’s Magazine editor, and Steve Coll, a staff writer for The New Yorker and Pulitzer Prize Board member. These types of profiles usually never fail in finding an everyman or a prominent exile to give them a quote about how Americans “should help us. Saddam Hussein, he was a dictator, and the whites decided to get rid of him. They should help us, too” (Maas, 2005). Silverstein (2014) dedicated about 70 pages of his *The Secret World of Oil* to his indignance at Teodorín’s purchase history. In his case, his aspirations are primarily literary and secondarily for “regime-change”. Silverstein, in an interview says, “the tales” or the “Godfather-type clan in Equatorial Guinea”, of “corruption and debauchery are like something out of a Garcia Marquez novel” — which he

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interspersed with some not fact-checked exaggerations like Teodorín apparently “commissioning about a billion-dollar yacht”. Silverstein speaks directly about what could be done: “corruption is so endemic” and “political repression is so vile, that you just have to think: do we have to do business with these people? Do we need Equatorial Guinea’s oil that desperately?” (Mother Jones, 2014). This cultivated humanitarian sanctioning reached its apogee in several short chapters dedicated to Obiang and Teodorín in a recent New York Times #1 bestseller book on “Big Oil” by MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow (2019, p. 130). The audiences for these works are entirely internal to the U.S. — Maddow accuses Obiang of not “looking to fund universal pre-K” — an Americanism for public funding of preschool care. While the chapters build up to and revolve around Rex Tillerson, ExxonMobil’s CEO (up to 2017) and Trump’s Secretary of State thereafter, she rehashes the works of other American journalists to presumptuously explain: “and that is how the black gold, the excrement of the devil, the natural resources [...] under the seabed of Equatorial Guinea ended up producing giant pots of money for the Obiang family”.

Over the past decade, the country’s economy has shrunk by almost 80%. For the first time last year, the value of gas exports exceeded that of oil exports. The centrepiece of Equatorial Guinea’s economy is an LNG complex located at Punta Europa on Bioko Island, next to Malabo airport, which exports the vast majority of gas in the country, and registered a 10% increase in 2022. This was the clearest and only sign of recent growth. This is why the most important economic sign and “lifeline” for the regime was the commitment secured by Obiang in Washington in December 2022 from Chevron executives regarding “new projects”, held after his meeting with Joe Biden during the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit (PDGE, 2022). By chance in 2020, Chevron accidentally found itself owning over 60% of the country’s hydrocarbon production as part of its much larger buyout of a small independent, Noble Energy, which owned most of the new gas fields in the country and had a large stake in Marathon Oil’s LNG complex at Punta Europa. After some negotiations and an attempt in early 2022 to sell off its Equatorial Guinean offshore concessions that pipe gas into the LNG complex for 1\$ billion (Reuters, 2022), Chevron seems to have decided to develop its regional plans in the shallow waters of the Bight of Biafra to boost LNG exports to Europe. The stabilizing of local and geopolitical developments — and favorable production-sharing agreements for their share of oil and gas sales (Appel, 2019) — likely influenced Chevron to stay and invest. This is by far the most important economic development necessary for the securing of the country near-term future — under Teodorín.

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6. The failure of the French courts

Twice in the past few years, the French *Cour de Cassation*, the highest court of appeal, upheld the 2017 “ill-gotten gains” ruling by a French penal court or *Tribunal correctionnel*, which mandated the seizure of Teodorín’s former mansion in the 16th arrondissement of Paris. A French lawyer and Rachida Dati, the former minister of Justice under Sarkozy, had advised the Equatorial Guinean ambassador in Paris to continue to appeal the decision for a fee of almost half a million euros. The mansion, implicated in a money laundering offense, is currently valued at around €50 million. The six-story property, boasting 101 rooms, including a private nightclub, is currently occupied by Equatorial Guinea diplomats. Teodorín warned on his Twitter account that if his diplomats were expelled, the French Ambassador in Malabo would be treated in kind. Equatorial Guinea had already started a case against France at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding immunities of high-ranking officials from French courts in 2016, mak-

ing the actual confiscation currently impossible. Equatorial Guinea (2022) has initiated new proceedings against France at the ICJ, trying to stop the sale of property by French authorities. The legal dispute revolves around competing definitions of the words “diplomatic” and “personal” property, as paperwork seems to prove that Teodorín sold the property back to the state of Equatorial Guinea in 2012². The legal confusion revolves around a fundamentally different understanding of public and private, and indeed a conflation of it in Equatorial Guinea. Before and at the beginning of the oil boom, a cash-poor state resorted to compensate its ministers and other high officials with a maze of property leases, exclusive rights, or concessions to operate or monopolize certain sectors of the economy — or “rents”.

Both those prosecuting and defending Teodorín have supplied evidence regarding the alleged sources of misused funds. The network of “private” shell companies used to manage the government’s “public” finances, including the original purchase of the Paris mansion, dates back to at least 1991. Witness accounts trace the source of Teodorín’s funds to an export fee, a “revolutionary tax” levied by his private forestry company SOMAGUI, consisting of 15,000 francs CFA (30\$) for every cubic meter of wood exported primarily by a Malaysian firm, Shimmer International, owned by Rimbunan Hijau (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). Teodorín also apparently imposed a “30% levy on all imports of the country” at the port of Bata, which was under Teodorín’s “personal and direct control” — according to an IMF economist who stumbled upon this income stream when figuring out why the government accounts had almost no import tax revenue (Silverstein, 2011). Teodorín’s state lawyer in Paris had insisted that his “logging company SOMAGUI SL” had only “private shareholders” and was “up to date with its tax obligations, such that the State of Equatorial Guinea need not claim any damages arising from the misappropriation of public funds” (Equatorial Guinea, 2017). The new case against France is being led again by Obiang’s long-time justice minister, Juan Olo Mba Nseng, who, contrary to mistaken assumptions, appears to be working in support of Teodorín. He is Constanca Mangué’s maternal uncle, studied in Moscow in the 1970s, and is apparently ardently anti-colonial, in the anti-European sense (Diario Rombe, 2017; Jeune Afrique, 2020).

Officials from Equatorial Guinea and elsewhere perceive the high-profile ill-gotten gains case as primarily a political attack, kickstarted in 2008 by Transparency International’s celebrity lawyer William Bourdon — founder of the strategic litigation Human Rights NGO “Sherpa”, the Mitterrand’s family lawyer and a great-grandson of the rubber baron Édouard Michelin. To them, the relatively new legal doctrine of *biens mal acquis* represents an unfair singling out of the families of Central African leaders, which were put in motion by various French judges in the case of Equatorial Guinea only after the realization that no oil and gas concessions were going to the French oil major Total, which is still ever present but clearly diminishing in the region. During the 2010s, the long-standing French corporate monopoly or dominance in a variety of sectors, such as gasoline and telecommunications (and formerly forestry and construction) were pushed back and even eliminated by other concessionaires, and in particular the state oil and telecoms companies, GEPetrol and GETESA — in this context, it is important to mention that in 2016 the French company Orange successfully received compensation of

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2 The extensive new annexes submitted by Equatorial Guinea (2022) is quite revealing. The Paris property seems to have been purchased by Obiang in 1991 through Swiss shell companies and then passed on to Teodorín: “On 19 September 1991, the building located at 42 Avenue Foch in Paris was acquired by the following Swiss companies: Ganesha Holding SA, GEP Gestion Entreprise Participation SA, RE Entreprise SA, Nordi Shipping & Trading Co Ltd, and Raya Holdings SA”; “On 18 December 2004, Mr. Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangué became the sole shareholder of the five Swiss companies and thus acquired ownership of the building”.

around \$50 million in French courts, for its loss of monopoly. In addition, the civil party and key witness in the case against Teodorín was the well-known Paris-based leader of a one-man opposition group, Salomon Abeso Ndong, who does not shy away from calling for the overthrow of the government and current constitution (Jeune Afrique, 2021). Abeso Ndong is an ardent enemy of the presidential family. A former used car salesman and self-appointed president of the opposition in exile, he runs a party website, “cored.fr”, with various tabs leading to graphic and disturbing accusations and accounts of political assassinations, police torture, cannibalism and incest.

Teodorín’s persistence is evident in the promotion of his close ally, Carmelo Nvono-Ncá, to the position of Ambassador in Paris in October 2022. This effective diplomat, previously stationed in Brussels, has also been the lead agent in the ICJ-mediated border delimitation dispute with Gabon — originally triggered by Gabon’s military annexation of the islets of Mbañe, Conga, and Cocoteros in August 1972, following the close advice of the Quai d’Orsay, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Yates, 2017). The ICJ judges’ imminent resolution of this fifty-year conflict will determine which of the two countries will have the authority to issue oil and gas concessions in the 2000 square kilometers of what is known in Equatorial Guinea as “Block EG-29”. The proven oil and gas reserves in this area will then be shared with either French or Texan drilling companies that have demonstrated an interest, also for over half a century, in these large and totally untapped shallow waters of the Bay of Corisco, on the mouth of the Muni River, and thus a prime site for significant oil and gas deposits.

7. Conclusion to Part II

Teodorín (2023) condemned his “radical opponents” in a seemingly out-of-the-blue but ever-green tweet statement about those who “have sold their souls to the devil” and are undertaking “strategies and pacts” that aim to “destroy everything that the country has achieved since our independence”. The perception of foreign interference in domestic affairs is indignantly reproached with pseudo-anti-colonial claims of the double standards of European governments and the universal standards of international NGOs who do not appreciate local political realities and differences, including by Obiang himself (France 24, 2018). For example, why are the superrich large family fortunes in the West not systematically framed in a similar light as arising from the “theft” of their own societies, and why is it only African leaders and small countries who are subject to a clear alternative imaginary of a completely different political system and targeted with such redistributive international legal tools. The high-profile persecution of leading government figures in Western courts is then perceived and equated with a slow “coup” to unseat the president’s chosen successor. Currently, neighboring or global powers with regional interests show no interest in engaging in a neo-imperial project of “state-re-formation”. In any case, such attempts simply reinforce the legitimizing ideology of the regime, which is sustained by the paranoia, real or imagined, of takeovers sponsored by former colonial powers.

The country’s ranking in the qualitative indices compiled by political rating agencies (Freedom House, Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, etc.) barely oscillates and if anything, has slightly worsened in the past decade. The well-researched Ibrahim Index of African Governance for 2022 is quite telling as the country’s overall bottom rung of 51/54 is only uplifted by its second place in the Security and Rule of Law component, which partly measures the capacity to thwart a coup. The country invariably figures towards the very bottom

The high-profile persecution of leading government figures in Western courts is then perceived and equated with a slow “coup” to unseat the president’s chosen successor

of all these rankings, alongside, for example, Libya and Burundi. In a country without a history of civil war or much internal political instability, such a ranking serves to communicate that high-level officials have near-total impunity. These rankings tend to uphold a narrative of an incompetent “tin-pot” “kleptocratic” “banana republic” on the verge of failure — a “failed state” or object of facile “transformation”. They channel the tireless hopes of exiles that a low reputation for associational, press, and business freedom could translate into increasing pressure by Western powers and even regime change.

The ten-year trend provided by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation is the all-purpose label “democratic backsliding”, which precisely coincides with Equatorial Guinea’s almost ten-year recession. This contrasts with the more peaceful previous boom period that deployed widespread financial co-optation of opposition figures through political appointments but also recalls Obiang’s more unstable early oil rule, which was characterized by severe political repression. In the boom, the government could even afford to make involuntary appointments and prompt political enemies, keeping a close eye on any facilitated or expected embezzlement of public funds, to prepare a pretext for an always ready penal punishment. Nonetheless, the heir apparent, Teodorín, or at least the trinity known as “OCONTE” (Obiang-Constancia-Teodorín), seem to possess sound political instincts and have a complete set of followers and allies, at least domestically and more than enough internationally between the U.S., China, and the OPEC states.

On external fronts, the government relies on world-class legal advisors, while internally, it tends to establish monopolies in all other political and economic domains while disregarding or suppressing any association or organization perceived as a threat. One may speculate that from the perspective of the upper echelons of the government as well as of the oil and gas executives successfully operating in the country, any intermittent and humdrum Western suggestions to cede or yield executive power, channeled mainly through NGOs or non-executive multilateral agencies, are as incongruous as faulting the CEO of a family-owned corporation for the lack of an internal democratic structure that would lead to their own replacement — and their total loss of social power. In the corporate world, only the board can remove a CEO, and after the overcoming of elaborate factionalism, the extended family board and their international backers have already appointed a new executive in waiting.

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LA COOPERACIÓN ESPAÑOLA EN ÁFRICA SUBSAHARIANA. EL CASO DE GUINEA ECUATORIAL

Spanish Cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Case of Equatorial Guinea

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Este artículo busca analizar la Cooperación Española en África subsahariana y sus distintos ámbitos de actuación. Las relaciones entre España y África se enmarcan en el III Plan África publicado en 2019, que persigue un acercamiento de España al continente africano, buscando intereses comunes e interactuando con los distintos actores españoles presentes en el mismo. Más concretamente, pretende centrarse en las relaciones entre España y Guinea Ecuatorial desde la independencia de la segunda en 1968 y cómo esas relaciones se han desarrollado a través de la Cooperación Española. A partir de 2007 se redujo drásticamente la ayuda española a Guinea Ecuatorial, dejando de ser su principal donante desde 2010.



Resumen

En este trabajo vamos a partir de dos hipótesis. La primera consiste en que desde la independencia colonial las relaciones diplomáticas entre Guinea Ecuatorial y España están principalmente enmarcadas en el ámbito de la cooperación. La segunda, que depende de la primera, busca saber si Guinea Ecuatorial es un socio preferente de la Cooperación Española y si España es su principal donante de ayuda oficial al desarrollo. En ese sentido, uno de los principales objetivos de esta investigación consiste en evaluar tanto el impacto real de la Cooperación Española en Guinea Ecuatorial como el número de proyectos, las cantidades de dinero y las distintas formas en que esa relación se ha desarrollado.

Cooperación al desarrollo; cooperación española; África subsahariana; Guinea Ecuatorial; ayuda oficial al desarrollo.



Key words

Development aid; Spanish cooperation; Sub-Saharan Africa; Equatorial Guinea; official development aid.

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Fechas



This paper aims to analyze Spanish international aid in Sub-Saharan Africa and its different fields of action. The relations between Spain and Africa are framed in the III Africa Plan, published in 2019, that pursues a rapprochement of Spain to the African continent seeking common interests and interacting with the different Spanish actors present in it. More specifically, this paper aims to focus on the relations between Spain and Equatorial Guinea since the latter's independence in 1968, and how these relations have developed through the Spanish international aid. Since 2007, Spanish aid to Equatorial Guinea has been drastically reduced, and it has ceased to be the main donor since 2010.

This article starts from two hypotheses. The first is that since colonial independence, diplomatic relations between Equatorial Guinea and Spain have mainly framed within the scope of international aid. The second, which depends on the first, seeks to understand if Equatorial Guinea is a preferential partner of Spanish aid, and if Spain remains its main aid partner. In this sense, one of the main objectives of this research is to evaluate both the real impact of Spanish Cooperation in Equatorial Guinea and the number of projects, the amounts of money and the different ways in which this relationship has developed.

1. Introducción

Las relaciones entre España y África se enmarcan en el III Plan África, publicado en 2019 con el título “España y África: desafío y oportunidad”, y persigue un acercamiento de España al continente africano buscando intereses comunes e interactuando con distintos actores españoles presentes en el mismo. El atractivo de España en el continente africano reside en el gran crecimiento económico y demográfico que va a vivir en los próximos años, siendo un continente cada vez más pacífico y democrático. La Cooperación Española enfoca gran parte de su apoyo en la cooperación en África subsahariana, con el objetivo de reforzar las organizaciones regionales y fortalecer los sistemas públicos en países de actuación mediante el establecimiento de buenas prácticas. Por ello, además de los países en los que se desarrolla directamente la CE, parte de su ayuda va dirigida a programas regionales socios de la Cooperación Española como la Comunidad Económica de Estados de África Occidental (CEDEAO), la Unión Africana (UA), la Nueva Asociación para el Desarrollo de África (NEPAD) o el Apoyo a las políticas públicas inclusivas en África subsahariana (APIA) publicado en el RD 1403/2007 de 26 de octubre.

Guinea Ecuatorial está situado en el Golfo de Guinea y mantiene relaciones diplomáticas con España desde su Independencia en 1968. Los primeros años después de la Independencia fueron convulsos hasta 1980, año en que se firma el Tratado de Amistad y Cooperación entre el Reino de España y la República de Guinea Ecuatorial. A través de este Tratado se han realizado 11 comisiones mixtas y supone el principal marco de relaciones entre ambos países. Durante muchos años fue uno de los principales beneficiarios de la Cooperación Española, aunque a partir de 2007 se redujo drásticamente la ayuda española a Guinea Ecuatorial, pasando de 14,76 millones de euros en 2007 a 1,34 millones de euros en 2017, dejando de ser su principal donante desde 2010. En la última década, países como Italia o Francia superaron la ayuda española y muchos donantes de fondos a Guinea Ecuatorial fueron organizaciones internacionales.

Entre las prioridades geográficas de la Cooperación Española, el Plan Director 2018-2021 se establece bajo el marco de la Agenda 2030, los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) y el Acuerdo de París sobre el Cambio Climático. Teniendo en cuenta las prioridades de cada país

se debe poner la atención en los países más vulnerables. La visión de la Cooperación Española es igual que la de la Agenda 2030, poniendo a las personas en el centro de acciones, sin dejar a nadie atrás, comprometiéndose con la promoción de la paz y la protección del planeta. La misión de la Cooperación Española es conseguir la implementación de los objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible. La Agenda 2030 pretende dejar las prioridades geográficas para alinearse con los objetivos globales. La CE apoya los organismos vinculados a la ONU para llevar a cabo la Agenda 2030 y los ODS. Como se observa en informe sobre el Seguimiento de Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo, el 6,6% de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo a Organismos Multilaterales de Desarrollo se destina a organizaciones de Naciones Unidas.

El Plan Director elige sus países de actuación según los indicadores de desarrollo en aquellos lugares donde la implicación sea mayor, estableciendo estrategias distintas según las necesidades de cada región. Los indicadores que establece son cuatro: el Índice de Desarrollo Humano corregido por Género, el GINI, que evalúa la concentración de la renta, el Índice de Pobreza Multidimensional y el Índice para Manejo de Riesgos, que evalúa el nivel de vulnerabilidad y la capacidad de gestión de riesgos. Clasifica los países en tres categorías en función de su nivel de cooperación: Países de Asociación Menos Avanzados, con menor desarrollo humano, muy vulnerables y bastante dependientes de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo; Países de Asociación de Renta Media, que no dependen tanto de la AOD, pero donde la desigualdad y la pobreza siguen muy presentes, y Países de Cooperación Avanzada, con una larga tradición con la Cooperación Española y que han mejorado mucho sus niveles de desarrollo y se centran en una cooperación más técnica e institucional.

Teniendo en cuenta los indicadores de desarrollo y su nivel de cooperación las regiones prioritarias de la Cooperación Española son América Latina y el Caribe, África Subsahariana, el Magreb y Oriente Medio y Asia. Como se observa en el informe anteriormente mencionado, la distribución de la AOD bilateral española por continentes es la siguiente: América el 49,93%, África un 26,08%, Asia un 15,50% y Europa un 9,48%. Si nos centramos en la región de África Subsahariana, la Cooperación Española pone sus esfuerzos en estrategias de integración en consonancia con las organizaciones regionales. Apoya a la Unión Africana, teniendo en cuenta el enfoque recogido en la estrategia Agenda 2063 y la Comunidad Económica de Estados de África Occidental. La Cooperación Española busca la creación de políticas regionales que afecten directamente a políticas nacionales en colaboración con la Unión Europea y otros socios, como el sector privado y la sociedad civil. Los ámbitos en los que quiere generar impacto en África Subsahariana son paz y seguridad, género y la cooperación sobre la mujer, agricultura, seguridad alimenticia y nutricional, energías renovables y eficiencia energética, control de la migración, etc.

2. Objetivos e hipótesis de la investigación

El objetivo principal de este artículo es analizar las relaciones entre España y el continente africano a través de la Cooperación al Desarrollo, poniendo especial hincapié en las relaciones con Guinea Ecuatorial en el marco de 50 años de Independencia. Otros objetivos son: evaluar el impacto, el número de proyectos, las cantidades de dinero y la relevancia real de la Cooperación española en Guinea Ecuatorial, así como las formas de relación entre ambos países.

Para analizar los objetivos, partiremos de dos hipótesis. La primera se refiere a que las relaciones diplomáticas entre Guinea Ecuatorial y España estén principalmente enmarcadas en el ámbito de la Cooperación desde su Independencia. La segunda, que depende de la primera, busca

El objetivo principal de este artículo es analizar las relaciones entre España y el continente africano a través de la Cooperación al Desarrollo, poniendo especial hincapié en las relaciones con Guinea Ecuatorial

saber si Guinea Ecuatorial es un socio preferente de la Cooperación Española, y si España es su principal donante de Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo.

3. Marco estratégico de las relaciones de España con África. III Plan África 2019

Se espera que para 2050 la población de África duplique su población actual y alcance los 2400 millones de habitantes (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2019). África es un continente cada vez más pacífico y democrático en constante crecimiento económico, muchos recursos y una gran población, aunque sigue enfrentándose a muchos desafíos como la pobreza extrema, los conflictos armados, los regímenes autoritarios, la degradación del medio ambiente o la falta de acceso a servicios básicos como la Salud y la Educación. Además, las migraciones son constantes y las desigualdades inimaginables. El atractivo de España en el continente africano reside en el gran crecimiento económico y demográfico que va a experimentar próximamente que permitirá convertirse en un continente inclusivo, sostenible, pacífico y respetuoso con los derechos humanos. Los objetivos de España están alineados con la Agenda 2063 de la Unión Africana y de la Estrategia Global de la UE. El Plan África es el mayor documento realizado hasta la fecha sobre la posición de España con relación al continente africano, poniendo énfasis en África Subsahariana y el norte de África, integrando flujos migratorios. España visualiza a África como un continente lleno de oportunidades, que pretende contribuir con su política exterior “a la transformación de África en un continente de oportunidades, próspero, democrático y en paz”.

Cinco principios orientan la acción exterior española en el continente africano: multilateralismo, unidad de acción y promoción de la Agenda 2030, defensa de los derechos humanos y la igualdad de género, el principio de asociación y el principio de diferenciación. Se materializan en cuatro objetivos: la promoción de la paz y la seguridad, la promoción del desarrollo sostenible, el fortalecimiento de las instituciones y apoyar una movilidad ordenada, regular y segura.

Para alcanzar sus objetivos, España quiere mejorar las herramientas de coordinación entre los actores, siguiendo la estrategia propuesta por el Plan Director de la Cooperación Española y diferenciar las acciones y mecanismos más apropiados a cada país en función de sus necesidades.

La finalidad es intervenir en países influyentes para generar más impacto. Los cinco “países prioritarios” de la política española en África subsahariana son Sudáfrica, Nigeria, Etiopía, Angola y Senegal, en los que los objetivos se materialicen. Se dividen en dos grupos: tres países “ancla” que ejercen especial influencia en sus regiones, Sudáfrica, Nigeria y Etiopía, con el objetivo de generar estabilidad en su entorno, y siete países de asociación formado por los dos socios prioritarios, Senegal y Angola, y países africanos considerados “socios preferentes”, donde hay presencia española, Ghana, Kenia, Mozambique, Costa de Marfil, Tanzania, y regiones como Sahel y África Occidental.

A pesar de los países prioritarios que incluye el Plan, “Guinea Ecuatorial, ocupa, y seguirá ocupando, un lugar preferente en la política exterior española por la existencia de importantísimos lazos históricos, culturales y humanos. España seguirá manteniendo un diálogo crítico, pero constructivo, con Guinea Ecuatorial, condicionado al ritmo del avance democrático en el país” (Grupo de Estudios Africanos de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2020).

El Plan África es el mayor documento realizado hasta la fecha sobre la posición de España con relación al continente africano, poniendo énfasis en África Subsahariana y el norte de África

3.1. Ámbitos de actuación

El V Plan Director de la Cooperación Española incluye 7 países del África Subsahariana divididos en 2 grandes categorías: Países de asociación menos avanzados, Senegal, Mali, Níger, Etiopía y Mozambique, y Países de cooperación avanzada, Cabo Verde y Guinea Ecuatorial.

El actual plan de Cooperación Española enfoca gran parte de su apoyo a la Cooperación en África subsahariana con el objetivo de reforzar organizaciones regionales y fortalecer los sistemas públicos en países de actuación con el establecimiento de buenas prácticas (Cooperación Española, 2018). Por ello, además de los países en los que se desarrolla directamente la CE, parte de su ayuda va dirigida a programas regionales socios de la Cooperación Española como la Comunidad Económica de Estados de África Occidental (CEDEAO), la Unión Africana (UA), la Nueva Asociación para el Desarrollo de África (NEPAD) o el Apoyo a políticas públicas inclusivas en África subsahariana (APIA). Tal y como se observa en informe sobre el Seguimiento de Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo, la cantidad de ayuda a estos organismos desde la CE ha variado con el paso de los años. En el caso de la CEDAO fue especialmente importante entre 2008 y 2011, con una ayuda superior a 10 millones de euros, y fue disminuyendo progresivamente, pero sin llegar a desaparecer. En el caso de la UA, la ayuda fue de 10 millones de euros en 2009, 5 millones de euros en 2010 y 2011 y disminuyó a partir de 2012. La NEPAD obtuvo ayudas en 2009 y 2010 superiores a 10 millones de euros y posteriormente pasó a desaparecer. Por último, APIA es un programa joven que surgió en 2015 y todavía no existen suficientes datos para analizar su evolución. Gran parte de la inversión económica para estas organizaciones se realizó hace años, pero muchos de los proyectos están en proceso de ejecución (Seguimiento de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo, 2018).

La Cooperación Española centra su apoyo en la Comunidad Económica de Estados de África Occidental (CEDEAO), compuesta por 15 estados miembros, mediante un acuerdo firmado en 2005 y ratificado en 2009. El actual plan director mantiene a la CEDEAO en el centro de sus actuaciones con el objetivo de reforzar las organizaciones regionales y fortalecer los sistemas públicos en los países de actuación (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2021). El plan de Cooperación de España con la CEDEAO centra sus esfuerzos en la cooperación, con 7 sectores fundamentales. En primer lugar, Agricultura, Desarrollo Rural, Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutrición, en el que España ha contribuido con distintos fondos para garantizar la seguridad alimentaria en los países miembros. España ha colaborado con una ayuda de 12,8 millones de euros y tiene especial relevancia el apoyo técnico y financiero, con un presupuesto de 5 millones de euros (Dirección General de Políticas de Desarrollo Sostenible, 2018). En segundo lugar, la creación de la Unidad de Desarrollo de Proyectos de infraestructuras, en la que la Cooperación Española cofinancia estructuras en la región y contribuye con 5 millones de euros a la Unidad de Preparación de Proyectos de Infraestructuras de la CEDEAO (Dirección General de Políticas de Desarrollo Sostenible, 2018). En tercer lugar, la creación del Centro Regional de Energías Renovables y Eficiencia Energética, con el objetivo de promocionar las energías renovables en Estados miembros a los que España proporcionó durante muchos años asistencia técnica. En cuarto lugar, la gobernabilidad democrática y el desarrollo institucional, con el objetivo de reforzar las instituciones de los países miembros. En quinto lugar, la creación de un fondo sobre Migración y Desarrollo, a través de la Cumbre de 2008 entre Unión Europea y África, con el objetivo de fortalecer los estados miembros y la comisión de la CEDEAO, así como financiar proyectos concretos de la Sociedad Civil. Se dotan 10 millones de euros, pero muchos de los proyectos aún están en proceso de ejecución. En sexto lugar, el Género, con la creación de incubadoras de empresas con las Comunidades Económicas Regionales para fomentar el emprendimiento de mujeres africanas

La Cooperación Española centra su apoyo en la Comunidad Económica de Estados de África Occidental (CEDEAO), compuesta por 15 Estados miembros

a través de la Nueva Asociación para el Desarrollo de África (NEPAD). Por último, el fomento del empleo juvenil en países miembros de la CEDEAO mediante el proyecto de Apoyo a las políticas públicas inclusivas en África subsahariana (APIA).

España centra su cooperación con la Unión Africana y la Nueva Asociación para el Desarrollo de África (NEPAD). Por una parte, financia la comisión de la Unión Africana (UA), a la que ha aportado 26 millones de euros (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2021). Esta financiación se ha centrado, principalmente, en dos sectores de actuación: “Paz y Seguridad” y “Desarrollo Económico, Humano y Social”. Sin embargo, desde 2018 la Unión Africana ha dejado de centrarse en sectores concretos de actuación y ha pasado al desarrollo de aspiraciones, muchas financiadas por la Cooperación Española, como la de África próspera, basada en el crecimiento económico y el desarrollo sostenible, la de África pacífica y segura y la del desarrollo de África, impulsado por personas, basado en el potencial del pueblo africano, sus mujeres y jóvenes y el cuidado de las niñas y los niños. Desde 2007 el Fondo España para la Nueva Asociación para el Desarrollo de África (NEPAD) financia con 20 millones de euros y tiene como objetivo el Empoderamiento de las Mujeres Africanas, centrando sus áreas de financiación en proyectos destinados a la Sociedad Civil, organizaciones sociales africanas e instituciones públicas nacionales y regionales. Además, la NEPAD destina parte de recursos a fortalecer la institución y la financiación de incubadoras de empresas con las Comunidades Económicas Regionales para fomentar el emprendimiento de mujeres africanas (se evalúa la participación de las mujeres en el mercado laboral, tanto en términos de empleo remunerado como en emprendimiento).

El programa de Apoyo a las políticas públicas inclusivas en África subsahariana (APIA) pretende que el crecimiento económico producido en algunos países subsaharianos no provoque un aumento de desigualdades, sino que permita un acceso generalizado a servicios básicos como Sanidad o Educación, una redistribución equitativa y una regulación adecuada del sector privado (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2021).

El programa APIA pretende acompañar a los países para que el crecimiento económico permita una distribución equitativa y genere sociedades justas. Este acompañamiento ayuda en tres tareas: el diseño y revisión de políticas inclusivas, la gestión de recursos financieros y la creación de mecanismos de gestión eficaces que permitan ser responsables. Se lleva a cabo durante todas las partes del proceso en 6 países de África Subsahariana y en países socios de la Cooperación Española como la CEDEAO, la UA y la NEPAD y pretende involucrar a los ciudadanos, especialmente a las mujeres.

APIA está organizado por la Cooperación Española junto con la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) y la Fundación Internacional para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP). Se ha llevado a cabo un proyecto con planes para el empleo de jóvenes, con un presupuesto de 94 000 euros (Dirección General de Políticas de Desarrollo Sostenible, 2018).

3.2. El caso de Guinea Ecuatorial. Restablecimiento de relaciones diplomáticas entre España y Guinea Ecuatorial

La Independencia de Guinea Ecuatorial fue bastante convulsa (Ruiz Miguel, 2004). La etnia Fang representaba una mayoría respecto a otras que reclamaban más Independencia, como la Bubi. Tras la independencia, España fue la encargada de controlar el primer proceso electoral

El programa APIA pretende acompañar a los países para que el crecimiento económico permita una distribución equitativa y genere sociedades justas

en el que Francisco Macías Nguema fue elegido primer presidente de la República. El recién elegido presidente era contrario a las relaciones entre España y Guinea Ecuatorial por lo que expulsó y expropió a muchos españoles residentes en la excolonia, incluyendo al embajador “en la primavera de 1969 se produjo la dramática salida de la población española del recién nacido Estado de Guinea Ecuatorial. El proyecto neocolonial trazado desde Madrid para mantener la influencia política y económica sobre la antigua colonia fracasó a pocos meses de la independencia” (Chillida y Sanz, 2022).

