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Nuno De Fragoso Vidal

ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.
Centro de Estudos Internacionais.
Lisboa, Portugal (ncfv@iscte.pt)

 ORCID ID:
orcid.org/0000-0002-5921-6311

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International development strategies for the XXIst century and post-modern patrimonialism in Africa – Angola and Mozambique

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Abstract

Development thinking has been progressively dominated by neo-institutionalism, influencing major donors in Africa, and recently included in the UN 2030 Agenda for development. This paper discusses some unintended impacts of such strategies in neo-patrimonial regimes such as Angola and Mozambique, whereby neo-institutionalism favoured donors' apolitical "partnership" with resilient neo-patrimonial structures, facilitating its recycling, sophistication, and modernization, taking advantage of financial globalization to its own ends and improving its democratic image through elections, but leaving untouched the principles of neo-patrimonial political management for a minority to hold on to power since independence. Theoretically, this approach contrasts with varieties of democracy and varieties of capitalism perspectives.

Keywords: Development strategies; Neo-institutionalism; Neo-patrimonialism; Angola; Mozambique.

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Introduction

This paper starts by succinctly characterising the evolution of development thinking and the strategies that have influenced major international donor agencies in Africa, from the Cold War institutionalist period, through the so-called transition of the 1990s, up to nowadays. Such thinking has been consecrated in the most influential development strategies over the years, including the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

During the political transition phase (1990s), civil society held a central role in development assistance thinking, advocating perspectives such as participatory development, empowerment, and development from below, by-passing the usual public institutions and administrations. However, that protagonist role

soon shrank, conceding its place to the state, with a gradual acceptance of neo-liberal currents of thought (in its most moderated forms), evolving into neo-institutionalism.

Neo-institutionalism essentially stands for support to beneficiary states' institutions and administrations through the national budget and technical support to the most influential ministries. Civil society is restricted to exercising a supportive role, by contributing to government policies through participation in representative structures of a federative-type (usually following the administrative design of states, from the local, up to the provincial and national level). The notion of civil society has gradually been losing ground to the wider and more flexible concept of Non-State Actors (NSA), mainly adopted by the EU, or the concept of Major Groups and other Stakeholders adopted by the UN (MGoS), which are inclusive of the business sector.

Taking the cases of Angola and Mozambique, the paper argues that the end result of these strategies in former neo-patrimonial regimes, was not their gradual liberal reform, but rather the unintentional facilitation of their inner logics. By means of increasing these political systems' technical, legal, and bureaucratic competence, facilitating their access to international global financial markets and diluting civil society's critical voices into apolitical representative structures, neo-institutionalism unintentionally supported the evolution of neo-patrimonialism. Various interrelated public/private, African/foreign clientelistic networks became more sophisticated, effective, and unaccountable, and served the essentials of a neo-patrimonial logic for power maintenance. The old neo-patrimonial political management system reinvented itself and expanded to assume a complex international financial dimension, constituting a sort of post-modern patrimonialism.

The paper evolves in three chapters. The first two are dedicated to the characterisation of the evolution of development thinking and strategies in Africa, from the Cold War institutionalism to the 1990s transitions and to the increasing dominance of neo-institutionalism over the 2000s and up to nowadays, consecrated in major donor organizations and reference documents. The third chapter deals with the effective impact of those strategies on two former Socialist and Lusophone African countries – Angola and Mozambique.

Cold War Institutionalism followed by Transitions led by the Apparent Agents of Democracy in Africa

Development strategies and approaches from the post-World War II up to the mid-1980s were essentially determined by Westphalian state perspectives conditioned by the Cold War. This stage can generally be defined as institutionalist, whereby development cooperation was state-centred with respect to classic sovereignty, modern legal-bureaucratic structures, and international recognition according to the political-economic (sometimes ideological) alliances prevailing within the Cold War context.

With the end of the Cold War and the wave of transitions in Africa in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, we witnessed the hope-filled liberal “theorisation” of the transformative role of four major drivers of change or agents for liberal democracy – transitology perspectives. These approaches have been unsuccessfully trying to find an effective formula to combine such drivers over the last twenty-five years, and probably for the next decade, through the consecrated Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda (United Nations 2015). These agents, in sequence and expectably within self-reinforcement dynamics, were the political opposition parties, the emerging business movement, civil society organizations - CSO (in its diverse facets: media, NGO, associations, churches, and unions to some degree, all consciously monitoring the management of public affairs) and international partnerships (basically meaning international governmental organisations articulated in support of the previous three factors, as defined and materialized in goal 17 of the UN Agenda 2030; United Nations 2015).

