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Political dynamics and policy responses to food crises in Sub-Saharan Africa: a comparative analysis of Malawi and Democratic Republic of Congo

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<tr><td>

Supervisor:

Professor **Lorenzo De Sio**

</td><td>

Candidate:

Claudia Leva

ID: 092632

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</table>

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INTRODUCTION

According to the UN report 2021, world hunger is growing and in 2021 an estimated 828 million people suffered from hunger, a full 46 million more than in 2020 and 150 million more than in 2019. The data are tragic and the goal of achieving Zero Hunger and defeating food insecurity by 2030 is now beyond expectations de facto unreachable. FAO and IFAD estimate, taking into consideration the impact of the pandemic, predict that about 8% (657 million) of the global population will be undernourished.[1] People still suffer hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity, and in the most extreme cases the most severe situation is reached with famines, as a result of which people cannot survive due to lack of food. Extreme poverty has increased dramatically and the most urgent solution is global solidarity on the part of rich Western countries: the intention is there, as can be seen from the numerous international agreements: Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and UN Security Council Resolution 2417 on conflict and hunger, but also the Tokyo Summit in 2021 on nutrition for growth and the 26th UN Climate Change Conference. However, these summits and western aids are not yet enough, there is furthermore a need for concrete action by domestic governments in famine-affected countries, as political instability often renders long-term improvements difficult. The data imply that if governments implement a repurposing of inputs used to incentivize the production, sourcing, and consumption of nutritious foods, it will also be possible to assist in ensuring that healthy diets are less expensive, more equitable, and more accessible to all.

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[1] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2022. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*.

Sub-Saharan Africans are not powerless, passive victims of famine and food instability. Famines and food scarcities are related to lingering vulnerabilities, which are often the effect of historical and contemporary changes that restrict 'people' options and opportunities for households. Theories about the reasons for famine have evolved from emphasizing environmental and demographic causes to political, economic, and social drivers. The first works on famines were influenced by Malthus, who attributed famines cause to growth in population and he stated that the best option to increase food availability was to the capacity to control the reduction in populations to a level compatible with food production. Other theories appeared in the coming years, Hendrie (1997)[2] argues that catastrophic events and natural disasters are the major causes of hunger crisis. However, other scholars consider as crucial the link between governance and famine. In "*Democracy and Famine*"[3] the author, Olivier Rubin, illustrates how democracy is important to prevent and fight hunger but is not sufficient, as it demonstrates in some case studies of African countries. Deveroux[4], with his work "The new Famines" states that the phenomenon of famine is strictly linked with the failures of the market and the inefficiencies in accountability and responses.

The problem lies in the political and governmental responsibility of the domestic policies and the political instability of a given country: according to the FAO report, Western Democracies attain the lowest hunger rates in the world, while authoritarian regimes rank at the top of the pyramid of hunger-stricken countries. According to Amartya Sen, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics and famous theorist about famine, in democratic countries famine does not occur and is the only way to escape to starvation. Famines are unlikely to cease without enhancing government responsibility and reinforcing civil society. Good governance must incorporate efficient and reliable management and accountable use of resources, transparent and equal distribution of resources and a strong and active society, with participative planning. As Sen remarked "*The diverse political freedom that are available in democratic state, including freedom of elections, free newspaper and freedom of speech, must be seen as the real force behind the elimination of famines*"[5].

In sub-Saharan Africa, democratic measures against hunger are difficult to achieve due to the high number of authoritarian regimes. However, who is the real generator of these long and persistent famines? Can we confirm Sen's theory and find political responsibility, or are there other causal factors to be accounted for?

Many authors have argued Sen and Hendrie's points of view. The former went against the dominant theory of famine, made by Food Availability Decline (FAD), which assumed that the solely and only cause responsible for hunger was the low availability of food. Sen and Dreze argued that hunger

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[2] O. Rubin, *Democracy and Famine*, Ed. 1; Taylor and Francis, 2012
[3] Famine and democracy
[4] (2007:11) the new famines
[5] Sen, 1990.

occurs even when food availability is increasing and that the only determinant for limiting hunger are democratic institutions and free press.[6] However, some scholars like Alex de Wall, in his paper "*Democratic Political Process and the Fight Against Famine*"(2000) after an investigation about the hypothesis of democracy prevent hunger, argues that "*democracy is an inoculation*"[7] against famine and using four counter example to demonstrate his thesis (Bihair 1966-67, Bangladesh 1974, Sudan 1986-88 and Ireland 1845-49). Moreover, Banik in 2007, with his work "*Starvation and India's Democracy*" concludes stating that the rather than on the level of democracy, should be on the impact of freedoms.

The purpose of this essay is to find, through an historical and methodological analysis, a proper answer as to whether there really is a correlation between famine and democracy or lack of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa and the political drivers of the persistence of hunger.

Certainly, the causes of persistent hunger cannot be exclusively attributed to government types, as other external factors must be considered such as historical, climatic and economic factors, natural disasters, or pandemics. However, the major responsibility lies with the policies adopted for organizing and managing these agents which are all variables that generate food insecurity leading to extreme poverty and consequently higher hunger rate.

Over the past few years, many international organizations and NGOs have collaborated with the goal of reducing hunger by sending financial aid, food, and medical relief. Indeed, some states, such as Ethiopia, Angola, and Rwanda have managed to significantly reduce the hunger index (they now count a reduction of 50/60% of the hunger index), however in other countries such as Somalia, international aid has not been as relevant and they are in the same tragic situation as in 2000, counting a decrease of only 12%.[8] Not all governments have managed and financed Western aid in the same way, public supports may vary depending on how it is allocated, in some cases it has been the very policies adopted that have contributed to the increase in hunger.

Governance, political economy, and incentives of important parties in a national and global context, will all play a role in how effective initiatives to repurpose food assistances are. Local and international institutions as well as involving and motivating players from the public sector are essential actors. Governments should begin to reassess how to reallocate existing public spending budgets to make them more effective and efficient in reducing the cost of nutritious foods and improving the availability and accessibility of healthy diets, ensuring equitable access to food for all. Due to the diversity of each country's political context, it is not easy to identify the most appropriate policy making agenda for sub African countries. However, evidence shows that where conflict and political instability predominate, the risk of famine is markedly higher. Primary causes of persistent

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[6] Famine and demcoracy
[7] De Wall 2000:10
[8] Global Hunger Index 2021.

African hunger go back undoubtedly to the period of colonialism, when Western states began to exploit the resources of sub-Saharan Africa, dividing arbitrarily homogenous ethnic groups and combining others opposed to each other by causing serious internal conflicts. When decolonization then began, most African regimes ended up with a one-party political system, controlling the state and the economy and thus making the state the sole driver of the economy. This union caused a large gap between the wealthy and the poor, generating underdeveloped and undemocratic countries. The end of this elaborate will cover a comparative analysis of two countries, Malawi and Democratic Republic of Congo, which started from similar socio-economic characteristics, but the former has improved and marked several progress, while the latter is still at the same starting point.

CHAPTER 1

The problem of hunger is an issue that has always persisted, and with the evolution of time, is getting better, but nevertheless presents tragic situations in the world. First, to conduct a good analysis of the problem one must conceptualize the difference in the terms that are used to describe the issue: hunger and famine are not the same thing even though they are commonly confused. We hear all the time about African children being left without food, but political and non-transparent causes are not so common. This chapter will first focus on a distinction of proper terms and methods for measuring hunger or malnutrition. Afterwards, the most common areas with the respectively most susceptible people to going without food will be analysed. Then, the analysis will focus on the historical context starting with the period of colonization (many blame Western powers for such African poverty) illustrating that perhaps yes, European powers did influence, the primary responsibility now lies with the regimes formed by the post-colonization period. The latter are not entirely transparent and democratic, presenting constitutional and social features which contribute to food catastrophe in the South of Africa. Finally, the first chapter will focus on how the historical context has influenced on the primary drivers for hunger. In particular, the last few years have been affected by the pandemic of Covid-19, which in addition to increasing poverty and restricting the movement of food, has helped authoritarianism to grow and the restrictions imposed by dictatorships to become more and more rigid. The general drivers of hunger, even natural disasters or meteorological actors are the products of years of dictatorial dynamics, inefficient political responses and corruptive international aids who persist in Sub-Saharan Africa since many years. Many theories have been done regarding the relationships between democracy and hunger, some agree with Sen's theory of democratic institution preventing famines; while other go completely against it. Surely, there is not a total correct answer since many cases democracy has ais or preventing hunger, but many counterexamples have also occurred.

1. METHODS AND TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

1.1. Terms definitions and tools of measurements

Food insecurity, hunger, malnutrition, and famine are similar concept, which many times are used inappropriately because the terms are misinterpreted or overlapped. Using the proper definition of the Food Agricultural Organization hunger is "*an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. It becomes chronic when the person does not consume a*

sufficient amount of calories (dietary energy) on a regular basis to lead a normal, active and healthy life." [9] FAO defines that the proper amount of calories per day is at least 1800, which corresponds to the minimum quantity to conduct a sane and functional life. Hunger should not be confused with undernutrition, which is defined as a lack of any or all the following nutrients: energy, protein, and/or vital vitamins and minerals. Undernutrition is caused by insufficient food consumption in terms of quantity or quality, inadequate nutrient utilization owing to pathogens or other diseases, or a combination of these primary factors. These, in turn, are the consequence of a variety of underlying problems, such as family food insecurity; insufficient prenatal care or childcare practices; or insufficient access to health services, clean water, and hygiene. Therefore, undernutrition is considered as a type of malnutrition in terms of problems caused by shortages of unbalanced and unhealthy diets; the other type is overnutrition or overweight, meaning the excessive consumption of the calories required per day without the intake of micronutrient foods which problem culminates in obesity.

When hunger and malnutrition occur, it implies that the suffering actor (it can be country, a regional area, an individual, or group of people) is food insecure. Food insecurity refers to the condition of people not to have sufficient access to food at least three times per day at either economic, social, or physical level. It may refer to the lack availability of food or to the absence of the adequate resources to provide it. In order to calculate the difficulty of people to have a direct food access, FAO relies to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) where the data rely on surveys [10] asked directly to people concerning their ability to acquire food resources. This type of scale is the best to gauge and monitor food quantity and quality across countries and time since it is based on individuals' personal experiences.

Many arguments have appeared to define famine and nowadays common definition that has been approved by the most of scientist is that famine is composed by an agglomeration of the components mentioned. According to the UN definition, famine can only be defined as such if it meets specific criteria, which are: for every 10,000 people there must be a mortality rate of at least 2 people, at least 30% of the population must suffer from malnutrition, and at least 20% of households have no access to food. Hunger is the most important integrant of famine and these two appellations should not be overlapped. The former is a psychological sensation, caused by food insecurity while the latter is a dangerous phenomenon which leads to death. Therefore, hunger exists everywhere and can persists for a long time, famine is about the short-term because the concept refers to people's survival, indeed

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[9] https://www.fao.org/hunger/en/

[10] The survey concerns eight yes or no questions, which are: 1. You were worried you would not have enough food to eat? 2. You were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food? 3. You ate only a few kinds of foods? 4. You had to skip a meal? 5. You ate less than you thought you should? 6. Your household ran out of food? 7. You were hungry but did not eat? 8. You went without eating for a whole day (FAO source).

it cannot affect the same population for a long period. The main difference concern if people can have enough calories to survive and famine is considered as the final and most alarming phase of hunger. In order to measure hunger, FAO and other non-governmental organization use different tools. The most ancient way has been used by the food organization is Prevalence of Undernourishment, usually referred as PoU. The latter expresses the percentage of people, which is undernourished, providing data of the overall trends in the incidence of food insufficiency throughout time. PoU measures the subgroup of population who's their dietary consumption is below the minimum standard requirement[11]. It considers national elements such as waste and loss, production, commerce, animal feed and seed and other food use and afterwards the indicator are combined for the purpose of valuate food calories per capita and portraying a global food supply pattern in a country during a certain period. However, PoU estimates are not sufficient to identify susceptible populations by country, which result limiting to monitor and achieve the goal of Zero World Hunger. Actually, in order to monitor the most vulnerable populations and be able to compare data from the respective countries with a more specific analysis, it is more appropriate to use the Global Hunger Index (GHI). The latter measures hunger at global, regional, and national levels. It takes into consideration four indicators[12]: undernourishment (the share of people that do not assume an amount of sufficient calories each day), child wasting and child stunting (the percentage of under 5 children that have respectively low weight and low weight compared to their ages, reflecting chronic and acute undernutrition) and child mortality: the mortality rate of under 5 child. The second phase concerns the numbering of each indicator on a scale from 0 (representing the best value, no hunger) to 100, the worst one; in conclusion in the last phase the standardised values are combined to obtain the final GHI result. The GHI scale is subdivided into 5 phases: *low* 9,9$\leq$; *moderate* 10-19,9, *serious* n20-34,9, *alarming* 35-49,9 and *extremely alarming* $\geq$50 and famine only occurs when it reaches the final degree.

Either GHI and PoU are useful tools to measure global and regional trends and they both are helpful to evaluate, compare and monitor trends of food security of different countries; however, they consider different elements and therefore a country with high GHI may have a very low PoU and vice-versa. The former focus on the most susceptible subpopulation, children under the age of five, while the latter concentrates on the level of undernutrition of people according to the calories they assume. Nevertheless, the Global Hunger Index is the best tool to calculate the level of hunger severity because it involves all types of indicators.

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[11] The minimum energy requirement depends on the analysed country and it may vary from 1.660 to 2.959 calories a day per person (all requirements for each country are available on FAO 2021).

[12] The sources of the indicators come from: for undernourishment FAO, child wasting and stunting from UNICEF, WHO, DHS MICS and World Bank, child mortality UN IGME.

1.2. Geographical areas and respective statistical data

In the last period hunger and malnutrition have not decrease but instead the percentage has considerably risen while there has been a reduction of undernourished people between 2014 and 2019, during the last two years 117 million people more are starved. Each year, the number of countries covered by the Global Hunger Index varies according to the availability of data, and in 2021 there were 116 countries with sufficient data, with a further 19 given a provisional score. Hunger remains *severe*, *alarming*, and *extremely alarming* in almost 50 countries. Despite the fact that GHI scores illustrates an overall decrease since 2000, progress is slowing: pursuant to the Global Hunger Index between 2006 and 2012, the worldwide score dropped by 4.7 points (from 25.1 to 20.4), although it has only dropped by 2.5 points from 2012 onwards. According to current estimates, at least 47 countries, of which 28 are in Sub-Saharan Africa (the remainder in South and East Asia, North Africa, and Latin America), will not achieve a low level of hunger within the next 9 years.

Looking at regional trends, as shown in the graph below, the geographical areas affected mostly by hunger and malnutrition are Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia in terms of malnutrition, undernourishment, and child mortality. Africa of south of the Sahara has the highest rates of undernutrition, stunting and child mortality, data which correspond to the highest in the world. In Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 21% of the population is undernourished, in the sense that in 5 people only one can get sufficient calories and child mortality is extremely high. Moreover, what sets Africa apart, however, is that it is the only region where the number of undernourished people is expected to increase between by 2030.[13]

Figure 1: Change in regional Global Hunger Index scores from 2006 to 2021
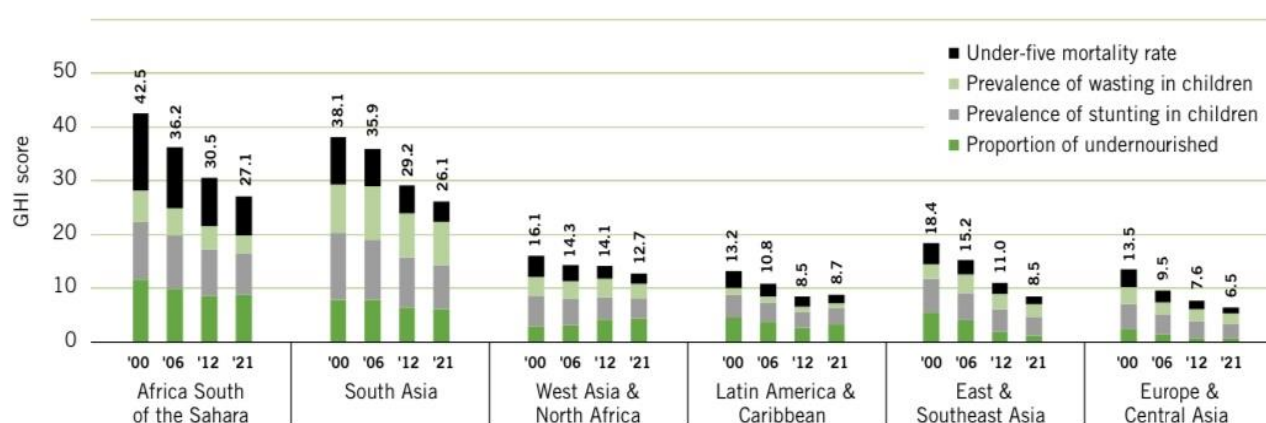
Source: Global Hunger Index 2021, The Regions, https://www.globalhungerindex.org/trends.html

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[13] UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, 2021a.

The chart depicts the hunger figures for the world's major geographical areas, which demonstrate that southern africa has the highest values of each indicator compared to the other regions. West Asia and North Africa portrayt a *moderate* level of hunger with a GHI of 12.7 with Yemen, Libya and Syria having the greatest impact. Latin American and Caribbean is the only regions in which undernourshied people have mostly increased during the last 8 years, espially due to the drivers up countries: Haiti and Venezuela, nations that contains high level of food insecurity and political instability. East and Southeast Asia, whose GHI is similar to the former region, 8.7, have improved during the last years but the critical aspect are the inequalities and social differences between the subgroups and data are disaggregated.

