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To the captor goes the spoils: An investigation of Russian State Capture in Sudan and the Central African Republic, 2014 - 2021

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To the captor goes the spoils:

An investigation of Russian State Capture in Sudan and the Central African Republic, 2014 - 2021

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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research in International Relations

Faculty of Humanities
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Supervised by Dr Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh
June 2023

Declaration

I declare that I have written the following research report and have not used sources or means without declaration in the text. Any thoughts from others or literal quotations are clearly marked. This research report is submitted towards the award of the degree Master of Arts in International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand. I confirm that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at this institution, or any other.



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I feel so incredibly blessed to have embarked on this journey and even more blessed that I did not embark on it alone. Throughout my MA I was supported by a loving family consisting of human and animal members (all of whom did their part to make sure I did not go insane!) To my family, thank you for your patience and constant support and for listening to my sometimes crazed rantings about this paper and its content.

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Finally, in all things I acknowledge the incredible provision of the Father. I thank God for the path He has put me on. For His grace, which is sufficient for me, and for His power which is always proven perfect despite my weaknesses.

Abstract

Following a period of disengagement after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian engagement in Africa has resumed in earnest. In the almost-decade since Russia annexed Ukrainian Crimea, Russia has endured criticism and hostility from the international community. Some African nations have, however, continued to express support for Russia in diplomatic fora and continue to engage with Russia through both formal and informal means. Russian engagement in Africa has come into acute focus for its unconventional nature. Particular concern is shown for the use of disinformation and the deployment of Private Military Companies. A distinct pattern of Russian engagement is presenting itself in Africa whereby these services are traded in exchange for access to natural resources, specifically precious minerals. This transaction between Russia and African nations is allowing embattled leaders to hold onto power. This research report seeks to explain and understand this phenomenon.

Keywords:

Russia; Africa; Russia in Africa; Russia-Africa relations; state capture; corruption; extraversion; neopatrimonialism; extra-state capture; Sudan; Central African Republic.

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Introduction

In October 2019, the Russian city of Sochi played host to 43 African heads of state and an additional 11 high-level representatives of leaders who were not in attendance (Kachur, 2020: 19). The first Russia-Africa Summit drew attention to Russia's renewed interest in the continent, with President Vladimir Putin characterising Africa as a "continent of opportunity" (El-Badawy et al, 2022: 4). The past two decades have seen an uptick in Russian involvement and activities in Africa following a period of minimal involvement after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kachur, 2020: 10). Russia is not the only external power interested in Africa and it is certainly not the only great power interested. Russia's economic presence on the continent is dwarfed by that of the Chinese, a meagre $20 billion in comparison with the Chinese's $200 billion (Kachur, 2020: 7). Aside from China, France and the United States channel significant foreign direct investment into the continent (EY Attractiveness Programme Africa, 2019). In the past 5 years, Turkey has opened a staggering 26 new embassies on the continent and nations like Brazil, Israel, and the Gulf Nations have begun campaigns for deeper diplomatic and commercial ties with Africa (El-Badawy et al, 2022: 3). External powers have long sought to gain access to Africa - a continent rich in natural resources, home to 54 potential votes in the United Nations General Assembly and three in the United Nations Security Council and a population set to grow tremendously before 2050 (Suzuki, 2019) - the continent's importance will only increase in the years to come (El-Badawy et al, 2022: 4).

A notable increase in Russian engagement can be seen following the illegal annexation of Ukrainian Crimea in March 2014 (Kachur, 2020: 11). The international fall-out of this conflict resulted in nearly 700 Russian individuals being targeted by sanctions imposed by the United States Congress (Rennack and Welt, 2021) and 177 sanctioned by the European Union (EUR-Lex 2020). Following the imposition of Western sanctions on Russia's financial, energy, and defence sectors, Africa has been the only region to consistently increase its imports from Russia ((Kachur, 2022: 521)). Declining oil prices have exacerbated the impact of sanctions on the Russia economy (Tyll, Pernica, and Arltova, 2018: 25). These two factors can be seen as

driving forces behind Russia's renewed engagement with African nations and markets. For all intents and purposes, Russia's increased interest in the continent has been mutually beneficial. Russia gains a foothold in a continent rich in resources and full of new market opportunities while African nations receive humanitarian aid for food security, healthcare, and climate crises, as well as an ally in the UNSC lobbying for restructuring of the body (Kachur, 2020: 13). It would be a gross misstatement to suggest that Russian engagement in Africa is completely nefarious; to be sure, there are benefits to be reaped from the increased attention. However, what bears noting is the fundamental differences which exist between the methods employed by Russia and other external parties when it comes to engaging with African nations. The legacy of Soviet engagement in Africa is one of support for decolonisation and liberation movements; this legacy is reinforced by present-day Russia's promotion of the sovereignty and self-determination of African states which extends to an acceptance of non-democratic regimes (Kachur, 2020: 7).

Closely related to its support of various forms of government is Russia's high tolerance for corruption. Ranking 137 out of 180 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (Corruption Perceptions Index, 2022), Russia's scores on the index have worsened in recent years and Transparency International describes the country as "the very embodiment of a kleptocracy" (Transparency International, 2023). Russia has created a reputation for itself as being less concerned over widespread poverty than its Western counterparts. This was re-affirmed at the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit where President Putin characterised cooperation between his country and African nations as "no strings attached", meaning Russian support and financing was not dependent on a nation's display of the democratic ideals of transparency and accountability (Kachur, 2020: 14). Another strategy employed by Russia which is divergent from Western powers is the information strategy. This involves the use of state media, specifically Russia Today and Sputnik, which are broadcast widely in Africa, as well as the use of the parastatal Internet Research Agency (IRA) which has been linked to disinformation campaigns in Libya, the Central African Republic, Mozambique, South Africa, and others (Grossman, Bush, and DiResta, 2019: 2). Related to this information strategy is the Association for Free Research and International Cooperation (AFRIC), a proxy organisation of the Russian government also involved in disinformation and the

promotion of Russian political and economic interests (Shekhovtsov, 2020: 5). The final engagement strategy which differs from those of its Western counterparts, is the increasing deployment of Russian Paramilitary Companies, in particular the notorious Wagner Group, funded by a close associate of President Putin, Yevgeny Prigozhin (Sauer, 2022).

These forms of engagement are unique to the Russian strategy of engagement in Africa and could indicate a new brand of Russian foreign policy emerging. Through these unconventional means Russia has secured itself a position of influence in several African countries. This comes with its own benefits for the Russian state including access to precious minerals and support from its African allies in international fora like the United Nations General Assembly. What is notable and concerning is that these unconventional means bear a striking resemblance to a form of grand corruption popularised by the World Bank, known as “state capture” (Hellman and Kaufmann, 2001). These economists characterise the phenomenon as an intricate and far-reaching network of individuals within the state who receive benefits in exchange for political, military, or economic favours granted to members of the state’s executive.

Within the realm of International Relations and Political Science, several potential explanations for Russia’s approach to relations with Africa emerge. Given the complex nature of these engagements it is clear that this is not just “mere corruption” and it requires a more nuanced explanation. This report investigates the extent to which several distinct, but interrelated manifestations of corruption can be applied to Russia-Africa relations, these include: petty corruption, neopatrimonialism, patronage, clientelism, extraversion, elite capture, and state capture.

At a first glance, the characteristics of state capture ring true in Russian engagements on the African continent and, as such, warrant further investigation. This research paper is guided by the research question:

To what extent are the actions of firms and individuals associated with the Russian state (including political interference, business involvement, and the deployment of

Private Military Companies) in Sudan and the Central African Republic facilitating a process of state capture, in the period from 2014 to 2021?

As the research report progressed, it became clear that neither state capture nor any of the other manifestations of corruption discussed provided a "perfect fit" or explanation of what is observed in the case study states. A reflection on the original research question is offered in the concluding chapter of this report.

This research report begins with an explanation of the Research Question which has guided every step of this enquiry. The Research Question informs the themes explored in the Literature Review, as well as the choice of methodology. The Research Question was informed by a particular rationale, which speaks to the reason behind the research. Ultimately, this research project is guided by a resurgence in academic interest in the means and methods of Russian engagement in Africa, and seeks to account for these interactions through the lens of state capture. This chapter concludes with an in-depth explanation of the Research Design. This research report employs a qualitative methodology and consists of desktop research. The over-arching aim of this research project is to offer explanation. The project can thus be regarded as an explanatory, theory-testing study. Chapter Four, which considers the suitability of a new conceptual framework, offers a break from the initial research design and suggests that this research project instead be considered as a theory-proposing project. This change in research design came about organically as the research report progressed and it became clear that a shift in perspective would be necessary.

The paper will then turn to a contextualisation of Russia-Africa relations and provide background to the phenomena we witness in this arena today. This section will serve as the basis for the application of the literature to the case studies. The case studies in this research report are the central African nations of Sudan and the Central African Republic, both of which have been key theatres for Russian engagement since the mid-2010s. While the exploitation of African peoples and resources is not a new concept, the patterns and methods of Russian engagement are unique. Russian engagements in Africa appear to occur in three, often interrelated, sectors. Russian individuals and corporations engage embattled African leaders on the basis of

media, mining, and military. Local media firms receive support from Russian entities - like Russia Today and Sputnik - and social media has become awash with pro-Russian, anti-French content. Russian firms have been allowed access to local mines and minerals. The extraction of these minerals is often a form of payment for the services of paramilitary groups like the Wagner Group, Sewa Security Services, and Patriot. In most instances, all three of these means of engagement are seen in concert as part of an elaborate relationship which ensures a favourable outcome for both sides of the partnership. Through these means, Russia is able to maintain allies across the geography of the African continent and procure precious minerals which soften the blow of Western sanctions. The African partners chosen by Russia are often embattled leaders facing challenges to their leadership. By procuring the multi-faceted services offered through relations with Russia, these leaders are able to secure their positions by any means necessary.

The following chapter takes the form of a survey of the existing literature on various manifestations of corruption. These concepts are ambiguous in definition and often conflated. Conceptual clarification between the concepts will assist in the application of these concepts to Russia-Africa relations. The literature review will begin by contextualising corruption in the broadest possible sense. Several influential works on corruption were consulted, including Nye (1970), Rose-Ackerman (1999), and Klitgaard (1988). The literature consulted presented three distinct thematic characterisations of corruption, namely: the political, the economic, and the sociological. The discussion then turns to several narrower conceptualisations of corruption, beginning with the concept of neopatrimonialism. This concept represents a largely political manifestation of corruption. Brief mention is made to two concepts often conflated with neopatrimonialism: patronage and clientelism. Although not considered to be a form of corruption, per se, the literature review includes a discussion of Bayart's concept of extraversion. Corruption often occurs within the framework of extraversion. The concept is used in this research report for its analytical value in interpreting the relations of African states with external parties. Another form of corruption which presents itself in the literature is that of elite capture. This manifestation of corruption appears to be a combination of characteristics of both neopatrimonialism and extraversion. The final manifestation of corruption which is discussed in the literature review is that of state capture. The

initial hypothesis of this research project is that state capture is the concept best suited to interpreting what is observed in the case study states. Given the focus on state capture for its explanatory potential, a significant portion of the literature review will be devoted to unpacking the concept of state capture, including how it is measured and quantified. The literature review will conclude with a brief discussion of the effects of corruption - in the broad sense, and including all its sub-varieties - on societies.

In the process of consulting the existing literature on corruption it became clear that there are aspects of each manifestation of corruption which lend explanatory potential to the case studies. However, there are also aspects of each manifestation which are incongruous with the context of the case studies. These similarities and differences warranted the discussion which opens Chapter Four of this research report. Guided by the original research question and by the research aim, which is to offer explanation for the patterns of behaviour observed in the case studies, Chapter Four applies the themes and manifestations of corruption presented in the literature review to what is observed in the case studies. As the research project progressed, it became clear that not one of these manifestations could wholly and convincingly account for what is seen in the case studies. As such, the remainder of this chapter discusses the development of a new conceptual framework called “Extra-State Capture”.

Although aspects of the case studies are discussed in Chapter Four, Chapter Five of the research report will present a deeper contextualisation of the two case studies, namely: Sudan and the CAR. The actions and involvement of actors associated with the Russian state in three key sectors will be expanded upon. This chapter serves as support for the newly-developed conceptual framework. The actions and behaviours of Russian and local actors and individuals are discussed in depth and the conceptual framework is applied to show congruence with the observable phenomena at work within the case studies.

This research report represents a journey through the literature from expectation to reality. As the report progressed, it became clear that a shift in perspective was needed in order to reconcile the expectation to the reality. The initial expectation that

state capture would be wholly applicable and offer complete explanation for what is observed in the case studies was incorrect. As such, the concluding chapter of this research report will confront this incongruence and reflect on the original research question. This concluding chapter also discusses the limitations of the newly-presented conceptual model and recommends avenues for further research.

With the progression of this research report clearly mapped out, the discussion will now turn to an explanation of the research design of this project. The research design includes the broader context for the research report, a discussion of the research question, and the rationale behind the research. Further, the research design and methodological approach employed are discussed.

Research Design

Problem Statement

Existing literature on state capture has put forth a wealth of definitions. Although these definitions have nuanced differences, they are essentially saying the same thing in different words. Several authors agree that state capture is a form of corruption which is transactional in nature. This transaction occurs between an actor (or actors) and representatives of the state whereby security, political, or economic benefits are exchanged. Once this transaction has taken place and both sides of the transaction have reaped their respective benefits the process is likely to perpetuate itself while the citizens of the captured state suffer.

Several influential studies have been conducted on state capture in geographically diverse locations including the Ukraine (Balabushko et al, 2018), Southeast Asia (Johnson and Mitton, 2001), and the Middle East and North Africa (Benhassine et al, 2009, Freund et al 2014). From these studies it has become apparent that there is no one-size-fits-all method for the study of state capture as the mechanisms will differ according to the context; as such, methodologies must be adapted to suit the particular context being studied (Fiebelkorn, 2019: 10). The problem or research gap which presents itself is the lack of research focusing on African instances of state capture. Hellman and Kaufmann's original study of state capture in 2001 made use of a data set which does not include African responses, since then no one has

sought to replicate this study in an African context and the research on African state capture which does exist is limited to a select few countries.

Although not an explicit research endeavour, it is worth noting the significant contributions made by all those who worked on South Africa's Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture. The dedicated work of countless South Africans spanning fields such as law, journalism, and Political Science has resulted in an immense cataloguing of South Africa's experience with state capture. Through the publishing of six volumes, the work of the Commission has contributed greatly to the understanding of how state capture might take place, how it could be identified, and how a country could course correct in the aftermath.

This research report seeks to begin the process of filling that gap in the research by contributing an analysis of the extent to which the African states of Sudan and the Central African Republic can be regarded as captured states. Furthermore, despite an increasing wealth of literature analysing the evolving relations between Russia and African states, many of which raise concerns over the unconventional methods employed by Russian firms and individuals, thus far the link between these actions and the mechanisms of state capture have not been fully investigated.

Research Question

Led by the research which already exists on state capture as well as empirical evidence of Russian political, economic, and military activities in the case study states of Sudan and the Central African Republic, I observe a correlation between these activities and the characteristics or mechanisms described to be a part of state capture. This correlation serves as the impetus for further investigation into the relationship. The research question guiding this investigation is as follows:

To what extent are the actions of firms and individuals associated with the Russian state (including political interference, business involvement, and the deployment of Private Military Companies) in Sudan and the Central African Republic facilitating a process of state capture, in the period from 2014 to 2021?

In line with this research question, the hypothesis in this research report is that the actions of Russian firms and/or individuals in Sudan and the Central African Republic from 2014 to the present day are congruent with the characteristics and mechanisms of state capture, as set out in the literature. These states can therefore be regarded as having been "captured" by firms and/or individuals associated with the Russian state.

Research Rationale

Following a period of absence from the continent, Russia rekindled its dormant relations with Africa in the early 2000s. An economic lightweight in comparison to the continent's other partners, many have begun to wonder how Russia manages to remain relevant to Africa. Pragmatically, Russia does not seem to want to compete with the continent's larger trade partners but instead offers tailored packages which meet the needs of African elites and embattled leaders. These packages include services that Western liberal democracies do not offer - weapons without human rights conditionalities, the deployment of Private Military Companies who do not maintain the same concern for human life as UN Peacekeepers would, nuclear power stations constructed on Russia's dime, and disinformation campaigns often directed against the West or intended to bolster support for a particular leader before an election. In its engagements with Africa, Russia certainly does not maintain the same obsession with democracy as the West tends to and this is attractive to some of Africa's leaders. This research paper seeks to explore possible explanations for these means of engagements.

The concept of state capture is fundamentally rooted in principles found in Political Science and International Relations. In its description of the "subversion of good government in the interests of powerful minorities", literature relating to state capture relies on three broad principles, namely: corruption, the existence of "elites", and the struggle for power (Southall, 2018: 33). A concern with how individuals or groups use their influence to pursue their own interests above those of the public has featured extensively in political analysis (Southall, 2018: 33). Major theorists of political studies have examined the nature of the relationship between the "elites" and general society ultimately asserting that this relationship is characterised by the domination of the masses by the elites (Southall 2018: 36). The final broad principle

upon which state capture rests is the concept of power, a concept which has captured the attention of political theorists since the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli (Southall 2018: 38). The culmination of these three principles results in the outcome now known as state capture.

The implications and effects of state capture are far-reaching within the context of the captured state, particularly in the cases of Sudan and the Central African Republic where the populations are already plagued by a vast array of socio-economic risks and vulnerabilities. Forces internal and external to the captured state have vested interests in maintaining the capture as they stand to reap benefits; this traps citizens in a corrupt system where even the most basic of rights are not guaranteed. This humanitarian aspect is a compelling motivation for investigating state capture in these states. Situating this study within the broader field of International Relations, state capture has implications on our conceptualisation of state sovereignty and norms of non-interference. The transactional nature of these processes of state capture requires cooperation between the Russian individuals and firms executing the capture and some local actors within the captured states.

Research Design Particulars

This research report is entirely qualitative in its approach and guided by the overarching aim of offering explanation. As such, this report can be characterised as an explanatory study. Given the noticeable similarities between the concept of state capture and the actions of individuals and firms with ties to the Russian state (within the case study states), this research report can be said to be “theory-testing”. This kind of research report makes use of empirical evidence “to evaluate existing theories” (Van Evera, 1997: 90). Although state capture is not a theory as such, its characteristics and mechanisms will be used as a roadmap of sorts to determine whether state capture is present in the case study states. [1]

[1] In the progression of this research report, it became a blended approach of both theory testing and theory proposing. This is further discussed in Chapter Four, which covers the proposition of a new conceptual framework. Van Evera (1997: 90) emphasises that this blended approach occurs in many research reports, and is not something to shy away from.

This research report will not follow the traditional approach of identifying dependent and independent variables. Given that this research report will be detailing several distinct, but interrelated manifestations of corruption, these kinds of variables do not present themselves easily. Assigning parts of a very complex whole as either dependent or independent serves only to confuse matters and, for the sake of clarity, it is far easier to progress in this report without being bound by a constant referral to these kinds of variables.

The method of this project will engage in a process similar to that of theory testing. This process would usually consist of framing a theory and inferring predictions from its assumptions. In this instance empirical evidence is not tested against the assumptions of a specific theory but rather against the definition and characteristics of Hellman and Kaufmann's "state capture" to determine a correlation between the observable practices of Russian firms and individuals within the case study states, and the mechanisms of state capture.