En años posteriores a su Independencia, Guinea Ecuatorial firmó varios acuerdos de Cooperación con España que no le eran muy favorables (Maroto Blanco, 2014). En 1969 se firmó el *Acuerdo de Cooperación Económica, Comercial y de Pagos* en el que España garantizaba mantener una relación comercial con Guinea Ecuatorial sin permitir que pudiera negociar relaciones comerciales con otros países. Tras ese acuerdo y de manera progresiva, otros países también establecieron relaciones de cooperación con Guinea Ecuatorial. Francia colaboró en la mejora de infraestructuras del país y otros países comunistas, como China o Cuba, también tuvieron gran importancia en la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo.

Posteriormente, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, sobrino de Francisco Macías Nguema, dio un Golpe de Estado el 3 de agosto de 1979 y ha permanecido como presidente hasta la actualidad (Ruiz Miguel, 2004). El nuevo gobierno no tuvo grandes cambios, permaneció la hegemonía de la etnia Fang, con la dominación del partido “único”, Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial (PDGE). Bajo la presidencia de Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo se produjo una mejora considerable de las relaciones diplomáticas con España, sin embargo, se continuaron produciendo constantes violaciones de derechos humanos, falsificaciones electorales y altos niveles de corrupción.

En 1980 se firma el Tratado de Amistad y Cooperación entre el Reino de España y la República de Guinea Ecuatorial (Cooperación Española, 2021) tras el cual se crearon 11 comisiones mixtas, la última en 2009, con una financiación superior a 50 millones de euros. En 1985 se creó un Plan Marco de Cooperación entre ambos países para intentar garantizar el buen funcionamiento de las estructuras políticas de Guinea Ecuatorial. Ese mismo año, nació la Secretaría de Estado para la Cooperación Internacional e Iberoamérica con el objetivo de realizar un desarrollo sostenible y coordinar la acción cultural.

En 1980 se firma el Tratado de Amistad y Cooperación entre el Reino de España y la República de Guinea Ecuatorial

3.3. Tratado de Amistad y Cooperación entre el Reino de España y la República de Guinea Ecuatorial (1980)

Las relaciones de cooperación se enmarcan en el Tratado de Amistad y Cooperación entre el Reino de España y la República de Guinea Ecuatorial, a través del cual se han realizado 11 comisiones mixtas, y la ayuda de España a Guinea Ecuatorial ha superado los 271 millones de euros en los últimos 28 años (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2019). Después del Golpe de Estado de 1979, el nuevo gobierno solicitó ayuda a España para la reconstrucción del país (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1981). La política de España hasta ese momento había sido de no injerencia, pero tras esa petición, expresó su deseo de cooperación con el pueblo guineano.

El objetivo del Tratado fue fortalecer los vínculos de amistad y solidaridad y establecer el marco y las bases legales que ordenaran la cooperación entre ambos países. Se basa en una serie de

principios rectores: respeto y consultas institucionales para resolver diferencias, establecimiento de la cooperación como tarea compartida entre ambos países dando especial importancia a la cooperación técnica, científica, cultural y social, participación en distintas organizaciones internacionales de Cooperación y Ayuda al Desarrollo. Guinea Ecuatorial se comprometía a contribuir a la Cooperación en función de sus posibilidades recalcando la urgencia de contribuir a la formación cultural, educativa y técnica y abordar necesidades propias de la sociedad ecuatoguineana en Sanidad, Alimentación y Educación. La Cooperación podía incluir técnicos y asesores, becas de estudio, Intercambio de Información y Transferencia de Tecnología, estudios y análisis que permitieran el crecimiento económico en ambos países, seminarios y herramientas de formación profesional, materiales necesarios para llevar a cabo la cooperación, etc. Además, en una de las cartas anejas del ministro de Asuntos Exteriores de España se reconocía un compromiso para la ejecución de proyectos concretos: terminación de las obras de traída de aguas a Bata, reparación de la red de aguas de Malabo, construir 218 viviendas y remozamiento de centros hospitalarios de Malabo.

Se decidieron crear comisiones mixtas que permitían examinar cuestiones y promover medidas para un mejor desarrollo de la cooperación, y cada vez se celebrarían en uno de los dos países e incluirían miembros de ambas administraciones, con unos objetivos específicos: supervisar el nivel de cumplimiento de los acuerdos de Cooperación, establecer nuevos programas de Cooperación, proponer recomendaciones entre ambos países y establecer nuevos sectores donde crear acuerdos de Cooperación. Al terminar cada comisión mixta se redactaría un Acta donde se precisarían los resultados.

El principal proveedor de fondos de la Cooperación en Guinea Ecuatorial fue la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el desarrollo (AECID) y después la Cooperación Bilateral Directa. El programa de Apoyo a políticas públicas inclusivas en África subsahariana (APIA) opera en Guinea Ecuatorial tratando de mejorar la gobernabilidad.

Durante el periodo 1979-2007 España fue el "donante" que destinó más Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo (AOD) a Guinea Ecuatorial, con 466,92 millones USD

3.4. Evolución de la Cooperación Española en Guinea Ecuatorial

Durante muchos años, Guinea Ecuatorial fue uno de los principales beneficiarios de la Cooperación Española. Durante el periodo 1979-2007 España fue el "donante" que destinó más Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo (AOD) a Guinea Ecuatorial, con 466,92 millones USD (31,02%), seguida de Francia, con 307,54 millones USD (20,43%). Desde 2007 se produjo una reducción drástica de esa ayuda, habiendo dejado de ser su principal donante a partir de 2010 (Larrú, 2011).

A mediados de los años 90, Guinea Ecuatorial experimentó un boom petrolero que le situó como primer productor de crudo de la zona Franco CFA y tercero del Golfo Guinea (por detrás de Nigeria y Angola). En esos años Guinea Ecuatorial experimentó una mejora en su economía que provocó una reducción significativa de la Cooperación Española en el país (Maroto Blanco, 2014). No obstante, el declive de la AOD española coincidió no sólo con el "máximo boom" petrolero de Guinea Ecuatorial, sino también con la grave crisis económico-financiera internacional que afectó en gran medida a España.

Según la Ficha País - Memoria AECID 2017, el total de Ayuda gestionada en 2017 para Guinea Ecuatorial por España fue de 1 236 619 € (AECID, 2017). El 100% de la ayuda fue a proyectos concretos. Si la relacionamos con Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible se canalizó de tres formas: un 76% por importe de 941 446 € fue destinada al ODS 3, que busca salud y bienestar para

todos, un 20% por importe de 273 312 € fue destinado al ODS 11, que busca ciudades y asentamientos inclusivos y seguros y un 2% por importe de 21 860 € fue destinado al ODS 4, que busca una educación inclusiva, equitativa y de calidad.

Si clasificamos esa ayuda en relación con el modo de canalización, un 7% por importe de 81 507 € fue destinada a Ayuda Bilateral directa, y el 93% restante por importe de 1 155 112€ fue destinada a Bilateral indirecta (no incluye organismos multilaterales de desarrollo).

A continuación, analizaremos la evolución de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo de España a Guinea Ecuatorial entre 2013 y 2016 utilizando información de la Dirección General de Políticas de Desarrollo Sostenible (DGPOLDES, 2018), órgano directivo de la Secretaría de Estado de Cooperación Internacional del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de España (Cooperación Española, 2016). Durante ese periodo la AOD Bilateral Bruta aumentó de manera directa de 1 369 562 euros en 2013 a 1 969 016 en 2016. El incremento de 2015 a 2016 fue del 13,29%. No consta que en el periodo considerado se produjeran reembolsos. En consecuencia, la AOD total bruta coincidió con la AOD total neta. Respecto a las características de la ayuda no hubo AOD reembolsable bruta (porcentaje de la AOD bilateral bruta) en ese periodo. La ayuda ligada (porcentaje de la AOD bilateral comprometida del agente) fue del 0,04% en 2013, 0,07% en 2014, 0,02% en 2015 y 0% en 2016. El % 2015-2016 fue del -99,07%.

En primer lugar, si estudiamos la AOD bilateral bruta por agentes e instrumentos observamos que durante ese periodo la Administración General del Estado aumentó progresivamente de 1 176 151 euros en 2013 a 1 956 738 euros en 2016, sufriendo un ligero retroceso entre 2013 y 2014 (DGPOLDES, 2018). De 2015 a 2016 el aumento fue del 33,33%. En 2016 la Administración General del Estado representaba el 99,38% del total de AOD bilateral bruta, correspondiendo el 0,62% restante a Universidades.

En segundo lugar, el Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación fue el que contribuyó más a la AOD bilateral bruta, con un 90,04% del total de la Administración General del Estado, siendo la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo la principal canalizadora de la AOD bilateral bruta. De los Sectores del Comité de Ayuda al Desarrollo (CAD) el sector de Infraestructuras y Servicios Sociales fue el que realizó más ayudas, aumentándolas un 14,81% de 2015 a 2016. En 2016 el sector de Infraestructuras y Servicios Sociales representaba el 94,46% del total de AOD Bilateral Bruta, siendo los ámbitos más representativos los de Educación, con un 23,09%, Salud con un 42,16%, Programas y Políticas de Población y Salud Reproductiva con un 6,09% y servicios e infraestructuras sociales con un 23,12%.

En tercer lugar, la evolución en los principales objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible en 2016 fue: Salud y Bienestar un 48,25%, Educación de calidad un 23,37%, Ciudades y comunidades sostenibles un 22,65% y reducción de las desigualdades un 5,08% (DGPOLDES, 2018). No se disponen de datos de la Dirección General de Política de Desarrollo Sostenible que cuantifiquen objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible para 2013, 2014 y 2015.

En cuarto lugar, los principales canalizadores de la ayuda oficial a Guinea fueron ONG y Sociedad Civil, con un 59,71% en 2013, un 46,22% en 2014, un 69,95% en 2015 y un 65,09% en 2016. El Sector Público se implicó menos en la canalización de ayuda oficial a Guinea, con un 31,11% en 2013, un 35,70% en 2014, un 15,89% en 2015 y un 33,85% en 2016. Residualmente figuran como canalizadores de ayuda oficial a Guinea Partenariados público, privado y redes, con un 0,44% en 2016, y universidades, inst. investigaciones y *think-tanks*, con un 0,62% en ese año. Resulta llamativo que, pese a ser minúsculo, el % canalizador de las universidades en

Los principales canalizadores de la ayuda oficial a Guinea fueron ONG y Sociedad Civil, con un 59,71% en 2013

la ayuda, se haya reducido respecto al año 2015 un 94% al pasar de 237 877 euros en 2015 a 12 278 euros en 2016.

No existen ayudas al desarrollo de Guinea durante el periodo considerado a través de instituciones internacionales denominadas Organismos Multilaterales de Desarrollo (OMUDES) según la Dirección General de Políticas de Desarrollo Sostenible.

Tabla 1. Evolución de la Cooperación Española en Guinea Ecuatorial

| Año | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| millones € | 14,76 | 9,56 | 15,15 | 14,87 | 11,04 | 7,21 | 1,37 | 1,45 | 1,74 | 1,97 | 1,34 |

Fuente: elaboración propia con cifras de la Cooperación Española y AECID (Cooperación Española, 2021)

El problema de los datos del DGPOLDES es que solo se refieren al periodo comprendido entre 2013 y 2016, con un aumento de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo. Si analizamos los datos de la Cooperación Española en Guinea Ecuatorial desde 2007 observamos que se ha producido una reducción drástica en la ayuda, pasando de 14,76 millones de euros en 2007 a 1,34 millones de euros en 2017. El gran salto se produce entre 2012 y 2013, que se reduce en casi 6 millones de euros, y no se vuelve a recuperar en ningún momento de la serie histórica. Ese descenso se puede explicar por varios motivos. En primer lugar, la última Comisión Mixta firmada entre ambos países fue en 2009 y comprendía el periodo 2009-2011. En 2014 se debió haber firmado la XII comisión mixta, y se firmó un *Acta de conclusión de las reuniones técnicas sobre el programa de Cooperación para el Desarrollo entre ambos países para el periodo 2014-2017*. En segundo lugar, España considera a Guinea Ecuatorial en su último Plan Director como un País de Cooperación Avanzada, que se refiere a los socios con larga tradición pero que han mejorado mucho sus niveles de desarrollo y se centran en una Cooperación más técnica e institucional. En tercer lugar, la bonanza económica en Guinea Ecuatorial a causa del petróleo. Con la explotación del petróleo, la Cooperación al Desarrollo quedó relegada a un papel secundario al disminuir progresivamente el volumen de AOD enviado por España. Por último, reducción generalizada de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo.

Tabla 2. Evolución de la AOD neta total a Guinea Ecuatorial

| Año | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| millones \$ | 30,78 | 88,09 | 23,35 | 14,72 | 4,63 | 0,57 | 7 | 7 | 6,9 | 6,7 |

Fuente: elaboración propia con cifras de la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE). (OECD, 2021)

Relacionado con la AOD española total, resulta conveniente evaluar si la cantidad de AOD recibida por Guinea Ecuatorial se ha reducido de manera generalizada o tan solo en el caso de la Cooperación española. En la tabla observamos que Guinea Ecuatorial ha ido reduciendo su papel como receptor de AOD con el paso de los años, pasando de recibir más de 30 millones de dólares en 2009 a una media de 7 millones de dólares al año entre 2015 y 2018, en línea con la reducción de la Ayuda Española.

Tabla 3. ROD a Guinea Ecuatorial por donantes durante el periodo 1973-2007

| Donante | Millones USD | % |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------|
| Países del CAD | 907,53 | 60,30% |
| Organizaciones multilaterales | 525,37 | 34,91% |
| Países no miembros del CAD | 72,14 | 4,79% |
| Donante | Millones USD | % |
| España | 466,92 | 31,02% |
| Francia | 307,54 | 20,43% |
| Italia | 37,88 | 2,52% |
| Alemania | 31,07 | 2,06% |
| Estados Unidos | 23,22 | 1,54% |
| Japón | 11,87 | 0,79% |

Fuente: Elaboración propia con cifras de la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE)

La mayor parte de la ayuda que recibió Guinea Ecuatorial durante el periodo 1979-2007 procedía de acuerdos bilaterales con países miembros del Comité de Ayuda al Desarrollo (CAD) y de organizaciones multilaterales. Según datos del Banco Mundial a mediados de los años 80 Guinea Ecuatorial recibía AOD por importe superior al 22% de su PIB, que se incrementaron hasta el 54% en 1989 y disminuyeron al 15% en 1996 cuando empezaron las inversiones petrolíferas. En 1997 continuaron disminuyendo hasta el 6%, porcentaje que fue decreciendo paulatinamente y llegar al 0,5% del PIB en 2007.

Por otra parte, si comparamos la ayuda que proporcionaba España con otros países como Italia, Alemania, Estados Unidos o Japón, esta era considerablemente superior. Durante el periodo 1979-2007, Guinea Ecuatorial recibió la suma de 466,92 millones de dólares de España, lo que representa más de un 30% de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo a Guinea Ecuatorial.

Tabla 4. Comparativa de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo (AOD) bilateral a Guinea Ecuatorial

| (Millones de \$) | España | Francia | Italia |
|------------------|--------|---------|--------|
| 2018/2019 | 1,98 | 2,01 | x |
| 2013 | 1,81 | 3,22 | x |
| 2012 | 9,58 | 3,38 | x |
| 2011 | 14,68 | 3,6 | x |
| 2010 | 19,77 | 3,26 | 57,54 |
| 2009 | 20,82 | 2,54 | x |

| (Millones de \$) | España | Francia | Italia |
|------------------|--------|---------|--------|
| 2008 | 12,76 | 4,06 | 0,18 |
| 2007 | 20,13 | 3,93 | x |

Fuente: elaboración propia con cifras de la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE) (OECD, 2021)

Si comparamos la Ayuda Bilateral de España a Guinea Ecuatorial con la de otros países donantes, durante muchos años la ayuda española fue predominante. Hasta 2010 ningún donante había superado la de España. Pero en los últimos diez años esa ayuda fue superada muchas veces por países como Italia o Francia.

Tabla 5. Principales donantes de (AOD) a Guinea Ecuatorial 2018-2019 (Ayuda Bruta)

| Fondo Monetario Internacional (FMI) - Fondos Concesionales | Francia | Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia (UNICEF) | España | Fondo de Población de las Naciones Unidas (FPNU) |
|--|----------------|--|---------------|--|
| 34,78 | 2,01 | 2,01 | 1,98 | 1,12 |
| Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) | Estados Unidos | Fondo Mundial para el Medio Ambiente (FMAM) | Unión Europea | Fondo Verde del Clima (GCF) |
| 0,97 | 0,85 | 0,67 | 0,49 | 0,45 |

Fuente: elaboración propia con cifras de la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE). Cifras en millones de dólares. (OECD, 2021)

Los principales donantes de Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo a Guinea Ecuatorial en el periodo 2018-2019 fueron Francia, Alemania y Estados Unidos. La ayuda restante provino de organizaciones internacionales. El principal proveedor de ayuda fue el Fondo Monetario Internacional, a través de Fondos Concesionales (que ofrecen ventajas para el que solicita el préstamo si se compara con préstamos del resto del mercado e incluyen al menos un 25% de donación). Guinea Ecuatorial llegó a un acuerdo de tres años con el FMI a través del Servicio ampliado del Fondo por valor de 282,8 millones de dólares. El objetivo era reducir los desequilibrios macroeconómicos y las deficiencias del sector financiero, la protección social, potenciar la diversificación económica, la buena gobernanza, la transparencia o luchar contra la corrupción, con el fin de garantizar un crecimiento inclusivo y sostenible. La economía guineana se ha visto muy afectada por la caída del precio del petróleo debido a su dependencia y ha tenido un crecimiento económico negativo (FMI, 2019). La ayuda bilateral proveniente de España ha pasado a no ser prioritaria, teniendo más importancia la proveniente de organizaciones internacionales.

Los principales receptores de Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo de España en 2018 fueron Venezuela, Colombia, Turquía, El Salvador, Siria, Guatemala, Palestina, Bolivia, Honduras y Ucrania, mientras Guinea Ecuatorial se situaba en el puesto 48 (DGPOLDES, 2018). África Subsahariana es la cuarta con mayor recepción de AOD española con un 13,9% por importe de 151 millones de dólares. La pregunta que surge es si la representatividad de la AOD española en Guinea Ecuatorial fue siempre baja o era más elevada los años que aportaba mayor cantidad de dinero. Si analizamos años en los que la AOD a Guinea Ecuatorial era más elevada, como 2009 (DGPOLDES, 2018), seguía sin ser uno de los principales receptores de AOD de la Coopera-

ción Española, situándose en la posición 44 en el año 2007. Por tanto, la última hipótesis que cabe exponer es si la bajada en la cantidad de AOD, recibida en Guinea Ecuatorial, se puede explicar por una reducción generalizada del presupuesto de AOD de España.

Tabla 6. Evolución de la AOD española total 2007-2017

| 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 3912 | 4943 | 5015 | 4773 | 3206 | 1651 | 1941 | 1596 | 1625 | 4101 | 2560 |

Fuente: elaboración propia con cifras de la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE). Cifras en millones de dólares. (OECD, 2021)

Si analizamos la evolución de la AOD española total observamos que, en los años anteriores, posteriores a la crisis, hubo una clara disminución en AOD, y los años con mayor presupuesto, como 2009, coincidieron con una mayor contribución para Guinea Ecuatorial. Entre 2000 y 2008 la AOD española aumentó constantemente, casi 3400 millones de dólares, hasta casi triplicar su ayuda respecto al año 2000. En el año 2000 representaba un 0,22% de la Renta Nacional Bruta, hasta un 0,45% en 2008, y a partir de este año se produjo un colapso de AOD. Entre 2008 y 2015 la AOD española se redujo un 74%. “El Examen de Pares realizado por la OCDE destacó que los datos registrados en 2014 y 2015 no habían sido tan bajos desde 1988, cuando España no era miembro del CAD” (Gómez, Parra, Alemán y Rísquez, 2018). La reducción generalizada de la AOD española en los años de mayor recuperación, como 2016, que aumentó significativamente el presupuesto, no se tradujo en un aumento considerable de ayuda a Guinea Ecuatorial, que se puede explicar por un cambio de tendencia o no haberse firmado la Comisión Mixta XII entre ambos países, la reclasificación de Guinea Ecuatorial como País de Cooperación Avanzada o la bonanza económica por el petróleo.

3.5. Sectores de la actuación de la Cooperación Española en Guinea Ecuatorial

Los principales sectores de la Cooperación Española en Guinea Ecuatorial han sido la Educación, la Salud y la Cultura (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2019).

En materia de salud la Cooperación Española ha realizado una gran ayuda con profesionales españoles encargados de investigar y formar a la población local. Algunas congregaciones religiosas gestionan varios centros de salud en Guinea Ecuatorial y en sus orígenes fueron financiadas por la Cooperación Española. Actualmente la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) colabora a través de la Fundación de Religiosos con el objetivo de reforzar el sistema sanitario guineano y se encarga de la financiación de proyectos como la renovación del laboratorio de Castroverde, cuya principal actividad es la realización de análisis clínicos e intentar garantizar el acceso a toda la población independientemente de sus recursos económicos. El Instituto de Salud Carlos III lleva más de 25 años trabajando en Guinea Ecuatorial colaborando con proyectos sanitarios de la Cooperación Española (psglobal, 2021) y se ha encargado del control de enfermedades infecciosas como el VIH, la malaria, la tuberculosis o la lepra. Se ha convertido en un participante del Ministerio de Salud y Bienestar Social de

Guinea y ha estado presente en la organización de planes sanitarios y protocolos a través de su Proyecto Centro Nacional de Referencia para el Control de Endemias de Guinea Ecuatorial. Desde 2004 el Centro Nacional de Medicina Tropical de ese Instituto ha permitido acoger a médicos residentes españoles en Guinea Ecuatorial para formar profesionales en enfermedades infecciosas. La Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) colabora con trabajadores del Instituto de Salud Carlos III en Guinea en el cumplimiento de proyectos sanitarios de la Cooperación Española. En febrero de 2021 aprobó, junto con la Embajada de España en Guinea Ecuatorial, un Proyecto de Cooperación Española en materia sanitaria que pretende dar acceso a servicios de salud sexual y reproductiva a adolescentes ecuatoguineanos y prevenir enfermedades de transmisión sexual. La AECID otorgó 322 000 euros a la ONG Fundación para el Desarrollo de la Enfermería y dejó patente su compromiso con la sanidad y la sociedad de Guinea Ecuatorial (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2021).

En materia de cultura existen dos centros culturales de España en Guinea Ecuatorial, y aunque el plan marco de cooperación sólo incluye la Cooperación Técnica y Cultural existen otros programas provenientes de la iniciativa privada más centrados en la asistencia económico-financiera. Para fomentar la Cultura Española existen dos centros culturales de España en Guinea Ecuatorial, uno en Malabo y otro en Bata. El objetivo fundamental de estos centros culturales es la promoción de la cultura y lengua españolas mediante, exposiciones, cursos, etc. Colaboran con el Instituto Cervantes en la enseñanza del español y con otras instituciones guineanas como el Centro Cultural Ecuatoguineano o la Academia Ecuatoguineana de Lengua Española.

La Cooperación Española en materia de educación en Guinea Ecuatorial se enmarca en 2 tratados: el Tratado de Amistad y Cooperación y el Acuerdo complementario entre ambos países. Guinea se autodefine como “un país bantú con raigambre hispánica” (Yáñez-Barnuevo, 1988), por lo que la acción cultural de España en Guinea Ecuatorial está basada en apostar por la transmisión cultural del español, y uno de los objetivos iniciales de las relaciones diplomáticas fue fomentar el idioma español y la cultura hispánica como parte de la herencia cultural durante los años de la colonia. La Cooperación Española en Educación tiene como objetivos generales mejorar los métodos pedagógicos para enseñar el español, ayudar a los profesores, proporcionar material escolar y el acceso a la educación superior a través de la colaboración con la Universidad de Educación a Distancia (UNED). Actualmente, la Cooperación Española se está centrando más en la formación del profesorado y mejora de los centros de formación profesional. En 2014 la UNED conmemoró 30 años de presencia en Guinea Ecuatorial. “El 26 de junio de 1981 se firmó en Malabo el Protocolo entre el Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia de España y el Ministerio de Educación, Cultura, Juventud y Deportes de Guinea Ecuatorial, por el que se resolvió establecer un Centro de Enseñanza Superior en Guinea Ecuatorial de la UNED de España a fin de dar satisfacción a las necesidades de formación superior del pueblo ecuatoguineano” (UNED, 2014). Esta universidad ofrece acceso de estudios a la sociedad guineana a través de su centro asociado internacional con sedes en Bata y Malabo. Los objetivos de la UNED en Guinea Ecuatorial han sido “la difusión de la lengua española, al desarrollo social, la promoción de valores ciudadanos y la incorporación de las mujeres a los estudios universitarios”. También ha conseguido mantener la identidad de la lengua española entre la población hispanohablante y el prestigio de la formar ciudadanos guineanos.

En materia de género, la Cooperación Española se hace con organizaciones locales para prevenir la violencia de género (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación,

Para fomentar la Cultura Española existen dos centros culturales de España en Guinea Ecuatorial, uno en Malabo y otro en Bata

2019). Actualmente la Cooperación Española financia más de 20 proyectos contra la violencia de género. En aras de concienciar a la población de esta lacra social la Secretaría de Estado de Cooperación Internacional celebra el 25 N el “Día Internacional de la Eliminación de la violencia contra la mujer”.

Tabla 7. Distribución de la Cooperación Española por sector en Guinea Ecuatorial 2007-2017

| Año | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Género | <1% | x | 3% | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Servicios Sociales | 4% | 6% | 5% | 14% | 9% | x | 20% | 15% | 1% | 23% | 20% |
| Agricultura, Pesca, Desarrollo Rural | 3% | <1% | 2% | <1% | <1% | <1% | <1% | 1% | x | x | x |
| Transportes, Comunicaciones y Energía | 1% | <1% | <1% | x | x | <1% | <1% | <1% | x | x | x |
| Otros Sectores | 3% | 5% | 4% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 3% | 11% | 6% | 5% | 5% |
| Educación | 51% | 24% | 46% | 48% | 56% | 79% | 70% | 19% | 14% | 23% | 3% |
| Salud | 31% | 45% | 32% | 37% | 33% | 20% | 6% | 53% | 72% | 42% | 72% |
| Salud Sexual y Reproductiva | 1% | 18% | 10% | 1% | <1% | <1% | x | x | 6% | 6% | x |
| Agua y Saneamiento | 3% | x | <1% | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| Gobierno, Sociedad Civil y DDHH | 4% | 3% | <1% | <1% | <1% | <1% | 1% | 1% | <1% | x | x |
| Construcción de Paz | x | <1% | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | xx |
| Industria, Comercio y Servicios Bancarios | x | 1% | x | x | x | <1% | 1% | <1% | x | <1% | <1% |

Fuente: elaboración propia con cifras de la Cooperación Española y AECID (Cooperación Española, 2021)

Si observamos esa tabla podemos decir que Educación y Sanidad representan la prioridad de la Cooperación Española en Guinea Ecuatorial; la salud el 72% de la ayuda en 2015 y 2017, y la Educación el 79% en 2012. Los servicios sociales y la salud reproductiva y sexual también llegaron a representar importantes porcentajes de ayuda algunos años, y el resto de sectores obtienen un porcentaje de ayuda marginal. Esos porcentajes no coinciden con la distribución habitual de la AOD española ya que, por ejemplo, en 2017 la Educación solo representaba un 10,35% y la Sanidad un 9,06%, y en 2016 la Salud un 11,71% y la Educación un 9,61%. Las Infraestructuras Sociales y servicios suelen representar más del 60% de la Ayuda Española (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2019).

Si miramos los principales sectores en los que Guinea Ecuatorial recibe AOD bilateral coinciden con los sectores prioritarios de la Cooperación Española. Guinea Ecuatorial recibe el 19% de AOD bilateral para Educación y el 35% para Salud (OECD, 2021). En las últimas décadas se han acuñado nuevos términos referentes a la Cooperación Internacional como los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio (ODM), los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) o la Agenda 2030, que están presentes en los últimos planes Director de la Cooperación

Española e intentan acabar con la pobreza, las desigualdades y la falta de oportunidades que limitan el desarrollo.

En Cooperación Religiosa en Guinea Ecuatorial, existen dos ONG católicas con gran presencia desde los años 80, la Federación Española Religiosos de la Enseñanza —Titulares de Centros Católicos FERE-CECA (ONG perteneciente a Escuelas Católicas)— y la Fundación de Religiosos para la Salud FRS. Estas congregaciones religiosas llevan a cabo muchos proyectos en colegios y hospitales con presencia de misioneros religiosos españoles. En 1979, los gobiernos de España y Guinea Ecuatorial pidieron ayuda a la Federación Española de Religiosos de la Enseñanza para desarrollar y mejorar el sistema educativo en Guinea Ecuatorial, y desde ese año la FERE lleva a cabo esa labor con el apoyo de la Cooperación Española (Escuelas Católicas, 2021), que dio lugar a la creación de la Asociación de Centros Católicos de Enseñanza de Guinea Ecuatorial en 1994. En 2019, 700 directores y docentes guineanos se formaron por la colaboración con la Asociación de Centros Católicos de Enseñanza de Guinea Ecuatorial, Escuelas Católicas y la Agencia Española de Cooperación al Desarrollo (Escuelas Católicas, 2021).

4. Conclusiones y propuestas

El III Plan África expresa buena voluntad para establecer excelentes relaciones entre España y África, aunque especialmente con África Subsahariana y el Norte de África. Pretende el acercamiento y la búsqueda de intereses comunes o la interacción con actores españoles en África, tratando temas como la promoción de la paz y la seguridad, la promoción del desarrollo sostenible, el fortalecimiento de las instituciones y apoyar en una movilidad ordenada, regular y segura. España trae un discurso bastante positivo sobre África, haciendo hincapié en la pacificación, democratización y prosperidad del continente. Es un plan muy ambicioso por la limitada capacidad de acción de España en el continente africano.

Se trata más de un documento informativo donde se establecen líneas de acción exterior de España que de una herramienta de planificación, pero no incluye proyectos específicos sino más bien objetivos generales. Por tanto, la efectividad real del Plan África depende de las estrategias y planes de acción de las embajadas españolas en África, y si quieren conseguir una efectividad real deberán incluir acciones concretas y herramientas de medición que pongan de manifiesto la relevancia de ese plan.

El V Plan Director de la Cooperación Española hace un enfoque muy especial a la Agenda 2030 y a los ODS, que pone a las personas en el centro de sus acciones sin dejar a nadie atrás, y con la defensa de los DDHH. También pone de manifiesto los principios centrales de la Cooperación Española, la defensa de los derechos humanos, la igualdad de género, la diversidad cultural y la sostenibilidad. El Plan Director escoge a los países en función de sus indicadores de desarrollo, las necesidades y las relaciones establecidas de antigüedad y presencia de actores locales en el país. En el caso de Guinea Ecuatorial se ve una clara centralidad de lazos históricos, culturales y la presencia de actores locales para considerar Guinea Ecuatorial socio de la Cooperación Española.

Los indicadores establecidos por la Cooperación Española para elegir a los países de actuación son cuatro: el Índice de Desarrollo Humano corregido por Género, el GINI que evalúa la concentración de la renta y mide la desigualdad de los ingresos en un país, el Índice de Pobreza Multidimensional y el Índice para Manejo de Riesgos, que evalúa el nivel de vulnerabilidad y

El V Plan Director de la Cooperación Española hace un enfoque muy especial a la Agenda 2030 y a los ODS, que pone a las personas en el centro de sus acciones

la capacidad de gestión de riesgos. El problema con Guinea Ecuatorial es la falta de datos y la opacidad de sus instituciones. El informe sobre Desarrollo Humano 2020 del Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo presenta que hay índices que no se han podido calcular debido a falta de datos, como el IDH ajustado por la Desigualdad (IDH-D), el índice de desarrollo de género, el índice de desigualdad de género o el índice de Pobreza Multidimensional. Estableciendo esa estrategia diferencial en función de cada región, España ha categorizado a Guinea Ecuatorial como país de cooperación avanzada, referido a socios con larga tradición, que se centra más en una cooperación técnica e institucional (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2020).