Such agents of “democracy” would supposedly be capable of developing their liberal “function” in Africa, if guaranteed civil and political liberties (freedom of association and expression), economic freedoms (freedom of initiative and private property), institutionalised processes for the peaceful handover of power (through frequent, free and universal multiparty elections), and social peace (through strong/independent judicial systems and public institutions). Almost three decades after the transition processes began, the reality has revealed itself to be rather different. The engagement of these four agents was not exactly what had been expected. Somewhat deceptively in the vast majority of cases, political opposition parties and elections failed to bring about substantial change, especially since so few opposition parties rose to power or effectively altered the status quo (Chabal 2009). The same neo-patrimonial logics, whereby primary solidarities and political co-optation of rivals determine the appropriation and distribution of public funds, prevailed. There was perhaps some greater inclusion of selected beneficiaries but without ever altering the deep socio-economic imbalances and primary solidarity principles (patrimonial ethics), which characterise neo-patrimonial systems (as defined by Bayart 1989, 1992, Médard 1982, 1991, Chabal and Daloz 1999).

Realizing that opposition parties would not imply change per se, “hope” gravitated to the emerging business sector (drawn from informal markets), where one could apparently see entrepreneurial traits. Given the opportunity to express itself freely and legally, such emerging entrepreneur dynamics would create a strong middle class (*petite bourgeoisie*), capable of challenging the status quo fundamentals. Once again results disappointed: the supposed Schumpeterian entrepreneurs of the informal market did not evolve into modern businessmen (*petit bourgeoisie*), nor did they give birth to a new productive system. Instead, one witnessed the privatisation of state assets for the benefit of the old political guard, also now in business, but more likely to accumulate capital (in several cases out of the country and articulated within new international networks) and with a *rentière* mentality, rather than saving, investing and being productive in Schumpeterian terms. Above all, they were more capable of aligning with foreign capital for the support of the old neo-patrimonial management of the political system to remain in power (e.g., Congo-Brazzaville, DRC, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia).

By the late 1990s, the failure of the transformative role of opposition politics and of the supposed productive entrepreneurial sector left CSO as the new hope. These organisations had come to exercise a role in social service provision in various African countries, substituting many state functions, and implementing local development strategies (e.g., Angola, DRC, Mozambique, Tanzania, Liberia, and Sierra Leone). This role also politically legitimized various national and foreign NGOs to play a part in monitoring and evaluation of public policies, empowering community-based organisations to implement several civil and political rights' agendas. Due to this ascending protagonist role in public affairs, throughout the 1990s, CSO and the churches became the preferred channels of assistance, seen as more credible than the state, which was increasingly immersed in serious diversion of development funds. While assuming greater aid delivery effectiveness to beneficiary populations, investment in CSOs in Africa presented certain advantages to the donor community, with national CSOs working in partnership with international NGOs and thousands of expatriates.

Such dynamics were accompanied by a process of reflection and "theorisation" on civil society by various currents within international development thinking. Western neo-Marxist developmentalist thought evolving since the late 1970s and 1980s became disillusioned with the "varieties" of socialist experiments in Africa and engaged on issues of empowerment, participatory development, and reform of the international institutions of power. They acknowledged popular resistance within the space for civil society and the possibility for more effective and peaceful "revolution" by the impoverished majorities exploited and oppressed by authoritarian regimes (military and civilian, formally liberal or socialist). These were to be united within a civically conscious movement seeking to reform (restructure or even revolutionize) political and economic power relations, where the local linked up with regional and international levels (Friedman 1992, Rahman 1993, Nelson and Wright 1995, Stohr and Fraser 1981). The World Social Forum process, which started in Brazil in 2001, would be an example of this organised global socio-political consciousness and restructuring movement (Santos 2006).

By contrast, neo-liberal thinkers explored civil society from a different perspective, emptying it of its ideological baggage and of a macro-structural power relations' analysis, at the national (so-called developing countries), regional or international levels (major international organizations). Civil society came to be understood within an instrumentalist and functionalist view of democracy and development, from a micro, short-term and sectorial dimension. It faced a multiplicity of gradual reformist functions, from the technically improved implementation of social projects for needy populations, to monitoring authorities and public services in specific sectors (health, education, environment, agriculture, food security), in order to make them more accountable. It also served as the space for the exercise of freedom of expression, association and initiative, alleviating tension within historically authoritarian societies, favouring greater political, economic, and social stability, and supporting the peaceful handover of power between opposing parties. Here we have a division between "orthodox" (Collier and Venables 2008, Collier 2008, Anten 2009, Herbst and Mills 2009) and moderate tendencies, which adopted a social-democratic character,

that we call neo-institutionalist thinking (to distinguish it from the previous institutionalist – too ideologically conditioned - approach of the Cold War period). Neo-institutionalism then prevailed up to nowadays within major international organisations and donor agencies, and is visible in such key reference documents as the Cotonou Agreement (European Union 2000, 2005), the Millennium Declaration (United Nations 2000) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015).