Although it may appear unexpected, all regions in the world, including Central Asia and Europe are not immune to hunger and manlnutrition. According to FAO reports, the number of undernourshed people is very low, but food insecurity is severe and it is increasing from 2014, especially for countries of ex Jugoslavia or ex URSS.

Despite the fact that all regions in the world have made progresses, the improvements from 2000s to 2020, as showed in Figure 1, have gradually diminished and after the impact of the pandemic crisis, data related to food insecurity and undernourished people are expected to increase.

Concurring to the Global Hunger Index 2021, the countries that have measured the highest GHI scores and therefore where the most of population, especially children, suffer hunger is Somalia, being the only country in the world that counts an extremely alarming level of famine. This country in the Horn of Africa is also a sui generis case because until the previous GHI rankings, it had a provisional seriousness rating, as it did not have enough data. Somalia is where the greatest number of conflicts, climate change and pandemic impacts are concentrated.

Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, and Yemen scored *alarming* level of hunger, while 31 nations are *serious*. However, 19 countries, out of the 116, resulted to have insufficient data to provide an accurate analysis of their index therefore they have been calculated according to GHI Severity Scale, other food reports and existing data and indicators. Most of the time the reason for missing data is country's involvement in violent conflicts which makes harder the availability of the data, and on public authorities who are intended on hiding the absolute poverty and starvation related deaths in their country. Four of these countries with not entirely reliable data are Burundi, Syrian Arab Republic, Comoros, and South Sudan,[14] which, after Somalia, have been ranked as the countries where hunger is most prevalent.

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[14] Global Hunger Index, 2021.

Figure 2: 2021 Map of Global Hunger Index in Africa
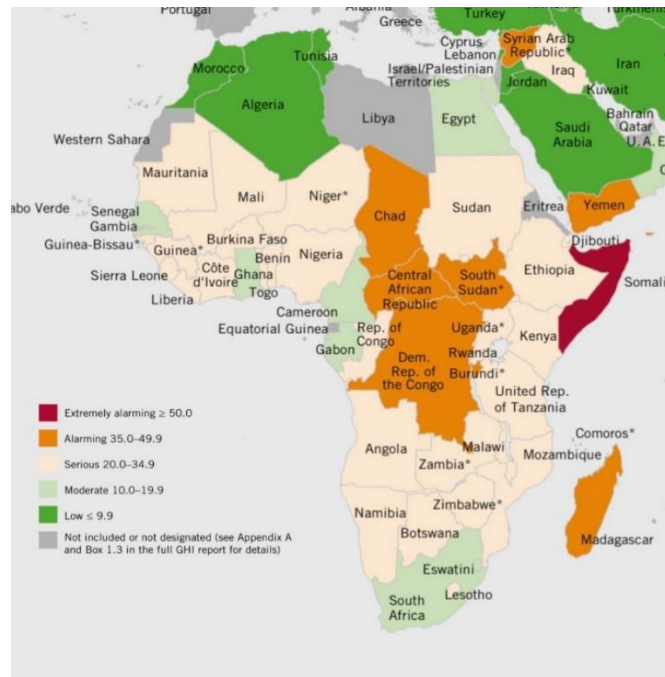
Source: Von Grebmer et al. (2021). "2021 Global Hunger Index by Severity" Map in 2021 Global Hunger Index: Hunger and Food Systems in Conflict Settings. Bonn: Welthungerhilfe, Dublin: Concern Worldwide.

Despite the pandemic crisis and the recent disasters attributed to climate change, conflicts remain the leading factor of hunger and malnutrition. The two phenomena are interconnected between each other, they are correlated by a strong relationship: as violence destructs food production, crops, harvests and makes unavailable food commerce, transportations and consumption, many times food insecurity and governments' inability to provide sufficient food (and recently the failures to manage the pandemic properly) have caused food riots and internal insurrections.

These sub-African countries that mark the highest rates of hunger correspond to those countries that have suffered the most since the period of colonization from strong political instability, characterized by authoritarian regimes, internal conflicts against governments, and civil strife between different ethnic groups. To understand how these regimes have influenced health policies by having a strong impact on hunger, we need to start from the historical roots of the colonization period.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND THE BIRTH OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

Scarcity of natural resources, recurrent droughts and the wide spread of debilitating diseases have made survival difficult for centuries in Africa, which has long been a sparsely populated continent. Moreover, the African population has always been highly unevenly distributed across the landmass, with almost uninhabited areas (deserts and equatorial forest) and some peaks of maximum density

along the course of the Nile, the eastern highlands, the Great Lakes region, along the Gulf of Guinea and southern Africa.

The colonization of Africa by Europeans during the 1800s, among other things, broke the fragile balance between resources and population. The occupation of the most fertile lands with plantations of export crops-such as coffee, tea, peanuts, tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, bananas-reduced the area available to small-scale subsistence and self-consumption farmers and forced many of them to move to drier lands where it is difficult to maintain the crop rotation cycle. In turn, farmers were pushed to marginal and more easily deteriorated areas.

Currently, at the political level, the 48 states of sub-Saharan Africa often have linear boundaries, as they were largely artificially drawn during the Berlin Conference held between 1884 and 1885, during which the great European colonial powers divided up the African continent following a brutal logic of political and economic influence and took no account of the human-made realities of those territories. Ethnically homogeneous groups were divided and at the same time rival tribes were forcibly forced to coexist. Such demarcations were at the root of many conflicts that bloodied Africa after independence was achieved, with devastating civil wars, some still ongoing.

With the end of World War II and the affirmation of the principle of self-determination of peoples, a long and complex process of decolonization took place and there was a veritable population explosion, aided by improved sanitary conditions and vaccination campaigns.

Throughout the 20th century, in order to meet the needs of a young and rapidly growing population, the "plundering" of African nature continued: the abnormal growth of some urban centres reduced agricultural space; the emission of pollutants increased enormously; and the forest was destroyed at an accelerated rate both to acquire new areas for agriculture and to exploit on an industrial scale the valuable African timber (ebony, mahogany, rosewood).

This situation of over-exploitation of the land has not changed even with the independence of African countries: the development plans of governments have not always taken sufficient account of environmental conditions, nor of the needs of small-scale subsistence production, which is still predominant in agriculture. There have been insufficient initiatives to protect soils or improve their fertility, the phenomenon of soil erosion and desertification is widespread.

The causes of Africa's heavy underdevelopment, in addition to colonialism and poor soil fertility, are also to be found in the inability of many governments of various newly independent states to invest in genuine development capable of ensuring the well-being of their populations. In the 1960s, the decade of early independence, African states waged great battles against illiteracy and disease and invested heavily in building infrastructure (roads, railways, bridges). Unfortunately, however, they also squandered a great deal on huge misguided projects, such as the construction of dozens of communal villages (this happened in Tanzania and Mozambique) to which farmers were forcibly

relocated by forcing them to live in them and grow the products decided by the government. The most conspicuous squandering has undoubtedly occurred in military spending: even countries that have not experienced wars have squandered entire fortunes in rearming their armies and strengthening their security apparatuses (police, intelligence services). This has become particularly evident in states where the military has come to power, and if we consider that from 1975 to 1993 alone, the time of the last independence, there were as many as 32 coups d'état in Africa, largely implemented by the military, we have the dimension of the enormity of the problem.[15]

Even more than state-to-state wars, internal wars within countries, due to secessionist ambitions, political-religious (Sudan), ethnic-political (Rwanda, Burundi), or ethnic-economic (Nigeria, Liberia) conflicts, and struggles to overthrow regimes in power (Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo) have been ruinous (and in some cases still are).

Most African regimes, with very few exceptions, (Senegal, for example) came to the threshold of 2000 with regimes based on a single party. This was meant to unify the country, that is, to create the new nation within the arbitrary borders inherited from colonialism. Unfortunately, however, in most cases the single party was an expression of a single ethnic group that also controlled the state and economy and over the years favoured the personal regimes of undemocratic head-presidents. In the late 1980s, as the planetary-scale confrontation between the two superpowers, which had also sought to establish their own spheres of influence in Africa, waned, external pressure diminished and a new situation emerged that was more conducive to negotiations. With the fall of the Ethiopian military regime, for example, in 1993, Eritrea gained independence. Agreements, albeit partial and uncertain, opened peace-making processes in Angola and Mozambique. In South Africa, the apartheid regime fell. At the same time across the continent the demand "from below" for more democracy and prosperity became strong. Thus, in the 1990s, regimes in most African countries allowed, not without resistance, the formation of multiple parties and the organization of elections. This process, however, proved controversial: too often the governments thus elected benefited from popular legitimacy gained through electoral fraud, marginalization of the opposition, gagging of the press and disregard for human rights.

All African states, then, even the liberalist ones, have made the state the sole engine of the economy, extending state control over land, industries, and commercial circuits. Only those who were (and are) embedded in the state apparatus and the political circuit could (and can) profits well. In Africa, therefore, the businessman or entrepreneur is generally also a bureaucrat, or a man connected to politics. National resources thereby ended up being exploited (and squandered) by a single circle of power to the detriment of the community, and those who remained outside the state apparatus were

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[15] Sofri G., 2010. "Le trasformazioni del XX secolo: crescita demografica ed urbanizzazione", "Le ragioni del disastro economico africano" in "Ambienti, popoli idee: continenti e paesi".

also marginalized from the opportunity to enrich themselves. This in turn deeply affected political life as well, that is, it did not allow democratic culture and rules to be strengthened, because losing power also meant losing control over the economy. Lack of democracy breeds underdevelopment, and underdevelopment breeds undemocratic regimes.[16]

3. GENERAL DRIVERS: THE FOUR C'S TO EXPLAIN THE MAIN CAUSES OF HUNGER

Discussing about the major drivers of hunger and malnutrition means considering all those factors which have a negative impact on food systems. The latter is a *"complex web of activities"*[17] and includes all stages of food preservation: cultivation, harvesting, packaging, processing, marketing, consumption, and disposal of food. Therefore, it is considered as a vast interconnected apparatus where a change in one variable has an impact on the rest. Drivers of hunger and malnutrition, coexist and interact between each other (i.e. climate extreme) therefore they can affect just one stage of the food chain (i.e. production) but it will have consequences on the other phases causing undernourishment or malnourishment among the concerned population. Indeed, the impact may have repercussions on diets' variables such as quantity, quality safety and nutrition elements like health food.

Drivers of food crisis that have an impact on food system can be classified into major (or primary) and secondary drivers. The former category includes the so called "four C", which refer to climate extremes, covid-19, conflicts and cultural-social actors; while the second category include economic downturns and political instability. However, it would be incorrect to reduce the causes of hunger to these factors just mentioned, even though they are the major ones. Therefore, among the drivers of hunger and malnutrition, social inequalities, cultural factors, and public policies are also very relevant.

Even if the causes may vary depending on the region taken into consideration, it is important to highlight that all drivers of hunger are interlinked between each other and in most of the cases are reconnectable to political authorities and institutional actors.

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[16]Brancati A., 2022. "Africa" in "Epoche e spazi".
[17] Oxford Martin Programme on the Future of Food, *What is a food system*.

3.1 Internal and external conflicts

The major driver of hunger and malnutrition concern a cause that can only be overcome in the long term, which very often requires years, aids from third countries, non-governmental actors efforts and a considerable amount of money: it is conflicts, usually internal but also between two or more regions, protests and political unrests that threaten the lives of women, children and ordinary people every day. Indeed, as reported by the World Food Programme (WFP)'s Executive Director David Beasley for which is adamant : "*There's no two ways about it — we can't end hunger unless we put an end to conflict*."[18] According to the Global Food Crisis Report 2021, conflicts remained the main driver as data of 2019-2020 illustrate: every year the worst countries in terms of food are embroiled in conflicts and political insecurity (Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Central African Republic and South Sudan).

However, the phenomena are involved in a circular chain, in which sometimes is the lack of food that causes conflicts. For example, violent uprisings erupted when, in 1984, the Moroccan and Tunisian governments cut food subsidies in order to comply with the conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)[19].The riots only ended when this policy was cancelled.

The nature of conflict has evolved in the recent years: from being between national armies fighting each other for expanding their territories and become superpowers, now there are forces, including rebels, non-state actors or criminal organizations, duelling for independence, security and peace or to obtain political control or rebelling against the current government. There are not two big dominant countries fighting to impose their ideology on the rest of the world (i.e. Cold War), but instead numerous small wars, civil or urban riots, with no lines of frontier, without battlefields or clear conflict zones; without distinctions between civilians and fighters without ideologies.

Conflicts cause food reduction, food availability increasing food insecurity, even in areas where food may have been available: according to the Food Agriculture Organization, violent conflicts "*negatively affects almost every aspect of a food system, from production, harvesting, processing, and transport to input supply, financing, marketing, and consumption*".[20]

In Africa, the geographical areas with the highest food insecurity and registering alarming and extremely alarming level of hunger, are all involve in violent conflicts: Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic and South Sudan The only country not involved in conflicts with an alarming level of famine is Madagascar which is located in a zone affected by climate change and locusts' attacks, as mentioned above.

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[18] Beltrami,S.(2020), *No end to world hunger without an end to conflict — WFP warns*, World Food Program

[19] Seddon D. (1986), "*Riot and Rebellion: Political Responses to Economic Crisis in North Africa, Tunisia, Morocco and Sudan*", UEA Norwich, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia

[20] (FAO, IFAD et al. 2021, 54) Global Hunger Index,2021

Somalia is involved in a tragic internal conflict since 1995, when the President Siad Barre was overthrown by the opposing clan, and now the country is prevailed by political instability and government's absence for almost 30 years. In this Horn African nation, the collapse of the state, anarchy, lawlessness and interclan wars have caused a serious widespread of famine and the disruption of farming communities.[21]

Guerrillas often use hunger as a weapon of war: they seize food supplies and production tools, leading the population to fast or often starve, to obtain easier civilian submission. In South Sudan for instance, violent conflicts in November 2000 left 2.6 million people in need of emergency food aid.[22]

Conflicts affect food security in several ways. They can have a direct impact, for example when food resources are damaged or destroyed like crops or harvests, water resources or livestock, or when access to fields is blocked or populations are forced to flee. Indirectly, conflicts have repercussions on energy systems, transportation, and illness. The reduction of available food leads to government inability to control food prices, farmers production and consumers access to sufficient resources. Indeed, wars can also cause an economic recession, leading to high rates of inflation, increasing unemployment and the destruction of essential services that affect access to and availability of food and the ability to produce and trade it. Moreover, conflicts also lead to the damage and destruction of infrastructure, markets and any human resource necessary for food production, distribution and consumption.[23] In addition, they typically induce to an increase of military spending, more specifically for arms imports: In the recent years military spending has registered the highest amount since the Cold War. For example, in December 2012, prices in war-torn Chad even increased six-fold compared to pre-war prices. The exponential increase in prices in this case was attributed to both the significant decrease in production and the bombardment of numerous companies and industries with a relative increase in the costs of transhipment.[24] The lack of proper form of control by the government induce black market to flourish derived by the difficulty for farmers to receive products, as it happened in Somalia. This generates the creation of small producers which lead to illegal chains to trade food resources which remained operative also after the moments of the previous war. Although black markets, which systems are based on remittance inflows, livestock and money transfer, can have a good impact during period of conflicts because they allow population to survive and to have access to their basic needs without too many sacrifices, an informal economy may have serious

[21] THE GUARDIAN (2007), "Clans and crisis in Somalia"
[22] FAO, WFP, "Special Report: FAO/WFP crop and food supply assessment mission to Sudan, December 22, 2000."
[23] Cohen M.J., Marchione T., Messer E., "Conflict: a cause and effect of hunger", Entwicklung und Lændlicher Raum 34(1): 18-21, 2001;
[24] Morello C., "Food shortages in Syria send prices soaring", The Washington Post, December, 7, 2012.

repercussions in the long run. Smallholders do not recur to any form of insurance, formal assistance, or cash flows causing a negative impact to the whole country wealth. [25]

In Mali, conflicts against Malian government by insurgent groups called Azawad, have destroyed access to markets, and the consequences have been an increase in wheat prices of 80-100% since 2011, and especially in the lean period (June-September 2012). At the end of 2012, prices returned to historical levels, thanks in part to good harvests due to the rainy period. However, in 2013 cereal prices rose again due to the military intervention in the north of the country. Every consequence of conflicts may generate economic shocks which can be considered one more major driver of world hunger. Landmines provoked by conflicts are also compromising for agriculture and food production: in Sierra Leone for instance, resulted impossible to remove mines because it costed between $300-$1000, therefore 1/10 lost a limb and agriculture production was unable. [26]

After experiencing a series of coups for decades, Nigeria has had a president elected by the people since 1999. However, ethnic and interreligious conflicts have resulted in thousands of deaths in recent years, undermining the country's political and social stability. Nigeria is in fact divided into two areas: in the north inhabited by Islamists, the Hausa-Fulani, and in the south live Christians, the Yoruba and Ibos. In some cities, the two groups live in close contact, provoke each other, and every single gesture by one group (such as building a mosque) initiates acts of violence by the other group. Conflicts do not only occur between ethnic groups. In the oil-rich Delta region , MEND (independence movement of that area) carries out acts of sabotage against foreign oil companies and demands that profits be distributed equitably.

