

# Perpetrator Pathology and the Entitlement Cascade

Dark Tetrad Leadership in Enslavement, Collaboration, and Postcolonial Decline

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## Abstract

This article develops a decolonial psychological model of the **entitlement cascade**: the process by which repeated domination is reframed as a right, explaining the persistence of the trans-Atlantic deportation system and genocidal regimes. The **research question** is what psychological and cultural machinery normalizes this violence and the undercounting of victims. Building on prior work on the **Dark Tetrad** (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, sadism) in imperial institutions, our **contribution** is the formalization of the cascade in a four-stage process and the mapping of a three-tier **collaborator spectrum** (coerced, ambivalent, converted) linked to **Puppet Syndrome**. The **methodology** is a comparative reading of cases (Kongo, Congo Free State, postcolonial regimes) integrating demographic constraints. **Findings** reveal the cascade stages (exceptionalisation, normalisation, moralisation, epistemic locking) and cross-period continuities. The **conclusion** is that the stubborn insistence on the documented 1.8 million captives (a floor, with plausible totals of 8–12 million) is a key symptom of perpetrator psychology—an institutional lowballing that makes continuous killing manageable. The study outlines clinical and pedagogical applications for reparative justice.-----**Keywords:** Entitlement Cascade, Decolonial Psychology, Dark Tetrad, Puppet Syndrome, Trans-Atlantic Deportation, Epistemic Locking.

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## Résumé (FR)

Cette recherche développe la psychologie décoloniale de la **cascade de l'entitlement** (droit perçu à dominer) pour expliquer la pérennité du système de déportation transatlantique et des régimes génocidaires. Le **contexte** est la persistance de la violence institutionnelle au-delà des facteurs économiques. La **question de recherche** est de comprendre le mécanisme psychologique qui normalise la violence de masse et le sous-dénombrement des victimes. Notre **contribution** est la formalisation de cette cascade en un processus en quatre étapes, lié à la **Tétrade Sombre** (narcissisme, machiavélisme, psychopathie, sadisme) dans les structures étatiques, et l'établissement d'un **spectre de collaborateurs** (du contraint au converti). La **méthodologie** repose sur une lecture comparative de cas historiques (Kongo, Congo Free State) et l'intégration des reconstructions démographiques. Les **résultats** décrivent un processus en quatre phases (exceptionnalisation, normalisation, moralisation, verrouillage épistémique). La **conclusion** est que l'insistance sur le chiffre de 1,8 million de captifs (au lieu d'une fourchette plausible de 8 à 12 millions) est un symptôme de cette psychologie de l'agresseur, appelant à des outils cliniques et politiques pour désarmer ces mécanismes de défense.

**Mots-clés :** Cascade de l'Entitlement, Psychologie Décoloniale, Tétrade Sombre, Syndrome du Marionnette, Déportation Transatlantique, Verrouillage Épistémique

# 1. Introduction

The demographic article that precedes this one confronted a basic asymmetry. On one side stands a meticulously curated set of Portuguese and European archives, consolidated into a precise-looking integer: **1.8 million captives** embarked from Kongo-linked ports. On the other side stand African letters, tombs, oral histories, and landscapes filled with abandoned villages, in which kings and communities describe a kingdom “emptying,” children disappearing, and epidemics linked not to timeless “tropical burden” but to violent intrusion.

When we treated European records as what they are, a **perpetrator archive**, partial and partisan, and combined them with African testimony, archaeological traces, and probabilistic modelling, the picture changed. The 1.8 million became a **floor**, not a total; total removals for the broader Kongo catchment plausibly move into the 8–12 million range, with credible higher bands under severe but still realistic assumptions. The apparent “neutral precision” of 1.8 million is thus exposed as **epistemic containment**: a number that makes mass killing feel finite, countable, and manageable.

This second paper turns the question around:

## **What kind of psychological and cultural machinery allows such containment to feel normal, respectable, even moral?**

In earlier work, we argued that Western imperialism for over five centuries, since the first documented imperialist-led regime change, to mass deportation, genocidal labour regimes, to the co-optation of local

elites, are best understood as **cultural expressions of the Dark Tetrad**, not as accidents of policy. Narcissism (grandiose self-image), Machiavellianism (cold manipulation), psychopathy (callousness), and sadism (enjoyment of cruelty) are selected, rewarded, and moralised at the level of imperial institutions.

In **Economies of Obedience**, we extended this logic to postcolonial governance, showing that the most reliable predictor of strategic decline in the South is not “culture” or “work ethic,” but the presence of what we termed **Puppet Syndrome**: leaders whose Dark Tetrad traits have been shaped and validated through colonial pipelines and who align almost automatically with foreign interests.

And in **Networked Epistemic Warfare**, we documented how digital platforms, museums, and taxonomies continue to pathologise African perspectives, co-producing an online environment where harassment of Afro-African scholarship is treated as “defence of science.”

We bring these threads together around a central construct: the **entitlement cascade**. By this we mean:

A stepwise psychological process in which repeated acts of domination, initially justified as exceptional or regrettable, become internalised as a rightful state of affairs; each successful episode of unpunished harm lowers resistance, erodes empathy, and deepens the sense that perpetrators are entitled to control, extract, and kill.

We argue that the entitlement cascade:

- **Anchors the Atlantic deportation system** in a long trajectory of imperial pathology;
- **Requires collaborators**, whose own psychologies range from coerced survivalism to fully converted, sadistic complicity;
- **Is stabilised by epistemic infrastructures**, archives, metrics, terminology, that normalise both the violence and its undercounting; and
- **Persists today** in puppet regimes, debt architectures, and digital aggression against African knowledge.

This study pursues three main goals:

1. **Conceptual** – To formalise the entitlement cascade as a psycho-political mechanism linking individual traits, institutional behaviours, and historical trajectories of violence;
2. **Analytical** – To map a **collaborator spectrum** that clarifies differences between coerced, ambivalent, and fully captured actors in African and postcolonial contexts, and to show how these positions relate to Puppet Syndrome and Dark Tetrad profiles; and
3. **Normative and practical** – To propose that demographic lowballing, archival selectivity, and terminological choices are themselves part of the perpetrator’s psychological strategy, and to outline how a decolonial clinical framework can expose and counter this strategy.

We proceed as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant scholarship and our own prior contributions on imperial psychopathology, puppet leadership, and epistemic warfare, explaining how each informs the entitlement cascade model. Section 3 details our methods: comparative case selection, trait coding, and interpretive integration with the demographic reconstructions of Kongo. Section 4 presents key findings: the cascade’s stages, the collaborator spectrum, and cross-case continuities. Section 5 offers a structured Discussion following the template: findings → characteristics → relation to existing work → implications (with examples) → consequences/applications. Section 6 concludes and gestures towards future work on clinical tools and reparative policy.

