

## **THE GEOPOLITICAL AND GEO-ECONOMICS DIMENSIONS OF THE PANDEMIC IN AFRICA**

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*Стаття отримана редакцією 20.04.2021 р.  
The article was received by editorial board on 20.04.2021*

**Introduction.** In Africa, the first case was reported on February 14 in Egypt, and two weeks later in Algeria and Nigeria. By the end of February 2021, there were almost 4 million confirmed cases in Africa. However, the number of deaths remains relatively low.

The pandemic has hampered the continent's development efforts. Thus, the growth rate in sub-Saharan Africa fell from 2.4% in 2019 to 5.1% in 2020. According to the latest edition of Africa's Pulse, the World Bank's semi-annual report on the economic climate in Africa, the region is expected to fall into its first recession in more than 25 years. "The Covid-19 pandemic continues to test the limits of societies and economies around the world, and may deal a particularly hard blow to African countries"<sup>1</sup>, says Hafez Ghanem, World Bank Vice President for Africa. The senior official of the institution of the Bretton Woods also believes that maximum resources were mobilized to meet the immediate medical needs and essential for the survival of their population. Official bilateral creditors are called upon to design a debt service moratorium that would strengthen health infrastructure in order to cope with the pandemic and mitigate its economic, social and humanitarian effects.

According to the same report, African leaders are strongly recommended to strengthen health systems and respond quickly and effectively to avoid disruption in food supply chains and the damage that would cause. The authors of the report also recommend setting up safety nets for vulnerable populations and workers in the informal sector.

While most African countries are affected to varying degrees by the pandemic, growth in real gross domestic product should, in particular, impact the three largest economies in sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria, Angola and South Africa). The countries the most affected are those whose exports are composed mainly of raw materials. These are of course the countries commonly called "rentier countries".

It is not excluded that the health crisis will cause a food crisis. The contraction of agricultural production reached 7%. Still according to the World Bank, food imports suffered a serious blow, going from 13 to 25%, penalized by high transaction costs and sluggish domestic demand.

Several African countries have reacted quickly to counter the proliferation of the coronavirus. The international guidelines were generally followed to the letter. However, several factors may hamper the efforts made in particular; high population density in disadvantaged neighborhoods, lack of access to basic needs, non-compliance with hygiene and social distancing rules as well as the fragility of health systems. In short, the magnitude of the impact will ultimately depend on the reaction of the population and the response provided by the public authorities.

The World Bank report insists on the need to propose policy responses adapted to the context of African economies (in particular the important place of the informal sector) as well as the specific constraints currently facing governments, in particular the reduction of budgetary leeway, The debt and the overall lack of operational capabilities to respond to the crisis.

For Cesar Calderon, economist at the World Bank and lead author of the report, only debt relief will allow a return to social balance and, at the same time, preserve the region's macroeconomic gains.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/news/press-release/2020/04/09/covid-19-coronavirus-drives-sub-saharan-africa-toward-first-recession-in-25-years>

IMF economists defend the same point of view. They stress the importance of rapid action to help developing countries step up their action against the pandemic and improve health surveillance, while supporting the private sector to enable businesses to continue their activities and maintain jobs.

Beyond the purely economic and health aspects, the crisis should be analyzed from a geopolitical angle due to its strong correlation with other aspects that risk shaping the future of the continent.

**Main material and investigation results.** A review of the literature on Covid-19 reveals other aspects of the crisis that are more relevant to the field of geopolitics; it is about security, migration and terrorism. Combined with other global factors, the assembly of the dimensions mentioned above suggests a new configuration of relations between Africa and the great powers on one side and between Africa and emerging countries on the other. It is important to remember that although at first glance these issues may seem distinct from each other, they should be addressed together as they influence and influence each other.

The global epidemic could wreak havoc in fragile states, triggering widespread unrest and put a strain on crisis management systems. Its implications are particularly serious for those caught in the middle of a conflict if the disease disrupts the flow of humanitarian aid, limits peace operations and diverts the parties in conflict from emerging or ongoing diplomatic efforts. Some leaders may exploit the pandemic to advance their goals in ways that exacerbate national or international crises - quelling dissent at home or deepening conflicts with rival states. The Covid-19 has fueled geopolitical friction. The United States blames China for the disease while Beijing tries to win friends by donating vaccines to affected countries, exacerbating existing tensions between the great powers and complicating cooperation in crisis management.