3.2 Climate change and natural disasters

The annual UN report[27] found that climate variability affecting rainfall patterns and agricultural seasons, as well as weather extremes such as droughts and floods, are among the key factors behind the increase in hunger, along with conflicts and economic crises.

Climate change fuels world hunger by negatively affecting the four pillars of food security: availability, access, utilisation and stability of access to food. The report's analysis illustrates that the prevalence and number of starving people tend to be higher in countries highly exposed to extreme weather events.

Natural disasters, such as droughts and floods, have a strong impact on food security, rendering land uncultivable and consequently reducing agricultural production. This causes to rapid upheavals in the nutritional status of entire populations, inducing to extreme malnutrition. The decrease in production

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[25] Delgado C, Smith D. (2021), *Hunger and food systems in conflict settings,* Stockholm International Peace Research Institute pag 27

[26] Messer. E, Cohen M.J., Marchione T., *Conflict: a cause and effect of hunger*, ECSP Report,

[27] Global Report on Food Crisis 2021.

also generates higher food prices making access to food even more difficult, especially for urban dwellers and the poorest, who, unable to afford basic foodstuffs, are inevitably subject to malnutrition. Moreover, with the global population set to reach 10 billion by 2050, a 50% increase in global demand for agricultural products compared to current levels, the use of natural resources, which are already heavily exploited, is likely to intensify.

The most exposed country in Sub-Saharan Africa are Madagascar and Burundi which were hit by disastrous natural disasters. The former is one of the African nations most vulnerable to global heating consequences such as tornados, dry seasons, and surges. Longer and more frequent droughts have increased water scarcity and severely impacted the local population's livelihoods. More than 1.3 million people in the region are expected to endure acute food insecurity, with 28,000 facing famine. However, countries' location and climate disaster cannot be the major driver of hunger and malnutrition: although the consequences of the catastrophes have threaten even more people's life, in democratic or political-stable countries at risk zone, natural disasters are prevented and the governments have disposed of all the most adequate measures to avoid very serious damages, as it is the case of Japan.

These tree countries do not enjoy a political stability, they are involved in internal conflict which got worst their food shortages. However, in the case of Zambia, which now is in the period of peace, the main variable is climate change. However, governments have postponed public policies and funds for the climate emergency to give priority to the pandemic.

3.3 The pandemic crisis of Covid-19

Since the beginning of 2020, the Corona virus pandemic is one more actor to add at the famine's causes. Although it is not possible yet to calculate the negative impacts of the covid-19, which will be completely visible in the long period, some effects have already marked some countries' statistics as well as creating social and political unrests and leading to economic shocks. According to Oxfam, global economic activities have diminished by almost 4% and the economic crisis has driven more than 40 million people in 17 countries at suffering hunger. Beyond the impact of covid-19 on food availability, food access, humanitarian assistance, the virus has induced furthermore to a growth of conflicts and social tensions[28], as the World Good Program reports "*The pandemic may well devastate livelihoods and food security* […] *A global recession will majorly disrupt food supply chains.*"[29] The restrictions and lockdowns have limited access to food particularly for the most vulnerable and minority groups, further increasing social and economic inequalities. The overall reduction in production activities and the restrictions on trade are making it difficult for local governments and

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[28] Global report on food crisis 2020, (page. 5)
[29] GRFC 2020 in brief,(page 3)

reducing the income of families, who are also likely to face higher food prices. Those living in rural areas are most at risk as restrictions and lockdowns have made it difficult to trade food, sell agricultural products and buy inputs for farmers such as fertilisers. Restrictions on movements have hampered locust control affecting harvest production. Moreover, unemployment rapidly raised, and the reduction of salary and wages had repercussions on food purchases also affecting households that significantly had to face a reduction of consumer demand. Particularly in the countries of the horn of Africa, the situation revelled to be tragic, as these regions already suffer from severe famine, are at risk from climate change and overrun by conflict, the Covid-19 has resulted in a trade-off: choosing not to starve people or not to let them die from the virus. Poorest countries' economies like the members of the project promoted by the Europe Union AFTER[30] (African food tradition revisited by research) depend on food imports. However, protectionism and restrictive policies also have limited food commerce decreasing even more their GDP, precisely why in this regard the director-general of the AU (African union) spoke at a virtual conference with FAO, saying "*border closures limit trade and food availability in many countries, particularly those dependent on food imports*" and stressing that these must "*remain in place*".[31] Furthermore the pandemic incremented political instability and social tensions: authoritarian governments used the excuse of the virus to postponed (or even cancel the elections), jeopardizing democratic and competitive elections, for instance, as it happened in Somalia where elections should have been started on 25th July 2021, but they have been rescheduled without a precise date. The authorities did not explain valid reason and arguments for the delay and neither provided any details, they merely claimed it was due to "*technical problems*", as Puntland sources reported to the Agence France Presse news agency.[32] Somalia has descended into a constitutional crisis on 8th February, when Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed's presidential term was terminated and the leaders of Somalia's five states were unable to reach an electoral agreement before the presidential term expired in February. After several negotiations, Somali political leaders agreed on a political timetable to be held in July, but this was disregarded for not detailed causes.

The circumstance that this quandary happened in the country with the highest Global Hunger Index in the world, is a clear example that any causes of hunger and malnutrition, including the "new entry" phenomena of Covid-19, is linked to political authorities' responsibility that aggravate political unrests, further threating democratic process, having repercussions on the security and well-being of the population and therefore on countries' famine.

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[30] The project generated in 2016, sought to apply European technologies and expertise to improve food safety and the quality of food production in Africa. The categories of food involved included several types of cereals, fruit, vegetables, meat, and fish.

[31] Plini G., 2020. *Fao e Unione Africana: insieme per garantire cibo ai Paesi poveri*.

[32] Gentili C., 2021. *La Somalia non va al voto: elezioni rinviate*, Sicurezza Internazionale.

Moreover, the pandemic has largely increased the economic and social inequalities worsening hunger world situation. Two years after the beginning of the pandemic, it can be asserted that there is a disintegration in the social fabric that is affecting mainly women, young people, the self-employed and precarious workers. These are the categories that have suffered the most serious impacts of the pandemic and the restrictions put in place to contain the contagions. The pandemic has widened pre-existing economic, racial and gender inequalities. The 10 richest men in the world increased their wealth by 540 billion and returned to pre-covid levels in just 9 months (the poorest people needed more than a decade). If women's employment were equal to men's,112 million women today would not be at risk of losing their jobs and income. Pandemic kills the unequal world: the poorest people are less likely to plan for prevention or to have rapid access to available treatment. The 10 richest men on the planet possess 6 times more wealth than the poorest 40% of the world (3.1 billion people)[33].

3.3.1 Economic downturns

Strictly linked with the pandemic crisis since the last two years, are also economic downturns and economic shocks provoke wide spreading of famine and malnutrition, as the last recent pandemic crisis has demonstrated having repercussions to the economic area. The increase in unemployment and lower salaries, cause people not able to buy healthy food conducing them to assume fat diets, which are cheaper. Economic slowdowns have negative impacts for the whole country's economy because it affects not only internal market but also international trade, especially for countries involved in primary resources trade. Moreover, a decrease of the overall GDP will increase socio and economic inequalities between those living in urban and rural areas. For the latter access to food f is more difficult and the ability to invest in the agricultural sector, such as fertile products or new machinery, becomes very limited. Since 2020, lockdowns, closure of industries and factories, reduction of demands in primary commodities and external one such as tourism have aggravated food crisis in countries such as Sudan and Zimbabwe which registered already economic downturns in 2019. [34]

3.4 Cultural and social actors

It has been ascertained that certain socio-cultural factors increase the risk of famine and chronic malnutrition. Habits and ways of life, lack of education, food taboos, status of women and its position in the society, religious norms can accumulate increasing the risk of hunger and strengthening the widespread of malnutrition.

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[33] Oxfam, *La Pandemia della Disuguaglianza*, gennaio 2022.
[34] FSIN, *Global Report on food crisis 2021*, A global overview of food crisis chapter 1, page 22.

Social inequalities are relevant drivers of hunger although sometimes is not considered as the major ones. Naomi Hossein, researcher at the Institute of Development Studies, stated that "*The unequal distribution of hunger and malnutrition in all its forms is rooted in the disparity of social, political, and economic power.*"[35] The most vulnerable subjects are women, children and minority groups. As reported by Carter and Kelly (2021) food access is related by discriminatory factor including gender, age, biological diversity. Gender inequality is an important factor for food availability, as reported by the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), there is a large gap between men and women which was accentuated during the Covid-19: women are 10% more insecure than men in 2020, while the percentage was on 6% in 2019.[36] The differences of the gender gap are almost inexistent in Northern America and Europe, while are more visible in sub-Saharan Africa, "*even when they have the same income and education levels and live in similar areas as men*".[37]

In areas afflicted by conflicts or in rural areas where food production is inexistent or unhygienic camps compromise nutritional standards, women and children are very proved. The former many times are deprived by the food because are constrained to give the scanty meals to their husband, who often abuse them[38]. If there is not sufficient food for the whole family, it is the women who has to renounce eating in favour of the male figure.

For children, which need further nutrient values for the reproduction of their body, often experience psychological trauma due to physical disabilities provoked by the lack of healthy and sufficient food, homelessness and separation from their parents. [39]

Gender inequalities depends on cultural institutional factors. In poor countries where often the male figure prevails over females and it is viewed as households' heads, when families constrained to ration meals, benefits men over girls. [40]

[35] Hossein N., 2017. *Inequality, Hunger, and Malnutrition: Power Matters*, Global Hunger Index 2017, International food policy research institute (ifpri) welthungerhilfeconcern worldwide
[36] FAO Report 2021
[37] FAO et al., 2020: 24.
[38] Sayegues, 1992.
[39] Messer E, Cohen M.J., Marchione T., *Conflict: a cause and effect of hunger*.
[40] UNICEF, 2011.

CHAPTER 2

1. AUTHORITARIANISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Territory, state, nation are the three constitutive terms of modernity. There is hardly any state today without territory, and the ambiguity of the term nation allows all territorial states, even multinational ones, to refer to a national feeling, based on citizenship. In Africa at the foundations of political devolution, which goes by the name of decolonization, or of armed liberation struggles, a long process that runs from the late 1950s to the 1990s and can only be said to have ended symbolically with the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa (1994), lies the notion of conquest of the state understood as "nation."

Most Sub-Saharan African countries are agricultural economies that produce raw materials for export and still have very large areas of mere subsistence family-type production. Industrial development is little while the already inadequate infrastructure has been deteriorating since the economic crisis forced neglect of maintenance and innovation in the 1970s.

The economic boom of the 1960s marked the end of the post-war crisis period. The nation-states of Africa, having won their independence, were categorized as "developmental states", characterized by strong state intervention, especially for public goods such as education and health and economics.

1.1. Political behaviour and the constitutional elements

The new constitutions of these new sovereign states echoed the political models and democratic principles of advanced European states. However, the initial democracies of the newly independent states, characterized by competitive electoral systems, rights to citizens, the recognition of equality before the law and limited powers to the state, were soon abandoned, modified and replaced with mostly military regimes, but also personal or one-party regimes. Such political change was justified as a prerequisite for achieving modernization because state control favoured the development of the production system; multipartyism was repudiated as an expression of colonial manipulation and an obstacle to national integration. States formed by single parties alone and/or personalization of presidential power began to spread, seen as the only means to achieve national unity. One example is Tanzania, where President J. Nyerere justified his seizure of power and the creation of a one-party

system in order to achieve economic development by appealing to nationalist ideals and ideological constructs, such as the Ujamaa.[41] ("extended family" in the Swahilii language).

Presidential constitutions, the primacy of single parties and the personal management of power by the "fathers of the fatherland" or their successors, usually military dictators, also signal the fall in the legitimacy of governments caused by a general drift of most African states toward neo-patrimonialism forms of management. According to the Weberian paradigm, the conception of neo-patrimonialism refers to a hybrid type of domination in which alongside formal institutions the distinction between public and private disappears while weak institutions can easily become hostage to ethnicity, nepotism, corruption, clientelism, outright predation. Neopatrimonialism is the manipulation and betrayal of the "conquest of the political realm" by means of the ideological and institutional construction of a "legitimate vision principle" aimed at controlling and accumulating political, economic and symbolic resources, which have become the raison d'être of power. Power and wealth are closely interdependent, hence corruption and cronyism that overwhelm the weak institutional structuring, autonomy, and capacity of administrative and judicial apparatuses. In fact, governments had (and have) total control over the labour market, prices, marketing, exports, enterprises and any economic aspect. However, the limited administrative capacities of the new states to allow them to manage economic life so intensively did not allow for concrete economic advancement. The transformation of the developmental state into a neo-patrimonial state represented a betrayal of the hopes and utopias of the independence.[42] In addition to being marked by corruption, clientelism and neo-patrimonialism, the new sub-Saharan arrangements are marked by communitarianism, structures formed by the convergence of religion and ethnicity, and traditional (family, ethnic, tribal) and modern (of social classes) cleavages appear.[43] The problem of such regimes arises primarily from a question of Nation building, given the artificial political constructions of colonialism, and following therefore a problem of State building. The sum of these two issues results in the one-single party system and single power of a charismatic leader.

Principles such as adherence to socialism, rejection of political pluralism, national integration and preservation of peace prevail at the basis of many new sub-Saharan constitutions. Monopoly of military hegemonic figures, cruel dictatorships, policies based on patronage and to strengthen the positions of authority (*politique du ventre*) characterize the African weak state. In the sub-Saharan landscape, the political problem is the centralization of powers of charismatic leaders and governments characterized by the centrality pre-eminence of the president and marginality of parliament. In most Sub-Saharan African states (with a few exceptions such as Botswana or South

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[41] A. Gentili, *Lo Stato in Africa Sub-Sahariana: da sudditi a cittadini?,* Il Mulino 2002
[42] M. Bratton, N. van de Walle, Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa, in World Politics,1994
[43] R. Orrù, I Paesi dell'Africa subsahariana, in P. Carrozza, A. Di Giovine, G.F. Ferrari,; Bari, Laterza, 2014

Africa) authoritarian and long-standing presidentialism prevails, the division of powers is forgotten, and good governance and rule of law are not guaranteed. Many cases reproduce U.S. presidentialism in a deviant way, but in practice it is authoritarian presidentialism denoted by sharp imbalance of powers to the benefit of the president. In the early 1990s, however, the new "democratic revival" constitutions failed to ensure compliance with rule of law and good governance. The rationale for this is that in fact the principle of separation of powers does not work because of the already mentioned presidential authoritarianism, and the presidents themselves often control the major parties in parliament. Elections are purposely made to ensure the continuation of the office of the president and ensure his reelection; in fact, less than 15 percent of major elections in Africa result in a transfer of power to the opposition. Theoretically, it cannot be disputed that in some states elections are multiparty but in practice "[m]any of these elections have included illiberal practices, from voter intimidation to vote buying and violence." [44] Violence, intimidation, fraud, and manipulation are often associated with elections in Africa, both in the pre- and post-election periods. Among the various artifices to affect electoral processes appear measures that control and hinder opposition forces, limiting the circle of possible candidates, e.g., imposing procedures with age or citizenship limits, weakening "watchdog" institutions, reducing the electoral clout of voters, and changing the election period in favor of the incumbent president. Other measures that absolutely make elections unfair and undemocratic include intimidating voters to defect, unduly cultivating an electorate through pro-choice policies and cronyism, and of course alternating final election results. To provide a background, among the ten longest-serving presidents in the world, six are in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, Chad's President Idriss Dèby, who died in 2020, was in office 29 years, Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Democratic Republic of Congo has continued in office since 1997, and again Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir was in office from 1993 to 2019 (the office ended due to a coup by the military).

Citizens during and after elections, are totally isolated from the activities of political life, are surrounded by silence, fear, terror and intimidation, principles that do not comply with the Human Development Report (1994). Often parliament introduces laws without the knowledge of the citizens, gnawing more and more of all those fundamentals of a democracy each time. An emblematic case is Uganda, where the president (as in most sub-African countries), under the guise of a pandemic, took advantage of this to repress all forms of freedom. In the January 2021 elections, Yoweri Museveni was re-elected for a sixth term, an aberration of democracy, but Museveni nevertheless artfully used the coronavirus to suppress dissent. All opposition demonstrations have been banned, suppressed and

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[44] L. Laasko, Electoral Violence and Political Competition in Africa, in Oxford Research Encyclopedias, cit., 2019: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1344

dispersed, in some cases brutally by the police, even with casualties, under the pretext of having broken the rules of the pandemic emergency, while those of the majority linked to the president have not.

1.2. The new Chinese influence

After the end of U.S.-USSR bipolarity and with the worldwide emergence in the last decade of economies of states that could not be traced back to liberal democracies (e.g., China or Russia), doubts arose about the belief that the progress of African countries was inextricably linked to a merely mechanistic relationship between neoliberal economic development and liberal advancement.

In the 1990s, the opening up in the international context of de facto uncompetitive African economies demonstrated the substantial failure of both "Western conditionality for aid" aimed at the development of democracy and the policies of international bodies for structural adjustments of African governments.[45]

It was an important tool for economic development completely within the African continent has been the gradual creation of a continental common market. In July 2019, the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA)[46], which has as its primary purpose the development of internal African trade through the removal of barriers on goods and services, entered its operational phase.

