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Abstract

The paradigms on connections between power discourse represented by government actions and global institutions' have been long reflected in the post-colonial era's literature and academic research. This paper discusses the connections between the airline industry through various analyses of news reported by aviator.aero on aviation in Nigeria, South Africa and Namibia, during March the 8th and August the 8th, 2019 and the discourse on the concept of power. The main analysis will focus on airlines, as economic actors, which can diffuse through their activities that are also the double-folded representations of social change and resistance. In their pure semiotic meaning, these concepts are seen as signs of dialogues carried on the social problems and future perspectives, represented in terms of development or more straightforward—evolution. There will be a few core objectives of the main analysis of resistance and social change. Those include the definition of whether the postcolonial discourse is visible in the actions, decisions and business development of economic actors in the Sub-Saharan aviation, looking precisely at the mentioned countries' cases. Ultimately, this study would open discussions on how and where the postcolonial aviation discourse should seek modifications or further research.

Keywords: Airline industry, Aviation, Business development, Post-colonialism, Sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

The era of aviation growth and its effects on national business development requires a particular focus on social change and resistance. Namely, it is about the shift in values and beliefs and the resistance to imposed changes to integrative politics and models, stereotypes, isolation or globalisation. These abstractions are instrumentally deferred to the projections of the airline industry's development seen from a social perspective. The foremost and non-pragmatic objective of the airlines and indirectly of other aviation operators is movement management and ruling.

In this context, it is possible to think of mobility patterns that reflect on the social change and the resistance concept, especially in terms of postcolonial thinking. As reflected by Christer Jönsson, the communication and transport tied

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with colonies were crucial for the European colonial powers to validate their powers over other territories. (1981: 278)

Review on the evolution of thought, with (post)colonial reading

The strongest argument on the discourse on mobility seen in the Sub-Saharan airline context is the specific social awareness characterising the so-called new continent. The development of small airlines is still limited in African territories when compared to other regions. In this respect, peripheral discourses on power might equilibrate the major findings and innovations on the concept of power and its use. But why should aviation be necessarily linked to the discourse of power? Is there space for a new interpretation?

It has been more than forty years since commercial aviation field represented a sort of protected government intervention area, especially for the five headings recorded by Thornton: national defence, peacetime national objectives, consumer protection, protection of locally owned companies, and foreign exchange and efficiency (1971: 542). The development of low-cost airlines, at a global level, assured the turning of the political discourse on these five headings. Indeed, from a pragmatic view, this suggested that travelling mechanisms became easier to use and understand.

Between the eighties and the nineties, when most of the African nations were struggling to define their reconciliation with the colonial past and defend their independence from the "underdevelopment" stereotype, less than 250 gateways were built. This was the smallest increase in airports in the world, excluding the region of Oceania (Bowen, 2002: 427). In contrast, when referring to France's instrumental role as a coloniser, the envisaged post-colonial approach insisted on the internationalisation of the cities, route-maps, and interline agreements. (Thompson, 1971: 543)

These aspects were already shown in the wake of independence of African countries from colonial powers since 1962. At that time, Duncan Cumming wrote that new airlines in the independent African nations were forced to require capital and also technical assistance from airlines operating in the former colonial powers. This allowed these nations to be able to exercise their sovereignty over the independent air space as right of states following the

Chicago Convention of 1944 (35).[32] As a consequence, the after or post-postcolonial discourse on aviation's evolvement directions in the context would consist of a pragmatic view on globalisation, rather than on the aforementioned internationalisation. On the other side, the symbolic views on the definition of route-maps and destinations that shape the concept of the polarisation of the world are to be taken into account.

In fact, Adedeji allowed the talks on a Pan African airline servicing the profile market, meaning that less importance should have been given to action, and aid assured to African airlines by those of former colonisers. In spite of this, the paradoxical contradiction of terms, focusing on the internationalisation of an airline that should recall the globalisation of it, as intended before, opened up paths to the paradigms of post-colonialism.