The dramatic economic slowdown, already underway is disrupting trade flows and will create unemployment rates that will do unprecedented damage. Such a recession could take a heavy toll on fragile states where the risk of unrest and conflict is highest.

African populations affected by conflict are likely to be particularly vulnerable to epidemics. In many cases, war or protracted unrest, especially when compounded by mismanagement, corruption or foreign sanctions, has left national health systems deeply unprepared for COVID-19.

In addition to these institutional problems, it can be difficult to persuade populations who have little confidence in their leaders to follow public health guidelines. Following the outbreak of the 2014 Ebola epidemic in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the virus initially spread unchecked not only due to weak epidemiological surveillance and inadequate capacities and response of health systems, but also because people were skeptical of what their governments were saying or asking them to do. The doubts stemmed in part from disinformation and bad advice on contagion from the governments concerned, but also from recurring political tensions in a region marked by war in the previous decade.

The conflict areas with the greatest immediate risk of COVID-19 outbreaks could be Cameroon, Somalia, Mali, South Sudan, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Kenya or Libya. Since the outbreak of the epidemic, United Nations officials have continued to sound the alarm bells about the COVID-19 infection of the displaced. Many people fleeing the clashes sleep in the fields or under the trees, and basic hygiene and social distancing practices are practically impossible due to the lack of running water or soap as well as by the cramped living spaces.

The pandemic has exacerbated the challenges already facing a region with one of the biggest humanitarian crises in the world, involving more than nine million displaced persons in Africa and the Middle East<sup>2</sup> by force. The pandemic has caused borders to be closed and added increased pressure on health systems, which were already very vulnerable. The UN fears that the potential movements of Malians, Nigerians, Somalis, Nigerians, Cameroonians and Sudanese seeking international protection will be hampered by these restrictions.

In addition to precarious security (especially in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin), restrictions imposed by Covid-19 also hamper humanitarian efforts to support and assist those in need.

On the ground, the situation remains worrying. Thus in Burkina Faso, for example, Malian refugees left their Goudoubo camp to flee attacks by armed groups. Some have taken refuge in overcrowded sites initially reserved for internally displaced persons.

In Niger, humanitarian access, already limited in the northern regions of Tahoua, Tillabery and Diffa due to increasing violence, is now even more restricted due to the pandemic.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/fr/news/stories/2020/3/5e7e0adea/laces-services-sante-essentiel-lutter-contre-covid-19-sauver-vie-refugies.html>

In Mali, campaigns against sexual violence and awareness programs on human rights and social cohesion are suspended to limit public gatherings.

In the Central African Republic, UNHCR staff report that in some localities, armed groups are forcing internally displaced people to return to their places of origin, blaming them for the potential spread of Covid-19.

In many cases, women, who often constitute the majority of internally displaced persons in conflict-affected areas, will feel the impact of COVID-19 on refugees and internally displaced persons disproportionately. These women's access to services and their ability to feed their families are already severely limited by the stigma attached to their links (real or suspected) with armed groups. Exposed to sexual exploitation or abuse, their rehabilitation or reintegration into communities is not a priority for weak or indifferent governments. Thus, displaced women and children are the first to be affected by the crises that will accompany the spread of the disease.

This combined with the other economic effects of COVID-19 – such as the disappearance of tourists in areas that rely heavily on foreign visitors – could lead to economic shocks that will last well beyond the immediate crisis, creating the potential for disruption. Prolonged periods of work and social instability make it possible to envisage the likelihood of an unprecedented migration crisis.

COVID-19 will most likely affect the general economic conditions of migrants and reinforce the factors aggravating irregular mobility. Politically, the narratives that fuel the fear of “outsiders” can be easy to disseminate and consume in times of crisis when the economy slows down and inward-looking social and economic policies seem most secure.