Respecto a las hipótesis de partida, la primera se refiere a si las relaciones diplomáticas entre Guinea Ecuatorial y España están enmarcadas principalmente en el ámbito de la Cooperación desde su Independencia. Esta hipótesis quedaría confirmada ya que las relaciones entre ambos países han estado principalmente enmarcadas en el Tratado de Amistad y Cooperación de 1980, con la realización de 11 comisiones mixtas y una financiación que supera los 271 millones de euros. La segunda, que depende de la primera, trata de verificar si Guinea Ecuatorial es un socio preferente de la Cooperación Española, y si España es el principal donante de Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo a Guinea. Durante mucho tiempo Guinea Ecuatorial fue uno de los principales receptores de la Cooperación Española. Sin embargo, la realidad es que el volumen y la relevancia total de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo de España a Guinea Ecuatorial ha ido disminuyendo con los últimos Planes Director. Desde 2007 se ha producido una reducción drástica de ayuda, pasando de 14,76 millones de euros en 2007 a 1,34 millones de euros en 2017. Hasta 2010 nunca había superado a España la ayuda que hace otro donante a Guinea Ecuatorial, pero en la última década países como Italia o Francia superan la ayuda española. Existe una tendencia generalizada a la reducción de los presupuestos de Cooperación Española: 5015 en 2009, 4773 en 2010, 3206 en 2011, 1651 en 2012, 1941 en 2013, 1596 en 2014 y 1625 en 2015 (cifras en millones de dólares). Además, la cantidad de AOD a Guinea Ecuatorial también ha disminuido considerablemente, pasando de recibir más de 30 millones de dólares en 2009 a una media de 7 millones de dólares al año entre 2015 y 2018, en línea con la reducción de la Ayuda Española al país. Por último, hemos observado que los principales proveedores de fondos a Guinea Ecuatorial no siempre son países, sino que gran parte proviene de organizaciones internacionales. Por tanto, a pesar de que Guinea Ecuatorial es un socio de la Cooperación Española debido a los lazos históricos, culturales y a la presencia de actores locales, esta hipótesis no puede quedar confirmada. La realidad es que la ayuda ha disminuido considerablemente y ha dejado de ser su principal donante.

Me gustaría concluir este artículo argumentando que la disminución de ayuda a Guinea Ecuatorial se debe, fundamentalmente, a seis factores. En primer lugar, en 2014 se tendría que haber firmado la XII comisión mixta, y solo se firmó un “Acta de conclusión de las reuniones técnicas sobre el programa de Cooperación para el Desarrollo entre ambos países para el periodo 2014-2017”, y la última comisión mixta entre ambos países solo abarcaba el periodo 2009-2011. En segundo lugar, el V Plan de la Cooperación Española presentó a Guinea Ecuatorial como país de cooperación avanzada, que reconocía que había mejorado mucho su desarrollo, y se centraba en una cooperación más técnica. En tercer lugar, la bonanza de la economía ecuatoguineana debido al boom del petróleo. En cuarto lugar, la reducción generalizada de AOD española. En quinto lugar, la cantidad total de AOD a Guinea Ecuatorial ha disminuido considerablemente con el paso de los años, y no se trata de una excepción española. En sexto

Guinea Ecuatorial es un socio de la Cooperación Española debido a los lazos históricos, culturales y a la presencia de actores locales

lugar, en relación con los sectores de actuación de la Cooperación Española la Educación y la Sanidad representan sus dos prioridades: la Salud el 72% de la ayuda en 2017 y 2014, y la Educación el 79% de la ayuda en 2012, que coincide con la representatividad de la AOD total que recibe Guinea Ecuatorial.

Como se observa en informe sobre el Seguimiento de Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo, la región de América concentra un 49,93% de la AOD bilateral española, seguido por el continente africano con un 26,08%. Si nos centramos en la región de África Subsahariana, la Cooperación Española pone sus esfuerzos en estrategias de integración, en consonancia con organizaciones regionales. Apoya a la Unión Africana, teniendo en cuenta el enfoque recogido en la estrategia Agenda 2063 de la misma, y a la Comunidad Económica de Estados de África Occidental. La CE busca la creación de políticas regionales que afecten directamente a políticas nacionales en colaboración con la Unión Europea y otros socios, como el sector privado y la sociedad civil. Si analizamos ámbitos concretos en los que la Cooperación Española quiera generar impacto en África Subsahariana, estos son: paz y seguridad, género y la cooperación sobre la mujer, agricultura, seguridad alimenticia y nutricional, energías renovables y eficiencia energética, control de la migración, etc.

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ECOLOGISMO, FEMINISMO Y NO-VIOLENCIA EN INDIA. ANÁLISIS DE LOS FUNDAMENTOS DEL MOVIMIENTO CHIPKO

Environmentalism, Feminism and Nonviolence in India. Analysis of the Fundamentals of the Chipko Movement

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Chipko es un movimiento conformado principalmente por mujeres del ámbito rural que se originó en India, en el Estado de Uttar Pradesh, en la década de 1970. Se ha caracterizado por perseguir fines sociales y medioambientales a partir de la resistencia no-violenta. Sin embargo, es objeto de debate si Chipko, como movimiento, puede caracterizarse como feminista y ecologista. Se argumenta que sus principales influencias son realmente el hinduismo y la propia cultura de India y que, en su origen, su pretensión solo era la supervivencia de las comunidades rurales. No obstante, Chipko se ha consolidado como movimiento en el tiempo y sus fundamentos y experiencias han tenido gran influencia en otros movimientos sociales dentro y fuera de India. Por ello, en este artículo defendemos que para comprender verdaderamente Chipko, este debe analizarse desde otra perspectiva: el ecofeminismo.



Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo demostrar que Chipko debe ser considerado un movimiento ecofeminista y que sus métodos no-violentos han sido fuente de inspiración para otras causas sociales y movimientos ciudadanos. Se concluye con una reflexión más amplia sobre la necesidad de desoccidentalizar conceptos como feminismo y ecologismo para comprender su actual vigencia e influencia.

India; feminismo; ecologismo; pacifismo; bosques.

India; feminism; environmentalism; pacifism; forests.



Key words

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Fechas

Chipko is a movement made up mainly of rural women that originated in India, in the State of Uttar Pradesh, in the 1970s. It has been characterized for pursuing social and environmental goals based on non-violent resistance. However, it is a matter of debate whether Chipko fits within feminism and environmentalism. It is argued that its main influences are really Hinduism and India's own culture, and that, in its origin, Chipko's initial claim was only for the survival of rural communities. However, over time, Chipko has consolidated itself as a movement and its foundations and experiences have had great influence in other social movements both in India and beyond. Therefore, in this paper, we argue that to fully understand Chipko, it should be analyzed from a different perspective: ecofeminism.



This article aims to demonstrate that Chipko should be considered an ecofeminist movement and that its non-violent methods have been a source of inspiration for other social causes and grassroots movements. We conclude the paper, reflecting on the need to de-Westernize concepts like feminism and environmentalism to better understand their continuous relevance and influence today.

1. El origen de Chipko

En la actualidad existen distintos debates sobre el medio ambiente y el uso de los recursos naturales. La defensa y conservación de la naturaleza no implican necesariamente una postura ecocéntrica absoluta. Tienen cabida posturas antropocentristas, que sostienen que es esencial la supervivencia de los seres humanos, pero se deben encontrar formas de garantizar su bienestar sin dañar irremediablemente los ecosistemas que habita.

Estos debates no son homogéneos en todo el mundo; las circunstancias y los intereses influyen en la concepción de los movimientos ecologistas. Algunos historiadores han argumentado que el ecologismo es un fenómeno que solo nace en sociedades plenamente desarrolladas que empiezan a valorar materias como el aire limpio y las áreas silvestres cuando tienen cubiertas sus necesidades materiales (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 130). Es lo que se denomina Posmodernidad y que es descrita a raíz de una serie de movimientos pertenecientes a distintas áreas (cultura, literatura, filosofía) que abogan por ir más allá de los valores materialistas imperantes en la Modernidad, definida como una articulación de procesos históricos desarrollados en los últimos cinco siglos en los que se han entrecruzado elementos diversos como capital y consumo; industria e imperio; naciones, ciudadanos y súbitos (Dube, y Capetillo, 2008, p. 84). Todo ello enfocado en alcanzar más libertades y mayor riqueza material para, en esencia, implementar mejoras en la vida de los ciudadanos. Por el contrario, la Posmodernidad ha abogado por defender otros valores como el ecologismo o el feminismo. Así, algunos académicos consideran que el ecologismo es un fenómeno fruto de un “estómago lleno”. Es decir, con la riqueza económica y las necesidades materiales básicas cubiertas, los ciudadanos pueden atender a otras necesidades diferentes como el cuidado del medio natural, tal y como señala Roderick Frazier Nash en su libro *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1982). Sin embargo, ese no tiene por qué ser el único origen válido del ecologismo. Así, algunos de los movimientos ecologistas más destacados del último siglo han surgido en países en vías de desarrollo y en comunidades empobrecidas (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 131), como es el caso de la India.

La India todavía es un país predominantemente agrario (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 131); aunque, tras la liberalización de su economía desde la década de 1990, sus sectores industrial y terciario han crecido sustancialmente, en un intento por integrarse en el sistema económico global con mayor celeridad. No obstante, eso ha generado problemas de sostenibilidad medioambiental que, a su vez, han provocado reacciones contrarias. En los últimos cincuenta años han surgido movimientos ecologistas que abogan por un desarrollo que no suponga la destrucción de lugares naturales que, en algunos casos, son considerados sagrados. A su vez, es habitual que “los movimientos ecologistas en países en desarrollo y en sociedades poscoloniales hayan articulado cuestiones medioambientales conectándolas con otras desigualdades económicas, raciales o sexuales” (Chae, 2015, p. 519).

Existe un amplio consenso que considera que el punto de partida de este tipo de movimientos en la India es el movimiento Chipko (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 104). En abril de 1973, en Uttarkhand —entonces parte del Estado de Uttar Pradesh— un grupo de mujeres del ámbito rural se unieron para frenar la tala de árboles de un bosque local. Fueron ellas las que primero “vieron claramente las razones detrás de sus problemas [de subsistencia] y las necesidades de pura supervivencia las hicieron apoyar un movimiento que buscaba la preservación del equilibrio ecológico en la zona” (Jain, 1984, p. 1788). Inspiradas por el principio gandhiano de *Satyagraha*, las campesinas lograron impedir la tala con un simple gesto: abrazar árboles. Ese sencillo acto es lo que dio nombre al movimiento (Chipko significa en hindi “abrazar”) y su éxito lo convirtió en una inspiración para campesinos de otras zonas cercanas, en las que “las políticas forestales estatales habían favorecido constantemente los intereses comerciales externos a expensas de sus propias necesidades de subsistencia de combustible, forraje y madera” (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 104). No obstante, y aunque Chipko comenzó siendo un movimiento plenamente autónomo, también ha tenido una amplia repercusión fuera de la India, inspirando otras actuaciones en defensa del medio ambiente a través de la resistencia no-violenta, como la labor de Greenpeace.

Además, Chipko ha adquirido mayor relevancia en la actualidad debido al contexto de emergencia climática. Si bien los efectos del cambio climático son notorios en todo el mundo, adquieren una mayor gravedad en el Sur Global. Ya sea por la escasa industrialización “haciendo que la actividad esencial de la población esté centrada en la agricultura o la ganadería” o porque empresas occidentales trasladan sus fábricas allí, estos países presentan menor regulación medioambiental. De ese modo, el Sur Global es el principal damnificado del cambio climático. Por ello, para sus habitantes es aún más esencial encontrar una manera de servirse de la naturaleza de forma sostenible. Y Chipko tiene valiosas propuestas para alcanzar ese objetivo en la India.

Así pues, el propósito de este artículo es analizar en profundidad Chipko y las principales cuestiones que se plantean sobre cómo calificar este movimiento: ¿puede ser considerado un movimiento feminista por estar protagonizado por mujeres, o la participación femenina es algo accidental? ¿Es un movimiento ecologista por su defensa del medio ambiente o simplemente las personas que lo componen quieren mantener los recursos que fundamentan su sustento? ¿Cómo de profunda es su inspiración gandhiana o religiosa?

2. La teoría y la perspectiva en el estudio

Las teorías y categorías que sirven para explicar fenómenos sociales occidentales resultan generalmente insuficientes para comprender fenómenos no-occidentales. Y su inadecuada aplicación puede llevar a hacer un análisis incorrecto, a la par que incompleto, que no lleve a conclusiones ni válidas, ni valiosas. Es decir, toda realidad política se fundamenta sobre la base de un contexto

Chipko ha adquirido mayor relevancia en la actualidad debido al contexto de emergencia climática

complejo y concreto, por lo que “no se puede intentar estudiar esta en un vacío científico. La experiencia individual y colectiva y la naturaleza de los objetivos condicionan el horizonte de lo posible a través de la opinión pública y la cultura política” (López Areu, 2020, p. 18).

Pese a ello, un movimiento social sí puede definirse atendiendo a unos rasgos básicos presentes en cualquiera de sus vertientes y manifestaciones. Esto es el tipo ideal, según la metodología de Max Weber. De acuerdo con Weber, las ciencias sociales no pueden estudiarse sobre leyes absolutamente generales: “no se puede pensar en un conocimiento de los fenómenos culturales que no sea sobre la base del significado que tengan para nosotros determinados aspectos concretos de la siempre individualizada realidad” (Weber, 2017, p. 122). Sin embargo, en la segunda parte de su metodología, Weber distingue entre concepto genérico —la parte que tienen en común varios fenómenos de la realidad— y *concepto genético* o *tipo ideal*. Este tipo es un modelo que sirve de referencia para analizar fenómenos; es una imagen mental que se genera a partir de un conjunto de características objetivamente posibles, pero que no existe en la realidad. Con el tipo ideal se comparan las realidades para descubrir sus elementos más importantes, de manera que puedan comprenderse (Weber, 2017, p. 145).

Desde este enfoque, el objetivo del artículo es analizar cualitativamente las bases y fundamentos de Chipko para determinar si merece o no tres calificativos: feminista, ecologista y pacifista. Por ello, en primer lugar, es fundamental encuadrar las tres teorías y cómo han explicado Chipko diversos autores desde ellas.

Con relación al primero (feminista), una correcta aproximación debe suponer una síntesis de clase, raza, género y sexualidad (Amos y Parmar, 1984, p. 18), pero hay una tendencia a mantenerse sobre la perspectiva interpretativa de una mujer blanca, de clase media y occidental, y analizarlo todo desde ahí. Por ello, ante los nuevos retos que se plantean en la actualidad para las mujeres de todo el mundo, y en particular para las mujeres del Sur Global, el feminismo es más consciente que nunca de su necesidad de readaptarse. Con la tercera ola, llegaron nuevas voces al feminismo que abogan por garantizar la emancipación de las mujeres creando un mundo más igualitario, justo y libre (Nancy Fraser en *De cómo cierto feminismo se convirtió en criada del capitalismo. Y la manera de rectificarlo* del 2014) y por desafiar las definiciones universales de lo que es ser mujer (Judith Butler en *Fundamentos contingentes: el feminismo y la cuestión del “postmodernismo”* del 2001).

En el caso concreto que nos atañe, se observan discrepancias sobre cómo debe interpretarse la participación de las mujeres en Chipko. Autores como Payal Mago, Isha Gunwal, Vandana Shiva o Bina Agarwal han argumentado de distintas formas que Chipko sí es un movimiento feminista. Mago y Gunwal hacen referencia a la cercana relación entre las mujeres y la naturaleza “[que] llevó al surgimiento de la teoría del ecofeminismo [...]. Es un campo de estudio que une la ética ecológica y el feminismo [y] busca explorar las conexiones conceptuales entre la degradación ambiental y la opresión sexista” (Mago y Gunwal, 2019, p. 4). Mientras, Agarwal considera que Chipko no puede ser entendido sin tener en consideración el rol específico que cumplen las mujeres que protagonizaron este movimiento, pues “las mujeres a menudo tienen una larga historia [...] de funcionamiento cooperativo dentro de las redes sociales tradicionales caracterizadas por la reciprocidad y la dependencia mutua, especialmente en las comunidades rurales de los países en desarrollo” (Agarwal, 2000, p. 305). En suma, estos autores comparten la tesis de que tanto la óptica feminista como la óptica ecologista son importantes para entender Chipko, y por ello se habla de que es un movimiento “ecofeminista”.

Desde este enfoque, el objetivo del artículo es analizar cualitativamente las bases y fundamentos de Chipko para determinar si merece o no tres calificativos: feminista, ecologista y pacifista

Sin embargo, otros autores prescinden de la teoría feminista para analizar Chipko. En particular, Ramachandra Guha afirma que “Chipko es solo uno de una serie de movimientos de protesta contra la silvicultura comercial que datan de los primeros días de la intervención estatal” (1989, p. 174). Por su parte, Cecile Jackson argumenta que un movimiento mayormente protagonizado por mujeres no se convierte de forma automática en un movimiento de corte feminista *per se*. Señala que, si Chipko contó con una mayoría femenina, fue porque eran las mujeres las que estaban disponibles en su aldea para formar parte del movimiento, cuyos principales líderes originales fueron dos hombres: Sunderlal Bahuguna y Chandi Prasad Bhatt (1993, p. 404).

Respecto al ecologismo, estos movimientos suelen estudiarse sobre la base de la Posmodernidad: se asume que solamente surgen cuando la población tiene cubiertas sus necesidades, porque es cuando se presenta la necesidad de encontrar una forma menos destructiva de usar los recursos naturales. Sin embargo, la Modernidad no ha llegado de la misma forma a todo el mundo: en Occidente —Estados Unidos, Canadá, Australia, Nueva Zelanda y Europa, según la división de Samuel Huntington en *El choque de las civilizaciones y la reconfiguración del orden mundial* (1996)— se desarrolló con la idea de mejorar la vida de sus ciudadanos. Mientras, en el Sur Global, llegó buscando recursos para garantizar el bienestar de otros. En concreto, en la India, la Modernidad llegó de la mano del Imperio Británico, que la convirtió en un Estado colonial en 1858. Con ello, llegó a la población india las ideas de democracia, resistencia pasiva y activa, entre otros conceptos (Kaviraj, 1997, p. 12); pero también supuso configurarla como “una herramienta para conseguir una más eficiente extracción de los recursos económicos indios” (López Areu, 2019, p. 109). En este contexto, resulta plausible que el ecologismo surja porque las personas quieren proteger sus recursos naturales; porque los necesitan para subsistir.

Guha considera Chipko como uno de los movimientos clave en el origen del ecologismo en la India. A su vez, lo califica de ejemplo paradigmático de por qué el ecologismo del Sur Global es diferente al de Occidente. Guha afirma que, en democracias como Estados Unidos “el ecologismo es un movimiento popular que es, de hecho, un producto inconfundible de una economía posindustrial y una sociedad posmaterial” (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 131). Es decir, en las sociedades postindustriales occidentales, los movimientos ecologistas buscan paliar las amenazas a la salud de las personas y las opciones de ocio —amenazas originadas por los efectos nocivos de la industrialización—.

Por el contrario, en países como la India, país mayoritariamente agrario, “la degradación ambiental [producida en mayor medida por las acciones de las industrias occidentales en su búsqueda de recursos] y la consiguiente escasez de recursos amenazan directamente la supervivencia y el sustento” (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 132). Chipko es un ejemplo claro de movimientos ecologistas basados en el concepto de “conservacionismo utilitario” (Narain, 2002, p. 129). Es decir, es un movimiento compuesto por individuos cuya principal motivación es conservar la naturaleza lo mejor posible porque su supervivencia depende de ello. Así, “los movimientos ecologistas en la India no son, por tanto, para una Tierra ‘verde’ y ‘limpia’, [...] sino que son para la supervivencia de los pobres” (Misra, 2007, p. 138).

Además, la India es un caso particular porque gracias a “la disponibilidad de ‘espacio democrático’ en el país, el movimiento ecologista ha crecido rápidamente durante las últimas décadas” (Narain, 2002, p. 130). De hecho, se ha logrado crear cierta conciencia ciudadana sobre el medio ambiente y mostrar oposición a determinados proyectos que perjudicarían intereses medioambientales. Algunas de esas protestas han tenido cierto éxito; pero, para proteger verdaderamente la sostenibilidad ambiental resultaría necesario “construir un orden político en el

Guha considera Chipko como uno de los movimientos clave en el origen del ecologismo en India

que el control de los recursos naturales lo ejerzan hasta donde sea posible, las propias comunidades que depende de dichos recursos” (Narain, 2002, p. 133).

Sin embargo, dada la búsqueda de diferentes objetivos entre Occidente y el Sur Global, hay voces que discrepan sobre si realmente existen movimientos ecologistas en países como la India. Al final, el objetivo de estos “movimientos” solo es mantener recursos para sobrevivir; no hay un deseo de proteger la naturaleza realmente, sino de utilizarla, egoístamente, para satisfacer las necesidades propias. Bajo esta perspectiva, autores como Cecile Jackson rechazan el calificativo de ecologista para Chipko porque afirman que, “parece más una afirmación conservadora de una economía moral particular, constituida por ciertas estructuras de poder, incluidas las que subordinan a las mujeres” (Jackson, 1993, p. 403).

A este respecto, es importante analizar también el ecofeminismo. Es un movimiento que auna los objetivos de ambas teorías, reconociendo un papel predominante de las mujeres en la protección del medio ambiente. En Occidente, ecologismo y feminismo han ido por separado, considerándolas excluyentes. Esto se debe al rechazo que genera la idea de que la mujer, más próxima a la Madre Naturaleza, es más benévola y está dedicada al cuidado; mientras que el hombre, más beligerante, puede contribuir y participar de los avances tecnológicos de la civilización (Puleo, 2002, p. 37). La mujer occidental aspiraba a romper con ese tópico, buscando progresar igual que el hombre, y así lo han reflejado, de distintas maneras, los feminismos liberal, radical y socialista. Y es que, la idea de progreso tiene unas connotaciones muy concretas en Occidente desde la época de la Ilustración: el ser humano, a través de la razón, puede controlar la naturaleza y ponerla a su servicio. Consecuentemente, “se piensa que los deberes morales sólo pueden referirse a los seres humanos porque la naturaleza es axiológicamente neutra” (Lecaros, 2008, p. 24).

No obstante, este paradigma sobre el progreso de las mujeres carece de sentido fuera de Occidente porque la vida de la mayor parte de las mujeres es radicalmente distinta. En economías de subsistencia, las mujeres son las principales víctimas de la destrucción del entorno natural. Así, una importante reivindicación que se le hace al feminismo es que, si pretende mantener una vocación internacionalista, “deberá pensar también en términos ecologistas ya que las mujeres pobres del Sur Global son las primeras víctimas de la destrucción del medio natural llevada a cabo para producir objetos suntuarios que se venden en el Primer Mundo” (Puleo, 2002, p. 37).

Finalmente, el tercer calificativo que ha recibido Chipko es el de ser un ejemplo de movimiento inspirado en la doctrina y en los principios éticos que guiaron la lucha sociopolítica de Mahatma Gandhi. Si bien este aspecto no se discute demasiado, sí hay mayor debate sobre si, más allá de la labor de Gandhi dentro del movimiento nacionalista indio, su legado puede servir a otros movimientos para conseguir cambios similares o si, por el contrario, lo que logró Gandhi a través de la no-violencia es algo irrepetible.

A priori, conviene señalar que son numerosos los autores que, aun incluso no considerándose feministas, encuentran que las opiniones de Gandhi sobre las mujeres son indescritiblemente retrógradas, por lo que puede parecer incoherente que Gandhi se convirtiera en una influencia tan notable de Chipko. El editor y escritor S. Anand argumentó esta postura recordando un episodio en el que, en la Granja Tolstoy, ante el acoso de un niño hacia dos niñas, Gandhi llegó a la conclusión de que, si las mujeres fueran despojadas de su cabello largo, estarían más seguras y alejadas del ojo del pecador (Lal, 2008, p. 59). Sin embargo, “muchas feministas, indias más que occidentales, aprecian sus esfuerzos por llevar a las mujeres a la lucha por la libertad, y han

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entendido que el hecho de Gandhi recurriera a la lucha no-violenta facilitó su participación en ella” (Lal, 2008, p. 59). De ese modo, con independencia de la crítica legítima a algunos actos y actitudes de Gandhi; el estudio, revisión y aplicación de sus ideas han resultado útiles en movimientos futuros.

Así, autores como Vandana Shiva consideran que la inspiración de Gandhi ha resultado determinante. En concreto, Shiva señala que el principio de *Satyagraha* que inspiró la Marcha de la Sal, “se extendió rápidamente a las regiones forestales del país y se convirtió en el ‘*Satyagraha* de los bosques’ contra la apropiación británica de los bosques comunitarios” (Shiva, 2021, p. 82).

La Marcha de la Sal fue una manifestación pacífica liderada por Gandhi que sintetizó la fuerza de la acción no-violenta en 1930. El objetivo era alcanzar un estatuto de autonomía como el de otras colonias británicas (para estar más cerca de una independencia plena). Gandhi insistió en alcanzar ese objetivo por medios no-violentos, como ejerciendo su derecho a recoger y producir sal, desafiando el monopolio del imperio sobre su producción. Así, tras un largo recorrido a pie desde la ciudad de Ahmedabad hasta la costa, Gandhi realizó un sencillo gesto: recoger un puñado de sal para arrojárselo después al suelo. La respuesta de la administración británica fue violenta, pero los seguidores de Gandhi no respondieron con violencia, sino que imitaron su gesto. La conclusión fue la capitulación de los británicos ante la presión por haber actuado con violencia contra una protesta pacífica.

Posteriormente, el *Satyagraha* inspiró otras protestas contra el control británico, como movimientos de protección de los bosques comunitarios, también sometidos a las normas británicas para convertir los bosques en plantaciones industriales. Esto generó un importante impacto ecológico y afectó con severidad a la población cercana. Así, la Marcha de la Sal fue el detonante para que en Tilarí (en el distrito de Tehri Garhwal) se realizaran protestas pacíficas. Es aquí donde se considera que Chipko tiene sus raíces (Shiva, 1991, p. 102).

En la actualidad, la no-violencia se mantiene como instrumento común de lucha política en Asia Meridional; es “un camino para la reflexión sobre las formas de abordar la desigualdad, la injusticia y cómo la ‘posverdad’ se ha apropiado de ‘la verdad’” (Rai y Mani Tiwary, 2021, p. 122).

Esta actitud pacífica ante un escenario de violencia puede resultar incomprensible para la mentalidad occidental. Sin embargo, en la India, la no-violencia es la esencia misma del principio *Satyagraha*, que se traduce como “fuerza verdadera” y se usa para referirse a la resistencia no violenta (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 120). Conformado por dos palabras (*satya* y *agraha*, verdad e insistencia), implica que “los individuos buscan su versión de la verdad sobre la base de la conciencia de elección y obedecen la ley que uno se da a sí mismo” (Rai y Mani Tiwary, 2021, p. 125). Gandhi buscó, inspirado por el *Satyagraha*, una verdadera transformación política reclamando la libertad de la India.

3. Análisis

El siguiente análisis sobre Chipko y sus características parte de tres teorías: feminismo, ecologismo y la no-violencia. Así, el análisis cualitativo se basa en el estudio de diversas fuentes que explican las características de las tres teorías y su evolución junto con lo que otros, como Bina Agarwal, Vandana Shiva o Ramachandra Guha han argumentado de Chipko. El objetivo es determinar si Chipko es un movimiento merecedor de los calificativos de feminista, ecologista y pacifista.

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3.1. Chipko feminista

El feminismo busca alcanzar la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres en el espacio público y privado. Esta es una premisa que debe ser considerada en abstracto, pues, según la teoría de Weber, es un tipo *ideal*; una imagen mental de la que partir para entender distintas realidades. Si las circunstancias son distintas, los objetivos y la forma de alcanzarlos también lo son. Además, hay autoras, como Judith Butler, que reivindican que no existe un tipo *ideal* de mujer (2001, p. 33). El mismo argumento sostiene Vandana Shiva y su escuela de pensamiento.

Por ello, el análisis comienza con una premisa básica: un movimiento feminista en Occidente se manifiesta de una forma diferente respecto de un movimiento feminista en el Sur Global. Sin embargo, ambos son feministas porque el objetivo último sigue siendo alcanzar la igualdad efectiva. Así, es importante tener en cuenta conceptos como la interseccionalidad (Crenshaw) y el empoderamiento, así como las particularidades del feminismo poscolonial.

Chipko surgió con el objetivo original de proteger el bosque, habiendo entonces un mayor número de mujeres disponibles para acometer esa tarea. Sin embargo, como señala Shiva, “aunque el movimiento empezó como un movimiento conservacionista/ecologista se desarrolló también como movimiento feminista hacia finales de los años setenta” (Kumar, 2015, p. 428). Es decir, en otros movimientos sociales (con objetivos, *a priori*, no feministas), algunas mujeres han logrado adquirir roles importantes y eso; *a posteriori*, les ha permitido plantear también cuestiones específicas sobre el género. Por ejemplo, en actividades sindicales, por su gran número y por asumir ciertas posiciones de liderazgo, las mujeres pudieron plantear problemas de carácter socioeconómico y familiares que les afectaban de forma específica a ellas (Kumar, 2015, p. 429).

Así, Chipko fue precursor de futuros movimientos que lucharon por incluir a las mujeres dentro de la gestión comunitaria. El objetivo era reivindicar una participación más activa, especialmente en lo relativo a tomar decisiones importantes para la comunidad y la economía local, teniendo ellas, además, una visión más sostenible sobre la gestión de recursos. De ese modo, las mujeres empezaron a realizar protestas contra la explotación comercial de los bosques del Himalaya; algunas conjuntas con los hombres de la comunidad, pero también “en contradicción con los deseos de los hombres de la aldea, debido a las diferencias en las prioridades sobre el uso de los recursos” (Agarwal, 1989, p. 60). Esto queda reflejado en el caso de Bachni Devi de Adwani, que lideró una protesta contra Bakhtawat Singh, su esposo y jefe de la aldea al descubrir que había firmado un contrato para talar árboles. Así, “las activistas de Chipko se enfrentaron a los funcionarios forestales encendiendo linternas durante el día, dando un ejemplo de *Satyagraha* e impartiendo una lección sobre el valor del bosque” (Kumar, 2015, p. 428).

A ello se suma que Chipko fue una oportunidad para que las mujeres, “siendo las guardianas domésticas del medio ambiente y de la familia, insistieran primero en la igualdad de derechos sobre el uso y la gestión de los recursos” (Dalal, 2019, p. 150). Sin embargo, esto requiere una matización: Chipko “se fortaleció a partir de la colaboración de género contra las prácticas inapropiadas de manejo de los bosques de montaña. Las mujeres jugaron un papel importante en el movimiento, al igual que sus homólogos masculinos” (Bandyopadhyay, 1999, p. 881). No obstante, quizás es precisamente por eso que las mujeres vieron lo importante que era tener la misma posición activa que los hombres en el resto de aspectos de la gestión local.