The upturn of it was shaped in the adaptation of aviation's evolution in Sub-Saharan Africa, to the same tendencies at a global level. It started in the nineties, following and suffering from the same 2008 crisis (OECD, 2010: 28), ending with the first decade of the 21st century. In relation to this century, Marina Novelli noted, based on data from the Euromonitor International, that there has been an emergence of low-cost carriers on the African market, easing the cross-regional accessibility (2015: 200).

The effects of globalisation on aviation, with the birth of low-cost opportunities of movement, are important for the creation of gateways, as defined by Bowen (2002). As a consequence of their creation, space regained importance and strength. That for, space, under the form of gateways, needed also to be an object of classification. One of the effects of this classification, which is a main prerogative of power given to former colonialists, was that postcolonial discourse became typically concentrated on peripheries, exploited and third spaces, besides schisms. In the meantime, the world's wider theories better explained the local and global contrasts and juxtapositions.

In fact, the classification of places is strictly linked, from a pragmatic and economical point of view, to the frequency, directions and direct movement possibilities it presupposes. The supposition on the frequency of movement, in the context of the blurred positions of "here" and "there", playing consecutively the role of metropolis or colony, centre or periphery (Gupta & Ferguson,

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[32] The Convention was established to promote cooperation and "create and preserve friendship and understanding among the nations and peoples of the world." (source: icao.int, accessed on 12/01/2021)

1997:38), calls for the assumption that aviation could shape a new path of the discourse on power and the applications of it.

A relevant idea to begin with is the discourse on the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision, a framework for the liberalisation of airlines operating in the African continent. This pact is considered mainly a failure, compared to similar agreements successfully implemented within the European Community (Njoya, 2016: 8). This was one of the first forms of discourse initiated in 1999, and developed until arriving to the paradigm of cross-nations collaborations for the development of infrastructure (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018: 338). The rhetoric focusing on liberalisation as a process that would weaken the market and challenge national airlines, is still following patterns of colonial commerce. That it seemed to predict the fall of peripheral airlines. As Njoya stated (2016: 8), the cross nation collaboration, or the unification into a regional or sub-regional market, is however diminished in the actual discourse. Indeed, it was considered that there was very poor practical integration in regards to the African airlines (Button et al, 2019: 86).

Therefore, still existent discrepancies between African nations, cultures, urban/rural population, destination qualifications (intended as the importance given to certain regions or destinations on the route-map), frequencies and cross-national cooperation has been limited by natural and/or cultural reasons. This shows that the continuation of a post-colonial discourse spotlighting liberalisation, for the emergence of a domestic or regional intra-African economy, or the compaction of regional perspectives of social change and resistance on global challenges, is somehow a paradox.

With roots located back in 1988 (Njoya, 2016: 10), coincidentally when Valentin Mudimbe was publishing his *Invention of Africa*, the liberalisation should have symbolised the reaction to the control of the state, or to the power of the nation. On the contrary, liberalisation of aviation meant the harmonisation, the greater international regularisation alongside the deregulation (Bowen, 2002: 426). It also signified the empowerment of the authority of the nation, who would support the international regularisation from within, especially accents being put on building cross-nations cooperation (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018: 338). Since governments in the Sub Saharan were more inclined to control and protect their own air carriers (Button et al, 2019: 89), competitiveness and deregulation itself were at risk. However, the

paternalistic ideology of justification of the intervention could not have been totally distanced, on the purpose to avoid social and political negative consequences (Hopkins,1987: 132).

This type of paradox would be significant for the beginning of a post-postcolonial discourse, reflected by departing from the field of aviation. The same paradox is revealed when considering the implications of gateways or "Aerotropoles" from the more recent discourse (Button et al, 2014: 85) on the possibilities of shifting of the discourse on power. The development of gateways would be possible on the condition that greater support for urban areas populated should be assured, meaning an accent put on secondary and tertiary sectors and on the continuation of the industrialisation of the African nations. Besides it, gateways discourse is focused on centre-periphery assumptions applied to aviation (Bowen, 2002), as extension of theories on radical diffusionism according to which the core urban culture would destroy the periphery and semi periphery one (Roberts et al, 2014: 99).

