

III. FORECASTS

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Sociodemographic Risks of Armed Civil Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa: Modelling Future Scenarios*

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Abstract

This paper presents forecasts for the emergence of large-scale political and demographic collapses and for the economic growth of some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where the likelihood of armed civil conflicts and population impoverishment is the highest in the coming decades.

The study develops mathematical models to forecast: (1) risks of large-scale armed civil conflicts with population size, median age, and education as the main explanatory variables; and (2) economic growth with the same explanatory variables and risks of conflicts added. Our models include interactions between explanatory variables. We estimate inertial, pessimistic and optimistic scenarios for four large Sahel countries. The inertial scenario is an 'as is' scenario based on the assumption of an unchanged continuation of the current rates of modernization processes (including the diffusion of formal education and fertility transition) and corresponds to the reference scenario by IHME. The pessimistic scenario implies a stall in modernization processes (including fertility stall) and corresponds to the IHME scenario of delayed achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The optimistic scenario presumes fast achievement of SDGs and corresponds to the IHME scenario of full achievement of SDGs.

Sahel could become a particularly disadvantaged region. The four countries of this region are characterized by: (1) negligible differences between inertial and pessimistic scenarios; (2) extremely high risks of full-scale civil wars in the near future; and (3) prospects of reaching the current level of middle-income countries not earlier than by the end of the century, even under the optimistic scenario.

In the last section of the article, we will give a brief summary of our vision and some forecasts regarding 1) the prospects for the development of the African continent in the future due to its rapid development and increasing role in the World System; 2) geopolitical rivalry between the leading powers in Africa now and in the future; 3) directions and opportunities for the development of Russian-African relations (including in connection with the NWO).

The main way of mitigating the risks of sociodemographic collapses is rapid progress towards achieving the SDGs in the very near future, which seems impossible without the support of the world community.

Keywords: armed conflicts, demographic factors of instability, GDP per capita forecasts, instability forecasts, population growth, Sahel.

Introduction. Economic and Demographic Development of the Countries of Tropical Africa

The recent decade has brought signs of undoubted improvements in various aspects of development across Sub-Saharan Africa, such as rapid economic growth, substantial increases in the productivity of particular economic sectors (including some sectors of agriculture), improvements in governance including cases of successful post-conflict recoveries, substantial development of infrastructure and IT, and some major advances in social welfare, including health care and education (for detailed success stories see Chuhan-Pole and Angwafo 2011; Radelet 2010; Ndulu *et al.* 2007).

Trusting the long-rallied slogan ‘Development is the best contraceptive’, one would expect that advances in development should markedly accelerate the fertility transition across SSA, which has been the most demographically lagging region of the developing world so far. However, many countries in Eastern, Central, and Western Africa are still characterized by very high fertility rates, which distinguish it from all other regions of the world (see Fig. 1, see also Zinkina and Korotayev 2014a, 2014b; Korotayev *et al.* 2016; Nzimande and Mugwendere 2018; Kebede *et al.* 2019; Schoumaker 2019; May and Rottenberg 2020).

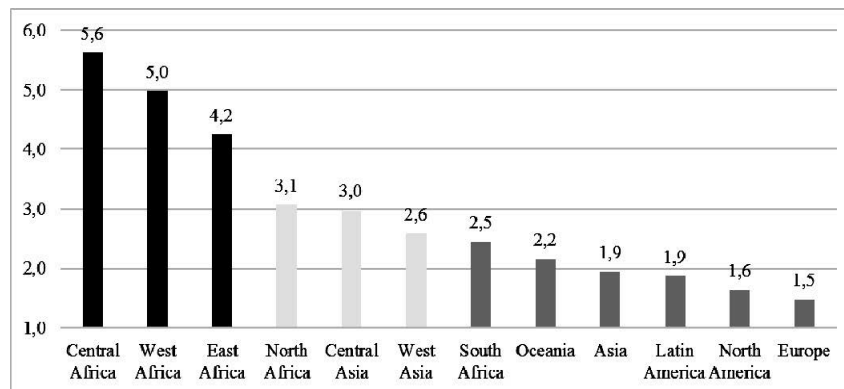


Fig. 1. Fertility rates in various regions of the world (births per woman)

Source: UN Population Division 2022.

Sub-Saharan fertility rates have been declining rather slowly. Some SSA countries still have very high fertility of more than five births per woman, including Nigeria – the largest country in the region – as well as Niger (6.82 births per woman in 2021, the largest value of this indicator in the world), other Sahelian countries such as Mali (5.96) and Chad (6.26), *etc.* (UNPD 2022).

Given the very slow decline in fertility rates against the background of rather remarkable decline in mortality rates, it is hardly surprising that even the medium variant of UN population projections yields continuing rapid though decelerating population growth in this region. For example, according to the UN estimates in the medium projection variant, the population of Uganda, which is estimated at 45,1 million in 2021 (31 % of the population of Russia, which is 145,5 million), will catch up with the population of Russia and surpass it in the late 2070s; by the end of this century, the population of Uganda is estimated at 132 million, while Russian population is estimated at 112 million in 2100 (see Fig. 2). The forecasted population size of Tanzania will exceed the forecasted population size of Russia by the middle of this century; by the late 21st century, Tanzania is projected to overtake Russia in terms of population size by almost two times. Ethiopia is projected to overtake Russia in terms of population size by 2030 and will exceed Russia by almost three times by the end of the century. The largest increase in population is forecasted for Nigeria; by 2100 it is projected to reach almost 550 million (see Fig. 2).

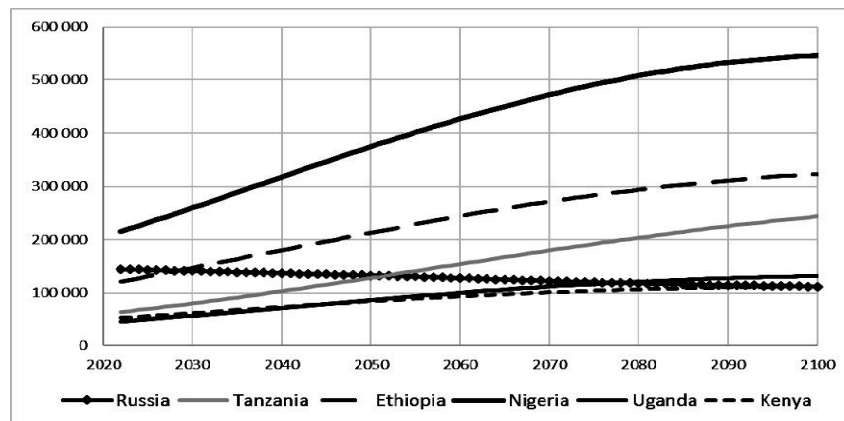


Fig. 2. Population size projections for some African countries in comparison with Russia, UN forecasts from 2020 to 2100 (thousand people)

Source: UN Population Division 2022.

One should mention here that African populations have been growing more rapidly than the non-African developing world had grown *at its peak*, and that the ratio of young dependents to the working-age population had exceeded historical developing-country norms by 1970 and remained above these through decades (Ndulu *et al.* 2007: 106). A decade of economic successes was barely enough to bring many countries just to the WHO recommended level of per capita food consumption. However, if the fertility decline fails to accelerate and

population continues rocketing up, sustaining this level (let alone surpassing it) is likely to become a ‘mission impossible’. Population pressure can exert ever-increasing strain upon the rural infrastructure, likely exacerbating the problems of soil fertility, land scarcity, leading to the decline in already low living standards in rural areas and contributing to social tensions (see, *e.g.*, Goldstone 1991). On the other hand, if the large cohorts get squeezed out of the countryside into the cities, this may very likely lead to mass social turmoil, as the majority of Eastern Africa is highly under-urbanized and the existing cities are hardly ready either to accommodate millions of rural youths or, still less, to create annually millions of new workplaces in the non-farming sectors for the rural migrants – though, of course, under certain circumstances this could be a driver for economic growth acceleration (cf. Goldstone 1991, 2002; Korotayev *et al.* 2011, 2022; Korotayev and Zinkina 2015; Slav *et al.* 2021).

Methods

In this paper we aim to calculate and compare a series of forecasts of Sub-Saharan development in order to understand what scenario allows avoiding or, at least, substantially mitigating the risks to development and stability related to rapid population growth. To model the demographic future of African countries, a mathematical model with the following cognitive scheme is used (see Fig. 3).

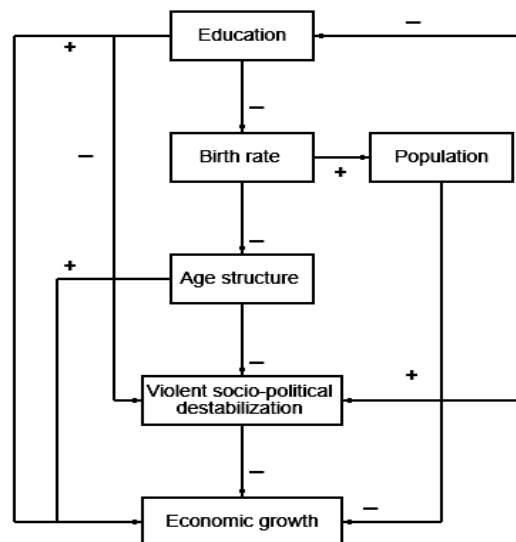


Fig. 3. Cognitive scheme of the influence of various factors on destabilization and economic growth and their interactions

The expansion of formal education in the low-income and middle-income countries leads to a significant decrease in the birth rate (see, *e.g.*, Zinkina and Korotayev 2017; Kebede *et al.* 2019). In turn, fertility decline leads to an increase in the share of the working-age groups in the total population, creating ‘demographic dividends’ (see, *e.g.*, Bloom *et al.* 2000, 2003; Bloom and Williamson 1998; Omoruyi 2021; Korotayev, Shulgin *et al.* 2022). Fertility decrease brings down the youth bulges and leads to population aging (an increase in the median age), which, *inter alia*, leads to a decrease in the risks of violent socio-political destabilization (see, *e.g.*, Goldstone 1991; Urdal 2004; Staveteig 2005; Cincotta and Weber 2021; Korotayev, Romanov *et al.* 2022). The spread of education leads to a reduction in the risks of socio-political destabilization and directly and positively affects economic growth (see, *e.g.*, Mankiw *et al.* 1992; Lucas 2002; Korotayev *et al.* 2006; Korotayev 2009; Mamoon and Murshed 2009; Bonnal and Yaya 2015; Grinin and Korotayev 2015; Ustyuzhanin *et al.* 2022). On the one hand, the spread of formal education in low- and middle-income countries often encounters deep and rigid job deficits. The ensuing conflicts between aspirations and opportunities result in frustration which may lead to non-violent socio-political destabilization while risks of armed rebellions diminish (Ustyuzhanin *et al.* 2022). Armed rebellions/civil wars have strong detrimental impact on economic growth. Education reduces namely the risks of armed rebellions/civil wars that especially negatively affect economic growth. Therefore, the impact of the spread of formal education on economic growth through this channel is rather positive, which is also confirmed in neoclassical models of economic growth.