The AfCFTA, if supported by the political will of the various African leaders, can strengthen the continent's economies in the context of global trade relations and provide valuable support in combating poverty and social development. This appears even more important at the current historical juncture, in which sub-Saharan Africa is "the main theater of China-directed trade projection,"[47] essentially indifferent to the internal conditions of African countries. China's strong economic presence on the Continent often overshadows Western conditionality for development cooperation policies. As noted above, this conditionality is linked to factors deemed indispensable to human progress such as: democracy, the rule of law, and the exercise of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The Chinese approach is largely different and not aimed at promoting the protection of rights and real democratic development. This, along with other strictly environmental issues, contributes to the significant gap in many sub-Saharan countries between constitutional norm and political and social reality.

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[45] R. Orrù, I Paesi dell'Africa subsahariana, in P. Carrozza, A. Di Giovine, G.F. Ferrari,; Bari, Laterza, 2014

[46] This agreement, was signed in 2018 and it is, following the WTO, the largest in the world and it is the largest pact of world free area. It seeks to decrease inter-member tariffs and includes policy areas such as trade facilitates and services, as well as normative measures such as health standards and engineering barriers to trade. The agreement was mediated by the African Union (AU) and was co-signed by 44 of its 55 member states in Kigali, Rwanda, on March 21, 2018. The only country that has not yet joined the agreement is Eritrea, with a mostly closed economy.

[47] To the "conspicuous presence in Africa of China, which for geopolitical reasons finances infrastructure such as ports (Dschibuti), railways, etc." alludes P. Häberle, The constitutionalism as a project of science, cit., 11.

African regimes, since independence, have often adopted "Westernized" ordinances, but lacking the same cultural and social substratum. This has frequently resulted in a formal adherence of sub-Saharan state systems to democratic and rule of law constitutional models; at the substantive level, however, hybrid regimes are often encountered, with an underlying ambiguity that combines democratic and multiparty form with authoritarian substance. In many states, the enduring and extensive extension of presidential powers causes the weakness of parliament and of the principle of separation of powers.

China, in recent years has begun a series of direct investments in the African continent beginning an entirely different "colonization" to that of the West. In fact, Chinese multinationals are building infrastructure, relocating production and labor, in exchange for access to natural resources. According to U.S.-Zambian economist Moyo, the great Eastern power, unlike the West, sends aid to Africa by investing but asking for an economic return, as she mentioned "The secret of China's success is that its foray into Africa is only for business".[48] The mistake of Western powers has been to send aid without asking for anything in return.

1.3. Linz definition applied to Sub-Saharan countries

Sub-Saharan countries reflect perfectly the characteristics of an authoritarian regime according to the definition given by Linz : " *Political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones*."[49]   Linz identifies three types of no-democratic regimes which are totalitarian, authoritarian and traditional. He labels the post-totalitarian regime as a new form of non-democratic regime with its own identifying characteristics. From the author's definition, four main characteristics of authoritarian regime emerge and that recur in African regimes. Firstly, limited and *not responsible political pluralism* means that people are encouraged to not participate and what dominates is apathy. Pluralism is limited to relevant elite actors such as army, bureaucracy, industrial entrepreneurs and church, while several social groups are excluded from participation. Other parties exist but they are under the hegemonic one, therefore there is not real competition. Opposition candidates very often are prevented from participating in elections. It is common for them to be charged with criminal offenses, as was the case in Senegal where opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, was charged with rape or in Niger where Amadou was arrested for participating in protests. The salience of limited pluralism

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[48] A.M. Barducci, *Aiutiamoli a casa loro? Lo stiamo già facendo, ma male* - Einaudi Blog, 2020
[49] Linz 1964, page 255

permits to identify the importance of the relevant political actors. This concept refers us to that of the dominant (anti-anything) coalition, that is, the set of groups that support the regime. Often there is a leader who interacts with and accords the different parties. Dominance is guaranteed by the presence of coercive resources, influence and status. The second element is *mentality rather than ideology*: the former is a general and emotional attitude shared by everyone, while the latter is a complex system of ideas that explain how the system should work. The adoption of mentality allows the leaders to obtain the loyalty and avoiding opposition, in this sense it serves as a pragmatic approach. There is a characteristic mindset that can nurture cohesion within civil society. Notable cases to remember, for example, are the restrictions on political activism during the election period in countries such as Chad, Uganda, or the Republic of Congo. In the former, in 2019, Social media was banned for more than 16 months due to unrests, demonstrations, and economic downturns. The other two countries also created a total blockade of the Internet and WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram during the March 2021 election period.[50]

The third element is undefined but predictable limits: political elite has the power to decide and limits are not visible but predictable. Institutional structures refer to the political structures supporting the regime that are created and institutionalized (e.g., military juntas, parties, trade unions…). The last element is the absence or very limited mobilization: usually this kind of regime tends to demobilize citizens from popular participation because they fear to not be able to control it if it starts to become autonomous and the regime has not means of suppression. The quantum of mass participation is induced and controlled from above, this implies the existence of effective repressive apparatuses that can implement demobilization policies and the partial weakness or absence of mobilization structures. The following object of study focuses on the comparative analysis of the hunger index and the indices of democracy and political fragility of different countries in Africa. This shows that there is a correlation between the three elements and therefore from the analyses it is assumed that the more political stability and democracy a country disposes of, the lower the risk of severe malnutrition or famine for its population.

2.   CORRELATION BETWEEN HUNGER AND AUTHORITARIANISM

The Democracy Index, made by the Economist Intelligence Unit (E.I.U.), measures the level of political democracy of a given state. To calculate the total average of a country, it takes into account

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[50] L. Zamfir; State of Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. Democratic progress at risk; European Parliament Research Service, 2021

5 indicators which are basic elements of a democracy: *political participation* (degree of apathy, abstention, public debate, election of representative, adhesion of a political party...); *civil liberties* (the safeguard and protection of the basic human rights); *political culture* (obedience and docility of the population), *electoral process and pluralism* (security of voters, fair and competitive elections, acceptance of the losing parties of the transference of powers); *the functioning of government* (legitimacy, accountability and responsiveness). The democracy index, according to the weighted average of the indicators just mentioned, divides countries into 4 types of regimes, which are (from the lowest to the highest score) authoritarian regimes, hybrid regimes, flawed democracies, and full democracies.[51] In Sub-Saharan Africa, even today, there have been classified 23 as authoritarian regimes and only Mauritius as full democracy (the other country have been labelled 14 as hybrid regimes and 6 flawed democracies).

If we also consider the Fragile State Index (FSI), which is drafted by the Fund for Peace and establishes for each year the ranking of states according to their fragility, the risk and vulnerability of a state, we see a relationship between the countries suffering from hunger and those at the top of the ranking. This index is constructed based on political (state legitimacy, human rights and rule of law, public services), economic (economic decline, human flight and brain drain), socio-cultural (external interventions, demographic pressure, refugees) and cohesion indicators (security apparatus, group grievance, factionalized elite). Somalia, which is the only country with an extremely alarming level of hunger, covers the second place in the fragility ranking (followed by Yemen), and among the top 10 places, 7 are in sub-Saharan Africa.

From the cartogram below, the comparison and correlation between the various indices can be better comprehended.

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[51] To learn more about the measurement method, how scores are assigned, and the scientific investigative model in more detail see: www.eiu.com

Figure 3. Comparison between Democracy Index, Fragility Index and Global Hunger Index in Africa (2021)
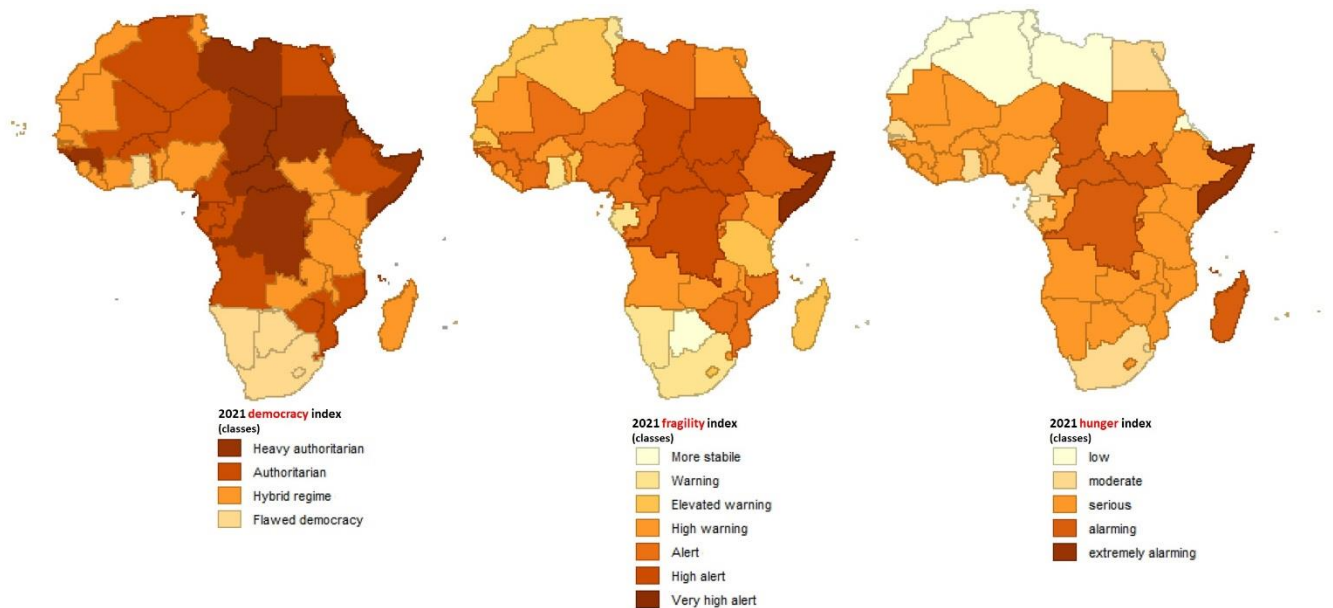
As illustrated in Figure 3, most of the countries highlighted in dark red, which suffer the higher hunger index, essentially correspond to the states with a high index of political fragility and lower level of democracy

2.1. Do democracy and political stability prevent hunger?

Democratic political institutions and processes can play a major role in combating famine, but this also depends on the development of political coalitions in the countries affected and the strategies they employ. In Africa, democratic anti-famine policies are complicated by the presence of wars, the nature of famines, and the level of international aid. Modern famines are inherently political as they can multiply power struggles and can be manipulated (or even created) to achieve a political goal, although obviously inadequate food productivity, natural disasters and poor infrastructure are the primary causes of famines.

According to Sen, democracies provide good protection against famine in so far as governments face a free press, opposition parties and free regular elections, and such political freedoms present in a democratic state should be seen as the real force for the elimination of hunger. Thus it seems that one set of freedoms-criticizing, publishing, and voting-is linked to other kinds of freedoms, such as the freedom to escape starvation and death by famine (a theory commonly summarized in the phrase "democracy prevents famine").

Sen 's statement is certainly supportable, but the concrete reality is more complex. Examining these complexities helps us identify the specific policy mechanisms that help protect against famine.

Despite the presence of a considerable amount of historical or contemporary sources, it is not easy to test this theory. First of all, important "counterexamples" are present, such as the case of India, which has conspicuously failed to combat chronic hunger and malnutrition.

Having already clarified in the first chapter what the dividing line between hunger and famine is, we now turn to detail the mechanisms that best enable democratic institutions to play a decisive role in preventing famine.

The analysis is primarily concerned with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa as the continent most susceptible to famine, but some examples and conclusions also apply to several countries in Asia.

It should be preliminarily clarified that the distinction between chronic poverty and acute famine is essential to any attempt to examine the "democracy prevents famine" theory. This is because no one argues that democracy prevents poverty, at least in the short run. While it is easy to implement this distinction in Asia, however, because famines are dramatic and rapid onset events, such a distinction is more difficult in Africa. As an example, among some communities in South Sudan the words " hunger" and "famine" are usually related, and thus the term "famine" need not have the meaning of a sudden outbreak of acute starvation.

The assumption behind the claim that democracy prevents famine is that civil and political rights-freedom of speech, of free association, of electing representatives of one's choice-contribute to the protection of social and economic rights, of which the right to food and livelihood are part.

But it is not so simple. There are serious abuses of social, economic, and cultural rights even in democracies. Homelessness in the United States and chronic poverty and malnutrition in India are two examples. In these cases, it appears that citizens have not used their civil and political liberties to successfully achieve basic social and economic rights. Why is famine different? Perhaps because it affects the whole society and not just some unfortunate sections? This does not seem to be a complete answer. More likely, it seems historically, famine can become a serious political issue, which is not the case with other types of deprivation.[52]

Basically, there is a *political incentive* to prevent famine. Elected politicians fear punishment from their constituents in the voting booths and have hope for the electoral reward of success by providing famine prevention. Civil servants fear demotion for their inability to prevent famine, hoping to use the opportunities of a famine emergency to prove their ability and get a promotion. A freely elected government will immediately act appropriately against famine because otherwise voters may replace

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[52] Alex de Waal, *Democratic political process and the fight against famine*, Institute of Development Studies (Brighton, England), 2000

it at the next round of elections. The distinction between democracy and dictatorship is obviously not clear-cut. There may be states with democratic processes and institutions that do not seek the support of some constituencies and thus are indifferent to their welfare (or lack thereof), while some authoritarian states may derive their legitimacy from poverty alleviation and famine prevention.

A further reason is that in a democracy, where political opposition is permitted and openly expressed dissent can be, information of impending or actual famine cannot be suppressed.

In this context, state action is generally necessary to prevent famines. Market solutions alone do not solve the famine problem; indeed, as much research has shown, well-functioning markets are entirely compatible with famines. Famine protection is also provided by the free press, which in a democracy plays the role of holding the government accountable and mediating information, ensuring that a hunger cannot be hidden or underestimated by the government. This, of course, is the main tool for holding the government accountable in implementing sound anti-famine plans. According to Sen, a free press and a pluralistic political system are valid anti- famine protection, while the lack of such guarantees would cause famines. The democratic government therefore shows itself to be responsive, with appropriate measures to prevent or mitigate famine precisely in response to pressure from the media, public opinion and opposition parties. In Sen's view, a free press and the ability to hold protest rallies allow the government to have information to use, but these elements in a way express popular pressure that can compel the authorities to respond proactively to warning signs. According to Moore and Teskey the legislature and elections are the two key elements of government accountability. Although this does not absolutely guarantee anti-famine government action, it does ensure that the government will be called to account in the event of a lack of action in protecting against famine. A responsive government therefore is often created by a free press, providing adequate information, and the above mentioned accountability.[53]

According to Myhrvold-Hanssen, however, the civil rights of speech and press mentioned by Sen are not sufficient to prevent famines. According to the author, it is necessary for the population to be properly educated in order for the free press to effectively give voice to the poorest and thus can effectively help mitigate famines. Many sub-Saharan states depend heavily on foreign funding and thus have severe financial constraints. Since foreign agencies often intervene in development plans both at the organizational level and in their financing and implementation, this can cause problems for a democratic government, which may find itself forced to delegate its effective power to international development organizations. Thus, if by hypothesis a government wanted to increase the amount of resources for anti-charter protection, foreign control over such protection policies would make the scaling-up process more complicated and slower. In addition, the responsibility of the

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[53] O. Rubin, *Democracy and Famine*, Ed. 1; Taylor and Francis, 2012

elected government would be more diluted, given the presence of multiple players and outside organizations in anti-church programs. It may also be difficult for the elected government to plan such measures over the long term if famine-protection programs are funded by outside organizations. In some cases such funding aimed at particularly weak states has been withheld, or given minimally at the very time of greatest need. This has resulted in program policies that are not long-term and a widespread feeling of insecurity. Obviously, the intervention of humanitarian organizations has saved the lives of a great many people and cannot be considered harmful, but excessive reliance on foreign funding can undermine the political authority of a fragile state, and lack of political authority is a determining factor in analyzing a government's political action in famine prevention and protection programs. As a general rule, effective political action against famine requires both primary (i.e., mass movements) and secondary mobilizations (i.e., specialized human rights institutions, such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, Human Rights Watch). Primary mobilization is essential because politicians take into account the logic of numbers. In any competitive electoral system, representatives cannot afford to ignore the grievances of large numbers. Famines, particularly when they involve large numbers of destitute people converging on cities, are also a major security threat, and governments must pay attention. However, primary mobilization alone is insufficient, because those simply seeking food can be provided with distributions, which do not involve anti-hunger measures. Secondary activism, which serves to articulate management and political connections, is also essential.[54]

2.2. The importance of mobilization and responsibility

The issue of famine must be politically supported even when there is no famine, and measures must be instituted well in advance of any future crisis. Economic, nutritional, epidemiological, agricultural and other expertise is needed to change the approach to hunger from being simply a charitable request to a political cause.

Coalition building is critical to creating a policy against famine. Those who address the issue of famine must be ready to enter the political arena directly and be prepared to create commissions of inquiry and other accountability mechanisms.