It is precisely in this context that the effects of aviation on mapping places and defining gateways, highlight the significance of power discourse in the aviation and its influence on the colonial thought's alternatives.

Anthropologists and researchers in social studies have agreed on the importance of tourism and the studies on it, to the production of knowledge, revealed from the beginning of the modernity. Tourism was a modality of power, as tourists exert power on the hosts (Lacey & Ilcan, 2015: 42), similar to the power of colonisers on the colonised. Moreover, tourism was considered an alternative social practice of daydreaming.

Knowledge production, as result of diffusionism, and daydreaming, as result of imagining, are key elements for locating, with methodological purpose, the subjects: tourism and power, in the narratives of where postcolonial thinking should be directed to. Thus, considering these aspects of tourism and the fact that airlines practically tended to dominate tourism, their decisions shaping the success of the tourism system (Thornton, 1971: 548), it was a logical consequence to consider the discourse on actions and aims of the airlines, as fundamental. Therefore, to assess their capability to shape the ways and paths colonial rhetoric was reproduced from its initial linear forms, to post-colonialism and nowadays, the eventual "post-post" modalities of it.

Methodology. The why and how of this paper

In order to understand the discourse of the airlines and its implications on the way power is encouraging the social change and the resistance, it is of great significance to simplify talks and concentrate them around leading parts of the discourse with practical social application, such as communication. This methodological approach is especially meant to define contemporary ways of thinking in a forced fully represented cluster area, the Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite early criticism of Mudimbe on the clustering of such (2020), communication is looked at in its broader definition, as both information (media) but mostly advertising, which, according to Habermas, would be linked to political and cultural battles (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997: 76). Nowadays battles are still premising of social change and resistance.

Advertising is seen as an act of communication of specific messages that accentuate and convey the information to the public. Moreover, airline advertising is a result of the shifting patterns of demand that trace the tendencies to follow, considering the force this shift imprints change in the airlines themselves (Bowen, 2002:426). Therefore, it would be necessary to analyse the rhetoric of such communication products, creating the demand and then supplying it. It is proposed a brief analysis on informative communication products, containing elements of advertising in it. Analysed documents are short newsletters sent to commercial aviation business professionals, forwarded by email, from Aviator, a company focused on airline intelligence support, from 2008, as it describes itself.

According to the aims and objectives of Aviator Aero, the focus is on the free delivery of information and the subsequent free admission of news transmission, from the part of those aviation actors who decide to deliver a specific message to the market, namely the announcers. From this perspective, the message is actually the voice of the actor, since, as stated by Mr Lee Tiernan, Managing Director, there is little or no interference of Aviator on the structure, tones or essence of the message received from the announcer on the purpose to be published as it is.

Especially important information that Aviator display in the newsletters might also come from press releases, generally worked out as essential news. Data used in the newsletters could also be pulled in from newspapers, official websites of indirect announcers and it is dramatically possible to have also

word-of-mouth data utilised. This is not limiting the research but interests, as it bases the actual discourse not only on a single voice, that of the announcer, but also on all voices advanced about, or around the subject (Spence et al.,2015: 3). As Foucault put it, in reference to the power and capabilities of the words in the language of the voice, they "unceasingly renew the power of their strangeness and the strength of their contestation." (1966, 2005: 55)

Mixed methodology of quantitative data interpretation will be used in order to assess the dominant qualitative perspective on the directions of a power discourse related to aviation in Sub-Saharan Africa. The research is based on observations from the perspective of factual members of the audience.

In the first instance the methodology is focused on the interpretation of the news frequency. This is based on the assumption that freedom to use the right of publication given by the Aviation.Aero, through its platform, is guaranteed. Secondly, the methodology is used to interpret two proportions. One regards the number of news pertaining to Sub-Saharan African aviation actors, in relation to the total number of news. The other one looks at the proportion of news in three states from Sub- Saharan Africa related to the total number of news pertaining to this region. At a second level of interpretation, it is proposed a critical view on the quality of data, the expressions that are frequent and similar, possibly evoking the state of the order the economic, political or cultural turns that each news might signify.