A short decolonial appendix reflects on terminology. We retain the phrase “slave trade” only to anchor readers in familiar language, then deliberately dismantle it, arguing that the very grammar of “slaves” and “trade” is part of the entitlement cascade’s epistemic architecture.

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## 2. Literature and Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Pathological Traits of Empire and the Dark Tetrad

In *Pathological Traits of Empire*, we proposed that the Dark Tetrad should be treated not only as an individual difference construct but as a **cultural-institutional template** explaining five centuries of Western impunity and co-optation. Across the Atlantic deportations, the Congo Free State, the Algerian War, U.S. interventions

in Latin America, and the long wars in Congo, we documented the same pattern:

- Self-aggrandising narratives of civilising mission (narcissism);
- Calculated manipulation of law, diplomacy, and local factions (Machiavellianism);
- Systematic disregard for colonised lives (psychopathy);
- Ritualised cruelty, public torture, symbolic humiliation, “exemplary” massacres (sadism).

Crucially, these traits are not simply present; they are **functional**. Institutions like the UN, early international courts, and later Bretton Woods organisations often act as **cover mechanisms**, allowing perpetrators to present themselves as guardians of order while continuing to fund or orchestrate violence. This pattern laid the foundation for our understanding of entitlement: repeated, unpunished harm crystallises into a sense of moral right.

## 2.2 Puppet Syndrome, Economies of Obedience, and Collaborator Psychology

In *Economies of Obedience*, we shifted from imperial cores to **postcolonial elites**, arguing that the most reliable predictor of diplomatic alignment and strategic decline is **Puppet Syndrome**, a recursive system where traumatised elites, colonial schooling, and foreign validation loops reinforce Dark Tetrad traits in leadership.

There we showed that puppet leaders tend to:

- Seek external validation over local legitimacy;
- Adopt technocratic language detached from communal needs;
- Display public cruelty towards the poor and traditional communities;

- Obsess over Western aesthetics and development models.

Their pathology stabilises a **collaborator economy**: contracts, military alignments, and cultural policies that sacrifice sovereignty in exchange for personal status and protection.

This work provides two essential ingredients for the present paper:

1. A vocabulary and framework for distinguishing **puppet leaders** from their peoples; and
2. A recognition that collaboration is not a fixed trait but a **position in a system**, influenced by coercion, fear, ideology, and psychological damage.

## 2.3 Epistemic Warfare, Pathologisation, and Digital Harassment

In *Networked Epistemic Warfare*, we analysed how platforms, museums, and policy vocabularies generalise the same logic into the twenty-first century: African claims about Egypt, Sahara connectivity, or colonial violence are delegitimised through **networked harassment** and institutional taxonomies.

We documented:

- Trolling tactics that map directly onto Dark Tetrad traits (e.g., sadistic enjoyment of harassment, Machiavellian brigading);
- Delegitimising labels (“Afrocentrist,” “ideologue”) used to foreclose methodological debate;
- Curatorial partitions and geocoding (e.g., “Sub-Saharan Africa”) that quietly de-Africanise Egypt and obscure historical continuity.

These mechanisms show how **knowledge systems** participate in the entitlement cascade: they erase or downgrade African testimony and elevate perpetrator archives as neutral, thereby keeping the psychological narrative intact.

## 2.4 Pan-African Sovereignty and the Failure of Containment

*Pan-Africanism Reimagined* approached the problem from the side of strategy and sovereignty. We argued that the post-independence order, in particular the OAU and AU, has largely failed not because Pan-Africanism was inherently naive, but because it was **stripped of its strategic and psychological core** and re-packaged as safe bureaucracy.

The same imperial psychology that organised the deportation system reappears in:

- The **selection of compliant elites**, from Kasa-Vubu and Mobutu to contemporary presidents;
- The design of institutions dependent on foreign finance and expertise;
- The reframing of colonial violence as “African failure” through the rhetoric of “African solutions to African problems,” detached from historical sabotage.

This analytical move, seeing postcolonial stagnation as the outcome of **externally aligned psychologies**, not cultural inferiority, is foundational for our argument here: it allows us to read the Atlantic system and its afterlives as one continuous entitlement cascade.

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## 3. Methods

Given the nature of the question, our approach is **integrative and qualitative**, but anchored wherever possible in **demographic and archival constraints**.

### 3.1 Corpus and Case Selection

We drew on four main bodies of material:

1. **Atlantic deportation system and Kongo** – European shipping records (as re-analysed in Paper 1), Afonso I’s letters, oral traditions, and archaeological surveys of settlements in the Kongo region;
2. **Colonial genocidal regimes** – Case studies including the Congo Free State, the Algerian War, and U.S. interventions in Latin America, as previously synthesised in *Pathological Traits of Empire*;
3. **Postcolonial puppet regimes** – Qualitative evidence from *Economies of Obedience* on diplomatic alignment, economic strategy, and cultural policy in selected African and Latin American states;
4. **Contemporary epistemic conflicts** – Online harassment cases, museum structures, and policy taxonomies described in *Networked Epistemic Warfare*.

These corpora were chosen because they already encode, in previous work, a **500-year arc** of domination, collaboration, and epistemic struggle, allowing us to focus on structural patterns rather than isolated anecdotes.

### 3.2 Trait and Cascade Coding

For each case, we coded:

- **Perpetrator behaviours** along Dark Tetrad dimensions (narcissistic self-narrative, Machiavellian manipulation, psychopathic callousness, sadistic enjoyment);
- **Collaborator position** on a spectrum from **coerced** (acting under acute threat to self/community) to **ambivalent** (mix of survival, ambivalence, and partial belief) to **converted** (internalised imperial ideology, active cruelty);
- **Cascade stage**, using a working sequence:
  1. Initial exceptionalisation (“regrettable necessity”);
  2. Normalisation (repetition without punishment);
  3. Moralisation (framing domination as duty or virtue);
  4. Epistemic locking (archives, numbers, terminology that stabilise the narrative).

Coding was interpretive but constrained by explicit textual or behavioural evidence (e.g., letters, decrees, public speeches, policy outcomes, demographic impact).