At the same time, rapid population growth coupled with insufficient economic growth causes an increase in the risks of violent destabilization. Population itself strongly and positively influences the risks of destabilization (Urdal 2008; Besançon 2005; Wimmer and Cederman 2009; Hegre and Sambanis 2006; Raleigh 2015; Gleditsch 2007), because ‘countries with larger population are more likely to contain some group willing to rebel’ (Gleditsch 2007: 300). Violent political destabilization is strongly and negatively associated with economic growth (see, *e.g.*, Aisen and Veiga 2013; Fosu 1992; Gates *et al.* 2012; Alesina *et al.* 1996). As has been mentioned above, there is also a strong negative relationship between education and armed rebellions, which is supported empirically (see, *e.g.*, Justino 2006).

These theoretical assumptions are specified through equations that estimate for a particular country in a particular year: (1) the probability of a violent destabilization (a modified version of Cincotta and Weber 2021 model); and (2) economic development, taking into account this probability (based on the model by Aisen and Veiga 2013). Such models can be presented in the following format:

For armed rebellions:

$$g(c_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * \ln(P_{it}) + \beta_2 * M_{it} + \beta_3 * E_{it} + \beta_4 * \mu_t + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (1)$$

$$i = 1, \dots, N \quad t = 2020, \dots, 2100$$

where $g(c_{it})$ – logit function or log-odds of the dependent variable c_{it} (1 = armed rebellion, 0 = its absence) of observation i at time t ;

P_{it} , M_{it} and E_{it} – explaining variables of i observation at time t (population, median age, and education, respectively);

β_{it} – estimated coefficients at the explanatory variables;

μ_t – specific time effect;

ε_{it} – the random errors of each observation i at time t .

To calculate the probability from the estimated $g(c_{it})$ it is necessary to transform it into exponential form. Then the equation of the estimated probability of event $c_{it} = 1$ will be:

$$P(c_{it} = 1) = \frac{e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 * \ln(P_{it}) + \beta_2 * M_{it} + \beta_3 * E_{it} + \mu_t + \varepsilon_{it}}}{1 + e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 * \ln(P_{it}) + \beta_2 * M_{it} + \beta_3 * E_{it} + \mu_t + \varepsilon_{it}}} \text{ or } \frac{e^{g(c_{it})}}{1 + e^{g(c_{it})}}. \quad (2)$$

$$i = 1, \dots, N \quad t = 2020, \dots, 2100$$

For economic growth, it makes sense to start with modelling the overall level of economic development:

$$\ln(y_{it}) = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 * \ln(y_{i,t-1}) + \gamma_2 * \Delta P_{it} + \gamma_3 * M_{it} +$$

$$+ \gamma_4 * E_{it} + \varphi\left(\frac{e^{g(c_{it})}}{1 + e^{g(c_{it})}}\right) + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (3)$$

$$i = 1, \dots, N \quad t = 2020, \dots, 2100$$

where y_{it} – GDP per capita of observation i at time t ;

β_i – estimated coefficients at the explanatory variables;

$y_{i,t-1}$ – GDP per capita of observation i at time $t-1$ (lagged) that also is a proxy for some country-specific circumstances;

$$\Delta P_{it} = \frac{P_{it} - P_{i,t-1}}{P_{i,t-1}} - \text{population delta};$$

where P_{it} – population of observation i at time t , and $P_{i,t-1}$ – population of observation i at time $t-1$ (lagged);

M_{it} – median age of observation i at time t ;

E_{it} – education of observation i at time t ;

ε_{it} – random errors of each observation i at time t ;

$\varphi\left(\frac{e^{g(c_{it})}}{1 + e^{g(c_{it})}}\right)$ – probability function of violent destabilization of observation i at time t , which has the following form:

$$\varphi\left(\frac{e^{g(c_{it})}}{1 + e^{g(c_{it})}}\right) = \begin{cases} \gamma_4 * P(c_{it} = 1), & P(c_{it} = 1) \leq 0,25 \\ 2\gamma_4 * P(c_{it} = 1), & P(c_{it} = 1) > 0,25 \text{ and } P(c_{it} = 1) \leq 0,5 \\ 3\gamma_4 * P(c_{it} = 1), & P(c_{it} = 1) > 0,5 \text{ and } P(c_{it} = 1) \leq 0,75 \\ 4,5\gamma_4 * P(c_{it} = 1), & P(c_{it} = 1) > 0,75, \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

$$i = 1, \dots, N \quad t = 2020, \dots, 2100$$

where $P(c_{it} = 1)$ – estimated probability of armed rebellion for observation i at time t .

Then economic growth can be modeled by the following equation:

$$growth_{it} = \frac{y_{it} - y_{i,t-1}}{y_{i,t-1}} * 100\%. \quad (5)$$

$$i = 1, \dots, N \quad t = 2020, \dots, 2100$$

At the same time, in terms of its demographic characteristics, our calculated inertial scenario corresponds to *reference scenario* of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), and the pessimistic scenario corresponds to the scenario of delayed achievement of the SDGs (IHME) (Vollset et al. 2020). These scenarios correspond to the scenarios for population dynamics in Sub-Saharan Africa shown in Fig. 5 below.

Based on this, the following scenarios are modeled:

1. The inertial scenario is based on the assumption that the trends of recent years will continue at the same pace in the respective countries (and in SSA as a whole).

2. The pessimistic scenario of delayed modernization in SSA cannot be ruled out as there have already been precedents when, after a period of fairly rapid social and demographic modernization (e.g., steady fertility decline, rapid expansion of modern formal education), many countries of the region experienced a noticeable slowdown or even complete fertility stall while still being in the early stages of fertility transition. Thus, Benin, Guinea, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Tanzania experienced fertility stalls when their total fertility rates were still higher than five children per woman (Kreider et al. 2009). Another research lists Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, and Tanzania as countries with rather lengthy periods of fertility stalls in 1990s (Shapiro and Gebreselassie 2008). Yet another research investigates the cases of stalls in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe and reveals fertility stalls of late 1990s – early 2000s in all those countries (Ezeh, Mberu, and Emina 2009). Thus, the attempts to save on education within the framework of structural adjustment reforms of the 1990s caused delay in educational attain-

ment which, in turn, led to remarkable slowdowns or, not infrequently, complete stalls of fertility decline (Schoumaker 2019; Zinkina and Korotayev 2017; Kebede *et al.* 2019).

3. Scenario of full achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs). When analyzing the impact of achieving the SDGs on fertility decline in Sub-Saharan countries, we rely on the calculations of IHME (Vollset *et al.* 2020).

In terms of demographic characteristics, our inertial scenario corresponds to the reference scenario by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, and the pessimistic scenario corresponds to the scenario of slow achievement of the SDGs by the Institute for Health Metrics and Assessment (*Ibid.*). These scenarios produce the following projections of population dynamics in Sub-Saharan Africa (see Fig. 4).

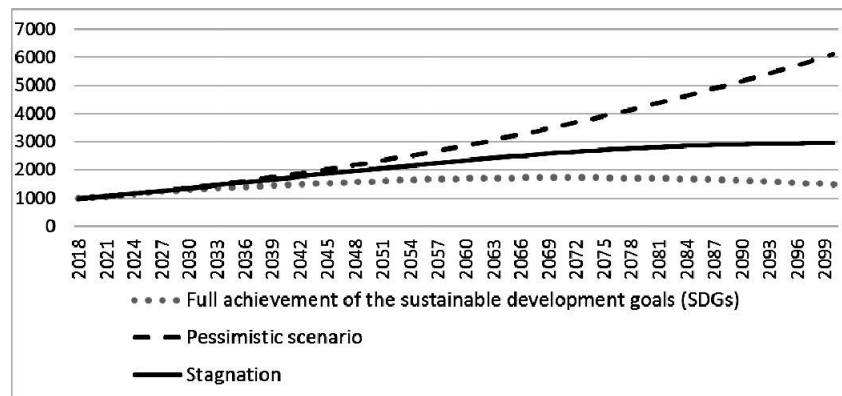


Fig. 4. Population growth scenarios (in millions) in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 21st century

Note that the pessimistic scenario (the upper black line in Fig. 5) is rather speculative. This scenario is fraught with the highest risks of socio-demographic and political-economic collapses in the near future. Inertial scenario, though less threatening, also bears serious risks of collapses, although in a noticeably more distant future. The only scenario that can secure stable development of the SSA countries withstanding the risks of sociodemographic and political-economic collapses is the scenario of rapid achievement of the SDGs.

Results

Angola

To begin with, let us consider scenarios of the risks of armed destabilization/civil wars changing over time (see Fig. 5).