The intention to focus on three particular cases, namely in regards to news coming from or related to Nigeria, South Africa and Namibia, is a direct consequence of the necessity to restrict research and focus it on both recognition criteria and frequency of data.

The period taken into account starts on March, the 8th, 2019 and ends, due to statistical criteria, on August, the 8th, 2019. The relevance of this period is valued in the context of being high season preparing and operating time frames with maximum commercial and communicational potentials.

The news catalogue is displayed five times per week, on each day, except weekends. The recognition criteria in the choice of the case study stands, among others, on the appreciations of Nigeria as an evident tourism powerhouse, in Euromonitor International (Novelli, 2015: 18) or on the well-known dimensions of air travel market characterising South Africa (Novelli, 2015: 22).

Social change and resistance, in the discourse of aviator.aero

For the mentioned period, a total number of two hundred and three news reports were referring to Sub-Saharan African contexts, from a total average number of news displayed to the audience, of five thousand five hundred (calculated for an average of fifty news reports per day, each day except weekends). The first interesting observation on the resulted percentage of African news, of around 4% from the total average news, reflects both the evident and bursting need of Sub-Saharan aviation actors to make their voices heard on the aviation market, recalling the discourse on marginality and the need to get out of it.

The evidence that in relation to this percentage, only a half of it, barely the 2.1% of the commercial passenger and freighter aircraft is African (Button et al., 2019:81).

Table 1.

PERIOD	08.03.2019-08.08.2019
NEWS	203
AVERAGE	50 news/day
aprox	110
total average news	5500
percentage African news	less than 4%

Sub-Saharan states in the western part of the continent that appear in the newsletters of the period are, to a greater extent from Angola, Cameroon, Namibia, Nigeria and South-Africa, so excluding the latter two, selected based on the recognition criteria, the more present nation, except for Angola, is Namibia. The reason to exclude Angola is sustained by its characterisation as pre-emergent market (Novelli, 2015:107); trying therefore to concentrate the attention of the critical rhetoric on the discourse developed in one nation,

whose news are published in the search period, that has major number of news but it is also likely to be an emergent actor.

Table 2.

Country	News number
Angola	14
Cameroon	9
Namibia	13
Nigeria	16
South Africa	29
Other	122

The period of close observation and classification of news is not casual. It starts on the 8th of March, three days before the crash of the Ethiopian Airlines B737 MAX 8 crash, an event that impacted airlines using the same aircraft globally. The news was immediately followed, the next day, by the predictions of IATA (International Air Travel Association) on the reduction of growth, due to cited "trade frictions, Brexit and anti-globalisation rhetoric."

The period of observation ends on the 8th of August, with the news on the potential closure of Air Namibia, in the discourse of authorities and the relative effects on the moves and decisions of the carrier: "Air Namibia is in talks to exit from A330 lease agreements with Castlelake (US), as the government weighs options regarding the future of the airline, including a bailout and closure." (newsletter, 8 august 2019, aviatior.aero).

The choice to follow news in the mentioned period is also due to seasonality reasons, as tourism, therefore aviation also, is a highly seasonal activity. From March to August, the annual period seems for the airlines more prolific for implementing the following: new destinations, route-mapping, gateways proposals, advertising, strategic business plans, and their application.

Interpretations of the news had two stages: the first one is focused on assigning a value to the facts or events from the report or on the practical meaning of the information provided; the second consists of giving a key lecture to the message behind actions or words.

Two groups of relevant meanings have been selected about the discourse on power: social change and resistance. Each element from the news or each information seen, on the whole, about causes and results it defines, assignable in significance to one or another group, will be consequently noted with *S* for social change and *R* for resistance.

Following assumptions in an academic register, social change will refer to assuming a sort of self-protection of the impoverished region regarding relations between lower and more affluent areas. A solution to Franck Gunder's dependency theory, to avoid underdevelopment and colonial hegemony (Roberts et al, 2014:99, Ogunnubi, 2017:28) and a rethinking of difference through connections made in respect of the distance above (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997:35). Moreover, social change would refer to the tendency to keep ideologies alive that will not obstacle growth, as normal condition of the social life (whether in a pure economic sense, or in reference to the society and the self) (Roberts et al, 2014: 55).