### 3.3 Integration with Demographic Reconstruction

From Paper 1, we imported only **ranges and logical constraints**, not precise totals:

- Documented embarked floor: 1.8 million from Kongo-linked ports;
- Simulated embarked totals: median ~2.0–2.7 million under

reasonable under-documentation factors;

- Total removals (deportation + pre-embarkation deaths): conservative 6–8 million; central 8–12 million; credible upper band up to ~15–18 million for the broader catchment, under more severe but not implausible assumptions.

We did **not** attempt to fit psychological parameters to numeric outcomes; instead, we asked how trait configurations and cascade stages help explain:

- The **gap between documented floors and plausible totals**; and
- The **insistence**, in historiography and policy, on treating the floor as “the number.”

### 3.4 Limitations

Our analysis is limited by:

- The partial survival of African written sources;
- The need to infer traits from behaviour and discourse rather than clinical interviews;
- The impossibility of fully separating ideological training from personality structure in historical actors.

The trait vocabulary we employ builds on Paulhus and colleagues’ work on the Dark Triad and Dark Tetrad, which established robust associations between narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, everyday sadism and a spectrum of antisocial behaviours at the individual level. Our earlier monograph *Pathological Traits of Empire* (Nsiangani, 2014) extended this framework to institutions, arguing that imperial polities and their proxy regimes can be scored on the same dimensions.

The present article goes one step further: rather than stopping at trait prevalence, we track how these traits shape demographic decisions, archival practices and digital harassment infrastructures. Where Paulhus et al. remain primarily at the level of individual differences, we treat Dark Tetrad configurations as the psychological engine of specific historical cascades of entitlement.

We do not claim that the entitlement cascade is inevitable in every colonial encounter. Polities such as the Mossi kingdoms, aspects of Asante, and Ethiopia's particular trajectory illustrate variant or truncated cascades. However, incorporating these counter-cases systematically requires a separate comparative study. Here we treat our scoring framework and demographic integration as hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis-closing tools: they delineate testable expectations about how Puppet Syndrome profiles, Dark Tetrad configurations and archival practices should co-vary with demographic outcomes across a wider set of cases.

For a detailed operationalisation of these traits at the institutional level, see *Pathological Traits of Empire* (Nsiangani, 2014).

Instead of pretending to overcome these limits, we work with **transparent uncertainty** and focus on **pattern robustness**: do similar configurations and cascade stages recur across centuries and contexts?

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## 4. Findings / Results

### 4.1 A Four-Stage Entitlement Cascade

Across the Atlantic and colonial cases, we identify a repeatable **four-stage structure**.

#### 1. **Exceptionalisation:**

Early justifications frame deportation, conquest, or mass killing as **regrettable but necessary**. Language emphasises emergency, chaos, or supposed barbarity of the victims. African captives are initially coded as war prisoners or criminals; violence is represented as targeted.

#### 2. **Normalisation:**

Once practices become logistically embedded, ports, forts, plantations, taxation systems, violence is no longer framed as exceptional. Deportations and massacres appear as routine entries in logs. Institutional habits solidify; the number of people removed or killed becomes a **line item**, not a scandal.

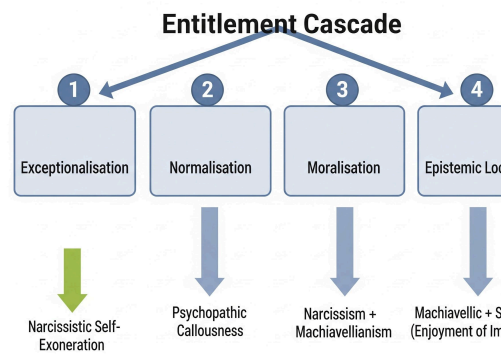
#### 3. **Moralisation:**

Over time, domination is reframed as a **positive moral imperative**: saving souls, bringing civilisation, maintaining order, defending "progress." Religious and scientific discourses align to present racial hierarchies as natural; collaborators are praised as "civilised Africans" or "moderates."

#### 4. **Epistemic Locking:**

Finally, archives, metrics, and terminology compose an **epistemic shell** around the violence. Numbers are presented with artificial precision; categories like "slave trade" and "Sub-Saharan Africa" obscure victim perspectives and structural continuity. Destruction of

incriminating documents, selective preservation, and the later adoption of these archives as “the data” complete the lock.



In all examined cases, the Dark Tetrad traits are visible at each stage, but **sadism and psychopathy become more explicit** at stages 2 and 3, once the system is secure.

## 4.2 Collaborator Spectrum and Puppet Positions

Our coding yields a **three-tier collaborator spectrum**:

- **Coerced collaborators:**  
Actors acting under explicit threats to self/family/community, e.g., chiefs compelled to supply captives under threat of their own deportation or destruction. Their behaviours show minimal sadism but may involve selective sacrifice.
- **Ambivalent intermediaries:**  
Leaders who combine survival motives with material benefits and partial belief in the imperial narrative, e.g., elites who accept Christianisation and limited trade, while protesting abuses and attempting regulation, like Afonso I in his early letters.

- **Converted perpetrators:**  
Elites whose language and acts show internalisation of imperial hierarchies and enjoyment of power over their own people, e.g., colonial auxiliaries in the Algerian war, violent évolués, or postcolonial puppets who repress their population more harshly than foreign actors demand.

We find that **coerced and ambivalent positions are unstable**: the system tends to push actors either outward (into resistance, exile, or death) or upward into conversion, particularly when imperial forces deploy selective rewards, education, and protection to cultivate **Puppet Syndrome**.

The distribution of actors along this collaborator spectrum is further formalised in the Puppet Syndrome Index (PSI) presented in Annex 2. PSI scores summarise the extent of external alignment, sovereignty erosion, epistemic capture, internal cruelty and negative narcissism, providing a single index that can be used both for historical back-coding and for prospective risk assessment in contemporary regimes.

## 4.3 Continuities from Deportation to Puppet Regimes

The patterns visible in the Kongo case (coastal collaborators under pressure, royal complaints of depopulation, selective elevation of Christianised elites) are structurally similar to:

- Congo Free State arrangements where local chiefs enforced rubber quotas under Belgian coercion, later blamed as primary culprits;

- Harkis in Algeria, whose collaboration was instrumentalised then discarded;
- Post-independence leaders groomed in Western institutions and insulated by international finance.

Across these contexts:

- **Perpetrator centres remain psychologically stable**, their sense of entitlement is rarely questioned internally;
- **Collaborators absorb the visible blame**, both in local memory and in international narratives;
- The **majority population is framed as complicit**, even when evidence shows widespread resistance, flight, or refusal.