Todo esto es muy significativo si tenemos en cuenta que las activistas de Chipko eran mujeres del ámbito rural de la India y empobrecidas. Sin embargo, las demandas de este calibre tien-

Chipko fue precursor de futuros movimientos que lucharon por incluir a las mujeres dentro de la gestión comunitaria

den a minusvalorarse en Occidente en comparación con “otras grandes y clásicas demandas feministas”, como el derecho a la educación. Esto se debe a que las mujeres que tienen voz en feminismo —mujeres blancas occidentales de clase media-alta— tienen el poder de determinar si las diferencias interseccionales de otras mujeres no-blancas se incorporan o no a la lucha feminista (Crenshaw, 2012, p. 114).

Por ello resulta tan fundamental tener en cuenta la interseccionalidad, es decir, el hecho de que otras categorías más allá del género, como la sexualidad o la etnia, están interconectadas en los casos de discriminación. Como señala Nivedita Menon, dicha interseccionalidad debe servir para configurar una perspectiva global del género que tenga en cuenta el conocimiento de lo local (2015, p. 43). En el caso de las mujeres de Chipko, la marginalización de las mujeres es “un resultado de la intersección y la subordinación conferida por casta, clase y etnia, así como por género. Esto es especialmente así en las aldeas indias, que están altamente estratificadas” (Agrawal et al., 2006, p. 8). Al tener en cuenta la intersección de esas discriminaciones, así como las circunstancias del lugar en que se encuentran las activistas, los actos de Chipko cobran más valor. Aceptar ese hecho implica abandonar una postura dominante para asumir que las demandas de Chipko sí son feministas.

Del mismo modo, conviene remarcar las victorias feministas de Chipko, sobre todo con relación al empoderamiento. En líneas generales, el empoderamiento implica que una persona pueda tomar una decisión que antes le estaba vetada. En términos más concretos, se entrelazan tres elementos: recursos (financieros y sociales), *agency* (potencialidad de cambio para lograr un verdadero poder de decisión) y logros (Hajdarowicz, 2018, p. 4). Dichos elementos resultan determinantes porque lo que el feminismo realmente busca no es solo que la mujer “esté” sino que pueda “hacer”; es decir, la oportunidad de participar activamente.

No obstante, es importante aceptar que la idea de “poder” puede entenderse de distintas maneras. Por un lado, el “poder sobre” se acerca más a la idea de “dominación” y se considera ilustrativo del patriarcado/violencia. Por el contrario, el “poder para” es “la capacidad de un actor individual para alcanzar un fin o una serie de fines” (Allen, 1998, p. 34). Esta última acepción encaja con la idea de empoderamiento que resulta valiosa para el feminismo. El poder no debe entenderse solo vinculado a la violencia o a la rebelión. Tener “poder” para cuidar o para proteger a otro también es empoderante socialmente. Así, el rol de las mujeres de Chipko puede ser visto como una forma alternativa de empoderamiento, pues aprovechan los recursos del bosque de manera sostenible.

Es un hecho que en lugares como la India existe una importante dependencia de los bosques y los recursos de propiedad común, sobre todo en comunidades pobres. Y “cuanto mayor es la pobreza en los hogares, más centrales se vuelven las mujeres para garantizar la supervivencia de los hogares y, en consecuencia, asumen una mayor responsabilidad por la provisión de recursos de los bosques y las tierras comunales” (Agrawal et al., 2006, p. 12). No obstante, estas mujeres, pese a ser esenciales para la economía local, carecían de voz para decidir qué hacer con los recursos forestales y no podían ostentar derechos de propiedad. Ante esta realidad, la decisión de las activistas de Chipko de proteger el bosque cuando se vio amenazado resultó muy significativa; era un ejemplo de unión de los habitantes de una aldea (recursos sociales) ejerciendo una posición activa al abrazar los árboles para protegerlos (*agency*) y consiguiendo con ello frenar su tala (logro).

Y aunque no parezca empoderante —por una falsa convicción de que proteger un bosque perpetúa el rol de “cuidadoras” de las mujeres—, se ha observado que la participación femenina

Resultó un ejemplo de unión de los habitantes de una aldea (recursos sociales) ejerciendo una posición activa al abrazar los árboles para protegerlos (agency) y consiguiendo con ello frenar su tala (logro)

en formas de gobierno descentralizado en comunidades forestales en la India sí es valiosa para la comunidad y, por ende, para ellas. Un estudio llevado a cabo por Arun Agrawal, Gautam Yadda, Raul Andrade y Ajoy Bhattacharya concluyó que “los esfuerzos para abordar la equidad de género en la participación aumentan considerablemente la probabilidad de una gobernanza sostenible de los recursos forestales” (2006, p. 50). Añaden a su vez que “los funcionarios del gobierno y de las comunidades locales pueden hacer mucho más para involucrar a las mujeres en la toma de decisiones relacionadas con la gobernanza y la protección de los bosques” (2006, p. 50), pero sin duda, su inclusión activa es algo positivo a todos los efectos.

Por todo ello, parece evidente que Chipko es un ejemplo de movimiento feminista poscolonial. Chipko encaja en los aspectos señalados por Chanadra Talpadre Mohanty y que definen una idea de feminismo poscolonial: su opresión, además de por razón de género, tiene una base imperialista y racista; la lucha por la supervivencia o la interrelación entre las luchas feministas y racistas (Olivia Portolés, 2004, p. 14). Y, en concreto, Chipko se encuadra en la tercera fase del feminismo de la India, que se basó en hacer frente a la explotación de las mujeres a través de organizaciones mayoritariamente femeninas.

En conclusión, como señala Bina Argwal, Chipko es actualmente un movimiento que busca afrontar las desigualdades relacionadas con el género. Lo que comenzó como la defensa de un bosque ha llevado a “una movilización a gran escala contra el alcoholismo masculino y la violencia doméstica asociada y el despilfarro” (1989, p. 61) y a que muchas mujeres se pregunten por qué no pueden formar parte de los miembros de los consejos de sus pueblos (*panchayats*). Por ende, concluimos que Chipko sí es feminista.

Chipko es actualmente un movimiento que busca afrontar las desigualdades relacionadas con el género

3.2. Chipko ecologista

La teoría ecologista surgió como una reacción a la degradación medioambiental. Esto es un *tipo ideal*, que solo tiene sentido en abstracto. La realidad es que la degradación medioambiental no se ha manifestado igual en todo el mundo. En el caso de la India, se señala a Chipko como punto de inflexión del ecologismo. La pregunta es si su motivación de querer proteger la naturaleza por garantizar la propia supervivencia encaja dentro de la teoría ecologista.

En primer lugar, conviene resaltar el concepto de “conservacionismo utilitario”, que es una de las principales argumentaciones a favor de que Chipko sea definido como un movimiento ecologista. En la India contemporánea “los conflictos agrarios e industriales más convencionales plantean importantes problemas de justicia distributiva y eficiencia económica” (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 103). Esos problemas enlazan con las cuestiones relativas a la sostenibilidad ambiental, donde chocan las posturas de los agricultores de subsistencia y las grandes industrias. Es decir, en la medida que no se distribuyan de forma justa y se protejan debidamente los recursos naturales, se mantendrán los problemas relativos al desarrollo de la sociedad india. En este contexto, Chipko destacó sobremanera tanto por sus técnicas novedosas como por mostrar una postura clara ante este debate de la sostenibilidad ambiental.

A su vez, los movimientos ecologistas que responden a la idea de “conservacionismo utilitario” pueden verse como reacciones contra una visión reduccionista de la naturaleza. Son una afirmación categórica de una visión ecológica muy concreta; “una respuesta civilizatoria contraria a un modelo de desarrollo (modelo occidental de desarrollo industrial) basado en la destrucción ecológica por un lado y la creación de pobreza por el otro” (Bandhyopadhyay y Shiva, 1987, s.n.).

De ese modo, se podría llegar a defender que los movimientos encuadrados dentro del conservacionismo utilitario son aún más ecologista, pues querer proteger la naturaleza para garantizar la propia supervivencia resulta una motivación mucho más férrea que simplemente querer tener una Tierra *verde* por cuestiones estéticas o de ocio. Porque, aunque es innegable que la degradación ambiental afecta a todo el planeta, las consecuencias son mucho más severas en el Sur Global, donde la realidad es que “los recursos naturales se desvían para producir energía y productos básicos para los ricos” mientras que “los pobres deben soportar los costes sociales y ambientales del desarrollo económico, ya sea en forma de disponibilidad decreciente de recursos naturales, un medio ambiente más contaminado o, cada vez más, desplazamientos físicos” (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 119). En contraposición, las consecuencias en Occidente se perciben de forma más amortiguada y no afecta con la misma severidad a la supervivencia de las personas.

En segundo lugar, no se trata de una casualidad que este tipo de ecologismo se haya desarrollado en la India, pues constituye un caso particular de democracia en Asia. El hecho de que se haya logrado crear una conciencia sobre la necesidad de proteger el medio ambiente es fruto de dos hechos: la evidente degradación ambiental y el establecimiento de una democracia propiamente india.

Por ejemplo, dado que algunos recursos naturales son gratuitos, como el agua que se puede obtener de los pozos en la India rural, resulta lógico para un empresario contaminar su entorno antes que invertir en tecnología no contaminante (porque lo primero supone obtener un mayor beneficio económico). Ante esta situación, en los países industrializados “uno de los principales focos del movimiento ambiental ha sido presionar al Estado para que apruebe leyes y cree organismos encargados de hacer cumplir la ley para controlar la contaminación” (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 117). Por el contrario, en la India llevar a cabo esos actos contaminantes se perciben como algo mucho más grave, porque hay más dependencia de los recursos naturales. Sin embargo, “el aparato estatal indio alterna entre ser ‘blando’ y ‘depredador’; [es decir] las leyes no se hacen cumplir [...] o los infractores compran el cumplimiento oficial” (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 117). No obstante, la India es una democracia y por ello “las acciones de los ciudadanos pueden actuar como un correctivo parcial incluso cuando el Estado abdica de su papel” (Gadgil y Guha, 1994, p. 117).

La dependencia de los recursos naturales y la corrupción con relación a cuestiones medioambientales existen en Occidente y en la India. La diferencia entre ambos estriba en la reacción de la población: en Occidente simplemente esperamos que el Estado regule o actúe; mientras que, en la India rural, el Estado a veces no llega y, por tanto, la sociedad civil es la que afronta directamente los problemas.

Ese rechazo en la India a actos que supongan una excesiva explotación de recursos naturales o que formen parte de un proceso de industrialización no es casual. Este hecho no se explica atendiendo solo a las diferencias de valores occidentales —como el individualismo, la libertad o el libre mercado, tan imperantes en países como Estados Unidos— e indios (aunque es un factor importante). Ese distanciamiento voluntario respecto de la industrialización tiene también que ver con la percepción de la propia Modernidad occidental en el subcontinente. La llegada de los occidentales supuso para las sociedades asiáticas un dilema: aceptar su modelo de “modernidad” o ser avasalladas por ella (Ianni, 2006, p. 61). Y es que la Modernidad occidental puede presentar dos caras. Por un lado, el éxito económico, logrado gracias a la Revolución Industrial, que permitió que gran parte de la población occidental alcanzará un alto nivel de vida. Sin embargo, eso fue posible porque el imperialismo y el colonialismo propiciaron una explotación de los recursos del Sur Global. Si la India, como colonia del Imperio británico,

No se trata de una casualidad que este tipo de ecologismo se haya desarrollado en la India, pues constituye un caso particular de democracia en Asia

conoció principalmente solo esa segunda cara, resulta lógico que la Modernidad Occidental y todo lo que conlleva genere rechazo o, como mínimo, desconfianza en la sociedad.

Así, la India buscó crear su propia “Modernidad” basada en una confluencia de factores: ideas políticas occidentales y la propia ética y tradiciones hindúes, como el carácter sagrado de los animales, las montañas, los ríos y los bosques. En concreto, ciertos sectores de los bosques se considera que “están dedicados a deidades o espíritus ancestrales” y por ello “permanecen intactos y sin perturbaciones durante un cierto periodo de tiempo, lo que a su vez permite la conservación de plantas y vida silvestre” (Misra, 2007, p. 138). La ética ambiental está fuertemente arraigada en la vida cotidiana de los hindúes, como se ve en prácticas como “el vegetarianismo, numerosos festivales que celebran los ciclos de cultivo [...], el culto a la tierra (por su fecundidad) y la albahaca sagrada (debido a sus propiedades medicinales) [...] y el Yoga” (Misra, 2007, p. 138). Dada la importancia que se le da a la naturaleza hasta en las cosas más sencillas de la cotidianeidad, es lógico que el conservacionismo utilitario sea actualmente un valor fundamental de la Modernidad India, así como la Revolución Industrial ha definido la Modernidad Occidental.

Conviene con ello recordar que la religión es, en muchos casos, un elemento esencial en los procesos ecológicos-políticos. Esto se refleja en “la articulación de posicionamiento individuales, la producción de diversas construcciones teóricas y corpóreas de la naturaleza, la legitimación de la gobernanza interpersonal a través de formas ambientales, y como catalizadores de movimientos de resistencia” (Wilkins, 2020, p. 290). De ese modo, movimientos como Chipko se han visto reforzados por el espiritualismo hinduista.

En consecuencia, la conciencia ambiental india es única. Nace de una confluencia de factores, valores e ideas, como son la resistencia pasiva, la ética ambiental o el conservacionismo utilitario. Y aunque aún está por desarrollarse, es real. Chipko es un ejemplo de sus comienzos. Igualmente, es una muestra clara de las particularidades del ecologismo indio. Además, es importante tomar conciencia de que “el medio ambiente no sólo equivale a plantar árboles o proteger a los tigres, sino también a profundizar en la democracia” (Narain, 2002, p. 133), pues es la forma de garantizar que las protestas se transformen en políticas efectivas.

Así pues, con los argumentos aportados en el apartado anterior y en este, afirmamos que Chipko es un movimiento ecofeminista, aunque conviene examinar algunas cuestiones para reforzar esa afirmación.

En primer lugar, el hecho de que en Occidente ambas posturas vayan por separado no implica que en el Sur Global suceda lo mismo. En el caso de Chipko, se muestra de forma clara “la disposición de las mujeres a reaccionar ante el agotamiento del recurso forestal [porque] tuvo un profundo impacto en su sustento, ya que eran las protectoras domésticas de la familia” (Dalal, 2019, p. 149).

No obstante, hay quienes rechazan esa idea con rotundidad. Autores como Cecile Jackson aseveran que “las mujeres actúan como agentes ambientales de manera tanto positiva como negativa” (1993, p. 413) y que por ello se debe obviar la supuesta predisposición de las mujeres a la conservación. Sin embargo, el hecho de que las mujeres campesinas hayan tenido un papel tan significativo en los movimientos ecologistas no es casual. No se debe realmente al hecho de que sean mujeres *per se*, sino porque “más que cualquier otro grupo, todavía mantienen (incluso si uno argumenta forzosamente, dada la división sexual de trabajo) un vínculo recíproco con los recursos de la naturaleza” (Agarwal, 1989, p. 60). Bina Agarwal argumenta

La religión es, en muchos casos, un elemento esencial en los procesos ecológico-políticos

a su vez que, si bien los vínculos entre las mujeres y la ecología pueden verse como una construcción cultural y social (y no una determinación biológica), la realidad es que esos vínculos existen e importan (1989, p. 60).

Además, el hecho de que las mujeres hayan luchado por asegurarse una posición en la toma de decisiones de la comunidad es muy significativo. Su inclusión es positiva porque aportan conocimientos concretos sobre cómo utilizar recursos naturales de forma sostenible; es una sabiduría que procede de la experiencia de las mujeres como agentes y custodias (Hernández Piñero, 2012, p. 346). Prescindir de ese saber ha llevado a lo que Shiva denomina “feminización de la pobreza”; es decir, las sociedades “que han tenido que soportar los costes de la destrucción de recursos” han sufrido a su vez “la destrucción de las tecnologías tradicionales, respetuosas de la ecología, que suelen crear y emplear las mujeres, junto con la destrucción de su base material” (Shiva, 1995, p. 43). Y esa destrucción convierte a las mujeres en “prescindibles”. Chipko se posiciona en contra de esa “cancelación”.

Por último, dentro de las distintas posturas del ecofeminismo, Chipko se entiende mejor desde el ecofeminismo espiritualista o el constructivista. En el primer caso, los actos de Chipko encajan en la formulación de Shiva sobre la importancia de reconocer cierta connotación política en las prácticas cotidianas de las mujeres. Por su parte, la postura constructivista de Agarwal reafirma que esos actos no tienen una justificación biológica, sino que se vinculan al origen de las responsabilidades en la economía familiar: la desigualdad de género.

3.3. Chipko pacifista

Existe un amplísimo consenso que afirma que Chipko es un movimiento pacifista. La esencia del pacifismo se basa en usar métodos no-violentos (abrazar árboles) para oponerse a medidas violentas (destruir un bosque para obtener un futuro beneficio económico a corto plazo).

El principio de *Satyagraha* ilustra una concepción más específica del pacifismo que ha inspirado a personajes como Gandhi. En el caso de Chipko, es una muestra clara de un grupo de mujeres que no deseaban cooperar con un sistema y unas políticas que consideran contrarias a su humanidad y sus principios. Por ello se considera un ejemplo de compasión y empatía, reflejando la convicción de que, para que el ser humano pueda vivir, debe hacerlo en consonancia con la naturaleza. Sin ese equilibrio, la vida no es posible. Como el propio Gandhi señaló: “la Tierra tiene suficiente para las necesidades de todos, pero no para la codicia de unos pocos” (Pyarelal, 1958, p. 668).

No obstante, la lógica detrás de *Satyagraha* va más allá; actuar según este principio implica asumir que la violencia es deshumanizante. Esta conclusión permite al individuo hacer autocrítica de sus actos, lo que supone un autocrecimiento personal. No en vano, *Satyagraha* es la fuerza del amor y la capacidad de sentir empatía hacia el otro; “es la disposición humana que permite la sociabilidad pacífica a través de la autoimposición moral de límites a nuestras ambiciones personales” (López Areu, 2018, p. 94). En un mundo que parece sostenido por el uso de la violencia, Chipko se muestra contrario a esa tendencia y refleja que “la fortaleza de la verdad [*Satyagraha*] consiste [...] en mostrar el carácter real y efectivo de todo aquello que acontece sin concurso de la violencia” (Hernández Piñero, 2012, p. 350).

Chipko, además, es un ejemplo de cómo funciona la democracia india. Al contrario que las democracias occidentales —mucho más formales, donde la voluntad general se manifiesta con

La lógica detrás de Satyagraha va más allá; actuar según este principio implica asumir que la violencia es deshumanizante

claridad en actos periódicos como votar—, la India es una democracia más orgánica. Esto implica una participación muy activa de la población para materializar su voluntad, como han hecho las mujeres de Chipko a través de una protesta pacífica.

Así pues, solo resta una cuestión que sí ha generado más debate: ¿son realmente relevantes y eficaces los actos no-violentos? El pacifismo entraña ciertos problemas que se resumen en que resulta demasiado utópico afirmar que, por el hecho de que algunos actúen de forma pacífica, se podrá inspirar a los demás a actuar igual.

Pese a que no se ha podido frenar por completo la tala de árboles en el Himalaya, Chipko sí abrió el debate sobre la conciencia medioambiental en la India y sirvió para lograr algunas mejoras medioambientales a nivel local en el Estado de Uttar Pradesh. Del mismo modo, en países como Canadá, hay grupos ecologistas que se han servido de las mismas técnicas que Chipko para proteger cedros y abetos centenarios del bosque de Fairy Creek, en la isla de Vancouver. Chipko también inspiró la labor de la activista ambiental Julia “Butterfly” Hill, que vivió durante dos años en una centenaria secuoya de California para evitar su tala a finales de los años 90 del siglo pasado. Sobresale también el ejemplo de Greenpeace, cuyas campañas en defensa del medio ambiente se basan en la acción no violenta.

En consecuencia, la postura firme y compasiva de las mujeres de Chipko sí apeló a la empatía de otras personas del mundo.

Sobresale también el ejemplo de Greenpeace, cuyas campañas en defensa del medio ambiente se basan en la acción no violenta

4. Reflexión y conclusión: el legado de Chipko

El mundo contemporáneo presenta numerosos retos y sobre ellos surgen debates y opiniones variadas. Un problema que hemos examinado es cómo en esos debates a veces se ignoran o subestiman ciertas posturas y circunstancias. La realidad es que Occidente debería atender a lo que acontece en el Sur Global, porque allí se han dado grandes movimientos que merecen nuestra atención, como Chipko. Por ello se ha procedido a hacer un profundo estudio de su origen y legado para concluir que Chipko es un movimiento ecofeminista y pacifista de gran relevancia.

Sin embargo, se da la paradoja de no ser muy conocido en Occidente o su magnitud y relevancia teórica y práctica son cuestionadas por quienes sí saben de su existencia. Esto se debe a que, generalmente, partimos de unos parámetros muy rígidos —y occidentales— para entender los distintos movimientos que suceden. Sin embargo, estancarse en esa visión eurocéntrica puede ser la condena de las teorías utópicas. Si quieren seguir desarrollándose y ser relevantes, deben volver la mirada hacia lo que acontece más allá de Occidente.

Así pues, en relación con el feminismo, hemos destacado la necesidad de que el feminismo abrace las diversas sensibilidades y preocupaciones que muestran las mujeres a lo largo del mundo, como son las cuestiones ecologistas. Además, el esfuerzo de tantas mujeres del Sur Global para lograr el poder necesario para cuidar de los entornos naturales no es algo baladí. Actuar por mantener ese rol activo y ese poder ha acabado teniendo efectos positivos tanto en la vida de esas mujeres como en el desarrollo de sus comunidades. Además, Chipko es un ejemplo claro de movimiento feminista poscolonial.

Por otro lado, Chipko supuso un punto de inflexión en el desarrollo del ecologismo en la India. Fue el origen de una conciencia ambiental genuinamente india basada en la idea del “conser-

vacacionismo utilitario”, conciencia que a su vez se desarrolló gracias a su particular contexto democrático. Así, para la mayor parte de la población india conservar la naturaleza resulta vital porque de ello depende su supervivencia. Es una postura que difiere del ecologismo occidental, donde la degradación ambiental se percibe de forma más atenuada. No obstante, esto no debería ser un impedimento para que Occidente se replantee su relación con el medio ambiente y la estructura de su Estado de Bienestar.

Con ello, conviene señalar que la teoría ecologista debe “desoccidentalizarse” para entender que la importancia de vivir en armonía con la naturaleza va más allá de los postulados posmodernistas. No es solo una cuestión de rebelarse contra los valores materialistas de la Modernidad Occidental; sino que realmente existe una necesidad latente en todas las sociedades de encontrar esa armonía entre los seres humanos y el medio ambiente, porque es indispensable para que la vida siga. De ese modo, el ser humano “como eslabón fundamental en la cadena biológica debe abstenerse de ejercer funciones y actividades que vayan en contra del equilibrio natural y cuando quiera que él sea violentado deben ponerse los medios para restituir las condiciones de equilibrio” (Aguirre, 2005, p. 92).

A su vez, ser conscientes de este equilibrio lleva aparejada la necesidad de hacerse otras preguntas sobre nuestro modo de vida. En concreto, Occidente podría preguntarse si su estado de bienestar es en verdad un estado de *muchotener*. Se podría discutir sobre si el verdadero sentido de *bienestar* debería incluir en su lugar propuestas sobre el *bienser* y el *bienvincularse*, rechazando así las agresivas ideas del *muchotener* (Riechmann, 2014, p. 427).

De este modo, aunando el feminismo y el ecologismo, hemos definido a Chipko como movimiento ecofeminista. Ante esta cuestión, “el desafío para las académicas eco/feministas es descubrir cómo articularnos en esta comunidad, genealogía, y descubrir qué debemos hacer (para) nosotras mismas” (Moore, 2011, p. 18).

Aunque las cuestiones ecologistas son fundamentales para todos, en Occidente, feminismo y ecologismo han ido de forma más habitual por separado. Sin embargo, “si creemos que el feminismo ha de plantear horizontes utópicos en el sentido etimológico de Utopía (*ou-topos*, aquello que todavía no ha tenido lugar, pero puede tenerlo), podemos ver que el feminismo ecologista tiene mucho que aportar” (Puleo, 2002, p. 39).

Finalmente, conviene reflexionar sobre la importancia de cómo el feminismo y el ecologismo se articulan para lograr sus objetivos. Sobre ese aspecto, el pacifismo es una hoja de ruta a seguir. Los métodos pacifistas pueden no ser perfectos y tardar años en alcanzar sus objetivos, pero, tal y como muestra Chipko, aseguran el crecimiento individual, de la población y de la democracia.

Chipko [...] se ha beneficiado del espiritualismo hindú y la filosofía de Gandhi. Además, las prácticas tradicionales hindúes de ecogestión, las escrituras hindúes, la tradición y el ritual tienen el potencial de abordar la crisis ambiental y fomentar la conservación ambiental. (Misra, 2007, p. 142)

Con todo ello, Chipko es un ejemplo de la importancia de aprender y dejarse inspirar por los actos de estas personas y ha hecho grandes aportaciones al feminismo, ecologismo y pacifismo. Estas teorías utópicas tienen que “desoccidentalizarse” para dar cabida a la realidad de muchas personas con preocupaciones diferentes, pero igualmente importantes e innovar en la forma de abordar sus objetivos. Porque el mundo está lleno de personas que viven en diversas realidades y merecen que sus voces también se escuchen.

Occidente podría preguntarse si su Estado de bienestar es en verdad un Estado de muchotener

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LA COMUNIDAD ANDINA DE NACIONES, UNA APUESTA POR LA INNOVACIÓN Y LA DIVERSIFICACIÓN COMERCIAL EN ECUADOR

The Andean Community of Nations, A Commitment to Commercial Innovation and Diversification in Ecuador

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En un mundo cada vez más conectado, comercial y virtualmente, los países están apostando por la integración regional como un mecanismo para promover y fortalecer su oferta exportable. La presente investigación aborda la temática de la integración comercial entre los miembros de la Comunidad Andina de Naciones (CAN) y tiene como propósito analizar su proceso de integración y la importancia de la innovación para la diversificación de bienes y de mercados. El estudio es descriptivo, con una modalidad de investigación documental, a través de la cual se ha llegado a la conclusión de que Ecuador se ha visto ampliamente beneficiado del acuerdo con los países miembros de la CAN, en particular con el auge de los productos elaborados que se comercializan de manera intracomunitaria y a los avances en materia legislativa que permiten progresar hacia un mercado común andino, a pesar del panorama poco alentador en materia de diversificación de su oferta, dada la baja inversión en innovación.



Resumen

Ecuador; integración regional; CAN; innovación; comercio internacional.

Ecuador; regional integration; CAN; innovation; international trade.



Key words

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Fechas

In an increasingly commercially and virtually interconnected world, countries are opting for regional integration as a mechanism to promote and strengthen their exportable supply. This research addresses the issue of trade integration among the members of the Andean Community of Nations and its purpose is to analyze the integration process of the CAN and the importance of innovation for the diversification of goods and markets, and its repercussions in Ecuadorian exports. The study is descriptive, using a documentary research modality, where it has been concluded that Ecuador has been greatly benefited from the agreement with the member countries of the CAN, in particular the rise of processed products that are marketed intracommunity and the advances in legislative matters that allow progress towards an Andean common market, however, with a not very encouraging panorama in terms of diversification of its offer given the low investment in innovation.



1. Introducción

La integración de los países es cada vez más necesaria en el mundo globalizado. El orden económico mundial, como los conocemos actualmente, ha venido trabajando en acciones conjuntas, en principio con países vecinos o afines a sus políticas de estado. Como integración regional los primeros pasos fueron dados por países europeos después de la segunda guerra mundial y con el ánimo de consolidar la paz, fortalecer la cooperación y reconstruir los países. En la actualidad la velocidad con la que se firman los acuerdos de integración en todos los continentes se ha acelerado y Latinoamérica no es la excepción.

De acuerdo con la Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL), la integración regional es un proceso multidimensional cuyas expresiones incluyen iniciativas de coordinación, cooperación, convergencia e integración profunda, y cuyo alcance abarca no solo las temáticas económicas y comerciales, sino también las políticas, sociales, culturales y ambientales. La teoría de la integración regional, aunque se desarrolla inicialmente en universidades estadounidenses, nace en torno a la integración europea. El funcionalismo, el federalismo, el neofuncionalismo y el intergubernamentalismo surgen para explicar el origen y desarrollo de las comunidades europeas.

Posteriores enfoques, como el liberalismo intergubernamental o la gobernanza multinivel, también buscan explicar el proceso europeo. Teorías que surgen en los debates de las ciencias sociales, como el institucionalismo o el constructivismo, se aplican para entender y explicar la integración en Europa.

En el caso de América Latina, la CEPAL en los años 50 presentó propuestas teóricas que vinculaban la integración económica regional a la estrategia de desarrollo. Es así como desde la dimensión productiva existen factores que destacan en los procesos de integración, como el acelerado cambio tecnológico, el liderazgo económico de Asia y en general de las economías emergentes, las cadenas mundiales de valor y la conformación de macrorregiones.

Ecuador es un país que a la fecha ha incursionado en los mercados internacionales a través de la firma de acuerdos regionales en la última década, por lo que su nivel de integración aún es incipiente. Su participación en la CAN data de 1969, Unión Europea en 2017 y EFTA en 2019. Pese a que el país ha postulado su participación en acuerdos como Alianza del Pacífico y Mercosur, no ha recibido una respuesta favorable, por lo que en el presente manuscrito nos concentramos en los avances dentro de la CAN.

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo analizar el proceso de integración de la CAN y la importancia de la innovación; para la diversificación de bienes y de mercados, y sus repercusiones en las exportaciones ecuatorianas, a través de un estudio descriptivo, utilizando una modalidad de investigación documental. Para ello el artículo se ha estructurado de la siguiente manera:

Ocho apartados, iniciando por la introducción; posteriormente el lector se encuentra con una descripción de la CAN, seguido del capítulo 3 donde se destaca el papel protagónico que la innovación tiene actualmente en materia comercial. El capítulo 4 corresponde a la metodología empleada, la cual se define como una investigación de tipo documental, los resultados podemos encontrarlos en el capítulo 5 donde se resalta la importancia del comercio intracomunitario, la innovación para la diversificación de la producción y el acceso a nuevos mercados. Le sigue el capítulo 6, en el que se discute sobre las diferentes posibilidades de Ecuador en la esfera internacional frente los desafíos de la innovación en materia comercial, mientras que las conclusiones se determinan en el capítulo 7, acápite en el que se resalta la importancia de los acuerdos de integración y la necesidad de pasar de la definición de políticas públicas a acciones concretas en materia de innovación. Finalmente, en el último apartado del artículo se registran las referencias.

2. Los Acuerdos de Integración Regional

2.1. Contexto de la Integración Regional

Existen algunas razones de peso, nacionales e internacionales, que impulsan a los países a negociar acuerdos comerciales regionales, entre ellas: el acceso preferencial a mercados, la atracción de inversiones, el establecimiento de relaciones pacíficas, incremento del poder de negociación en la esfera internacional, la consolidación de reformas políticas nacionales domésticas, alternativas al multilateralismo, profundización de la liberación comercial existente y, los acuerdos comerciales regionales, los que ofrecen beneficios más allá del comercio.

En realidad, estos acuerdos son extremadamente complejos y abarcan un amplio abanico de disciplinas (Shearer y Tres, 2016). La mayor parte de la literatura reconoce que los Acuerdos Comerciales Regionales (ACR) son “trampolines” que resultan beneficiosos para el comercio entre los países miembros y, además, producen efectos de creación del comercio, siempre y cuando los países miembros practiquen un regionalismo abierto o continúen liberalizando el comercio con los países no miembros (Shearer y Tres, 2017).

La integración regional tiene varios niveles de integración económica, que van del menos al más integrado, ello es: área de libre comercio, unión aduanera, mercado común, unión económica y unión política.