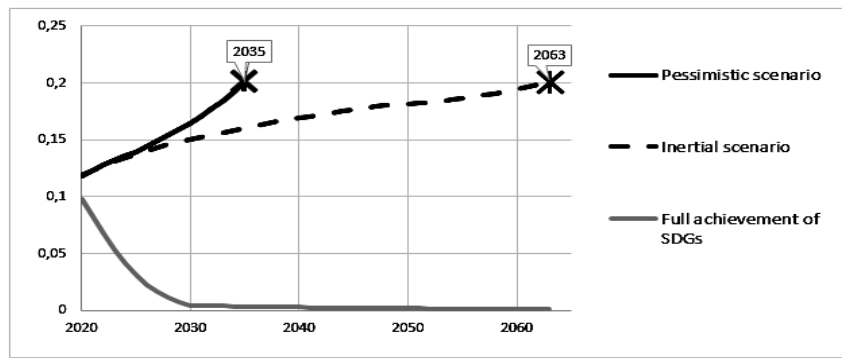


Fig. 5. Projected risks of armed destabilization/civil wars in Angola under different scenarios¹

When compared to other SSA countries analyzed in this study, Angola encounters relatively low risks of the outbreak of large-scale civil wars. If the inertial scenario is followed, noticeable risks of catastrophic civil wars in this country will appear only in the second half of this century. Only a significant delay in progressing towards the achievement of the SDGs (primarily in the spread of modern education) can actualize such risks as early as in the next decade (pessimistic scenario). Angola will be able to reach the level of modern China in per capita GDP by the late 2050s if it follows the inertial scenario, or before the mid-century under the SDG achievement scenario (see Fig. 6).

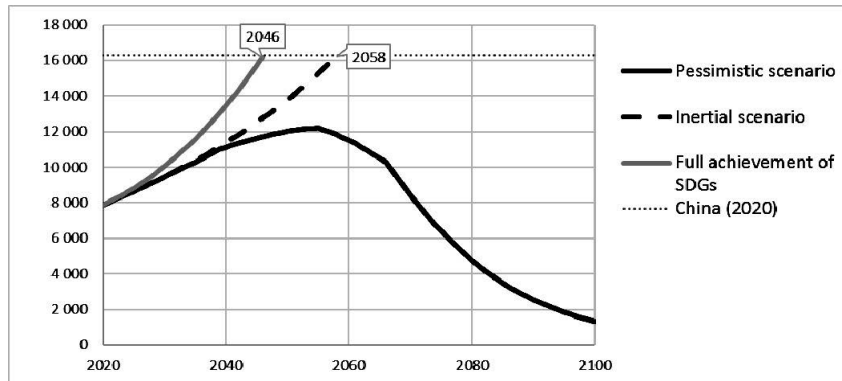


Fig. 6. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Angola

¹ In fact, here and in all the respective figures below these are just the dates when the risks reach a threshold value according to the model under a certain scenario. They should not be regarded as prophecies.

It should be noted that if progress towards the SDGs is disrupted, not only the risks of civil wars will increase in Angola, but also economic development will slow down (probably with negative economic growth rates), followed by an impoverishment of the population. However, even if this scenario is followed, per capita GDP in Angola will drop to US\$ 1,350 by 2100, still a significantly higher level than in modern Niger (US\$ 985). This shows that Angola has a comparatively solid economic base (mostly due to natural resources, such as oil and diamonds) and relatively low risks of violent destabilization and impoverishment of the population.

Tanzania

Tanzania is characterized by a noticeably higher level of risk than Angola, although it looks quite moderate compared to some other countries of SSA. Under the inertial scenario, serious risks of full-scale civil wars in this country will appear only in the 2040s. If there occurs a significant delay in reaching the SDGs in general, or the spread of formal education in particular is seriously hindered, Tanzania may face the risks of full-scale violent destabilization as early as in the 2030s (see Fig. 7).

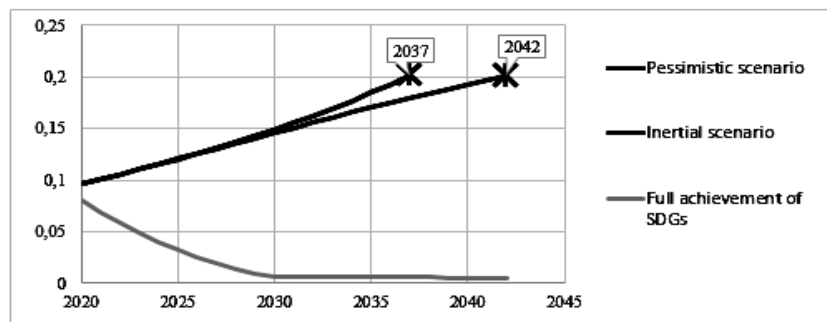


Fig. 7. Projected risks of armed destabilization/civil wars in Tanzania under different scenarios

Under the SDG Scenario, GDP per capita in Tanzania will reach the level of today's China in the 2070s. Under the inertial scenario, Tanzania will not be able to exceed the US\$ 9,000 level, and the average income levels of the population may fall at the end of the century. Under the pessimistic scenario, even if Tanzania manages to avoid a large-scale political and demographic collapse, there will be a catastrophic impoverishment of the country's population with a drop in GDP per capita below US\$ 1,000, which is less than in 2020 (see Fig. 8).

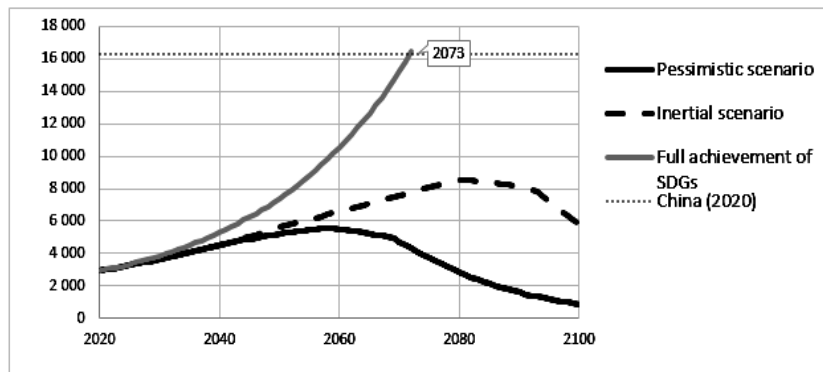


Fig. 8. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Tanzania

Uganda

The pessimistic scenario for Uganda is rather close to that of Tanzania, producing the risks of a full-scale civil war as early as in the 2030s. The inertial scenario produces such risks in the second half of the 21st century, somewhat later than in Tanzania (see Fig. 9).

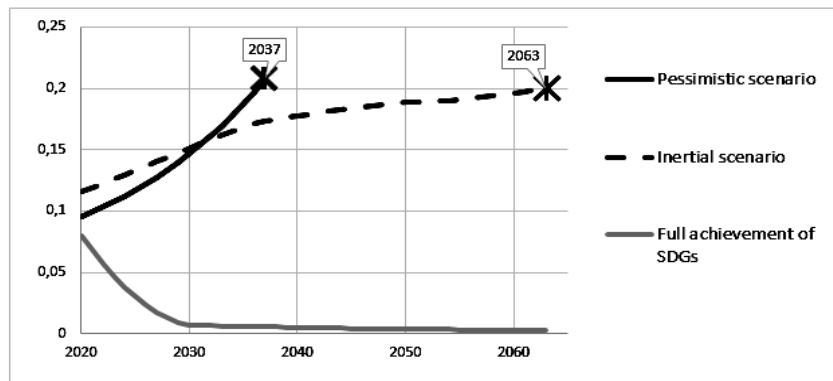


Fig. 9. Projected risks of armed revolutionary destabilization/civil wars in Uganda under different scenarios

If Uganda is able to follow the SDG scenario, it will reach the per capita GDP level of the modern China in the second half of this century. It performs slightly better under the inertial scenario than Tanzania; still, under the pessimistic scenario, it is projected to be even more impoverished, with GDP per capita falling below US\$ 500 by the end of this century (see Fig. 10).

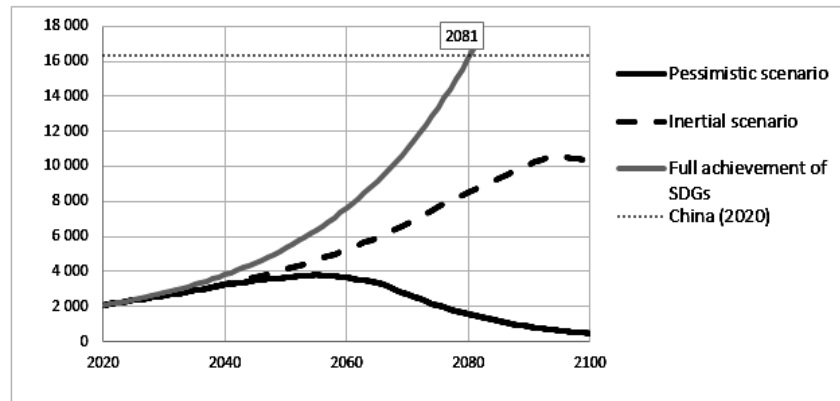


Fig. 10. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Uganda

Ethiopia

Ethiopia faces extremely high risks of armed revolutionary destabilization, full-scale civil wars, and political and demographic collapses in the very coming years even under the inertial scenario (not to mention the pessimistic one). To prevent them, a noticeable acceleration in the achievement of the SDGs is needed (see Fig. 11).

