

Real-Time Validation of Puppet Governance in a Critical-Minerals Regime (2018–2025)

Author: Malcolm Mak Diarra

Affiliation: Researcher, Pan-African Sovereignty Observatory (PASO)

Abstract

In 2018, a little-known theoretical paper on “economies of obedience” argued that postcolonial decline is best explained not by “African culture” or ethnic stereotypes, but by a deliberate **imperial selection mechanism** that rewards a certain style of leadership. The earlier work, authored by K. Nsiangani, introduced an *Imperial Selection Model* (ISM) and a *Trait–System Fit Index* (TSFI) based on Dark Tetrad constructs (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, sadism). Leaders whose ruling style scored high on this index were expected to attract strong external backing, reopen doors to Bretton Woods institutions, preside over neglect-driven excess mortality, and sign structurally asymmetric resource deals.

This follow-up paper revisits those claims seven years later. It asks a focused question: **Did the pattern anticipated in 2018 actually materialise in real time, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) between 2019 and 2025, and in comparable cases on the continent?** Using the DRC government of 2019–2025 as an index case, we triangulate macro-economic indicators (exchange-rate drift, inflation, debt), health and excess-mortality estimates, diplomatic alignments, and the legal architecture of recent critical-minerals arrangements, including the 2021 Extended Credit Facility (ECF) with the IMF and the 2025 U.S.–DRC Strategic Partnership Agreement on minerals security.

The results are unsettling. The DRC case, far from being an outlier, follows the ISM script with unusual precision: rapid re-entry into IMF tutelage, a collapse of domestic purchasing power, a pattern of neglect consistent with large-scale preventable mortality, and the signature of a deeply asymmetric strategic-minerals pact that restructures national law to guarantee external access. Similar, if less extreme, dynamics appear in other high-TSFI regimes tied to critical-minerals corridors.

At the same time, this paper clarifies two points that critics have rightly demanded. First, it states **explicit falsification criteria**: the hypothesis would be weakened or overturned by regimes that normalise carelessness toward their populations without generating elevated excess mortality, or by high-TSFI leaders who nonetheless deliver sovereign, broad-based improvements. Second, it emphasises that the ISM is **structural and behavioural**, not metaphysical: it pathologises political choices and alignments, not the private soul of any person.

The conclusion is simple. The original “economies of obedience” framework has not only survived contact with reality; it has been **validated in real time** in ways that few psychopolitical models ever are. For postcolonial societies, the choice is no longer between “conspiracy” and “coincidence.” It is between continuing to feed a machine whose outputs are predictable, or building parallel sovereignty tools capable of refusing it.

Keywords: puppet governance, Dark Tetrad, Imperial Selection Model, critical minerals, strategic corridors, excess mortality, IMF, sovereignty

1. Introduction

1.1 From equations to events

In 2010, K. Nsiangani proposed a simple but explosive idea: **colonialism did not end; it changed recruitment strategy**. Instead of appointing direct governors, imperial powers learned to select, groom and protect local leaders whose psychological style and ruling practices fit their needs.

To move beyond slogans, T. Kusimbiko's 2018 paper formalised this intuition as the **Imperial Selection Model (ISM)** and introduced a **Trait–System Fit Index (TSFI)**. In condensed form, TSFI was a weighted combination of four trait clusters, mapped from clinical and personality literature to political behaviour:

- **Narcissism (N)**: prestige-seeking, dependence on foreign praise, symbolic grandiosity.
- **Machiavellianism (M)**: secrecy, betrayal of allies, manipulation of institutions.
- **Psychopathy (P)**: cold indifference to predictable harm and suffering.
- **Sadism (S)**: tolerance for humiliation and structural cruelty toward one's own people.

Rather than diagnosing anyone in a clinic, the original work used these constructs as **behavioural lenses**. Leaders whose observable conduct scored highly on this composite index were said to fall into a "High Imperial Suitability Zone." The prediction was that such leaders would be:

1. **Selected and stabilised** by external powers;
2. **Locked into creditor programmes** (IMF, World Bank) under the banner of "reform";
3. **Encouraged toward neglect-driven governance**, where preventable deaths pile up without open war;
4. **Steered into asymmetric deals**, especially where strategic minerals and corridors are concerned.

At the time, many readers - including myself- treated these claims as provocative but speculative. The core of the model was testable, but the test would require time.

Time has passed.

1.2 Purpose of this paper

This second paper, authored independently and under a different byline, revisits the ISM with the benefit of hindsight. It is not about personalities, sympathies or antipathies. It is a **forensic audit of a model**.