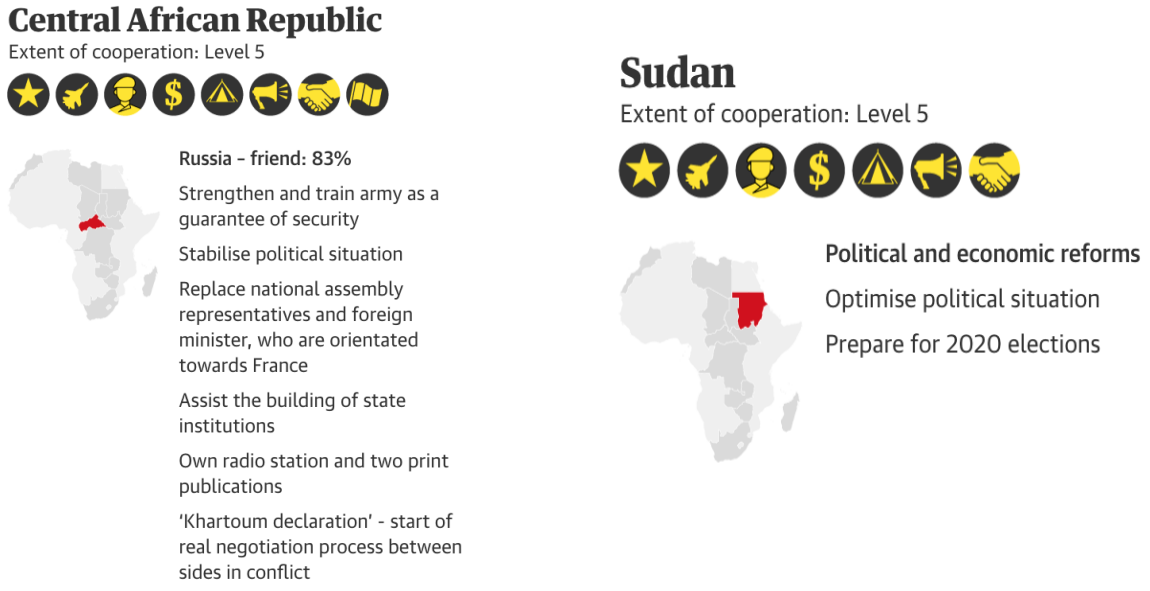
Fiebelkorn (2019) identifies several methods which may be used to capture a state, these include: the allocation of public contracts or public procurement, preferential access to public assets, privileges in taxation, influencing of laws (both their creation and the implementation of those already existing), or preferential access to debt financing. Within the context of this research project certain actions undertaken by the Russian state and associated firms and individuals can be seen to be congruent with the mechanisms of state capture expounded upon in the literature. In particular, this report will look for and examine the awarding of contracts for natural resource extraction to Russian firms, political interference in the form of electoral meddling and campaigns of disinformation, and the deployment of Paramilitary Companies with close ties to the Kremlin, specifically the Wagner Group and Sewa Security Services. It is by these indicators that we can determine whether state capture is occurring in the case study states.

The research project will take the form of an inductive, qualitative study which is exploratory in nature. A small sample of two case studies will be used where the case studies were chosen in a purposive fashion as can be expected in a qualitative project (Gerring, 2017). The study is inductive in the sense that it proposes an

answer to the research question based on “empirical analysis of explicated, initial assumptions” (Panke, 2018: 3).

The two case studies have been selected for their specific relevance to the concept of state capture as well as the level of Russian involvement in their political, economic, and military situations. Both countries present significant vulnerabilities to state capture: weak or ineffective checks and balances, excessive state interventions in the economy, and leaders who are isolated from the broader international community due to so-called “bad behaviour” are a few of the characteristics of these states that leave them vulnerable (Mbaku, 2018). According to leaked Russian documents, both Sudan and the Central African Republic are “Level 5”, indicating the highest level of cooperation with Russia (Harding and Burke, 2019). Below is a graphical representation of the dimensions of Russian engagement with Sudan and the Central African Republic; this information is directly translated from the leaked Russian documents (Harding and Burke, 2019).

Figure 1: Graphic depicting the extent of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the case study states



Source: The Guardian, 2015.

The works of Raballand and Rijkers (2021) and Fiebelkorn (2019) are particularly useful for identifying and examining the mechanisms of state capture. This research project will make use of the three-pronged approach mentioned in both of these works whereby state capture can be identified and investigated through three broad themes, namely: firm-level indicators or a problematic economic outcome, the presence of political connections, and identifiable mechanisms whereby the state is captured and advantages are conferred on those connected to its capture (Fiebelkorn, 2019: 11; Raballand and Rijkers, 2021: 5). The table below summarises potential data sources for each of these themes.

Table 1: Table detailing themes present in the literature as characteristics of state capture and potential data sources

Theme mentioned in the literature	Data sources
Firm-level indicators or the presence of a problematic economic outcome	· Administrative data sources, where available (i.e. Central Banks, Tax Authorities, and Firm Registries). · Supplemented with data from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys as well as databases such as Orbis, Compustat, Worldscope, and Datastream.

The presence of political connections	· Existing literature regarding Russian individuals with connections to the Russian state who are present and active in the case study states. · Databases such as BoardEx and the Thomson Reuters' World-Check Watchlist of Global PEPs. · These political connections will be presented using the Net Map Tool for ease of communication.
Mechanisms of state capture whereby advantages or benefits are conferred upon those connected to the capture.	
Awarding of contracts for natural resource extraction to Russian firms and or individuals.	· GAN Risk and Compliance Portal · Existing literature regarding the presence of Russian firms in mining industries in the case study states
Political interference in the form of election meddling or the spreading of disinformation.	· Existing literature documenting disinformation campaigns undertaken in the case study states by firms linked to the Russian state

Deployment of Paramilitary Companies with links to the Russian state.	· Existing literature which documents the deployment and actions of PMCs with alleged ties to the Russian state, including Patriot, Sewa Security Services, and the Wagner Group.

It must be noted that, although many scholars have expressed concern over the particular strategies of engagement being pursued by Russia in Africa, it is not a widely or commonly held belief that these actions are comparable with state capture. This research report will make use of some of the above-mentioned sources to draw a comparison between what is observed in the case studies with the characteristics of state capture as put forward in the literature. The covert nature of corruption means it is often difficult to pinpoint each individual involved and every instance of corrupt behaviour. However, the work of dedicated individuals in exposing corruption when it happens, means that there is a wealth of reporting in newspapers, magazines, and online sources which details at least part of these extensive networks.

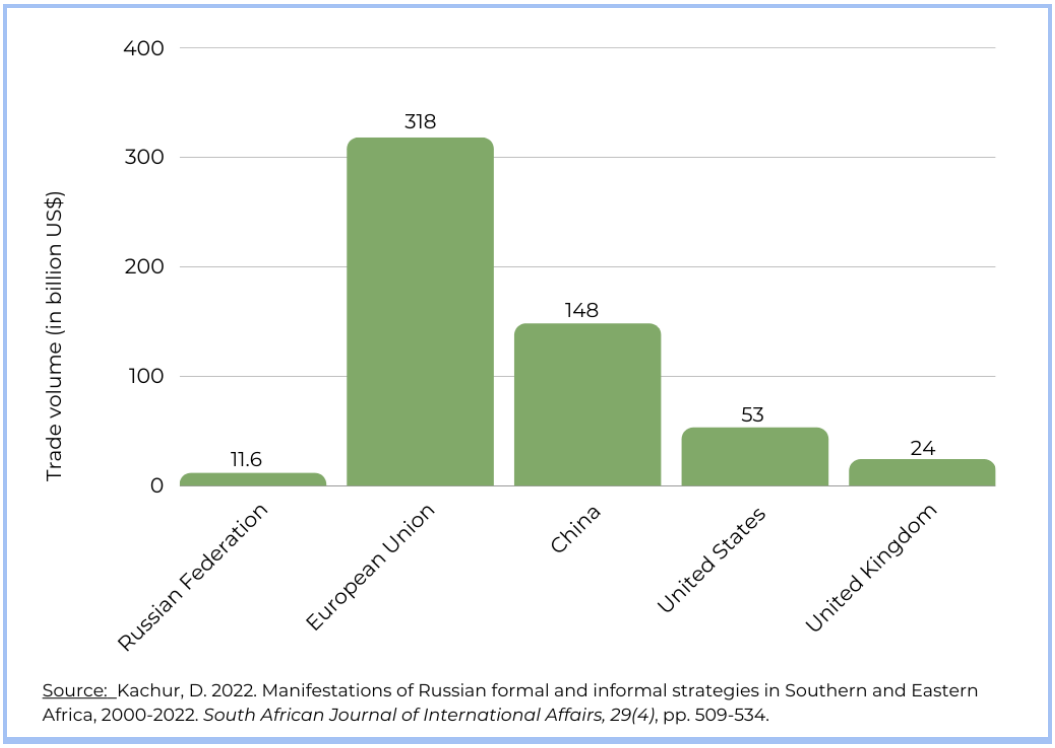
This introductory chapter has served to contextualise some of the background of this study. It has also presented a detailed account of the proposed research design and methodology. In order to engage in the theory-testing process proposed in the methodology of this project, this study will survey literature on several existing manifestations of corruption to find which is most appropriate for describing what is observed in the case study states. The initial hypothesis of the study is that state capture, as conceptualised by Hellman and Kaufmann (2001) is the most appropriate interpretation of the involvement of actors linked to the Russian state in the context of the selected case study states. The following chapter of the research report will expound on the research rationale by contextualising Russia-Africa relations, demonstrating that these engagements are unique and warrant further investigation.

Context of the study: Russia in Africa

The preceding introductory chapter has emphasised that the rationale for this study is based on the intriguing nature of Russian engagement in Africa in the post-2014 time period. While the involvement of external actors in Africa and the exploitation of Africa's peoples and resources by these external actors is nothing new, a distinct form of Russian engagement has presented itself and this warrants deeper investigation. This chapter seeks to offer deeper insight into the timeline of Russian engagement in Africa and how this engagement is distinct from that of other external powers. Moreover, this chapter will identify and explain three key sectors of Russian involvement in the continent, namely: Media, Minerals, and Security.

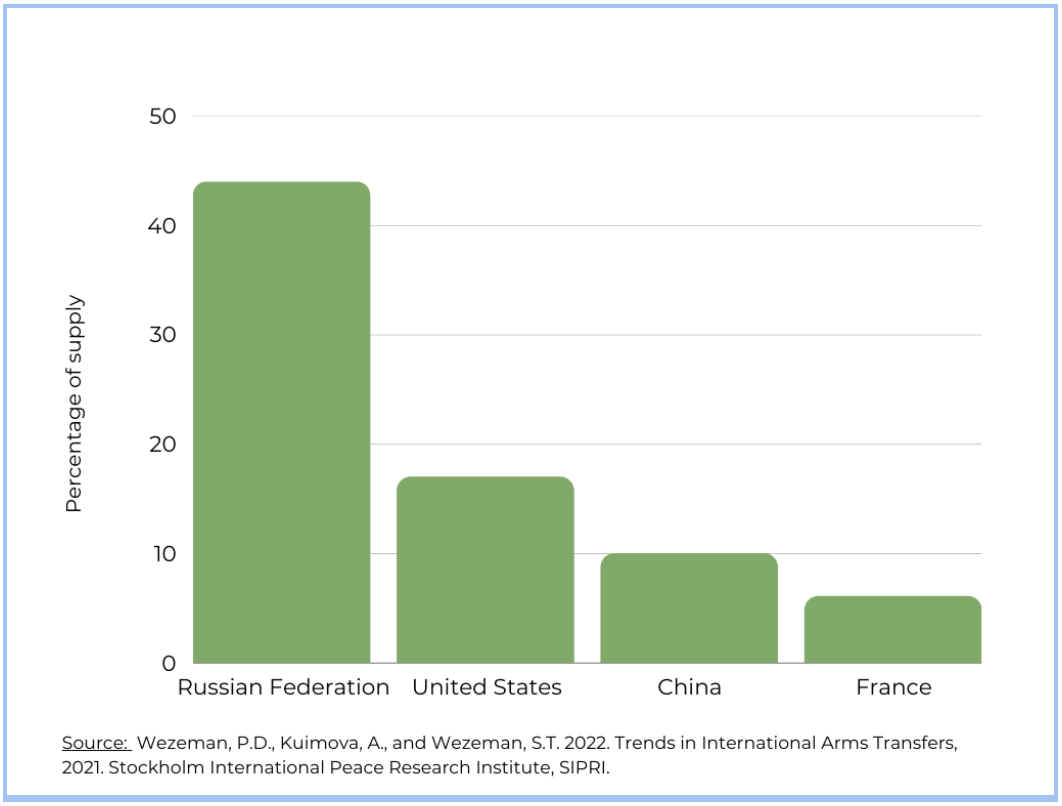
Russia's renewed interest in the continent has been anchored in key markets, namely: arms, energy, mining of precious minerals, military cooperation, and the expansion of trade networks (Singh, 2022:3). Russia's activities on the continent are far outpaced by other major international powers like the USA, UK, EU, and China, except in arms exports where Russia leads the pack by a significant margin This disparity between trade and arms exports are depicted in the graphs below.

Graph 1: Graph depicting annual trade with Africa of five global powers



Source: Kachur, D. 2022. Manifestations of Russian formal and informal strategies in Southern and Eastern Africa, 2000-2022. *South African Journal of International Affairs, 29(4)*, pp. 509-534.

Graph 2: Graph depicting African arms imports from four major partners over the period 2017 - 2021



Source: Wezeman, P.D., Kuimova, A., and Wezeman, S.T. 2022. Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2021. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI.

1999 marked a turning point for the embattled Russian economy, although it wouldn't recover to the level of the 1980s for another five years (Singh, 2022: 7). The election of Vladimir Putin to the position of President of the Russian Federation in 2000 brought about sustained economic growth as well as a more coherent and aggressive foreign policy stance (Singh, 2022: 7). The country's new foreign policy stance was clearer in its orientation toward the external world, including African nations, in pursuit of a multipolar world order (Singh, 2022: 7). The landmark of Russian foreign policy under Putin has been the revival of the country's great power aspirations (CIDOB International Yearbook, 2010: 225). Russia's economic recovery was accompanied by its resumption of aid to the developing world in the mid-2000s with its total Official Development Assistance increasing fourfold in the period from 2010 to 2015 (Asmus, Fuchs, and Muller, 2018). Africa's inherent trust in Russia is based on a legacy of financial, educational, and military support for liberation movements and their stalwarts. Russia's history with African countries, unlike Western nations, does not contain periods of violence or oppression (Sukhankin, 2018).

Kachur (2022: 511) analyses the changing nature of Russia-Africa relations by dividing the past two decades into three distinct periods. 2005 - 2014 are characterised as "Russia awakening to the global power" and refers to the emergence of the modern Russian state from the haze of the post-Soviet moment and the resumption of conventional relations with African states (Kachur, 2022: 516-518). The second phase - Russia in search of new markets - began with Russia's annexation of Crimea and lasted until the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi. It was during this period that Africa's utility as an ally and source of revenue came in handy for Russia, which had largely been ostracised by the international community (Kachur, 2022: 520). Africa is the only region in the world whose imports from Russia have consistently increased despite the imposition of Western sanctions regimes (Kachur, 2022: 521). It is within this time period that Russian PMCs, particularly the Wagner Group, began appearing on the continent and Russian mining companies made their entry into the African mineral market as extractors of

wealth. The third phase in Russia-Africa relations began after the Summit, this is the phase we are living in now: the era for solidifying state capture (Kachur, 2022: 511).

Furthermore, Kachur (2022) also identifies five distinct elements of Russia-Africa relations over these three phases. These elements are: debt-for-development swaps, nuclear technology exports, military and paramilitary cooperation, disinformation campaigns and election meddling, and the sponsorship of political parties (Kachur, 2022: 512). These elements of engagement are consistent with the interest and rationale of this research report.

The Soviet Union was actively involved in a number of African countries during the Cold War era with the majority of these relations taking the form of defence cooperation or support for national liberation movements. Following its collapse at the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union's activities on the continent fell into hibernation (Marten 2019: 155). Although the nation faces some distrust on the continent from former partners who were left in the lurch, under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin in the early 2000s, Russia began to reconnect with its former African allies (Marten 2019: 157). President Putin has relied on the historical ties between his country and former partners in Africa – specifically the Soviet Union's role in liberation struggles - to promote partnerships with his country as opposed to the supposedly neo-imperialistic tendencies of the Western nations (Kachur 2020: 14).

Leaders on both the African and the Russian side of these relations have begun pursuing partnerships across various sectors. The revival of these relations took on new impetus following the sanctions placed on Russia in the wake of the 2014 annexation of Ukrainian Crimea (Kalika 2019: 6). The bear's "great return" to Africa has, however, been somewhat overstated by Western media. Far from being a new superpower or imperialistic force on the continent, Russia's economic position on the continent is that of an "economic lightweight" with sub-Saharan trade not exceeding $5 billion a year (Kalika 2019: 7). Although Russia does noteworthy trade in arms across a number of African countries, this is a market that is still open for the taking (Kalika 2019: 7). Moscow's African strategy is largely dominated by the exchange of military or security services for access to economic advantages, mainly through the

extraction of natural resources (Kalika 2019: 10). It is this characterising feature of Russia-Africa relations which warrants further investigation, and particular consideration from the perspective of Hellman and Kaufmann's concept of 'state capture'.

The African continent makes up a significant voting bloc in the United Nations General Assembly with a total of 54 voting members, 3three of which sit on the Security Council at any given time; this voting bloc represents the organisation's largest, and often most coherent contingent (Ross 2018).

Leaked documents have revealed the Kremlin's ambitions of increasing partnerships across at least 13 African countries through building relationships with their leaders, training their security forces, and grooming a "new generation of leaders" (Harding and Burke 2019). These ambitions have been pursued in increasingly proactive ways in the years since the annexation of Crimea. Siegle (2021a) considers Africa a "theatre for Russia's geostrategic interests rather than a destination itself" however, the effort and resources Russia appears to be exerting points to something different. He does, however, note that Russia does not invest in "conventional statecraft" as other states do; the precise "unconventionality" of Russia's approach to its relations with African states forms the rationale for this research project. These strategies have included the embedding of Kremlin-linked individuals within the governments and state institutions of African countries as well as the widespread deployment of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in a number of African countries (El- Badawy et al 2022: 5). The aforementioned documents detail Russia's level of involvement and partnership across the 13 countries, ranked from level 1 to level 5 – with level 5 denoting the highest levels of cooperation (Harding and Burke 2019).

Means of Engagement

As previously mentioned, Russia is not the only external state to show an interest in exploiting African people and resources for their own gain. What is worth noting, however, is the ways in which Russia is engaging its African partners. Recognising its inherent inability to compete with other external powers like the USA, UK, and China, on an economic front, Russia is pursuing different means of engagement.

These means of engagement are predicated on meeting the needs of embattled leaders. Often, Russia engages with individuals and states that the democratically-obsessed West would not engage, in ways that the West will not engage. In this way, Russia is able to secure allies in strange places. The following section will summarise three key means of Russian engagement in Africa.

Media

Local media have been used very effectively as a tool to disseminate pro-Russian sentiments; the media sector in both case study states faces financial constraints which are alleviated by Russian financial support (Dukhan 2020: 7). Russia makes use of local news outlets and media groups and also relies on the French and English language version of its two big international outlets, Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik (Kalika 2019: 18). These outlets are complemented by the activities of the now-infamous Internet Research Agency (IRA), managed by Russian oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin and responsible for election meddling and social media troll campaigns in multiple countries (Kachur 2020: 17). Another organisation with close links to the Russian state is the Association for Free Research and International Cooperation (AFRIC) which presents itself as an Africa-based network of experts but in reality is involved in election interference (Shekhovtsov 2020; Kachur 2020). Following the inaugural Russia-Africa Summit in 2019, Facebook announced the suspension of a network of Russian-linked disinformation campaigns which included elements of electoral interference targeting at least 8 countries across Africa, including both Sudan and the Central African Republic (El- Badawy et al 2022: 14). In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russian disinformation began targeting perceptions of the Russian-produced Sputnik V vaccine; the effects of this campaign was an overall positive African outlook on the Sputnik V vaccine despite an overall lack of clinical data on its efficacy (Hassan and Hiebert 2021). These media tactics extend to more traditional forms of propaganda including the feature film “Touriste” and a children’s cartoon (El-Badawy et al 2022: 19). These media campaigns are not ideologically homogenous and, in the case of Sudan, do not necessarily stand behind a single leader, but are generally aimed at improving perceptions of Russia and Russian-linked activities in Africa (Grossman, Bush, and DiResta 2019: 54).