Therefore, classification of an event in object, as emerging in a social change possibility, is given by the situation that the event produces a change of perspective in regards to the dependency from the internationalisation or from foreign aviation actors, governments or international aid (e.g. news NG9[33] and NG10[34] for Nigeria), in regards to growth which should be pursuit. In the meantime, the value of social change should be assigned to news reflecting important financial decisions, route-mapping, human resources management or interlining decisions that might impact the activity of the aviation field's actor (e.g. news ZA18[35], for South Africa, referring to a change of chief executive with end results on the vision, culture and activity of the concerned actor).

Not avowedly, on the contrary, the resistance would mean opposition to the relations of power that regulate a certain field in the society, considering these relations permeate all levels of the society, according to Foucault (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997: 5). The opposition is placed in a rather linear chronology. From the first moment colonial power is instated to the moment of its confirmation, therefore classified in a primary and secondary resistance, specific to Africa, following the historiographical School of Dar-Es-Salaam. Besides, the

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[33] See catalogue 2

[34] See catalogue 2

[35] See catalogue 3

resistance means tradition that has to oppose imperialism (Wa Thiong' o, 1992: 2) being against the sovereignty of others, economic exploitation of government from outside (Lazzarato, 2017: 75), or the colonial rule, intended as order. In this case, the resistance would mean daily contravention (Gibson, 2004: 18), but also a liberation act (Barthes, 1977: 213).

In this sense, the news that express the denial of actual pathways besides radical tournament of thinking, opposing common perspectives and sustaining actions against rules in force, mean resistance. The value attributed to them is *R*. There are three catalogues at the end of this paper, where news values assigned intuitively and the assignment's argumentation are available.

For example, in Namibia, the information on the same event of Windhoek to Lagos and Accra route discontinuity is displayed differently, at two days distance. On the 27th of May, it signifies a social change: "Air Namibia dropped the Windhoek – Lagos – Accra route on 22 May 2019, which was previously served with A319" (NA11[36]), due to impact on travellers, revenues, subject airline activity."

To clarify the value of resistance, news NA7[37] is relevant, referred to Air Namibia's discourse on issues of lack of fleets was solved with funding from the government, meaning that the opposition to the concept of the relation of power is revealed. Besides, resistance would also mean opposing imperialism, suggested in the action of re-adjustment of prices practised by the national carrier, at the claim of the concurrence representing the private aviation (NA6[38]) or opening paths to questioning, even denying, the relations of power that would otherwise be considered normal, like in the case of the news on Nigeria Air and the funds allocated to it by the government (NG4[39]). Thus, a discourse on the political engagement to reduce distances or on the contrary, increase them, by highlighting the efforts to govern and sustain the industry, no matter its profitability, is constructed.

The resistance value is also given to the news for the audience's interpretation to think of exogenous factors conveying an activity's evolution. It means that resistance allows the preservation of power concepts (e.g. NG7[40],

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[36] See catalogue 1

[37] See catalogue 1

[38] See catalogue 1

[39] See catalogue 2

[40] See catalogue 2

NG9[41] for Nigeria or ZA21[42] for South Africa, containing court decisions that invite the audience to assign power positions to aviation actors, that are supposedly equal).

Another interesting issue on the resistance value regarding argumentation is that it also suggests the resistance to imperialism, defined as being linked to traditions. For example, as in the news on FastJet (South Africa), an unsafe financial side impacts the airline (ZA27[43]). Or, recalling the opposition to exploitation by pointing out labour struggles and their management (ZA24[44]).