Neo-Marxist/neo-socialist strategies were soon to be overwhelmed by those of neo-institutionalists due to their growing influence on major international organisations and donors, namely the European Union, United Nations, World Bank, IMF, USAID, bilateral cooperation and development agencies of Western countries, and innumerable international Western NGOs. The prevailing notion of the third sector became clearly Western, neo-liberal, techno-bureaucratic, reformist, and institutionalist (through the recuperation of liberal reform and investment in public administration), short-term, sectorial and micro (specific economic development themes and places), devoid of broader regional or even less international links and transformative (revolutionary) ambitions of the neo-Marxist perspectives.

Return of the State and the constructive engagement of civil society within neo-institutionalist strategies

Different factors would lead to change in development thinking and strategies in the 2000s, with the state slowly returning to the centre-stage at the expense of civil society. Regardless of a decade-long investment and activities, CSOs manifested certain inadequacies and were far from being the pivotal drivers of change that was expected from them at different levels. They appeared to be highly dependent on external funding and on outside agendas. Also in many cases there was a significant overlap with political power, and many suffered from the same clientelistic culture prevalent within public administration (Figueiredo 2009, 149-150). Besides specific and less political-ideological themes (e.g., HIV-AIDS, gender, environment), the CSOs' difficulty in networking at the national, regional, and international levels became clear (Chabal 2009, 3-15, Motala et al. 2005). Concerning the ruling elites, while, on the one hand, donors' strategies of channelling aid through CSOs had politically strengthened such organisations (namely their ability to monitor and evaluate public policies), on the other hand, it also allowed for government reduction of expenditure on public social sectors, which were now increasingly supported by international funding. Decreasing public social expenditure left more public resources available for neo-patrimonial management at the central level (Pacheco 2009, 123-134). In addition to these realities, in the 1990s, the growing phenomena of warlordism and criminalisation of the state became evident (e.g., Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, Nigeria, Somalia), and fears of the proliferation of such phenomena to other countries, added to the emerging global terrorism and global security issues (Reno 1998, Bayart et al. 1999).

It was within this context that Western development currents of thought (already with a growing neo-institutionalist inclination), and different development strategies for Africa, rediscovered the necessity to heavily re-invest in the recovery of the old “modern” bureaucratic-administrative sovereign state. These strategies were visible in various state-building programs dealing with the national budget, which gained currency in the 2000s (e.g., the World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers). During the first decade of the new century, they were further evident in such key aid documents, as the Declaration on Harmonization adopted in Rome (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2003), the Marrakech Roundtable on Managing for Development Results (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2004), the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2008), the Cotonou Agreement (European Union 2000, 2005) and the Millennium Declaration (United Nations 2000).

Such strategic repositioning was operationalized throughout the 2000s in different programmes of the EU, whose major new idea was the gradual substitution of the concept of civil society by the concept of Non State Actors (NSA), including traditional CSOs, churches, trade unions, and the private sector (e.g., article 4 of the Cotonou Agreement, European Union 2000, 2005). In this way, the private sector would apparently become more involved in making the corporate social responsibility agenda a reality. The same reasoning (though more diluted) can also be found within the UN concept of Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) consolidated at the UN 2030 Agenda (United Nations 2015).¹

Thus, a broad strategic partnership for development was supposed to come into existence, involving the state, donor and NSAs, visible internationally in the generalised and depoliticised Millennium Development Goals (MDG), focusing more on manifestations of poverty (insufficient education, gender inequality, infant mortality, deficient maternal healthcare, HIV and malaria, environmental issues), than on its causes (political-economic structures and power relations at national, regional, and international levels). Within the same reasoning, the eight MDGs were later extended into seventeen Sustainable Development Goals from 2015 and onwards through the UN 2030 Agenda, now explicitly including “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” (Goal 16) and “Partnerships for the Goals” (Goal 17), consecrating and consolidating the trend of the previous twenty five years as we have been seeing (1990–2015).