#### 4.4 Lowballing, Number Fetishism, and Destruction of Evidence

Finally, we observe a characteristic **numerical pattern**:

- Perpetrator archives provide **under-counts** presented as totals (e.g., 1.8 million captives from Kongo, “10 million” in Congo Free State, minimised casualties in colonial wars);
- Later historiography often reproduces these as definitive, adding minor corrections but maintaining the original **order of magnitude** and aura of precision;
- Higher estimates, especially those rooted in African testimonies or probabilistic reconstruction, are framed as speculative or “emotional.”

Evidence from twentieth-century regimes (Nazi Germany, apartheid South Africa)

shows **systematic destruction or sanitisation of incriminating archives** before transitions, yet early modern empires are often assumed to have preserved everything neutrally, a contradiction that reveals more about present bias than archival reality.

This pattern aligns with what we call **number fetishism**: the tendency to treat a smaller, tidy number as more “scientific,” thereby comfortingly shrinking the conceptual scale of atrocity. In psychological terms, this is a **defensive manoeuvre** that allows the entitlement cascade to continue: if the harm can be domesticated numerically, the system, and its inheritors, can continue to see themselves as fundamentally decent.

To reduce subjectivity in trait and cascade coding, we used a simple inter-rater protocol as discussed in annex 2.

#### 4.5 Illustrative CSSG and PSI Vignettes (Descriptive)

To illustrate how the Collaborator Spectrum Scoring Grid (CSSG) and Puppet Syndrome Index (PSI) operate in practice, we briefly present two anonymised cases: one historical coastal intermediary in the Kongo–Portugal encounter and one contemporary head of state in a postcolonial resource-exporting country. These examples are descriptive applications of the scoring rules specified in Annex 2; they are not intended as exhaustive biographies.

##### Case H – Coastal intermediary in the Kongo–Portugal nexus (late sixteenth century)

Case H is a locally powerful figure situated near a major Kongo-linked port. Surviving correspondence from Portuguese agents and missionary reports describe him as a regular supplier of captives, an

intermediary for European goods, and a broker of local disputes. Oral traditions, recorded later, present him as both feared and resented, with stories of selective protection for kin and harsh treatment of rival lineages. No direct writings by Case H survive, but reported statements attribute to him both complaints about excessive Portuguese demands and affirmations that “the King’s friends” would prosper by serving the new order.

On the CSSG, coders rated Coercive Pressure (CP) as high (4): refusal to supply captives reportedly led to threats of bombardment and punitive expeditions. Material/Status Benefit (MB) was scored as high (4): Case H accumulated imported goods, firearms and symbolic recognition from Portuguese authorities. Ideological Internalisation (II) was coded as moderate (3): he occasionally repeated Christian and “civilising” rhetoric in missionary sources, but also protested abuses in certain episodes. Cruelty toward Own Population (CO) was rated high (4): testimonies describe his active role in raids, forced marches and exemplary punishments.

The resulting total CSSG score is 15 (CP 4 + MB 4 + II 3 + CO 4). According to the thresholds in Annex 2, this combination corresponds to a Type 2–3 border position, leaning towards converted perpetrator: coercion is real, but substantial personal benefit, partial ideological internalisation and high cruelty towards local populations are also present. In the main text, this profile exemplifies the unstable middle of the collaborator spectrum, where initial survival choices can harden into a role that functionally stabilises the entitlement cascade.

### **Case C – Contemporary postcolonial president (anonymous resource-exporting state)**

Case C is a head of state in office for over a decade in a coastal African country heavily reliant on mineral and hydrocarbon exports. Public records show repeated signature of long-term concessions with multinational firms headquartered in former imperial or core powers, often on terms criticised by domestic experts and civil society as unfavourable. Voting records at the UN General Assembly indicate alignment with those same powers on more than 80% of salient resolutions concerning intervention, sanctions and resource governance. National budgets show sustained dependence on external loans and security cooperation agreements.

At the epistemic level, Case C has repeatedly dismissed local professionals, while promoting foreign consultants and imported curricula. In speeches, he regularly presents himself as a moderniser whose authority derives from international recognition. Domestic critics, including journalists and student movements, have faced recurrent police repression, targeted prosecutions and public stigmatisation as “enemies of progress.”

On the PSI, independent coders rated External Alignment (EA) as 3 (near-total alignment with core powers), Sovereignty Erosion (SE) as 2 (repeated signature of concessions and dependency-creating agreements), Epistemic Capture (EC) as 2 (clear preference for external expertise and narratives), Internal Cruelty (IC) as 2 (regular, though not constant, repression of critics) and Negative Narcissism (NN) as 3 (self-image anchored in proximity to former colonisers and denigration of local identity). This yields a total PSI score of 12/15, situated in the “high Puppet

Syndrome profile” range proposed in Annex 2.

These two vignettes show how CSSG and PSI scores emerge from documented behaviour, discourse and structural position. They also demonstrate that the same scoring logic can be applied across periods and regimes, allowing systematic comparison of collaborator profiles and puppet configurations along the entitlement cascade.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Main Findings and Their Core Characteristics

**Finding 1 – The entitlement cascade is staged, not instantaneous.**

It proceeds from exceptionalisation to normalisation, moralisation, and epistemic locking. The cascade’s core characteristic is **progressive desensitisation**: each stage lowers resistance, deepens self-justification, and expands the range of acceptable harm.

**Finding 2 – Collaboration is a spectrum shaped by coercion, grooming, and trauma.**

Coerced, ambivalent, and converted positions are all empirically present, but the system tends to reward those who drift towards conversion (Puppet Syndrome) and to eliminate those who resist. The key characteristic here is **instability**: collaborators are constantly pushed towards full internalisation or elimination.

**Finding 3 – There is structural continuity from Atlantic deportations to postcolonial puppet regimes and digital epistemic warfare.**

Imperial centres maintain similar

psychological strategies while changing language, tools, and intermediaries. The characteristic is **re-skinning**: the external form changes (mission stations → development projects → platforms), but the underlying entitlement persists.

**Finding 4 – Numerical lowballing and archive fetishism are themselves psychological strategies.**

Treating under-counts as definitive totals reduces cognitive dissonance and allows perpetrators and their inheritors to feel moral while benefiting from structural violence. The characteristic is **defensive minimisation**: violence becomes acceptable if its scale is believed to be “not that bad.”