Mining

Lobaye Invest, a private company registered in the Central Africa Republic but led by Russian national Evgueni Khodotov, has been issued several mining licences over the course of 2018 and 2019, most notably on land within rebel-controlled areas (Dukhan 2020: 6). The land allocated to Lobaye Invest amounts to 4000 square kilometrers (Baev and Maglov 2019). Despite a large-scale withdrawal of international mining companies from the country and diminished trade in diamonds due to the political instability in the country, Russian companies have made significant inroads into the country in recent years - most significantly since the arrival of state-linked Private Military Companies (Matthysen and Clarkson 2013: 5). A similar pattern can be observed in Sudan with a company named M-Invest and its Sudanese subsidiary Meroe Gold (also spelled Miro); the details of each of these will be further discussed within the presentation of case study evidence (Yakoreva 2018). Through these investments in mineral mining and extraction, Russia is establishing “a vital source of funds and security” (El-Badawy et al 2022: 21) which provides a lifeline in the wake of both the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Africa is becoming an integral part of the global energy market with the total investment in gas and oil exploration on the continent set to exceed $2 trillion by 2040, according to the International Energy Agency; as states face increasing energy crunches they may look to Africa for their resources (Rambler 2019). In addition to its energy resources, African nations also hold deposits of manganese, bauxite, and chromium, all of which are needed for industrial processes in Russia (Neethling 2020: 17). Through its mining exploits in countries like Sudan and the Central African Republic, Russia seeks to secure new streams of revenue which are immune to the sanctions regimes imposed by Western nations following its invasion of Ukraine (Kalika 2019: 6).

Security

Stronski (2019: 14) remarks that, in vying for influence in Africa “guns have opened many more doors for the Kremlin … than butter”. This is perhaps due to the lack of human rights conditionalities on Russian arms purchases. African countries are free to purchase advanced military technology from Russia without being held to any rules or regulations, with the added benefit that Russia offers training on and servicing of these weapons (Stronski 2019: 16).

Perhaps the most visible and concerning manifestation of Russia's interest in Africa has been the proliferation of Russian-linked Private Military Companies (PMCs) in African countries; these include companies such as Patriot, Sewa Security Services, and the infamous Wagner Group. Members of these groups can be seen providing personal security services to Russian businessmen as well as political figures such as the President of the Central African Republic, Faustin- Archange Touadera (Olivier 2019). Officers in these PMCs also provide military training to local forces (Kalika 2019: 21). El-Badawy et al (2022: 7) note that the growing insecurity of African nations has led African leaders to seek security support from external groups in order to effectively secure their land and defeat insurgencies. Between 2014 and 2018, the presence of Russian PMCs on the continent has more than tripled and forces are cropping up in new countries regularly, most recently surfacing in Mali (El-Badawy et al 2022: 8). In the absence of the significant financial resources of its geopolitical rivals - the USA, China, and other Western nations - Russia has carved out a niche for itself in Africa by offering tailored solutions to embattled leaders in need of support.

Paramilitary groups exist within a "grey area" for the Russian Federation. These groups are legally forbidden from existing or operating within the Russian State however, the Wagner Group trains on a compound adjacent to an official GRU training facility (Marten 2019: 162). These entities are often used overseas to pursue the interests of the Russian state, from the battlegrounds of Chechnya and Ukraine and further afield in Syria and Africa. These companies have been used by state-owned entities such as Gazprom and Rosatom, although their activities are described in balance sheets as 'external services' (Kalika 2019: 21). Furthermore, some of the individuals known to be involved in the organisation and funding of the Wagner Group include a retired Russian military intelligence officer, Dmitry Utkin, and Yevegeny Prigozhin, convicted of organised criminal activity turned successful restaurateur and Russia's largest defence contractor under President Putin (Marten 2019: 162). Although it appears on paper as a legitimate company, further investigation reveals that this organisation (which should be illegal under Russian law) is deeply intertwined with Russia's national military and intelligence communities and, as such, should be regarded as acting as a proxy of the Russian

state (Racz, 2021). Individuals serving in Wagner Group operations are issued passports through a special passport desk in Moscow which issues passports almost exclusively to individuals employed in the Russian Ministry of Defence; furthermore, if Wagner forces are injured in confrontations they are treated and rehabilitated in Russian military hospitals (Racz, 2021).

President Putin has, in recent years, demonstrated a break from legislative tradition by mentioning the foreign activities of the Wagner Group approvingly in a public speech (Marten 2019: 162). Ultimately, the semi-state and generally ambiguous nature of Russian-affiliated paramilitary groups works in Russia's favour, offering a degree of 'plausible deniability' and the opportunity to distance themselves from the actions of these groups when it becomes necessary to do so (Marten 2019: 162). The proliferation of Russian-linked paramilitary groups on battlefields in the Caucasus, the Middle East, and Africa, has coincided with a renewed assertiveness in Russian foreign policy (El-Badawy et al 2022: 7). The persistence of conflict and unrest in Africa has provided a receptive audience and the perfect testing ground for the services of these groups.

The use of Private Military Companies like the Wagner Group serves as a way for Russia to offset the significant costs incurred as a result of Western sanctions - the price for employing the services of one of these PMCs is near unfettered access to the country's mineral resources like gold and gems (Doxsee, 2022).

These three means of engagement are often interrelated and offered as part of a transactional relationship between Russia and its African partners. To embattled African leaders, Russia can offer tailored disinformation and the services of security forces, all designed to keep them in their positions of power. So long as these leaders remain in power, and in return for the services rendered, Russian individuals and companies with ties to the Russian state are allowed access and rights to precious natural resources. The simultaneous presence of these three means of engagement in nearly all of Russia's relations with African nations has raised concern amongst scholars observing from afar (see the work of organisations such as the African Centre for Strategic Studies, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, and the South African Institute of International Affairs, for example). Indeed,

it is these unique means of engagement which raised the alarm and prompted this research report. The most concerning aspect of these unconventional means of engagement and the transactional nature of Russia's relations with many African nations is the way in which it appears to reflect the definition and mechanisms of state capture. Prompted by the initial suspicion that something about these relations is inherently corrupt, this research report will now progress into a review of existing literature on several different manifestations of corruption. The aim of this literature review is to contextualist the existing debates and understandings of corruption from the perspective of Political Science and International Relations to determine which, if any, of these descriptions accounts for what is observed in the case studies.

Literature Review

It is imperative to note that the academic discussion and presentation of evidence which follows in this research paper is firmly situated in the discipline of International Relations but draws on knowledge from diverse sources in varying fields. This literature review will largely focus on exploring the different ways in which corruption manifests. These different manifestations of corruption were not known at the outset of the literature review, but rather presented themselves throughout the process of engaging with the literature. The seven manifestations of corruption presented in this literature review are not dissimilar from one other, in fact some are often conflated with one another. This is the nature of the existing literature on corruption: there are varying definitions for the same concept put forward by different scholars. In order to account for what is happening in the case study states, the literature review will begin with a discussion of corruption in the broadest sense of the concept. Through extensive consultation of the existing literature on corruption it becomes clear that the concept at its broadest, is perhaps too broad to lend any true analytical value. This necessitates the investigation of more narrow conceptualisations of corruption with defined characteristics. Thus, the literature review will also expand on the concepts of neopatrimonialism, patronage, clientelism, extraversion, elite capture, and state capture. Given the initial similarities between the concept of state capture and the behaviours exhibited by individuals and firms linked to the Russian state in the case study states, a significant portion of the literature review is dedicated to further exploring this concept, as well as its mechanisms.

Corruption

Academic literature about corruption abounds but it is, unfortunately, clouded with ambiguity (Kaufmann, 1997: 115). Scholars disagree on the central tenets of a definition as well as whether typologies for classifying corruption are necessary - and, if they are, which behaviours should be included in these typologies. This has resulted in varying interpretations. The following section seeks to offer a survey of

some of the literature on corruption and related concepts, thereby offering some clarity as to how these behaviours differ from one another.

Despite abounding definitions and conceptualisations of the phenomenon of corruption, there appears to be one thing many scholars agree on: corruption represents a failure of ethics (Kaufmann, 1997). Even if consensus on a definition is never reached, that key characteristic is enough for anyone to form the basis of an understanding of corruption. Nye (1970: 566) phrased it differently, stating that corruption is "behaviour that deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of a private or pecuniary or status gains". This definition speaks to the responsibility holders of public office have to the citizens of the state, and categorises corruption as a dereliction of this duty. One of the reasons the concept remains ambiguous is that "corruption" can be used to describe actions of varying severity. A public official accepting a bribe from a private citizen is called corruption. But so is the preferential awarding of national contracts worth billions of Rands, as has been seen in South Africa. The sheer variety of actions covered by, "corruption" is part of why few seem to agree what it is and what it is not. The most commonly accepted definition of corruption is that which was popularised by Transparency International: corruption is the "abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (Heywood, 2016: 2). Although no one typology nor one definition will satisfy everyone nor cover every aspect of this complex phenomenon, this definition serves as a useful basis for our understanding of the concept.

Perhaps a useful place to start in understanding the dimensions of corruption is to think of the various activities of corruption as falling into one of two larger categories: grand corruption and petty corruption (Rose-Ackernamn, 1999). The former refers to activities perpetrated by those as the "highest levels of politics, business, and the military" (Masenya 2017: 153). The outcome of grand corruption is the mass misuse and expropriation of state funds, often to the tunes of millions or billions in currency. Petty corruption, in contrast, happens further down the political food chain or where an individual encounters an aspect of the state which can be exploited (for example, an individual citizen offering a bribe in exchange for services rendered by the state's bureaucracy).

Thematically, literature on corruption points to three main ways the various forms of corruption can manifest and how they impact society. The following literature review will consider conceptualisations of corruption in the available literature presented in three thematic areas, namely: the political, the economic, and the social.

As explained by Tom Lodge (2018: 33), a concern with corruption is central to much of our political analysis; this is due to the immense social, economic, and political effects of corruption on a society. Max Weber famously characterised the modern state as possessing “administrative and legal order” which is changed through legislative processes and is overseen by the organised, corporate activity of a bureaucracy (1947: 156). The exercise of undue influence by public officials over public interests is, at its core, a perversion of the state as we understand it. Harsch (1993: 33) describes corruption as encompassing a wide array of practices which vary in their severity and approach, his list includes behaviours such as theft, embezzlement, nepotism and the granting of favours to personal acquaintances, and the abuse of one’s public authority to “exact payments and privileges”. Much of the existing literature on corruption follows a similar understanding of that put forward by Klitgaard, who summarised the concept in the following formulation:
Corruption = monopoly + discretion - accountability (Klitgaard, 1988: 75). Leaders and public officials possess monopoly over the distribution of rents or benefits, these are allocated according to their own discretion. In instances where these obligations are exploited by these leaders and in the absence of accountability for these actions, corruption exists. Corruption can also occur when private actors seek to exploit the monopoly, discretion, or level of accountability of a leader or public authority.

Corrupt actions have far-reaching consequences including the reduction of accountability of rulers, the subversion of democracy, lower rates of economic growth, the undermining of judiciary processes, and an overall inefficiency of public services (Lodge, 2018: 34). Generally, corruption of any kind is considered to be inimical to a democratic system (Harsch, 1993: 32). Ades and Di Tella (1999: 982) note that there may not be such a thing as to “overstate the economic and social significance of corruption”, however, a lack of reliable data and difficulty pinpointing such data where it exists has kept the phenomenon off the research radar of many disciplines for a long time. Nonetheless, it is a pervasive problem which is present in

developed and developing countries alike. Put differently, Rose-Ackerman (1999: 9) asserts that all states, “whether benevolent or repressive”, can fall victim to corruption. This is due to the fact that the distribution of benefits and the imposition of costs are controlled by the leaders of a state or public officials. These leaders may seek to distribute benefits only to themselves or their acquaintances (Rose-Ackerman 1999: 9), resulting in one form of corruption. In other instances, private entities external to the state may be willing to pay for the allocation of benefits to themselves or the avoidance of certain costs being imposed (Rose-Ackerman, 1999: 9), this would result in a different form of corruption. Similarly, the type of corruption may differ based on who exerts control over resources; for example, the state exerting such control will result in a different form of corruption than if private actors are the most powerful actors. These widespread impacts means that corruption should be considered a matter of importance for policymakers, international organisations, the media, civil society, and academics of many fields.

The literature on corruption presents three interwoven narratives of how and where corruption may manifest, one such way is within the political space. Examples of this would include some illicit campaign financing schemes, the utilisation of mass and social media to influence public opinion, or trading favours in the interests of maintaining a position of political power (Sitorus, 2011: 55). In some instances, political corruption may involve the accepting of bribes or financial incentives; however, the ultimate motive is political in nature and usually relates to a desire to remain in a position of power. A number of authors have noted that political corruption in African societies often extends beyond the government and sees members of a political actor’s ethnic group or political support base receiving benefits such as state property or jobs in government as part of a widespread “patron-client” network (Harsch, 1993: 35).

Although some financial gains may be associated with political corruption, economic corruption is associated with a motivation of direct financial gain. Harsch (1993: 41) defines “rent seeking activities” as a search for financial gain or profit from non-productive economic sectors. Grzymala-Busse (2008: 639) describes an economically-focused predatory rule, loosely referred to as elite predation, wherein rulers extract resources from the state without delivering on their obligations to their

citizens and competition (or direct political opposition) is not tolerated; in this instance, predatory rule is aimed at maximising the financial gains for the ruler as opposed to the political manifestation of predatory rule, as discussed above. Goldsmith (2004: 89) describes a similar phenomenon, stating that some leaders "favour excessive consumption", neglecting the needs of their constituents. Drawing again on Klitgaard's formula, economic corruption can occur when an individual or group holds a monopoly over resources and is willing to offer these resources in exchange for political support from voters; Medina and Stokes (2002) term this as "clientelism". Lewis (1998: 14) terms this same concept, "the personalised exchange of resources for support", to be "patrimonialism". Much of the literature concerning governance and corruption in African countries chalks the continent's underdevelopment up to the excessive greed of its rulers who abuse their powers in the interest of themselves (Hopper, 2017: 232).

The end result of extreme or severe economic corruption is a form of government known as a "kleptocracy". This would see corruption organised from the highest levels of government in a manner which allows the leader or political authorities to maximise its extraction of rents from the country, essentially allowing the leader or government to "loot" the coffers of its own country (Lodge, 2018: 35).

Corruption manifests in political and economic practices executed by rulers or political authorities and in both instances have significant impacts on the citizens of the country. These impacts warrant a discussion of corruption as a sociological phenomenon which infiltrates the lives of innocents who often cannot afford the additional risk brought on by corruption. The enrichment of society's elites comes at the expense of the country's poorer populations as unemployment and poverty deepen (Harsch, 1993: 32). At times, small gains may trickle down to the rest of the population but this is often in the context of corrupt leaders seeking to secure their position through offering incentives to their voters (Johnston, 2005: 25). Ultimately, any form of corruption seriously undermines the state's ability to fulfil its obligations in terms of public welfare, this endangers often already-fragile populations ever further (Erdmann and Engel, 2006: 19).

Neopatrimonialism

Corruption manifests itself within the political, economic, and social spheres of the state and impacts each of these spheres in profound ways. Overall, the concept can be situated within the disciplines of both Political Science and International Relations. One fairly straightforward way to situate this concept within these disciplines is through the use of a theoretical framework which has been employed widely and has recently experienced a revival in discussions of African governance and politics. The concept of neopatrimonialism gained prominence in Development Studies and Political Science in the 1970s as an explanation for the political instability and underdevelopment in some countries, especially those in Africa (Hopper 2017: 226). The term was coined by Eisenstadt in 1973 as a new iteration of the traditional 'patrimonialism', and was developed further by Medard (1982) and Clapham (1985). Clapham (1985: 48) offers the following definition:

> *"A form of organisation in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines. Officials hold positions in bureaucratic organisations with powers which are formally defined, but exercise those powers, so far as they can, as a form not of public service, but of private property".*

A neopatrimonial system would see the filling of government positions, awarding of contracts, and general decision-making dominated by the personal interest of politicians, thus rendering formal systems of accountability to the state's citizens completely redundant (Hopper 2017: 227). Erdmann and Engel (2007: 104) characterise the neopatrimonial society as a post-Weberian invention, or a combination of the two kinds of domination put forward in Max Weber's "Economy and Society", namely "rational-legal bureaucratic domination", and "patrimonial domination". A system built on Weber's rational-legal model is exploited by those in power through the processes of patrimonialism, patronage, and nepotism (Hopper 2017: 233); resulting in a hybrid and complex phenomenon (Erdmann and Engel 2006: 17). Many scholars claim that neopatrimonialism presents an effective framework through which to interpret political and administrative behaviours in African countries (Erdmann and Engel 2007; Medard 1982; Bratton and van de Walle

1994; Englebert 2000; and van de Walle 2001). Roth (1968: 196) has furthered the understanding of neopatrimonialism, warning that it is not synonymous with authoritarianism but rather represents a system of leadership which operates on personal loyalties “inextricably linked to material incentives and rewards” as opposed to any sense of confidence in a ruler’s abilities or qualifications to lead. This lays a very shaky foundation for political leadership and neopatrimonial regimes are often characterised by insecurity and a degree of unpredictability (Erdmann and Engel 2006: 19).

Transparency International characterises neopatrimonial tendencies as a significant threat to development and democratic accountability due to the way in which it allocates resources “unfairly and inequitably” (Hopper, 2017: 236). Erdmann and Engel (2006: 28) argue that rent seeking behaviours can reinforce and reproduce neopatrimonial tendencies. Incentives to engage in corrupt behaviours appear to be particularly enticing in neopatrimonial regimes where leaders and officials are poorly rewarded through official channels and often do not have extensive training for the positions they hold (Hopper 2017: 227). The uncertainty of their position due to the fickleness of personal loyalties may also entice leaders to exploit what they can while they hold a position of power.

Neopatrimonialism refers to a vertically-organised relationship whereby resources are distributed by those at the top to those further down. This results in the development of a client-patron network (Francisco, 2010: 1). The concept is written on widely but unfortunately shrouded in just as much confusion and contestation as corruption itself. This is acknowledged by two prominent authors on the subject, Erdmann and Engel, who write of the problems researchers of neopatrimonialism face in terms of both sources and methodology (2007: 104). Many attribute the roots of the concept to Max Weber’s “patrimonialism”, which he asserted should not be used as a synonym for “bad governance”. The addition of the prefix “neo” by Shmuel Eisenstadt in (1973) allows the term to be used in reference to modern states, thus bringing the concept back into common use for several disciplines. Bourmaud (1997: 61) argues that the addition of this prefix frees the concept from Weber’s previous configuration of the root concept. The literature on the topic, however, tells a very

different story as many scholars go to pains to describe the concept's theoretical roots in the works of Weber.

Bratton and Van De Walle (1997) emphasise this amalgamation of traditional patrimonial logic with modern bureaucratic institutions as a characteristic feature of neopatrimonialism. Although traces of these practices can be found in "all polities", Bratton and Van De Walle (1997) assert that they are they are the core characteristic of "post-colonial politics in Africa". Pitcher, Moran, and Johnston (2009: 132) summarise the core characteristics of neopatrimonial societies as:

- "Highly personalistic presidential rule"
- "Reliance on patron-client ties and networks for professional and political advancement"
- "The use of state resources to reward supporters for their loyalty"
- "Repeated appropriation of state funds … for their personal enrichment".

Neopatrimonial systems are characterised by highly personalised leadership - the right to rule is given to an individual as opposed to an office (Bratton and Van De Walle, 1997).