The state thereby resumed its primordial place within donor strategies. The development assistance of major donors became a process of greater articulation between these (OECD 2005, 4-7), supporting beneficiary state budgets and development programmes, with absolute

¹ Genesis of MGoS can be found in 1992 at the Agenda 21 (United Nations 1992) referring the importance of effectively engaging “Major Groups” (Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Community, Farmers). It was latter reaffirmed by the so-called UN Rio+20 Conference (United Nations 2012), highlighting the role that Major Groups can play in pursuing sustainable societies. Then it was extended by governments in UN processes related to sustainable development, to include “other stakeholders” (local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities).

respect for sovereignty. Such concept of sovereignty had been gradually weakened within the EU federative structures but was restored and strengthened for Africa by the EU itself (European Union 2000, 2005, article 2). A “complementary” role was reserved for civil society in partnership with the private sector within the field of development (European Union 2000, 2005, article 4).

Irrespective of the various regimes’ anti-democratic and neo-patrimonial working logics (e.g., DRC, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Zambia, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola), donor strategies opted to work with the entities detaining state power and existing institutions, “hopeful” for gradual reform through institutional strengthening, technical assistance, and cooperation. The process of transition towards democracy in the long-term would also hopefully count on the gradual change of regional organizations in support of such trends, such as the African Union (AU) and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the adoption of general democratic principles for its members. However, this strategic repositioning of the state, came to ignore deep political issues on how power relations continued to be structured: at the national level - the appropriation and very unequal distribution of public resources to serve a neo-patrimonial political management logics; at the regional level - where leaders of similar regimes mutually protect each other in regional institutions of international standing (e.g., AU and SADC); at the international level - external commercial and financial relations regarding natural resource exploration in partnerships between African and foreign institutions (public and private), competing for strategic resources (e.g., the case of Asia and the West for oil and other minerals).

The Paris Declaration made vague and isolated references to the need for engagement in resolving generically defined issues such as corruption and the lack of transparency. Nevertheless, it avoids touching on the fundamental issues of governance and power relations regarding how these countries are structured internally and within the international system, and the relation between these structures and poverty (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2005). The same vacuum can be found in the referred UN Millennium Declaration and the 2030 Agenda.

It is natural that the insertion of CSOs into such broad categories as NSAs or MGoS, and their increasing dependency on funds channelled through the public budget (managed by government institutions whose office holders have worked for decades in clientelistic and neo-patrimonial logics), implies reducing the effectiveness of some CSOs as monitors of government action. CSOs are increasingly pressurised to reduce their activity to that of providing technical support and resolving social issues within communities, fearing reprisals if they offer political critique of government. Donors find it difficult to avoid discriminating against politically troublesome CSOs in accessing resources from the national budget. Legislation becomes a useful weapon within authoritarian regimes, through which they can prescribe that only CSOs fulfilling certain criteria have access to public funds, namely the statute of public utility in several countries, to which primarily regime or pro-regime CSOs have access (e.g., Angola and Mozambique, Pacheco 2009, 123-134).

This repositioning of aid strategies ended up making it easy for many African governments who had argued for the depoliticization of civil society, accused of not having the legitimacy to interfere in politics as they lacked the legitimacy derived from popular vote (Fiedler-Conradi 2003). Neo-institutionalist thinking increasingly adopted an argument (mainly at the EU) in favour of representational structures for NSAs, sustaining that it is not possible for the government to deal with hundreds of NSAs in limited forums and that some form of representational (federative) structures must be put in place. This posture became evident in several initiatives such as the National Conference of Civil Society in Angola, the G20 in Mozambique, the CSO Joint Platform for Engagement in Tanzania and the National Symposium at Democratic Republic of Congo. It is also present at inter-government regional strategies to fight poverty such as the SADC project of a Regional Poverty Observatory, which was supposed to be implemented before the 2015 MDG deadline (due to the incentive and funding from Western donors, namely the UK Department for International Development) (Vidal 2011).

Given that governmental structures in authoritarian regimes usually believe that CSOs should abstain from involvement in political issues, the above strategy had a double impact in the medium term. First, by adopting an increasingly technical approach, aid-delivery oriented, sectoral action (through thematic networks - HIV, environment, civic education, etc.) and apolitical activity, by “legitimate government partners.” Secondly, through a homogenisation of discourse and approaches which facilitate the subjugation of independent NGOs through collective federative and representative structures, more easily co-opted and manipulated by political power (Macedo 2009). From a neo-patrimonial governmental perspective, “constructive engagement” as outlined above is naturally welcome. It is a more efficient way to soften/dilute the critics, as it depends on the initiative and collaboration of those who promote it (international donors, agencies and its national partners).