Social change, instead, is represented in discourses that highlight the mechanisms an economic actor would use to realise its objectives, from internationalisation to a rethinking of power relations. Regarding the research's time frame, it was interesting to discover a relevant proportion of news focused on human resources management decisions. There are 13.79% social change situations, from the total of valued facts represented in the news due to Chief Executive Officers nominations or dismissals in all three states. This high percentage compared to other arguments giving value to the news displayed, is reflecting the importance of the leader in regards to changes at the level of an organisation (Jackson, 2004: 34), as a tradition for Africa, revealed by anthropologists and highly sustained by Jefferson Murphy in his volumes of *History of the African Civilization* (1972). However, it also reintroduces, from a demographic perspective, the idea of the structuring of gateways. The explanation would be that proposed mappings of routes is also a consequence of vision and values that an aviation actor promotes and these are more changeable when a CEO is changed then when other factors are acting and influence the operation of an airline. In this consideration, since tradition preserving against imperialist pretensions was preferred, the social change and resistance appear as inter-dependent values.

Moreover, the significant presence of social change value is reflected in South Africa's news, noting an almost equality of S and R in the news about Nigeria. In the report regarding Namibia, R is a dominant value, with eight references to it, compared to five elements of S. These conclusions might define

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[41] See catalogue 2

[42] See catalogue 3

[43] See catalogue 3

[44] See catalogue 3

some narratives due to news under surveillance often coming directly from announcers.

At the second level of interpretation, proposing the news's rhetorical analysis, the values' interdependency is sustained by the previous observation on the same fact or event represented in two different moments. This fact is regarded in the frame of an "object opposing its being". This, or the justification given to the object by the decolonised subject, are modalities of resistance to colonial order. In other words, it would support redundancy and repetition regarding the message's communication, implying at this stage, a manipulation too.

On this second level of interpretation, resistance and social change are part of the same significant power, reflecting the different ways an aviation actor is part of the newsletter's targeted audience, would understand the words reflecting actions, decisions or statuses. There is a more extensive list of corresponding aviation actors in South Africa, due to better-developed sectors regarding the low-cost operation, consequently justifying a more considerable freedom of movement, access to aviation services and further growth of it. Nevertheless, due to the discourse on possible trajectories of the colonial-related thought, the prevalence of social change, more visible in South Africa, means that discourse is stuck and could not actually overcome its postcolonial direction to new proposals. Meanwhile, greater numbers reflecting the resistance parameter for Nigeria and Namibia could reiterate the scant belief in the idea that relations of power are not necessarily based on the existence of unequal subjects. For this reason, only the imperialism, including the South African sub-imperialism (Bond, 2016: 618), would be to contest.

Taking into account the sum of values in Nigeria, Namibia and South Africa, social change would outreach resistance, which means discourse on the airlines and postcolonial discourse would change together and proportionally, being yet nothing new that the advertising or economic artefacts of aviation, would bring or add essence to the postcolonial understanding of power relations.

Conclusions and limitations

This analysis is limited by the possibility to have major interference of the medium on the message displayed. Another limitation is the reader's position from a different, Western, Euro-American, system of thought. However, the assumption was that every news report was majorly prepared and presented in the form that the announcer wanted to create, protect, maintain or change the image on the own brand. A second assumption is that colonial thought is related to the two parameters, social change and resistance. Based on what is arguable to perceive from one action, event, observation and possible consequences of them, the parameters of social change and resistance are assignable to each of these.

The identification of parameters could be criticised in terms of the assignment. Yet, at a closer look to frequently used terms: "politics," "diplomatic," "law," "sue," "claim," "cut," "resume," the recourse to establishing connections between their senses and the facts described, is in itself rather extensive, then limitative.

Overall, aviation cannot transform the thoughts on power, even if it had brought a deconstruction of spaces, a re-imagining of distance and space, a new consideration on connectivity and difference. In terms of discourse on power, aviation cannot produce new paradigms when the old ones are related to aviation's importance as a military force. At all levels, aviation's discourse is still linked to self-protection, safety and national guidance from an economic perspective, despite its globalisation. The almost robotic procedural conservation of ideologies that were natural in sustaining the social change intermediated by the development of aviation could only now be interrupted by the incipient aviation industry's critics, in line with the "Greta effect" and the flights-shaming movement.

Acknowledgements

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