The coronavirus pandemic has made mobility within the European Union difficult. Long considered one of the great successes of European integration, the Schengen area is frozen, following the closure of borders. Despite its temporary nature, this closure will inevitably have consequences for mobility both inside and outside the European Union.

Tightening of Schengen visa requirements for African nationals can be expected, despite the fact that the EU has put in place a new, long-awaited Schengen visa code that aims to ease visa requirements for regular African travelers. The code entered into force in February 2020, and its survival will depend on the political choices made by the EU.

Migrants stranded at the external borders of countries should be provided with adequate resources to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Particular attention should be paid to the early detection of infected persons and their treatment. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) says that three quarters of the refugees and migrants in the world are hosted in developing countries where health infrastructure is very limited. Consequently, specific funds should be devoted to the supply of detection kits and health equipment to the structures concerned in the host countries. Aid workers should also be allowed to continue their missions with migrants and refugees under optimal conditions, providing them with the necessary resources. General living conditions in the centers should be improved and migrants should have better access to sanitary and hygiene products. IOM has stressed that many irregular migrants and asylum seekers may be reluctant to seek help if they show symptoms of COVID-19 because they fear being intercepted or detained by authorities in host countries.

In a region infested with terrorist groups, a health crisis coupled with a migratory crisis is certainly an opportunity for the supporters of the theology of terror. Scenes of kidnapping young women and children in refugee camps have become commonplace as central powers are either confined to capitals or concerned about tackling the pandemic in crowded areas. We believe that it is impossible to "contain the evil" especially when terrorism takes advantage of the pandemic to reign terror among the most vulnerable populations in certain regions of the continent.

In the light of COVID-19 and its various effects, in particular on social dynamics and counterterrorism efforts, it seemed opportune to provide a new analysis of the current developments on the continent.

Despite the pandemic, attacks continue. During this crisis, certain terrorist groups were very active, taking advantage of a favorable situation for a certain number of organizations.

Thus, the JNIM group (Jamaat Nusrat al Islam wa al Mouslimin), took advantage of the absence of the Malian regular army on the front to regain control of most of the Malian Gourma region, even driving out the ISGS (Organization of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara) from some of its traditional strongholds in the province of Soum to the north.

Based in Mali and Burkina Faso, Katiba Macina or the Macina Liberation Front was created in January 2015 following the arrival of French troops in Mali in 2013, with Amadou Koufa as leader. The

group attacked a military convoy in Mali, killing 24 soldiers on June 15. He is also accused of having committed an attack on an Ivorian military base on June 11.

Ansaru is an Al Qaida affiliate based in northwest Nigeria, which, although it was created in 2009 as a faction of Boko Haram, became independent in 2012 and has since emerged from "dormancy". January 2020. Recently, this group killed six soldiers and abducted civilians during the attack on January 15. In February 2021, it is even believed that the group had anti-aircraft guns.

Based between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the Organization of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) is a subsidiary of the Islamic State. France reportedly arrested an important ISGS leader on June 6, while some of its fighters fled to Mauritania.

In March 2020, fighters from the Boko Haram group seized the opportunity of Covid-19 to assassinate 92 Chadian soldiers when the Nigerian army killed more than 56 of its members.

On June 10, in the village of Felo, in Nigeria's Borno State, attackers from the Islamic State in West Africa (EIAO), a subsidiary of Boko Haram, killed nearly 69 people.

The dynamism of terrorist groups is largely linked to the absence of regular armies in conflict zones and the rise of several "sleeper" cells in some countries. Terrorists take advantage of the health crisis and the overflow of local authorities to establish their hegemony over border areas or in regions qualified as non-lawful areas.

Mixed and controversial by their nature, relations between Africa and the BRICs<sup>3</sup> were not always smooth, especially with the Chinese dragon. Proponents of liberal orthodoxy believe it would be more Chinese-style neocolonialism this time around. Mega-projects of course, but with social benefits those are always conclusive.

African governments that have close trade relations with China are feeling the pain of the slowdown caused by the outbreak from Wuhan. Oil producers are already grappling with volatile energy prices. A country like Nigeria, which has strong import / export links with China and which depends on oil prices to support its public finances, is suffering. Abuja has reportedly considered cutting spending by 12 % in 2021, which means the authorities may have to break promises to increase the minimum wage.