Mobilization against famine has several interconnected goals. When achieved together, they amount to a political backlash against famine. First and foremost, mobilization ensures a timely response to the threat of famine. Many countries have various forms of famine early warning systems, but there needs to be a political trigger to act for them to actually work. A coalition of affected people joined

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[54] Alex de Waal, *Democratic political process and the fight against famine*, Institute of Development Studies (Brighton, England), 2000

by professional groups (including journalists, extension workers, labor unions, farmers' and pastoralists' associations, academics, and so on) can provide help to political power. Second, effective mechanisms against famine are needed because having the political will to prevent famine is essential, but it is not enough. In fact, the latter must be increased by a sound economic understanding of the causes of famine, combined with sound nutrition, public health, concern for agriculture, environment, migration and other policies. This requires investment in technical expertise on the part of the state, which otherwise may minimize or even ignore famine. As has already been mentioned, education of the public is another key issue. It is important that political mobilization does not become separate from the more technical debates, so the public must be well informed. This must start with a free press and a well-informed legislature. In addition, one of the dangers of equating 'democracy' with only free elections and majority rule is that a state can claim to be 'democratic' but still fail to provide the basis for human rights for minorities, including protection against famine. A political mobilization against famine must ensure that just as everyone is equal before the law, everyone must be entitled to protection against famine. This was the main cause of the famine that occurred in Sudan in 1986-8 where the governing institutions of liberal democracy in Khartoum failed to prevent a disastrous famine in the war-affected South and less severe famine in Western Sudan.[55] In this case, the affected populations were not considered by the government as full citizens of the country and were in no position to defend their rights as they were considered "undeserving" by their rulers. However, this raises the question: what are true democratic institutions?

In countries where there is a newly elected and therefore still weak civilian democratic government, the latter, in striving to secure its power, may be tempted to play the nationalist card and provoke national or ethnic conflict. It could therefore be argued that an immature and insecure democracy is more vulnerable than stable authoritarian governments.[56]

This could happen because an insecure parliamentary government feels compelled to respond to the most heated constituencies while ignoring the most marginal ones. Thus in Sudan, the authoritarian regime of President Jaafar Nimeiri could afford to ignore the more traditionally powerful constituencies during the drought of the early 1970s and respond to the needs of the more remote rural areas. But the parliamentary government of Prime Minister Sadiq el Mahdi in the late 1980s, while responsive to the demands of the urban population, ignored the needs of the rural and especially southern populations, against whom a bitter war was being waged. Thus in 1988 the Sudanese government was so accountable to the people of Khartoum that it had to renege on an important

[55] O. Rubin, *Democracy and Famine*, Ed. 1; Taylor and Francis, 2012
[56] Alex de Waal, *Democratic political process and the fight against famine*, Institute of Development Studies (Brighton, England), 2000

agreement with the IMF to maintain a subsidy on grain for consumption in urban areas, but it could completely ignore the hungry people of Bahr el Ghazal in the South.

Although Sudan is an extreme case, this analysis points to a general problem that can occur with representative systems of government: some groups have stronger voices than others, and minority power can be excluded entirely.

Electoral accountability of members of parliament, parties, and governments to their constituents, understood both as individual voters and gathered in organizations, associations, unions, and others Wider democratic accountability, represented by public opinion, through letters and editorials in newspapers and whatnot. A free and informed press is important for educating the public and politicians, alerting the system in time, and evaluating performance.

Legal accountability, particularly relevant where there are laws and codes of conduct to establish effective measures against famine, which can be accomplished through the courts or through commissions of inquiry.

Professional responsibility of public officials, health workers, planners, and managers, who will be required to know the technical anti-harvest system, including through lecture series. There must be political pressure to find the economic resources and implement the necessary measures to prevent famine. In non-democratic regimes, professionals will be able to find good solutions to prevent famine, but they will not have the political pressure behind them to do so. In an uninformed democratic system, there will be political pressure to develop such measures, but not necessarily effectively.

In conclusion, preventing famine requires more than just "democracy." Liberal institutions and popular mobilization can be much more effective than a democracy of only free elections.

3.   INTERNATIONAL AIDS AND ITS POLITICAL ROLE

History shows that famine is won mainly by internal political processes and the people of the affected countries. External aid can play an ancillary role, but not be the main factor in victory. In recent African famines, for example, relief rarely accounted for more than 10-15% of the population's demand for food consumption.

However, economic aid to Africa has not developed the economy because it has failed to develop an entrepreneurial culture. On the contrary, international aid has enriched African dictators even more, and they are the biggest obstacle to development today. International aid has, in one regard, "helped

to bring down" economic and democratic development in Africa since it has perpetuated dictatorships, the main cause of Africa's evils.

According to economist Peter Bauer, among the earliest critics of 'international aid, economic aid does not serve development and argues that "aid is the process whereby the poor in rich countries subsidize the rich in poor countries." In fact, although foreign aid still seems the best short-term solution, they have rarely really helped reduce hunger and, instead, have encouraged and worsened corrupt behaviour, providing cover for policies and programs and starving people even more. The money coming from the West has helped line the pockets of corrupt bureaucrats without contributing to the wellbeing and health of the nation.

After years of aid to the governments of African countries, the situation a that was supposed to improve, is only becoming more catastrophic. As a matter of fact, international policies, are failing to develop and promote the African economy. However, these initiatives do not seem to be aimed at either developing or promoting the African economy. Foreign aid may work when faced with emergencies from natural disasters or famine episodes, but it fails to foster any kind of long-term sustainable economic development. Moreover, when donor countries send international aid, it flows not directly to the starving population, but to governments. The direct consequence is the growth of the state's role in the recipient country's economy, which provides no incentive for private sector development. Because of international aid, the state is not even intent on seeking consensus from its citizens, since it has already been enriched by the West. The problem is that the latter still believes that sub-African regimes represent the interest of the people when they represent only the elite.

The EU as well as international organizations, have invested large sums for aid in africa: Italy, for example, in 2018 had as a target to invest 0.5% of GDP, Great Britain in 2016 invested 0.7% (about 15billion euros) in international aid, and the UN in 2000 projected that by 2015 member states should devolve at least 0.7% of their GDP in international aid, setting as a goal the end of world hunger (now it turns out to be impossible to achieve it by 2030). [57]

The paradox is that although aid has increased, political, social and security conditions in African countries have not improved but worsened.

An example of the failure of international cooperation is Congo, a country rich in natural resources. Before, foreign funding supported the corrupt government of Mobutu Sese Seko. In 1997, once the remnants of Mobutu's dictatorship were removed, Laurent Kabila took power, but was later killed in 2001 by his bodyguards. He was then succeeded by his son Joseph Kabila, supported by aid donors, who paid for the organization of two elections (in 2006 and 2011) that cost billions of dollars. The elections, won by Kabila, were considered fraudulent by the opposition, and-as a result-violent

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[57] *The Sorry Record of Foreign Aid in Africa*, Fee.org, August, 1, 2001

protests broke out in the country. At a time when Congo most needed unity, Western solutions led only to internal divisions, giving political and economic power to corrupt elites unable to build a functioning state.[58]

International aid has obvious economic consequences, but it also has a strong political impact on recipient countries.

In conclusion then, the main political problems with international aid are of various kinds. The first concerns the tendency for large, high-profile humanitarian operations to backfire. This may arise because a high media profile creates a political and funding imperative for major UN agencies and NGOs to maintain a presence, making them more vulnerable to manipulation, because the magnitude of the activity makes monitoring and control less effective, and because a high level of media attention attracts NGOs that are less scrupulous and ready to make unethical compromises, with even widespread corruption phenomena. In addition, there can be massive diversion of resources to belligerent forces and authoritarian governments, and the need to support war efforts and attempts at social and economic transformation. Second, foreign dependence and orientation of accountability toward external donors. It can happen that central or local government staff and NGOs themselves become oriented toward external donors rather than local constituents, and this can lead governments to delegate responsibility to fight famine, blaming foreign aid donor countries and blaming them if things go the wrong way. International aid generates laziness on the part of African politicians, and dependence on foreign aid, instead of developing the economy, generates a vicious cycle from which it is difficult to get out. A further problem is the weakening of national capacity. In heavily aided countries, many of the best-educated personnel are attracted to employment in humanitarian institutions or engage in aid-related activities on behalf of the government or local institutions. In addition, sustained aid creates an important if subtle cultural change in the recipient country. Foreign aid donors increasingly come to define the recipient country's problems and solutions. Their dominant position in key policy debates undermines the recipient country's ability to conduct its own internal debates on these issues. The final result may be that the citizens themselves come to believe that solutions lie in the hands of external aid agencies, not in their own actions, creating demoralization and dependence. To conclude, there is little transparency in aid negotiations. Although the purpose of humanitarian aid is also to promote democracy and good governance, yet negotiations over contracts and aid arrangements are almost always conducted in private between representatives of

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[58] There are other, more striking examples of failed aid. In the 1980s, a Norwegian disdevelopment agency had built a fish freezing plant in northern Kenya. After completing the work, the agency realized that more energy than was produced in the entire region had to be used to operate the plant. Also in the same years, $10 million from Western agencies had been spent inTanzania, to build a cashew processing plant. The plant had three times the processing capacity of the entire country's cashew production, and it was also cheaper to send the fruit to processing plants in India

donor and recipient country governments, which does not allow for democratic participation. In fact, many elements of the aid relationship are not in the public domain at all.

In the aid meeting the donor has almost arbitrary power, and this too is not a fair model for democratic politics. It encourages confidential and elitist decision-making and discourages accountability of the recipient population.

On the whole, humanitarian aid does not seem to contribute to the development of a form of governance that could promote the fight against famine; on the contrary, it could be an obstacle to the development of popular awareness and the development of the political processes necessary for the creation of an anti-famine "contract." Where a contract already exists, however, aid can achieve its humanitarian objectives without political disadvantage. For example, in Botswana the political drought relief program is essentially indigenous and based on a national political contract, but it often uses foreign aid and resources to implement its commitments.

Foreign aid not only supports corrupt governments but provides them with forms of money to use as they please. As Moyo reports, "*These corrupt governments interfere with the rule of law, the establishment of transparent civil institutions, and the protection of civil liberties, making any foreign or domestic investment unattractive...the lack of investment reduces economic growth, which leads to a shortage of job opportunities and the growth of poverty*."[59]

A major challenge for aid donors sincerely concerned about famine prevention is finding ways to minimize the risks of adverse political outcomes. The main means of doing so seem to focus on making the aid meeting more democratic and transparent. This will not only help reduce the chances of abuse but will be an exercise in public education (in both donor and recipient countries) that can help initiate processes of open debate in the recipient country.

4.   CAN FAMINE OCCUR IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES?

Sen's theory that democracy prevents hunger is not entirely true. There are examples where democratic institutions have failed to prevent it due to several factors. Even though it is true that democratic institutions had prevented famine, like in India and Botswana, there are certainly counterexamples, however, where democratic or liberal institutions have failed to prevent. In the section below, two of the most recent famines which occur in a non-authoritarian regime in sub-Saharan Africa will be analysed which are Malawi food crisis of 2002 and Niger crisis of 2005.

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[59] Dambisa Moyo, "*Dead Aid*", Penguin, 2009

4.1. Malawi crisis of 2002

However, lack of legislative capacity hampered the judiciary from good governance even though scholars do not consider this problem to disqualify Malawi as a democracy. The famine in Malawi was considered minor because it counted a range of 46,000-85,000 deaths (estimates changing based on UNICEF and UN, World Bank, Save the children data). Grain and food prices had risen, people began to migrate, and diseases such as HIV and AIDS were circulating, affecting mostly young people and women, causing many orphans with little chance of surviving the famine. People were sleeping in the fields with a knife to protect their crops and prevent them from being stolen. If, we can say, there was an elected government and civil liberties were guaranteed, what led to the famine? The problem lay in political deficiencies. Malawi was (and is) an extremely poor country with high debts and monetary deficits even in government, 65 percent of the population lived on less than a dollar a day, and more than 40 percent of GDP came from international aid. Therefore, two implications come out: the population could only rely on the public transfer given by the government, but the government relied only on foreign aid. Therefore, it was the Western powers that had strong influence on policy decisions that had negative impacts and made the famine worse. In fact, some donor agencies such as World Bank, IMF) forced the government to sell grain resources to repay debts. These IOs, had mistakenly considered that the remaining grain resources were sufficient to feed the population, but by 2000 they were already completely empty.[60] However, besides the underestimation of donor agencies, the problem of not responding to the famine promptly was also caused by politicizing of data reporting. In fact, former President Bunda had implemented a policy of crop diversification that led to an escalation of corn prices. In addition, international aid arrived belatedly given the scepticism of donors over the mismanagement of reserves. Other allegations also blamed the governments' management of funds and policies, which were ineffective in reducing hunger: there was a lack of a functioning retribution system and unexplained shortages in food supplies. Government corruption seemed to have assumed a major role in turning the food crisis into a full-blown famine, as by some estimates, corrupt politicians sold 168,000 tons of maize from a reserve for their personal profit. In contrast to the 1992 Malawi crisis that erupted because of authoritarian regime, in the democracy of the 2000s the problem was government weakness and lack of accountability. The government was more likely to follow policies that were responsive to interest groups rather to the entire population. In addition to corruption (which was not the major cause of the famine) and international aid that

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[60] O. Rubin, *The Malawi Famine of 2002* (ch.6) in *Democracy and Famine*, Ed. 1; Taylor and Francis, 2012

increased the food crisis, it was more a matter of lack of capacity whose such weakness leads to donors' foreign policies prevailing although they are not directly accountable to the people.

4.2. Niger crisis of 2005

Other issues in Niger, which had democratic institutions, also caused a famine in 2005. After the end of dictatorship in 1999, Niger returned to being a democracy where rights to life, health, security, education, general wellbeing, and freedom of the press were guaranteed and elections were free and fair. The Nigerian famine of 2005 took place in a pluralistic political environment with an independent judiciary and a functioning and fair liberal democratic constitution. However, once again the country was (and is) surrounded by poverty (people live on 0.85 cents a day and the average life expectancy is 44-45 years) and the country is very dependent on international aid. Lack of food was conceived as the biggest problem of the crisis: more than 90 percent of households were left without resources, the market did not collapse but there was an out-of-control price escalation. The question that arises is why the famine was not received early and why the government's responsiveness was not immediate but especially inadequate after its intervention. The Nigerian president at the time, Mamadou Tandja, and other ministers at first denied the famine, and when the situation became undeniable blamed external factors such as climate and natural disasters (drought) and sudden population growth as the main drivers of the famine. Subsequently, such politicians blamed the West for the poor and delayed response with monetary aid. The government's food reserves from which were supposed to be 110,000 tons were scarcely 20,000: the few emergency supplies are surely the government's responsibility. It was not until June that the president urged for international aid, which delayed arriving (due to other states requesting aid such as Mali). Once again, the government failed to respond properly since it undersimulated the amount of food needed to feed the population (the president asked for 78,000 tons which is enough for only 15 percent of Niger's population). In conclusion, the government's response was late and insufficient and initially unwilling to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation.[61]

The cases analysed show that famines can occur in a country with democratic institutions but the deficiencies in the hunger response demonstrate that when democracy is as poor and dependent on external consensus, the pluralistic political system becomes ineffectual since decisions are dictated only by the government. In the case of Niger even, the choice to intervene with aid came first from the UN and not from the government and moreover the watchdog was done by an external NGO rather than the opposition parties.

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[61] O. Rubin, *The Niger Famine of 2005* (ch.7) in *Democracy and Famine*, Ed. 1; Taylor and Francis, 2012

5. CAN AN UNDEMOCRATIC COUNTRY IMPLEMENT AN ANTI-FAMINE PROGRAM?

There are various programs against famine that do not depend on electoral democracy, as the following examples illustrate. In addition to the famine in communist China in the 1940s i where the communist government achieved remarkable success in combating rural poverty and malnutrition, there are other examples that occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the early 1970s, effective anti-famine measures were developed by a number of authoritarian governments in northeast Africa. Sudan withstood the "Sahelian" drought of the 1970s without suffering famine. The new revolutionary government in Ethiopia introduced far-reaching land reform in 1975 and established the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. The military government in Somalia responded vigorously to the 1974-75 drought. In each of these cases, a combination of idealistic mass mobilization and professional commitment by civil servants quickly created efficient anti-drought systems. But within a few years everything had collapsed, and all three countries were suffering from famine

Another example is The Kenyan government that responded quickly and effectively to the 1984 drought, using rural aid distributions as an opportunity to rebuild the mass base of the ruling KANU party. However, famine prevention efforts remained erratic (pastoral groups continued to suffer severe famine) and circumstantial (the government was considerably less vigorous in responding to subsequent food crises). Finally, Tigray, northern Ethiopia, also had anti-famine policies during the war against Dergue in the mid-1980s. Faced with a war directed against the civilian population, the People's Liberation Front (TP/F) made famine prevention its strategic priority. This helped gain the adherence of the great mass of Tigrinya's peasants and thus ensured victory. Since then, the TP/F has invested heavily in Tigray's economic development and the fight against poverty has figured on the government's agenda. However, the weakness of democratic institutions at the national level and the absence of a free press or competitive elections within Tigray have made the effectiveness over time of these anti-poverty measures open to debate.