The cases of Mozambique and Angola: financial internationalization of neo-patrimonialism or post-modern patrimonialism

Mozambique has usually been presented as a clear-cut case of major leverage by donors and the international community over the government. Since the transition in the 1990s, the country has been closely following the policies prescribed by major donors and cooperation partners – from the WB and IMF structural adjustment programmes and the EU and USAID preferential channelling of aid through CSOs, to the renewed priority given to state institutional support and public budget centrality in the 2000s (neo-institutionalism), as well as the promotion of CSO representative networks of a federative-type.

In Mozambique, the first of such structures came to be known as the G20, which originally consisted of twenty CSOs, but soon expanded to include more than one-hundred. It was involved in myriad activities, from health to debt reduction campaigning and socio-economic research,

among several others. During its first panel meeting in 2002, the G20 was assigned the tasks of conducting a government-complementary poverty analysis from the perspective of the poor. Research for the first report in 2004 (funded by international donors) included ten provincial seminars and a final national meeting. Such experience and structure were thus established (“institutionalized”) for subsequent reports and the G20 structure was replicated at the provincial level, including the private sector (Francisco and Matter 2007, 27).

According to government members interviewed by the author in 2010 and 2015, “frameworks for dialogue between the government and NSAs were effectively created under the direct stimulus of international partners.” According to interviewees within the G20 leadership structures (interviewed in 2010), the G20 process and the external leverage on the government by the G19 (group of major donors) to allow the G20 participation in policy decision-making as a condition for releasing aid for the 2010 budget, permitted an improvement in good governance and anti-patronage schemes.

Although the G20 did not evolve to the initially intended all-encompassing representative federative-structure for NSAs (due to the resistance of some CSOs), the Mozambican case was usually presented (throughout the 2000s up to the financial scandal of 2016) as an example of good coordination between donors, government and NSAs. Mozambique seemed the most successful story of neo-institutionalism with constructive engagement under the aegis of the donor community. Meanwhile, FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique), the party in government since the independence in 1975, managed to achieve smashing and consecutive electoral victories since the transition to a multiparty system (beginning in 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014), which added an increasing factor of political stability to a country that had lived in civil war since 1977 up to 1992. Such stability reinforced the enthusiasm of the donor community for *le bon élève*.

Unfortunately, neo-institutionalism and the narrative explaining the NSA involvement in government decision-making processes through representative structures as an effective way to improve good-governance (anti-patronage schemes), was dramatically shattered by the 2016 financial scandal. In the fall of 2016, a debt crisis unravelled layers of misappropriation of public funds within the ruling party, the government, and the state and rang the alarm on the possibility of a wider financial crisis in poor countries, that could have global repercussions or a so-called “global financial shockwave” (The Guardian 2016, October 27). A financial crisis, caused by the government taking on too much external debt, much of it in secret, forced the government to default in 2017, admitting that its debt levels were unsustainable. Donors, who had provided about a quarter of the country’s public budget suspended financial assistance and demanded full investigation on secret loans and missing funds (The Guardian 2017, January 27; Financial Times 2017, June 25; 2018, January 29).

Suddenly, the prodigy student of the IMF, the World Bank, and the donor community turned out to be a fraud, as ridden by neo-patrimonial networks as several of its counterparts (usually called bad examples) in Africa. “Suddenly,” the country with a dizzying economic growth since the mid-1990s, comparable to that of China, was in fact admitted to have been unable to tackle

poverty with effectiveness over the last two decades. Poverty remained the reality for most of the people and development a mirage (Gerety 2018).

The most astonishing fact about this episode, rendering it the character of a scandal, was to discover the government's ability to conceal such a major financial scheme from top international banking institutions since 2013. The government was able to raise more than 2 billion US\$ in international markets and hide such debt from public official accounts and even disburse much of it within the usual neo-patrimonial management schemes by the party. This happened in a country where international partners and institutions have major leverage and have been closely involved in government and civil society affairs since the 1990s, funding a quarter of the state budget for more than twenty-five years. Moreover, this happened in a country where neo-institutionalist policies allowed international organizations and their appointed specialists, advisors, and consultants, to be embedded in each of the most influential ministries, working on a daily basis with key-ministers and closely following the national budget formulation and spending. It also happened in a country where participation of NSAs apparently was made effective through extensive structures for their participation in public policies' design, monitoring, and evaluation.