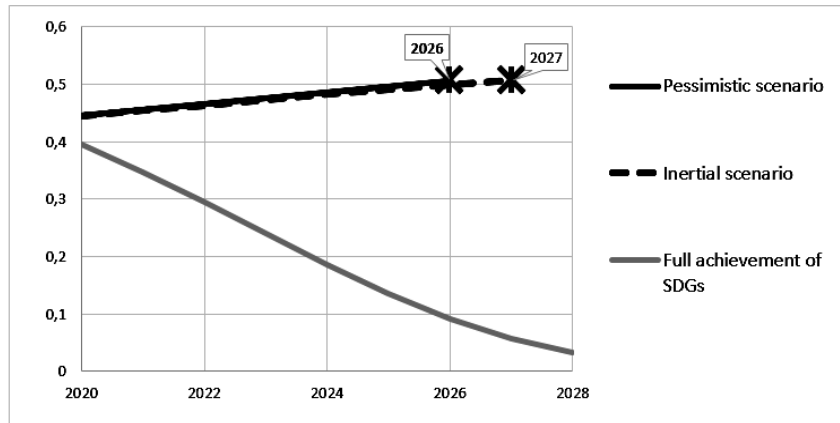


Fig. 11. Projected risks of armed revolutionary destabilization/civil wars in Ethiopia under different scenarios

Even the inertial scenario (let alone the pessimistic one) results in a significant impoverishment of the Ethiopian population in the coming decades. How-

ever, the accelerated SDG scenario could bring Ethiopia to reach the level of modern China in the second half of this century (see Fig. 12).

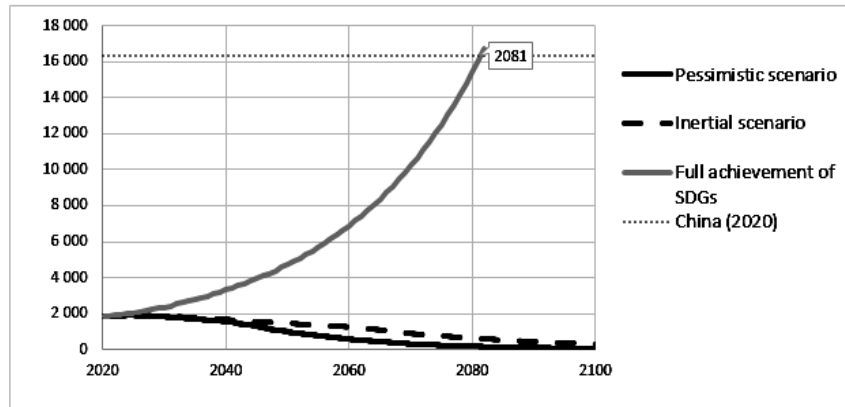


Fig. 12. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Ethiopia

Nigeria

The risks of political and demographic collapses in Nigeria are somewhat lower than in Ethiopia, but still very high, and are likely to strike in the 2030s both under the pessimistic and the inertial scenarios (see Fig. 13).

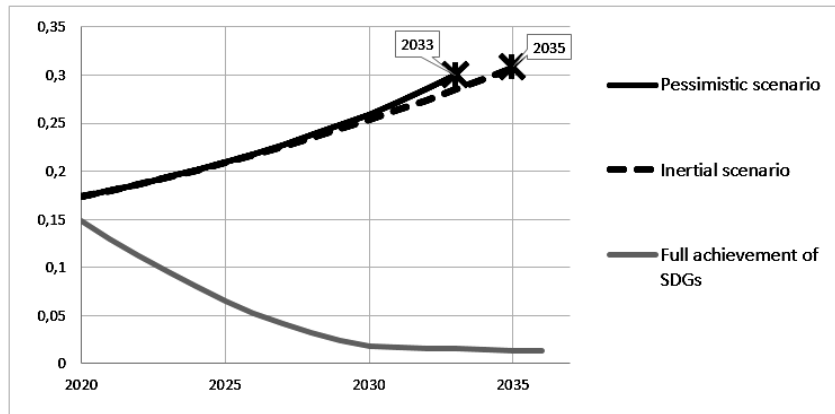


Fig. 13. Projected risks of armed revolutionary destabilization/civil wars in Nigeria under different scenarios

However, Nigeria's economic outlook looks somewhat more optimistic. According to the inertial scenario, per capita GDP growth in Nigeria may con-

tinue until the middle of the century (albeit at a rather slow pace). Under the optimistic scenario, it may approach the level of modern China by the middle of this century (see Fig. 14).

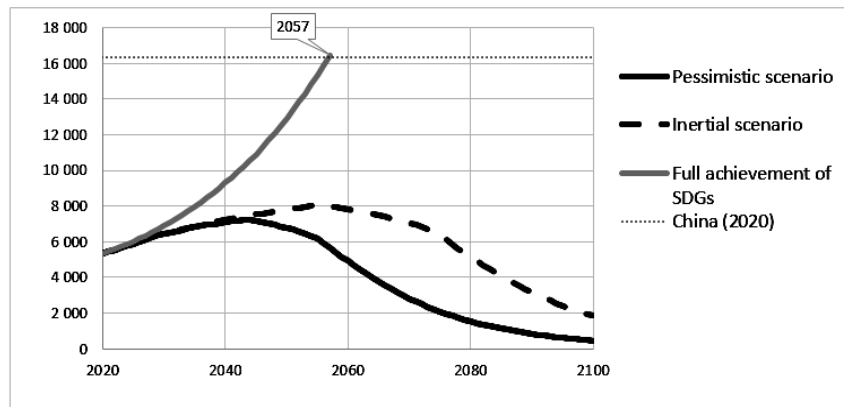


Fig. 14. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Nigeria

The Democratic Republic of Congo

The risks of full-scale civil wars are also extremely high in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as early as the 2030s and the early 2040s (see Fig. 15).

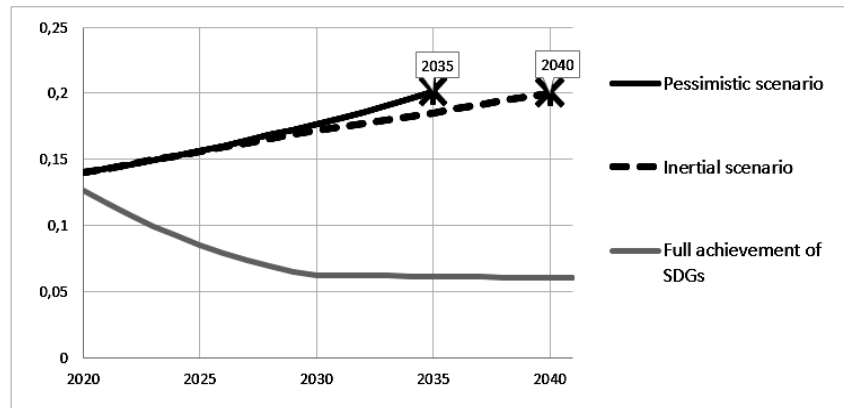


Fig. 15. Projected risks of armed revolutionary destabilization/civil wars in the DR Congo under different scenarios

At the same time, the economic prospects for the DR Congo appear to be noticeably worse than those for Nigeria. Even under the optimistic scenario, the

DR Congo will be able to reach the current GDP per capita level of China only by the very end of this century (see Fig. 16).

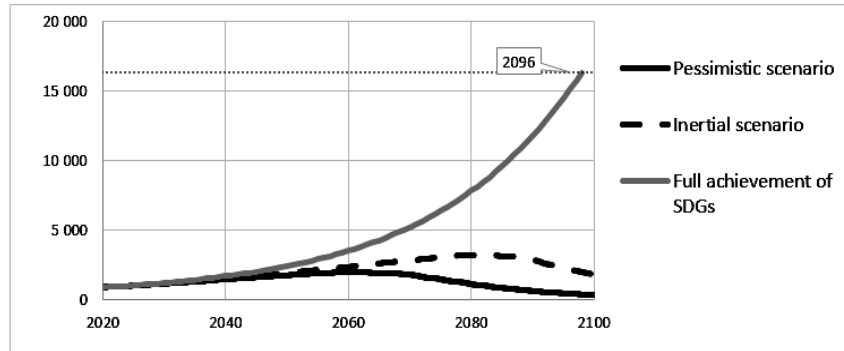


Fig. 16. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for the DR Congo

Sahel

Finally, the highest (even by the standards of Sub-Saharan Africa) risks of political and demographic collapse are observed in Sahel (Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger; see Figs 17–24).

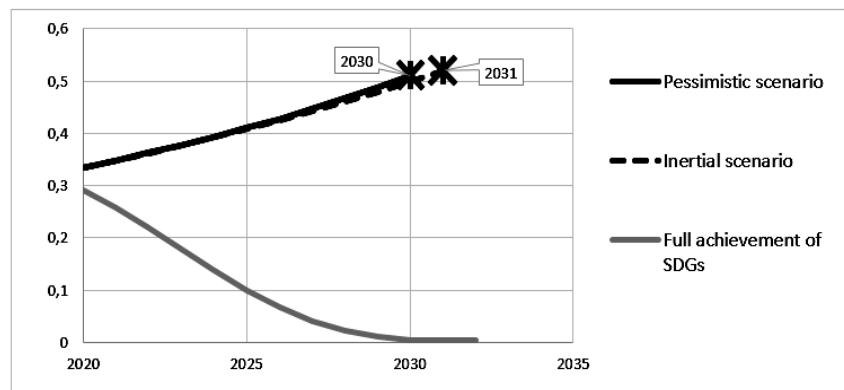


Fig. 17. Projected risks of armed revolutionary destabilization/civil wars in Chad under different scenarios