Such cases show that any type of government, if it is willing, can adopt effective measures to combat hunger and poverty. Most governments, if secure and stable, or if they are looking to consolidate a power base in a constituency affected by famine, are likely to take such measures. However, in such cases, anti-hunger measures are a privilege rather than a right. Affected people cannot enforce their demands, and if the government's priorities change, then the anti-hunger program may be discontinued. The last case, Tigray, is indicative of a broader phenomenon in which guerrilla armies

are subservient to enlightened leadership that relies on the support of the people and then adopts social and economic programs that serve the interests of the masses. Another example of this phenomenon is the National Resistance Army under Yoweri Museveni in Uganda. During the struggle, the fact that the guerrillas relied on popular support forced them to respond to the demands of the masses, and this can be an effective political contract against famine. However, other guerrilla armies did not follow this path. The Sudanese People's Liberation Army is a case in point, as it has done very little to protect the people of South Sudan from famine. In such cases, enlightened leadership, commitment to a social agenda and the development of some form of representative institutions are key to the possibility of a political agenda against famine. War also tends to undermine democracy and the rule of law by creating authoritarian or military governments, thus undermining the possibility of democratic action against famine.[62]

In conclusion, there can be anti-famine commitments and programs even in the absence of democracy, but a contract against famine requires that the party concerned (the people) have some capacity to enforce the agreement, and liberal political systems provide a number of mechanisms that can help people do this. In authoritarian systems the only resource is protest, armed or unarmed.

The last chapter of my research will focus on a case study that will refer to a comparative analysis of Malawi and Democratic Republic of Congo regarding their hunger level according to the Global Hunger Index. Of them, the former, while still suffering from food crises like all sub-Saharan states, has shown remarkable improvement, decreasing its hunger score by more than half over the past 20 years (from 43.1 to 21.3). The second, on the other hand, despite starting from similar climatic and political backgrounds, has continued to struggle in a very serious situation for years, without having recorded any effective improvements and still registering an *alarming* level of GHI.
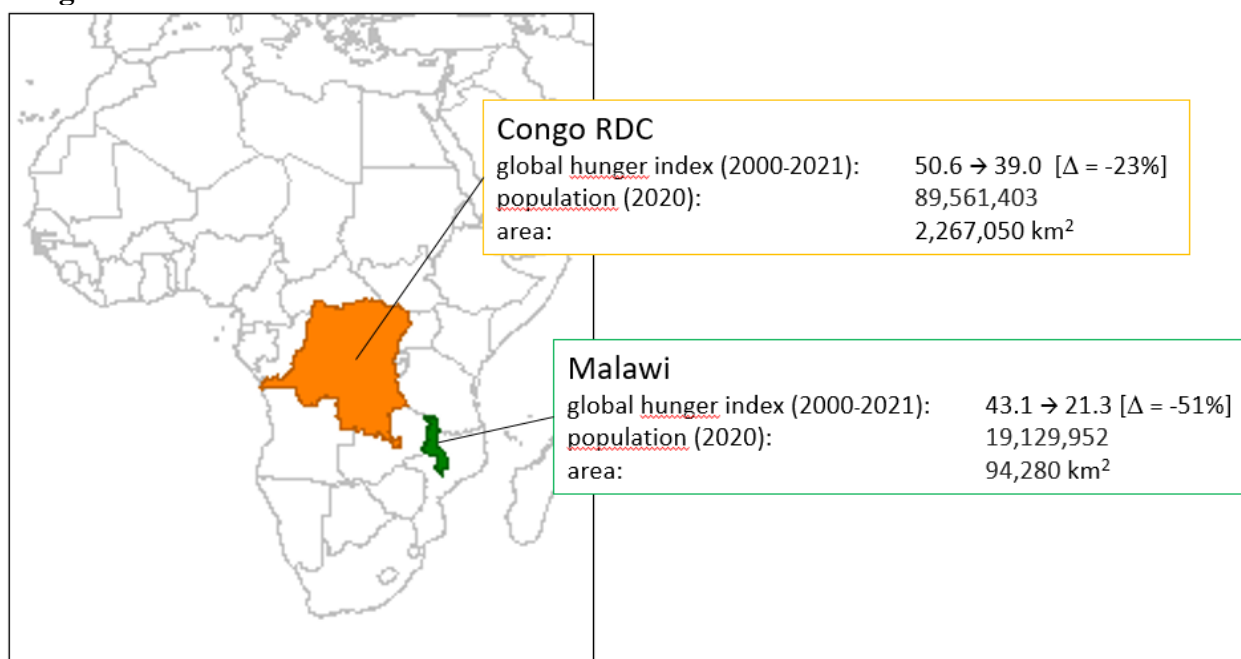
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[62] J. Dreze and A.Sen, *The Political Economy of Hunger: Famine Prevention* (vol.2); Oxford: Clarendon Press

CHAPTER 3

This chapter, as already anticipated, will focus on the comparative analysis of Malawi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the following study, therefore, will start with a separate geographic and climatic introduction of the two countries, proceeding thereafter with a brief historical summary of the processes of colonization and postcolonial politics. Therefore, economic peculiarities and social dynamics will be highlighted. Finally, a comparative analysis of the two situations of hunger and famine and their respective governmental responses in the area of prevention and response to these phenomena will be made. This comparison clearly shows that the democratic government of Malawi, which is more attentive to the needs of the population, has achieved important results in the field of hunger alleviation, in contrast to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the presence of dictatorial governments and strong internal upheavals have prevented an effective response against famine. Although Malawi is ranked with "serious" level of hunger, registering as 81'out of 116 for hunger index, it is among the top 5 that has made the most improvements over the past 20 years.

The following image illustrates the close geographic location of the two states analysed, which therefore have similar climatic characteristics, with the variation in hunger index: Malawi has decreased in twenty years by 51 percent (the second African state with the most variation), the Democratic Republic of Congo, on the other hand, by only 23 percent. Both states have gained dependence on colonizing states since the 1960s, but anti-hunger and malnutrition policies since then have brought completely different results, although both are still in tragic situations.

Figure 4. Geographical and Demographic comparison of Malawi and Democratic Republic of Congo

Congo RDC
global hunger index (2000-2021): 50.6 → 39.0 [Δ = -23%]
population (2020): 89,561,403
area: 2,267,050 km²

Malawi
global hunger index (2000-2021): 43.1 → 21.3 [Δ = -51%]
population (2020): 19,129,952
area: 94,280 km²

Source: prepared using *Global Hunger Index* - https://www.globalhungerindex.org and *World-o-meter* - https://www.worldometers.info

1. MALAWI

1.1 Physical and climatic characteristics

Malawi, located in south-central Africa, consists of a flat area, a portion of the ridge, rising to over 2600 m (Nganda, 2606 m) and, in the far south, the Mulanje Mountains plateau. The climate is tropical with two distinctly different seasons, one cool and rainy and one hot and dry.

The population distribution in the territory is uneven, as the southern part of the country, which makes up only a third of the territory, is home to almost half of the total population.

Despite the high mortality rate, including infant mortality, Malawi's population is constantly increasing; in parallel, the migration balance has been negative for several years: the gap between population growth and the real absorption capacity of an economy that is still mostly agricultural generates intense migration flows to neighbouring countries, Zimbabwe and South Africa above all. As a result, population growth is relatively small but increasing. Very heavy is the health situation because of the spread of AIDS, and the country ranks last in the world in human development, despite a fair level of schooling. The country is one of the most densely populated in Africa (density is 166 inh./ km²)[63] although there are great disparities from area to area. Urbanism is a recent phenomenon

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[63] https://www.populationpyramid.net/it/population-density/malawi/2021/

and still very modest: the urban population barely reaches 18% (2020), the only real cities being Blantyre and the capital.

The gradual increase in deforestation and soil erosion since the early 2000s is the most important environmental problem, along with drinking water pollution caused by agricultural and industrial waste.[64]

1.2 Historical context

In the territory, included in the orbit of empires or potentates, Britain proclaimed its protectorate in 1891. There was no shortage of incidents of rebellion against colonial rule, but the first nationalist party in the strict sense, the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), was not founded until 1944. It soon strengthened its raison d'être with opposition to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953), which was desired by London. As the struggle against colonialism and the Federation became more radicalized, the British government reacted forcefully by outlawing the NAC (since 1958 led by H.K. Banda) and establishing a state of emergency. But when the party was able to reorganize as the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the colonial authorities came to terms. On July 6, 1964, independence was proclaimed and the name Malawi was adopted, a reminder of a kingdom that belonged to the Zimbabwean strand of civilization. The country, although animated by a lively Africanist spirit, found itself, once it gained independence, confronted with the harsh reality of being a state of small size and limited economic possibilities, distinctly disadvantaged in terms of geographic location.

In 1966 Malawi gave itself a republican, one-party, presidentialist constitution, but in fact was subject to the authoritarian regime of Banda, since 1971 declared president for life, concentrating all power in his person. Malawi established normal diplomatic relations with the Republic of South Africa (1967) and remained even later on the fringes of engagement against colonialism and racism. Opposition to the regime, particularly pressing since the early 1990s, achieved the reintroduction of multipartyism, then a new constitution, again presidential in nature, followed by elections that brought Bakili Muluzi and his United Democratic Front (UDF) to the presidency. With political prisoners freed, a policy of reconciliation was initiated. Although there were signs of improvement, accentuated by the resumption of international aid, the structural conditions of the economy remained characterized by extreme fragility mainly due to agriculture's heavy dependence on weather patterns. In addition, the spread of the AIDS epidemic had severe economic repercussions. In the years following Muluzi's reelection (1999), the food and health situation became dramatic. Suspicions of harboring authoritarian aims also hung over that president. In the 2004 presidential election, Bingu wa Mutharika, Muluzi's surprise nominee as his successor, came out on top. In February 2005 the

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[64] Several Authors, *Malawi: an Alternative Pattern of Development*, Edinburgh, 1985; J. Carter, *Malawi*

new president decided to leave the UDF, claiming he was unsupported in his anti-corruption policies, and founded the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) with his supporters. After facing an impeachment attempt, Mutharika consolidated his power. Re-elected president in 2009, he continued in the anti-corruption campaign. His strong point was the agricultural sector; in 2005 he introduced a new, farmer-friendly agricultural policy, lowering the price of seeds and offering, to people interested in growing crops on farms. Malawi, prior to his arrival in government was a nation in crisis, with one of the highest poverty thresholds in the world, but his actions turned it into the "breadbasket of the African world" capable of exporting food to other countries in southern Africa. Mutharika passed away in April 2012 and was succeeded by outgoing Vice President J. Banda, 61, the first woman to hold this position in the country. Presidential elections held in May 2014 saw the defeat of the female politician in a confrontation with DDP candidate P. Mutharika, the former president's brother, who succeeded her in office. At the new consultations, held in June 2020, the non-government candidate L. Chakwera won, who garnered 59 percent of the vote against the 39 percent won by the outgoing president, whom he succeeded in office.[65]

1.3 Economic conditions

Malawi is one of the poorest countries on Earth, and its economic conditions place it among those with the most modest social development. From 2006 to 2009, however, it experienced annual economic growth of more than 7 percent and has become an exporter of food, partly due to support from international investment. After a phase in the late 1980s and early 1990s, during which considerable progress had been made in agriculture and in economic productivity in general through modernization and liberalization efforts, the consequences of unfavourable weather and the withdrawal of international aid (as a form of pressure for human rights compliance in the country) caused an economic meltdown.[66]

Poorly supplied with mineral and energy riches and penalized in terms of climatic-pedological conditions (nearly 30 percent of the country's land area is uncultivated and unproductive), Malawi was only able, once it achieved independence in 1964, to somehow implement development programs thanks to massive foreign aid and investment. The pronounced dependence on foreign capital inevitably conditioned government economic policy; little changed the economic monopoly of the white minority; on the contrary, it was largely benefited by a distinctly liberalist economic line, which in practice aimed to create the conditions most conducive to foreign investment. The economy's heavy

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[65] *Wildlife, Parks and Reserves*, Basingstoke, 1987; Ph. L'Hoiry, *Le Malawi*, Paris, 1988.

[66] https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/newsroom/wfp274603.pdf

dependence on climatic conditions, as well as the lack of crop diversification, the variability of their prices, and the high cost of transportation (in addition to the lack of maritime outlets) forced the country to resort to IMF aid and to radically restructure the economy through privatization programs and public finance consolidation.[67]

Malawi's has recently qualified as one of the fastest growing economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Bolstered by improved macroeconomic management, and donor country support, driven by a record tobacco harvest, rapidly increasing maize production, and improved activity in the service sector.

The most recent official poverty statistics for Malawi show that 71.4 of the population lived in poverty in 2010, only marginally lower than in 2004, when the poverty rate was 72.8 percent[68]. World Bank projections suggest that this rate has dropped slightly to 69.2 percent by 2017.[69] Malawi's GDP per capita in 2017 was only $338 in current U.S. dollars and is the second lowest GDP per capita of all countries with available data; only Burundi is lower, growing only 1.2 percent in seven years.[70]

2. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

2.1 Physical and climatic characteristics

The country is dominated by the Congo River Basin, which is home to the second largest rainforest in the world after the Amazon and covers almost half of the Congolese territory.

The climate is diverse, given the extent of the country: hot and humid in the river basin area, cool and dry in the southern mountainous areas, and cool and humid in the eastern highlands.

Congo's ethnic picture is extremely diverse, however much of the population belongs to the two large Bantu and Sudanese families: but the same linguistic fragmentation illustrates the country's cultural variety.

Such fragmentation also gives rise, with great frequency, to local rebellions, inter-ethnic clashes, and secessionist attempts, often aggravated or provoked by external events or interests, as, e.g., was the attempted secession of Katanga, or as happened in the years 1994-95 on the occasion of the arrival of some 1.5 million Rwandan refugees in the eastern regions.

The population dynamic is largely surplus (growth rate of 3.2 percent per year in 2008, despite an infant mortality rate of over 83‰ and a life expectancy of just over 50 years), and it shows no signs of slowing down in a stable manner. Although the region's main endemic diseases (responsible for

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[67]Malawi - A closer look at hunger and undernutrition (2019)

[68] World Bank 2019

[69] World Bank 2017

[70] World Bank 2019

very high levels of mortality in the past) have been strongly countered therapeutically, very serious deficiencies are still found in terms of prophylaxis, hygiene and territorial distribution of health services. For that matter, and more generally, poor conditions of access to all services for the population, as is also shown by the illiteracy rate (just under 40 percent) and the low percentage of inhabitants who have access to drinking water. The picture is further aggravated by recurrent natural disasters (droughts in the South, seasonal flooding of the Congo River, and eruptions in the E, Rift Valley). More than half of the population lives in small, isolated rural villages, often located on the banks of rivers, which in many areas are the only means of communication.[71]

The urban phenomenon has developed impetuously especially since the 1960s: for example, the capital, Kinshasa, which had a population of 370,000 in 1957, exceeded 7 million in 2004.

2.2 Historical Context

The recent history of the DRC began when the country gained independence from Belgium in 1960. Already that year, Patrice Lumumba, the country's first democratically elected leader, was ousted and later executed by firing squad in Katanga, then self-proclaimed independent under the leadership of Moses Kapenda Tschombe. In 1965, a second coup ousted President Joseph Kasa-Vubu, bringing to power Colonel Joseph Désiré Mobutu, who retained power for the next 32 years as part of a dictatorship, surrounded by electoral fraud and violent repression.

Mobutu's regime quickly led to the deterioration of the country's economic situation. Clientelism and corruption undermined the foundations of the state, which had to rely on a growing public deficit to recover. In 1973, Mobutu, to cope with the situation, embarked on a program of zairization (zairification) of small and medium-sized foreign enterprises, nationalizing them or distributing them to private Congolese. Then, in 1974, it was the turn of the large Belgian enterprises, which were nationalized through radicalization, the second program launched by Mobutu.

These measures led to an almost total loss of domestic and international private sector confidence in the domestic economy, which thus suffered a further shock. Faced with the decline in private lending and investment, Mobutu, strong in the support of the West, especially in view of its strategic role as an ally in the context of the Cold War, had no choice but to resort to bilateral loans with foreign powers. Only part of the borrowed capital, however, contributed to the country's development, leaving the rest to flow directly into the pockets of Mobutu and his entourage. As a result, the economic situation in the then Zaire experienced a steady deterioration, with an average annual inflation rate of 56 percent during the period from 1978 to 1988. The resulting deterioration in terms of trade did not allow the country to participate in the benefits of international trade by taking

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[71] https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo

advantage of its immense natural wealth. The lack of investment, both international and domestic, also did not allow for the productive diversification of the domestic economy that was functional for economic development.

In 1997, a coalition of rebels, led by Laurent Kabila and supported by Uganda and Rwanda, overthrew Mobutu, again renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo. Becoming the new president of the DRC, Kabila survived an insurgency supported by Uganda and Rwanda in 1998, gaining military support from other African states. In 2001, however, he was assassinated in Kinshasa by one of his bodyguards and was replaced by his son, Joseph Kabila, who succeeded in ending the unrest in the eastern part of the country. Despite the persistence of sporadic fighting in the area in question, the situation remained relatively stable. Contributing to this achievement was the presence of the UN peacekeeping mission MONUC, which was launched in 1999 and recently strengthened with the MONUSCO mission. While the UN MONUSCO mission has succeeded in preventing escalation in the various internal crises, it has not succeeded in eradicating the presence of the many armed groups and solving social and institutional problems. Indeed, the U.N. project, in its methods and objectives, does not follow the wishes of Congolese governance, and excessive neutrality is perceived negatively by local politicians.

 After 18 years in power, on December 30, 2018, Joseph Kabila, unable to run for a third term due to a constitutional ban, left the country's leadership. The winner of the election turned out to be Felix Tshisekedi, the current president, who was immediately accused by his opponent, Martin Fayalu, of orchestrating a series of electoral fraud with his predecessor. The new president thus appeared undemocratic and was labeled a "front president," a "puppet in Kabila's hands."