Neopatrimonialism has, since its initial conception, gained wide popularity in discussions regarding statehood in Africa. The difficulties experienced by African states in emulating the Western trajectory to democracy has been blamed for the persistence of underdevelopment on the continent. Mkandawire described the state as "the most demonised social institution in Africa, vilified for its weakness … its repressive character, its dependence on foreign powers, its ubiquity, its absence, etc" (2001: 289). The use of the neopatrimonial lens to interpret politics in Africa has certainly contributed to the widespread "failed states narrative" and depicts African states as "quintessentially anti-developmental" and destined for a descent into informality and criminality (Bach, 2011: 289). The concept's first application in an African context, Jean-Francois Medard's investigation into neopatrimonialism as a contributing factor to Cameroon's "underdevelopment", seems to have set the tone for future studies. The concept is (and has been) frequently employed as a justification or explanation for weak states, underdevelopment, and pervasive corruption on the continent. Erdmann and Engel (2007) have famously described the

concept as “endemic” to Africa, while Therkildsen (2005: 36) went as far as to describe neopatrimonialism as “a paradigm for all African seasons”. The concept itself is not without some merit and, if employed correctly, is likely a useful lens for interpreting some of the behaviours exhibited by African leaders. Unfortunately, the concept’s overuse to describe any and all instances of corruption or personalised leadership on the continent has diluted its effectiveness somewhat.

Patronage

Patronage is often conflated with, or at least associated with, neopatrimonialism. This is due to the fact these both refer to a vertical relationship involving resource distribution from the top down. Distribution is facilitated by “an individual to whom all within the system owe their position” (Thomson, 2004: 127). Patronage-based relationships make use of blood, kinship, or community bonds to “facilitate moral, social, and economic support” (Singh, 1999: 467). This forms the basis of what Morris (2003) refers to as “economies of affection”. Patronage both relies on and results in a sort of cohesion amongst the individuals involved, they are brought into the system based on something they have in common and remain in the system because *it* becomes what they have in common.

Clientelism

Another concept which is often referred to in relation to neopatrimonialism is “clientelism”. Clapham (1985) refers to clientelism as one of three key manifestations of neopatrimonial leadership. Masenya (2017: 149) describes clientelism as a “reciprocal relationship involving distribution of resources or engagement of services between patrons and their clients”. This transactional relationship most often takes the form of a client rallying votes for their political patron in exchange for resources or services disbursed to them by the patron. This strategy, with its reliance on relationships of loyalty and dependence, forms one part of the neopatrimonial system. The system as a whole is, however, more complex and involves many actors other than these individuals lobbying for votes. The system includes the public sector as well as private citizens who receive personalised rewards in the form of licences, contracts, or projects (Bratton and Van De Walle, 1994: 458).

Extraversion

Some years after “neopatrimonialism” entered the lexicon of the discipline as a potential explanation for the persistent underdevelopment of the African continent, another prominent idea was introduced. This concept, known as “extraversion”, sought to account for Africa’s relations with the international system as a continent which was largely considered to be an outlier still characterised by a degree of “backwardness” and underdevelopment. The main proponent of this concept, French Political Scientist Jean-Francois Bayart, describes Africa as being in “limbo” in the international system, existing “only on the outer limits of the planet which we inhabit” (Bayart and Ellis, 2000: 217). Bayart, himself, rejects the notion that Africa is a passive observer of international affairs (Cheeseman, Bertrand, and Husaini, 2019). Moreover, he argues that African elites were complicit in the processes which have rendered African states dependent upon the West; this complicity was spurred on by the fact that it was in the interests of the elites to do so (Cheeseman, Bertrand, and Husaini, 2019). Bayart acknowledges the disparity between African nations and those of the West but what truly interests him, and what he seeks to explain through his concept of extraversion, is what African leaders make of this disparity (Clapham, 1994: 436).

Proponents of extraversion recognise the underdevelopment of Africa as being intrinsically linked to the continent’s continued dependence on the West politically, culturally, and economically (Sebola, 2018: 52). The continent’s lack of political development and the proliferation of corrupt and failed regimes are attributed to the fact that, in the post-colonial moment, African nations were forced to emulate Western models of state formation with little to no assistance or consideration for the fact that these models may not be suited to African contexts (Sebola, 2018: 52). African independence was “abrupt” (Gordon, 2007) and the lack of preparation has resulted in states which are characterised by “bad governance, incompetence, and corruption” (Mohiddin, 1998). Clapham (1994: 433) describes the “all too evident problems of African government” - corruption, instability, and ineffective institutions - as being ascribed to the incongruence between imported models of state building

and “Africa’s fragmented economies, artificial state borders, and indigenous social structures and values”.

Tull (2011: 8) describes extraversion as “asking how African actors shape their foreign relations and how they deal with external actors”. In its consideration of Africa’s external relations, extraversion maintains a strong focus on how African leaders react to and handle their state’s dependence on Western states. The implication of this concept is that, to some extent, African elites find this dependency on the West somewhat useful or even “politically desirable” (Tull, 2011: 8).

Having engaged initially with the literature on extraversion, one may begin to wonder what this strategy looks like in practice. The concept is based on a fundamental belief that Africa is underdeveloped and marginalised. Western nations, recognising the developmental challenges faced by African states, respond through “development assistance, loans, investment, diplomatic support, and security or police cooperation” in order to “solve what they perceive to be problems” in African countries (Tull, 2011: 8). African political elites, be they heads of state, members of government, or individuals with close ties to either, attempt to access these resources for their own private use and benefit (Tull, 2011: 8). These elites are, therefore, capitalising on their foreign dependency by using aid and assistance intended for development, as their own personal private income streams. The environment external to the state is thus viewed as a resource for “economic accumulation” and, by making use of this resource for their personal gain, African elites have been “active agents in the *mise en dependence* of their societies” (Bayart and Ellis, 2000: 219).

Tull (2011: 8) goes so far as to suggest that these elites compensate for their “lack of authority, legitimacy, or resources” domestically by orienting themselves away from the internal conditions of their state and towards external, specifically Western, states. The more these elites perpetuate dependence on the external world, the more legitimacy slips aways from them domestically, resulting in a vicious cycle.

Although the phenomenon refers mainly to a strategy for reaping economic benefits, Bayart theorises that extraversion could just as easily be a cultural phenomenon

(2000: 227). This cultural manifestation would involve the adoption of the figures of globalisation and mass consumer culture and their behaviours. Bayart refers specifically to Rambo and that the appropriation of his behaviour may encourage consumers of Rambo content to loot and plunder in order to obtain consumer goods they otherwise would not have had access to (Bayart and Ellis, 2000: 227). This cultural extraversion has been helped along significantly by the proliferation of private foreign actors who have gone to Africa for "commercial gain alone" (Bayart and Ellis, 2000: 239). Bayart describes private security and mercenary companies, transnational criminal organisations, and entrepreneurs as "essential partners in the strategies of extraversion implemented by local power holders" (2000: 239).

Bayart's extraversion refers mainly to the elites of the continent who reap benefits from being complicit in the continent's dependence on the West. Another of his concepts, "the Politics of the Belly", offers a look at the other side of the coin. This concept refers to the way in which post-colonial politics in Africa has been largely dominated by the struggle to accumulate and consume material goods (Thomas, 2000: 154). These two concepts offer a poignant contrast: while the elites of the continent engage in strategies of extraversion and accumulate rents at the expense of the state, the ordinary citizens endure the "politics of the belly" whereby they are relegated to struggle for survival.

Elite Capture

Elite capture, as a distinct phenomenon with its own name and characteristics, is fairly novel. The phenomenon was named in the 1970s and has since gained popularity among scholars of International Relations and Development Studies (Shapland, van Paassen, and Almekinders, 2021: 2). Although the practices associated with the capture of elites have been going on for centuries. The concept refers broadly to the preferential treatment shown to society's elites by actors hoping to get ahead. By virtue of their elevated social, economic, or political status or position, elites are able to wield considerable power and exert undue influence (Rajasekhar, Babu, and Manjula, 2018: 21). The phenomenon of elite capture bears

resemblance to some of the characteristics of neopatrimonialism and extraversion, existing almost as a culmination of the two concepts.

In some instances, definitions of elite capture edge closer toward the neopatrimonial end of the scale. Musgrave and Wong (2016: 90), for example, describe the existence of a "political elite" comprising "public officials or individuals with demonstrated political affiliation and influence". The perceived legitimacy of these individuals allows them to make sometimes skewed decisions regarding the distribution of resources. This capture of resources by political elites bears resemblance to Francisco's conception of neopatrimonialism as a top-down system, whereby resources are distributed by those at the top to those further down on a purely preferential basis (2010: 1). Whittaker (2022) also draws on this stream of thinking about elite capture, defining it as the crafting of systems "by and for elite interests", specifically referencing elites' intentions to retain power. This view of elite capture correlates with neopatrimonialism, which represents an inherently vertical relationship between patron and client. This relationship is often observed when political elites appeal to the interests of very specific constituents in order to stay in power.

Other scholars, such as Shapland, van Paassen and Almekinders, however, employ elite capture within the context of development aid programmes. This is, arguably, what the concept was meant to describe from its inception in the 1970s (Holdcroft, 1978). In this context, elite capture is described as sectors of society (ie. elites) "usurping undue portions of project benefits for personal gain" (Shapland, van Paassen, and Almekinders, 2021: 3). This could include the exercising of their significant social, economic, or political influence in the selection of beneficiaries of resources intended as development aid or in determining locations for developments such as schools, recreation centres, or hospitals (Rajasekhar, Babu, and Manjula, 2018: 27). This contextualisation of elite capture (as something which happens in relation to development aid) closer resembles Bayart's extraversion than neopatrimonialism.

Conceptual confusion over what exactly elite capture is or isn't reflects a perennial problem within the literature on corruption: the tendency to proliferate concepts

without clear delineation of how they differ from previously conceptualised manifestations of the corruption phenomenon.

State Capture

Defining State Capture

The preceding discussion characterised corruption as manifesting in three broad thematic areas, namely: the political, the economic, and the sociological. The relevance of state capture as a form of corruption lies in the fact that it manifests in all three of these thematic areas. The impacts of state capture include significant social costs which are borne by the ordinary citizens of the captured state; the captors reap economic benefits while the overall economic performance of the state declines; and the capacity of the state to meet its obligations in terms of the welfare of its citizens is significantly diminished (Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann 2003: 770).

There is nothing new in the notion that some individuals or groups are willing to engage in less-than-legal methods in search of increased influence or benefits; in some form or another, corruption has always been around (Lodge 2018: 30). Czada (2011) claims the roots of state capture can be identified in the mediaeval practices of corporatism - a system in which society is hierarchically ordered and some groups are afforded a deliberate monopoly within their respective sectors in exchange for "observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support" (Schmitter 1974: 93-94). Modern-day state capture is more sophisticated but it is easy to see why Czada drew a comparison with the ideology of corporatism. The precise conceptualisation of state capture as a distinct form of corruption, as is employed in this research report, dates to the late 1990s/early 2000s when it was popularised by a group of economists from the World Bank (Lodge 2018: 14). The concept was initially developed as an explanation for observations in the transition economies of Eastern Europe after the Cold War. Hellman and Kaufmann (2001: 33) noted that many of these states began their transition to democracy weakened by the Cold War and generally unable to provide basic public goods to their citizens. These states were also characterised by a set of particularly influential state-owned entities dominating their respective markets. New

entrants to the markets adopted a strategy whereby property rights, security, and other advantages were purchased from public officials; these processes were termed ‘state capture’ (Hellman and Kaufmann 2001: 33).

Since its inception, the concept has been modified, clarified, and developed further; as recently as 2017, scholars have continued to add their own definitions; these range from detailed and exhaustive to some as simple as “the elite extraction of state resources for private gain” (Grzymala-Busse 2008: 639). The 2017 World Development Report offered a broader definition of state capture than has previously been occupied, characterising state capture as the “exercise of power by private actors - through control over resources, threat of violence, or other forms of violence - to shape policies or implementation in service of their narrow interest”. The vast number of definitions of state capture and a lack of conceptual clarity over the issue has led to a significant degree of abuse of the concept; most common being the umbrella application of the term ‘state capture’ to any seemingly corrupt relationship between the state and private stakeholders (Shai 2017: 65).

An important point of conceptual clarification is that state capture is a form of grand corruption but it is not a concept completely removed from that of corruption (Hellman and Kaufmann 2001: 31). It is, in a sense, a subtype of corruption which follows its own processes and has its own, distinct characteristics and objectives. In their seminal work on state capture in transition economies, Hellman and Kaufmann (2001: 32) note that the distinct difference between most forms of corruption and state capture is that corruption is generally aimed at influencing the implementation of existing laws, rules, and regulations. State capture, however, is aimed at influencing the formation of laws, rules, and regulations to ensure they are beneficial to the captor. As Begovic (2005: 3) puts it: “the point is that state capture involves formulation rather than breaking the rules”. In doing so, captor firms or individuals seek to reap advantages directly from the state (Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann 2003: 753). Mbaku (2018: 772) notes that, through the appropriation of state institutions or functions, captors can influence the formation or adoption of new laws and regulations, as well as the amendment or modification of existing laws which disrupt their objectives. Ultimately, a captor is no longer bound by market or other

rules and is able to extract rents and accrue benefits on a recurring basis (Stoyanov, Gerganov, and Stefanov, 2016: 3).

The Centre for the Study of Democracy, which has conducted significant research into state capture in Eastern Europe, identifies a common characteristic across all definitions of state capture, namely: deviance. To this Institute, state capture refers to a "deviant form of relations between several types of collective actors: the state, the business sector, and the political class" (Stoyanov, Gerganov, and Stefanov 2016: 2). Deviance in this case refers not to the corrupt practices of state capture but rather to the fact that state capture represents a deviation from the patterns of relations between these actors which would be considered the norm. This addition to a traditional conceptualisation of state capture emphasises the way in which the processes of state capture pervert the state and prevent it from meeting its obligations to its citizens.

If we, like the Stoyanov, Gerganov, and Stefanov (2016: 2), consider state capture to be a 'deviation' from the normative form or pattern of relations which exist between the state, the business sector, political elites, and the general population of the state, then it stands to reason that, generally speaking, a mechanism of state capture could be any corrupt transaction or behaviour in these relations or interference with the obligations of the state. Grzymala-Busse (2008: 640) describes the state as the "formal institutions that administers citizen obligations … and regulates public provisions" such as infrastructure, the rule of law, and general welfare of its citizens. Furthermore, she states that the state comprises both "public finances and the channels of their distribution" (Gryzmala-Busse 2008: 640). Deviation from the state's responsibilities and obligations towards its citizens, through the processes of misallocation of public funds and resources to politically connected firms and individuals can result in a process of state capture.

Captors may represent commercial sectoral interests but they can also represent political interests or the interests of an ethnic elite (Lodge 2018: 17); ultimately the processes and objectives of state capture remain the same, whether the beneficiaries are individuals or firms, bound by their business interests or common ethnic or political backgrounds (Hellman and Kaufmann 2000: xv). The forms, type,

and extent of the state capture project will be different depending on the situation and are all largely determined by the captors and their relative power (Stoyanov, Gerganov, and 2016: 2).

Since its initial conception and further development of the concept, state capture has emerged as a threat in a number of states worldwide (Sitorus 2011: 45). Although the phenomenon often happens “behind closed doors”, the effects thereof are often publicly visible and tangible to the wider population of the captured state. These effects on a population, an economy, and the policy space of the state often present in patterns which can be found and analysed, if one knows where to look (Galev, Gerganov, and Todorov 2021: 14) The following section will describe common mechanisms of state capture, as identified in the literature, and describe which mechanisms will be relevant for the purposes of this project.

As stated by Southall (2018: 30), there is nothing novel about the notion that a certain group within society may be able to (overtly or covertly) usurp control of a state and the machinery thereof, and use this for their own benefit. In many ways this is a tale as old as time and similar interactions can be traced back throughout history. The use of the term “state capture” however, as it is currently understood, was popularised within the context of the patterns of corruption which emerged in post-Soviet spaces in the transition to market economies (Southall, 2018: 30). This is the context which produced Hellman and Kaufmann’s formative literature on state capture which can be understood as a process completely distinct from other forms of corruption and state control. What sets state capture apart from early colonialism or administrative corruption is the specific set of mechanisms seen to be present in captured states. The initial identification and analysis of instances of state capture relies on three identifiers, namely: a set of economic outcomes deemed problematic, key stakeholders with political connections, and information on a set of mechanisms through which advantages are conferred on those with political connections (Raballand and Rijkers, 2021: 5).

Identifying and diagnosing state capture relies on the ability of a researcher to demonstrate manipulation of policy formulation and/or implementation to advantage a select few firms or individuals (Raballand and Rijkers, 2021). This manipulation

often manifests in privileged access (to land, import licenses, or natural resources), the perversion of public procurement (whereby contracts are awarded to those with connections), and preferential treatment in tax enforcement or the awarding of grants or subsidies (Raballand and Rijkers, 2021. Fiebelkorn (2019) describes how even debt financing can be used as a mechanism of state capture. The illicit nature of these dealings would suggest they are difficult to study, however, many scholars (particularly economists) have begun to unpack these mechanisms of state capture. The World Bank has been especially involved in this academic exploration over the past two decades in an attempt to analyse the conditions which facilitate state capture, the processes by which it occurs, as well as the extent to which it occurs (Sitorus, 2011). The diverse array of state actors and captors involved in various cases of state capture in different geographic locales makes for a very diverse and dynamic phenomenon and, although no two cases of state capture are exactly the same, it can be said that weak institutions, “heavy state involvement”, and room for actors of the state to act within their own discretion are the ideal conditions for state capture to occur (Fiebelkorn, 2019: 1).

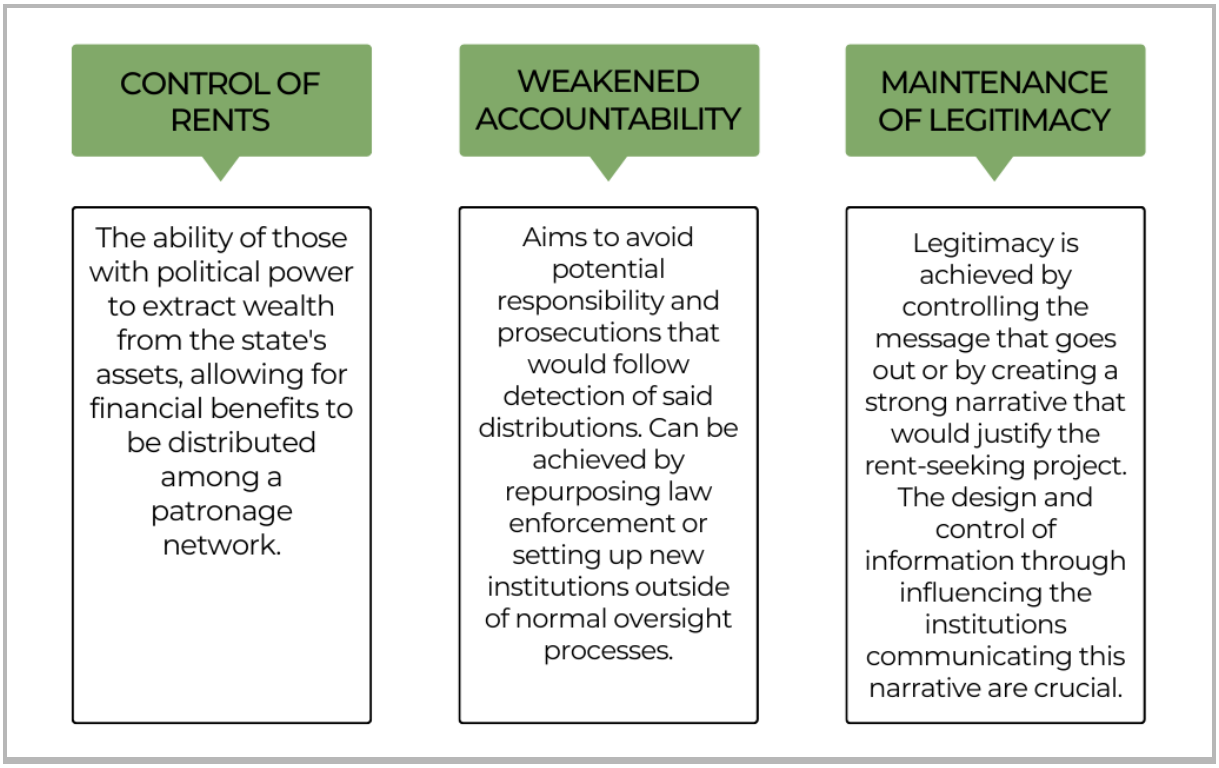
Peter et al (2022) make an interesting distinction between corruption and state capture which will be useful in maintaining a clear difference between the two concepts. Corruption, they say, tends to be an “individual action… facilitated by a loose network of corrupt players”. Regardless of the exact form it takes, corruption is almost always “fragmented and opportunistic” (Peter et al, 2022: ix). State capture, on the other hand, is “systemic and well organised” and consists of repeated transactions which increase in scale as time goes on (Peter et al, 2022: ix). Perhaps the most useful part of this distinction comes in the form of an analogy which, in the course of researching and writing this paper, has proven incredibly useful. The authors speak about “the rules of the game”, essentially referring to the operation of politics in the country and the state’s formal legislation. Corruption, they say, is based on an inherent belief or “political conviction” that the “rules of the game” are rigged against certain communities or sectors. This legitimate the breaking of these rules in order to tip the scales. State capture, however, aims to change the formal and informal “rules of the game”. Once these rules have been overhauled, the captors “legitimise them, and select the players who are allowed to participate” (Peter et al, 2022: ix). Callaghan, Foley, and Swilling (2021: 392) further emphasise that, while

corruption forms a key part of the processes of state capture, the two concepts are not equatable. Ultimately, state capture always involves corruption or corrupt activities, but corruption does not always equal a fully-fledged case of state capture.