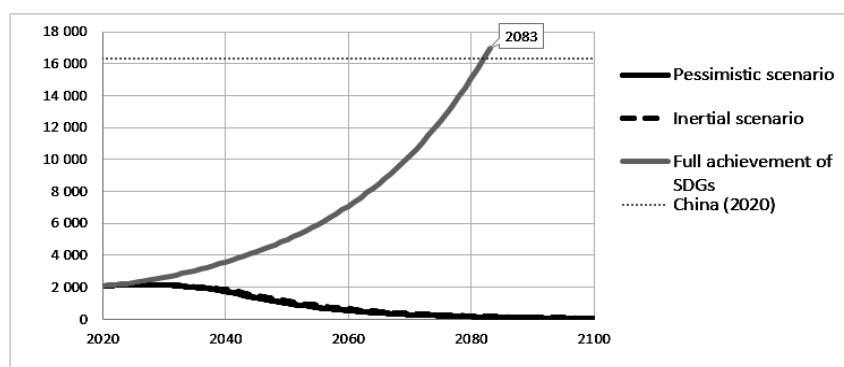


Fig. 18. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Chad

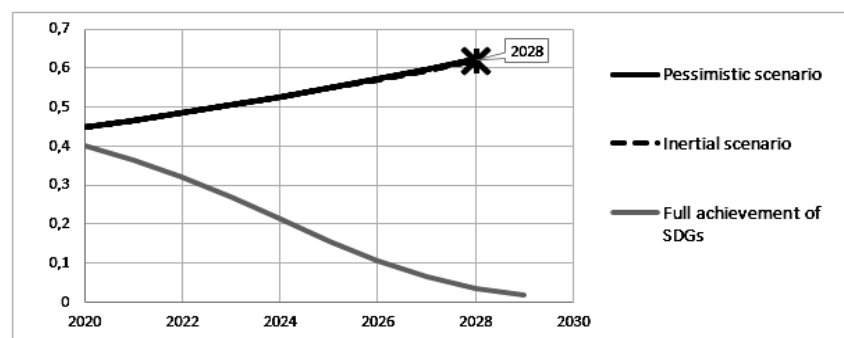


Fig. 19. Projected risks of armed revolutionary destabilization/civil wars in Niger under different scenarios

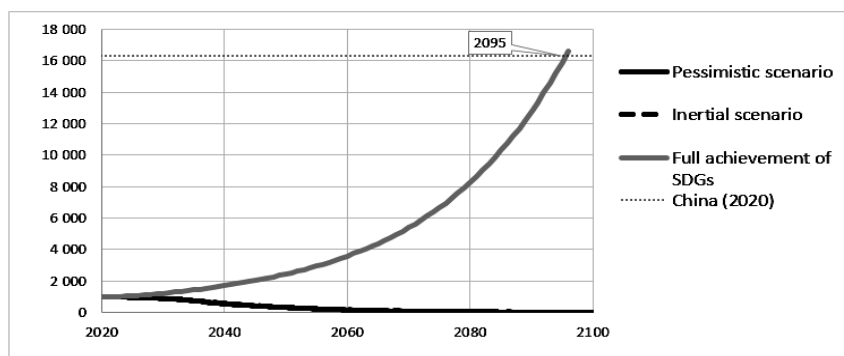


Fig. 20. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Niger

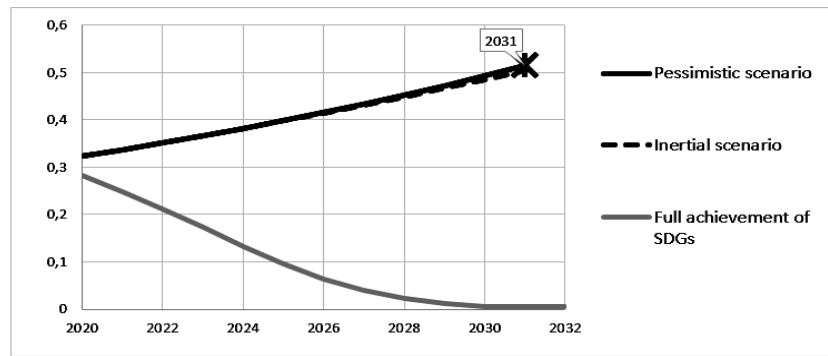


Fig. 21. Projected risks of armed revolutionary destabilization/civil wars in Mali under different scenarios

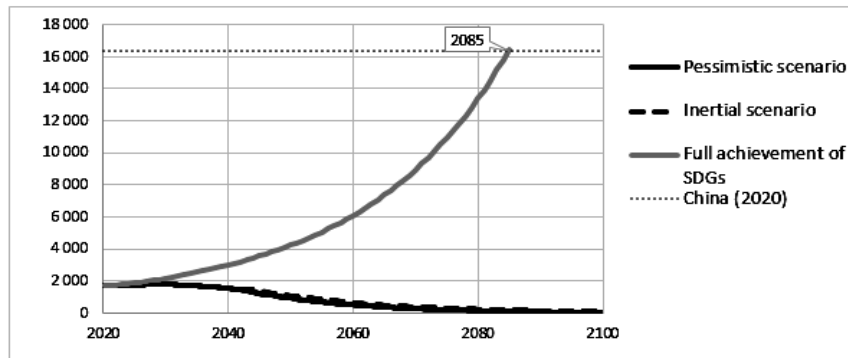


Fig. 22. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Mali

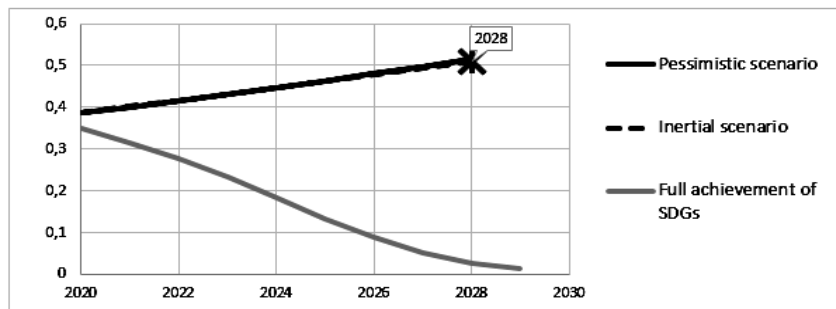


Fig. 23. Projected risks of armed revolutionary destabilization/civil wars in Burkina Faso under different scenarios

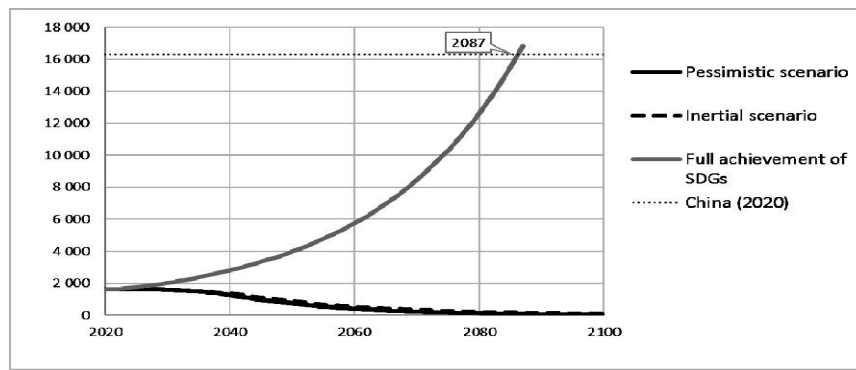


Fig. 24. Scenarios of per capita GDP dynamics for Burkina Faso

These four Sahelian countries are characterized by: (1) a negligible difference between the inertial and the pessimistic scenarios; (2) extremely high risks of full-scale civil wars in the very near future (in the late 2020s – early 2030s); and (3) reaching the level of middle-income countries only by the end of this century, even under the most optimistic scenario.

Discussion

Note that we refrain from forecasting further economic development of SSA countries after reaching the level of modern China, since there are reasons to expect that, after this, the development of the countries of SSA will most likely slow down due to the effect of the middle income trap (on the middle-income trap, see, *e.g.*, Glawe and Wagner 2016; Kharas and Kohli 2011; Matsuyama 2008; Azariadis and Stachurski 2005). Thus, for modeling the further development of the countries of SSA, the mathematical model described in the ‘Methods’ section is no longer sufficient.

Also, note that in the current paper we confine our attention to only two groups of factors of sociopolitical turbulence and unrest – these are the dynamics of GDP per capita and structural demographic factors. However, this does not rule out the possible impact of other factors. Below we will discuss some of the factors that, coupled with the demographic dynamics described above, can either exacerbate or mitigate the risks that the Sub-Saharan countries are likely to encounter in the near or more distant future.

Angola faces relatively low risks of destabilization caused by the demographic factors. However, these risks can become more threatening against the background of the existing ethnic divisions within the population of this country, as well as high economic inequality, with Gini index reaching 0.51 in 2018 and showing no signs of decline since 2000 (World Bank 2022b). Also, Angola has experienced serious violent conflicts in its rather recent history, first and

foremost, the 26-year-long Angolan Civil War (1975 – 2002) with a death toll up to 800,000 and over one million displaced (Malaquias 2001; Frynas and Wood 2001), which can also influence its prospects of retaining political stability.

Inequality is also high in Tanzania (Gini index reached 40.5 in 2018 [World Bank 2022b]). Among other factors that can influence sociopolitical stability in Tanzania is the acceleration of urbanization, which may lead to Tanzanian economy failing to produce enough new jobs for large groups of predominantly young rural population migrating to the cities (Korotayev and Zinkina 2015; Korotayev *et al.* 2011, 2022). These factors will create additional strain on the country's stability, making the inertial development scenario even more risk-prone. The pessimistic scenario is particularly threatening in Tanzania, as this country has already experienced a drop in the spread of formal education when school fees were introduced in the 1990s, hindering fertility decline. If this experience repeats, the extreme risks of political and demographic collapses will be looming over Tanzania.

Uganda, another country of the region with high inequality (Gini at 42.7 in 2019 [World Bank 2022b]), with respect to urbanization fell behind even other SSA countries. In 2020, only a quarter of its population lived in cities. So, the risks that an acceleration in urbanization may bring are even higher here than in Tanzania. If, on the other hand, rural-urban migration does not accelerate, it may actualize the risks of a Malthusian-type instability, as most rural residents are still employed in low-productivity subsistence agriculture. The high GDP growth rates in Uganda have largely stemmed from the rocketing growth of some particular highly productive non-agricultural sectors. However, robust economic growth has changed little for the majority of Ugandan population that is engaged in low-productivity subsistence agriculture.

Ethiopia presents yet another example of an under-urbanized African country: in 2020 only 22 % of the population resided in cities. The picture of conflict risks related to demographic and economic factors would be flawed without taking into account the ethnic tensions and the ongoing conflicts in many regions of Ethiopia, because of which in 2018 this country

had the highest number of new internal displacements associated with conflict worldwide. Inter-ethnic violence that year caused almost 2.9 million new displacements, four times the figure for 2017 ... The major hotspot regions in the country for the past year and a half include the north-eastern, north-western and western Amhara Region; several woredas in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region; western, southern and central Oromia; bordering areas between Oromia and Somali Region; and eastern and north-eastern parts of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (Yusuf 2019: 3–4).