En un área de libre comercio se suprimen todas las barreras al comercio de bienes y servicios entre los países integrantes; en la unión aduanera se eliminan las barreras comerciales entre los Estados miembros y se adopta una política comercial exterior común, en el mercado común, no hay barreras al comercio entre los países miembros, se respeta una política comercial exterior común y se acepta el libre tránsito de los factores de producción entre ellos.

La unión económica consiste en el libre tránsito de productos y factores de producción entre Estados miembros y la adopción de una política común de comercio exterior, pero además requiere de una moneda común, la homologación de las tasas impositivas de los miembros

La unión económica consiste en el libre tránsito de productos y factores de producción entre Estados miembros y, la adopción de una política común de comercio exterior

y políticas monetarias y fiscales comunes. El paso a una unión económica suscita el tema de cómo hacer que una burocracia coordinadora asuma su responsabilidad ante los ciudadanos y las naciones miembros, esta respuesta asume la forma de unión política (Hill, 2011).

Los procesos de integración regional en materia política y económica se han visto alentados por factores como la globalización. La globalización puede definirse como la integración de las economías mundiales a través de la eliminación de barreras impuestas al movimiento de bienes, servicios, capitales, tecnología y personas (Daniels et al., 2013), es un fenómeno global que tiene trayectoria histórica. Podemos considerar hechos como la industrialización de las naciones en los inicios de la década de 1900 aunque incipiente, pero se prevé una colaboración entre las naciones en materia comercial y la tendencia a mayor integración en la etapa posguerra (Weiss, 2003), actualmente, vivimos sus efectos y complejidades.

La globalización impacta principalmente en dos ámbitos; la internacionalización de los mercados y la producción, incentivados por la expansión del transporte en todos sus niveles, las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación y el movimiento de capitales, entre los principales. Si el Estado-nación se ve amenazado por el fenómeno de la globalización, tiene sus interrogantes, ya que se convierten en unidades que acogen o no las ventajas y enfrentan sus desventajas para sus estados.

Existe escasa evidencia de una reducción sistemática del Estado a manos de la globalización (Ravenhill, 2017), pero sí hay factores que demuestran una correlación positiva al aprovechar ciertos factores de la globalización como la inversión extranjera directa, la apertura de mercados financieros, las economías de escala, la ampliación de las cadenas de valor y las condiciones de inserción de empresas multinacionales/multilaterales.

Otro factor importante para considerar en los procesos de integración económica está en las cadenas globales de valor (CGV), las que se ven impulsadas por los acuerdos comerciales regionales y por los beneficios que perciben de las empresas multinacionales al vincularse a los diferentes eslabones comerciales. Las CGV, constituyen la distribución de actividades que agregan valor, necesaria para producir un bien o suministrar un servicio desde su concepción, pasando por el proceso de producción ubicado en distintos países, hasta su entrega final al consumidor (BID, 2018).

Las cadenas de valor se inician como el reflejo de una actividad, comencemos con el análisis de Porter para explicarla,

[...] es una sucesión de acciones realizadas con el objetivo de instalar y valorizar un producto o un servicio exitoso en un mercado, mediante un planteamiento económico viable, con tres objetivos clave, la mejora de los servicios, la reducción de costos y la creación de valor. (Porter, 1985)

Partiendo de este concepto los países empiezan a buscar su participación en las cadenas de valor regionales y globales.

Los Estados responden a las demandas de las empresas con intención de internacionalizarse y crean espacios económico regionales y mercados más grandes (De Lombaerde y Rodríguez, 2020) al unirse a instituciones como tratados de libre comercio, unión aduanera, mercado común, unión económica o unión política, cada una con particularidades y estados de integración progresivos, que responden no solo a la demanda del mercado internacional, sino a la coyuntura política del momento o al estilo de decisión del gobernante de turno.

Otro factor importante para considerar en los procesos de integración económica está en las cadenas globales de valor (CGV)

El alcance de las cadenas de valor no siempre es global, sino más bien regional, creando espacios transfronterizos donde la economía, la política y la ley se interceptan (De Lombaerde y Rodríguez, 2020).

Es importante mencionar que aparte de las CGV hay otras concepciones como las cadenas globales de productos básicos, por sus siglas en inglés *global commodity chains* (GCCs), y las redes globales de producción, por sus siglas en inglés *global production networks* (GPNs), cada una responde a diferentes intereses y espacios geográficos.

Es necesario comprender los inicios de la integración regional y los avances de esta, por lo que en el siguiente apartado se presenta una reseña de la CAN, con los hitos más importantes de su historia.

2.2. La Comunidad Andina de Naciones

La CAN, Comunidad Andina de Naciones, por sus siglas en español, cuenta con diversos órganos e instituciones que integran el Sistema Andino de Integración (SAI), cuyo objetivo es alcanzar un desarrollo integral, equilibrado y autónomo, mediante la integración andina, con proyección hacia una integración sudamericana y latinoamericana. Los países miembros de la comunidad andina son: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú y como países asociados: Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay y como países observadores España y Marruecos (CAN, 2021b).

La CAN, integrada actualmente por Perú, Colombia, Bolivia y Ecuador acaba de celebrar su LII aniversario (CAN, 2020), y se encuentra ante la oportunidad de poner en marcha normas que permiten avanzar en la integración regional, más allá del campo comercial y que son indispensables para fortalecer su objetivo de mejorar el nivel de vida y desarrollo equilibrado de los habitantes de los países miembros mediante la integración y la cooperación económica y social. Algunas de las normas más relevantes son:

Comunicación: desde enero de 2022, ciudadanos de los países de la CAN podrán comunicarse sin recargos adicionales por itinerancia *roaming*, de acuerdo a la decisión 854 acercando a los habitantes andinos y facilitando los negocios (CAN, 2022a).

Ciudadanía andina: la decisión 878 establece el estatuto migratorio andino, que abre la puerta a “una novedosa integración” de los 111 millones de habitantes del espacio regional, el estatuto tiene por objeto regular el derecho comunitario andino en materia de circulación y residencia de los ciudadanos andinos y sus familiares, así como de los residentes permanentes extracomunitarios (CAN, 2021b).

Circulación: la decisión 884 ofrece facilidades para la circulación de los más de 111 millones de ciudadanos de la CAN, contribuirá a la reactivación del sector turismo, al permitir la libre circulación de vehículos por los 4 países miembros (CAN, 2021b).

La CAN es para Ecuador un primer eslabón para consolidar su posición estratégica de negociación internacional y ser un referente de integración para el mundo. Ecuador deberá aprovechar la presidencia *protempore* de la CAN que asumió el pasado mes de julio (El Universo, 2021), para fortalecer las exportaciones no tradicionales que benefician principalmente a las pequeñas y medianas empresas de manufactura, diversificar su oferta exportable y promover la real integración regional andina, por la que se ha trabajado 52 años, con las últimas decisiones de

La CAN, integrada actualmente por Perú, Colombia, Bolivia y Ecuador acaba de celebrar su LII aniversario

facilitación al comercio y libre movilidad de las personas y empresas dando paso a un nuevo orden en los andes (CAN, 2021b). Para ello es necesario profundizar en el cambio de la matriz productiva y aportar a la innovación de su oferta exportable.

3. La innovación y diversificación para el desarrollo económico de Ecuador

3.1. Contexto del comercio exterior en países de la CAN

En los últimos años los países de la CAN han experimentado una mayor apertura económica mediante la eliminación de barreras arancelarias y no arancelarias, procesos de integración económica, la privatización de principales compañías estatales, y políticas y programas económicos; sin embargo, su participación en el mercado internacional sigue siendo mínima, al 2001 fue de alrededor de 0.8% (CEPAL, 2014). Los recursos naturales siguen desempeñando un papel importante en el comercio exterior de los países miembros de la CAN.

Si analizamos el caso de Ecuador, en el año 2020, Estados Unidos fue su principal destino de las exportaciones, representando el 23.4% del total exportado; seguido por la Unión Europea con el 17.5%; China con el 15.8%; Panamá con el 12.0% y la CAN con el 6.1%. En cuanto a los productos exportados, los principales fueron: el petróleo, camarón, flores, cacao, atún y pescado. Sus importaciones se centran en materias primas para la industria y la agricultura, bienes de consumo duraderos y no duraderos, equipos de transporte y maquinaria, bienes de capital para la industria, y bienes de tecnología y medicina humana (CAN, 2021c; Gallegos et al., 2023).

Bolivia, durante el año 2021, tuvo como principal socio comercial a MERCOSUR, representando el 23.3% de las exportaciones; la India con el 16.6% y la CAN con el 15.1%. Las importaciones mantuvieron una relación comercial fuerte con MERCOSUR, con una participación del 32.3%; China con el 20.6% y la CAN con el 10.7% (CAN, 2022b; Díaz, 2016; INE, 2022; Pedraza, 2021). Para el mismo año, los principales productos exportados fueron: gas natural en estado gaseoso, minerales cinc, minerales de plata y estaño en bruto, entre otros, (CAN, 2022b).

En 2021, las exportaciones de Colombia tuvieron a Estados Unidos como principal destino, con una participación del 28.7%; la Unión Europea con el 12.8%; China con el 8.9% y países miembros de la CAN con el 7.8%. Su crecimiento económico ha sido sostenido en las últimas décadas, impulsado principalmente por la explotación de sus recursos naturales, como el petróleo y el carbón, concentrándose en sectores como la minería y la industria manufacturera (CAN, 2021a; Yllescas et al., 2021).

Perú, durante el año 2020, tuvo a China como el principal destino de sus exportaciones, con una participación del 27.7%; Estados Unidos con el 16.2%; la Unión Europea con el 13.8%; Canadá con el 6.3%; Corea del Sur con el 5.6% y la CAN con 4.9%. De enero a noviembre de 2021, las exportaciones experimentaron una expansión del 33.16%, impulsada por el aumento de las exportaciones tradicionales en un 41.20% y las no tradicionales en un 14.32% (Morales et al., 2021).

Para el mismo año, los principales productos exportados que representaron el 64.5% del total fueron: minerales de cobre, oro para uso no monetario, cátodos de cobre refinado en bruto, harina de pescado o de crustáceos, gasolina sin tetraetilo de plomo, cinc en bruto, aceite de petróleo o de mineral bituminoso, entre otros (CAN, 2021d).

Bolivia, durante el año 2021, tuvo como principal socio comercial a MERCOSUR, representando el 23.3% de las exportaciones; la India con el 16.6% y la CAN con el 15.1%

Tabla 1. CAN: principales destinos y productos exportados e importados año 2022

| CAN - Principales destinos de exportaciones | | Principales productos |
|---|---------------|--|
| Países | Participación | Aceites crudos de petróleo. Minerales de cobre. Demás formas en bruto de oro para uso no monetario. Plátanos tipo-cavendish valery. Hulla bituminosa. |
| Estados Unidos | 20.1% | |
| China | 16.4% | |
| Unión Europea | 12.0% | |
| CAN | 6.5% | |
| Importaciones extracomunitarias | | Principales productos |
| China | 24.0% | Gasóleo. Aceites livianos y preparaciones. Aceites de petróleo o de mineral bituminoso. Teléfonos móviles y otras redes inalámbricas. Gasolinas sin tetraetilo de plomo para motores de aviación. Maíz amarillo duro, excepto para siembra. |
| Estados Unidos | 23.2% | |
| Unión Europea | 11.7% | |
| MERCOSUR | 11.2% | |
| CAN | 5.9% | |
| Exportaciones intracomunitarias | | Principales productos |
| Perú | 30.0% | Tortas y demás residuos sólidos de soja. Aceites de soja. Aceites crudos de petróleo. Alambre de cobre refinado. Demás preparaciones para la alimentación de animales. |
| Colombia | 29.4% | |
| Bolivia | 22.3% | |
| Ecuador | 18.3% | |
| Importaciones intracomunitarias | | Principales productos |
| Ecuador | 34.2% | Tortas y demás residuos sólidos de soja. Aceites de soja en bruto. Aceites crudos de petróleo. Demás preparaciones para la alimentación de animales. Gasóleos. |
| Perú | 32.3% | |
| Colombia | 23.2% | |
| Bolivia | 10.3% | |

Fuente: CAN (2023)

Por otro lado, para el año 2022, el comportamiento de la región en lo que se refiere a los productos manufacturados, estos tuvieron una participación en las exportaciones intracomunitarias del 90.3%; a nivel extracomunitario del 41.2%. Mientras, las importaciones a nivel intracomunitario fueron del 89.2%; y a nivel extracomunitario del 92.8% (CAN, 2023).

Para Ecuador, en el año 2020, la CAN fue el cuarto destino de las exportaciones de productos manufacturados, representando 11.7%; las exportaciones de estos productos al interior del bloque representaron 85.4%. Las importaciones desde la CAN representaron el 97.6% del total; asimismo, las importaciones desde otros mercados fue del 94.9% del total (CAN, 2021c).

Tabla 2. Ecuador: principales productos manufacturados exportados e importados año 2020

| Productos exportados a la CAN | Productos importados desde la CAN | Productos importados extracomunitariamente |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Los demás tableros de madera. » Preparaciones y conservas de listados y bonitos, enteros o en trozos. » Las demás preparaciones para la alimentación de animales. » Preparaciones y conservas de atunes, enteros o en trozos. » Cocinas de fundición, hierro o acero, de combustible gaseoso, o de gas y otros combustibles, excepto cocinas empotrables o de mesa | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Tortas y demás residuos sólidos de la extracción del aceite de soja (soya), incluso molidos o en pellets. » Las demás preparaciones para la alimentación de animales. » Los demás medicamentos, dosificados o acondicionados para venta al por menor, para uso humano. » Dentífricos. » Vehículos automóbiles para transporte de mercancías, con motor de émbolo, de encendido por compresión de peso total con carga superior a 9,3 t, pero <= 20 t. » Los demás vehículos automóbiles con motor de émbolo alternativo, de encendido por chispa, para transporte de personas, de cilindrada >1000 cm³, pero <= 1 500 cm³ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Gasoil (gasóleo). » Nafta disolvente. » Los demás medicamentos, dosificados o acondicionados para venta al por menor, para uso humano. » Teléfonos móviles (celulares) y los de otras redes inalámbricas. » Tortas y demás residuos sólidos de la extracción del aceite de soja (soya), incluso molidos o en pellets. » Los demás vehículos automóbiles con motor de émbolo alternativo, de encendido por chispa, concebidos principalmente para transporte de personas, de cilindrada > 1500 cm³, pero <= 3000 cm³, excepto camperos (4x4) (87,3%). |

Fuente: CAN (2021)

En el año 2020, Colombia tuvo a la CAN como el segundo destino de sus exportaciones de productos manufacturados, con el 15.1% del total. Las exportaciones a la comunidad representaron el 91.4% del total exportado; mientras que las exportaciones a otros mercados fueron del 43.7%. Las importaciones desde la CAN representaron 90.5% y desde otros mercados el 93.1% del total (CAN, 2021a).

En el caso de Perú, el mercado andino fue el quinto destino de las exportaciones de productos manufacturados, representando 9.3% del total. Las exportaciones al interior del bloque representaron 94.6%; las exportaciones a mercados externos el 47.6% del total. Las importaciones desde la CAN representaron 90.0% del total importado; asimismo, las importaciones de productos manufacturados desde otros mercados alcanzaron el 91.9% del total (CAN, 2021d).

En el 2021, Bolivia destacó por tener a India como el primer destino de las exportaciones de productos manufacturados con 32.2%, seguido por la CAN con el 28,0% y la Unión Europea con 8.0%. Las exportaciones al bloque representaron el 95.3% del total; mientras las exportaciones al exterior conformaron el 43.7%. Por su parte, las importaciones desde la CAN representaron el 99.0% del total, y desde otros mercados alcanzaron el 98.7% (CAN, 2022b).

Como demuestran las cifras, los productos manufacturados de la región tuvieron una participación considerable en el comercio intracomunitario, sin embargo, existe todavía un margen considerable para incrementar su presencia en el mercado internacional y diversificar las exportaciones más allá de los recursos naturales.

En este sentido, los procesos de innovación se erigen como una pieza fundamental para alcanzar dichos objetivos.

3.2. Importancia de la innovación y su impacto en la diversificación de productos

La innovación puede mejorar la competitividad de un país en los mercados internacionales, porque permite a las empresas producir bienes y servicios de mayor calidad a menor costo, mejorando su competitividad, provocando el aumento de la demanda de los productos y servicios, e impulsando de esa manera el crecimiento económico de un país (Gutiérrez et al., 2016).

Para Bravo y Arroyo (2018), promover la innovación es cuestión de supervivencia ya que intervienen aspectos claves como la globalización progresiva de mercados, el ciclo de vida reducido de los productos, los cambios tecnológicos y los cambios en el comportamiento de los clientes.

El desarrollo social y económico de un país u organización está directamente relacionado con las capacidades de sus miembros en innovación, desde diferentes puntos de vista como: el técnico, el comercial, el económico, el financiero, el humano, el administrativo, el sensorial y el social (Galvis, 2013).

La innovación se entiende como la capacidad de las personas para generar ideas, resolver problemas o sugerir diferentes conceptos o soluciones a una realidad social, económica y contextual. La mayoría de los autores la definen como un conjunto de actividades en un periodo de tiempo y lugar que llevan a la introducción en el mercado y, por primera vez, una idea en forma de nuevos o mejores productos, servicios o técnicas de gestión y organización. Es un factor primordial para crear soluciones, ideas de negocios y políticas nuevas (Córdoba et al., 2018).

El impacto de la innovación se mide en función de los cambios generados, tomando como referencia al pasado de su entorno empresarial u organizacional a nivel local o regional (Cadena et al., 2019; Vernaza et al., 2020). Algunos factores que se asocian a la capacidad innovadora de un país: capital humano de alta calificación, exportaciones e importaciones, venture capital, publicaciones, patentes y gasto en I+D, entre otras. Las dos últimas para América Latina y el Caribe fue de alrededor 0.56% del PIB, cuatro veces menor al de Estados Unidos.

Según la CEPAL (2021), la participación de las empresas en el financiamiento de la investigación y desarrollo (I+D) es un factor crucial que considerar. En China, este valor alcanza el 80%, mientras que, en Estados Unidos, la Unión Europea y las naciones de la OCDE supera el 60%. En contraste con la región, la cifra se situó en torno al 35%. Además, se observó una disminución en el porcentaje de patentes registradas. En 2010, la región representaba el 2.8% de las patentes a nivel mundial, pero para el año 2020, esta cifra se redujo al 1.6%.

3.3. Perfil de innovación de Ecuador

Para Mubarak y Busler (2012), un sistema de innovación se define como la combinación de todos los elementos que afectan al desarrollo y uso de innovaciones, en aspectos como: económicos, sociales, políticos, organizacionales, institucionales, entre otros. Es un conjunto de procesos, actores y relaciones que interactúan para crear, difundir y utilizar conocimientos y tecnologías innovadoras.

Según Donoso (2014), los países europeos como: Alemania, España, Irlanda y Finlandia, han logrado desarrollar sistemas nacionales de innovación bastante consolidados, permitiéndoles un rápido crecimiento económico y una mayor diversificación de sus economías. Se caracterizan por una combinación de factores como una cultura empresarial propensa a la innovación, po-

La participación de las empresas en el financiamiento de la investigación y desarrollo (I+D) es un factor crucial que considerar

líticas públicas adecuadas para fomentar la innovación, infraestructura tecnológica avanzada y un alto nivel de inversión en I+D.

En el caso de China, entre los factores claves están las inversiones extranjeras directas, la política de innovación del Gobierno, inversión en educación y formación de recursos humanos. Importaciones de tecnología existente y el fortalecimiento de las capacidades internas para utilizar y mejorar esas tecnologías (Kowalski, 2021). Para Morales y Ortíz (2013), algunos países latinoamericanos empezaron a introducir temas de innovación con diez años de retraso, además influyen factores como: nivel de desarrollo económico, cambio de políticas monetarias y fiscales, sistemas educativos débiles y formación de recurso humano.

El Global Innovation Index (2021), sus siglas GII, mide la innovación en las economías, propone 81 indicadores para su definición. De 132 economías, 15 encabezan el ranking, ninguna economía de América Latina y el Caribe forman parte de este.

Tabla 3. GII 2021 ranking países CAI

| Rank top 60 | Rank top 80 | Rank top 100 | Rank top 110 |
|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 53 Chile | 67 Colombia | 91 Ecuador | 104 Bolivia |
| 55 México | 70 Perú | | |
| 56 Costa Rica | | | |
| 57 Brasil | | | |

Fuente: GII (2021)

El índice en mención define cinco pilares para medir el desempeño de la innovación en una economía. Cada pilar tiene subpilares, entre los más importantes: el ambiente político, el entorno regulatorio, el ambiente de negocios, la educación, la investigación y desarrollo, las TIC, la infraestructura, la sostenibilidad ecológica, el crédito, la inversión en diversificación, la innovación, la absorción, creación e impacto del conocimiento; los activos intangibles, los bienes y servicios creativos y la creatividad en línea. Para la economía ecuatoriana se definió el siguiente perfil (valores normalizados del 0 al 100).

Tabla 4. Perfil económico de innovación del Ecuador año 2021

| Pilares | Subpilares | Valor | Aspectos débiles | Aspectos fuertes |
|--|--------------------------------|-------|---|---|
| Entorno institucional Promedio: 44.1 | 1. Ambiente político. | 45.1 | Factibilidad para iniciar un negocio. Factibilidad para resolver insolvencia. | |
| | 2. Entorno regulatorio. | 39.8 | | |
| | 3. Ambiente de negocios. | 47.3 | | |
| Capital humano e investigación Promedio: 20.5 | 1. Educación. | 41.6 | Financiamiento por estudiante secundaria. Porcentaje graduados en ciencias y tecnologías. Inversiones corporativas I+D. | Gasto en educación, % en el PIB. Clasificación universitaria QS. |
| | 2. Educación terciaria. | 13.6 | | |
| | 3. Investigación y desarrollo. | 6.4 | | |

| Pilares | Subpilares | Valor | Aspectos débiles | Aspectos fuertes |
|---|---|-------|---|--|
| Infraestructura Promedio: 39.6 | 1. Tecnologías de la información y tecnologías. | 63.7 | Uso de las TIC. | Servicio en línea del gobierno. Participación electrónica. Desempeño ambiental. |
| | 2. Infraestructura. | 24.8 | | |
| | 3. Sostenibilidad ecológica. | 30.3 | | |
| Sofisticación negocios Promedio: 50.3 | 1. Crédito. | 44.5 | Facilidad para obtener crédito. Facilidad para proteger las inversiones minoritarias. | Préstamos brutos de microfinanzas. |
| | 2. Inversión. | 44.0 | | |
| | 3. Diversificación escala de mercado. | 62.6 | | |
| Sofisticación del mercado Promedio: 39.6 | 1. Trabajadores del conocimiento. | 28.5 | Empleo intensivo en conocimiento. Colaboración en I+D entre universidades e industria. Acuerdos entre empresas, alianzas estratégicas. Importaciones de servicios TIC, % total. | Empresas ofrecen formación regulada. |
| | 2. Vínculos de innovación. | 13.0 | | |
| | 3. Absorción del conocimiento | 18.2 | | |
| Conocimientos y productos en tecnología Promedio: 13.2 | 1. Creación del conocimiento. | 7.6 | Complejidad de producción y exportación. | Certificados de calidad ISO 9001. |
| | 2. Impacto del conocimiento. | 27.2 | | |
| | 3. Difusión del conocimiento. | 4.8 | | |
| Salidas creativas Promedio: 18.5 | 1. Activos intangibles | 29.4 | Exportación de servicios culturales y creativos, % comercio total. | Marcas de origen. |
| | 2. Bienes y servicios creativos | 4.6 | | |
| | 3. Creatividad en línea | 10.7 | | |

Fuente: GII (2021)

Como se puede observar en la tabla anterior, la inversión en I+D, la educación terciaria, los vínculos de innovación, la difusión del conocimiento, los bienes y servicios creativos, entre otros sub pilares, muestran una débil capacidad de innovación y, por tanto, un escaso impacto de la misma en el comercio internacional. Ecuador es altamente vulnerable a los cambios en los precios internacionales, tiene una de las inversiones más bajas en investigación y tecnología en la región, lo que limita su capacidad para desarrollar nuevas actividades productivas y reducir su potencial para diversificar la economía.

4. Materiales y métodos

El estudio es descriptivo, enfoque cualitativo e inductivo, utiliza una modalidad de investigación documental, apoyado en documentos de origen institucional de la CAN, CEPAL, el Banco Mundial, el Banco Central del Ecuador y Índice Global de Innovación (GII). Esta metodología nos ha permitido analizar los beneficios de la integración económica de la CAN para Ecuador tomando como medida el grado de diversificación de los productos y el valor de la innovación.

5. Resultados

Los resultados se han organizado desde tres principales dimensiones; el análisis de las exportaciones intracomunitarias versus las extracomunitarias, el grado de diversificación de los productos exportables y las exportaciones intracomunitarias. Las exportaciones intracomunitarias en conjunto crecen a un mayor ritmo que las exportaciones extracomunitarias.

Desde los inicios de la CAN con la firma del acuerdo de Cartagena en el año 1969, las exportaciones fueron creciendo levemente, es a partir del año 1993 con la implementación de la Zona Andina de Libre Comercio, entre los países miembros que las cifras de exportación despegan de manera acelerada. La tasa de crecimiento intracomunitario, 10.7%, es superior a la tasa de crecimiento extracomunitario, 8.6%, lo que muestra una oportunidad para fortalecer los mercados de los países andinos. A diferencia de lo que se podría esperar, cuando los 4 miembros son países que compiten en algunos mercados a nivel internacional, tales como las flores, el café, el petróleo y el banano, pese a ser países que compiten en similares mercados, las cifras analizadas nos permiten ver el potencial del mercado intracomunitario.

A nivel regional, los países andinos se complementan principalmente con la comercialización de productos elaborados que contienen un mayor valor agregado, como los tableros de madera, aceite de soja, aceite de palma, azúcar de caña, preparaciones para animales y vehículos automóviles. En el año 2019, se duplicó la exportación de manufacturados pasando de un 38% en 1970 a un 84% en el año 2019 para un total de 6954 millones de dólares (CAN, 2020), lo que nos permite inferir que Ecuador tiene un amplio potencial para mantener sus mercados de manufacturas y elaborados dentro del grupo andino.

Frente a la diversificación de la oferta exportable, en el año 2010, 49 productos abarcaban el 90% del valor total de las exportaciones desde la CAN hacia el mercado de Estados Unidos; en tanto que, en el 2019, dicho porcentaje se cubrió con 109 productos. Asimismo, la oferta exportable andina dirigida hacia la Unión Europea refleja cierta concentración; 51 productos en el 2010 y 61 en el 2019 abarcan el 90% del valor de las exportaciones totales de la CAN a la Unión Europea, cifras que nos indican que la CAN va por buen camino en materia de la diversificación de mercados.

Para el caso de las exportaciones, al interior del bloque andino se presenta una situación diferente, el 90% de estas exportaciones son representadas por 425 productos en el año 2010 y 457 productos en el año 2019, lo que demuestra una mayor diversificación de la oferta exportable andina en el marco intracomunitario en relación con el extracomunitario, y estas cifras reafirman el potencial que se tiene al interior de los países miembros de la CAN.

Se observa que entre el año 2010 y 2019, los países miembros de la CAN han logrado aumentar el número de rubros exportados hacia la CAN y el mundo, lo que ha permitido alcanzar un mayor grado de diversificación. Convirtiéndose por lo tanto, en un mercado atractivo para la exportación de manufacturas y elaborados (CAN, 2020), lo cual se traduce e ingresos más altos para sus empresas exportadoras.

Para Ecuador, los aspectos positivos referentes a la innovación se relacionan con el gasto en educación universitaria; servicios en línea del gobierno; préstamos brutos a microfinanzas; certificados de calidad; marcas de origen y formación regulada. Los aspectos desfavorables tienen que ver con la factibilidad para iniciar un negocio; factibilidad para resolver insolvencia; financiamiento por estudiante secundario; porcentaje de graduados en ciencia y tecnología; inversiones corporativas en I+D; uso e importaciones de TIC; facilidad para obtener

A nivel regional, los países andinos se complementan principalmente con la comercialización de productos elaborados que contienen un mayor valor agregado

crédito; facilidad para proteger inversiones minoritarias; empleo intensivo en conocimiento; colaboración en I+D entre universidad e industria; complejidad para producir y exportar y exportación de servicios culturales.

6. Discusión

Los alcances de la CAN resultan favorables para sus países miembros, sin embargo, al compararlo con otros grupos de integración a nivel mundial como la Unión Europea, aún queda mucho camino por recorrer. La Unión Europea cuenta con 27 países como miembros y 19 países en zona euro (países que han adoptado al euro como su moneda oficial), en tiempo de integración tanto la CAN como la UE llevan casi el mismo tiempo de haberse constituido, sin embargo, los avances en materia de integración regional de la UE han sido expedidos, con objetivos claros y metas que se han ido cumpliendo en el organismo supranacional.

La CAN debería continuar avanzando en materia legislativa para promover de manera acelerada un acuerdo regional en el que se fortalezcan los cimientos de un mercado común que posteriormente nos lleve a obtener una unión económica con la puesta en marcha de una moneda unificada, un Banco Central Andino y fortalecer el papel del Parlamento Andino entre otros.

En la CAN, el alcance de las negociaciones ha tenido una preferencia más bien política que económica en comparación con acuerdos comerciales regionales más recientes, tales como el Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), y su posible integración con la Alianza del Pacífico (AP).

Los procesos de integración regional necesitan un proceso institucional que coordine y colabore con los lazos de colaboración política y económica, y adicionalmente, contemple un diálogo entre el sector público y privado, con el objetivo de lograr una sinergia de negociación para lograr acuerdos comerciales regionales, que den paso a un crecimiento no solo económico, sino social y cultural de los países participantes.

La innovación es clave para el desarrollo económico y la diversificación. En países europeos como Alemania, Irlanda y Finlandia se han consolidado sistemas nacionales de innovación que les han permitido crecer y diversificar sus economías. China ha impulsado su sistema de innovación a través de inversiones extranjeras directas, políticas adecuadas y fortalecimiento de las capacidades internas. En contraste, con países latinoamericanos, donde hay factores como el nivel de desarrollo económico, la falta de políticas adecuadas y sistemas educativos débiles que han retrasado la innovación.

7. Conclusiones

Ecuador se ha visto ampliamente beneficiado del acuerdo con los países miembros de la CAN, en particular al auge de los productos elaborados que se comercializan de manera intracomunitaria, a los avances en materia legislativa que permiten avanzar hacia un mercado común andino con las últimas decisiones tomadas y finalmente, el rol protagónico que debe asumir Ecuador, quien ha ejercido la presidencia *pro tempore* del organismo a partir del año 2021.

La búsqueda de nuevos mercados como bloque es la alternativa más viable; sin embargo, se debe considerar una medida a mediano y largo plazo, ya que las cadenas y sus destinos tienen

La CAN debería continuar avanzando en materia legislativa para promover de manera acelerada un acuerdo regional en el que se fortalezcan los cimientos de un mercado común

diferentes restricciones de entrada, lo que implica un proceso de preparación anticipado para el sector de bienes.

Es un trabajo en conjunto entre el sector público y privado, especialmente para dirigir esfuerzos al cumplimiento de las restricciones, especialmente a mercados potenciales como la Unión Europea, Estados Unidos, Corea del Sur y Japón, lo que implicará una inversión de ambas partes.

Otra alternativa, junto con lo anterior es reconocer las deficiencias del sector exportador y flexibilizar las líneas de crédito, la deuda por siembra y cosecha de los pequeños productores, pero no solo como política local sino regional.

La innovación debe estar ligada al papel fundamental del capital intelectual, el capital humano, el capital estructural y el capital relacional, que se vea fortalecida en la especialización y desarrollo de productos; nichos de mercado; modernización para abrir canales de ventas y la confianza de emprendedores y redes empresariales, que promuevan líderes y nuevos gerentes tolerantes al riesgo, con orientación a la innovación y con facilidad para desarrollar redes globales y alianza estratégicas.