The main objectives are:

- To compare the original ISM expectations with the **observed trajectory** of several postcolonial regimes between 2018 and 2025, with the DRC government of 2019–2025 serving as the central *index case* rather than a personal target;
- To identify where the ISM appears **validated**, where it may over-generalise, and where it needs refinement or explicit falsification tests;
- To place the **2025 U.S.–DRC Strategic Partnership Agreement on critical minerals** inside a longer genealogy of treaties that trade sovereignty for access, and to show why this is not an accident but a structurally predictable endpoint of high-TSFI governance;
- To clarify the **ethical scope** of the framework: this paper pathologises **policies and alignments**, not the private value of any individual.

The question is simple, even if the implications are not: **was the 2018 paper an over-excited polemic, or a rare example of a psychopolitical model that actually predicted the future with uncomfortable precision?**

2. Framework and Methods

2.1 The Imperial Selection Model revisited

The ISM makes three core claims:

1. **Imperial continuity:** Former colonial powers and their allies still exercise control over peripheral states, primarily through economic, military and diplomatic levers rather than direct rule.
2. **Psychological selection:** Among competing elites, those whose ruling style most reliably secures external interests are more likely to be promoted, financed, and defended.
3. **Behavioural signature:** This selection produces a recognisable pattern of governance: dramatic loyalty to foreign creditors, indifference to domestic suffering, and readiness to sacrifice long-term sovereignty for short-term regime survival.

The TSFI is a stylised instrument for capturing this pattern. For the purposes of this follow-up, the mathematics of the index are less important than its **directional meaning**: a high score signals a **tight coupling** between a leader's governing style and imperial requirements.

2.2 Case selection and data

This paper focuses on:

- The **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 2019–2025**, as the primary index case;
- Comparative glances at other high-dependency regimes in Africa, especially where strategic-minerals corridors and creditor programmes intersect.

For the DRC, we combine:

- **Macroeconomic series** for the Congolese franc (CDF)–USD exchange rate and inflation, showing a loss of value well in excess of two-thirds since the late 2010s, and de facto collapse of purchasing power for ordinary households;
- **IMF documentation** on the 2021 Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement with DRC, including conditionalities, reform language and monitoring structure;
- **Official and policy texts** relating to the December 2025 **U.S.–DRC Strategic Partnership Agreement** on minerals security, which defines DRC as a strategic supplier and commits it to legal and fiscal changes to secure “stable, predictable” access for U.S. entities;
- **Global health and conflict datasets**, which, taken together, indicate an excess-mortality burden in the low millions for the early 2020s relative to plausible baselines, driven by a combination of pandemic, conflict and structural neglect;
- **Field reports and investigative analyses** on critical-minerals corridors, resettlement risks and the spatial reorganisation of extractive infrastructure, particularly around rail and port projects linking the Copperbelt to Atlantic outlets.

No single source is treated as gospel. The method is **triangulation**: when macro trends, diplomatic moves and legal texts all point in the same direction, we take that convergence seriously.

2.3 Validation and falsification strategy

To avoid turning the ISM into a closed belief system, this paper defines **clear validation and falsification criteria**.

The model is *supported* if, in the index case and similar contexts:

- A regime that matches the behavioural profile of high TSFI (external prestige-seeking, internal carelessness, secrecy, treaty-making obedience) is followed by:
 - Deepened creditor dependence;
 - Structural impoverishment (e.g. currency collapse, price shocks);
 - Increased neglect-related excess mortality;
 - Sovereignty-eroding deals in strategic sectors.

The model is *falsified or weakened* by any robust example of:

- **Falsifier A:** A regime that normalises carelessness toward its population (underfunded public goods, contempt for basic safety, deliberate under-maintenance of health and sanitation), yet does **not** produce higher neglect-related excess mortality relative to its structural peers.
- **Falsifier B:** A regime that scores high on the TSFI behavioural pattern (tight alignment with creditor and corporate demands, systematic humiliation of domestic constituencies), yet nonetheless delivers:
 - Sustained reductions in poverty and inequality;
 - Strengthening of public services and life expectancy;
 - Measurable increases in strategic independence.

If even one such case is documented with rigorous data, the **strong form** of the ISM hypothesis must be revised. This is not a weakness; it is how a serious model behaves: it invites refutation.

2.4 Ethical scope: policies, not souls

Critics of Dark Tetrad applications in politics have raised a legitimate concern: **does this language medicalise political conflict, or excuse elites by labelling them “sick”?**

This paper answers clearly: **no**.

- We do not claim to see inside anyone’s private psyche.
- We do not infer from political behaviour how someone treats their children, friends or neighbours.
- We do not say that any leader is incapable of change or redemption.

We say something narrower and more dangerous:

When a ruling group repeatedly takes decisions that predictably harm its population while protecting external interests, and when those choices are rewarded and stabilised by foreign powers, then the *system* behaves like a clinical syndrome, regardless of how charming or pious individual actors may appear.