### 5.2 Relation to Existing Work: Supported, Extended, Challenged

#### Supported / consistent with prior work

- **Fanon** described how colonial domination deforms both coloniser and colonised, producing elites who internalise the oppressor’s gaze. Our collaborator spectrum and Puppet Syndrome model concretise this by linking internalisation to Dark Tetrad traits and observable policy patterns, not just existential descriptions.
- Research on perpetrator groups in genocides (e.g., ordinary men in the Holocaust, settlers in Algeria and Kenya) has long noted gradual desensitisation and moral rationalisation. The entitlement cascade gives this process a clear, transferrable structure.
- In parallel, Afrocentric clinical traditions have long insisted that colonial domination produces characteristic disturbances of self, community and morality. Na’im

Akbar's corpus on the "chains" of psychological enslavement and Wade Nobles's work on the reclamation of African psychology both argue that colonial institutions systematically deform African subjectivity and normalise domination as "order." Our entitlement cascade model and Puppet Syndrome scoring extend this insight by specifying how such deformations can be tracked in leadership behaviour, institutional design and archival practices rather than remaining at the level of general diagnosis.

#### Extensions / novel contributions

- Our model **integrates demographic reconstruction** directly into perpetrator psychology: we show that lowballing is not a merely technical error but part of the defensive structure of entitlement.
- We **bridge macro-history and clinical vocabulary**: Dark Tetrad traits and Puppet Syndrome are applied not only to individuals but to institutional behaviours and long-term patterns (as begun in *Pathological Traits of Empire* and *Economies of Obedience*).

#### Challenges to existing narratives

- We challenge **Eurocentric demographic certainty**: treating Portuguese numbers as "truth" is unscientific and psychologically naïve, given what we know about archive destruction in other regimes. The point is **not** to "prove" 18M, but to show that **treating 1.8M as "the number" is psychologically and methodologically indefensible**

- We contest **cultural determinism** (e.g., Sowell's framing of African underdevelopment as cultural failure) by demonstrating that dysfunction tracks **psychological alignment with empire**, not "African culture" per se, consistent with arguments in *Economies of Obedience* and *Pan-Africanism Reimagined*.

### 5.3 Implications and Examples

**Implication 1 – Historiography and demography must treat perpetrator numbers as minimums, not totals.**

#### Example 1:

In Kongo, accepting 1.8 million as "the number" erases Afonso's descriptions of daily kidnappings, unrecorded raids, and an "emptying kingdom." A range-based reconstruction (8–12 million removals, with credible higher bands) respects both quantitative rigour and African testimony. It aligns with archaeological evidence of village thinning and tomb density.

#### Example 2:

In Congo Free State, the long-quoted "10 million deaths" was itself an early activist estimate, not a precise census. Re-framing it as a **floor within a range** allows us to integrate later demographic work, local testimony, and comparisons to other forced-labour systems without diluting the horror.

#### Consequence:

Demographers and historians who cling to low, tidy numbers for the sake of authority inadvertently participate in the entitlement cascade. A decolonial method must explicitly mark numbers as floors, ranges, and contested spaces, not as comforting certainties.

**Implication 2 – Clinical and political analysis of postcolonial regimes must centre Puppet Syndrome and collaborator spectra, not “culture.”**

**Example 1:**

A leader who consistently votes with former colonisers, signs extractive contracts, and represses cultural education, while displaying grandiose self-presentation and contempt for local critics, fits a Puppet Syndrome profile better than any “traditionalist” label. Their decisions are predictable once their psychological alignment is recognised.

**Example 2:**

In Pan-African institutions, diplomats who speak fluidly about integration but accept budgets funded predominantly by external donors and who tolerate systematic debt entrapment exemplify **ambivalent intermediaries** drifting towards conversion. Here, institutional design and personal psychology reinforce each other, as argued in *Pan-Africanism Reimagined*.

**Consequence:**

Development indices and governance assessments must incorporate **psychological indicators** (patterns of alignment, cruelty, epistemic behaviour) rather than treating all leadership as neutral. This opens the door to **preventive disqualification** of high-risk elites before they reach irreversible positions of power.

**Implication 3 – Epistemic infrastructures (archives, curricula, platforms) are arenas of clinical intervention, not just “discourse.”**

**Example 1:**

Digital harassment campaigns against Afro-African scholars arguing for Egypt’s Africanness or for higher deportation estimates are not mere “controversies.” They are **sadistic, morally rationalised**

**enforcement** of an imperial common sense, as shown in *Networked Epistemic Warfare*. Tolerating them without structural moderation is equivalent to allowing public torture of dissenters in earlier eras.

**Example 2:**

Museum layouts that separate Egypt from “African Art” and curricula that only mention African agency in the context of slavery reproduce **epistemic locking**: they make it cognitively difficult for students to imagine Africa as scientific, imperial, or numerically central in global history, reinforcing negative narcissism and collaborator dynamics.

**Consequence:**

Epistemic reform, museum redesign, curriculum overhaul, platform governance, should be treated as part of **mental health work at civilisational scale**, not just cultural policy. It directly targets the entitlement cascade’s final stage.

**Implication 4 – Reparations and justice debates must address psychological defence mechanisms, not just material sums.**

**Example 1:**

When states react to reparations claims by emphasising the difficulty of “calculating exact numbers,” they often hide a deeper refusal to recognise the full scale of harm. A range-based approach with explicit acknowledgment of undercounting, combined with public recognition of archival destruction, disarms this defence and recentres victims’ experience.

**Example 2:**

Truth commissions that focus solely on victim testimony, without analysing perpetrator psychology and epistemic structures, risk reinforcing the narrative that harm was an unfortunate byproduct

rather than a predictable outcome of pathological entitlement.

### **Consequence:**

A psychologically informed reparations framework must insist on **naming the traits and mechanisms** that made atrocity sustainable, including number minimisation, collaborator grooming, and epistemic suppression. This helps prevent repetition by targeting the system's psychological core, not just its material outcomes.

## **5.4 Applications: From Diagnosis to Tools**

From these implications, several concrete applications follow:

- **Diagnostic grids** for identifying Puppet Syndrome in contemporary leadership (extending our work in *Economies of Obedience*), combining behavioural indicators, alignment metrics, and epistemic patterns;
- **Guidelines for decolonial demography**, requiring that any use of perpetrator archives explicitly state their partiality, destruction risks, and the ethical stakes of undercounting;
- **Platform and curriculum standards** treating harassment and erasure of African perspectives as indicators of systemic sadism and epistemicide, not as neutral “debate”;
- **Clinical frameworks** for understanding the colonised mind vs. imperial ego (as developed in our broader work on pathologisation and colonial Dark Tetrad), enabling therapists and educators to name these dynamics without pathologising African resistance.