Although not the focus of this research paper, the South African experience of state capture is one of the most extensive examples of the phenomenon since its inception. The country's government and its agencies were infiltrated by factions seeking to extract rents and, for the most part, the country was successfully captured. As a student researching and writing about state capture in an African context, it would be remiss of me not to mention the South African example. Perhaps one of the most useful things the country's experience has yielded for researchers has been the publishing of the Commission of Inquiry into Allegation of State Capture (also known as the Zondo Commission), a multi-year, extensive deep dive reporting on every aspect of the state capture project. Through the volumes of this report, several traits of state capture have been identified, including: the appointment of loyal individuals to positions in government, projects which seek to intentionally weaken state institutions, the manipulation of existing policies, and the creation of "parallel decision-making structures" (Callaghan, Foley, and Swilling, 2021: 17).

Writing on the South African experience of state capture, Callaghan, Foley, and Swilling developed a model known as the "Racket of Predatory Power" (2021: 26). This concept is used to explain "how a power elite can repurpose state governance in order to derive benefits that align with the power elite's political and financial interests" (Kachur, 2022: 512). Although the model was developed as part of a project researching the extensive state capture network in South Africa, the components reflect the same sentiments as those of Hellman and Kaufmann's initial conception of state capture and so can be employed to investigate other instances of state capture outside of South Africa as well. The three key components are displayed in the diagram below:

Figure 2: Callaghan, Foley, and Swilling's "Racket of Predatory Power"



Source: Callaghan, N., Foley, R., and Swilling, M. 2021. Anatomy of State Capture. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media

What makes state capture a compelling phenomenon to study is the fact that state capture encompasses all three of the thematic areas presented in literature on corruption. State capture presents itself as a truly pervasive form of corruption which targets political and economic processes for the purposes of the captor reaping benefits, this results in significant societal impacts for the residents of the captured state. The processes of state capture are political in the sense that they target the laws, policies, and regulations of a state in an attempt to shape them according to the preferences of the captor (Hellman and Kaufmann 2001: 31). This implies that, in order to engage in state capture, the captor firm or individual would need to have some influence over political processes or authorities. Lugon-Moulin (2010) characterises state capture as a process wherein elites, businesspersons, or firms manipulate the formation of policies, thereby skewing the "rules of the game" in their favour. State capture is foremost a political concern due to the fact that it jeopardises one of the foundational elements of statehood, namely: legitimacy (Jonas, 2016). Furthermore, a captured state is characterised by a lack of transparency and

accountability to its constitution and citizens (Mbaku, 2018: 793). A number of studies conducted on state capture across varying geographic areas points towards state capture posing a significant political economy threat (these include: Balabushko et al (2018) in post-communist countries, Johnson and Mitton (2001) in Southeast Asia, and Behassine et al (2009) and Freund et al (2017) in the Middle East and North Africa). Some of these authors believe state capture to be a major root cause of economic stagnation in affected states (Raballand and Rijkers, 2021: 4). As in the case with other forms of corruption, the political and economic behaviours associated with the processes of state capture have a profound sociological impact on the citizens of the captured state; while captors enjoy concentrated gains, the citizens of the state suffer economic consequences of looted public funds and a dysfunctional political system (Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann, 2003: 769). Mbaku (2018: 779) asserts that, once state capture has begun, state institutions are adapted into tools for the advancement of the interests of the captor and no longer serve the needs nor uphold the interests of the state's citizens. Aside from the immediate effects felt by citizens when these institutions stop functioning, there are longer-term costs involved as well; development goals cannot be reached in the absence of functioning state institutions, thus state capture jeopardises the future of the country as well as its present circumstances (Lodge, 2018: 14).

Mechanisms of State Capture

Hellman and Kaufmann (2001) place great emphasis on the mechanisms utilised by firms and individuals in their pursuit of influencing policies and accruing material benefits. These mechanisms often take the form of "anticompetitive barriers" which allow certain powerful firms and individuals to amass concentrated gains while others are excluded from these benefits (Sitorus 2011: 45). The value in identifying the mechanisms of state capture lies not only in the fact that they represent the actual processes used to capture the state, but also in the fact that they are sometimes visible and tangible, and thus give scholars something to study empirically which points toward state capture. Understanding the mechanisms of state capture can assist in the long-term by indicating areas of ineffectiveness which can be addressed in a policy setting (Fiebelkorn 2019: 6). It must be noted that a one-size-fits-all method of studying state capture or identifying its mechanisms

simply does not exist (Fiebelkorn 2019: 10), this is due to the fact that actors and their methods may vary, thus resulting in unique manifestations of the state capture phenomenon. The following discussion on the mechanisms of state capture represents those mechanisms which are most frequently identified in existing research and literature.

Simple mechanisms of state capture can include practices such as bribery of parliamentarians or the offering of donations or inducements to political parties in order to better align their policies with the needs of the captor (Lodge 2018: 14). More complex mechanisms include preferential access to public assets, preferential treatment in the allocation of public contracts, as well as certain privileges afforded in terms of taxation (Fiebelkorn 2019: 9-10). Fiebelkorn (2019: 20) differentiates between *de jure* mechanisms in state capture (for example, voting patterns on laws or the status of the state's regulatory framework) and *de facto* mechanisms (these include public procurement processes, public lending tendencies, and customs and tax protocols). Furthermore, Stoyanov, Gerganov, and Stefanov add that captors may enact laws or regulations aimed at ensuring their own market advantage or to exempt them from prosecution. In some cases the captors may bribe members of the civil service and regulatory bodies to ensure no action is taken against their state capture activities (2016: 6).

Grzymala-Busse (2008: 649) refers to a number of "extractive mechanisms" available to firms or individuals seeking to extract rents or benefits from the state through a process of state capture; these include the awarding of contracts or tenders to allies or loyalists, nationalisation of assets or state institutions, or engaging in opaque accounting practices. Captor firms or individuals will often seek to maximise their control over state agencies by clearing out the country's civil service, weakening regulatory bodies or controls, or taking over the allocation of foreign aid and mineral rights (Grzymala-Busse 2008: 649). These extractive mechanisms often also target the state's fiscal bodies such as budget offices or central banks (Gryzmala-Busse 2008: 649). The political administration is often stacked with loyal supporters, who perpetuate the cycle and begin to extract benefits from the state themselves (Grzymala-Busse 2008: 650). The effects of these mechanisms manifest in a distortion of government policy, poorer quality of

government, heavier taxes, more corruption, and overall poor macroeconomic management (Hellman and Schankerman 2000: 555).

In an official guide issued by the World Bank concerning the study and quantitative analysis of state capture (Fiebelkorn 2019), a cross-validation of three factors is required, namely:

1. Political Connections: Who is connected with whom and to what degree?
2. Capture Mechanism: What are the mechanisms through which politically connected firms or individuals accrue benefits or advantages?
3. Firm-level Indicators: What is the actual impact of the capture? (Often analysed through a comparison of performance differences between connected and unconnected firms and/or individuals)

Effects of State Capture and Corruption

Corruption, in all its forms, and state capture are inherently damaging to every aspect of the state ranging from its economic viability to its political legitimacy. These practices have also been proven to be harmful to the citizens of the state who bear the brunt of the negative consequences of corrupt systems.

Krueger (1974: 302) describes the way in which rent seeking by a nation's elites can impact citizens' perceptions of their country's economic system. In these economies, where resource distribution is based on an individual's proximity to a person in political power, poorer and less-well-connected individuals and communities are excluded from reaping the benefits of rent seeking. Suspicion over the existence of this kind of arrangement is likely to result in temptation to "resort to greater and greater intervention, thereby increasing the amount of economic activity devoted to rent seeking" (Krueger, 1974: 302). A vicious cycle can emerge from this whereby dissatisfaction with selective rent seeking results in more and more individuals engaging in rent seeking, seeking to right the balance.

Kaufmann (1997: 116) describes an argument presented by corruption apologists which asserts that "greasing the wheels" of the system through bribery and

corruption is effective in evading “burdensome regulations and ineffective legal systems”. He argues against this perspective, however, citing the severe effects that corruption left unchecked can wreak upon societies. This “grease in the wheels” of an ineffective or old-fashioned system instead becomes “fuel for excessive and discretionary regulations” (Kaufmann, 1997: 116). Excessive “grease” has, in some cases, served as a strengthener for “gigantic monopolistic structures” and even contributed to macroeconomic crises; Kaufmann (1997: 117) cites the examples of Albania and Bulgaria.

These practices have a tendency to exact significant economic costs. Kaufmann (1997: 118) describes a misallocation of talent as jobs with “the potential to collect lucrative graft” attract individuals who are not necessarily interested in performing said job to the best of their ability. Additionally, jobs may be allocated on the basis of loyalty or connection to a politically influential person instead of being allocated to individuals with the necessary skill sets and characteristics for the job. Bureaucratic institutions may lag behind in terms of employing technological advances as corrupt bureaucrats “tend to favour nonstandards, complex, and expensive capital-intensive projects that make it easier to skim significant sums” (Kaufmann, 1997: 118).

Seeking to represent the effects of corruption in empirical terms, economist Paulo Mauro found that countries with high levels of corruption are likely to receive 5% less investment than a country which is relatively uncorrupt (Mauro, 1995: 681). Corrupt countries may even lose around half a percentage point of gross domestic product (GDP) per year (Mauro, 1995: 683). They can also expect slowed rates of foreign direct investment due a lack of confidence in their ability to use FDI funds wisely (Kaufmann, 1997: 120).

Overall, corrupt practices are negatively associated with developmental objectives (Kaufmann, 1997: 120). Neopatrimonialism, particularly, has been associated with the misuse of state finances and Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds (Francisco, 2010: 1). Sandbrook (2000: 97) has asserted that states displaying neopatrimonial characteristics are the “archetype of the anti-developmental state” where the economic objectives and political survival of a personalistic leader and his

regime are given precedence over the needs and survival of the state's citizens; this has detrimental effects.

Politically, these systems display undevelopment in their civil society resulting in a high likelihood of challenges in consolidating any subsequent democratic regime (Bratton and Van De Walle, 1997). The frequent fluctuation of positions of individuals within the elites and the competition which exists between them in their rent seeking activities also constrains the growth and functioning of political institutions (Pawelka, 2002: 434). Masenya (2017: 147) echoes these sentiments, acknowledging that in the short term these systems lack accountability, trust, and legitimacy. In the long-term, the development of robust democratic accountability and effective, credible democratic institutions is eroded (Masenya, 2017: 147). The ultimate political cost is paid by the citizens of the corrupt or captured state. The state, damaged and overcome by private interests, is not able to uphold its responsibilities toward its citizens (Erdmann and Engel, 2007:105). Citizens, having been disappointed by their corrupt leadership slowly but surely lost their confidence in these institutions (Nawaz, 2008: 6).

Once the mechanisms of state capture begin to take hold, state institutions are rendered less effective in serving the needs of their people and are instead used "for the advancement of the interests" of the captor individuals or groups (Mbaku, 2018: 779). This can generally be seen in poor service delivery, the redirection of fiscal resources away from the provision of public goods, and an overall weakening of state capacity through the appointment of "pliable but less than capable" individuals in key positions, especially those in political or financial offices (Martin and Solomon, 2016: 22). The processes of state capture provide custodians in state institutions with incentive to act opportunistically and in their own best interests, thus undermining national development (Mbaku, 2018). Hellman and Kaufmann's initial work in 2001 also discovered that state capture systematically deters foreign and domestic investment in the economy and stifles the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, thus leaving the captured economy all-the-more reliant on its captors. While the processes and ultimate outcome of state capture result in benefits for the captor or captor firm, it is associated with great social costs incurred by the rest of the economy and the population of the captured state (Hellman, Jones,

and Kaufmann, 2003). In states such as Sudan and the Central African Republic, which are facing immense humanitarian burden and socio-economic constraints, the long-term implications of corrupt practices could prove detrimental to their citizens.

These foundational works do, however, come with some limitations. Hellman and Kaufmann's 2001 study, wherein the concept of state capture was popularised, relied on data from the World Bank's Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS). This particular survey has been replicated a number of times but has never been conducted in Africa. While aspects of the data set can be found from other sources, the BEEPS provides key firm-level indicators which are not available elsewhere. Given the time frame and nature of this study, replicating the BEEPS within the case study countries is not possible, this may be seen as a limitation or perhaps an area for future study. Despite the inaccessibility of this particular methodology, the literature does describe qualitative methods of identifying and/or measuring the occurrence of state capture; this will be discussed further in the Research Design section of this proposal. In addition to the lack of African data in the World Bank's BEEPS, there is a lack of African data in the study of state capture, more broadly. Aside from a handful of studies on Tunisia and Egypt, and a recent proliferation of work on South Africa's experience, state capture in Africa is severely under-researched. Furthermore, the multitude of definitions and descriptions of state capture characterise it as a process which is undertaken by the executive of, or close affiliates to, the captured state. The literature thus far has not made provision for the capture of one state by firms or individuals linked to another state. This omission in the literature on state capture seems particularly applicable to the aforementioned Russian activities on the African continent, particularly in Sudan and the Central African Republic.

The literature on these manifestations of corruption is dense and extensive. Despite the wealth of scholarship on the phenomenon, one cannot help but feel as though these manifestations all fall short in some way. Even state capture, which has been conceptualised extensively to include descriptions of its mechanisms and guides to identifying the phenomenon, does not seem to cover all aspects of Russia engagement in Africa. Having consulted some of the extensive literature on corruption and summarised the salient characteristics of seven manifestations of

corruption, it has become clear that there are some characteristics which do not fit the activities observed in the case studies. Each of these manifestations of corruption fall short in their explanatory potential when applied to the context of the case studies. It is at this point in the research report that the methodology evolves into something slightly different. The core aim of the research report has not changed, this report still seeks to find a conceptual framework which, when applied to the case study states, offers explanatory and analytical value in accounting for the engagements of individuals and firms with ties to the Russian state. What has changed, however, is the origin of that conceptual framework. In the initial stages of this research project, the focus was on the applicability of state capture as an interpretation of what is observed in the case study states. Having established this model does not fully account for the phenomenon at work in Sudan and the CAR, the research report has shifted from a theory-testing project, to a theory-proposing one. The subsequent two chapters will be dedicated to conceptualising a new framework and applying it to the two case studies.

Conceptual Framework: Extra-State Capture

Throughout the course of the preceding Literature Review, it should be noted that there is no shortage of conceptualisations or manifestations of corruption. Often, these manifestations differ in the most subtle of ways and it begs the question: are so many different conceptualisations for the phenomenon of corruption really necessary? It is not within the purview of this study to debate this particular question. Instead this research report seeks to add to the quagmire somewhat. Ultimately, this research paper seeks to draw attention to the oversaturation of concepts in our understanding of corruption and, although it will be offering yet another understanding of the concept, seeks to motivate a new conceptual framework for several reasons. These reasons, and the particulars of the conceptual framework itself, will be discussed in the following chapter.

A survey of the literature on corruption and its many manifestations may lead one to believe that every possible manifestation of corruption has been captured by a scholar at some point or another. While the manifestations discussed in the preceding chapter - namely: petty and grand corruption, neopatrimonialism, patronage, clientelism, extraversion, elite capture, and state capture - present a comprehensive picture of how corruption manifests itself in society, it is my belief that none of these manifestations fully or accurately described the patterns of Russian relations being observed in certain African countries today.

Each of the aforementioned manifestations of corruption can be considered to be a box. Each one has specific dimensions and allows only specific characteristics to be held within that box. In each instance, there are aspects of Russia-Africa relations which fit into the box or meet the parameters for that particular manifestation of corruption. However, none of these boxes is a perfect fit. In each instance there are parts of these relations which do not fit a particular box or where a defining characteristic is missing.

Generally, there are several aspects of Russia-Africa relations which may be described as “corrupt”. Behaviours such as bribery, kickbacks, and money laundering, described by Sohail and Cavill (2008) as “man’s ills” take place within the

bounds of Russian relations with several African states, including Sudan and the Central African Republic. It is likely that these, and other corrupt activities, take place in Africa without the involvement of external parties. It is also highly likely that these activities occur in relations with other external actors like the USA or China, although these partners are not the focus of this paper.

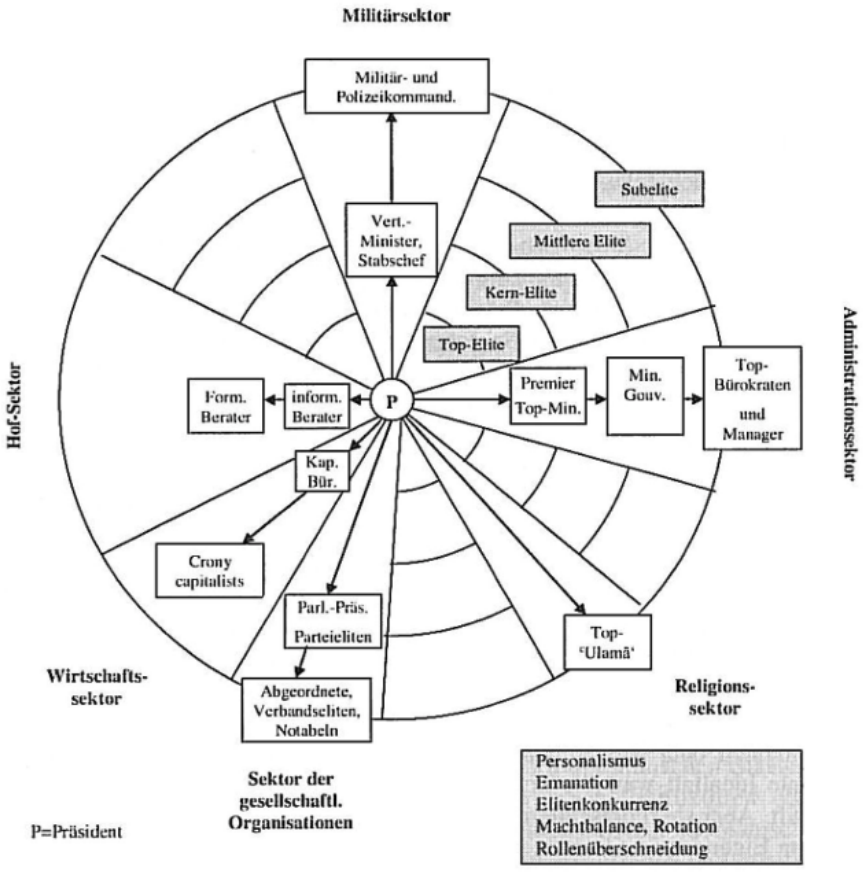
Grzymala-Busse (2008: 657) describes corruption as a strategy employed by predatory regimes to eliminate competition and consolidate their rule. This rings true in the case study states, and indeed, in many other African countries. Another related manifestation of corruption which reflects the behaviours observed in Russia-Africa relations is that of rent seeking. Krueger (1975) defines this as a form of corruption wherein state resources are privatised in the form of loans, property, subsidies, or cash transfers, and wealth is accumulated by the political elites, or 'rentiers'.