The scandal simply revealed that neo-institutionalism did in fact increase the technical ability and competence within the government. However, to the unfortunate surprise of the donor community and its promoted neo-institutionalism, that was not synonymous of effective liberalisation, accountability, public transparency, and economic development. On the contrary, technical competence was mainly used for the substantial sophistication of the old neo-patrimonial system that was not only able to survive, but also to reinvent itself and expand to a new, sophisticated and complex international financial dimension. The evolution served the major purpose of keeping the ruling elites at the heart of FRELIMO in power, with renewed legitimacy through several multiparty elections and with different presidents.

In terms of the international political context, the Angolan case differs from Mozambique insofar as the government always has had a relative leverage over international organisations (governmental and non-governmental), rather than the other way around. Foreign interests and institutions compete for very lucrative business in Angola, especially within the oil sector, and we cannot find the same level of coordination between donors as found in Mozambique; there are several cleavages, according to myriad geostrategic interests. Nevertheless, with the end of the long Angolan civil war in 2002, major donors (with the EU upfront) started to defend a neo-institutionalist strategy. This implied the usual WB and IMF instruments such as a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper-PRSP that the Angolan government was meant to present, led by the Ministry of Planning – Strategy to Fight Poverty 2003-2006 (Ministério do Planeamento 2003). The program should have represented the basis for a Medium-Term Development Plan and for a Long-Term Strategy for Structural Development, the so-called Angola 2025.

In practice, due to the referred leverage of the Angolan government, the whole package faced a few obstacles on its implementation. International organizations and donors tried to condition the much-awaited international donor conference (to support the country's post-war

reconstruction) to an agreement between the government and the IMF on the referred interim PRSP. Conditions were above all focused on government compliance with more transparency in public accounts (especially oil accounts) and respect for human rights. For an authoritarian neo-patrimonial regime, that was obviously a problem. Luckily for the Angolan government, a new partner came into play in 2003/2004 – China –, willing to fund the country's reconstruction with oil-backed loans, free from any such conditionality and with better financial conditions than the IMF. With the new partnership and the boom in oil prices, the government felt sufficiently comfortable by 2004 to give up on the donors' conferences with their associated conditionality (Vidal 2011, 67-70).

Nevertheless, technical support from the IMF, the WB, the EU and myriad bilateral cooperation partners was massively accepted. Expatriate consultants and advisors were placed at technical cabinets closely related to ministerial cabinets in every ministry, with special relevance to Economy, Planning, Finance, besides the Central Bank. Complementarily, hundreds of international consultancy companies were hired to support technical design and implementation of projects and day-to-day management of a variety of public institutions, not only in the usually referred oil sector, but in each and every sector of economic activity (Oliveira 2015).

Although international organizations had to soften previous claims for more accountability and transparency in public accounts, the neo-institutionalist agenda seemed to progress with the referred technical support to the government and also at the civil society level, with the promotion of constructive engagement and federative-type representative structures throughout the 2000s. Four major projects followed such purpose. The first project consisted on the Civil Society Strengthening Programme (CSSP) in 2007, led by Development Workshop (DW) and World Learning (WL), both international NGOs with a long history of cooperation with the government, aiming to “[...] strengthen [...] Angolan NGOs, so that they become legitimate and privileged government partners, in proving public utility services [...]” (cit. in Vidal 2009, 38). The second project came with the creation of the Centre for the Development of Angolan Partnerships (CDPA) in early 2007, envisaging CSO capacity-building and partnerships to support government social projects with funds from oil companies operating in Angola. The initiative was originally launched by the EU delegation, the Government of Angola and USAID and again involving DW and WL at the upfront with some major national NGO as promoters (Figueiredo 2009, 149-150).

The third major project was the EU's 2007-08 Program of Support to Non-State Actors (PAANE; Portuguese acronym), with the objective of promoting “social and political dialogue” between these and national authorities at central and local levels, but subordinating PAANE to the government, namely to the Angolan Ministry of Planning (so-called National Organizer, authorizing the implementation of the European Development Fund Program in Angola) (Vidal 2015).

The fourth major institutionalist project came from the EU Delegation in Angola and other major donors, launching an appeal in 2007 for a unifying structure for CSOs to speak with one voice with public institutions. The approach was to be materialized in a National Civil Society Conference that took place for the first time in 2007 in Luanda under the suggesting

theme “Constructing Unity in Diversity.” The conference recommendations emphasized the importance of civil society national representation, while referring to the need to unite, to collaborate with the government, and represent civil society through constructive engagement (Conferência Nacional da Sociedade Civil 2008, 1-3). The second conference in 2008 went further, approving a federative-type representational structure for CSOs from the municipality to the provincial and national levels (Conferência Nacional da Sociedade Civil 2009, 86, 105-106). The similarity with the Mozambique’s G20 structure and the above-mentioned structures in Tanzania and DRC was evident.