The ISM does not absolve. It **tightens responsibility**. A pilot who insists on flying with faulty brakes is more, not less, accountable after the physics are explained.

3. Results I – The Index Case: DRC 2019–2025

3.1 Creditor return and tutelary governance

The 2018 paper anticipated that a high-TSFI leadership configuration in DRC would lead to rapid re-entry into IMF and World Bank programmes. This is exactly what occurred.

In 2021, the IMF approved a multi-year **Extended Credit Facility** arrangement for the DRC, framed as support for “governance” and “transparency” reforms. The language is familiar across the Global South: stabilise public finances, improve the business environment, reassure investors. The practical effect is equally familiar: **tutelary governance**, where the priorities of foreign creditors define the budgetary horizon.

Instead of using a rare commodity boom to rebuild national health systems, domestic industry and food security, the DRC was once again locked into a conditionality regime whose main concern is predictable repayment and investor comfort.

3.2 Currency erosion and lived impoverishment

From the late 2000s to the mid-2010s, the Congolese franc remained relatively more stable, with public discourse often citing ranges around 1:900–1:1,200 to the USD. Under the new post-2019 configuration, the currency lost far more than two-thirds of its value, moving into a range where **multiples of thousands of francs** are required to purchase a single dollar.

Even without exact monthly figures, the lived reality is obvious to anyone buying food, fuel or medicine: wages in francs did not triple; prices did. For ordinary households, this is not an abstract “exchange rate.” It is a permanent emergency, imposed slowly enough to normalise despair.

From the ISM perspective, this is not a surprise. A high-TSFI regime is structurally incentivised to protect **external balance sheets** and **imported lifestyles** in the capital, not the food basket of the majority.

3.3 The 2025 Strategic Partnership Agreement

On 4 December 2025, DRC signed a **Strategic Partnership Agreement** (SPA) with the United States focused on critical-minerals security. This agreement:

- Defines DRC as a **trusted strategic supplier** for U.S. energy and technology transitions;
- Commits the Congolese government to adopt “stable and predictable” **legal and fiscal regimes** for U.S. and aligned entities, including tax concessions and protections that amount to a privileged legal corridor;
- Interlocks with specific mining and marketing arrangements involving state-owned enterprises and foreign traders, in which U.S. actors secure a de facto right of first access to cobalt and copper flows.

From a sovereignty standpoint, this SPA is the **materialisation** of the “economies of obedience” logic:

- **Legislative self-mutilation:** The state promises to rewrite its own laws to suit a foreign security agenda.
- **Locked-in hierarchy:** Domestic innovators, universities and cooperatives are almost invisible in the agreement. Intellectual property, tax uplift and value-addition are overwhelmingly externalised.
- **Diplomatic shield:** Because Congolese minerals are now formally tied to U.S. national security, any internal challenge to the regime is re-framed as a threat to American strategic interests.

The lions, as one might say, were never toothless. **They were trained not to bite the hand that built the zoo.**

3.4 Corridors and spatial obedience

Parallel to the SPA, Atlantic-facing corridors such as the **Lobito rail axis** were elevated as flagship projects for “regional integration” and “sustainable supply chains.” Behind the technical language lies a simple geometry: new rails and ports that accelerate the exit of raw minerals, often at the cost of local displacement and environmental risk.

Here again, the index case behaves as the ISM would expect:

- Mobility that serves **export flows** is prioritised;
- Communities in the way are **relocated or ignored**;
- The internal economy is stitched ever more tightly to external demand, rather than to regional food systems, local industry or human security.

Space itself becomes obedient.

4. Results II – Neglect and Human Cost

4.1 Excess mortality from structural carelessness

The 2018 model predicted that puppet governance would not only impoverish, but kill, in ways that are statistically visible even when no formal war is declared.

Between 2019 and the mid-2020s, DRC faced:

- COVID-19 and its indirect impacts on health services;
- Recurring outbreaks of measles, Ebola and cholera;
- Chronic under-investment in rural clinics, water, sanitation and maternal care;
- Persistent conflict in the East, with displaced populations crowding into already fragile zones.

Global health and excess-mortality models, even when conservative, point to **millions of deaths above baseline** over just a few years. Not all of these can be laid at the feet of any single government. But the pattern is clear:

- Budgets and political energy were devoted to **prestige projects, political consolidation and treaty diplomacy**;
- The most elementary duties of a state – clean water, basic health, safe roads, resilient livelihoods – were treated as optional.

The ISM calls this **institutionalised carelessness**. It is not an insult, it is a description.

4.2 Social disintegration and spatial trauma

In mining towns and in the capital alike, one sees the same split:

- Enclaves of glass and marble branded as “modernity,” often co-financed with external partners;
- Surrounding seas of informal settlements, flooded roads, uncollected waste, precarious work.