While these activities, broadly referred to as corruption, may well be present within the context of Russian relations with the case study states, they do not fully account for the depth and complexity of what is at play in these countries. These activities, displayed by both the Russian and African actors at play, represent only a fraction of the phenomenon being witnessed in these relations. This lack of depth and inability to cover the spectrum of behaviours observed in the case study states steers this research paper away from the realm of corruption in search of a more appropriate description.

Neopatrimonialism, defined as a system characterised by the simultaneous existence of Weber's 'legal-rational authority' in the form of formal institutions of state, alongside the granting of favours and special treatment to individuals with close ties to these institutions (Cromwell and Chintedza, 2005), comes a step closer in its explanatory potential. The Pawelka Model is particularly useful in explaining the phenomenon, presenting the neopatrimonial system as a series of concentric circles with a single decision-maker at the centre (Pawelka, 1985: 202). Surrounding the centre are select elites, organised in differing proximity to the core based on their importance. Pawelka refers to these as the top, core, middle, and sub-elites (Pawelka, 1985: 202). This model can implicate several sectors of society, including

the military, the economy, the religious sector, or the country's bureaucracy. This model, and the image it puts forward of a neopatrimonial system, offers a fairly fitting interpretation of what is observed in the case study states.

Figure 3: Pawelka's Model depicting a neopatrimonial network in Egypt



Source: Pawelka, P. 1985. *Herrschaft und Entwicklung im Nahen Osten: Ägypten*. Heidelberg: C.F.Müller.

Both Sudan and the CAR present a similar structure to what is suggested by the Pawelka Model: both states are led by strongmen leaders who sit at the centre of extensive networks of supporters within several of the state's sectors. Where these states differ from the model is that the centre is not occupied by one man alone. The centre of the systems in place in these states is occupied simultaneously by their strongmen leaders (the militant Hemedti in Sudan and Touadera in CAR) as well as a network of Russian individuals.

At first glance, the literature on neopatrimonialism appears to present a possible explanation for the patterns of behaviour observed in Russia-Africa relations. However, delving into the literature reveals a narrative which is largely reliant on the presence of a single, influential leader. Within the context of Russian interactions with the case study states, the centre of the network consists of a group of individuals intent on extracting rents for their own benefit. The networks within the context of these case studies may be somewhat neopatrimonial in nature, but this concept does not fully explain the complexities of these systems.

Closely associated with the concept of neopatrimonialism, patronage and clientelism also cannot fully account for the patterns of behaviour being observed in the case study states. The defining characteristic of patronage is its reliance on “blood, kinship, or community bonds” for garnering support. While the actors involved in the looting of resources in Sudan and the CAR are certainly motivated by a common sense of greed, their actions cannot truly be considered patronage as they are not bound by blood, kinship, or community bonds. Clientelism, more broadly, refers to a “reciprocal relationship involving the distribution of resources”. At a stretch, one may consider the nature of relations between elites within the case study states and their Russian collaborators to be clientelistic. In some ways these relations do occur on a “patron-client” basis whereby suitably connected individuals (both local to these countries as well as their Russian partners) distribute resources, services, or benefits to a network of clients. The true value of the concept, however, lies in the analysis of how patrons use their clients to rally political support. This transactional relationship is perhaps best observed in the incentives patrons offer to their clients in exchange for their unconditional support at the polls. This concept is best deployed in understanding the interplay between patrons and clients within an electoral campaign. This, in addition to a lack of depth and breadth in covering all aspects of the relationships observed, makes clientelism an inappropriate lens through which to interpret Russian relations with the case study states.

Each of the aforementioned manifestations of corruption have a characteristic in common which means their analytical value and explanatory potential in the context of Russia-Africa relations falls short. This characteristic is that these behaviours and, more importantly, the actors responsible for displaying them, are internal to the state.

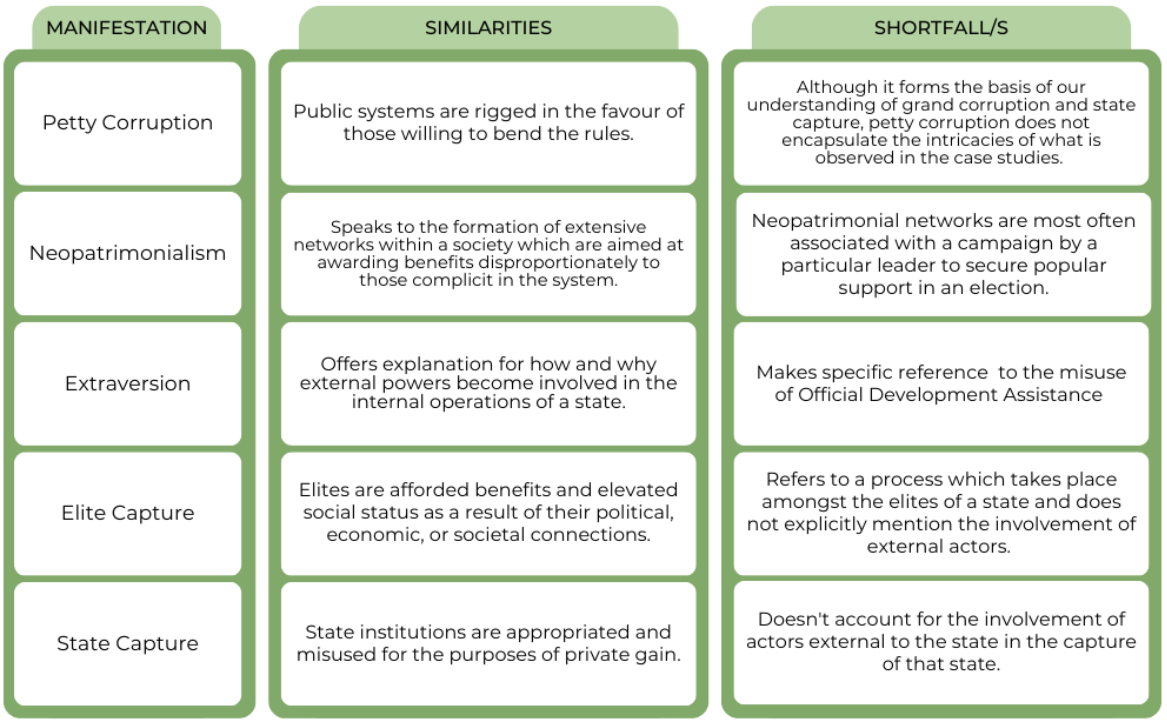
The purpose of this research report is to investigate the nature of Russia-Africa relations, with specific reference to the actions of individuals linked to the Russian state within the case study states of Sudan and the CAR. In order to account for these relations, it is imperative that the conceptual framework or lens employed makes specific reference to the involvement of external actors. Bayart's concept of extraversion appears to fulfil that need. The concept is proposed as a means for interpreting Africa's relations with the external world and appears to present a promising interpretation for the cases in this study. Bayart draws attention to the continued dependence of the African continent on external, specifically Western, partners. At the same time, Bayart emphasises that some African leaders have been complicit in perpetuating this dependency. This proposition certainly lends itself to being employed in the analysis of these case study states, drawing attention to the fact that Russian partners have been invited into these countries by African statesmen. The concept does, however, rely specifically on the mismanagement of Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds to demonstrate how continued dependence on the West proves to be beneficial, and even lucrative, to African elites. This addition, although fascinating and certainly observable in several countries, is the dimension of the extraversion box where the case study states just do not fit. The behaviours observed in the case study states are complex and pervade several sectors of society, the transactional nature of Sudan and the CAR's reliance on Russia is not limited to the provision of ODA. In fact, ODA is yet another area where Russia is overshadowed by other nations. ODA does not feature in discussions of Russia's relations with its key African partners, not because the amount of aid it provides is negligible, but rather because these relations are predicated on far more valuable resources. In the eyes of an embattled African leader, offers of security assistance, disinformation campaigns aimed to keep them in power, and unfettered access to public resources for personal gain are of far greater value than ODA. This focus on how ODA, specifically, is misappropriated by political elites is too narrow to account for the full spectrum of relations being observed in the context of the case study states. In this sense, extraversion is as much an 'imperfect fit' as the other manifestations of corruption. The concept's emphasis on the complicity of African actors in the processes resulting in dependence on the West is, however, too compelling to discard completely.

Elite Capture is another manifestation of corruption which offers some analytical potential for interpreting what is seen in the case study states. Some scholars working on research on Russia-Africa relations have already recognised the analytical value of the concept, describing their actions as “undermining democracy through elite capture” (Siegle, 2021b). The concept refers widely to the fact that societal elites experience preferential treatment by virtue of the fact that they are elites (Rajasekhar, Babu, and Manjula, 2018: 21). Simply because of their elevated social, political, and economic status, some individuals receive benefits and are able to exert influence, thus further elevating them above others. At face value, this appears to apply to the case study states where politically-connected individuals receive kickbacks and benefits directly related to the presence and involvement of Russia individuals in the country’s affairs. Within the context of both Sudan and the Central African Republic, it would be fair to say that political elites have been captured by Russian actors.

Like extraversion, however, literature on elite capture has a significant slant towards the use of development aid for personal gain. The concept was actually born within this context as development studies scholar Holdcroft (1978) described the phenomenon whereby certain individuals, by virtue of their elevated social standing, were able to cement this standing by dipping into funds earmarked for development programmes. This occurred through the misappropriation of funds as well as the preferential awarding of contract. Although these two things do occur within the context of the case studies, elite capture is conceptually shallow and - much like extraversion - cannot fully account for the complexity of interactions being witnessed in the case study states.

The final manifestation of corruption which must be considered for application to the case studies is that of state capture. In the initial stages of this research report, the focus was entirely on state capture as an explanation for what is happening within these case study states (and in nearly every other African country currently engaged in relations with Russia). Having consulted a wealth of literature on the subject and months spent grappling with how the concept simultaneously does and does not fit, it has become clear that this research report is not about state capture anymore.

Figure 4: Graphical representation of key similarities and shortfalls of each aforementioned manifestation of corruption and the behavioural patterns observed in the case studies



The Centre for the Study of Democracy considers state capture to be an amalgamation of various kinds of corruption which is ultimately identified and set apart by its objective: to secure benefits or privileges for the captor across the long-term achieved through the exploitation of “the power of the government for private benefit” (Stoyanov, Gerganov, and Stefanov, 2016: 5). This key characteristic is what led to the initial belief that what is happening in the case study states is state capture. Both countries show evidence of state institutions being taken over by private interests through a series of mechanisms reflected in the literature on state capture. The political elites in both Sudan and the CAR, as well as their Russian partners, appear to be accruing significant benefits off of state resources and through state institutions.

Research conducted on actual instances of state capture seem to point to a number of factors which render states vulnerable to capture, these include limited civil liberties, a lack of political and economic transparency and competition, and insecurity in property rights (Sitorus 2011: 46). Both Sudan and the CAR have ranked consistently high in the Fund for Peace's "Fragile States Index". Within the time period covered in this research report, Sudan has been ranked 4th, 5th, 7th, and 8th on the list. In the 2021 results, the country scored a total of 105.2 points (out of a maximum of 120) and ranked at number 8 (Fragile States Index, 2021). The CAR has ranked 3rd, 5th, and 6th at various points between 2014 and 2021. In 2021, CAR ranked at number 6, scoring 107 points out of 120 (Fragile States Index, 2021). Both countries fall within the "High Alert" category, indicating there are serious concerns over the vulnerability of these states and their citizens. This systemic fragility in both of the case studies indicates that these countries have been vulnerable to capture for quite some time.

Galev, Gerganov, and Todorov (2021: 9) point to what they refer to as the "building blocks of state capture" which include power to enforce regulations, privileged access to resources, control of the media and financial sectors, and influencing power over both domestic and foreign policies. These 'building blocks' are reflected in several of the indicators measured in the Fragile States Index. These indicators include: security apparatus, economic decline, uneven development, state legitimacy, public services, and human rights and rule of law (Fragile States Index Annual Report 2021: 48). In addition to their generally high scores, each of the case study states score high in each of these indicators.

Hellman and Kaufmann's formative work on state capture titled "Confronting the Challenge of State Capture in Transition Economies" defines state capture as "the efforts of firms to shape the laws, policies, and regulations of the state to their own advantage by providing illicit gains to public officials" (2001: 31). This definition has formed the basis for subsequent works which have contributed to the furthering of this concept, these include Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann (2003), Pesic (2007), and Lugon-Moulin (2010). Mbaku (2018: 772) has furthered Hellman and Kaufmann's work, describing state capture to be the "appropriation of state institutions, organs, or functions" by individuals or groups with the intent to influence or control the design of

new laws and the implementation of existing ones. Cumulatively, these works on and definitions of state capture have framed our understanding of the concept and, although nuanced differences exist, all definitions of the concept agree that it is a form of corruption through which benefits are afforded to a firm or individual (for example, business contracts, access to natural resources, or preferential taxation arrangements) in return for political, military, or economic gains afforded to members of the state's executive. Hellman and Kaufmann (2001: 33) have summarised the captured state as rewarding "connections over competence" and "influence over innovation".

While the explanations of state capture in the literature are comprehensive and offer a fairly effective interpretation of what is being observed in the case studies, what none of these scholars has yet considered is the possibility that such processes of state capture may be carried out by individuals or parties external to the captured state. Having consulted a wide range of literature on the subject, and despite the fact that this research report began as a project seeking to prove the presence of state capture in the case study states, it has become clear that what is present in Sudan and CAR cannot be considered state capture. In both cases, there is a singular characteristic which is incongruent with current understandings of state capture - this is the involvement of Russian individuals with links to the state. In fact, none of the manifestations of corruption detailed in this report focus on the involvement of external parties.

The presence and involvement of external parties in these states is too significant to be ignored and it is clear that, in order to reach any real explanation for these activities and behaviours, conventional definitions of state capture are insufficient. The aim and purpose of this research report is to account for Russia-Africa relations within the context of these case studies, this necessitates the creation of a new conceptual framework. This framework is a culmination of the wealth of literature which already exists on the various manifestations of corruption with the addition of characteristics unique to the case studies, and therefore unique to a new manifestation of corruption.

The conceptual framework proposed by this research report is strikingly similar to state capture in its characteristics and workings. The defining characteristic, however, is the direct involvement of parties external to the state in the appropriation of state resources. As such, the naming of the conceptual framework seeks to incorporate both of these factors. By including ‘state capture’ within the name, the concept is not too unfamiliar and retains an association with the characteristics of conventional state capture. The addition of ‘extra’ to the name of the concept immediately indicates what sets this concept apart from conventional state capture, that is, the presence of external parties. The conceptual framework proposed in this research report will thus be known as ‘extra-state capture’.

Extra-state capture is proposed as a culmination of all the other manifestations of corruption discussed earlier in this report which includes the involvement of external parties in order to lend analytical value when interpreting Russia-Africa relations. The table below compares these existing manifestations of corruption and the proposed framework of extra-state capture.

Table 2: Table comparing characteristics of varying characteristics of corruption

MANIFESTATION	WHO?	WHAT?	WHERE?	WHY?	WHO BENEFITS?
Petty Corruption	Private citizens, members of the bureaucracy	Rigging the system/bending the rule	Internal to the state	Make processes easier and quicker	The briber and bribee
Neopatrimonialism	Members of the bureaucracy, political elites	Rally support from a specific enclave of society, establish a network of patronage	Internal to the state	Remain in political power, receive benefits	Political elites and their networks
Extraversion	Political figures	Misuse or misappropriate development funds	Internal to the state, although the funds come from external sources	Receive benefits	Political figures
Elite Capture	Political, economic, or societal elites	Rally support of specific groups, distribute benefits amongst these groups	Internal to the state	Receive benefits, solidify elevated status	Elites
State Capture	Political figures	Appropriate state institutions for private gain	Internal to the state	Receive benefits	Captors
Extra-State Capture	Political figures within the state, in collaboration with actors external to the state	Exchange of resources between parties who have a specific need	Both internal and external to the state	Remain in political power, receive benefits, meet the needs of the captor	Internal and external captors

Given that this conceptual framework includes several of the characteristics of conventional state capture, it will incorporate one of the more generic definitions of state capture. Grzymala-Busse (2008: 639) defines state capture as “the elite extraction of state resources for private gain”. In cases of extra-state capture, these resources are extracted by, and for the benefit of, actors within the state (internal captors), as well as actors external to the state (external captors). The extraction of resources under extra-state capture thus forms part of a transactional relationship between internal and external captors whereby the needs or interests of both are met.

Peter et al (2022: ix) differentiate between corruption and state capture by stating that, where corruption breaks the rules, state capture seeks to change those rules completely. Extra-state capture presents as a mixture of bending, breaking, and

completely re-formulating the rules in the interests of the internal and external captors.

Although the concept of extraversion, as a whole, does not account for the behaviours and activities observed in the case study states, Bayart's core argument can lend analytical depth to the conceptual framework of extra-state capture. Bayart has long asserted that African leaders are partially responsible for where their states are today, he speaks to a degree of agency which African leaders have in their own dependency and underdevelopment. In choosing to remain dependent on external sources of legitimacy or financing, African leaders are exercising their agency. This seems somewhat incongruent, African agency is usually referred to in positive terms and as a means of empowerment for African states in the international system. It stands to reason, however, that if African states have agency in improving their conditions and making their voices heard, there may be some degree of agency in the chaos of state capture too. The unfortunate reality is that the actions of individuals linked to the Russian state are not being imposed on African states in a neo-colonial or neo-imperialistic way. Leaders like al-Bashir, Hemedti, and Touadera have played a significant role in opening their countries up to actors like the Wagner Group and several Russian businessmen linked to the state. For the expropriation of precious minerals, the human rights abuses at the hands of mercenaries, the deliberate misleading of citizens via targeted misinformation, and all the subsequent erosion of the democratic institutions of these states, part of the blame rests at the feet of these leaders. Singh (2022: 12) suggests that Russia may see the underdevelopment and conflict-ridden African continent as a strategic opportunity to "embed itself with ruling political elites", and these ruling elites are only too willing to allow the Russian embedment.

Taking all of this into account, the following working definition for extra-state capture is proposed:

The extraction of state resources by actors both internal and external to the captured state in a collaborative and transactional manner whereby the needs of both parties are met. Through this process, both internal and external captors are able to reap benefits and exert undue influence within the captured state.

The conceptual framework of extra-state capture may, at this point in time, appear to be ‘half-baked’. Admittedly, it does not go to the same analytical depths as the literature on state capture or any other manifestation of corruption. However, given the fact that no other manifestation of corruption is wholly applicable to what is observed in the case studies, the new conceptual framework is entirely necessary. The way this concept manifests itself may not be presented in concise bullet points or with decades worth of evidence to support it, but it is certainly happening. This section of the research report has served as something of a conceptual brainstorm, presenting the ways in which existing manifestations of corruption are inadequate in their explanatory potential within the case studies. These inadequacies serve as the impetus for the development of a new conceptual framework which is better suited to interpret Russia-Africa relations, specifically within the context of the case studies. Although the concept has not been fully developed, a working definition and explanation has been put forward.

Case Studies: Sudan and the Central African Republic

The current pattern of Russian involvement in Africa, consisting of military partnerships and mining rights to previous minerals, emerged in the wake of Russia's 2014 annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea. Since then, this modus operandi has allowed the international outcast to lessen the blow of Western sanctions and provided the country with allies in an increasingly hostile international system. African states have, generally, been welcoming to Russia. This is partially due to the country's legacy as a supporter of liberation movements in several African countries, and partially due to the perks which come with being a friend to Russia. Although Russia is not able to engage economically on the same scale as other external players like the USA, UK, or China, the benefits it offers its allies are tailored to the interests of embattled African leaders.