Currently, Ethiopia is experiencing a heated internal conflict, as the tensions with the leadership of Tigray escalated to a military confrontation.

The economic situation of Nigeria depends rather heavily on oil production and, consequently, on the global oil prices (Ugbomeh and Atubi 2010). Apart from the ethnic divisions, there is also a strong division between the predominantly Muslim population of the northern regions of the country and the predominantly Christian population of its southern regions (and frequent conflicts between the Muslim Fulani herdsmen and the Christian peasants). The South of Nigeria is significantly more modernized than its North in many aspects, especially demographic (thus, total fertility rates vary from 5.8 – 7.3 children per woman in the North to 3.4–5.0 in the South; infant mortality ranges in between 164–262 per 1,000 live birth in most regions of the North to 30–119 in the South [NPC and ICF 2019]) and social (spread of education) (Imam 2012). Separatist agitations are also acute in Nigeria (Aghedo 2017; Ayomola and Oketokun 2021). All in all, the structural demographic risks are highly relevant to the Nigerian situation, but the projected threats to the development of this country are in no way limited to these factors.

As for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, historical experience provides few reasons for optimism, as the DRC has been torn by violent ethnic and land conflicts, including, but not limited to, the First and Second Congo Wars, as well as a number of rebel movements, some of which are still ongoing (the largest of them being Kivu and Ituri conflicts). These conflicts have engendered extreme levels of crime and instability, which will undoubtedly hinder the achievement of SDGs. At the same time, if the country fails to achieve SDGs, the impact of demographic risks and impoverishment risks will be particularly severe against the background of the existing tensions.

As noted above, for the Sahelian countries the inertial scenario is hardly distinguishable from the pessimistic scenario. This is largely due to the fact that these four countries rank lowest in the global ranking of countries in terms of educational attainment (see Fig. 25)

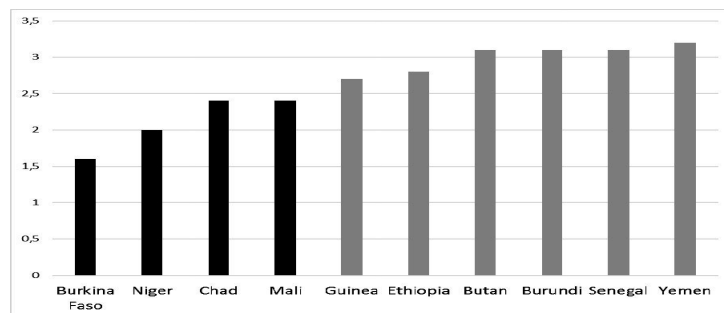


Fig. 25. Ten countries in the world with the lowest average years of schooling in 2018. The G5 Sahel countries are marked with black

Source: Korotayev and Ustyuzhanin 2021, based on UNDP data.

Meanwhile, as mentioned above, the level of formal education is a very important factor lowering the chances of revolutionary actions in a certain country taking an armed form. In other words, armed revolutionary uprisings are more likely in countries with a high proportion of illiterate or semi-literate population (Collier 2004; Barakat and Urdal 2009; Grinin and Korotayev 2009, 2014, 2016, 2022; Machado *et al.* 2011; Brancati 2014; Butcher and Svensson 2016; Korotayev, Bilyuga, and Shishkina 2017, 2018; Korotayev, Sawyer *et al.* 2020; Korotayev, Sawyer, and Romanov 2021; Kostelka and Rovny 2019; Sawyer and Korotayev 2021; Ustyuzhanin *et al.* 2022), which is exactly the case in the Sahel countries.

It is especially sad that, during the internal conflicts, military formations of Islamist radicals consciously choose schools, teachers, and students as their targets. Their behavior is not random. Most often, they aim at those who they perceive as their conscious and dangerous enemies. Alternatively or additively, rebel military commanders seek to limit access to formal education and to depress the size of the educated class. For example, Boko Haram², one of the most important radical Islamist groups of West Africa, used as its name the slogan of fighting the spread of modern education (see, *e.g.*, Walker 2012). In 2020 Islamist militant groups chose schools as important targets for their attacks. Effectively, 126 attacks and armed threats against teachers, students, and schools by jihadist groups have been reported. ‘Consequently, the Burkinabe government has closed around 2.5 thousand schools, depriving about 350 hundred thousand students of education’ (Lyammouri 2020: 2–3).

Thus, a dangerous negative feedback loop is forming in the Sahel, as the high proportion of population with no modern education stimulates the increase of armed violent activity, which, in turn, hinders the spread of education. This spiral of deficiencies not only perpetuates violence, but also depresses and even reverses fertility decline thus replicating the situation of the 1990s. The consequences of such dynamics are out of scope of this paper, but definitely deserve more attention in further research, as an increase in population growth will logically follow, hindering economic growth and exacerbating ‘youth bulges’, which will further feed armed rebellions and jeopardize the prospects of development. The countries of the Sahel need to get out of this trap as soon as possible, which, apparently, is not feasible without structural socio-economic reforms and increased assistance by the world community.

Instead of a Conclusion. Africa: Geopolitical and World-System Aspects and Opportunities of Russia

In the last section of the article, we will formulate our vision and some forecasts regarding: 1) the prospects for the development of the African continent in the future due to its rapid development and increasing role in the World

² The terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation.

System; 2) geopolitical rivalry between the leading powers in Africa now and in the future; 3) directions and opportunities for the development of Russian-African relations (including in connection with the NWO).

Africa: Problems and Prospects

The African region has 54 states, very different in terms of political, economic, demographic and other indicators. Nevertheless, these countries have a lot in common, which makes it possible to speak of them as a certain unity. To use the cliché of the Soviet era, modern Africa is a continent of colossal contrasts, while the contrasts that catch the eye of a tourist are just the tip of the iceberg. Much has been said above about the powerful growth of population and urbanization. But rapid development is taking place in many areas. This is, in particular, the steady growth of agriculture, in which the growth rate of productivity outstrips the growth rate of population, the rise of industry, especially mining, the development of many sectors of the economy, national and cultural construction, the rise of education and culture, *etc.* In general, this development means the modernization of all aspects of life, but with very different rates of change. Therefore, the growth of higher education coexists with a large number of illiterates, European culture in cities with wild practices of pre-colonial times (like female circumcision), intensive agriculture with transhumance, modern business with subsistence farming, *etc.*

As a result, a very peculiar and contradictory symbiosis is created in African countries, which leads to many consequences and results. In the most general terms, one can speak about two consequences. On the one hand, the combination of archaic and modern features, active and diverse modernization processes and other factors lead to destabilization, including revolutions, separatism, terrorism, coups, civil wars, *etc.* (about the number of only revolutionary events in Africa see Goldstone *et al.* 2022; Ustyuzhanin *et al.* 2021). In particular, we believe that in the 21st century (perhaps, already in its first half), it is Africa that will be the continent where the largest number of revolutions, conflicts, and extremism explosions will occur, due to the fact that African countries are still in the process (often in the initial phases) of modernization, urbanization, the formation of ethno-political nations and the development of statehood.³

We are predicting that Africa will become the most troubled World System continent in the future (*e.g.*, Grinin 2020b, 2022a). The process of rapid modernization in any state creates an increased risk of destabilization (Grinin 2013;

³ See, *e.g.*, Grinin 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d; Korotayev, Grinin *et al.* 2017, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Korotayev, Bilyuga, and Shishkina 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Korotayev, Zinkina *et al.* 2011; Korotayev, Issaev *et al.* 2015; Grinin 2012, 2013, 2022; Korotayev, Malkov, and Grinin 2014; Korotayev, Vaskin, and Bilyuga 2017; Slinko *et al.* 2017; Korotayev, Vaskin, Bilyuga, and Ilyin 2018; Vaskin *et al.* 2018; Korotayev and Shishkina 2020; Korotayev, Vaskin, and Tsirel 2021; Slav *et al.* 2021.

see also Ustyuzhanin *et al.* 2022, 2023), while in Africa the risk increases greatly.⁴ Of course, it is an extremely important task, both for the governments of these countries and for the world community, including Russia, to help minimize destabilization processes, including to monitor the fulfillment of certain conditions and rules that contribute to it (see, *e.g.*, Grinin 2022b; Korotayev *et al.* 2022). There is a lot of speculation on how to mitigate the situation in certain countries. Nevertheless, in African conditions, many destabilizing phenomena cannot be avoided.

But, we believe that many African societies are on the path to a great future, and Africa as a whole is the continent of the future, where for a long time there will be strong dynamics of development and growth in various aspects, including economic processes important for the world, such as the extraction of natural resources, investments related, for example, to the relocation of production there, the expansion of opportunities for remote work of Africans in the economies of developed countries (see below), *etc.*

In a word, the development of Africa is full of contradictions, possible conflicts, but there is a powerful dynamic and potential that are already exhausted in the Western world. Africa is and will continue to contribute increasingly to the process of pulling the third world closer to the first, which has been called the Great Convergence (Grinin and Korotayev 2015, 2016).

We believe that the greater Africa's role, the more it will be influenced by world-system processes (and vice versa, the stronger Africa's influence on the world-system [on the process of reconfiguration of the World-System and its impact on certain regions, see Grinin and Korotayev 2012, 2015; Grinin 2022a, 2022b]). Objectively, the world community faces an important task – to effectively use the African resources to solve global problems. However, this challenge, as well as the opportunities for Africa in the future, is not sufficiently recognized. Meanwhile, the growing demographic resource of the Black Continent, in addition to the urgent problems, in the world-system aspect can contribute to the development of regions with an elderly population. With the rapid expansion of opportunities for remote work, more Africans will be connected with economically developed countries. Attracting educated African youth to remote work in the global North is a project for decades that will simultaneously alleviate the problem of labor shortages in the Western world and China, and may be one of the ways to reduce unemployment in Africa, raise living standards in these countries and bring together European and African cultures.⁵ The young and growing populations in Africa in the future will also become a critical resource for the education systems of developed countries that suffer from a

⁴ On the rise of Africa in the process of modernization, as well as its revolutionary activity, see Grinin 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2021a, 2021b; Grinin 2022b.