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EXAMINING THE ROLE OF WEDGE ISSUES IN SHAPING VOTER BEHAVIOR: INSIGHTS FROM THE 2020 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Examinando el papel de los *wedge issues* en la configuración del comportamiento electoral: el caso de las elecciones presidenciales de 2020 en EE. UU.

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Every presidential election is shaped by determinant wedge issues, issues that are intentionally constructed to divide and polarize the electorate. When used correctly by candidates, these issues have the potential to mobilize the electorate towards one party or another. The U.S. presidential election of 2020 was characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic crisis resulting from it, accusations of electoral fraud and high levels of misinformation, as well as police brutality against minorities. This situation left a highly divided country and an electorate disappointed with the political institutions. The overall objective of this research is to explain the impact on voter mobilization, primarily, the impact wedge issues play, with the three specific issues of the campaign being: race issues, the prestige of the political institutions, and COVID-19.

Cada elección presidencial está marcada por temas específicos que resultan determinantes para el resultado electoral. Los llamados wedge issues, temas contruidos intencionadamente para dividir a los votantes del adversario, pueden influenciar al electorado hasta el punto de movilizarlo hacia un partido u otro. Las elecciones presidenciales estadounidenses de 2020 se caracterizaron por la pandemia de la COVID-19, la crisis económica resultante de la pandemia, las acusaciones de fraude electoral y los altos niveles de desinformación, así como la brutalidad policial contra las minorías raciales, dejando un país muy dividido y a un electorado decepcionado con las instituciones políticas. El objetivo general de esta investigación es explicar el efecto del discurso político en la movilización de los votantes, principalmente el impacto que juegan los wedge issues, centrándonos en tres temas específicos de la campaña: la brutalidad contra las minorías raciales, el prestigio de las instituciones políticas y la COVID-19.

Elections; COVID-19; race issues; prestige of the political institutions; discourse; wedge issues.

Elecciones presidenciales; COVID-19; temas raciales; prestigio de las instituciones políticas; discurso electoral.

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1. Introduction

The assault on the Capitol after Joe Biden was elected the 46th President of the United States (U.S.) reflected the heavy polarization among the American electorate and a loss of confidence in the political system (Urta, 2021). The 2020 U.S. presidential election saw a historical record number of participants, with a turnout of two-thirds of the eligible voting population, more than in any of the previous 120 years (Schaul, Rabinowitz, & Mellnik, 2020). Joe Biden amassed 74 million votes as of November 6th, whereas Donald Trump received around 70 million votes, achieving the largest and second-largest number of votes, respectively, in U.S. election history (Deane & Gramlich, 2020). This heavy polarization was the result of candidates' exploitation of issues such as COVID-19, accusations of electoral fraud, police brutality, and high levels of misinformation. When these issues are intentionally constructed to divide the electorate to gain political advantage, they are called wedge issues (Wiant, 2002, p. 276). These issues, added to conflicts, polarization, fear, and a loss of trust in the institutions, have the potential to mobilize voters to one candidate's party.

All elections are dominated by a few main issues, and it is the candidates' role to find out which of these issues succeed in mobilizing the most voters to their party. The overall objectives of this research are to explain whether wedge issues have been a determinant factor in the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, focusing on three specific issues of the campaign: race issues, the prestige of the political institutions, and COVID-19; and the impact these issues had on voter mobilization, based on an analysis of the discourses used by each candidate.

2. Theoretical framework

This section will review the main concepts and approaches that will be used for the analysis regarding voter behavior and how wedge issues are key to mobilizing voters. First, the importance of cross-pressure voters during the elections will be analyzed, followed by the psychological model of voter behavior, which explains what voters take into consideration when deciding between candidates. Finally, a definition of what a wedge issue is and the role these issues play during the elections will be discussed, with a further look into the saliency of said issues and how these are key in party competition.

2.1. Voter behavior

Candidates' efforts to exploit controversial issues can be explained through cross-pressured voters, who are partisans closer to one of the main parties, but that disagree with their affiliated party on a policy issue that is personally important to them, causing an internal conflict (Shields & Hillygus, 2008). To attract voters from the opponent, candidates need to recognize who the cross-pressured voters are and target them with issues that are important enough to them to mobilize them to the candidate's party, usually done through wedge issues (Lakoff, 2004).

To reach voters more effectively, candidates need to understand how different voters behave. As we are trying to understand the impact of issues on voters — focusing on cross-pressured voters — the psychological perspective will help us understand how mental structures work and how they can be modified through discourse to mobilize voters for one party or the other. Other approaches, such as the economic approach, would fail to explain why someone may

The 2020 U.S. presidential election saw a historical record number of participants, with a turnout of two-thirds of the eligible voting population, more than in any of the previous 120 years

vote based on prioritizing the common well-being of society even if it does not coincide with maximizing their personal interest. The sociological approach — which explains how an issue, when correctly targeted to a social group and with an elaborate discourse, can help mobilize different social groups — would also fail to explain why people within a specific group can vote for different candidates depending on the election.

Following the psychological approach and according to George Lakoff (2004), everyone has mental frames that affect their thinking process. This process starts with mental structures that condition the way we see the world and how we reason, called frames. This idea that frames create meanings was first developed by Robin Lakoff in *The Language War* (2000). Words are also defined in relation to conceptual frames so when we hear a word, its frame is activated in our brain. Following George Lakoff's theory, conservatives and progressives have different ways of understanding morality which come represented by two family models: the strict father and the nurturant parent model. Each of these two models illustrates a different view of the world, either as a dangerous and competitive place or based on empathy and responsibility. Political opinions are dominated by one of the two models, but everyone has both, either actively or passively. Knowing which model voters have in different aspects of their lives helps us find the best narrative to approach them.

A wedge issue is a rhetorical strategy, usually focused on a social concern, that is intentionally constructed to divide party voters and polarize the public

2.2. Wedge issues

Parties struggle for attention as the electorate and media have limited information-processing capacities, and this attention is crucial for a party's electoral (Hobolt, De Vries, & van de Wardt, 2014). The concept of issue salience plays a major role in elections, as parties define their policies by emphasizing certain issues more than others. However, there is a debate on whether parties always emphasize the same "owned" issues or if they emphasize different issues in different elections to win votes (Budge, 2015). "The theory of issue ownership finds a campaign effect when a candidate successfully frames the vote choice as a decision to be made in terms of problems facing the country that he is better able to "handle" than his opponent" (Petrocik, 1996, p. 826).

Candidates can actively exploit issues to make them salient. The increased salience of an issue is associated with an increment of knowledge of its possible causes and solutions, stronger opinions, a reduced likelihood of taking a neutral position, and a higher likelihood of participating in politics (Weaver, 1991). Choosing the right issues to make them salient can help candidates mobilize voters.

These issues become wedge issues when candidates rely on divisive themes to mobilize voters in their favor or to control the agenda, so to move it away from other issues that may rally voters in favor of their opponent (Shields & Hillygus, 2008). "A wedge issue is a rhetorical strategy, usually focused on a social concern, that is intentionally constructed to divide party voters and polarize the public in order to gain political advantage" (Wiant, 2002, p. 276). Some of the most common wedge issues are abortion rights, gun ownership, gay marriage, minimum wage, or immigration, which force people to choose a side, for or against. Another characteristic of these wedge issues is that they divide voters through code words, labeling, and other strategies to gain a political advantage (Shields & Hillygus, 2008).

How these wedge issues are used by both candidates during campaigns can shape voter behavior and election outcomes. The impact of the campaign will have little effect on some voters, especially partisans, but for others, the campaign provides critical knowledge to choose between

the candidates (Shields & Hillygus, 2008). For cross-pressured voters, the campaign is critical as it determines if their internal conflict regarding an issue is exacerbated or assuaged by altering the salience of that specific issue. Ultimately, the purpose of resorting to wedge issues is not to change people's minds, but to mobilize voters by targeting people who do not have a solid opinion on a specific issue and lack strong party loyalty (Peterson & Fayyad, 2017).

The challenge for political parties in every campaign is to identify the most important issues for the electorate and use them to attract voters to a specific party. Campaigns serve a dual purpose: reinforcing the loyalty of the candidate's base (Campbell, 2016) and attracting cross-pressured voters, as the partisan base is not sufficient to win the elections.

Through discourse, candidates can choose the issues they want to cover, as they feel they are at a considerable advantage compared to the opposition, or address issues in which they have public opinion support. Nevertheless, candidates deal with issues that change from one election to the following one and depend on external factors. But even in these situations, the approach they decide to take, the wording or codes they use to address the topic, or how quickly they react to that specific issue can influence the final decision of the voter.

There is evidence to suggest a link between internal conflict and susceptibility: "By regulating the degree of conflict experienced, the persuader can make it more likely that the persuadee will choose the option desired by the persuader" (O'Keefe, 2002, p. 81). Other authors state that when the underlying structure of an attitude is less consistent, that attitude is more responsive to new information (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995). In cases where an opinion is not consistent, voters are more open to new information and motivated to increase their knowledge about the issue. In this process of seeking new information, voters will rely mainly on the campaign as a source of information.

3. Hypotheses and methodology

The main objectives of this paper are to determine whether the three wedge issues we have identified were a determinant factor in the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election and to assess the impact of these issues on voter mobilization. To achieve these objectives, we present the following working hypotheses:

1. COVID-19, the economic crisis caused by it, the prestige of the political institutions, and the race issue were the main wedge issues in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.
2. The massive mobilization observed in the election — that beat historical records — was a consequence of the polarization caused by the exploitation of these wedge issues.
3. Joe Biden's framing of COVID-19 was more successful than Donald Trump's, resulting in a new framework that resonated with voters.

To test these hypotheses, the analysis is divided into two main parts:

- » First, we will verify whether the proposed issues are wedge issues.
- » Second, we will analyze whether these issues had a substantial impact on the outcome of the U.S. presidential election.

The analysis will be conducted among different ethnic groups to better identify the impact these issues had within each group. By examining cases where an ethnic group intended to vote

The purpose of resorting to wedge issues is not to change people's minds, but to mobilize voters by targeting people who do not have a solid opinion on a specific issue and lack strong party loyalty

for a particular candidate, but also had concerns about a specific issue, and observing if their voting preferences were modified as a result, we can determine the impact of a candidate's narrative on that particular issue as well as the issue salience's impact on voters' behavior.

Due to the limited extent of the analysis and its main objective, we will only be taking into consideration the impact of the three identified wedge issues on the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election. However, while outside the scope of this paper, a comprehensive understanding of the election outcome would require the analysis of many other variables, such as the historical context, perception of each candidate by the voters, sociopolitical dynamics, etc.

3.1. Verifying the issues proposed are wedge issues

The proposed issues are COVID-19, the prestige of the political institutions, and race issues. These issues have been selected based on them being dominant topics of the debates and in a survey conducted by Pew Research Center (2021) on the public's top priorities. Among the different issues, dealing with the coronavirus outbreak was a top priority for 78% of people, improving the political system by 62%, and addressing issues around race for 49%.

For the analysis of wedge issues, the definition of Wiant (2002, p. 276) presented in the theoretical framework will be used. We will assess each of the three issues following this structure:

1. Introduction: A brief introduction will provide the reader with contextual information about the issue.
2. Polarization: We will analyze the discourse of both candidates during the presidential debates to identify divisive approaches and the specific wording used by each candidate, as the aim of explaining the use of wedge issues is to create division among the electorate.
3. Media coverage: To identify the salience of the issues proposed, we will analyze the articles written by the New York Times between February 1st and November 3rd of 2020 through an API to identify when keywords appear. This newspaper was selected as it is the third most sold in the U.S. and the only one that offered a free-to-use API to access its archive of data. Even though it is considered to lean towards the Democratic party, it is only being used quantitatively to establish the number of times these issues have been covered in the media.
4. Public opinion: We will examine public opinion to determine if the narrative of an issue caused any reaction among the electorate. This analysis will consider the time frame from the 1st of February 2020, to the 31st of January 2021, as some key events that need to be considered for evidence took place after the elections.

Lastly, as the aim of this research is to demonstrate the effectiveness of political discourse when used correctly to mobilize voters, we will see if the model of wedge issues strategies can predict which voters were mobilized.

3.2. Analyze if these issues had a substantial impact on the outcome of the U.S. presidential election

In this section, we will measure the impact of the three issues in terms of mobilization. If a candidate's discourse is effective and the polarization is perceived by the voter, it will result in mobilization.

The aim of this research is to demonstrate the effectiveness of political discourse when used correctly to mobilize voters

To measure this mobilization, we will conduct an analysis of the different voters' profiles by ethnic group and their sociology. Furthermore, we will examine the main issues of the 2020 U.S. presidential election and then, specifically, the issues more relevant to Democrats and Republicans. For the analysis of these issues, we will be using two surveys conducted by Pew Research, the first one conducted between July and August 2020 and the second conducted right after the elections in November 2020. The purpose of doing this is to identify any changes in the importance given to any of these topics in the months leading to Election Day and during the presidential debate period.

Subsequently, we will analyze how the three issues proposed were perceived by each party's supporters to identify, if any, the differences between Trump supporters and Biden supporters, assessing the role of party affiliation in issue prioritizing. Finally, we will analyze the results of the exit polls by ethnic group to see how specific groups prioritized these issues. If an ethnic group was inclined to vote for a candidate but also expressed concern about a specific issue, and this concern led to a modification in the percentage of support for that candidate, we can conclude that the narrative of a candidate on that issue had an impact on the voter.

To measure this mobilization, we will conduct an analysis of the different voters' profiles by ethnic group and their sociology

4. Analysis

4.1. Verify if the issues proposed are wedge issues

4.1.1. COVID-19

Introduction

Between January and May 2020, the disease spread to every state, killing around 576,724 people and infecting 32.4 million in the United States, although due to testing delays and scarcity of tests, many cases and deaths went undiagnosed. During March and April 2020, local authorities limited large gatherings, closed non-essential businesses, and ordered residents to stay in their homes, triggering a national shutdown. With measures attempting to slow down the virus's spread, the economic toll incited a debate over when and how businesses and schools should continue with their in-person operations, and whether the measures both the federal and local governments were taking were too restrictive or not restrictive enough (Hernandez et al., 2020).

Polarization

To analyze each candidate's position on these issues, we are going to rely on the two presidential debates¹.

The vaccine played a significant role in Trump's discourse, as the electorate was extremely concerned about the situation. Proving that Trump could have the vaccine before Election Day was decisive to the elections' outcome, so he clearly stated during his speech that logistics were ready to start delivering the vaccines as soon as they were available, implying that this moment was not far in time. In relation to the vaccine, Biden knew that acquiring a vaccine before the

¹ All the quotes are taken from the debates' transcripts via <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/donald-trump-joe-biden-1st-presidential-debate-transcript-2020>

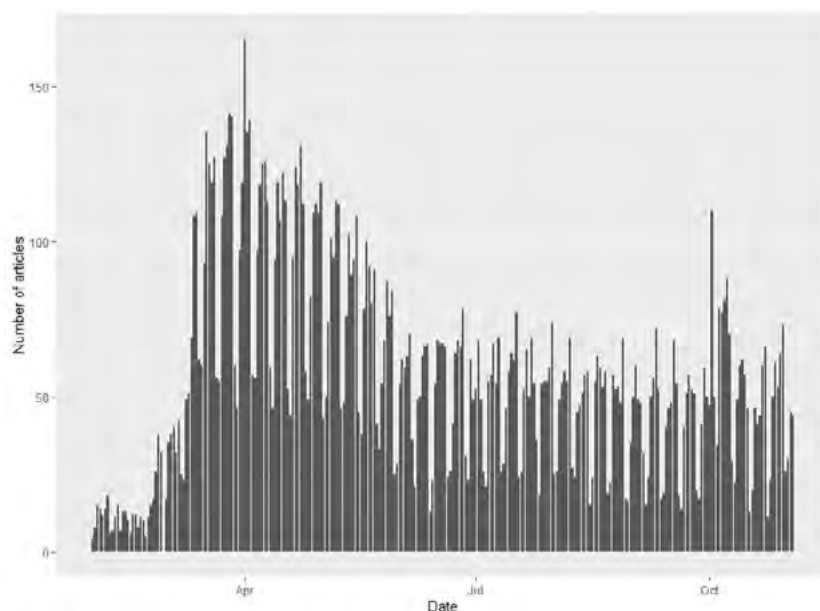
elections could potentially harm his campaign, so he attempted to discredit Trump's statements about having the vaccine before the elections.

The economy played a substantial role in this issue, as the country's economic situation and the number of jobs a president manages to create are key in determining public opinion about the president. Biden's motto regarding the economic crisis was "You cannot fix the economy until you fix the COVID crisis". Trump also introduced fear in his discourse as he mentioned several times that Biden wanted to shut down the economy and said: "We can't keep this country closed [...] People are losing their jobs. They're committing suicide. That's depression, alcohol, drugs at a level that nobody has ever seen before". Biden's discourse during the second debate was more dramatic, aiming to place blame on Trump's management during the pandemic "Anyone responsible for that many deaths should not remain as President of the United States of America".

Media coverage

To identify the salience in the media, we have analyzed the number of articles written in the New York Times between February and November 2020 that included the keyword "COVID". As can be seen in the graphic, since its entrance into the U.S., COVID-19 became a salient issue, especially between March and June 2020. The average number of articles written regarding COVID-19 exceeded 50 per day, demonstrating that this issue was consistently salient throughout the whole time frame established.

Graphic 1. Plot of the amount key words were used in articles over time



Source: Personal elaboration based on articles by the New York Times

Public Opinion

The lockdown restrictions prompted protests in the U.S., with people taking to the streets in states like Texas, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Wisconsin. In New York, counter-protests were held, and fake body bags were delivered to Trump International Hotel by citizens angry at Trump's approach to the crisis (BBC News, 2020a).

In Raleigh, North Carolina, a state governed by Democrats, dozens of protesters crowded to demand that the state reopened faster than its neighbors to the south. Some high-profile dissenters, such as Elon Musk, also openly flouted shutdown orders by defying California officials to arrest him for reopening his factory against local restrictions. President Trump supported Elon Musk by tweeting "California should let Tesla & @elonmusk open the plant, NOW. It can be done Fast & Safely!" (Shepherd, 2020).

Conclusion

To determine whether COVID-19 is a wedge issue, we must verify if it satisfies the three main requirements: polarization, salience in media coverage, and triggering a reaction among the electorate. Firstly, we can see a clear polarization in the discourse of both candidates taken from the presidential debates, and the use of fear as a political tool. Trump's approach was to prioritize the economy, stating that businesses had to remain open and promising that the vaccine would be ready before Election Day. On the other hand, Biden stated that the economy couldn't be fixed until the COVID-19 crisis was resolved. Moreover, according to CNN's exit polls (2021), for the question "Who would better handle the coronavirus pandemic?" 4% of Biden supporters thought it was Trump, and 6% of Trump supporters thought it would be Biden, proving that this issue created division among each candidate's supporters and that they each managed to take a portion of their opponent's voters. Regarding salience, the issue was constantly present in the media after the virus started spreading in the country. Lastly, the lockdown restrictions triggered protests in various states, displaying a stark divide between those who disagreed with Trump's management of the pandemic and those in Democrat-governed states such as North Carolina, who crowded to demand the reopening of the state. Given it satisfies all the required elements, we can conclude that COVID-19 was indeed a wedge issue in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

As a result, citizens lost confidence in the information provided by both the candidates and public institutions

4.1.2. Prestige of the political institutions

Introduction

The constant stream of fake news was supported by conspiracy theories, such as the ones spread by QAnon questioning the system. The suspicions surrounding mail voting fraud were encouraged by Trump's statements, as a majority of Democrat voters would vote by mail. The exploitation of wedge issues and the spread of controversial information on social media culminated in Trump's suspension from Twitter due to the risk of inciting violence. As a result, citizens lost confidence in the information provided by both the candidates and public institutions. Due to the number of various issues that have influenced the prestige of political institutions, for this research, we will focus on two main events that contain keywords facilitating the analysis of media coverage: the appointment of Ruth B. Ginsburg's successor as associate justice of the Supreme Court and the accusations of election fraud.

First, when Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died, a political battle started to appoint her successor. Her passing occurred just weeks before the presidential election, causing a debate over who should nominate her replacement. This decision was controversial as, if Republicans chose the successor, it could solidify a conservative majority in the country's highest court (BBC News, 2020b). Second, throughout his campaign, Trump repeated that there would be election fraud and that voting by mail, which ballooned due to the pandemic, could not be trusted. When Biden won the election, Trump went to court in six states in which Biden's margin was higher, arguing that the elections were fraudulent. All the fear and the polarization among the electorate ended up in the assault of the Capitol and a second impeachment of Trump for "incitement of insurrection" (Gerhart, 2020).

Polarization

During the first debate, the selection of a successor to Ruth Bader Ginsburg generated significant controversy. Biden's narrative centered on "The American people have a right to have a say" and he insisted that the right to decide who would choose the nominee should wait until after the election result. Trump's approach regarding choosing the nominee was that having won the 2016 election, it was his right to choose the successor, "I am not elected for three years. I am elected for four years" which he repeated during different parts of the debate.

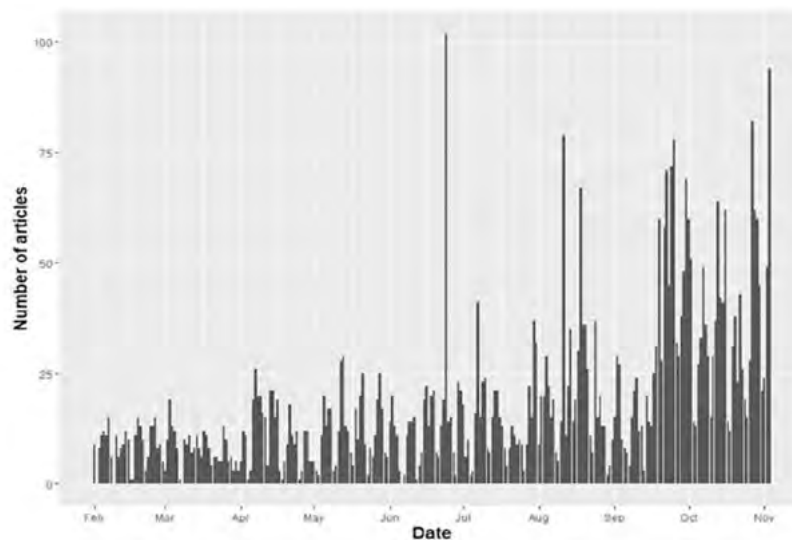
Regarding election integrity, Trump claimed that more ballots were being sent than there should have been "They sent two in a Democrat area [...]. This is going to be a fraud like you've never seen", also claiming that ballots were being sold. He also aimed to mobilize his voters: "I'm urging my supporters to go into the polls and watch very carefully". On the other hand, Biden attempted to prove that there was no evidence that the elections would be fraudulent, "His own Homeland Security director, as well as the FBI director, says that there is no evidence at all that mail-in ballots are a source of being manipulated and cheating", as he also encouraged people to vote early if their state allowed it.

Media coverage

The keywords used to search these articles were "Supreme Court", "Vote Fraud", "Fraud Election", and "Vote-by-Mail".

As can be seen in the graphic, this issue was not especially prominent during the initial months. However, as Trump started to introduce it in debates, it became increasingly salient in the months preceding the Election Day. The peak months were October and November in which the electorate was more concerned about this issue, as both candidates were debating who should nominate Ruth Bader Ginsburg's successor to the Supreme Court and Trump introduced the topic of election fraud. The relevance of this issue continued increasing, ending up in the assault on the Capitol in January.

Candidates were debating who should nominate Ruth Bader Ginsburg's successor to the Supreme Court and Trump introduced the topic of election fraud

Graphic 2. Plot of the amount key words were used in articles over time

Source: Personal elaboration based on articles by the New York Times

Public Opinion

This crisis of trust left the country highly divided as, according to the exit polls by CNN (2021), in response to the question “how confident that votes will be counted accurately”, 12% of the voters stated that they were not confident, with 33% of them being Biden supporters. This proved that this issue managed to draw a portion of the Democrats towards the Republican party. Trump’s tweets were claimed to have encouraged his supporters to take action as the elections were being “stolen”, as evident in tweets like “We are up BIG, but they are trying to STEAL the Election. We will never let them do it. Votes cannot be cast after the Polls are closed!” (Sardarizadeh & Lussenhop, 2021).

After Biden was elected President, Trump’s supporters broke into the Capitol while lawmakers were conducting a ceremonial count of Biden’s victory. This assault resulted in five deaths and several officers injured (King, 2021). Evidence also emerged of online mobilization on platforms frequently used by Trump supporters, such as TheDonald.win, as well as on Facebook and Twitter using hashtags such as #StormTheCapitol or #StopTheSteal (BBC News, 2021).

Conclusion

First, we can identify differing positions between the candidates: Biden believed they had to wait until Election Day to choose Ruth B. Ginsburg’s successor, while Trump stated he had the right to do it as he was still President. Also, regarding election integrity, Trump claimed that the elections were fraudulent and that mail-in ballots were being manipulated, managing to attract a portion of Biden’s supporters. As for salience, it has been shown that this issue gained importance especially since it was brought up during the debates and culminated with citizens, mainly Trump supporters, storming the Capitol, leading to a loss of trust in the institutions by voters. As it has all the elements required, we can conclude that the prestige of the political institutions was a wedge issue in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

4.1.3. Race

Introduction

Race is an issue that has been present in U.S. history since its formation, and it has played a role — big or small — in every election. However, cases of police brutality have increased, such as the tragic death of George Floyd on the 25th of May 2020 (Hill et al., 2021). Another case occurred on the 13th of March 2020, when Breonna Taylor was shot in her apartment in Kentucky by three police officers (Oppel et al., 2021).

Polarization

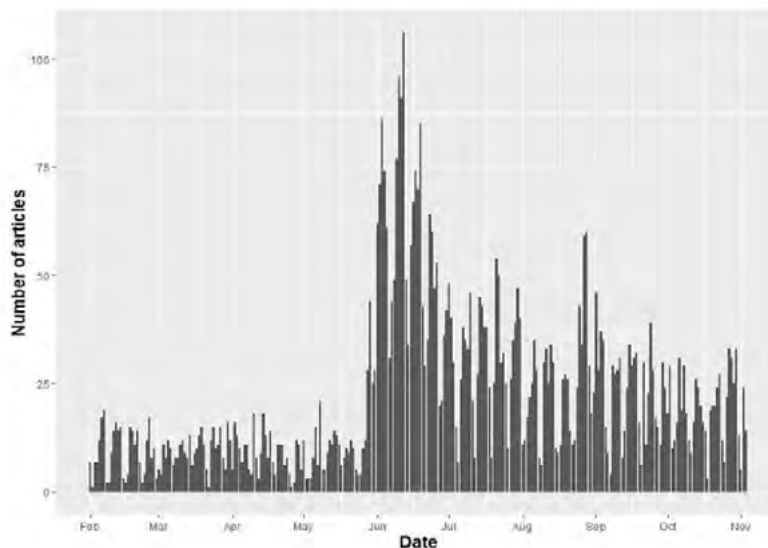
Biden supported the Black Lives Matter movement, and when speaking about the “peaceful protests in front of the White House”, he stated that Trump “came out of his bunker, had the military use tear gas on them so he could walk across to a church and hold up a Bible”. Biden tried to position Trump as a privileged citizen while aiming to be seen as closer to the average citizen. Biden also highlighted during his discourse that COVID-19 affected more African Americans than the rest of the electorate, stating, “One in 1,000 African Americans has been killed because of the coronavirus”. In this last quote, it is worth noting that he did not say that African Americans died because of the coronavirus, but he uses the word “kill”, personalizing the virus and implying that African Americans were the main victims.

In his discourse, Biden used numerous examples to identify himself with the situation that African Americans have to live with. For instance, during the second debate, he said “I never had to tell my daughter if she’s pulled over, make sure that you put both hands on top of the wheel and don’t reach for the glove box because someone may shoot you [...]”. Trump’s position regarding race issues was backed up by the fact that Biden created a crime bill in 1994 and referred to African Americans as “super predators”. His discourse was based on the slogan “law and order”, stating that Biden did not support law enforcement because he is a “radical left Democrat”. Trump’s messages also included reminding the voters that Biden had been in government for 47 years and never accomplished anything.

Media coverage

The keywords used to find these articles were Black Lives Matter, Racism, and Law and Order. As can be seen in the graphic, this issue was always present during the elections, but it became a salient issue in June 2020 after the death of George Floyd at the end of May. The peak between June and July can be attributed to the mobilization of the Black Lives Matter movement through social media, which initiated strikes and ended up with a majority of people crowded outside the White House. As shown, after this peak, the frequency of articles regarding this issue increased considerably.

Biden also highlighted during his discourse that COVID-19 affected more African Americans than the rest of the electorate

Graphic 3. Plot of the amount key words were used in articles over time

Source: Personal elaboration based on articles by the New York Times

Public Opinion

What happened with Breonna Taylor and George Floyd was the trigger for the Black Lives Matter movement (BBC News, 2020c). This movement expanded all over the country, leading to protests in more than 130 cities and resulting in 4.400 arrests. These tragedies had a significant impact on further dividing the electorate, as 76% of White Republicans believed that Trump's message regarding the protests was mostly or completely right, compared to the almost unanimous agreement among White Democrats (94%) that believed that the message was wrong. (Mitchell, Jurkowitz, Oliphant, & Shearer, 2020).

Conclusion

First, we can see two different positions of the candidates. Trump based his discourse on "law and order", while Biden supported minority rights and directed his discourse toward the African Americans in the electorate. According to the exit polls by CNN (2021), for the question "view of Black Lives Matter" 57% were favorable (78% Democrats and 20% Republicans), and 37% unfavorable (14% Democrats and 86% Republicans). These results show that this issue created division among the supporters of each candidate, and Biden managed to attract a greater portion of voters from the opposition than Trump. Regarding salience, it has been shown how media coverage increased after the death of George Floyd, as it was followed by the protests. During the months before Election Day, salience decreased compared to June 2020, but it remained higher than before the death of George Floyd. Lastly, this issue was able to mobilize voters and resulted in a crowd outside the White House. As it has all the elements required, we can conclude that race was a wedge issue in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

4.2. Analyze if these issues had a substantial impact on the outcome of the U.S. presidential election

Once we have established these issues can be considered wedge issues, we will conduct an analysis to determine if voters were mobilized as a result of these issues. This will be divided into four main parts. First, an analysis of the different voters' profiles by ethnic group and their sociology will be conducted. This will be followed by an examination of the main issues of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, then specifically the issues more relevant to Democrats and Republicans, and lastly, the most relevant issues by ethnic group.

4.2.1. Voter profiles by ethnic group

Not only do the candidates and the main issues of the campaign differ from one election to the next one, but the electorate is also in a constant state of change as more citizens reach the legal age to vote or as more immigrants become citizens. In order to understand the outcome of the 2020 presidential election, we need to understand the heterogeneity among the voter spectrum. For these elections, non-whites accounted for a third of eligible voters, their largest share ever, and one-in-ten eligible voters were members of Generation Z (Cilluffo & Fry, 2020).

According to a Pew Research Center analysis of American' partisan identification, approximately a third of registered voters in the U.S. (34%) considered themselves Independents, 33% Democrats, and 29% Republicans. The majority of Independents leaned toward one party, considering independents' leanings, 49% of all registered voters classified themselves as Democrats or leaning toward the party, as opposed to 44% identified as Republicans or leaning toward the party (Gramlich, 2020). However, just because a voter leans toward a specific party, it does not imply that he will end up voting for that party.