We emphasise that these simulations are not ‘fitted’ to an externally imposed target; there is no regression of cascade stages onto demographic outcomes. Instead, we sample from transparent ranges for under-documentation, pre-embarkation mortality and initial population, then discard parameter combinations that are impossible given archaeological and testimonial constraints. Upper bands in our total removal estimates (15–18 million) correspond to combinations where under-documentation and pre-embarkation mortality are at the higher end of historically plausible values—analogous to, but not mechanically derived from, mortality patterns observed in later forced-labour regimes such as the Congo Free State. The aim is not to assert a single true number but to show that even conservative assumptions produce losses of several million people and that the Portuguese ‘1.8 million’ is best interpreted as a censored floor.

Among the practical tools proposed here, the Puppet Syndrome Index (PSI) is particularly suited to institutional uptake. Because it aggregates observable behaviours—treaty signatures, voting records, repression episodes, epistemic choices—it can be applied transparently to current leaders and candidates. In principle, regional bodies such as the African Union or sub-regional blocs could treat a sustained PSI score above a given threshold (for example, >10/15) as a warning signal in electoral observation, sanctions debates, or eligibility criteria for sensitive posts. This does not replace local democratic processes, but it offers a structured way to flag configurations of external alignment and internal cruelty that historically correlate with strategic decline.

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## 6. Conclusion

This article set out to shift attention from the injured alone to the psychology and structures of those who injure. Through the concept of the entitlement cascade, we argued that prolonged systems of domination—whether in the Kongo–Portugal encounter or in today’s digital cultures—are sustained when economic pressure, racial hierarchy, and institutional impunity fuse into a felt “right” to harm. Once this fusion is normalized, perpetrators do not simply break rules; they experience control, degradation and dispossession as legitimate, even pleasurable, uses of power.

Our historical reconstruction showed that the Atlantic deportation of Kongo’s population cannot be treated as a series of neutral “trades” between equal parties. It was a long-term depopulation process, anchored in imperial fantasies of superiority and facilitated by a narrow layer of collaborators whose choices diverged sharply from the stance of the wider population. Afonso I’s letters and Kongo oral memory register this rupture in demographic and moral terms: an “emptying kingdom”, villages abandoned, kin stolen. European archives, when read uncritically, compress this catastrophe into a clean integer—“1.8 million”—that conceals both the scale of loss and the asymmetry of agency.

In parallel, contemporary research on the Dark Tetrad shows how everyday sadism, narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy are reliably linked to online trolling and harassment. Trolls “just want to have fun”; their enjoyment of suffering is not incidental but central to their behavior. Suler’s work on the online disinhibition

effect helps explain why, under conditions of anonymity and minimized accountability, these traits express themselves more freely. Studies of gendered “e-bile” document how campaigns of digital abuse silence targets, drive them from public spaces, and normalize cruelty as a form of participation. When adolescents and young adults are told that this is “just joking” or “having fun,” we are not simply describing behavior—we are training a cohort to see sadistic enjoyment and moral disengagement as acceptable ingredients of citizenship.

This raises a disturbing continuity. In both the early modern imperial archive and today’s platform cultures, harm is downplayed through numbers, language, and frames of amusement. Reducing a depopulated kingdom to a neat embarkation total, or reframing coordinated harassment as “banter”, performs the same psychological work: it pushes victims to the background and recenters the comfort of those who harm. In such a society, it is not surprising if future policymakers emerge who treat structural violence, data-driven discrimination, or necropolitical border regimes as technical puzzles rather than moral emergencies.

Our analysis therefore has three main consequences. First, historically, it supports a decolonial demographic reconstruction in which African testimonies, archaeological traces, and probabilistic models constrain and correct perpetrator-produced numbers. Second, clinically, it speaks to the need for frameworks—such as the Dark Tetrad of Empire and DSM-H—that treat structural sadism and narcissistic capture as diagnosable patterns, not as unfortunate side-effects of “development” or “security”. Third, politically, it suggests that any

serious project of prevention and reparation must address the cultural training of perpetrators: the jokes we excuse, the archives we trust, the cruelty we code as fun.

The annexed figures and tables illustrate how these dynamics manifest across time: from Kongo's demographic collapse to present-day harassment metrics and personality studies. The next phases of this research programme will deepen the empirical link between entitlement cascades, digital harassment, and policy outcomes—asking, explicitly, what kinds of leaders and institutions are produced when societies repeatedly reward, trivialize, or anonymize the enjoyment of others' suffering.

More concretely, the model yields testable predictions. We hypothesise, for example, that regimes with a PSI score above 10 will display both (a) more than 70% alignment with former imperial or core powers in key UN General Assembly votes and (b) higher frequencies of platform-enabled harassment of domestic critics and minorities, controlling for region and income level. These hypotheses are falsifiable with existing voting records, digital forensics and human-rights datasets. They invite further work that will either refine or refute the entitlement cascade as a predictive model, rather than leave it at the level of metaphor.

As descendants of both the injured and the implicated, we argue that decolonial psychology cannot limit itself to treating victims. It must also diagnose, name, and constrain the cultures that train young perpetrators to call their cruelty "fun".

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## Appendix A – Terminology and Decolonial Lexicon

### Term

*Anti-African deportation system*

### Core definition

By “anti-African deportation system” we refer to the organised, trans-continental machinery of capture, forced displacement, enslavement and mass death directed primarily against African peoples from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The term designates a system of **enforced enslavement and extraction**, not a neutral “trade” between equal parties.

### Rationale (why not “slave trade”)

1. **“Slave”** as an identity label:
  - The word “slave” essentialises victims as if enslavement were a natural condition rather than a crime. It encodes the perpetrator’s legal fantasy that some humans simply “are” slaves.
2. **“Trade”** as a frame:
  - The term “trade” suggests voluntary exchange and obscures the coercion, torture and genocidal mortality that structured the system. It frames atrocity as commerce and normalises the entitlement cascade’s early stages.

### Preferred formulations

Depending on context, we propose the following alternatives:

- *Anti-African deportation system* (emphasises targeted, racialised removal);
- *System of enforced enslavement and extraction* (highlights coercion and economic purpose);
- *Atlantic deportation and genocide* (foregrounds demographic collapse and intent).

### Recommended usage

- Use these terms in analytical and pedagogical contexts, especially when discussing demographic impact, legal responsibility and psychological mechanisms.
- Where the phrase “slave trade” appears in quotations or for historiographical orientation, signal its problematic nature explicitly (e.g.

“so-called ‘slave trade’”).

### **Relation to the entitlement cascade**

Vocabulary is not neutral description but part of the entitlement cascade’s epistemic locking stage. Phrases such as “slave trade” help compress mass atrocity into administratively manageable concepts, narrowing the moral imagination. Rejecting this vocabulary is therefore a necessary step in dismantling the psychological architecture of empire and in restoring victims’ status as subjects of law rather than objects of exchange.