⁵ There are also possible ways of convergence of European pension systems with the economies of African countries (for more details see Grinin and Korotayev 2016).

lack of their own youth. Already today, a large number of African students study at European, American and Asian universities, a large number of specialists from Africa work in one way or another for these economies.

Rivalry for Africa

Since, as mentioned above, the importance of Africa for the World System and individual major powers will grow, competition for its markets, resources, and political support will also intensify. Moreover, the faster Africa develops, the more active and sharper will be the geopolitical struggle for influence in African countries and in Africa as a whole. In the history of the last 150 years, there have been three periods when the struggle of the great and big powers for Africa has sharply intensified. The first began sometime in the 1880s and continued until the First World War. It was a time of rapid colonial conquests on the African continent. The second period began after the liberation of the African colonies in the 1960s and was accompanied by an active confrontation between the USA and the USSR, during which the superpowers sought to lure the young countries of Asia and Africa to their side. But after the collapse of the USSR, interest in Africa in the West fell sharply. Since the 2010s, the third stage of the intensification of the struggle of major powers for influence in Africa has begun. On the part of the West, it was spurred on by the activation there, first of China, and then of Russia.⁶ At present, economic interest is in the first place, but for the warring parties it has again become important to win over to their side, or at least ensure the formal or de facto neutrality of even insignificant countries.

We can formulate some reasons why there is competition for influence on the countries of Africa:

1. This is a very large sales market, so exporters of various goods and services are competing for it.
2. Among these goods, weapons occupy a special place, and the African market is one of the most growing in this respect. And against this background, the geopolitical struggle of the largest suppliers of weapons such as the USA, China, Russia, France, Great Britain, Israel, *etc.* is escalating. It is clear that where weapons are, there is instability.
3. Africa is also a supplier of many goods and minerals, some of which are strategic raw materials and have almost no alternative sources of supply. The importance of African oil and gas is also growing.⁷

⁶ On the geopolitical rivalry of major powers on the African continent see Grinin 2020c, 2021a; Grinin and Korotayev 2022.

⁷ Africa ranks first in the world in reserves of manganese, chromites, bauxites, gold, platinoids, cobalt, vanadium, diamonds, phosphorites, fluorite; second in reserves of copper, asbestos, uranium, antimony, beryllium, graphite; third in reserves of oil, gas, mercury, iron ore; there are also significant reserves of ores of titanium, nickel, bismuth, lithium, tantalum, niobium, tin, tungsten, precious stones, *etc.* (Filatov 2012).

4. Separately, it is worth noting that some African countries (in particular, the DRC) are rich in rare earth metals and other important components of the so-called green energy transition. The need for these minerals can activate foreign capital and accelerate the industrial development of Africa. This will cause an increase in interest in Africa among the leading geopolitical and economic players with all the pluses and minuses of their active penetration into this continent.

5. Military cooperation (including the possibility of establishing military bases), the need to fight terrorism, the voice of African states in the international arena, and so on, are also important. With the beginning of the SMO, competition in this direction intensifies (see, *e.g.*, Yermolov 2022; Inosmi 2023). Each side needs as many allies and trump cards as possible. Therefore, Washington and Moscow, as well as Beijing, are actively competing for the support of Africa (Ikhdzhan 2023). The West has not yet had much success in this direction, but is making big plans (see below).

The rivalry between major powers has a dual effect for Africa: on the one hand, it can be a potential source of instability, as competitors support different political forces, corruption is growing, and so on. But, on the other hand, it also has positive aspects, as the major powers in one way or another provide assistance and make investments in African countries, give impetus to the modernization of their armies, management structures and technologies.⁸

The rivalry for influence over the resource-rich states of the region between the US and China, Russia, France, the UK, and other players is constantly intensifying. It includes all new countries.⁹ With the development of exploration work, it will naturally increase.

In the most recent years, the rivalry between Western countries in general, on the one hand, and China, on the other, has become truly global.¹⁰ In particular, at the G7 meeting in July 2021, the seven leading Western countries proposed, according to their statement, the best alternative to the Chinese One Belt, One Road program, which was actively implemented not only in Asia, but

⁸ Most recently, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan announced that low-income countries (most African countries) have been expanding access to concessional, high-quality financing, and that serious efforts are being made to close the infrastructure gap in such countries in some program of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment – PGII, which allegedly mobilizes hundreds of billions of dollars to finance energy, physical and digital infrastructure between now and the end of the decade. The United States does not have the declared resources for this, but the Africans can obviously get some advantages.

⁹ In particular, India (Gulevich 2019a), Turkey (Isaev 2018), Italy (Gulevich 2019b) have interests in Africa. For the interests of Japan, Brazil and other countries, see Deutsch 2020.

¹⁰ One of the places of rivalry is the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the largest state, very rich in today's scarce minerals (including rare earth metals), in which, however, civil wars are actually going on. Now the authorities and the public of this country are discussing the pros and cons of the Western and Chinese programs for Africa (see, *e.g.*, Mwadi Makengo *et al.* 2023).

also in Africa, although now somewhere it is bogged down. But China is also actively investing in African countries through bilateral agreements. The Western Seven's program is called Build Back Better World (B3W). And they promised no less than US\$ 40 trillion by 2035 for infrastructure projects in low-income countries (and most of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa). It is clear that the actual amount of investment will be much less, but in any case, African countries may be the winners.

Let us consider now the policy of individual powers in Africa. There is a lot of talk about China's growing influence in Africa (Deych 2020). The need for resources contributed to the rapid growth of China's trade with Africa – from US\$ 11 billion in 2000 to US\$ 200 billion in 2012 (*Idem* 2013) and almost US\$ 300 billion in 2022. But this is mainly economic influence (investment, equity participation in mining, modernization of infrastructure and ports, loans, growing debt dependence of countries on China). However, it is rapidly transforming into a geo-economic one. Thus, 37 out of 54 African countries have signed an agreement with China under the One Belt, One Road project.

French policy on the African continent is largely characterized by continuity (*i.e.*, including the era of colonialism) and dates back to the reign of President Charles de Gaulle, who formulated the concept of 'Françafrique' (Françafrique). This strategy assumed that France, despite the abandonment of the colonies, should retain the exclusive right to develop African resources and markets. But, of course, politics is being modernized in connection with tougher competition with other powers. At the same time, over the past ten to twelve years, France has been increasingly cooperating with other players, including the UK and China.

The United States, taking into account the activity of China and Russia, was also forced to intensify its attention to Tropical Africa, although North Africa and Sudan were constantly in their field of activity. With regard to the United States, one can note that in the fight against competitors in certain countries, the tried and tested American arsenal of means is used: the struggle for the 'democratization' of the country and against human rights violations, which usually ends in the weakening of the regime and internal destabilization (see Grinin 2020a; Mirzayan 2020; Filatov 2012) or support for the separatists (for more details see Grinin 2020a, 2020b). Thus, both in the Middle East and in Africa, one of the constant lines of the foreign (both open and covert) US policy is to weaken or destroy strong regimes under various pretexts (see above). At the same time, each case of the overthrow of a stable regime creates a source of destabilization that affects the surrounding and even distant countries for a long time. This leads to very high costs, destabilization, humanitarian catastrophes, rampant terrorism, and so on. Thus, in particular, the decade-long explosion of terrorism in the Sahel explosion of terrorism in the Sahel, which has

been going on for a decade, spreading to other regions of Africa, did not accidentally begin in 2012. It was caused precisely by the West's policy towards Libya, Syria and Iraq. Indeed, in 2011, the Gaddafi regime in Libya was destroyed, and as a result of the civil war in Syria and the events in Iraq (the chaos which began with the overthrow and assassination of Saddam Hussein), the 'Islamic State' (the terrorist organization banned in Russia). Another example is Sudan, which has been undermined by the United States for decades. Omar al-Bashir has been in power in Sudan since 1993 and has strengthened the Islamist regime in the country (on this regime see Grinin 2018; Grinin and Korotayev 2019). The United States accused him of supporting terrorism. The US actively supported the rebels in South Sudan until they achieved its secession. In 2019, the Bashir regime fell as a result of a revolution and a military coup, and he himself was arrested. There is an opinion that both the overthrow of Bashir and the current events (*i.e.*, the civil war) are to some extent the work of the United States. In 2023, they are likely seeking to disrupt the project of a Russian naval base on the Red Sea (see Rybar 2023).¹¹ The civil war between the military formations of the country, which began in April 2023, may prevent this. However, Russia, having connections with both sides of the conflict, as well as with the leaderships of countries that now stand on opposite sides of the barricades, could well play the role of a mediator in the negotiations (*Ibid.*).

Currently, the United States is providing assistance to the countries of the Sahel zone against radical Islamist terrorists (see below about them). But it can be assumed that if strong and capable regimes are ever established in the countries of the Sahel, the US position may become the opposite: instead of supporting them, they will seek to undermine these regimes.

As already mentioned, competition offers Africa a number of advantages. Although each African country may have its own interests, the general vector of change is that the countries of the Black Continent are striving for a multi-vector policy and economic cooperation. They realize their growing importance and want to be able to choose partners. They refuse to focus only on Western countries, both because of the dissatisfaction of their actions and increasing self-consciousness of Africans. Therefore, while maintaining relations with their former mother countries, many states of the Black Continent are shifting their foreign policy vector towards Asian countries (see, *e.g.*, Denisova and Kostelyanets 2019). Under these conditions, Russia has the opportunity to develop relations with African states not only in bilateral, but also in multilateral formats (see, *e.g.*, Denisova 2018).