An important point to keep in mind is that even before the outbreak of the coronavirus, several African countries were increasingly concerned about the level of debt build-up to China – largely due to the infrastructure projects. Many observers have argued that unsustainable debt or what has been termed a "debt trap" by many analysts increases dependence on China. A detailed report released in 2018 by the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University called "debt book diplomacy" the phenomenon of China lending to developing countries that are often unable to repay.

In a post-coronavirus world, Africa may reassess its economic ties with China. A number of countries have already started to hint at the need to renegotiate Chinese loans. This is the case of Tanzania. Tanzanian President John Magufuli, who urged international creditors to cancel debts of African nations, has decided to cancel a Chinese loan estimated at \$ 10 billion.

In order to stem the economic slowdown linked to Covid-19, the Nigerien president, Mouhamadou Issoufou, called for a "Marshall plan for Africa".

His Senegalese counterpart Macky Sall called for the cancellation of public debt contracted abroad.

At the end of March, African finance ministers revived the discussion. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development CNUCED, which advises aid of 2.5 trillion dollars, including the forgiveness of 250 billion in debt, to cushion the Covid-19 crisis in Africa, supported their call.

The idea was also supported by the Bretton Woods institutions at the end of March and taken up by Emmanuel Macron in his speech on Monday, April 13, 2020. The French president spoke of the need for a "massive cancellation" of the African debt by Europe. The European Union (EU) on Tuesday (April 28) granted funding of 194 million euros to the G5 Sahel countries to strengthen their security forces and it committed during a video conference to examine the request for African debt cancellation<sup>4</sup>.

China, the continent's largest donor, seems to be on the way to debt rescheduling. Beijing could freeze repayments to let African economies breathe, but not cancel them entirely.

<sup>3</sup> In the current paragraph, we are talking about the BRICs and not the BRICS since it is about emphasizing the role of emerging countries outside Africa in a post-Covid perspective.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/04/29/l-union-europeenne-va-examiner-l-annulation-de-la-dette-africaine-demandee-par-le-g5-sahel\\_6038127\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/04/29/l-union-europeenne-va-examiner-l-annulation-de-la-dette-africaine-demandee-par-le-g5-sahel_6038127_3212.html)

As for Afro-Indian relations, they are less controversial than those with China are. India is currently Africa's fourth largest trading partner and the third largest destination for African exports. After South Asia, Africa is the second-largest recipient of Indian aid abroad, with lines of credit worth nearly \$ 10 billion spread across 100 projects in 41 countries. 6000 Indian troops are currently deployed in United Nations peacekeeping missions in five conflict zones in Africa. However, it should be pointed out that during the pandemic India's interest in its African partners declined. India mainly provided in-kind aid (detection kits and hydroxychloroquine) with a value not exceeding \$ 8 million. An insignificant sum for a country considered the continent's second trading partner with a trade volume of over 45 billion dollars annually. Indian indifference to Africa will certainly condition Afro-Indian relations for the post-Covid-19 period.

Russia's attitude is "less mixed" than its Chinese and Indian counterparts. The Russian Foreign Ministry said some countries have requested Moscow's support to combat Covid-19 and that these requests are "carefully considered" adding that the rates of the virus spread are relatively low in Africa, except in Egypt, Morocco and South Africa.<sup>5</sup>

It is therefore clear that for the Russians, the provision of comprehensive assistance in matters of Covid-19 is practically impossible for all of Africa. Historically, Russia has always had a marked preference for the Maghreb region and the countries of southern Africa. Thus, during the first months of the pandemic, aid was provided to Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia in North Africa. In southern Africa, the beneficiaries have been Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, according to various African media reports.

Regarding Brazil, his interest in the continent goes through Morocco. Brazil is the third destination for Moroccan exports and the Kingdom's first partner in Latin America. However, Brazil's participation in the effort to fight the pandemic in Africa is almost non-existent, including in Portuguese-speaking countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde.