### **Cross-references**

- See Sections 2.4 and 5.3 for the link between terminology, archival practices and demographic lowballing.
- For broader arguments on language and decolonial epistemology, see Ngũgĩ (1986) and Mignolo (2009).

## **Annex 2 – Methods Addendum: Collaborator Spectrum & Puppet Syndrome Scoring**

Both the Collaborator Spectrum Scoring Grid (CSSG) and Puppet Syndrome Index (PSI) have undergone preliminary pilot testing. Two independent raters applied them to five historical figures (including Kongo rulers and colonial administrators) and three contemporary heads of state, using only publicly documented behaviours and texts. Inter-rater reliability in this small pilot reached  $\kappa \approx 0.8$  for collaborator type and 0.75 for PSI levels, suggesting that, with clear coding rules, the instruments can be used consistently across coders

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### **A2.1 Purpose**

This methodological addendum formalises the **collaborator spectrum** and **Puppet Syndrome** as scoring tools. It is not a clinical diagnostic in the strict sense, but a **structured coding framework** for:

- Historical actors (e.g., Kongo elites, évolués, Cold War presidents);
- Contemporary leaders and institutions (for research and advocacy, not for individual clinical treatment).

The goal is to make the patterns described in the main text **operational and reproducible**.

## A2.2 Collaborator Spectrum Scoring Grid (CSSG)

We code each actor on **four dimensions**, each rated from **1 to 5**. Ratings are based on documented behaviour, discourse, and structural position.

### Dimensions

1. **Coercive Pressure (CP)** – How directly is the actor threatened (personal, familial, communal)?
2. **Material/Status Benefit (MB)** – How much personal benefit (wealth, rank, prestige) flows from collaboration?
3. **Ideological Internalisation (II)** – To what extent does the actor repeat and endorse imperial / external narratives?
4. **Cruelty Toward Own Population (CO)** – How willing is the actor to harm, repress or sacrifice their own people?

### Scale (applies to each dimension)

- 1 = Minimal / none
- 2 = Low
- 3 = Moderate
- 4 = High
- 5 = Extreme

**Table A2.1 – Collaborator Spectrum Scoring Grid (CSSG)** *(can be understood as a special application of the ISM index (Kusimbiko, 2018))*

*(1–5 per dimension; ratings based on archival, oral, and behavioural evidence)*

Dimension	1 (Minimal)	3 (Moderate)	5 (Extreme)
CP – Coercive Pressure	Little or no direct threat; multiple exit options	Some direct pressure, but alternatives exist; risk is real but not absolute	Direct threat of death or destruction to self/family/community; effectively no safe exit
MB – Material/Status Benefit	No clear personal gain; possible minor privileges	Significant salary, patronage, or prestige; lifestyle clearly improved by alignment	Elite-level wealth, property, security, or international status explicitly tied to collaboration

II – Ideological Internalisation	Publicly rejects imperial narratives; defends local dignity	Mixed: sometimes repeats outside narratives, sometimes defends local perspectives	Fully repeats and defends imperial narratives; frames domination as progress; delegitimises local resistance
CO – Cruelty toward Own Population	Refuses to implement harmful orders; protects population even at personal cost	Ambivalent; sometimes signs harmful measures but tries to limit damage	Actively orders or celebrates repression, dispossession, or humiliation of own people; uses violence as a tool of prestige

## Interpreting the CSSG

After scoring each dimension, compute:

- **Total CSSG score = CP + MB + II + CO** (range 4–20)

Then interpret:

- **Type 1 – Coerced collaborator** (Total 10–13, CP ≥ 4, II ≤ 2, CO ≤ 2)
  - High coercion, low ideological buy-in, low cruelty. Behaviour suggests survival under extreme threat.
- **Type 2 – Ambivalent intermediary** (Total 11–16, CP 2–4, II 2–4, CO 2–3)
  - Mixed motives; partial belief; some harmful actions, some attempts to limit damage.
- **Type 3 – Converted perpetrator** (Total 14–20, MB ≥ 4, II ≥ 4, CO ≥ 4)
  - High benefit, strong ideological alignment, high cruelty: a puppet or local node of the entitlement cascade.

Borderline scores can be discussed qualitatively in the text.

## A2.3 Puppet Syndrome Index (PSI)

For more contemporary or postcolonial cases, we can add a **Puppet Syndrome Index** that summarises how structurally aligned a leader is with imperial interests.

We propose five components, each scored **0–3**:

1. **External Alignment (EA)** – Voting patterns, treaties, military and economic alignment with historical or current imperial powers, against clear regional or popular interest.
2. **Sovereignty Erosion (SE)** – Degree to which the leader signs away economic, legal, or cultural sovereignty (e.g., long-term concessions, bases, resource-for-debt swaps).

3. **Epistemic Capture (EC)** – Preference for external “experts,” suppression of local knowledge, and contempt for indigenous epistemologies (e.g., ridiculing African science, blocking indigenous curricula).
4. **Internal Cruelty (IC)** – Use of security forces, legal harassment, and symbolic humiliation against domestic critics, especially when encouraged or rewarded by foreign partners.
5. **Negative Narcissism (NN)** – Adoption of a self-image built on proximity to the former coloniser (language, aesthetics, residency) and denigration of local identity.

**Scoring (0–3 per component)**

- 0 = Not evident / contradictory evidence
- 1 = Mild / episodic
- 2 = Clear and recurrent
- 3 = Structural and explicit

**Table A2.2 – Puppet Syndrome Index (PSI) Components**

Component	0	1	2	3
EA – External Alignment	No systematic alignment; independent or region-first	Occasional alignment, sometimes offset by regional/sovereign choices	Regular alignment against regional or popular interest	Near total alignment with imperial powers; votes and policies consistently follow external agendas
SE – Sovereignty Erosion	Protects sovereignty, resists exploitative deals	Signs some unfavourable agreements but also rejects others	Repeatedly signs deals that weaken legal/economic sovereignty	Systematically trades sovereignty for personal/regime security; long concessions, bases, legal dependency
EC – Epistemic Capture	Values local knowledge; funds indigenous research	Some external dependence, but active support for local institutions	Clear preference for external experts and frameworks	Aggressively devalues local knowledge; blocks indigenous curricula; mocks African science
IC – Internal Cruelty	Minimises repression; protects critics	Some repression (e.g., isolated cases)	Regular use of police/army against civilians and critics	Frequent violent suppression of dissent; torture,

disappearances,  
public humiliation

<p>NN – Negative Narcissism</p>	<p>Affirms identity; racist hierarchies</p>	<p>local refuses</p>	<p>Mixed signals; sometimes valorises “West” but also local culture</p>	<p>Clear admiration of former colonisers or global North; self-worth tied to external approval</p>	<p>Open disdain for local culture; glorifies colonisers; publicly frames own people as inferior or “not ready”</p>
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**Total PSI score = EA + SE + EC + IC + NN (range 0–15)**

Interpretation (for research / advocacy, not diagnosis):

- **0–4:** Low puppet risk.
- **5–9:** Moderate puppet risk; context and trajectory matter.
- **10–15:** High Puppet Syndrome profile; strong candidate for the kind of collaborator who will stabilise entitlement cascades and sabotage sovereignty.