High-TSFI regimes tend to treat these conditions as background noise, not as burning emergencies. The implicit message to the majority is: *“You are manageable losses in someone else’s development story.”*

The 2018 paper expected this **dual city** to deepen. The index case confirms that expectation.

5. Discussion

5.1 How well did the model perform?

Without personalising the critique, we can summarise the DRC sequence as follows:

- A leadership configuration aligned itself very clearly with **external validation** and **creditor expectations**;
- Within a few years, the country was back under an IMF ECF, under terms tailored more to “investor confidence” than to structural healing;
- The national currency eroded dramatically, squeezing ordinary people while leaving elite consumption intact;
- Excess mortality mounted in a pattern consistent with neglect rather than unavoidable catastrophe;
- A flagship, sovereignty-light minerals pact was signed that effectively rewires domestic law to guarantee external access.

In other words, the **exact pattern** anticipated by the “economies of obedience” framework appears. The model did not merely predict “problems” in the abstract. It sketched a structure, and reality walked into it.

5.2 On falsifiability and future tests

Strong performance in one index case does not make a theory absolute. The falsifiers defined earlier remain crucial.

Researchers and movements who dislike the ISM on instinct are invited to **disprove it**:

- Find a regime that treats public health, water, safety and dignity with open contempt, yet somehow does *not* generate higher neglect-related excess mortality.
- Find a leadership configuration that eagerly aligns with creditor and corporate demands, openly humiliates domestic constituencies, and yet manages to deliver

broad-based, sovereign development.

If such cases exist, they will not embarrass the model's originator. They will refine the tool for everyone.

5.3 Avoiding cults of diagnosis

One danger in any psychopolitical framework is the temptation to reduce complex histories to one accusatory word. "Narcissist." "Psychopath." These labels are emotionally satisfying and politically useless if misapplied.

The approach recommended here is different:

- Keep the **clinical vocabulary in the background**, as a reminder of patterns;
- Keep the **observable behaviours and measurable outcomes in the foreground**;
- Focus on what can be audited: treaties, budgets, mortality curves, legal changes, policing patterns.

The ISM works best when it is not a slogan, but a **checklist** that ordinary people, researchers and community assemblies can use to evaluate whether a regime is worth trusting.

6. Implications for Puppet Diagnostics and Sovereignty Tools

6.1 Upgrading the Puppet Diagnostic Index (PDI 2.0)

Building on both the 2018 work and this validation, a second-generation **Puppet Diagnostic Index** should:

- Distinguish **structural constraint** from **willing mimicry**. Some harms are imposed by sanctions or inherited debt; others are chosen. The index must differentiate.
- Integrate a "**carelessness module**" that tracks neglect-sensitive indicators (vaccination, potable water, rural clinics, basic roads). Where these improve despite pressure, TSFI interpretation should be softened.
- Treat **sovereignty-eroding events** (like the 2025 SPA) as explicit shocks with a scored impact, not as footnotes.

- Be overseen by **community and professional assemblies**, not donor boards, so that the tool itself does not become another instrument of manipulation.

The goal is not to create a new priesthood of experts. It is to give peoples under pressure a **language and metric** for what they already feel.

6.2 From diagnosis to prevention

If puppet governance can be described and measured, it can also be **prevented** – not perfectly, but better than now. That implies:

- Screening would-be leaders with behavioural and historical criteria before they are handed entire nations;
- Making TSFI-style analyses public during electoral cycles, so that citizens and movements can see the risks;
- Embedding *sovereignty clauses* in constitutions and party charters, including automatic disqualification for candidates who sign away strategic resources without transparent, popular consent.

None of this requires belief in any one author. It requires a basic commitment to the idea that **governance style matters as much as policy content**.

7. Conclusion

The story this paper tells is not comfortable, but it is clear.

A theoretical framework developed in 2018 argued that **imperial-friendly leadership styles** could be identified and that, if such a style were selected in a place like the DRC, the consequences would include renewed creditor tutelage, currency collapse, neglect-driven mortality, and a flagship sovereignty-eroding deal in strategic minerals.

Between 2019 and 2025, this is precisely what occurred in the index case.

This does not prove that history is mechanical, or that peoples are doomed. It proves something simpler and more actionable: **when you reward obedience to external interests more than loyalty to the people, you will get more obedience and more betrayal**.

The lions were never toothless.

They were trained not to bite the hand that built the zoo.

For postcolonial societies, the task now is not to beg the zookeepers for better cages. It is to build **parallel sovereignty tools** – diagnostic, economic, cultural and strategic – that can refuse obedience and make that refusal stick.

The “economies of obedience” framework, in both its original and current form, is one such tool. It is imperfect and open to criticism. But after 2018–2025, it is no longer hypothetical.

It has been tested in fire.

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