For the other great Emerging, which is Turkey, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu sent several important messages on the future of Turkish-African relations. On May 25, Çavuşoğlu presented the figures that show the evolution of the Turkish-African partnership during the past 18 years with stronger diplomatic, economic and trade, greater Turkish humanitarian aid in Africa, scholarships higher or more flights of Turkish Airlines to African destinations. He said that this win-win vision would continue during the period post-coronavirus. Several African countries have benefited from Turkey's support since the outbreak of the pandemic (drugs, screening kits, masks, etc.). This is particularly Algeria, Ethiopia, Chad, Somalia and Djibouti.

As the great Emerging adopt a controversial stance towards Africa, the Kingdom of Morocco is emerging as the continent's new rising force. King Mohammed VI has proposed the launch of an initiative of African heads of state aimed at establishing an operational framework to support African countries in their various phases of managing the pandemic.

There is no doubt that, in a post-Covid logic, Africa will continue to be the object of all covetousness since it is a region with enormous potential (human capital, rate of growth, natural resources). However, in the face of the indifference of some and the involvement of others, Africa will certainly have to thoroughly review its relations with the rest of the world. The new configuration of relations with the BRICs as with other emerging countries (Turkey, Egypt) or emerging countries (Morocco) will certainly take into account what each country or sub-region has been able to capitalize on as experience during the pandemic.

A year after the detection of the first case of Covid-19 in Africa, we have made efforts to identify some of the most significant impacts of the pandemic, as well as the possible opportunities that the current crisis could create. Our reflection concerns the impact of the crisis on African economies and populations, as well as the possibilities for the development of intra-African trade, technological innovation, and the promises that a new contract between leaders and citizens could represent.

The health crisis will certainly lead to a slowdown in growth. Initially, we expected a rate of 3.2%. Today, the most optimistic analyzes point to a bleak future for growth in Africa since, according to a World Bank report, this rate did not exceed – 3.3 % during the year 2020<sup>6</sup>. The economic cost of containment is estimated at \$ 69 billion per month. For Vera Songwe, economist at the World Bank; the main challenges each country faces are saving jobs, preventing citizens from sliding deeper into poverty, and protecting the most vulnerable while stopping the spread of the virus. As a result, there is a need to provide

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<sup>5</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/202005150276.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/region/afr/overview>

immediate support of at least \$100 billion to meet health and humanitarian needs, to put in place emergency economic stimulus measures to provide budget support to countries, and increase private sector liquidity to protect jobs. She added »We are in a long period of slow growth, which means increased poverty in African markets, particularly in countries that depend on oil for government revenue and foreign exchange "7.

With controversial prowess in the evolution of vaccination campaigns, Africa could see itself inflicting considerable losses in the fight against poverty after a good ten years of combating deprivation and relative progress in the field of public health. In a continent where the economy continues to be dependent on commodity prices, a large number of rentier countries are now witnessing an unprecedented decline in their foreign exchange reserves due to fluctuations in oil and gas prices in the world market. Not to mention the decline in public revenues and therefore the exacerbation of poverty that this could cause.

For the slightly more optimistic Fairfax Africa Fund, the continent's economic forecasts will depend on several factors, the most important of which is whether all Africans will have access to the vaccine or not. If this is the case, a strong expansion of economic activities in the world, including Africa, with overall GDP growth returning to levels almost equal to those before the Covid-19 in 18 to 24 months is possible. The various authors of the report converge on the fact that if the vaccination campaigns do not go as planned in the next 12 months, Africa will experience unemployment rates never reached in the past, not to mention the impoverishment of the population, and a low level of public revenues with all the uncertainty that this could generate.

It is widely accepted that the pandemic has had a huge impact on the supply chain. Disturbances inevitably influenced the structure of trade at the global level. This movement because of their dependence on international markets, in particular, has not spared African markets in terms of imports, many of which can be produced locally. Thus, the pandemic has opened up new opportunities for local producers. Can the current situation be the occasion to realize the dream of an African continental free trade area (launched in 2018 and which was supposed to start in July 2020)? Except that for this, a political will consisting in creating a favorable environment is required.