It is worth noting that not all Russia-Africa relations are predicated on an embattled or tyrannical leader needing regime support. Russia maintains fairly conventional and legitimate relations with several African countries, including Egypt, Angola, and South Africa. These relations are characterised by trade ties (mainly the sale of Russian weapons), the exchange of nuclear technology, and formal diplomatic ties. These relations are not noteworthy, nor do they present any sort of unique pattern of engagement. What is intriguing, however, is the second kind of Russian interaction in Africa. In countries with embattled leaders, Russia is presenting itself as a security partner able to secure the regime. Security assistance is rendered through the use of the now-notorious Wagner Group and other Private Military Companies with ties to the Russian state. These efforts are bolstered by tailored disinformation campaigns, aimed to stir up public discontent toward former-colonial powers and discredit political opponents to the regime. These services, however, do not come cheap. In exchange for this regime support, Russian companies are granted mining rights for precious minerals like gold and diamonds (used to mitigate the effects of Western sanctions) and rare earth metals (used in the production of Russian products). The final result of this transaction is that the African leader involved is allowed to remain in a position of power, albeit illegitimately, ultimately resulting in a degradation of

democracy and public oversight. These leaders often continue to make use of state institutions for their own personal gain, and the gain of those in their networks, thus completing the process of state capture.

The case studies of Sudan and the Central African Republic were chosen for two reasons: (1) both states show evidence of extensive involvement of individuals and companies with links to the Russian state, and (2) Russian involvement in these states began shortly after the invasion of Crimea in 2014, making these countries some of the first to experience the deployment of this strategy by Russia.

Both the Central African Republic and Sudan were characterised in leaked Russian documents as “Level 5” partners, indicating the highest level of cooperation between Russia and these two states (Harding and Burke, 2019). Russia has longstanding ties with the Sudanese military and persons within the Bashir regime as well as connections to legitimate and illegitimate gold markets in the West of the country (Siegle, 2021a). Relations between Russia and the Central African Republic took on new urgency in 2017 as President Faustin-Archange Touadera faced threats of a coup due to a lack of support for his presidency nationally, regionally, and internationally (Dukhan, 2020). President Touadera made a visit to the Kremlin in 2017 and returned home with presidential protection, weapons, and promises of military training; a number of similar deals have been conducted since (Dukhan, 2020). Although formal diplomatic and economic ties exist between Russia and these two states, Russia also makes extensive use of “unofficial” and even “extralegal” tactics in these relations (Siegle, 2021b). Russia-Sudan and Russia-Central African Republic relations have been described as “asymmetric” as the provision of security, political, or economic support leaves isolated and vulnerable leaders indebted to Moscow (Siegle, 2021b). Russia is afforded access to natural resources and an expanded sphere of influence and allies to rely on in the United Nations General Assembly (Dukhan, 2020). The transactional nature of the relationships between Russia and Sudan, and Russia and the Central African Republic will be investigated and expounded upon in this research report in order to determine the extent to which these two states have been “captured” by firms and individuals associated with the Russian state.

Sudan gained independence from Britain in 1956, one year into a brutal civil war which lasted until 1972 when peace was brokered through the Addis Ababa Agreement (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti 2009: 5). The country enjoyed 10 years without major conflict and oil development and exploration commenced; but, when oil was discovered, another dimension was added to the mix and the country erupted in civil war once again in 1983 (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti 2009: 5). These periods of war coincided with a period of borrowing from the USA, the World Bank, and Western Europe; the country's oil boom also resulted in an influx of investments from the Arab world (De Waal 2007: 4). In the decades since it began borrowing, the central concern of Sudan's financial authorities has been the management of their excessive debt (De Waal 2007: 5). Accumulating arrears resulted in Sudan's foreign debt increasing from $6 billion in 1978 (when the country first started lending) to a total of $77 billion in 2020 (CEIC Data). International assistance to Sudan peaked during the period from 1996 to 1999 as the country received massive humanitarian support from the United Nations (De Waal 2007: 8).

Relations between Russia and Sudan have been largely defined by military cooperation and mineral wealth. The mineral dimension of Russia-Sudan relations has come into acute focus as a consequence of Russia's actions in Crimea in the mid 2010's. Russia has been hedging its bets on alternative revenue streams for several decades, mostly in an attempt to diversify away from the dollar and compensate for drops in oil prices following its controversial actions in Georgia (2008) and Crimea (2014). While official exports of gold from Sudan to Russia remain minimal, reports have emerged claiming dozens of tonnes of gold are exchanged per year (Keating 2022). These illicit exports presumably originate from mines owned and operated by Russian companies which were granted mining concessions and mineral rights by then-President Omar al-Bashir. In exchange, the embattled leader received the support of the Wagner Group's mercenaries in fighting off various rebel groups threatening the country's very fragile sense of stability (Keating 2022). This exchange was one of several agreements signed at the end of 2017 by then-President Omar al-Bashir during a visit with Russian President Vladimir Putin at Bocharov Ruchey in Sochi (The Bell, 2018). To be exact, the Sudanese President signed concession agreements on behalf of the Ministry of Minerals which afforded mineral rights to an obscure Russian company called M-Invest Ltd (The

Government of the Russian Federation, 2017). This company has been subject to sanctions imposed by the United States Department of the Treasury since 2020 (US Department of the Treasury, 2020). The Russia-based entity is owned or controlled by the notorious Yevgeny Prigozhin, known to be the founder of the Wagner Group (Preussen, 2022).

The government's 2018 deal with Russian-linked Meroe Gold was met with protest from local miners at a site around 400 km outside of the capital city, Khartoum (Amin 2018). Protestors were met with a crackdown by Russian guards and a sniper, who were supported by the Sudanese police (Amin 2018). M-Invest was involved in the deployment of Wagner troops to guard the company's gold mines in Sudan (El-Badawy 2022: 16). Yakoreva (2018) describes the suspiciously tight timeline between the beginning of Meroe Gold's exploration activities and the arrival of Wagner Group troops in the company. According to customs data, Meroe Gold received more unique shipments from Russia than any other company in Sudan (Margolin 2019).

Also subject to sanctions is the Sudanese subsidiary of M-Invest, Meroe Gold. This company is responsible for overseeing M-Invest's mining activities on the ground in Sudan. Two key Russian nationals are known to be intricately involved in the running of this operation. Andrei Mandel is the Director General of M-Invest and is said to play a leading role in the Wagner Group (Open Sanctions, 2023a). A previous employee of the Internet Research Agency (also known as the Russian "troll factory"), Mikhail Potepkin is based in Sudan and acts as the Regional Director for both M-Invest and Meroe Gold (US Department of the Treasury, 2020).

Investigations conducted by CNN and The Dossier Centre revealed the involvement of a third individual, Alexander Sergeyevich Kuznetsov, who acted as an overseer of operations in Sudan from mining, to processing, and finally to the transit of gold (Elbagir et al, 2022). Kuznetsov was sanctioned by the European Union in 2021 for his role in kidnapping, attacks, and reconnaissance missions for the Wagner Group in Libya in 2014 (Open Sanctions, 2023b).

Russia has significant ties to the Sudanese military as well as elements of the ousted regime of Omar al-Bashir (Siegle 2021a). Russia has also long held ambitions of its own port on the Red Sea to complement its base in Syria; an ambition al-Bashir was happy to accommodate (Ramani 2020). This ambition was a topic of discussion between al-Bashir and Putin during the 2017 meeting in Sochi (The Government of te Russian Federation, 2017).

Protests broke out among the population of Khartoum in December of 2018 over the increasing cost of living in the country. These protests evolved into calls for al-Bashir to step down. Protestors were called “traitors and foreign agents” by the President and were met with violent crackdown from the country’s riot police (Altaher and Fox, 2018). Behind the scenes, an elaborate strategy was being formulated to discredit the protestors. The strategy was developed by a company linked to Yevegeny Prigozhin and included a disinformation campaign to be spread on social media which would cast the protestors as “enemies of Islam and traditional values” (Lister, Shukla, and Elbagir, 2019). Additionally, the plan entailed fabricating evidence that protestors had committed acts of arson against mosques, hospitals, and nurseries (Lister, Shukla, and Elbagir, 2019). These strategies would be complemented by efforts to improve public opinion of the government, this would be done through highly publicised distribution of foodstuffs in the capital (Lister, Shukla, and Elbagir, 2019). There is no evidence to suggest that al-Bashir implemented these plans. In a letter to al-Bashir, Prigozhin noted that the Sudanese government’s “inaction” in implementing the plans developed by one of his companies would “likely to lead to even more serious political consequences” (Lister, Shukla, and Elbagir, 2019).

Following decades of loyalty to ruler Omar al-Bashir, military general “Hemedti” supported the military coup which toppled the leader in April 2019 and took a leading role in the transitional government preparing for elections in 2022 (Abdelaziz, Goergy, and El Dahan 2019). Since the ousting of al-Bashir, Hemedti has taken on the role as Russia’s main point of contact in Sudan.

Russian PMC’s began operating in Sudan as early as 2018, around 500 troops arrived in the country between March and July of 2018 and operated a training camp

on the border between Sudan and the CAR (Jones et al 2021: 53). In addition to offering training, the groups brought along with them shipments of military equipment. Given the arrival timeline of these troops, it seems likely that they were involved in the suppression of the wave of popular protest which took hold in December of that year (Jones et al 2021: 54).

Experts have reported that Wagner Group forces are training the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary organisation which works alongside Sudan's state military and is led by Hemedti - leader of the 2019 military coup (Collins 2022). Furthermore, Russia's Ministry of Defence is represented within Sudan's own Ministry of Defence (Callaghan, Kachur, and Swilling 2020). The RSF has been receiving missiles from the Wagner Group to aid in their conflict against the country's military (Elbagir et al, 2023). A commentator described Wagner's presence in Sudan as being "the worst kept secret in Sudan" (African Defence Forum, 2022).

The country's media and information landscape has shown significant evidence of Russia interference in recent years. In May 2021, an extensive disinformation network was identified in Sudan and subsequently dismantled by Facebook (El-Badawy et al 2022: 20). The pages within this network often shared content which depicted Russia as a friend to Sudan including photographs of aid sent by Wagner-founder Prigozhin as well as stories which detailed the benefits of a Russian military base at Port Sudan (El-Badawy et al 2022: 20). This network was ultimately traced to Prigozhin's Internet Research Agency and consisted of some 440 000 individual user accounts (El-Badawy et al 2022: 20). A number of these pages were revealed to be authored by individuals within Sudan, as opposed to previous operations which were run from the IRA's headquarters in Russia. Some of the authors included a Sudanese journalist affiliated to the *Khartoum Star* newspaper and a musician who spent time in Russia (Grossman, Bush, and DiResta 2019: 21). It is notable that both of these authors have close ties to the Sudanese mining industry. Hassan and Hiebert (2021) argue that the result of more local involvement in disinformation and digital manipulation campaigns is content which is "linguistically correct and less overtly biased" - it thus appears as more authentic and familiar to local audiences. Furthermore, embedding these practices with local dialects and colloquialisms makes it more difficult for social media platforms to detect the

disinformation being spread. Internet content in Sudan has been shared over several platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, and WhatsApp and has been generally supportive of whichever government is in power at the time (Grossman et al, 2019).

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been described as a ‘phantom state’, ranking consistently poorly on the Human Development and Fragile States Indices (Dukhan 2020: 2). The country has long been gripped by political instability and its position in the centre of the continent has rendered it vulnerable to regional instability and development (Herbert, Dukhan, and Debos 2013: 8). Since its independence from French colonial rule in 1960, the CAR has had only one peaceful power transition, in 1993 (De Vries and Glawion 2015: 17). It has endured four successful coups and two failed attempts since 1979 (Edwards, 2021). In March of 2013, a violent coup plunged the country further into humanitarian crisis (Herbert, Dukhan, and Debos 2013: 2). Industrial development has lagged and infrastructure outside of the capital of Bangui is sorely lacking (De Vries and Glawion 2015: 42). The country has also struggled to secure international support in the midst of its many crises; while development aid to sub-Saharan Africa generally went up by more than 50% in the period of 1985 to 2005; aid to the CAR decreased by almost 60% (De Vries and Glawion 2015: 44). Russian involvement in the CAR became most noticeable after Moscow received an exemption from the United Nations arms embargo on the CAR in December 2017; Russian weapons and members of the Wagner Group arrived in Bangui shortly afterwards to train some 1300 members of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) (Kalika 2019: 5). This move to become involved in the CAR followed the withdrawal of hundreds of US soldiers as well as a widespread animosity toward French forces across the country which, according to one United Nations representative, left the CAR a “free country for the taking” (Hauer 2018). As of 2020, various armed militia groups control different regions of the country as well as the resources held within those regions (Dukhan 2020: 2). Despite being mineral-rich, the country’s infrastructural capacity has remained perpetually weak due to the conflict-ridden nature of the country’s political landscape (De Vries and Glawion 2015: 42). Chief amongst its mineral resources are the country’s significant deposits of both gold and diamonds (Matthysen and Clarkson 2013: 5).

The country's direct ties with the Russian Federation were brought into the public domain in 2017 when The Kremlin hosted CAR President Faustin- Archange Touadera. Voted into power democratically in 2016, Touadera quickly became an embattled leader facing the threat of an imminent coup and lacking any significant support from the international community (Dukhan 2020: 2). Relations were further cemented in the following year when President Touadera visited Russia again, this time to meet with President Putin himself, thus formalising relations at the highest political levels (Dukhan 2020: 6).

As one of the continent's most fragile and perpetually underdeveloped nations, it comes as no surprise that the media landscape in the Central African Republic is also severely underdeveloped. A lack of infrastructure and the constant need to address more pressing issues, has left the country's media space vulnerable to external attacks and influence. These factors have been exploited in recent years, bolstered by the provision of financial support to a struggling media network. It is through this dual strategy of exploiting existing weaknesses and the provision of much-needed finances that the Russian Federation has been able to foster a media landscape which is largely supportive of their activities (Dukhan 2020: 7).

Much of Russia's cyber-activities in the CAR, and elsewhere in Africa, have been linked to business entities funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin including the IRA, and AFRIC (Graphika and Stanford Internet Observatory 2020: 3). Despite these organisations, as well as others related to them, and their founder being sanctioned, their efforts in mis- and disinformation have continued. The content spread and sponsored by Russian entities consists mainly of propaganda aimed at spreading pro-Russian sentiments among African populations. To do this, Russia relies heavily on the Soviet Union's ties with liberation movements on the continent, seeking to cement its identity as a kindred spirit fighting Western imperialism. This has been demonstrated in a children's cartoon circulated via YouTube in July 2019. The video was sponsored by Lobaye Invest, a mining company in the CAR which is owned by Yevgeny Prigozhin (Graphika and Stanford Internet Observatory 2020: 10). The video represents Russia's narrative using African animals: a community of harmless animals is raided by hyenas (representing the USA and France and their imperialistic aims), a noble lion tries to fight off the hyenas (representing the CAR standing up to

Western imperialism) but is unable to do so on its own. The lion calls on a bear from a far off land for help. The bear, representing Russia, rushes in just in time to save the animals from the predatory hyenas. This video perfectly depicts Russia's narrative to its African partners and, drawing on its reputation as the former Soviet Union, emphasises Russia as the preferred partner in staving off imperialism and in pursuing development. A similar tactic was employed in the release of the feature film, *Touriste,* financed by the Wagner Group. This action film depicts Russia (and its Wagner forces, in particular) as a strong and reliable military ally. More than 10 000 people attended the premiere of *Touriste* in the capital city of Bangui (Shukla, 2021). Bulos (2023) refers to these propaganda projects as the "Wagner-verse", a series of action movies, documentaries, social media campaigns, and cartoons which act as PR material for the notorious PMC and as a means for the Kremlin to promote their own policies.

Image 1: A screengrab from the animated short film "LionBear"

The Central African Republic, represented by a lion, joins the Russian bear under a banner which says "To contribution between CAR and Russia"



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCZ0YSyWVhk

Image 2: A young man stands outside of the stadium where the film "*Touriste*" premiered, he is wearing a promotional t-shirt advertising the Russian-sponsored film



Source: Neil Munshi, The Financial Times, 2022.

Prigozhin's financing has also extended to *Lengo Songo,* a radio station, and *La Feuille Volante du President,* a free weekly newspaper - both of which have been used to disseminate pro-Russian narratives (Roger and Dougueli 2021). Aside from the activities of these Russian proxies and the financing of in-country media outlets, Russia also uses its own state media such as RT and Sputnik, both of which are broadcast widely across the continent (Kachur 2020: 17).

Russian-supported media missions in the CAR have not been limited to the dissemination of pro-Russian sentiments but has, in recent years, also included media campaigns aimed at further entrenching anti-French sentiments within the country and in a number of Francophone nations across the continent (Bax 2021). In the months leading up to a contentious election in 2020, France and Russia engaged in a digital proxy war via the CAR's media space, levelling accusations at one another regarding each country's activities and role in the CAR. This ultimately resulted in Facebook suspending hundreds of accounts linked to the French and Russian authorities (Bax 2021).

Russian involvement in the Central African Republic's mining sector can be traced to October 2017, when a private mining company named 'Lobaye Invest' was registered (Dukhan 2020: 6). The company obtained several licences for mining and exploration between 2018 and 2019. The company's Director, Evgueni Khodotov, is also CEO of M-Finance, a Russia-based entity linked to Prigozhin (Dukhan 2020: 6).

Lacking infrastructure and facing near-constant political instability since independence, the CAR's arable land is used for mainly subsistence purposes with the extraction of (and trading in) lucrative natural resources often happening illegally (De Vries and Glawion 2015: 23). Diamonds from the CAR have shown up in Francophone African capital cities and across Europe, while others are exported to cities in the Middle East or as far as India (De Vries and Glawion 2015: 42). The CAR's diamonds are the only traditionally defined "conflict" or "blood" diamonds in the world today with around 140 000 carats (worth $24 million) exported between May 2013 and October 2014 (Obale 2016: 10). The CAR's diamond trade has been placed under international embargo by both the United Nations and the Kimberley

Process - an international initiative which controls the trade of rough diamonds (KimberleyProcess.com). Despite this, diamonds have continued to leave the country illegally. Recent efforts to challenge the Kimberley Process's classification of the CAR's exports as "conflict diamonds" have been championed by none other than Russia itself (Searcey, 2022).

The country's gold sector is no less complicated. A significant lack of transparency and insufficient legal frameworks have led scholars to estimate that up to 95% of the country's actual gold exports may occur via illegal networks (Matthysen and Clarkson 2013: 7). The sector is largely made up of local, artisanal mining communities whose interests are often overlooked by the political elites, resulting in these communities being exploited by their own leaders and the foreign companies who have recently joined the fray. The involvement of foreign entities in the country's mining sector is not illegal under official legislation. The 2009 Mining Code (Law 09.005 of 29 April 2009) states that "all mineral resources, in the ground or on the surface, are the property of the Central African state" and gives the state the authority to allow anyone access to these resources. In line with this authority, the Ministry of Finance and Budget of the CAR granted permissions to Lobaye Invest to mine gold and diamonds in four cities, covering an area of around 4000 square kilometres (Baev and Maglov 2019). What is contentious, however, is that many of the companies currently operating in the CAR do so under research permits, which do not allow for exploitation rights (IPIS 2018: 95).

In March 2019, a company appeared on the Commercial Register of the CAR. Diamville's declared activity at the time was the purchase and import/export of both gold and diamonds (All Eyes on Wagner, 2022: 5). In October of the same year, the company became an authorised gold and diamond exporter by governmental decree. The manager of this company is said to be a CAR national, Bienvenu Patrick Setem Bonguende. Analysis by The Dossier Centre uncovered that this individual is employed as the driver of a well-known Russian man in Bangui: Dmitry Sytyi. Sytyi is currently subject to multilateral sanctions for his role in the activities of the Wagner Group (Open Sanctions, 2023c). Diamville, Lobaye Invest, and a third entity known as Midas Ressources, occupy several positions on the gold and diamond value chains in the CAR from extraction to selling (All Eyes on Wagner, 2022). All three of

these entities are known to be linked to Prigozhin and Wagner, the former two are currently under sanctions (Open Sanctions, 2023d; Open Sanctions, 2023e). These entities are able to export natural resources out of the country via three airstrips controlled by Sewa Security Services, subsidiary of the Wagner Group (Edwards, 2021).