Once again, as in the Mozambican case, leadership of those CSOs standing for such a strategy – reformists -, and interviewed by the author in 2010 and 2015, argued that collaborating with governmental structures in various projects would reform institutions from within and promote accountability, transparency, and good-governance. Those CSOs opposing such strategy as apolitical collaborationism were in minority and ended up being discriminated against by donors’ funding and government policies in the access to public funding. They were sidelined as radicals (Amundsen and Abreu 2006, 18) and their role and activism – confrontationalism - progressively faded and eventually became insignificant (Vidal 2015).

The post-civil war period reinforced the MPLA’s power at all levels, reflected in three consecutive electoral victories with more than two thirds of the votes in each election (2008, 2012, 2017).² Again, as in the Mozambican case, the country presented steady and record-high economic growth rates up to 2013, which even included the internationalization of Angolan (elite) capital, heavily invested in Portuguese strategic sectors such as banks, communications, energy, media, and insurances. This investment strategy was led by SONANGOL (the state oil company), the President’s daughter, Isabel dos Santos, and several of the President’s closest advisors, - including the military. At the same time, investors viewed the country as the new rising economy in Africa (Oliveira 2015, Costa and Louçã 2014, Fernandes 2015, Filipe 2013).

However, the steady decrease in oil prices from the second semester of 2014 represented a major strain to the regime (with oil still representing one-third of the GDP and over 95% of the government’s exports)³ and ended up revealing that not much had changed after all. As in Mozambique, major financial scandals erupted in 2017/2018. The most mediatic cases included the prosecution of José Filomeno dos Santos, former head of Angola’s \$500bn Wealth Sovereign Fund - WSF (and son of the former Angolan President, José Eduardo dos Santos, who left office in August 2017), together with the former governor of the Bank of Angola, Valter Filipe da Silva and others, formally accused by the Angolan Prosecutor of fraud, misappropriation of funds, and money laundering. Filomeno dos Santos and the WSF asset manager Jean Claude Bastos de Moraes were even arrested while awaiting trial.

² We will not discuss here the alleged electoral malpractices of the Angolan elections; for such analysis see (Vidal 2016).

³ World Bank data, available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/angola/overview>

As in the example with Mozambique, this case, among several others that have been disclosed in recent years involving several members of state and party structures,⁴ is illustrative of the increasing sophistication, technical competence, international linking, and complexity of neo-patrimonial management. The case reported to a transaction of \$500 million from the central bank in a scheme to skim off US\$1.5 billion from Angola's WSE. The government was to pay US\$1.5 billion to a company managed by Jorge Pontes Sebastião (Executive Secretary of the National Council of the Quality and Control System and business partner of José Filomeno dos Santos in a company holding 49 per cent of the Standard Bank Angola), for the supposedly start-up of a US\$35 billion strategic investment fund for public projects. Another company would place US\$300 million weekly in the local-currency market to supposedly help support the Angolan currency during the electoral period in August 2017 (BBC 2018, March 26, April 9; The Guardian 2018, January 11; BBC 2017, November 7) and therefore supposedly help the MPLA's government and presidential campaign.

The scandal was immediately followed by a new one the same month, whereby the Attorney General's Office (PGR), accused four generals and other accomplices of fraud and money-laundering within a US\$50 billion scam led by a Thai financier (RFI 2018, March 6). Meanwhile, it is also noticeable that the so-called "reformists" within CSOs, - constructively engaged with the government, which gained the upper hand since neo-institutionalism started to support them while marginalizing the "confrontationists," - were unable to stand publicly, collectively, or in any meaningful way, within any representative structure whatsoever, against these revealed schemes throughout the whole decade (Vidal 2015).

Again as in the Mozambique case, these scandals (and several others reported over the last decade) reveal not only the reinforcement of the neo-patrimonial political management system, whereby an elite at the center of the state and governing party appropriates public resources through clientelistic chains of accomplices and dependents for power maintenance, but also the expansion (national and international) of such schemes and networks. A new international financial dimension has become evident, reflecting a complexification of the neo-patrimonial management system in place and not the result of individuals freelancing.