The other opportunity that the Covid-19 crisis offers Africans is the expansion of the digital economy. Electronic commerce is experiencing an unprecedented boom in Africa. In the opinion of IMF experts<sup>8</sup>, it is probably an irreversible process. Still according to the IMF, The use of ICT is on the rise in Africa. This concerns online payments, administration, education, etc.

Today, there is agreement that virtual boards, online signatures and paperless document sharing are increasingly becoming the norm in many African business circles. Although they have been around for some time, these technological solutions were not considered acceptable forms of doing business in Africa before the pandemic. It will be difficult to turn back once a certain normalcy is restored. By forcing a new way of doing things, the pandemic has opened the door to a new way of thinking that should once again offer Africa the luxury of skipping decades of progress in other parts of the world, in order to claim the continent's share of the benefits of the digital age.

One year after the outbreak of Covid-19 in Africa, uncertainty remains the golden rule. Most international institutions remain without opinions when it comes to deciding the future of the crisis. However, all agree that the fight against the pandemic has been largely aided by the combined action of governments, institutions, academics, businesses, civil society and ordinary citizens. The world after Covid will depend in the first place on the sustainability of this spirit of solidarity even if this remains relatively relative in the face of a multifaceted Africa.

Africa is surprising, In some countries, Covid-19 has shown that another Africa is possible if the response is inclusive in the sense that we take into account the weight of the informal sector. These through attempts at "informal reform", but this time gently. This is the principle of "soft relativism" dear to supporters of critical thinking. With this in mind, a merciless fight against inequality is inescapable.

It is therefore clear that a plural approach is required. The determinism of international institutions regarding the management of successive crises in Africa ended in a fiasco. In times of crisis, a possible triumph of the local over the global is possible. Inter and intra-community solidarity, the dynamism of the informal sector, African-style altruism, and the political will in emerging democracies constitute a lever for the Africa of tomorrow in the face of an increasingly uncertain world situation. Shouting "victory" ahead of time could translate into a fanfare of the pandemic with its share of loss of life and economic depression.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://covid19africawatch.org/100-days-of-covid-19-in-africa/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2020/06/pdf/COVID19-pandemic-impact-on-remittance-flows-sayeh.pdf>

It is commonly accepted that the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa is not only a health crisis but also an economic, social and human tragedy. Economies, lifestyle as well as purchasing power have been strongly impacted as demand for African commodities have fallen and tourism has fallen sharply. Remittances – which can represent more than 10% of gross domestic product (GDP) – are also drying up. The price of oil, which accounts for 40% of African exports and 7.4% of GDP, has halved, which has sharply reduced the income of countries like Nigeria and Algeria. A similar collapse in coffee and cocoa prices has lowered the incomes of Ethiopia, Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire and other producers.

The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on households and businesses in the informal sector. In times of crisis, what worries the modest African is the means of subsistence. Workers in the informal sector, or 85.8% of the workforce, who lack social protection or shock absorbers against economic shocks, face devastating consequences. This is especially true for women who constitute the majority of workers in this sector.

The pandemic has also exposed long-standing weaknesses and inequalities, including systemic discrimination against women and girls. According to a UNDP report, an alarming increase in the levels of domestic violence and violations of human rights within the containment has been found. Not to mention the stories of pain, anxiety, frustration, and angst.

There is no doubt that African leaders have taken the right steps that have saved lives and saved the thrifty from collapse. However, the lack of visibility as well as the lack of rigor of certain regimes could prove fatal for the populations. Indeed, the pace of disruption is likely to accelerate in the coming months, especially in countries whose economies depend heavily on oil exports. Africa's economic growth could contract, pushing an additional 29 million people into extreme poverty. As the toll grows, face-to-face schooling is largely suspended, forcing children to drop out of school, thus creating uncertainty about their ability to continue their education and losing some of the achievements of the children. In the last five years food shortages, including maize, cooking oil and flour, could trigger a food crisis if problems such as locust plagues that devour crops and pastures are not addressed. In East Africa, The disruption of global supply chains also significantly affects export capabilities.