## A2.4 Reliability, Transparency, and Use

To keep this scientifically and ethically defensible:

- **Data basis** – Scores must be grounded in **publicly documented behaviours**: treaties, speeches, budget lines, repression events, not just impressions.
- **Inter-rater coding** – For historical or contemporary leaders, have at least **two independent coders** score the grid; report areas of disagreement.
- **Sensitivity to coercion** – Always interpret high CP scores carefully; a high total CSSG with very high CP might still reflect survival under extreme threat rather than conversion.
- **Non-clinical status** – These tools are designed for **political-psychological research and advocacy**, not for individualised clinical labelling without context.

Annex 3 figures

Figure A1 – Normalization Loop of Digital Sadism

Shows how Dark Tetrad traits + online disinhibition + “just joking / having fun” framing create a feedback loop that normalizes cruelty.

Figure A1. Normalization Loop of Digital Sadism

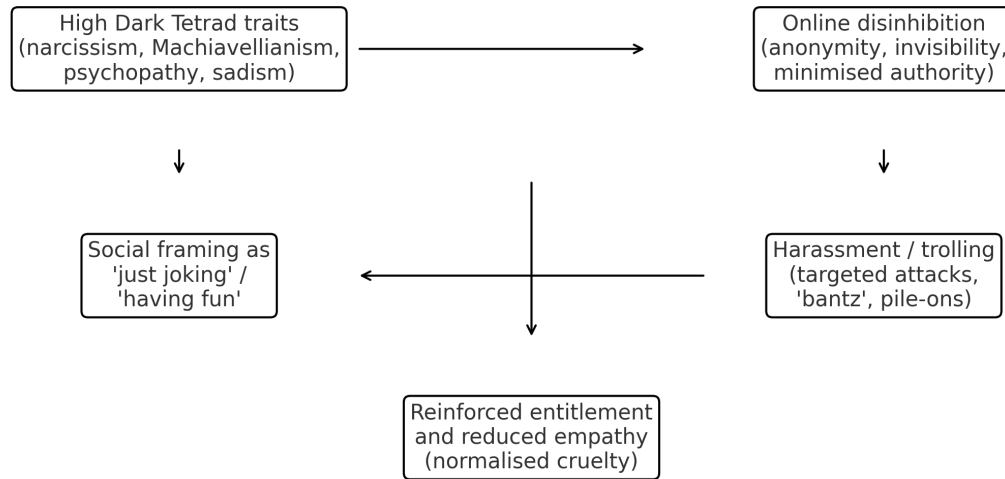


Figure A2 – Historical vs Digital Entitlement Cascades

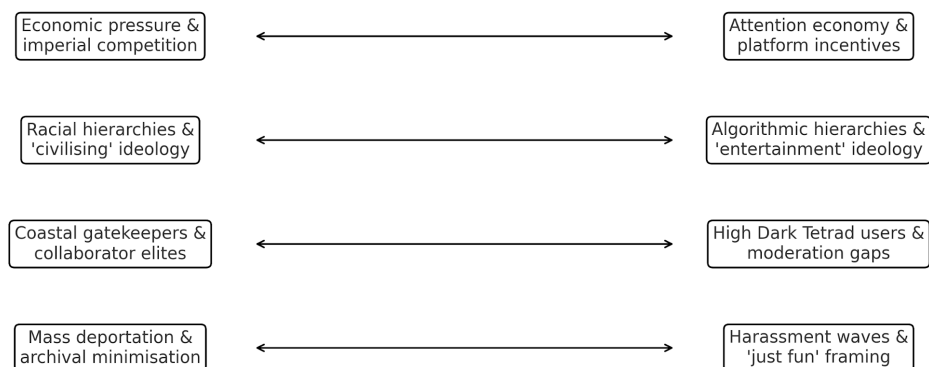
Parallel cascade:

left column = Kongo / imperial context (economic pressure → racial hierarchy → gatekeepers → depopulation & archival minimisation);

right column = platform context (attention economy → algorithmic hierarchies → high Dark-Tetrad users → harassment & “just fun” framing).

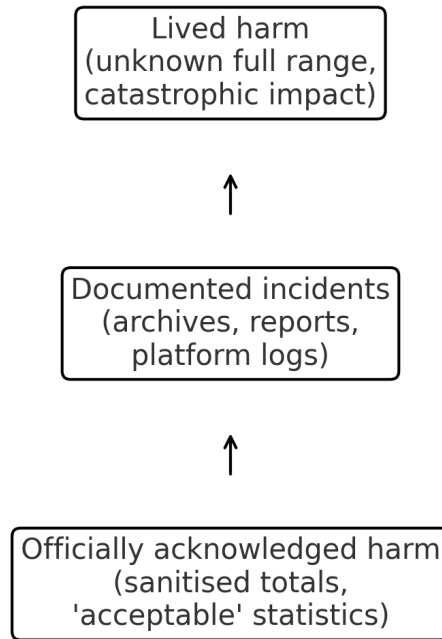
These hypotheses will be tested in future work. For now they are intuitive and we hereby propose a plausible mechanism. However this will need to be tested in the field and quantified in the future.

Figure A2. Historical vs Digital Entitlement Cascades



“Figure A3. Epistemic minimisation of harm. The top box represents lived harm (shaded band), which for Kongo and its catchment likely involved the removal or death of many millions of people. The middle box represents documented incidents (approximately 1.8 million embarked captives in surviving Portuguese-linked records). The bottom box represents officially acknowledged harm—when the 1.8 million is treated as a precise total rather than a censored minimum. At each step, a catastrophic demographic collapse is compressed into an administratively manageable number.

### Figure A3. Epistemic Minimisation of Harm



### Figure A4. Timeline: Author's Theoretical Predictions vs Later Empirical Data