In any case, his victory was confirmed by the DRC Constitutional Court; moreover, despite the unclear manner in which he came to power, Tshisekedi immediately sought to initiate a series of reforms and policy changes so that he would be legitimized to lead the country. With the conflict phase following the elections over, all the old hotbeds of guerrilla warfare remain in the country, compounded by new low-intensity conflicts and violent repression by the many armed gangs and the government army. As a result, although for the first time in national history, the incumbent president has assumed power in a bloodless manner, achieving peace and improving living conditions for the inhabitants still seem to have a semblance of unreality. The current picture is rather worrying: 71 percent of the population lives below the poverty level and the average life expectancy is 57 years. What's more, only 28 percent of Congolese have access to adequate health services and 52 percent to safe drinking water. Added to this must be the problem of land grabbing, i.e., land grabbing by foreign companies and large multinational corporations.

2.3 Economic conditions

The DRC's economic structure remains in some respects similar to that of a colonial country, still being based on the exploitation of mineral raw materials almost entirely for export. Despite various attempts to nationalize mining crops and first-processing production apparatuses, much of the proceeds leave the country without local reinvestment and no possibility of capitalization. One of the basic problems of the DRC is therefore, consistently, the absence of liquidity, resulting in the need to access international credit to a very considerable extent, even for the maintenance of just the day-to-day running of the state apparatus. Per capita income ($187.284, at current prices, in 2008) is one of the lowest in the world and does not seem inclined to rise. However, it should be borne in mind that much of the economic activity is informal and escapes statistical detection, and barter-based transactions are still widespread.

The primary sector is generally able to ensure food self-sufficiency, although cultivated land accounts for only 4 percent of the total area (while employing more than 60 percent of the working population) and despite the very serious difficulties of product distribution, which periodically force food imports. It is above all the extraordinary endowment of mineral resources that gives exceptional potential to the Congolese territory. The southern part of the country (Kasai and, especially, Katanga) provides a very large quantity and variety of minerals.[72]

The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the richest countries in raw materials, but its economy continues to lag far behind due to a lack of infrastructure, inefficient and corrupt public administration, and the conflicts that have long plagued it. Beginning in 1973, the government, as mentioned, initiated a series of nationalizations of other major foreign companies, adopting the so-called "zairization policy" or "Zairean way to socialism." This could have meant a genuine reappropriation by the state of national wealth, a new and proper way of planning the economy due to the huge profits the country would make from selling its products abroad. In reality, expropriations and nationalizations resulted in the sheer enhancement of privileges for the few in power, especially the typically bureaucratic national bourgeoisie, as inefficient as it was corrupt.

Also in the context of natural resources is the problem of human rights violations associated with their exploitation. With the enactment in 2010 of the Obama administration's so-called Dodd-Frank Act, the U.S. forced many companies to avoid mining in conflict-prone areas. The reform, however, pushed millions of miners deeper and deeper into poverty, further destabilizing the situation. During the first videoconference in February 2021 between Tshisekedi and Kamala Harris, the vice president

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[72] The DRC is among the world's top producers of cobalt (22,000 t in 2005), copper (92,000 t in 2005), diamonds (22 million carats) and coltan. Also with more or less substantial production are coal, petroleum, gold, silver, uranium, manganese, cadmium, zinc, lead, tin, and tungsten. Secondary activities, apart from first processing industries of locally produced minerals and textile fibers (cotton), are mainly found in the capital areas.

emphasized U.S. concern over serious human rights violations and the worsening humanitarian crisis.[73]

3. CONDITIONS ON HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION: DATA COMPARING THE TWO COUNTRIES

According to the latest GHI 2021 report, Malawi is ranked 81' with a rate is 26.2. Malawi's Quest last fluctuated over the two decades from 1999 to 2021. It declined between 2004-2006 and 2007-2009, but increased between 2013-2015 and 2015-2017 (FAO 2018), coinciding with the 2015 floods and 2015/16 drought that crippled the agricultural sector in Malawi and beyond. This trend is also reflected in the latest Integrated Household Survey (IHS), which shows an increase in food insecurity between 2010/11 and 2016/2017.[74]

In 2005/06, the government established the well-known Farm Input Subsidy Program with the aim of increasing maize production, promoting household food security, and increasing rural incomes.[75]

Gender is a key determinant of food security in Malawi. Although data on intra-household food distribution are largely lacking (and thus the extent to which women and men or girls and boys have equitable access to food is not well understood), there is evidence that female heads of households generally have poorer food security than male-headed households in Malawi.[76]

The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Malawi, currently at 10.6 percent of adults aged 15-64 (corresponding to about 900,000 Malawians living with HIV), has also contributed to malnutrition and hunger. HIV reduces the body's ability to use nutrients and people's ability to produce or access adequate food.[77]

In contrast, improvements are not seen in the DRC, whose GHI rate has varied by only 23 percent since 2000. The food crisis in the DRC persists and is extraordinarily high: recent projections suggest that 72 percent of the population is living in food insecurity and poverty. Ongoing violence and insecurity, particularly in the east of the country, are contributing to persistent political and social instability and high levels of displacement and undermining livelihoods and increasing food scarcity. Multiple public health crises, including severe outbreaks of Ebola, measles and cholera, and now the global pandemic of COVID-19, undermine the health, food and nutrition security and economic well-

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[73] https://www.globalhungerindex.org/case-studies/2020-drc.html

[74] NSO 2017

[75] Lunduka, Ricker-Gilbert, and Fisher 2013
[76] Kakota et al. 2015; Kassie et al. 2015
[77] MoH 2017; Nyantakyi-Frimpong et al. 2016

being of people. In the DRC, only 8 percent of children receive minimum acceptable diets (note: according to the most recent data (INS, USAID, and UNICEF 2019). Child stunting, a key indicator in the GHI, remains high is has not declined since 2001. The child mortality rate remains extremely high: 2018, approximately 296,000 children under the age of five died in the DRC.[78] A major cause of child mortality in the DRC is malnutrition, along with malaria, acute respiratory infections, and diarrheal diseases.[79]

Even in Malawi, despite improvements through policy programs that will be analyzed below, the proportion of Malawian children experience growth retardation is 37 percent.

The most recent official poverty statistics show 72 percent in 2018 (in 2012 it was 76 percent) and World Bank reports show that in 2018 GDP per capita was only $562 in current U.S. dollars. This is the tenth lowest GDP per capita of all countries in the world with available data. According to the Human Development Index, the DRC ranks 179th out of 189 countries. In addition, global pandemic of COVID-19 has the potential to have more widespread effects on food security, either through the direct effects of the disease in the country or because of the resulting economic contraction.[80] The latest pandemic, however, is considered among the least severe health crises impacting hunger. In fact, a massive and ongoing measles outbreak that began in 2018 has infected more than 300,000 people and killed 6,045 in 2019, with children particularly affected exposing them to an increased risk of acute malnutrition, which, in turn, increases the severity and duration of measles.[81]

In addition, the Democratic Republic of Congo faces a cholera epidemic in 23 of its 26 provinces, with over 30,000 cases and 500 deaths in 2019 alone.[82]

Malawi's 2018 GHI score is 26.5, considered severe, down from 44.7 in 2000, when it was classified as alarming. Underlying this improvement are reductions in three of the four indicator values used to calculate the GHI: child growth retardation (from 55 percent to 37 percent), wasting (from 7 percent to 3 percent)[83], and child mortality (from 18 percent to 6 percent)[84]. Given the importance of child nutritional status for well-being from birth to adulthood, Malawi's progress in this area is remarkable.[85] This improvement is likely due to nutrition programs by the state, which increased the expansion of supplementation of certain vitamins, thus contributing to the reduction of childhood

[78] UN IGME 2019b

[79] Kavle et al. 2019; MPSMRM,MSP, and ICF International 2014

[80] https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/newsroom/wfp274603.pdf

[81] Ducomble e Gignoux 2020; Holzmann et al. 2016

[82] Solidarités International 2020

[83] NSO and ORC Macro 2001; NSO and ICF 2017; de Onis et al. 2018

[84] UN IGME 2017

[85] Malawi - maternal autonomy and stunting (Scientific report, Nature portfolio, 2021)

diseases that inhibit nutrient utilization, increased direct nutritional interventions, and underlying factors such as economic growth.[86]

These programs, in turn, have been enabled by increased funding for Malawi's health sector and policies and interventions to improve child health and nutrition.[87] Malawi achieved the Millennium Development Goal of reducing child mortality by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015, but the current rate is still above the Sustainable Development Goal of 2.5 percent by 2030.[88]

For each of the three GHI indicators with subnational data (child stunting, wasting, and mortality) there is considerable variation at the district level, with some districts, particularly in the south-central regions, standing out with higher rates, as opposed to the North.[89]The Northern region also fares better than other regions in terms of several indicators related to nutrition and child health, including higher education rates of men and women, better handwashing facilities, and a lower total fertility rate.[90]

3.1 Progress is being made in Malawi despite formidable obstacles

In 1992 Malawi was hit by the very severe drought that struck the whole of southern Africa, which led to a sharp drop in agricultural production despite the adoption of fertilizers and hybrid seeds that had led to a significant increase in productivity; in the same year, moreover, because of constant human rights violations, Malawi suffered the withdrawal of all non-humanitarian aid. In the face of these difficulties, the government adopted rigorous stabilization measures: supporting and encouraging the liberalization of the economy and the participation in the economic process of all those agents who had been excluded in the past; ensuring a greater role for small landowners; privatizing some state-owned enterprises; and ensuring greater social equity and diversification of production. In the first decade of the 2000s, Malawi's economy was still heavily dependent on international aid and foreign investment with inflation at 8.7 percent (2008), a GDP growth of US$4,268, and a GDP per capita among the lowest in the world at US$313 (2008).

In December 2000, the IMF stopped disbursing aid due to corruption problems, which was followed by many other donors, resulting in an 80 percent drop in Malawi's development budget. However, in 2005, Malawi was the recipient of more than $575 million in aid. The Malawian government currently faces challenges in developing a market economy, improving environmental protection, addressing the rapidly growing HIV/AIDS problem, improving the education system, and satisfying its foreign donors and is working to become financially independent.

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[86] Kanyuka et al. 2016
[87] Kanyuka et al. 2016
[88] UN 2018
[89] World Bank 2016
[90] NSO and ICF 2017

Since 2000, Malawi has made significant progress in reducing overall levels of hunger and malnutrition as measured by the Global Hunger Index through the work of the government and supporting organizations.

3.2 Interventions that affect food insecurity and malnutrition in Malawi

Researchers conducted a series of studies in Malawi to assess the effectiveness of efforts to reduce hunger and malnutrition.

In terms of agricultural programs, the Farm Input Sussidy Program (FISP), through which the government subsidizes inputs mainly for maize production, has occupied a significant portion of the country's agricultural budget since its introduction in 2005/06. In 2018/19, the budget for FISP was 53 percent of the total budget for the agricultural sector.[91] The program was expected to reach 1 million beneficiaries in 2018/19.[92] Although the program is officially intended to benefit vulnerable and marginalized farmers, there have been allegations of elite capture and political influences on beneficiary selection.[93] Initially focused exclusively on fertilizer and maize seed improvement, the program has evolved to include seed for other crops as well.[94] Evaluations have shown that FISP has led to modest increases in maize productivity, but cost-effectiveness has been actively debated.[95] In terms of food security, access to FISP has been associated with an increase in self-reported adequacy of food consumption. FISP recipients also reported a lower incidence of childhood illness.[96] Interestingly, FISP recipients were shown to have higher levels of crop diversity and dietary diversity than non-FISP recipients, even when seed coupons were redeemable only for maize.

Other agricultural interventions have also benefited food security. The Soils, Food, and Healthy Communities project, run by Ekwendeni Hospital staff and Malawian and Canadian scientists, encouraged farmers to combine legumes with other crops to improve soil fertility, food security, and child nutrition. The project also provided training on gender issues and children's nutritional needs. Results showed that the longer and more intensively villages were involved in the project, the more substantial the improvements in children's growth.[97] The Malawi Farmer to Farmer Agroecology project, run by the organization Soils, Food, and Healthy Communities as a follow-up to the previous project, encourages farmers to engage in experimentation and share knowledge on agroecology,

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[91] UNDP 2018
[92] Kujaliwa 2018
[93] Mdee and Dedaa 2018; Asfaw et al. 2017
[94] Lunduka, Ricker-Gilbert, and Fisher 2013
[95] Ricker-Gilbert, Jayne, and Shively 2013
[96] Chirwa and Dorward 2013
[97] Bezner Kerr, Berti and Lizzie 2010

nutrition, social equity, and local food market development. Participating households showed greater food security, as measured by the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale, than the control group.[98]

Malawi was ranked second out of 45 African countries for its commitment to ending hunger and malnutrition among its people, as indicated by the Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index - Africa (Hanci-Africa).This ranking, produced in 2022, by the Institute of Development Studies (UK) with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) ranks the performance of 45 African countries based on 22 indicators of political commitment. The indicators are divided between indicators of hunger reduction commitment (10 indicators) and indicators related to commitment to address nutrition (12 indicators). By analyzing nutrition commitment and hunger reduction commitment separately, the index identifies how governments prioritize action against hunger and/or undernutrition. According to the index, Malawi's spending on agriculture (23.45 percent of public spending in 2014) meets the government's commitments set out in the African Union's Maputo Declaration (10 percent of public spending). *"Relative to other Hanci countries, Malawi's medium/long-term national development policy (Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II) places a strong emphasis on nutrition. Malawi has established a separate budget line for nutrition, allowing transparency and accountability for spending."* The national nutrition policy/strategy identifies time-bound nutrition targets, and a multisectoral, multistakeholder policy coordination mechanism has been established. The report states that Malawi policymakers benefit from regular nutrition surveys " that are statistically representative at the national level."

The last survey had been published in 2013-2014. However, the index also highlighted some socioeconomic aspects still need improvement. For example, the law guarantees women and men equal economic rights and equal legal access to agricultural land, but these laws are often not effectively enforced and discriminatory practices against women continue, increasing their vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition. In addition, "Social safety nets in Malawi are critical, but they cover only a few risks for a limited number of beneficiaries. Citizen registration rates are weak (63.9 percent in 2014) and potentially curb children's access to critical public services such as health and education," the report says. Although Malawi's policies and programs prioritize food security and nutrition, they have not addressed the persistent gender gaps that impede the achievement of women's empowerment. Overall, Malawi ranked 116 out of 153 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020, with economic participation and opportunity (113/153) and educational attainment (128/153) as the top two gender gaps facing the country. In addition, most women in Malawi do not have control over land resources, even when they legally own them. This is despite the vital role women play in producing food for their families. Women's lack of control over

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[98] Kangmennaang et al. 2017

these resources contributes to their powerlessness; it makes them vulnerable to poverty , thus contributing to chronic child undernutrition and food insecurity.

4 EXISTING POLICIES AND GOVERNMENT MEASURES AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN MALAWI

The government of Malawi has expressed its commitment to improving food and nutrition security in a variety of policies and institutional arrangements. It ranks second out of 45 African countries in the Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HANCI), which rates countries according to their policy commitment to fight hunger and malnutrition (IDS 2017).

Firstly, Malawi's constitution includes the right to adequate nutrition, stating, "The State shall actively promote the welfare and development of the people of Malawi by progressively adopting and implementing policies and laws aimed at achieving the following objectives... Nutrition: achieving adequate nutrition for all in to promote good health and self-sufficiency" (WIPO 1998, 3). The country's third national development strategy, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) (2017-2022), includes improved nutrition as a stated goal, describes the causes and implications of undernutrition in Malawi, and outlines strategies needed to overcome malnutrition (GoM 2017). Moreover, The National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy (NMNP) (2018-2022), to be operationalized through the National Nutrition Strategic Plan (2018-2022), is a revision of the National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan 2007-2012. The Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS is the main department responsible for the policy, but the roles of many other governmental and nongovernmental institutions are enumerated in the policy (GoM 2018b). The goal of the Malawi National Agricultural Policy, adopted in late 2016, is: "To achieve sustainable agricultural transformation that will result in significant growth in the agricultural sector, expanding incomes for farming households, improved food and nutrition security for all Malawians, and increased agricultural exports" (GoM 2016, 10). The policy explicitly acknowledges that in the past Malawi has "overly focused" on maize and tobacco production (GoM 2016, xi). The National Agricultural Investment Plan (2017/18-2022/23) is the implementation and investment framework for the National Agricultural Policy (Mpaso 2018). It includes a detailed budget for each of 16 focus areas, including food and nutrition security (GoM 2018°). Other policies with the potential to provide support for the country's nutrition goals are the National Health Policy, National Education Policy, National Gender Policy, National Resilience Strategy, National Irrigation Policy, Malawi National Social Support

Program II, and Decentralization Policy.[99] Malawi has been a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement since 2011. The SUN network has recognized the country as an "early riser" because of its high level of policy commitment to nutrition.[100]

4.1 Why policies responses have not worked in DRC

In contrast, the DRC only has in place a national strategic development plan (PNSD, 2017-2050) that provides the main points for the country to become a developed nation by 2050. The first phase of that plan focuses on agriculture, the second on industrialization, and the third on a knowledge-based economy, with the goal of being a fully developed country by 2050. It aims to promote exclusive breastfeeding of children from birth to six months of age, home fortification of complementary foods for children aged 6 to 23 months, interventions to improve the nutrition of pregnant and lactating women, action against micronutrient deficiencies (vitamin A, iron, iodine and zinc), and early diagnosis and management of childhood diseases, including acute malnutrition. It also seeks to reduce the prevalence of stunting in children aged 0-23 months by 50 percent and to reduce the prevalence of overall acute malnutrition below 10 percent in all provinces by 2023.