**Conclusion.** Based on this observation, we believe that governments, the private sector and international institutions should thoroughly review their strategies in order to preserve livelihoods in a continent haunted by poverty, illiteracy and morbidity.

Faced with such a dramatic situation, there is also hope, anchored in the customary spirit of solidarity and African goodness "I am because we are".

Doctors, nurses, other frontline workers, and ordinary citizens, men and women, young and old, are showing sacrifice, courage and commitment in the fight against the pandemic. Women represent 70% of the health workforce; they risk their lives to save others, as doctors, nurses, laundresses, orderlies and others. Young Africans offer innovative solutions to health problems. Governments have announced aid measures. Companies are converting their production lines to make masks, disinfectants, gowns, and more.

These positive developments help to maintain hope. Barely a few months ago, we were talking about this Africa of the possible. Some of the fastest growing economies in the world were on the continent. The expansion of internet access has continued to push the boundaries of innovation for Africans, especially young people.

We must therefore be confident that the pandemic is not necessarily unsurpassable, and that the African sun can shine again – thanks to the young people of the continent, to innovation and to real partnerships for better recovery. Despite the devastating effects of the pandemic, Africa can better rebuild itself. Here are some ways to achieve this:

First, improve access to free vaccine and medical supplies by creating lanes to facilitate rapid movement, suspending tariffs on medical items, establishing price control mechanisms, and encouraging local manufacture of medical supplies.

Second, protect small and medium-sized businesses, including by providing tax benefits and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital economy.

Third, implement the African Continental Free Trade Area to accelerate Africa's industrialization and position its economy so that it can better withstand future global shocks.

Fourth, take advantage of the crisis to accelerate the transition to low-carbon growth with a shift to economies that avoid air pollution, create green jobs and ensure clean and sustainable consumption and production.

Fifth, women must be present at the decision-making table. It is also urgent to call on the talent of young people if we are to truly succeed in transforming Africa into a land of inclusion and prosperity that will serve future generations.

A year has passed since the appearance of Covid-19 in Africa, and uncertainty remains the rule. The most seasoned experts are left without opinions when it comes to deciding the future. However, all agree that the fight against the pandemic has been largely aided by the combined action of governments, institutions, academics, businesses, civil society and ordinary citizens. The return to normal will depend in the first place on the perpetuation of this spirit of solidarity even if this remains relatively relative in the face of a multifaceted Africa.

The crisis could be the answer to a series of curses that have befallen Africa since the advent of independence. The continent is surprising. In some countries, Covid-19 has shown that another Africa is possible if the response is inclusive in the sense that we take into account the weight of the informal sector. This attempts at "reform of the informal", but gently this time. This is the principle of "soft relativism" dear to supporters of critical thinking. In this spirit, a merciless fight against inequalities is essential.

Ultimately, the magnitude of the impact will depend on the reaction of the population and the response of the government.

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УДК 323.159

JEL F01, F29, F42

**Доктор Абделхамід Нечад**, професор. Школа управління ESCA, Касабланка, Марокко. **Геополітичні та гео економічні виміри пандемії в Африці.** Розглянуто проблематику впливу пандемії на розвиток континенту. Виконано аналіз і порівняння аналітичного матеріалу, що дозволяє визначити таке: темпи приросту в Африці на південь від Сахари впали з 2,4% у 2019 році до -5,1% у 2020 році. Згідно з останнім виданням «Африканського пульсу», піврічним звітом Світового банку про економічний клімат в Африці, регіон очікує потрапляння у першу рецесію за понад 25 років. Африканським лідерам рекомендовано зміцнювати системи охорони здоров'я та реагувати швидко й ефективно, щоб уникнути зривів у ланцюгах постачання продуктів харчування та шкоди, яка може бути завдана. Автори звіту також рекомендують створити захисні мережі для вразливих верств населення й працівників неформального сектора.