White voters' share of registered voters diminished from 85% in 1996 to 69% in 2020, affecting both parties. However, white voters represented a much higher share of Republican or leaning Republican registered voters compared to Democratic voters (81% vs. 59% as of 2019). White voters represented 67% of eligible voters nationally in 2018, but the racial composition varied greatly among the 50 states (Gramlich, 2020).

Black American voters played a crucial role in battleground states as they reached a record of 30 million participating in the 2020 elections, with over one-third living in the most competitive states (Budiman, 2020). Black eligible voters amounted nationwide to 12.5% in 2020 of the electorate, compared to 11.5% in 2000. For the 2020 elections, 63% of Black registered voters expressed motivation to vote, and over a third (35%) supported the Democratic party. Black voters recorded high turnout rates compared to other racial groups, closely matching White turnout rates in 2008 and 2012.

In the 2020 elections, Latinos were expected to be the largest ethnic minority reaching a record 32 million voters eligible to vote, accounting for 13.3% of all eligible voters. Latino voters had the potential to make a difference for the Democratic Party, as 62% of registered voters identified themselves or leaned toward the party, while 34% leaned toward the Republican Party.

According to a Pew Research Center analysis of American' partisan identification, approximately a third of registered voters in the U.S. (34%) considered themselves Independents

4.2.2. Main issues of the 2020 U.S. presidential election

To analyze how the three main issues of our research were perceived by the voters, we utilized a survey conducted by Pew Research (2020) between the 27th of July and the 2nd of August 2020. The top issues for voters in the 2020 election were the economy (79%), highly affected by COVID-19, healthcare (68%), Supreme Court appointments (64%), the coronavirus outbreak (62%), and race and ethnic inequality (52%).

After the elections — between the 8th and 12th of January 2021 — the same survey by Pew Research (2021a) was conducted to examine the evolution of the priority issues among voters. The top issues were strengthening the economy (80%), dealing with the coronavirus outbreak (78%), improving the political system (62%), and addressing issues around race (49%).

4.2.3. Main issues of the 2020 U.S. presidential election by party

The same surveys previously mentioned were conducted to analyze the differences between Trump and Biden supporters, to determine which issues were prioritized depending on party affiliation.

For the purpose of this research, we will not analyze all the issues, but those that are the subject of our study. Both surveys indicate polarization among the electorate, as the differences regarding the issues are vast. For instance, the survey conducted between July and August 2020 shows that the coronavirus outbreak was considered a top issue for 39% of Trump supporters and 82% of Biden supporters. This disparity can be attributed to the different messages each candidate was giving at the time regarding COVID-19. However, in the same survey conducted after the elections, dealing with the coronavirus outbreak became a top issue for 60% of Republicans and 93% of Democrats.

Regarding race and ethnic inequality, in July 2020, only 24% of Trump supporters viewed it as a “very important issue” to their vote, compared to 76% of Democrats. This trend slightly changed after the elections as the Democrats who considered this issue a top priority decreased to 72%. On the other hand, Trump’s position on race was defined by “law and order”. Although this specific category is not included in the surveys, we will use the results of “violent crime” as it is the closest aligned with our analysis. In July 2020, violent crime was considered a “very important issue” by 74% of Republicans, in comparison to 46% of Democrats. After the elections this number decreased and “reducing crime” was considered a top issue by 55% of Republicans and 39% of Democrats.

Supreme Court appointments were considered a top issue by 66% of Democrats and 61% of Republicans. In the survey conducted after the elections, this issue did not appear and it was replaced by improving the political system, considered a top priority by 60% of Republicans and 64% of Democrats.

4.2.4. Main issues by ethnic group

Among the voter spectrum, there were also differences regarding what they considered the most important issues in the campaigns or the major reasons to vote for one candidate over the other.

These differences were also evident among different ethnic groups. For instance, addressing issues around race was considered a top priority to be addressed that year by 83% of Black voters,

The coronavirus outbreak was considered a top issue for 39% of Trump supporters and 82% of Biden supporters

68% of Latino voters, and only 40% of White voters. When analyzing the coronavirus outbreak, it was considered a priority by 95% of Black voters, 82% of Hispanic voters, and 72% of White voters. Lastly, improving the political system was a priority for 74% of Black voters, 64% of Hispanic voters, and 61% of White voters. To analyze the 3 different groups' preferences the exit polls conducted by CNN were used (2021).

White voters

The majority of White voters were Trump supporters, irrespective of age. When asked about confidence in the accuracy of vote counting, 51% replied "very confident" (46% of them Biden supporters vs. 53% Trump supporters), 37% replied "somewhat confident" (38% Biden supporters vs. 60% Trump supporters), and 8% replied "not very confident" (18% Biden supporters vs. 81% Trump supporters).

Regarding the coronavirus issue, there were stark differences among the electorate. It was considered "the most important factor" by 17% (42% Biden supporters vs. 57% Trump supporters), "an important factor" by 38% (40% Biden supporters vs. 59% Trump supporters), "a minor factor" by 22% (10% Biden supporters vs. 89% Trump supporters), and "not a factor at all" by 18% (4% Biden supporters vs. 95% Trump supporters). There were differences when asked "In vote for president, Supreme Court appointments were", but 49% of respondents considered this an important factor (54% Trump supporters vs. 45% Biden supporters).

When asked "Racism in the U.S. is" 11% of respondents said it was "the most important problem" (81% Democrats vs. 16% Republicans), 52% said "an important problem" (52% Democrats vs. 46% Republicans), 22% said "a minor problem" (11% Democrats vs. 88% Republicans), and 11% said "not a problem at all" (8% Democrats vs. 91% Republicans). Regarding the question "Most important issue to your vote", racial inequality amounted a 10% (84% Biden supporters vs. 16% Trump supporters), coronavirus accounted for 19% (81% Biden supporters vs. 18% Trump supporters), the economy 43% (11% Biden supporters vs. 88% Trump supporters), crime and safety 12%, and health care policy amounted 12%. As the economy was considered the main issue for white voters, the next question was "who is better in handling the economy" 59% chose Trump and 40% chose Biden.

Lastly, the question "Party ID" helps us identify if there were voters from one party who ended up voting for the opposition or how we have called them "cross-pressured" voters. Among the White voters 28% identified as Democrats (93% voted for Biden vs. 7% voted for Trump), 46% identified as Republicans (5% voted for Biden vs. 95% voted for Trump), and Independents amounted to 26% (51% voted for Biden vs. 46% voted for Trump).

Black Americans

Most Black voters were Biden supporters, regardless of their age. When asked "How confident are you that the votes will be counted accurately", the majority, 33%, replied "very confident" (68% Biden supporters vs. 32% Trump supporters), "somewhat confident" by 54% (95% Biden supporters vs. 4% Trump supporters), and "not very confident" amounted 8% of the responses. When dealing with the coronavirus issue, it was considered "the most important factor" by 49% (93% Biden supporters vs. 6% Trump supporters), "an important factor" by 35% (89% Biden supporters vs. 9% Trump supporters), "a minor factor" by 5%, and "not a factor at all" by 3%. There were differences when asked "In vote for president, Supreme Court appointments were" as 22% considered it "the most important factor", 33% "an important factor" (91% Biden sup-

The question "Party ID" helps us identify if there were voters from one party who ended up voting for the opposition or how we have called them "cross-pressured" voters

porters vs. 8% Trump supporters), 15% considered it “a minor factor”, and 26% “not a factor at all” (88% Biden supporters vs. 12% Trump supporters).

When asked “Racism in the U.S. is” respondents said it was “the most important problem” by 39% (98% Democrats vs. 2% Republicans), “an important problem” by 45% (87% Democrats vs. 12% Republicans), “a minor problem” by 7% and “not a problem at all” by 7%. Regarding the question “Most important issue to your vote”, racial inequality amounted a 50% (99% Biden supporters vs. 1% Trump supporters), coronavirus accounted for 17% (96% Biden supporters vs. 4% Trump supporters), the economy 15%, crime and safety 4%, and health care policy amounted 9%.

Lastly, regarding the question “Party ID”, 75% of Black voters identified as Democrats (97% voted for Biden vs. 3% voted for Trump), 7% identified as Republicans (13% voted for Biden vs. 87% voted for Trump), and Independents amounted 18% (73% voted for Biden vs. 21% voted for Trump).

Latinos

Most Latino voters were Biden supporters, despite their age. When asked “How confident that votes will be counted accurately”, 44% answered “very confident” (75% Democrats vs. 23% Republicans), and “somewhat confident” by 38% (72% Democrats vs. 25% Republicans). When dealing with the coronavirus issue, it was considered “the most important factor” by 40% (74% Biden supporters vs. 23% Trump supporters), “an important factor” by 32% (58% Biden supporters vs. 40% Trump supporters), “a minor factor” by 8% and “not a factor at all” by 11%. There were differences when asked “In vote for president, Supreme Court appointments were” considered by 24% “the most important factor” (53% Biden supporters vs. 45% Trump supporters), 47% “an important factor” (62% Biden supporters vs. 36% Trump supporters), 12% considered it “a minor factor” and 14% “not a factor at all”.

When asked “Racism in the U.S. is” respondents said it was “the most important problem” by 36% (89% Democrats vs. 9% Republicans), “an important problem” by 45% (74% Democrats vs. 23% Republicans), “a minor problem” by 13%, and “not a problem at all” by 4%. Regarding the question “Most important issue to your vote”, racial inequality amounted to 39% (95% Biden supporters vs. 5% Trump supporters), coronavirus accounted for 8%, the economy 28% (18% Biden supporters vs. 81% Trump supporters), crime and safety 11%, and health care policy amounted 8%.

Lastly, regarding the question “Party ID”, 52% of Latino voters identified as Democrats (93% voted for Biden vs 5% voted for Trump), 22% identified as Republicans (11% voted for Biden vs 86% voted for Trump), and Independents amounted 27% (55% voted for Biden vs. 40% voted for Trump).

4.3. Outcome of the analysis

This analysis had two main objectives: first, it had to verify if the proposed issues of COVID-19, race issues, and the prestige of the political institutions were wedge issues. Second, we examined if these issues were determinants in the outcome of the U.S. presidential election.

To do this, the analysis considered the heterogeneity among the electorate and their preference towards one party or the other to have a general overview of the 2020 electorate. Then, we considered the differences in issue perception depending on the party affiliation.

The analysis considered the heterogeneity among the electorate and their preference towards one party or the other to have a general overview of the 2020 electorate

The last part of the analysis aimed to show the differences among the voter spectrum by ethnic group. White voters were mainly Republicans and the most important issue determining their vote was the economy by 43%, followed by coronavirus by 19%. The majority of Black voters were Democrats and the most important issue determining their vote was racial inequality by 50% followed by coronavirus by 17%. Similarly, most Latinos were Biden supporters and their most important issue was racial inequality by 39%, followed by the economy by 28%. Biden strategically addressed race and coronavirus and made them his “own” issues through his discourse.

An important factor for the research was the role played by “cross-pressured” voters. In the case of white voters, Trump managed to attract 7% of the Democrats to his party while Biden attracted just 5% of Republicans. Among Independents, Biden mobilized more voters to his party (51%) compared to Trump (46%). Among Black Americans, Trump attracted only 3% of Democrats while Biden managed to attract 13% of Republicans. In the case of Independents, the difference was also considerable as 73% ended up voting for Biden while just 21% voted for Trump. In the case of Latino voters, Trump mobilized 5% of Democrats to his party while Biden attracted 11% of Republicans to his party. Independents voted 55% for Biden while 40% voted for Trump.

As previously explained, Biden recognized that minorities were more affected by two of the wedge issues analyzed, race and COVID-19, making them the main target of his discourses. This strategic approach led to record mobilization among voters and allowed Biden to win in the 2020 elections.

In the case of Latino voters, Trump mobilized 5% of Democrats to his party while Biden attracted 11% of Republicans to his party

5. Conclusion

The main objectives of this research were to determine whether the three wedge issues we have established were a determinant factor in the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election and their impact on voter mobilization. To do so, three hypotheses were established:

- » COVID-19, including the economic crisis caused by it, the prestige of political institutions, and the race issue, were the main wedge issues for the 2020 elections

The analysis demonstrated how the three issues stated, COVID-19, race issues, and the prestige of the political institutions are wedge issues. For the analysis we used Wiant's (2002) definition that states that: “when these issues are intentionally constructed to divide the electorate to gain political advantage are called wedge issues (Wiant, 2002, p. 276)”.

In the case of COVID-19, when asked “better handle the coronavirus pandemic?” 4% of Biden supporters thought it was Trump, and 6% of Trump supporters thought it would be Biden (CNN, 2021). Biden's discourse on COVID-19 managed to attract a greater portion of the opponent's supporters. For the issue of the prestige of the political institutions, when asked “how confident that votes will be counted accurately”, 12% of the voters stated that they were not confident and 33% of them were Biden supporters. Trump's constant message questioning the integrity of the system managed to create a division among Biden's supporters and attract them to his party (CNN, 2021). Lastly, regarding the race issue, Biden's support for the Black Lives Matter movement made him attract a greater portion of opposition voters. In this case, when asked “view of Black Lives Matter” 57% were favorable (78% Democrats and 20% Republicans) and 37% unfavorable (14% Democrats and 86% Republicans), proving that this issue caused division among the supporters of each party.

Once proven that these were wedge issues, we had to analyze their significance as the main issues in the election. To do so, we examined the surveys conducted by Pew Research (2021a) after the elections, between the 8th and 12th of January 2021. Among the issues the electorate considered most important were strengthening the economy (80%), dealing with the coronavirus outbreak (78%), and addressing issues around race (49%). The economy and the coronavirus outbreak were the two main concerns among the electorate, making them the primary issues of these elections. Even though other issues were considered more important than race, nearly half of the people that participated in the survey considered it as a top issue. The importance of these issues varied across the ethnic spectrum, with the coronavirus outbreak and race issues being crucial issues for minorities, while the economy being the main worry among White voters.

- » The massive mobilization — that beat historical records — was a consequence of the polarization caused by the exploitation of these wedge issues

According to Pew Research (2021), in the 2020 U.S. elections, Americans voted in record numbers, reaching 158.4 million ballots. Nationwide, the voter turnout in 2020 was 7 percentage points higher compared to the 2016 election, and for most ethnic groups. The rise in voter turnout can be attributed to the political battle between President Donald Trump and Joe Biden. A pre-election survey showed a record share of registered voters (83%) believed that it “really mattered” who won (Gilberstadt et al., 2020).

Although other factors that have not been analyzed may have had an impact on the outcome of the 2020 U.S. elections — such as the historical context, other potential wedge issues, and the voters’ opinion on each candidate — the polarization caused by the exploitation of the wedge issues analyzed played a major role in a massive mobilization in voter turnout.

- » Joe Biden’s framing of COVID-19 was more successful than Donald Trump’s, resulting in a new framework that resonated with voters.

The psychological approach to voter behavior helps us understand the impact of issues on cross-pressured voters. George Lakoff (2004) believes that everyone has mental structures called frames, which condition the way we see the world and how we reason. Words are defined in relation to conceptual frames so when we hear a word, the corresponding frame is activated in our brain. The challenge was to convince voters that Biden would handle the coronavirus outbreak better than Trump. This concept is known as issue ownership, which becomes effective when a candidate successfully frames the voting choice in terms of the country’s current problems and portrays himself as more capable to handle those issues compared to their opponent.

Through strategic discourse, Biden managed to attract Republican voters, especially Black and Latino voters who were more affected by race-related issues and COVID-19. He acknowledges that some Republican Black and Latino voters supported Trump but did not agree on his handling of the pandemic or the racial discrimination in the country, hence he exploited these issues, creating an internal conflict among those cross-pressured voters, which ended up in mobilization towards the Democratic party.

The success of Biden’s discourse hinged on whether more voters perceived him as more capable of handling the coronavirus outbreak than Trump. According to CNN’s exit poll results, when asked “who is better equipped to handle the coronavirus pandemic?” Biden

The massive mobilization was a consequence of the polarization caused by the exploitation of these wedge issues

was considered to be better equipped to handle the pandemic by 87% of Black voters, 69% of Latino voters. Trump, on the other hand, was seen as better handling the pandemic solely by White voters (53%). Based on this information, we can conclude that Biden managed to “own” the issue of COVID-19 and to create and establish a framework that was more successful than Trump’s.

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GENDER POLICIES IN POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA: EMPOWERMENT OR POLITICAL STRATEGY?

Las políticas de género en la Ruanda postgenocidio. ¿Empoderamiento o estrategia política?

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In this article, we argue that the gender policies implemented by the Government of Rwanda have been introduced in order to strengthen the democratic credentials of the regime in the eyes of international donors. In order to do so, we have structured the paper in three parts. First, the article examines the political structure of Rwanda, highlighting the dominance of the RPF and the criticisms of its authoritarianism. It also explores the narrative constructed by the RPF, focusing on the portrayal of Tutsi as victims and Hutu as offenders, and the impact of this narrative on international aid. The second part of the essay explores the feminist movement in Rwanda before and after the Genocide, emphasizing the reconfiguration of gendered power relations and the emergence of grassroots women organizations. Finally, it analyzes the implementation of gender policies in Rwanda, considering the tension between transformative feminist goals and the increasing authoritarianism of the state. The main conclusion we have arrived at is that the gender policies applied by the RPF have lacked a transformative impact and that, rather, they have been used as a public relations strategy to disguise the increasing authoritarianism of the government.



Abstract

Feminism; Rwanda; development; international cooperation; autocracy.

Feminismo; Ruanda; desarrollo; cooperación internacional; autocracia.



Key words

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Fechas

En este artículo, defendemos que el propósito del Gobierno de Ruanda a la hora de introducir políticas de género ha sido el de fortalecer sus credenciales democráticas a ojos de los donantes internacionales. Para cumplir con dicho objetivo, hemos estructurado el artículo en tres partes. Primero, se examinan las estructuras políticas de Ruanda, destacando el dominio del RPF y las críticas a su creciente autoritarismo. También se analiza la narrativa construida por el RPF, centrándose en presentar a los Tutsi como víctimas y a los Hutus como criminales y el impacto que esta narrativa tiene en la ayuda internacional. La segunda parte de la investigación examina el movimiento feminista en Ruanda antes y después del Genocidio, enfatizando la reconfiguración de las relaciones de poder de género y el auge de las organizaciones sociales de mujeres. Finalmente, se analiza la implementación de las políticas de género en Ruanda, considerando la tensión entre los objetivos feministas transformativos y el creciente autoritarismo del Estado. La principal conclusión a la que arribamos es que las políticas de género aplicadas por el RPF carecen de un impacto transformativo y que, en su lugar, han sido utilizadas como una estrategia de relaciones públicas para enmascarar el creciente autoritarismo del Gobierno.



1. Introduction

In 1994, the state of Rwanda was devastated by the clash of the two major ethnic groups in the area, Tutsi and Hutu, resulting in one of the most violent genocides in modern history. This left a broken state, a divided society, and a whole new paradigm for state reconstruction. Now, almost 30 years later, Rwanda has become a success story for many in terms of women's rights and female empowerment.

The 1994 Genocide and its consequent aftermath have severely impacted Rwanda's population. Although determining the causes for the ethnic disparity in Rwanda goes beyond the aim of this study, it is important to mark that, despite the general understanding of Hutu and Tutsi as antagonistic ethnics, this problem aroused from an *ethnicization* by European imperialism of what it was a pre-colonial class distinction (Mamdani, 2001). Hence, to be a Hutu or a Tutsi was intrinsically related to the economic power of individuals, a division that is still present nowadays.

Rwanda is defined as an example of social reconstruction. Nevertheless, the many flaws of the system have put into question the legitimacy of these claims. Theoretically, the Rwandan political structure is considered to be a multi-party system; in reality, power is mainly controlled by the RPF (Burnet, 2011). Since the end of the 1994 Genocide, the Rwandan Patriotic Front "has monopolised power and eliminated countervailing voices" (Reyntjens, 2011, p. 32). Kagame's arrival to power in 1994 entangled a series of political reforms which have granted the President and the Prime Minister further and longer executive power (Turianskyi & Chisiza, 2017).

Although there is a common understanding that the 1994 Genocide was committed by Hutu extremists towards the rest of the population, the RPF has constructed a narrative that positions Tutsi as *offended* and Hutu as *offenders*, unrecognizing the Hutu perspective of a double genocide. This single story has translated into the international arena in what Reyntjens considers "an extraordinary sense of entitlement" which is enhanced by the "exploitation of international feelings of guilt and ineptitude" (Reyntjens, 2011, p. 32).

The decade of the 1990s placed the ideas of liberalisation, democratisation, and good governance high in the international development agenda. The events that happened between April and July 1994 brought a globally extended feeling of guilt and accountability which catalysed Rwanda as an “aid darling” (Marysse, Ansoms, & Cassimon, 2007). In other words, despite the denounces of democracy diminishment, the donation flux to the country has substantially increased since the arrival of Paul Kagame to power. “If they sometimes privately agree that some things are going seriously wrong, there is a consensus to give the [Rwandan] government a smooth ride” (International Crisis Group, 2001, p. 13).

Nevertheless, the latest decades have shown an increasing awareness of gender and feminist policies in the Rwandan governmental agenda, positioning its parliament as one of the most gender equal in the world. The implementation of feminist policies in Rwanda has been a divisive issue in the academic literature. On the one hand, a part of academia has underscored the extraordinary efforts Rwanda’s government has employed to overcome the disruption of the rule of law. Authors such as Nimusa, Karuhanga et al. (2018) have addressed what they called “a genuine commitment” towards gender equality and democratisation. On the other hand, there is an ongoing criticism among scholars (Tiemessen, 2004; Reyntjens, 2011; Debussche & Ansoms, 2013) which implies that said feminist policies have served as a public relations strategy to attract donors and deviate attention from the increasing authoritarian nature of the Kagame’s legislature.

This study aims to discern whether the current gender policies applied by the government of Rwanda follow a transformative feminist character and how it relates to the increasing authoritarianism of the state.

2. The feminist movement prior to and post-genocide

War impels rapid social change. Furthermore, war and the post-conflict scenario obligate a re-negotiation of domestic power relations which entangled all levels of society from gender to class (Tripp, 2015). According to Hughes regarding the feminisation of politics in the twentieth century “countries that have experienced war since the 1980s have higher rates of women in their legislatures than countries that have not” (Hughes, 2009, p. 4). After the violence occurred in 1994, Rwanda went through a reconfiguration of gendered power relations, accelerating an ongoing trend that was taking place since the early 1980s (Berry, 2018).

Following the international arena of liberalisation, during the 1980s a modest women’s movement emerged in Rwanda. This was motivated due to the increasing awareness of females’ propensity to poverty in developing nations (Burnet, 2012). Rwandan women obtained the right to vote after the independence, however, they were still constrained in most basic freedoms, “they required their husband’s consent to engage in any profit-making activity, register businesses, buy land, or undertake any legal action in court (Jefremovas, 1991, p. 385).

Women were major victims of the genocide. Rwandan women not only became the targets of mass killings and violence, in addition, perpetrators employed rape as a form of violence with not only ethnic but also class, and gender dimensions, rather than an individual extension of personal dominant relations. It is estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 rape crimes were committed during the three months that the genocide lasted (Braunéus, 2008). In Rwanda’s precolonial society, the ethnic lineage followed a patrilinear line, consequently, sexual

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violence became a political act designed to carry out an officially orchestrated policy (Buss, 2009). The emasculation of an identity. The utilisation of women and the patriarchal thought of motherhood served as a manner of eliminating the source of ethnicity.

Despite this differentiation, both Hutu and Tutsi women experience a situation of extreme poverty after the genocide. Female-headed households are more likely to fall below the poverty line (Moser, 1989), hence, “in the process of securing their families’ basic needs, women began expanding their social networks and interacting with foreign and local actors” (Berry, 2018, p. 73). They present themselves as less ethnic, less politically engaged, and consequently, more suitable to fulfil the holes left by the dead and detained in the new RPF system.

The genocide left an increasing number of female-headed households, but the impact was not only economic. The severe psychological trauma experienced by women in Rwanda promoted the emergence of informal self-help groups, again the community service-focused labour of women appeared as a solution that the newly formed government could not reach. By 1997, around 15,400 women’s organisations were formally created (Newbury & Baldwin, 2000). By 1999 there were “120 women’s organisations operating at the prefectural level, 1,540 at the commune level, 11,560 at the sector level, and 86,290 at the cell level” (USAID, 2000). Moreover, “women succeeded in seeking aid or small loans from humanitarian NGOs or government projects, they gained value in the post-war social context” (Berry, 2018, p. 77). These groups transitioned from forums to alleviate female psychological distress to income generators and advocated for women’s rights within the new Rwanda. A stronger female grassroots movement emerged. Although there is no specific data on the personal profile of the members of this group, studies by Berry show that “most were Tutsi with secondary or university education” (Ibid.).

During the nine years (1994-2003) that the transition period lasted, Rwandan women’s social role developed. Women’s political value thrived in a scenario that merged from the urgency to meet the imperious population’s basic needs and the demand for a new, less violent, political actor.

3. Mainstreaming approach in gender relations: from a global perspective to national reality in Rwanda

There is an increasing idea that higher representation of women in policy-making organs would be accompanied by a general improvement in women’s lives. During the latest decades, international organisations have attempted to mainstream gender analysis in their policies. The growing awareness of female-headed households constituting the “poorest of the poor” enhanced the general acknowledgement that previous female-oriented development plans did not function as expected, consequently, gender mainstreaming was an attempt to “rectify the slow pace of progress in women’s status in developing countries and at the global level” (True, 2010, p. 192).

Gender mainstreaming at the institutional level has followed a liberal integrationist approach. Although international organisations encourage and commit to the mainstreaming of women in their policymaking, there is a general bias of contemplating gender perspectives as a problem-solving device rather than a global goal, hence, focusing on a utilitarian approach rather than advocating for a genuine reconstruction of the system. Consequently, gendered analyses have been employed as a way of “increasing the legitimacy of international norms such as liberal democracy, humanitarian intervention, free trade, regional integration and so on” (Whitworth, 2004, p. 195). The implementation of gender mainstreaming internationally has seldomly led to the questioning

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of liberal feminism and liberal market structures which “privilege masculine agency and reinforce gendered inequalities in power and resources in the market, state and civil society” (True, 2010). After all, the underlying gendered structure of liberal capitalist market is reliant on household economies and the dependence on informal women’s work as child bearers.

3.1. The reality of gender relations in Rwanda

The Rwandan political elite class woman has experienced an extension of her fundamental political rights. This woman, however, normally corresponds to highly educated anglophone Tutsi, whose education has allowed her to be part of the governmental structure (Berry, 2015). Furthermore, while reserved women’s seats in parliament correspond to geographic regions, there is an extended normality that representatives of those areas do not reside there. Consequently, despite women in Rwanda enjoying the constitutional framework which legitimises their legal equality, there are profound impediments to their application in real life that have a strong tie to economic factors. As such, I propose three major examples: In the first place, the cultural and the official approach to rape and sexual violence. Secondly, the augmentation of gender violence. And lastly, the neglect of the “invisible labour” under the economic rationale.

3.1.1. The silence culture around sexual violence and rape

An outstanding example of the extent to which patriarchal norms are cemented in Rwanda’s society is the approach to rape and rape victims. Rape became a major genocidal crime and part of the jurisdiction of the Gacaca courts in 2008 and part of the Jurisdiction of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda since 1994, nevertheless, most perpetrators have not been convicted and no compensation has been paid to the victims. “The rapes during the genocide are acknowledged in the general discourse and indeed used as a key point of reference in stories about genocide” (Selimovic, 2020, p. 137), it appears that despite a general acceptance of rape as a tool of mass violence and ethnic cleansing during the genocide, the individual acknowledgement of violations is still problematic. In addition, studies by Braunéus (2008) found that those women who testified as rape and sexual violence victims have experienced a re-traumatisation of the events and have been left with no psychological treatment and stigmatised in the community, “Rwanda rape victims’ experiences have been socially labelled as unbearable and unspeakable” (Selimovic, 2020, p. 140).

Having said this, it is important to remark the current narrative positions Tutsi as *offended* and Hutu as *offenders*. Nevertheless, the reality is that many cases of abuse happened outside the mere dyad of Tutsi as victims and Hutu as perpetrators, extreme militias raped, enslaved, and abused women of any ethnicity. According to Thompson among the estimated numbers of reported sexual abuses, there are extremely high levels of Hutu women as victims of their co-ethnics (Thomson, 2013). This single-story-told has had a severe impact on women’s lives and reconciliation within Rwanda. The acknowledgement denial of a gendered specific issue as gender violence to a part of the population has broadened the gap between Tutsi and Hutu women and has anchored the latter to a position no longer of victim or sufferer but of “whore” (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007). The specific economic breach between Hutu and Tutsi women implies that Hutu are more prone to live in communities where sexual stigma has more severe im-

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plications for community life. Furthermore, the experience of denial of sexual violence has as a consequence the denial of access to the respective legal and social security structures designed to cope with the situation of victims of sexual violence. As a striking example, Hutu women are denied their appearance as victims in the Gacaca courts (Braunéus, 2008).

3.1.2. The economic dimension of gender violence

Regarding the increase in gender violence, it is necessary to state that this issue is not a problem intrinsic in Rwanda or isolated in low-income countries. It is an ongoing dynamic in the vast majority of the world independently of economic, development or gender equality status.

Men are brought up, even in the most peaceful of times, to identify manhood with a readiness to exercise authority over women and to wield force, against women and other men. In war times they are further trained, and rewarded for the practice of wounding, raping and killing. Often this experience traumatises men as well as their victims. And it shapes their behaviour after the war, for the disposition to violence is not readily put aside with demobilisation. (Cockburn, 1998, p. 202)

Following Berry's studies on Bosnia and Rwanda feminist movements, "men firmly view themselves as the power holders and decision makers within the household, while they view women as primarily responsible for children and domestic sphere" (Berry, 2015, p. 201).

Although legislation such as Law No 59 of 2008 on the criminalization of marital rape has been passed, these efforts have been insufficient, 57.2% of Rwandan women had experienced gender-based violence from their partner and 32% of women reported that their partners had forced them to have sex (Rwanda Men's Resource Centre, 2010). The same study showed that those who were directly affected by the violence of the genocide, approximately 80% of respondents, had higher rates of perpetrating gender violence than those who weren't. The emancipation process lived in Rwanda is being matched with a *patriarchal backlash*, borrowing the concept from Berry (2018). The augmentation of independence and female emancipation in many historical and geographical locations has been counterparty with an augmentation of the violent and hostile attitudes by the patriarchy (Krook, 2015; Blalock, 1967).

Following this line of thought it is not surprising that the majority of reports for gender-based violence come from highly educated and normally employed women, suggesting that men use violence to repress their newly acquired freedoms. However, there is a dimension that seems to be hidden from statistics. A study conducted by Ho (2011) showed that women in low-income households were more reluctant to denounce their partners for gender-based violence. Paradoxically, whereas the punishment of perpetrators might be interpreted as a desired outcome "women don't like to talk about the violence they face because if the police are aware of that [abuse], they will imprison their husbands and [the wives] will remain alone" (Ibid.) The lack of financial means of women in low-income rural areas, impedes them from denouncing their aggressor fearing that the consequent punishment might worsen their financial situation. Furthermore, low-income women are less likely to seek a change in their life since the denouncement of their partner might imply a loss in their support network. This might entail not only that the number of poor women who suffer gender-based violence may be higher than those from an educated background, but that the overall number of women suffering this type of violence in Rwanda might be bigger than initially estimated.

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3.1.3. Gender and Poverty in the economic vision of Rwanda

Lastly, gender emancipation and feminist policies are hindered by Rwanda's attempt to impose an economic rationale in all sectors of the population, disregarding the "triple role" women are submitted to, particularly in the Global South. According to Caroline Moser (1989), in most low-income households "women's work" not only includes child-bearing work but also have a role as secondary income earners. Furthermore, the deficient state provision of basic services has linked women with community work, "where there is an open confrontation between community-level organizations and local authorities [...] women, as an extension of their domestic role, frequently take primary responsibility for the formation, organization and success of the local level groups" (Ibid.).