The CAR's best known mine is the Ndassima mine in Ouaka. Previously operated by artisanal miners, concessions for this particular mine were awarded to Canadian-based gold exploration firm, AXMIN (Wall Street Journal, 2023). The company was unable to proceed with exploration due to the civil war which gripped the country from 2013. Rebel group "Union for Peace in the Central African Republic" or "UPC" took control of the mine until Wagner forces entered the scene in 2017 (Wall Street Journal, 2023). In 2019, the CAR government revoked AXMIN's permits to explore the mine and awarded the rights to Midas Ressources, another company with Wagner ties (Wall Street Journal, 2023). Wagner's presence has been confirmed via satellite imagery of the mine which show what looks to be an Mi-8 or Mi-17 helicopter on the premises, the same kind used by Wagner elsewhere in Africa (Wall Street Journal, 2023). Imagery further details the progression of the Ndassima mine from an artisanal site to the CAR's first industrialised mine (Wall Street Journal, 2023). The mining pits have been expanded and digging machines and large processing facilities are now present on the premises (Joselow, 2023).

De Vries and Glawion (2015: 23) characterise the CAR's economic landscape, particularly the mining sector, as being highly competitive and persistently underdeveloped. This combination has culminated in a political elite which is unwilling to put in the work on economic reforms; opting rather to reap short term benefits when and where they can. In recent years this strategy has evolved to include Russian actors. In pursuit of easy money, the political elites have made concessions to Russian companies - allowing them access to mines and mineral deposits in exchange for a cut of the profits (De Vries and Glawion 2015: 23). Matthysen and Clarkson (2013: 5) describe the country's mineral resources as an "important cash cow" used by political elites to sustain their patronage networks.

The involvement of Russian elites in the CAR's mining sector has extended to the creation of a close-knit circle surrounding the country's President, Touadera (El-Badawy 2022: 13). Members of Touadera's inner circle include several prominent Russian individuals with close ties and vested interests in the Lobaye Invest mining exploration firm as well as Touadera's National Security Advisor, Russian national Valery Zakharov (El-Badawy 2022: 13). Bertin Maboula, former advisor to the President of the CAR, describes a "complex web in terms of businesses that [has] gradually been set up", specifically in areas of natural resource extraction like gold and diamond mining and the processing of timber (Wall Street Journal, 2023).

Russia and the CAR formalised their military cooperation with the signing of a memorandum in August 2018, on the sidelines of a defence expo hosted just outside of Moscow (Kelly 2018). Paid for with rights to mine gold and diamonds in the CAR, the Wagner Group arrived in the country in 2018 With almost 1000 military instructors, light weapons, rocket launchers, and artillery (Callaghan, Kachur, and Swilling 2020). Since then, the Wagner Group has engaged in a number of diverse activities, including: acting as the President's personal guards (Olivier 2019), holding of peace negotiations with rebel groups (on behalf of the President of the CAR), the training of national forces, offering support to some militia groups fighting anti-Touadera factions, and even mounting an attempt to change the country's constitution in order to secure Touadera's position as President and ensure the continuation of contracts he agreed to in his first term (Dukhan 2020: 3-4). Russia's paramilitary presence in the CAR was catalysed by the partial lifting of a United Nations arms embargo which allowed The Kremlin to deploy Russian military advisors and training officers, along with a selection of arms, to CAR (Dukhan 2020: 6). This move was welcomed by President Touadera, who was battling rebel factions and had been left disappointed by the inability of UN peacekeeping forces to make any significant moves on the rebels (Bax 2021). Russia's military activities in the country are largely managed through a subsidiary of the Wagner Group - a private company registered in CAR in November 2017 called Sewa Security Services (Dukhan 2020: 6). The presence of these Russian paramilitary forces is no secret in the CAR with between 1200 and 2000 military personnel, clad in camouflage gear, driving around the capital in military-style vehicles (Bax 2021). The forces of Wagner and Sewa Security Services have proven to be a good investment for Touadera as

they have managed to stave off attempts to overthrow his regime and tilt the scale in favour of the President for the first time in years (Bax 2021). Personnel from both PMCs are housed in the palatial compound of the former President Jean-Bedel Bokassa; access to the area is strictly prohibited to anyone outside of these forces (Olivier 2019). The companies already operate three airfields in the towns of Ndele, Birao, and Ouadda and have rehabilitated the 2000m airstrip built by Bokassa at his palace (Olivier 2019). National security forces and their Russian paramilitary support forces have been given near-free reign in the country in the name of regime stability; this has resulted in exploitation of mineral resources, the extortion of local peoples, and severe human rights abuses (De Vries and Glawion 2015: 16). A group of UN experts have detailed human rights abuses ranging from mass executions and forced disappearances to arbitrary detention, torture during detention, and increased targeting of humanitarian forces (UN Press Releases 2021). The Wagner Group's activities in the country consist mainly of securing mine compounds from the multitude of rebel groups active in the country (Grossman, Bush, and DiResta 2019: 21). Russia's deep involvement in the security landscape of the CAR is most acutely noticeable in the placement of a Russian national, Valery Zakharov who maintains close ties to Prigozhin and his business entities, as National Security Advisor to the President of the country (Huon and Ostrovsky 2018).

Application of the conceptual framework to the case studies

The preceding discussion has detailed several manifestations of corruption as well as the ways in which these explanations fall short in fully accounting for the pattern of Russian interaction being observed in Africa in the post-2014 timeline. As such, an alternative explanation has been proposed in the conceptual framework of extra-state capture. This section serves as an application of this conceptual framework to the cases of Sudan and the CAR, thus demonstrating its explanatory potential.

State capture, as it has been discussed earlier in this paper, aims at rigging the system in favour of the few (at the expense of the many). Both Sudan and the Central African Republic present networks of political elites with loyalties to a

personalistic and authoritarian leader and, in both cases, it is in their interests to maintain these leaders in power in order to continue reaping the benefits. When compared with the descriptions from the literature, the systems in place in both of these countries reflect the characteristics of state capture. It is imperative to note, however, that the political elites executing state capture from within the case study states do so in a transactional and cooperative manner alongside individuals and companies associated with the Russian state. It is this inconsistency with conventional definitions of state capture which has necessitated the development of a new conceptual framework. Extra-state capture, as a form of state capture which presents through the presence of similar mechanisms as conventional state capture, is a more appropriate explanation of the circumstances in the case study states as it can account for the presence of actors external to these states.

Through the exchange of security services and regime support for access to natural resources, captors both internal and external to the case study states are enriched. The Russian individuals and firms discussed in the context of these case studies are able to extract rents from these African states with minimal effort and risk, thus allowing them to accumulate wealth and offset the impacts of Western sanctions. The leaders within the case study states, responsible for opening their countries to these external actors, are able to stay the course and hold onto power, all while continuing to extract rents from the state for their own benefit. The intricacy of this system lies in the way in which actors internal and external to the state have appropriated the institutions and resources of the state in a simultaneous and cooperative manner. It is this intricacy that has prompted the investigation in this research report and necessitates the development of a new conceptual framework which will account for and explain the intricacies at play.

The proposed framework of “Extra-State Capture” is understood to encompass the following characteristics:

- The extraction of state resources
- By actors both internal and external to the captured state
- Which occurs in a collaborative and transactional manner whereby the needs of both parties are met

- Both internal and external captors are able to reap benefits and exert undue influence within the captured state

This framework is proposed as a means for interpreting and understanding the processes in place in the case study states of Sudan and the Central African Republic, with potential to be applied in other states where similar strategies are employed by Russia and its subsidiaries. The diagrams below demonstrate the extent to which Russian actors and entities have become involved in the political processes and mineral extraction at the highest level in both Sudan and the CAR.

Figure 5: Network Map - Sudan

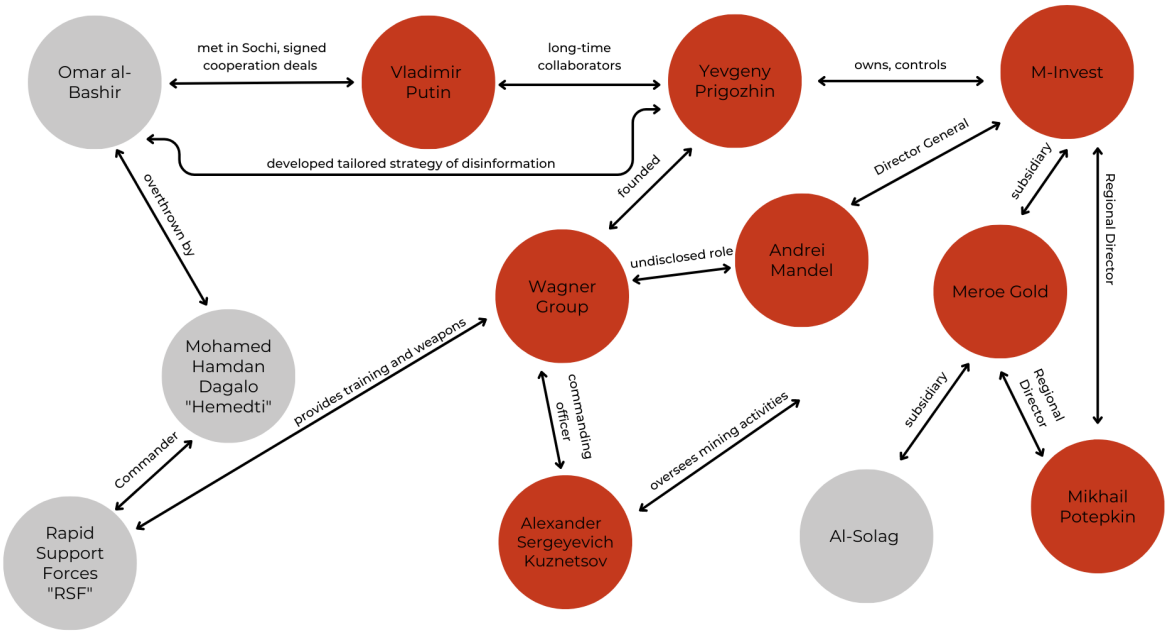
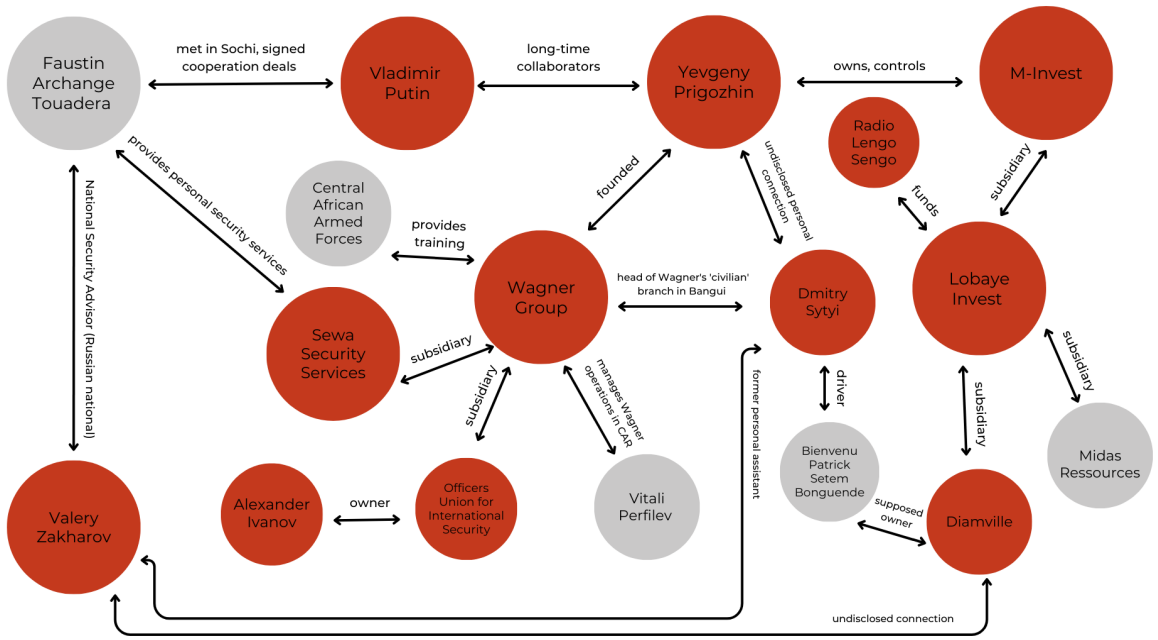


Figure 6: Network Map - Central African Republic



The figures above demonstrate the extent to which the security and mining landscapes have become intertwined in both case study states and include both local and Russian actors. These diagrams were constructed through consultation with literature covering the activities in both case studies. A running list was kept of names that appear in news reports and their relationships with other actors and entities was slowly mapped out throughout the process of the writing of this research report. The names were then run through a search on the Open Sanctions database which catalogues personal information, relationships, ownership in corporations, and whether an individual is subject to specific sanctions regimes. Those entities indicated in red on the diagrams are those which are subject to sanctions including EU Travel Bans, French Freezing of Assets, and the United States Office of Foreign Assets Control.

The imposition of sanctions upon these individuals and their corporations is directly related to their activities in Sudan, the CAR, and other African countries. Their activities have been sanctioned for their predatory characteristics and the violence and human rights abuses which often occur in the process. The entity Lobaye Invest SARLU, for example, has been sanctioned by the Council of the European Union.

The following excerpt from the sanctions designation explains the reasons behind its placing on the sanctions list:

> *"Lobaye Invest operates gold and diamond mines in CAR. It has been linked to the Wagner Group's operations in CAR. It also finances several media outlets, such as the radio station Lengo Sengo, a Central African radio station conducting disinformation campaigns and promoting the Wagner Group's presence in CAR"* (Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/433).

These case studies are just two examples of how African leaders are collaborating with Russian entities to secure their position of power and reap undue rewards. Leaders like Hemedti and Touadera are benefactors in these processes of state capture, along with the Russian individuals and entities which have helped orchestrate the process. It is the role played by these external entities which is the phenomenon of interest in this particular research report. The captors of these states are not simply the domestic political elites but a regime of Russian actors who leech benefits from these states. Conventional conceptualisations of state capture cannot account for the presence and involvement of external parties in the processes of state capture. As such, a new conceptual framework is necessary. The framework becomes all the more necessary when one considers the fact that Sudan and the CAR are not isolated cases. This strategy is being employed in several African states, to varied degrees of success. The Wagner Group and associated entities are being deployed into vulnerable states across the continent, often in the wake of democratic crises or coup d'etats. Significant concern has swirled around Burkina Faso (Detsch and Mackinnon, 2022), while Mali has already employed the services of Wagner post-coup (Thompson, Doxsee, and Bermudez Jr, 2022). Many democracies in Africa are fragile and face serious challenges to their legitimacy, this leaves the continent vulnerable to malign external forces, like those being deployed by Russia.

Understanding the actions of these malign external forces is vital for those looking to buffer their advances, for the sake of the African democracy. This research report seeks to contribute to this understanding, although it cannot fill the gap entirely. The research report has been limited in terms of its timeline and methodology. The proposed conceptual framework of "extra-state capture" is by no means fully

conceptualised. With more time and consideration, a full set of characteristics, means of identification, and policy recommendations could be developed; within the context of this study however, there simply was not time. As such, the framework in its current iteration has limited analytical value. The continuation of this line of enquiry presents an exciting opportunity to further develop the concept and the possibility of contributing something truly useful to the field of International Relations, more generally.

Conclusion

From proposal to final product, this research report has undergone significant evolution. The end result is something which will hopefully lend analytical value to the interpretation of Russian engagements in Sudan and the Central African Republic.

At this point, reflection on the initial research question is necessary. Despite the changes which took place in the focus and approach of this study and the fact that it has evolved from theory-testing to theory-proposing, the initial research question is still relevant to the overarching aim and findings of the study. The research question guiding this project was as follows:

To what extent are the actions of firms and individuals associated with the Russian state (including political interference, business involvement, and the deployment of Private Military Companies) in Sudan and the Central African Republic facilitating a process of state capture, in the period from 2014 to 2021?

Having explored the existing literature on state capture, as well as several other manifestations of corruption, this research project has come to the conclusion that none of these existing frameworks are wholly applicable to what is observed in the case study states. Thus, the answer to this research question is: the actions of firms and individuals associated with the Russian state can, to some extent, be considered to be facilitating state capture. This answer is somewhat unsatisfactory as this project set out with the aim of finding an explanatory framework and state capture only explains so much of what is observed in the case studies. Although the research question was technically answered, the rationale of the research project was not fully addressed.

To complete the full scope of this research project, it was not possible to simply stop at “state capture is not an explanation”. Instead, it was imperative to answer an additional research question: if state capture does not account for what is happening

in the case studies (as was put forward in the hypothesis of this study), then what can account for it?

In order to address this unresolved question, this research report has proposed a new conceptual framework known as ‘extra-state capture’. Limited by the scope and length of this particular research report, the conceptual framework has not been developed to its fullest potential. Ideally, the framework could be further fleshed out and its intricacies and identifiers could be expanded upon in a separate project. The value in this conceptual framework is that it does not do away with the underlying similarities between the case studies and the mechanisms of state capture, nor does it disregard the work of previous scholars in conceptualising other manifestations of corruption. Instead, this conceptual framework exists as a culmination of these concepts. This conceptual framework seeks to address the absence of external actors in any of the previous literature on corruption and state capture.

Extra-state capture follows a similar pattern as that which is observed in cases of state capture and involves the appropriation of state entities, resources, and institutions by actors for their own benefit. As such, the mechanisms of extra-state capture are much the same as those employed in state capture. Regardless of who is doing the capturing, the methods and means employed in both conventional and extra-state capture remain the same. Within the context of the case studies, Russia’s main means of engagement in the media, minerals, and security sectors are consistent with mechanisms of state capture. The fact that these mechanisms are employed in collaboration between both internal and external captors means these states can be classified as examples of extra-state capture.

Russian engagement in Africa has experienced a resurgence since President Vladimir Putin came to power in the post-Soviet state. These relations have taken on a distinctive form in the wake of the 2014 invasion of Crimea. Russia has pursued transactional relations with several African states in need of regime support. Despite a protracted war in the Ukraine, which began in February 2022, Russia’s grand African narrative shows no signs of slowing down. Throughout the progression of this research project, which began around the time of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia-Africa relations have come into acute focus for many. Close allies of Russia

have continued to lend diplomatic support to Russia despite the West's crackdown and Russia appears to be gaining new footholds in the continent - Mali and Burkina Faso spring to mind. There is no telling how the Russian war on Ukraine will progress. Nor can we predict what the international community will look like when the war eventually comes to an end. Russia may be beaten down as the Soviet Union was in 1989. Russia may emerge victorious in Ukraine, thus spurring on further acts of neo-imperialism. Regardless of the outcome, Africa is sure to be a prominent part of the fallout. If allowed to continue unchecked, Russian influence may take hold in the continent more permanently and African democracy will retreat. If Russia lapses in its side of the transaction, embattled African leaders may be deposed in the absence of their Wagner security guarantors. The resulting political instability could be detrimental.

Unfortunately, there is no quick fix to these circumstances. It is perhaps lucky that finding such a solution was not part of the objective of this study. Russia-Africa relations have come under greater scrutiny in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war and more attention and resources are devoted to the study of the phenomenon than before. Perhaps that is the value in a research report of this nature. Even if this project does not present a quick fix, it may serve as impetus to get someone else thinking about how Russia engages in Africa. It may offer some explanatory value in understanding the transactional nature of the arrangements seen not only in the case studies of Sudan and the CAR, but also in several other African countries. That is, ultimately, the aim of research in our discipline. This paper may not offer a perfect solution, but if it can steer one more person to thinking the current situation is problematic or if it can help one more person understand the transactional nature of Russian engagements in Africa, that would be enough.

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