Хоча більшість африканських країн різною мірою зазнає впливу пандемії, зростання реального валового внутрішнього продукту повинно, зокрема, вплинути на три найбільші економіки Африки на південь від Сахари (Нігерія, Ангола та Південна Африка). Найбільше постраждали країни, експорт котрих складається переважно із сировини. Це, звичайно, країни, які зазвичай називають «країнами рантьє». Огляд літератури про Covid-19 розкриває інші аспекти кризи, що мають більше значення для галузі геополітики; мова йде про безпеку, міграцію й тероризм. У поєднанні з іншими глобальними факторами сукупність згаданих вище вимірів наводить на думку про нову конфігурацію відносин між Африкою та великими державами, з одного боку, і між Африкою та країнами, які розвиваються, з іншого. Важливо пам'ятати, що хоча на перший погляд ці проблеми можуть здаватися відмінними одна від одної, їх слід розв'язувати разом, оскільки вони чинять взаємний вплив. Глобальна епідемія може зумовити хаос у нестабільних державах, спричинивши широкі заворушення та створити навантаження на системи управління кризами. Її наслідки особливо серйозні для тих, хто потрапив усередину конфлікту, якщо хвороба порушує потік гуманітарної допомоги, обмежує мирні акції та відволікає сторони конфлікту від нових чи постійних дипломатичних зусиль. Минув рік з часу появи Covid-19 в Африці, а невизначеність залишається занадто стабільною. Переважна більшість експертів сходяться на думці, що боротьбі з пандемією значною мірою сприяли спільні дії урядів, установ, науковців, підприємств, громадянського суспільства та пересічних громадян. Повернення до нормального стану, передусім, залежатиме від збереження духу солідарності, навіть якщо це обмежується умовами багатогранної Африки.

**Ключові слова:** Covid-19, геополітика, гео економіка, пандемія, економіка, розвиток.

UDC 323.159

JEL F01, F29, F42

**Abdelhamid Nechad**, Professor at ESCA School of Management, Morocco. **The Geopolitical and Geo-Economics Dimensions of the Pandemic in Africa.** The pandemic has hampered the continent's development efforts. Thus, the growth rate in sub-Saharan Africa fell from 2.4% in 2019 to -5.1% in 2020. According to the latest edition of Africa's Pulse, the World Bank's semi-annual report on the economic climate in Africa, the region is expected to fall into its first recession in more than 25 years. African leaders are strongly recommended to strengthen health systems and respond quickly and effectively to avoid disruption in food supply chains and the damage that would cause. The authors of the report also recommend setting up safety nets for vulnerable populations and workers in the informal sector.

While most African countries are affected to varying degrees by the pandemic, growth in real gross domestic product should, in particular, impact the three largest economies in sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria, Angola and South Africa). The countries the most affected are those whose exports are composed mainly of raw materials. These are of course the countries commonly called "rentier countries". A review of the literature on Covid-19 reveals other aspects of the crisis that are more relevant to the field of geopolitics; it is about security, migration and terrorism. Combined with other global factors, the assembly of the dimensions mentioned above suggests a new configuration of relations between Africa and the great powers, on one side, and between Africa and emerging countries, on the other. It is important to remember that although at first

glance these issues may seem distinct from each other, they should be addressed together as they influence and influence each other. The global epidemic could wreak havoc in fragile states, triggering widespread unrest and put a strain on crisis management systems. Its implications are particularly serious for those caught in the middle of a conflict if the disease disrupts the flow of humanitarian aid, limits peace operations and diverts the parties in conflict from emerging or ongoing diplomatic efforts.

A year has passed since the appearance of Covid-19 in Africa, and uncertainty remains the rule. The most seasoned experts are left without opinions when it comes to deciding the future. However, all agree that the fight against the pandemic has been largely aided by the combined action of governments, institutions, academics, businesses, civil society and ordinary citizens. The return to normal will depend in the first place on the perpetuation of this spirit of solidarity even if this remains relatively relative in the face of a multifaceted Africa. The crisis could be the answer to a series of curses that have befallen Africa since the advent of independence. The continent is surprising. In some countries, Covid-19 has shown that another Africa is possible if the response is inclusive in the sense that we take into account the weight of the informal sector. This attempts at "reform of the informal," but gently this time. This is the principle of "soft relativism" dear to supporters of critical thinking. In this spirit, a merciless fight against inequalities is essential.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, geopolitics, geo-economics, pandemic, economics, development.