¹¹ Of course, neighbouring countries, in particular Ethiopia, may be interested in the current conflict in Sudan, which will try to weaken the forces loyal to Egypt in Sudan and put pressure on Cairo, which opposes the launch of the Ethiopian dam on the Blue Nile (see Rybar 2023).

Russia and Africa

Currently, African states are playing an increasingly important role in world politics and economy, taking an active part in solving global issues.¹² The growing importance of African countries makes the development of diverse cooperation between the Russian Federation and African countries relevant. However, the development of Russia's relations both in North Africa and in sub-Saharan Africa at the beginning of the 21st century traditionally faced opposition from both domestic political groups and global players represented by the US, the EU, and to some extent China. Therefore, already at the end of the 2010s, the President of Russia formulated the task of resuming close cooperation between Russia and the countries of Africa. The 2016 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation affirms the need to expand cooperation with African states in a number of areas. Since 2022, as you know, Russia has faced unprecedented pressure from Western sanctions. The current geopolitical situation associated with the global confrontation between Russia and Western countries requires adjustment of the mechanisms of Russian-African interaction. At present, Russia faces the task of forming a socio-political and economic agenda that would clarify Russia's strategy towards African countries. This is all the more important given the growing competition for influence in African countries.

Russia has important advantages in Africa. In particular, the absence of the legacy of colonialism reduces the negative perception of Russia in the eyes of Africans, while positive memories of Soviet assistance in a number of countries, on the contrary, increase the positive attitude towards the Russian Federation. It is also very important that Russia, unlike the US and Europe, does not impose either democracy, or green energy, or LGBT¹³, or other Western 'values' that the African population does not want to adopt. We think that a significant advantage of the Russian Federation is that our country respects sovereignty and does not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of countries, does not try to change their regime, as the United States often does. Therefore, Russia is increasingly trusted. The current situation in Africa, in particular the fact that Europe has been reducing its interests in Africa for a long time, and even now it has not fully intensified, gives Russia opportunities for a more productive African policy. In the economic aspect, there are also some important advantages. The growing demand of African countries for grain and other food products opens up a window of opportunity for Russia as a major exporter, both in terms of long-term supplies and opening the Russian market for African products. But

¹² Let us take a recent example of African activity. The Organization of African Unity and individual African countries even try to act as a mediator outside the African continent, in particular, they offer their mediation in the Ukrainian conflict (see, *e.g.*, Ollivier and Mbabazi 2023).

¹³ The international LGBT social movement is banned on the territory of the Russian Federation.

it certainly increases the competition between Russia and Western countries in Africa.

Many African countries that are suspicious of the West are impressed that the Russian Federation is now actively opposing the West and the United States. In this regard, they sympathize with the Russian Federation, which withstands numerous sanctions and in some cases show solidarity with it. SMO, as is known, in many respects has split the World-System precisely along the line between the 'developed' countries and the developing world. For developing countries, the conflict in Ukraine is linked to the future of Europe only, not to the future of the world order, and is seen by them as a distraction from the more pressing global issues of our time (Menon 2023). Russia has a long experience of cooperation with a number of countries, in particular in North Africa, and accordingly seeks to transfer this experience to other regions of Africa.¹⁴

The possibilities for developing relations with African countries are wide and varied (of course, having great features for each specific country), in particular:

- relations connected with the expansion of mutual trade. There are great prospects here, taking into account both long-term relations and the situation under sanctions, when the urgent need to replace partners acts as a driver for expanding trade (by the way, a number of African countries successfully and profitably mediate in the resale of Russian oil and other goods, as well as grey imports to the Russian Federation). This can help to open up new markets for Russian goods, select import substitutes for some important items, which will become a new important growth point for the entire Russian economy.¹⁵

- Other economic relations: Russian investments in the development of minerals, in the energy sector, road construction, information technology, communications, *etc.*¹⁶

- Military-technical cooperation (purchase of Russian weapons and their maintenance, training of military specialists, direct military cooperation, as, *e.g.*, in Libya, *etc.*).

¹⁴ The priorities of Russia's foreign economic strategy in northern Africa are: exploration of mineral resources; acquisition of gas, oil, uranium and bauxite assets; construction of energy facilities, railways; the establishment of Russian trading houses for the promotion and maintenance of Russian engineering products; participation of Russian companies in the privatization of industrial assets. In all these areas, groundwork has been laid or is being formed for the implementation of the planned cooperation projects. However, their implementation requires coordinated, unprecedented efforts by the partners (Volkov and Tkachenko 2019; see also Volkov 2020).

¹⁵ As noted by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, in the new conditions, Russia and African countries are working to ensure uninterrupted logistics and establish financial settlement systems protected from outside interference (Izvestiya 2022).

¹⁶ Thus, the Russian competency map for Africa includes 39 products that are grouped into seven competencies: medicine, subsoil use, digital state, education, transport infrastructure, energy, agriculture (Summitafrica 2023).

- In some cases, the geopolitical interests of Russia (as in the case of the naval base in Sudan described above).
- Mutual actions in the international arena, including important joint declarations (*e.g.*, the declaration adopted at the first Russia–Africa forum in 2019).
- Cooperation in the humanitarian sectors (medicine, in view of a possible new pandemic, culture, science, education, *etc.*).
- Exchange of experience of Russia and the countries of the continent in the preservation of the environment, biodiversity, *etc.*
- Determination of the list of potential risks of interaction between Russia and African countries.

Finally, Russia's assistance to the Sahel countries (*e.g.*, the Central African Republic, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso) in fighting the terrorist threat with the help of PMC 'Wagner' is worth mentioning separately. The Russian Federation is well aware of the amount of threat the Islamists pose. As already mentioned, many countries in Africa (and their number, unfortunately, is growing) are under constant attack by Islamist radical terrorists. At the same time, it should be clearly understood that these are not just bandits and robbers, but revolutionary partisans who seek to change the political regime and the general way of life in countries in the manner of old-mode Islam, taking a model from the ever-memorable and banned in the Russian Federation ISIS (Islamic States in Syria and Iraq), to which many of these organizations swear allegiance (for more details see Grinin 2020; Grinin and Grinin 2022). In addition, and this, we think is, perhaps the greatest danger – they have a great influence on young people who are radicalized (*Ibid.*), also because many young people prefer the leather outfit and motorcycle of a terrorist to the fate of a shepherd or a peasant. It should be noted that Russian attempts to participate in counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel and other sub-Saharan countries are facing serious opposition from the West.

Thus, one can predict a fairly stable development of Russian-African relations in various areas, an increase in the volume of foreign trade, investment, mutually beneficial projects and cultural relations. The Russian Federation has the potential to become an important, and in some cases the most important partner for many African countries, and on the contrary, Africa will become an increasingly important partner and counterparty of Russia for decades to come. And this is extremely important in the context of the inevitable increase in the role of Africa in the world. Using the words of President of Russia Vladimir Putin, one can say that the development and strengthening of mutually beneficial ties with African countries and their integration associations will be among the increasingly important Russian foreign policy priorities.

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Appendix

In this section we provide the description of training dataset and estimated coefficients of the models.

Firstly, the risk of violent destabilization in Africa were modeled (general specification of the model is presented in Methods section). The dependent variable was taken from NAVCO 1.3 data and UPSALA data by merging these datasets. The Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) 1.3 data project (Chenoweth and Shay 2020) identifies 622 maximalist/revolutionary campaigns that occurred between 1900 and 2019. These data combine numerous instances of violent and nonviolent maximalist/revolutionary campaigns with different goals. However, we are interested in another variable (which is dependent in this paper) provided by Chenoweth and Shay – when violent/unarmed revolution occurred. Thus, it is a binary variable, where ‘1’ is a violent/armed revolutionary uprising/campaign and ‘0’ is its absence. The second dataset is UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 22.1 (Shawn, Pettersson, and Öberg 2022) that is a conflict-year dataset with information on armed conflict for time period from 1946 to 2021. The authors identified armed conflict as ‘a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year’ (Pettersson 2022: 4). Thus, dependent variable from this dataset is a binary variable, where ‘1’ is an armed conflict and ‘0’ is its absence.

The list of independent variables with their sources can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Independent variables

Variable	Description	Source
Population	In thousands	United Nations Population Division, <i>World Population Prospects</i> database, 2022
GDP per capita	Real GDP per capita in 2011US\$	Maddison Project Database, 2020
Median age		United Nations Population Division, <i>World Population Prospects</i> database, 2022
Education	Mean years of schooling	UNDP: Human Development Reports, 2022; Barro and Lee (2021) database

As explained in Methods section, violent political destabilization was modeled by logit-regression (using the bias-reduction method due to specific of dependent variable distribution). The results can be seen in Table 2. It was these coefficients that were used to predict the future probability of violent destabilization.

Table 2. Logistic regression of violent destabilization (with bias-reduction penalty)

Variables	β_i (log-odds)	p-value
Intercept	−11.102 (2.593)	1.862e-05
ln(Population)	0.679 (0.232)	0.003
Median age	−0.177 (0.106)	0.095
Mean years of schooling	−0.492 (0.084)	3.938e-09
μ	0.684 (0.195)	0.001
N	761	
logLik	−229.235	
AIC	468.470	
BIC	491.643	
Notes: Heteroscedasticity robust standard errors are given in parentheses.		

In turn, fitted model of overall economic development can be seen in Table 3. It was these coefficients that were used to predict future GDP per capita.

Table 3. Linear regression of economic development (logarithm of GDP per capita)

Variables	β_i	p-value
Intercept	-0.043 (0.05)	0.391
$\ln(\text{GDP per capita}_{t-1})$	0.997 (0.005)	< 2.2e-16
$P(C_{it} = 1)$	-0.075 (0.02)	0.0003
Mean years of schooling	0.006 (0.001)	2.811e-07
Population growth (delta)	0.078 (0.362)	0.82
Median age	0.003 (0.002)	0.15
N	722	
R2	0.989	
Notes: Heteroscedasticity robust standard errors are given in parentheses.		