Kagame's administration has demonstrated that whereas feminist policies interfere with economic growth, preference is given to the latter. A notable example is the reduction of maternal paid leave from twelve to six weeks despite the women's majority in parliament. Moreover, the plan Vision 2020 has conflicted with the economic dimension of gender policies. One of the pillars of this political agenda has been "to move beyond past delusions of viable subsistence-based agriculture towards productive high value and market-oriented agriculture" (Debusscher & Ansons, 2013, p. 1121). To fulfil this purpose, Rwanda's government has implemented a policy of sanctions and promotions of certain forms of labour and hygiene. Although to a certain extent, this affects both men and women with low income, "they are particularly detrimental to women because low-skill industries dominated by women are disproportionately illegal compared to low-skill industries dominated by men" (Ibid.). These policies which attempt to force farmers into maximums of productivity without addressing the gender dimension are likely to enhance the socio-economic gap and trigger women into a spiral of poverty. Furthermore, Rwanda's government has obliterated the "invisible labour". Taking into consideration the aforementioned distribution of community work where women tend to take unpaid tasks, the attempt of the government of formalising this sector has broadened the socio-economic gap. This is a clear example of how governments worldwide depend on unpaid work, mostly personalised in women, and how the economic capitalist theory sends this type of labour to oblivion, even theoretically engaged feminist states such as Rwanda.

Therefore, women's power cannot be determined by the legal framework, nor the availability of these rights rather is a matter of control over them. In an increasingly authoritarian traditional-based structure, "deeply entrenched social structures pose challenges for women's full control over resources" (Mason, 1986, p. 28).

3.2. Authoritarianism and gender in Rwanda's government

Unlike other paramilitary groups, the RPF has a story of female leadership embedded in that of the Ugandan National Resistance Movement (Longman, 2006). This together with the aforementioned factors of sex imbalance and ethno-nationalistic views on women, promote the upsurge of women into decision-making bodies and in general a legal framework that granted them the same rights as men. However, these advances have been put into question, firstly because of the lack of transformative potential in female movements; secondly, because of the increasing authoritarianism and repression in Kagame's administration.

We consider transformative potential when the implemented policies have "the capacity to address the deeply ingrained societal norms and practices within which gender inequalities are

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embedded” (Debusscher, 2011, p. 1112). In other terms, the assumption that a higher female representation would lead to fundamental change by itself it is erroneous since the hegemonic structures of the patriarchy ingrained in authoritarianist regimes would serve the dominant groups. The encouragement of women’s inclusion in decision-making organs is necessary but not sufficient to undermine the patriarchal structures of the state.

Furthermore, there is an increment in authoritarianism in Kagame’s administration. Certain scholars have remarked that the inclusion and the promotion of female leaders in Rwanda might be part of a strategy to increase foreign investment and assent control of an anglophone Tutsi elite and Kagame’s power (Pottier, 2002; Reyntjens, 2011). Despite the increase of women representatives in governmental agencies, grassroots movements have diminished, many times not because of lack of utility but lack of leadership. The RPF has curtailed civil society by giving political roles to the movement’s leaders, “which requires them to work to the government’s agenda rather than advocate for legal and policy changes to promote the rights of women” (Abbott & Malunda, 2016, p. 7). The lack of a vibrant civil society eradicates the possible opposition to the RPF hegemonic system and perpetuates the control of Kagame’s administration. Moreover, Human Rights Watch has denounced extra official killings, allegedly politically motivated, of women who have opposed Rwanda’s current government (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Rwanda’s government has benefited from a *single story* told. To construct a new nation under beneficial terms, the RPF has erected a coherent story of the nation which “relies upon stable, gendered, categories that are activated to mobilise support around the new and fragile post-conflict national narrative” (Selimovic, 2020, p. 134). There is little agency for women to act beyond the role of rape victims. This position of sufferer manufactures power through moral righteousness consequently, “glorifying victimhood” (Winter, 2006). Violence, especially sexual violence such as rape or sexual torture to which women were exposed during the genocide, is particularly linked with the feminisation of nationhood. Hence, the narrative revolves around the raping of Rwanda as a nation rather than acknowledging the individual victim. Therefore, we might interpret that the increasing attention to women might be part of an ongoing and more complex construction of a narrative which perpetuates a single story told to maintain the political elite which revolves around Kagame’s power.

The importance of the role that women represent in development policies is extensively recognized nowadays

3.3. The relation between authoritarianism and development in gender policy

Rwanda has experienced an increase in ODA (Official Development Assistance) flows and foreign investment in the last decades. As previously mentioned, this increase in international monetary “trust” relates to the reconstruction period after the genocide and subsequently, to the Kagame administration’s rise to power. Nevertheless, the linkage between female representation and the impact this investment flow might have on Rwandan women is an interesting matter of discussion.

The importance of the role that women represent in development policies is extensively recognised nowadays. Investing in women “speeds economic development by raising productivity and promoting the more efficient use of resources; it produces significant social returns, improving child survival and reducing fertility, and it has considerable intergenerational payoffs” (Ging & Boyd, 2016, p. 149). The argument relies on the idea that educated women are more likely to increase the human capital of a country by enhancing their productivity resulting in a consequent reduction in poverty.

As can be noted, there is a general understanding that gender inequality is an economic matter and thus, it could be solved by market forces. “Gender equality is reduced to women’s opportunities and empowerment, wherein women’s opportunities are limited to market opportunities and empowerment is constricted to economic empowerment in the form of individual human capital investment and job attainment” (Ibid.). The aforementioned paradox in Rwanda’s feminist policies displayed that whenever economic goals enter into competition with the gender equality agenda there was a preference for the former.

Nonetheless, this tendency is not merely enclosed in Rwanda, however, it is part of the general mainstreaming of female empowerment in development agencies. “Since the 1990s, multinational agencies, NGOs, and policymakers have made the advancement of women a core objective of development initiatives” (Berry, 2015, p. 3). The structure created by these organizations relies on the premise of “entryism”, the assumption that the augmentation of women into paid labour, decision-making structures or merely basic education will unequivocally result in a reduction of gender inequality (Razavi & Miller, 1995). Therefore, women’s empowerment actions have been directed to equalise the number of men and women in these scopes. The post-genocide conception in Rwanda was that access to financial credit would lead to an improvement in productivity, hence, several NGOs and the newly established government granted low-interest rate loans to women during the post-genocide period. Nevertheless, “the best outcomes for economic growth are not necessarily the best outcomes for girls and women” (Woodroffe & Donaldson, 2012, p. 100). This utilitarian view of gender equality enters into direct opposition with the transformative nature of feminist views. There is little value in normative resources when they served as a way of promoting class discrimination and broadening the economic gap not only between men and women but in society. Furthermore, this dynamic is particularly problematic since it implies that “if women’s productivity can be shown to be consistently lower than men’s, then, following the logic of the market, they deserve fewer resources” (Goetz, 1994, p. 161).

The structures in Rwanda have been arranged to appear democratic in what seems a method to attract international funding (Longman, 2006). The lack of transformative nature of this regime jeopardises the opportunity for a true renewal of gender relations. Furthermore, the infatuation for quantitative targets from both local and international policymakers “leads to the blind implementation of result-oriented policies that fail to address deeply ingrained societal norms, practices and power structures within which gender inequalities are embedded” (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013, p. 1130).

The Rwandan gender paradox arises from the inadequacy of a vertical up-bottom structure promoted by the national government where civil society and grassroots movements have been limited. Furthermore, the international development system has continuously prompted economic growth rather than social equality. This symbiosis has led to the maintenance of an autocratic regime that uses non-transformative, mainstream and anti-social gender equality policies to stay in power and gain the favour of the international community.

4. Conclusion

The use of women in Rwanda has been instrumental in both the national government and the international system. For the former, the introduction of gender policies has served not only to legitimise an autocratic regime under the notion of modernisation and female empowerment but also to sustain an economy that perpetuates this technocratic elite. For the latter, it is part

The Rwandan gender paradox arises from the inadequacy of a vertical up-bottom structure promoted by the national government where civil society and grassroots movements have been limited

of an economic rationale which capitalises on women with the focus of returning and increasing the investments made, instead of addressing the necessary dismantling of the structures that perpetuate this inequality.

There is a need for long-term strategies which disintegrate “the structure of inequality between genders, classes and nations” (Moser, 1989, p. 1815). The target of particular groups of women and the attempt to introduce them to paid labour has not necessarily meant improving their conditions since the “triple role” they maintain in society has not been addressed. This has been a top-down composition in which international organizations have set a series of standards in which founding recipients’ manoeuvre. The fixation on quantitative results has led to a lack of qualitative understanding of the repercussions certain policies have on the female population. Rights by their mere existence are of little use if they are not followed by an empowering movement for their holders.

Thereupon, if we are to truly combat gender inequality the international community must embrace an *empowerment approach*:

The empowerment approach acknowledges inequalities between men and women and the origins of women’s subordination in the family. It also emphasises the fact that women experience oppression differently according to their race, class, colonial history, and current position in the international economic order. (Moser, 1989, p. 1816)

By addressing the triple role that women are submitted to it recognises that women have confronted oppressive structures synchronously at different levels and sensitises the need for a strong core of women’s organisations that can turn this vertical hierarchy into a more horizontal one. This is particularly important in developing countries where civil society is limited by the lack of a democratic government and the intrusion of poorly planned development and funding initiatives. Withal, the empowerment approach remains largely unsupported due to its challenging nature against the status quo perpetuated by the international system.

To interrupt this circle of physical, structural and cultural violence, and to promote the rights of women, there is an imperious need to advocate for vital freedoms with the support of political, environmental, and fundamentally, social policies which might promote vulnerable women to recognise their agency. Change would only happen when we create an environment in which women can take active charge of their lives.

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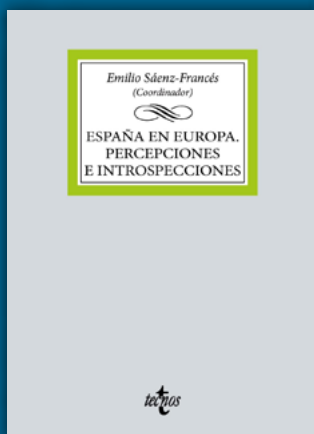
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España en Europa. Percepciones e introspecciones

Emilio Sáenz-Francés San Baldomero (Coord.)

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Ha transcurrido ya más de un siglo desde aquella célebre frase de Ortega y Gasset: “Europa es la solución”. No se trataba de una consigna accidental, ni siquiera vanguardista, la del filósofo madrileño; más bien ésta se encuadraba en el marco de una asentada corriente de reflexión sobre la relación entre España y Europa, y, particularmente en su caso, sobre la percepción de la segunda como un proyecto de reforma social y moral para superar el desconcierto político y la crisis de identidad que emanan del hundimiento del Imperio a finales del siglo XIX. En última instancia, el volumen reseñado se instala en esta longeva tradición y supone una contribución actualizada a esos debates y reflexiones que dimanaban de una ya prolija producción académica y literaria sobre el lugar —y la proyección— de España en Europa.

Así, en *España en Europa. Percepciones e introspecciones*, un brillante equipo de académicos y profesores capitaneados por Emilio Sáenz-Francés se aproxima a una de las dimensiones troncales de la política exterior española, la que contempla el vínculo con Europa en la historia reciente, y lo hace desde una multiplicidad de perspectivas temáticas y enfoques analíticos y disciplinares, lo que no solo enriquece la obra, sino que también la hace más accesible a un público diverso y no necesariamente versado en la materia. En esencia, este ejercicio introspectivo toma forma a partir del pormenorizado escrutinio de dos bloques temáticos muy bien definidos: por un lado, el que se refiere al tipo de política europea articulada desde

nuestro país por los dos últimos ejecutivos con mandato extinto (un bloque que también examina los fundamentos ideológicos e institucionales sobre los que descansan las distintas ramificaciones de esa política); por otro, el que hace alusión al tipo de relaciones que ha mantenido España con algunos de los protagonistas de la vida política europea (Reino Unido, Francia, Alemania, Bruselas, y hasta Europa del Este) al tiempo que pondera la imagen proyectada por el país fruto de esas relaciones. Sin impugnar su idoneidad y pertinencia, queda en el aire, no obstante, la congruencia de este enfoque: no está claro si la sin duda novedosa aproximación de los autores (esto es, el énfasis en la política europea de España, primero, y en las relaciones del país —en sentido más amplio— con otros actores, después) es arbitraria, o si, por el contrario, es el producto de cualquier suerte de disquisición sustantiva que lo justifique.

En línea con esas dos preocupaciones temáticas, el libro se estructura en dos partes sustanciales —de cuatro y cinco capítulos, respectivamente— precedidas por un epígrafe de carácter más introductorio redactado por el coordinador, y apoyadas en una amplia base bibliográfica y documental. Los autores se muestran especialmente afinados a la hora de armonizar ambas partes con una coherencia y precisión quirúrgicas, integrándolas bajo el amplio —a la par que arraigado— paraguas de la “dimensión europea de la política exterior española” (pp. 10, 21, 143), evitando redundancias entre capítulos, e incluso

haciéndolos dialogar entre sí. Con todo, y aunque esta disposición bicéfala extiende el rango de temas que pueden ser abordados dentro del radio de alcance del libro, se echa de menos un mayor nivel de profundización en cada una de las partes, que podrían dar pie, por sí solas, a un sólido volumen monotemático. Mayor profundidad no tanto en los contenidos ya tratados, que exhiben un inusitado grado de detalle y rigor, sino más bien en lo referente al abanico de cuestiones, actores o problemas determinantes que quedan desatendidos en cada parte fruto de la ambición bicípita del volumen, que obliga a realizar una concisa selección de contenidos al tener que distribuir el espacio disponible entre dos densas ramas temáticas.

La primera parte comienza con dos aportaciones esenciales para comprender los cimientos sobre los que se ha construido la política europea de España. Por un lado, Carlos Sanz parte del trascendental Tratado de Lisboa y examina la intrincada base institucional y organizativa desde la que nuestro país despliega su política europea. El valor del capítulo radica en el hecho de que no encarna una mera descripción de los resortes orgánicos con prerrogativas formales para el ejercicio de esta política, sino también —y sobre todo— una atinada reflexión sobre la medida en que el complejo engranaje multinivel de la Unión y de la propia España condiciona la forma de participación de nuestro país en una política europea que es “a la vez política interior y exterior” (p. 32). Por su parte, el profesor Martín de la Guardia hace un exhaustivo recorrido por la intelectualidad del siglo XX en España (desde Mallada a Serer, pasando por Costa, Silió, Unamuno, y Ortega y Gasset, entre otros) para revelar la ostensible debilidad de las bases ideológicas del europeísmo español. Una cuestión, a mi juicio, sobresale a este respecto y merecería una reevaluación en futuros trabajos, a saber, la idea de que el europeísmo en España solo se entiende en relación con la sensación de una decadencia continuada, de la inferioridad y excepcionalidad que tantos escritores han atribuido a nuestro país. Esta proposición, esencialmente noventayochista, configuraría, en efecto, un poso seminal de europeísmo superficial y coyuntural, en tanto cuanto éste tan solo emergería como socorrida vía de escape para subyugar otro poso más arraigado, el del hastío hacia la propia España y su desfase integral. Así pues, no existiría tanto una pulsión europeísta como una pulsión criticista con lo español (“Europa como contraejemplo de la patria”, p. 34), la cual encontraría en “Europa” un sólido pretexto en el que

revelarse. El ahondamiento en esta línea de razonamiento parece indispensable para desentrañar el origen y alcance de las manifestaciones contemporáneas de euro-criticismo y euroscepticismo o la progresiva pérdida de legitimidad difusa de la Unión de la que indirectamente hablan Betti y Marco en su capítulo.

Dicho lo cual, los dos capítulos que vertebran esta primera parte del libro son los de Moreno Juste y Betti y Marco, que escudriñan el rumbo de la política europea adoptada por los gobiernos de José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero y Mariano Rajoy, respectivamente. Una política que, como bien apuntan estos epígrafes, adoptó posiciones rupturistas con el ejecutivo de Aznar y retomó la ambición eurocentrista que había caracterizado la etapa de la Transición en el primer caso, y que, aunque jamás reprochando la actitud de la UE ni relegando las cuestiones internacionales a un segundo plano, se centró en “lo doméstico” (p. 136) en el segundo caso, como consecuencia de la *policrisis* económica, política y territorial con la que tuvo que lidiar el presidente popular. Como perspicazmente señala Moreno Juste, además de la recuperación del pragmatismo que había caracterizado la gestión de la agenda europea, la administración de Zapatero apostó por la recuperación de alianzas privilegiadas con Francia y Alemania. Todo ello en un contexto peculiar, no solo de crisis financiera, sino también, a nivel externo, de adaptación al nuevo modelo de *governance* surgido a partir del Tratado de Lisboa, y, a nivel interno, de normalización del disenso con el Partido Popular respecto a Europa. Ese mismo contexto, fundamentalmente definido por la crisis financiera, afecta también a la administración de Rajoy, que, casi por primera vez en España, tiene que hacer frente al cuestionamiento del rol del país como “aliado fiel de la UE” (p. 152). Lejos de utilizar a la UE como chivo expiatorio y —aunque Betti y Marco no lo explicitan— abrazando los postulados Habermasianos de construcción nacional, Rajoy sobresalió por sus incansables esfuerzos para proteger ese rol, elaborando un “patriotismo de la Constitución española y de la integración europea” como remedio más eficaz contra las disidencias emergentes encarnadas en una pléyade de movimientos populistas y nacionalistas.

Mas allá del oportuno estudio de las singularidades de cada administración, leídos conjuntamente, se entrevé en todos los capítulos —y, en especial, en estos dos últimos— el núcleo sustantivo que cimenta la obra. Por un lado, que,

cuando hablamos de la proyección española en Europa, en nuestro país siempre han prevalecido los momentos de consenso nacional, algo que no ha prevenido etapas de desacuerdo partidista sobre “los despliegues concretos de la política europea” (p. 84), pero que sí ha evitado esos mismos desencuentros cuando nos referimos a las líneas maestras de esa política. O, como agudamente retrata el profesor Sáenz-Francés en el primer capítulo, el éxito de la proyección exterior de España radica en el “consenso no perfecto, pero sí real, en las grandes cuestiones de la política exterior” (p. 17). Por otro lado, que, con el cambio de siglo y, sobre todo, a raíz de la crisis financiera, esa voluntad o predisposición para el acuerdo (de mínimos) se quebró, dando lugar a un proceso de creciente polarización que perdura hasta nuestros días. Es cierto, en relación con esto último, que el lector podría echar en falta un mayor esfuerzo introspectivo a la hora de analizar el alcance de ese proceso polarizador, el cual parece haber trascendido las altas esferas de las élites dirigentes para instalarse también en la propia ciudadanía. Sabemos que, hoy, las posiciones de los partidos políticos y sus votantes no solo divergen entre sí significativamente más que antes, sino que, además, lo hacen tanto en el simbólico eje *izquierda vs derecha* como en dimensiones o políticas públicas más concretas (Miller, 2020, 2023). El ámbito de la política europea quizá sea uno de los más propicios a verse involucrado en esta dinámica habida cuenta de la progresiva politización nacional de la UE tras crisis como la financiera, la migratoria, la COVID-19, o la guerra de Ucrania. Y a ello, sin duda, también ha contribuido otro aspecto por el que el libro pasa de puntillas: el surgimiento de partidos de extramuros (a uno y otro lado del espectro ideológico) que, a menudo, han articulado un discurso confrontativo —si no euroescéptico— con el rumbo del proyecto europeo. Es el caso de Podemos en 2014, que bebe del descontento popular ante la crisis financiera y las políticas de ajuste macroeconómico recetadas desde el norte de Europa, y de VOX, que ha venido asumiendo algunos de los planteamientos soberanistas contra el establishment bruselense que han propugnado durante décadas sus homólogos europeos. Si el próximo 23 de julio la convocatoria a las urnas culminase con un cambio de ejecutivo (y, sobre todo, si ello implicase la asunción de carteras ministeriales por parte de la derecha radical), la presidencia española del Consejo del segundo semestre de 2023 podría ser un buen termómetro del nivel actual de consenso en materia europea.

La segunda parte del volumen denota un enfoque distinto, más historiográfico, si bien no por ello menos inquisitivo. Una idea subyace —quizá inadvertidamente— todos sus capítulos, a saber, la de la especificidad del tipo de relación que ha mantenido España con cada uno de los actores internacionales examinados. Ante la dificultad de definir un marco compartido sobre el que se cimiente la heterogeneidad de vínculos que el país conserva con el exterior, parece conveniente aproximarse a cada uno de esos vínculos conforme a sus circunstancias concretas. Con varios de los países considerados (Reino Unido, Europa del Este, Francia), se dibuja una relación sujeta a fluctuaciones ocasionales a lo largo del último siglo, si bien es cierto que esas oscilaciones revelan sus propias peculiaridades de país en país. Así, en el caso del Reino Unido, por ejemplo, la relación con España se encuadra en el marco de una eterna búsqueda de la estabilidad en la región ibérica, como señala Julius Ruiz, combinando la progresiva mejora del vínculo hispano-británico con un nada anodino peso de reticencias y suspicacias hacia España resultante de una lectura cuasi arbitraria e interesada de la historia. Suspicias también presentes en la cosmovisión francesa, como indica el profesor Berdah, que se hicieron visibles en el torpedeo al proceso de integración de España a la CEE, y que solo comenzaron a distenderse tras dicho proceso y gracias a la buena sintonía de los ejecutivos socialistas de ambos países. Con otros países, como Alemania, por ejemplo, se esboza una relación notablemente dispar, caracterizada por una cordialidad prolongada, por el apuntalamiento de proyectos cooperativos en multiplicidad de ámbitos (industrial, económico, cultural), por el alineamiento sinérgico en torno a intereses compartidos, y, en definitiva, por la “complementariedad espiritual” entre ambas naciones (p. 254). Desde el punto de vista investigativo, un único reproche se le puede hacer a esta parte del libro, a saber, que carece de una explicación detallada de los criterios de selección de los países y actores considerados. ¿Por qué Reino Unido y Francia, y no Portugal e Italia, por ejemplo?

En suma, *España en Europa. Percepciones e introspecciones* se erige en una obra innovadora, exhaustiva desde el punto de vista documental y bibliográfico, y exponente de un enfoque analítico riguroso a la par que original. Aunque se echa en falta una mayor incisión en determinadas dinámicas (polarización de la política exterior, implicacio-

nes de la emergencia de Podemos y VOX) y, sobre todo, algunas precisiones metodológicas (la pluralidad de aproximaciones incentiva una pluralidad de apuestas metodológicas que, en ocasiones, complejiza la lectura e invita a la reflexión sobre la calidad de los resultados obtenidos), este volumen presenta una propuesta interesante, sin duda de referencia, para comprender los entresijos de la política exterior de España respecto a Europa, el proceso de europeización dual que ha experimentado nuestro país en los últimos cincuenta años, y, en definitiva, la posición de España en el viejo continente. Lo hace, además, ex-

hibiendo una vocación tan académicamente investigativa como didáctica de la que, seguro, podrán beneficiarse futuros estudiantes y estudiosos en la materia.

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La Unión Europea y los muros materiales e inmateriales: desafíos para la seguridad, la sostenibilidad y el Estado de Derecho

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Los desafíos a los que se enfrenta la comunidad internacional, la tensión entre los valores democráticos, el respeto de los Derechos Humanos y del Estado de Derecho, así como el creciente populismo en todo el continente europeo, son los extremos bajo los que se asienta el texto aquí presentado.

Esta obra coral presenta un ámbito de estudio multidisciplinar, un trabajo oportuno para el desarrollo de un profundo y completo análisis del complejo fenómeno migratorio en el territorio de la Unión Europea. Su contenido es enfocado desde el análisis de las barreras no solo físicas sino también jurídicas que “comporta una forma de comprender y regular las relaciones internacionales desde una visión no solo unilateralista sino estrictamente securitaria” (p. 15). Estructurada en doce capítulos encuentran una perfecta conexión e integración en su contenido dada la pluralidad de estudios vertebrados sobre una cuestión central: los movimientos migratorios y la creciente construcción de barreras.

En términos generales, la relación entre la UE y las fronteras es compleja y ambivalente. En origen, la noción de frontera ha sido cuestionada desde una doble perspectiva, por un lado, la globalización y por otro, el proceso de integración europea, si bien, la cuestión migratoria es elemento esencial para efectuar una reflexión de fondo sobre las fronteras (p. 183). De este modo, se puede definir “frontera” como “la línea que marca el límite espacial en el ejercicio de competencias soberanas de los Estados, se tra-

ta así, de un recurso a normas internacionales para la delimitación de las fronteras terrestres y marítimas” (p. 21).

Desde esta perspectiva, la UE necesita un límite físico para definirse, si bien, el Espacio Schengen a través del Espacio sin fronteras interiores” se aleja de la concepción clásica de frontera. No obstante, resulta oportuno la forma en la que el capítulo 9 aborda el estudio sobre “las fronteras internas y externas”, pues recoge que “evocar las fronteras de Europa consiste en abordar la complejidad de las diferentes entidades-Estados y organizaciones intergubernamentales que dentro del continente se identifican con el “significado de ser europeo” (p. 185). Las fronteras europeas han tendido a extenderse en función de la evolución del proyecto político de los Estados miembros, de aquí que, sea esencial prestar atención al capítulo primero a la hora de estudiar uno de los extremos más complejos en la materia; las relaciones bilaterales entre España y Marruecos. En concreto, el caso de Ceuta y Melilla y la importancia de conocer sus límites territoriales bajo las normas internacionales del S. XX, de modo que, el interés de España es mantener la delimitación y demarcación fronteriza vinculada al título originario de soberanía y jurisdicción española sobre estos territorios (p. 47).

Si bien, debemos prestar atención a la forma en la que se ahonda en el estudio de las “barreras” que cada vez más han distanciado a Occidente y a Rusia, quien desde la desintegración de la Unión Soviética no ha cejado en la

búsqueda de su posición en la comunidad internacional (capítulo 3). Las relaciones entre ambos núcleos se han desarrollado históricamente en un entorno de creciente complejidad procedente de distintos extremos como la cultura, el choque de mentalidades, discrepancias de valores, cuestiones ideológicas o factores religiosos, etc.); todo ello ha determinado la indiscutible vulneración de los principios estructurales del Derecho Internacional contemporáneo que acompaña a las actuaciones de Rusia (p. 78 y ss.).

El recurso a barreras tanto físicas como jurídicas y la forma en la que se utilizan, determinan claras consecuencias que comportan en no pocas ocasiones violaciones de obligaciones internacionales esenciales afectando a materia de extranjería, inmigración, asilo y refugio e incluso las violaciones del Derecho Internacional Humanitario. De este modo, el capítulo 6 fija su atención en la especial situación de los desplazamientos forzados que afectan a menores; en este sentido, se requiere una especial protección dado el carácter particularmente vulnerable, atendiendo a una doble circunstancia; son niños y refugiados (p. 139). No obstante, y sin encontrar disposiciones concretas para los niños refugiados, el Sistema Europeo Común de Asilo (SECA) nacido en el Consejo Europeo de Tampere de 1999, incorpora el interés superior del menor como consideración primordial a tener en cuenta durante el procedimiento de solicitud de refugio. Entre las garantías procesales no solo encontramos el epicentro que circula en torno al interés superior del menor, sino que, se atiende a la situación específica de los menores extranjeros no acompañados (MENA) (p. 141 y ss.).

Por su parte, el capítulo 7, (p. 149 y ss.) toma en consideración el derecho de todo ciudadano de la UE a circular y residir libremente en el territorio de los Estados miembros y su extensión a todos los “miembros de la familia” independientemente de su nacionalidad, para argumentar que “los niños tienen derecho a vivir en familia, por tanto, no se les podrá separar de las personas que les cuidan, protegen y cubren sus necesidades, a menos que ello resulte contrario al principio de su interés superior” (p. 153). En este sentido, el contenido de la Directiva 2004/38, relativa al derecho de los ciudadanos de la Unión y de los miembros de sus familias a circular y residir libremente en el territorio de los Estados miembros,

fundamenta el concepto de “descendiente directo” y junto, con Tribunal de Justicia de la Unión Europea (TJUE), entienden que en virtud de la seguridad jurídica y la defensa de los Derechos del niño, no puede interpretarse de acuerdo con el ordenamiento jurídico del Estado miembro de acogida porque la propia Directiva no se remite expresamente a la legislación del país en cuestión.

En este marco de estudio, el capítulo 10 no olvida la situación que deviene de la detención de extranjeros a efectos de expulsión, máxime cuando estamos en presencia de colectivos especialmente vulnerables como son los menores extranjeros (p. 205), puesto que reúnen una serie de características -son menores, inmigrantes, están en situación irregular y en ocasiones no son acompañados por un adulto-. Siendo un derecho de los Estados el control de la inmigración en su territorio, y en especial consideración de vulnerabilidad, los Estados deben valorar de forma razonable la posibilidad de detener a menores en el contexto de la inmigración, tomando en consideración lo dispuesto en la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño (Asamblea General de Naciones Unidas, 20 de noviembre de 1989), pues a la hora de adoptar decisiones y medidas referentes a los menores, estas deben girar en torno al interés superior del menor.

En el avance del contenido del derecho internacional privado, hemos encontrado mecanismos para detectar y corregir discriminaciones en las normas de su disciplina (capítulo 4). En este sentido, podemos encontrar barreras culturales que de inicio podrían proceder de ordenamientos jurídicos pertenecientes a distintas civilizaciones pero que, implícitamente pueden darse en situaciones contrarias a la igualdad de género, que evidencian la profunda discriminación que éstas sufren. En este caso, se pretende que el sistema sea respetuoso con la identidad cultural de las personas, permitiendo la aplicación de la ley nacional al estatuto personal o Derecho de familia, si bien, se identifica la discriminación hacia las mujeres en dichas instituciones, debiendo en este caso y en defensa de la igualdad de género, oponer la excepción del orden público internacional (p. 92 y ss.). Desde esta perspectiva, las normas de derecho internacional privado han introducido la denominada regla de “autonomía de la voluntad conflictual” incluso en el derecho de personas, familia y sucesiones, esto es, el denominado “estatuto personal” (capítulo 5). Tradicionalmente, se ha aplicado

el sistema personalista basado en la nacionalidad del individuo; ahora bien, la progresiva sedentarización de la inmigración en Europa ha ido haciendo que se desarrollen los modelos de integración basados en la asimilación buscando soluciones alternativas como la aplicación de la ley del Domicilio, residencia habitual, etc. De forma muy interesante se recogen los Reglamentos que han mostrado una seña identitaria del proceso de integración europeo en la materia (p. 120 y ss.).

La propia evolución de la sociedad de la información nos imprime la necesidad de gestionar el flujo de datos cada vez más voluminoso a la par que sensible. El capítulo 8 muestra la coexistencia entre la protección de los derechos fundamentales y los vertiginosos avances de la sociedad de la información. Para ello, recurre al marco normativo nacido en el seno de la UE como esencia

de la libre circulación de datos personales dentro del mercado interior a efectos de proporcionar solidez jurídica y transparencia a los operadores económicos (p. 163 y ss.).

A modo de conclusión y como hemos podido comprobar, nos encontramos ante un trabajo perfectamente sistematizado que compone una obra necesaria para el estudio y reflexión sobre la gran expansión del fenómeno migratorio dentro de las fronteras europeas. La importancia de conocer las distintas formas en las que se traduce la imposición de barreras (físicas, jurídicas, culturales, etc.) comporta un ámbito esencial en el marco de las relaciones internacionales y desde su perspectiva securitaria y de protección, haciendo por tanto que estemos en presencia de una obra esencial en el marco de estudio del derecho internacional.



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