Conclusion

As seen in Angola and Mozambique (and possibly other cases within the same rationale), neo-institutionalism, as a dominant development thinking strategy at the centre of major donors' organizations, was made effective in terms of minimally functional Westphalian sovereign states, basically to avoid more "failed states" as feared by the international community in the 2000s. From that perspective, it might have been successful in preventing several states from falling into

⁴ See the journalist investigative blog of Rafael Marques de Morais, www.makaangola.org

extreme cases of neo-patrimonial disruption whereby massive and uncontrolled predatory practices fragmented them, undermined their sovereignty, and transformed them into threats to regional and international security (e.g., Somalia or DRC).

Nonetheless, neo-institutionalism was unable to subvert the logics of neo-patrimonial political management, and on the contrary it ended up unintentionally facilitating its development. The all-encompassing (and essentially apolitical) strategy of partnerships between NSAs and the state unintentionally facilitated their political control through federal-type representation structures. The most critical (politically disconcerting) voices within civil society, which monitored public policy and held governments accountable, were silenced or significantly diminished. More technical competence managing ministries and the state administration also represented more competence to avoid uncontrolled predatory practices and increased distribution control by those at the centre, which greatly benefits neo-patrimonial management, always in need for power concentration and administrative centralization (Vidal 2007).

The potential threats to liberal democracies, including multi-party elections and the legislative guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms were tamed and rendered more formal and ritualistic than effective. Incumbent parties won consecutive elections with a smashing majority of votes as shown in Angola and Mozambique, with the same parties in power since independence. More technical competence and knowledge dealing with liberal international financial markets, actors, institutions and mechanisms, opened a whole new set of possibilities to access new forms of funding and international commercial and financial alliances (besides the possibilities offered by the China “factor” in Africa, Brautigam 2009, Alden and Oliveira 2008). These new possibilities were politically capitalized by the regimes in place, reinforcing their neo-patrimonial management of the political system and power maintenance. In reality, these systems refined their operational mechanisms/structures in creating new combinations of international and national transactions of public and private agents (African and foreigners), which become indistinguishable. A network of complicity was created between public and private, national and foreign sectors.

An opposite theoretical perspective would argue that such phenomena described here as neo-patrimonial sophistication were in fact forms of local adaptation to world capitalism or varieties of capitalism in Africa or capitalist dynamics in Africa as Pitcher would put it (2017). However, just like the old varieties of socialism or local socialist dynamics in African countries ended up as disguises of a deeper and stronger neo-patrimonial management for those in power, so the so-called varieties of capitalism and democracy in the post-transition period in these countries seem to reveal new forms of neo-patrimonial taming of political and economic international dynamics, now of liberalism.

It is not a matter of illiberal capitalism, more or less liberal statism (state involvement in the economy) or any other variations in so-called post-neo-liberal states (Pitcher 2017, 367-369) within some post-transitology perspective, or any other approach to emphasize the dominion of the external factor on African politics. We are here arguing that it is above all a matter of

neo-patrimonial sophistication for its own development and strength. This is not about world capitalism or liberal democracy creating local (poor) varieties (in transit to better ones), but rather the subordination of liberalism (political and economic) to dominant and local forms of neo-patrimonialism. It is neo-patrimonialism (with all its immense varieties coming out of considerable historical, structural, and institutional differences over time and across space, but with a similar matrix or logics⁵) that has been taking advantage on the possibilities opened by international capitalism and its mechanisms (with all its varieties coming out of considerable historical, structural, and institutional differences over time and across space), to its own modernization and purpose of power maintenance as a dominant political management system. It is more like the financial internationalization of neo-patrimonialism, or its development into some kind of postmodern patrimonialism (in order to stress its sophistication and evolution beyond the usual matrix of neo-patrimonialism). The cases of Mozambique and Angola presented here seem to support such an argument, but in the end, nothing would summarize such agency and African perspective on politics better than the words of the new Angolan president, João Lourenço, after being elected in 2017, when asked if he was a reformer and could be considered the Angolan Gorbachev?

Reformer? We will work for that, but certainly not Gorbachev. Deng Xiao Ping, yes. I would rather be treated like that (Diário de Notícias 2017, September).⁶

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⁵ Contrary to Pitcher, the essential logics of neo-patrimonial political management is far from being “an exclusive of African economies,” which would “construct them as exceptions to patterns found elsewhere in the world” (2017, 367). A rich and extensive literature deals with neo-patrimonialism in Latin America, Asia and...Europe (e.g., Chubb 1982).

⁶ It might also be worth to have in mind that João Lourenço is a general who got his military academy education and training in the former USSR.

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