The program has a total estimated cost of $5.7 billion over the life of the program, with about 9 percent of this amount (about $540 million) allocated for food security management, nutrition improvement, and development of strategic food reserves.[101] The National Health Development Plan (PNDS, 2016-2020) outlines the country's approach to addressing health challenges. These challenges include poor access to high-quality health services, insufficient human resources, and lack of coordination throughout the health system. The strategy includes expanding and strengthening the roles of community members and structures (Devlin, Egan, and Pandit-Rajani 2017). The PNDS recognizes malnutrition as a serious challenge facing the DRC and includes targets to reduce child stunting and acute malnutrition among children. It also sets the goal of achieving universal health coverage for the population, which the government reiterated in statements following the approval of the PNDS.[102] However, the program, which came into effect in 2017, has yet to see improvement. This shows that the government's lack of credibility, accountability, and readiness to respond to crises. NGOs and IOs donate multiple monetary aid and physical resources (staff on mission, medicine, items for living...) to the DRC, but internal conflicts, persistent corruption, and authoritarian figures at the helm of the government, do not ensure that these funds are well managed; in fact, very often they themselves use them for other reasons for their own benefit (e.g., purchasing weapons to increase

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[99] GoM 2018b; Chauwa 2018
[100] Babu et al. 2016
[101] UNDP, CAADP and NEPAD 2013
[102] Instabilità e interessi strategici (Pandora Rivista): *https://www.pandorarivista.it/articoli/instabilita-e-interessi-strategici-nella-repubblica-democratica-del-congo/*

control and security so as to block any rebellion). In fact, Thus, according to Ayittey, Africa's development cannot come through direct investment, but only through the creation of democratic infrastructure. The solution would be to tie any Western financial aid to the following features: an independent central bank that ensures economic stability, an independent jurisdiction to create the rule of law, free and independent press,so that citizens can freely express the problems that plague Africa, an efficient public administration that offers services based on need and not on ethnicity or political affiliation. Although these features are not fully developed in Malawi, but are slowly forming becoming more just, there is still no sign of institutions evolving in the DRC.[103]

5   COMPARISON OF THE TWO COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO GHI AND LEVEL OF DEMOCRACY

In the context of researching the relationship between socio-political conditions and food security, the strength of the association between the improvement in hunger-related conditions in various African states and the relative level of democracy was tested; the latter was measured through the 2021 democracy index, while the improvement in hunger conditions was calculated as the percentage difference between the value of the global hunger index in 2000 and the value of the same index in 2021. The computations were done with SPSS software.

What emerges is that if one studies the phenomenon by considering all African countries, there are no obvious links between the two variables. If, however, only authoritarian states and those with a hybrid regime (i.e., states with a democracy index of less than 6) are examined, then the association appears clear (Figure 5), which, by the way, would be even stronger by limiting the observation to authoritarian states only.

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[103] RDC - A closer look at hunger and undernutrition (2020): *https://www.globalhungerindex.org/case-studies/2020-drc.html*

Figure 5. African states with democracy index < 6 - Strength of association between 2021 democracy index and improvement in global hunger index [100*(GHI_2000 - GHI_2021)/GHI_2000]
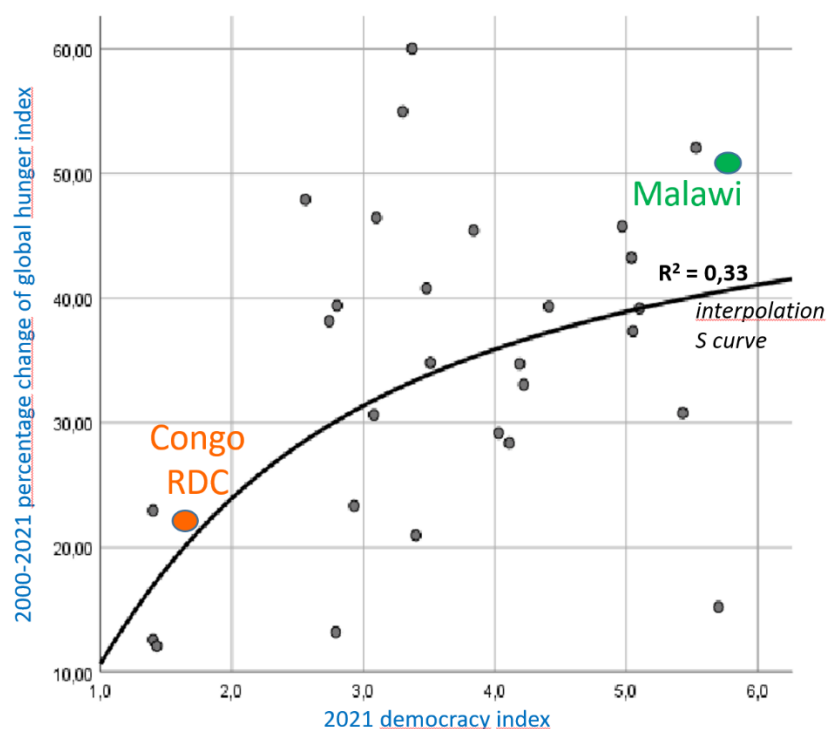
In other words, where the level of democracy is higher, greater improvements in food security have occurred.

The comparison between Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (two countries in many ways similar) is representative of this trend.

5.1 Directions for improving food security : what the Congolese government has NOT done and should do

In accordance with what just mentioned above, it is possible to highlight the several anti-famine programs and the security services the government has not applied to prevent famine:

- Strengthening government institutions and their capacities is critical to laying the foundation for a robust response to food and nutrition insecurity. Creating an enabling environment for action requires strengthening the rule of law and building trust in institutions. The country's weak governance and limited government capacity at the local, provincial and central levels are

major constraints to increasing nutritional intake.[104] The National Nutrition Program (PRONANUT), the agency responsible for nutrition within the Ministry of Health, is understaffed and underfunded and lacks the expertise to fulfill its mandate.[105] PRONANUT requires more resources to strengthen its capacity and enable robust delivery of nutrition services. More government support is needed, including increased funding, training, capacity building, and access to supplies (Community Health Roadmap 2019).

- Increasing agricultural production and productivity is also essential to improve food security and maintain stability in the DRC. To increase productivity, farmers need greater access to agricultural inputs (FAO 2018a). Technologies such as short-cycle seeds can be particularly useful in areas still prone to conflict (FAO 2018b). The Democratic Republic of Congo's agricultural extension system, although relatively well equipped, does not successfully provide knowledge and technology to farmers. Additional training, funding, and incentives are needed for extension agents, as well as better coordination and a clear, unified policy and mandate for the extension system (Ragasa et al. 2016). Reform of the land tenure system is needed to help secure land rights for farmers, particularly in eastern DRC.[106]

- Adolescents need greater access to family planning and reproductive health services, which could lead to nutritional gains for children. Children born to young mothers have a higher risk of being rachitic in Africa south of the Sahara, including the Democratic Republic of Congo.[107] In the Democratic Republic of Congo, 23.4 percent of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years are pregnant or have had their first child, and only 9.5 percent of married or partnered adolescent girls use a modern contraceptive method[108]. Adolescents' knowledge of contraceptive methods is limited, and barriers such as fear of judgment and social stigma prevent access to them.[109] Although support for sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents has increased in recent years, more funding and greater availability of services are desperately needed.[110] In addition, adolescent girls and women are too often subjected to gender-based violence and rape as weapons of war, which must be addressed by challenging social norms and strengthening the justice system to enable better prosecution of such acts (UNFPA 2019).

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[104] M. Deibert, *The Democratic Republic of Congo: between hope and despair*; Ed. 1; Zed Books, 2013
[105] World Bank 2019a
[106] International Land Coalition 2020
[107] Kismul et al. 2018; Fink et al. 2014
[108] INS, USAID, and UNICEF 2019
[109] Muanda et al. 2018
[110] Kwete et al. 2018

- The water, sanitation, and hygiene services sector needs capacity building and institutional reform to address the multiple challenges in this sector. The 2015-2016 Water Law and Policy encouraged the decentralization of water, sanitation and hygiene service delivery to local governments; however, provincial and local governments need more resources and capacity to carry out their mandates. In addition, responsibility for policy-making and regulation of the water, sanitation and hygiene services sector needs to be consolidated rather than divided among multiple ministries, as it has been historically, to ensure efficiency and consistency at the national level.[111]

- Given the immense size of the DRC and the variability of regional conditions, food and nutrition security interventions must take into account local conditions and contexts. Although data for the DRC are sparse in many respects, a recently developed typology identifies several high-priority intervention areas within the country and describes their most pressing bottlenecks. This tool can be used to geographically target food and nutrition security interventions, particularly when supplemented by other types of data.[112]

- Humanitarian and development organizations must help address the root causes of hunger and poverty and uphold the highest ethical standards to contribute to long-term solutions. In cases of protracted crises such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is essential that the international humanitarian community support long-term development in addition to responding to emergency needs.[113] Moreover, according to a recent report, fraud and corruption are rampant among humanitarian organizations in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[114] These organizations need to immediately undertake reforms and become models of anti-corruption rather than contributing to the problem.

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[111] RDC - A closer look at hunger and undernutrition (2020): *https://www.globalhungerindex.org/case-studies/2020-drc.html*

[112] Marivoet, Ulimwengu, and Celery 2019
[113] Mosello, Chambers, and Mason 2016
[114] Kleinfeld and Dodds 2020

- Improving the security situation, particularly in eastern DRC, is essential to achieving food and nutrition security. Government efforts to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate former combatants are critical to this process (UN 2019c). In addition, as recommended by a recent independent strategic review, when the government decides it is ready to independently meet the country's security needs and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) can conclude its mission, a transition period and ample flexibility to respond to events as they unfold will be required (UN 2019a).

CONCLUSIONS

Assuming from the thesis proposed by A. Sen that democratic regimes are the most effective in deploying actions and resources against hunger and famine, the analysis carried out in this paper showed the substantial validity of this assumption, while noting the multiplicity of causes and possible policy responses to food crises.

The elaborations carried out also showed that, for low levels of democracy (i.e., authoritarian states and hybrid regimes), where there is a higher democracy index, there was a more pronounced improvement in the global hunger index.

The present study focused on analyzing the possible relationships between malnutrition, hunger, famine, and the policy actions of democratic and authoritarian regimes to prevent and counter these calamities in sub-Saharan Africa.

At the methodological level, the economic, historical and social factors of the countries most affected by undernourishment were preliminarily analyzed.

An analysis of the elements that define and characterize malnutrition, undernourishment, hunger and the acute hunger crisis, i.e., famine, was then implemented, identifying actions and aspects that can increase or decrease them. Climate change, the Covid pandemic, wars and political instability have been shown to have a strong impact, as have authoritarianism and violent uprisings.

It was therefore illustrated how some governments in sub-Saharan Africa, formally democratic, actually have a low index of democracy, effectively not guaranteeing free elections, political pluralism and freedom of the press. Such governments, having no real need to secure the consent of the population, do not appear obliged to act in a timely and effective manner against hunger and malnutrition as opposed to truly democratic governments that must operate with a broad system of preventive and famine-reducing measures in order to "survive." However, what emerged is that it is not enough for a state to be truly democratic, as with the 2005 Niger and 2002 Malawi food crises, truly democratic institutions did not prevent famine. By contrast, cases have been highlighted where non-democratic institutions have prevented hunger. Democracy prevents hunger by guaranteeing rights to citizens, allowing them freedom of the press and free elections, but at the same time what is needed is real competence of all state apparatuses (bureaucracy, administration, government...) that must ensure effectiveness in responsiveness and accountability.

The comparative analysis of two African countries, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which started from similar historical and social situations but now have two different political regimes, revealed that the state with a higher democracy index, Malawi, has almost halved its hunger index, approaching a "moderate" level (while still being "serious"); in contrast, the DRC,

which is a heavy authoritarian state with serious internal rebellion problems, still remains in an "alarming" hunger situation.

What has emerged from all the cases analyzed in this paper, however, is that the cause of hunger cannot be attributed to one type of regime, but is the result of a series of political processes surrounded by conflict, corruption, political instability, inefficiency in dealing with food crises, lack of government credibility, and lack of readiness to act.

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ABSTRACT

La presente tesi analizza   la relazione causale tra l'efficacia delle azioni politiche di contrasto alla fame e alla carestia e la presenza di governi democratici nei diversi Stati. Lo studio si apre con un' introduzione generale sulle teorie, a volte contrastanti, di studiosi ed analisti su tale rapporto; Amartya Sen, ad esempio, afferma che più le istituzioni politiche di uno stato sono democratiche e la libertà di stampa e gli altri diritti civili sono garantiti, minore è la possibilità che si verifichino carestie. Altri autori, come Hendrie, rigettano invece questa teoria, affermando che le cause principali della fame e della carestia sono essenzialmente di tipo naturale, come avverse condizioni climatiche o calamità naturali.

Il primo capitolo, affrontato in termini storici-giornalistici, si è aperto con una visione generale del problema (correlazione tra fame, regimi autoritari e democrazia), con le definizioni dei termini utilizzati (fame, carestia, malnutrizione...) e con l'individuazione degli strumenti e dei metodi per analizzarli.

Dopo aver individuato che l'Africa Sub-Sahariana è l'area mondiale che soffre maggiormente fame e malnutrizione, con il più alto tasso di mortalità infantile e il più basso indice di sicurezza alimentare, è stato inquadrato il contesto storico di tale regione. Dal periodo post-colonizzazione difatti, l'Africa è stata (ed è) il centro di conflitti civili e ribellioni contro i governi autoritari appena formati; tali rivolte puntano ad ottenere più diritti civili e sociali e un maggiore sviluppo economico. Il continente africano nel periodo della colonizzazione è stato sfruttato per le risorse economiche e minerarie , ma anche successivamente i nuovi regimi non democratici hanno contribuito a minare la sicurezza alimentare. Tra le cause principali della fame e malnutrizione, emergono oggi come fattori principali le " Tre C" di conflitti, cambiamenti climatici e il Covid. In secondo luogo, influiscono anche l'arretratezza economica, le disuguaglianze economico-sociali e i fattori culturali.

Come è stato dimostrato nel secondo capitolo, i paesi che soffrono di più la fame (maggiore Global hunger index) sono quelli che hanno un Democracy Index più basso e che presentano condizioni di forte instabilità politica. Tali stati infatti, nonostante alcuni di essi abbiano costituzioni formalmente democratiche, mostrano dei tratti totalmente autoritari: la maggior parte dei presidenti-dittatori sono longevi e continuano a rimanere in carica da oltre 30 anni, è presente il monopolio dell'unico partito del capo di stato, la libertà di stampa non è garantita, i poteri dello stato non sono divisi e l'èlite politica economica è l'unica ad avere potere decisionale. Le I.O. e le NGO hanno provato ad intervenire con aiuti economici e alimentari, che però sono risultati in gran parte vani. Come è stato dimostrato, tali fondi infatti non arrivano direttamente alle famiglie bisognose, ma sono indirizzate alle istituzioni statali, causando un ulteriore accentramento del ruolo politico ed economico, con il

conseguente aumento della corruzione a livello governativo. In realtà, ci sono stati casi, come le crisi alimentari del Malawi (2002) o del Niger (2005) che sono scoppiate nonostante le istituzioni statali fossero essenzialmente democratiche, si fossero svolte libere elezioni e la libertà di stampa fosse effettivamente garantita. Inoltre, ci sono stati diversi casi in cui le istituzioni non democratiche sono riuscite a prevenire la fame attuando politiche anti-carestie e programmi per garantire la sicurezza alimentare, come è accaduto in Sudan. Si è dimostrato quindi che, se è senz'altro vero che anche negli stati democratici possono essere presenti malnutrizione e fame, tuttavia le istituzioni democratiche prevengono la fame e la carestia in modo più efficace e sono più pronte a rispondere in situazioni di carestie (teoria di Sen).

Il terzo ed ultimo capitolo ha presentato un'analisi comparata delle azioni politiche contro fame e carestia in due stati dell'Africa subsahariana, il Malawi e la Repubblica Democratica del Congo, che sono partiti da condizioni economiche e contesto storico molto simili, ma che hanno ottenuto risultati molto diversi nella lotta alla fame. Si è proceduto inizialmente ad uno studio delle condizioni geoclimatiche, storiche, economiche e sociali dei due Stati, focalizzando poi l'attenzione sugli aspetti più propriamente politici. Si sono quindi analizzati l'indice di democrazia dei due stati, la stabilità politica e le azioni governative intraprese nel contrasto alla fame. Si è evidenziato che il Malawi, che presenta un Indice di democrazia che lo classifica come regime ibrido, ha diminuito il livello di fame di oltre il 50%, al contrario della RDC, regime autoritario e con una forte instabilità , che non ha ottenuto di fatto alcun miglioramento.

L'analisi dei casi presentati ha dimostrato che le cause della mortalità per fame sono molteplici e spesso interrelate. La carestia quindi di per sé non può essere attribuita in modo univoco ad un tipo specifico di regime politico, ma può essere il risultato di molteplici fattori, come lotte per il potere, congiunture climatiche sfavorevoli, situazioni di guerra o di forte instabilità politica. Le azioni politiche prevenzione e di contrasto alla malnutrizione ed alla fame, al contrario, risultano più efficaci ed incisive nei regimi con un indice maggiore di democrazia.