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GEOPOLITICS AND GEOECONOMICS IN FUNDING HUMANITARIAN MINE ACTION – THE CASE OF ANGOLA

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Received 25 August 2022; accepted 24 October 2022; published 30 December 2022

Abstract. As a result of forty years of armed conflict, Angola is today among the eight countries in the world with the highest contamination of landmines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs). Since 1994, a number of international donors supported humanitarian mine clearance with varying amounts and for varying periods as part of their foreign policy agenda. The study finds that, as it is generally true in the case of foreign policy and aid, international mine action support is closely linked to underlying geopolitical considerations. Given Angola's natural resource wealth and market potentials, geoeconomics also plays an important role in funding decisions, particularly for influential powers like the United States and Japan, but not (yet?) for China, for instance.

Keywords: humanitarian mine action; geoeconomics; geopolitics; Angola; China; The European Commission; Japan; United States

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Hegedűs, É. 2022. Geopolitics and geoeconomics in funding humanitarian mine action – the case of Angola. *Insights into Regional Development*, 4(4), 166-183. [http://doi.org/10.9770/IRD.2022.4.4\(10\)](http://doi.org/10.9770/IRD.2022.4.4(10))

JEL Classifications: F35, F50, H56, N40

Additional disciplines political sciences

1. Introduction

As a result of thirteen years of war for independence (1961-1974) and twenty-seven years of civil war (1975-2002), Angola is today among the eight countries in the world with the largest contamination of landmines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs)¹. This deadly legacy poses a daily risk to lives and limbs and hinders inclusive and lasting socio-economic development at all levels: local (household and community), regional and national.

Angola is also among those countries which have an enormous natural resource wealth and thus foreign investment and market potential (Besenyő, 2019, 63) While the country's economic growth is held back by a range of factors, the country has always been of interest for foreign actors for various geopolitical and

¹ Beside landmines, Angola has a significant problem of other ERWs, which include Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), and certain, though limited, presence of cluster munition remnants. Humanitarian mine action deals with the clearance of all these. For the sake of word economy, this study will use the term 'landmines' or 'mines' in most places, but it also implies ERW and cluster munition contamination.

gocioeconomic reasons. These include political and ideological alliances; promotion of international stability, security, peace, and conflict resolution; acceleration of socio-economic development; and scaling up of bilateral commercial and trade relations.

There is already extensive research into the interrelations of foreign policy, geopolitics, geoeconomics and the provision of aid, and the way aid may be allocated to serve donors' (but also recipients') political, economic, military, and other goals. This study looks at the specific case of international support to humanitarian mine action and the case of Angola exploring the web of apparent or likely motives behind financial allocations from geopolitical and geoeconomic perspectives. It gives an overview of Angola's geopolitical and geoeconomic endowments, and its existing landmine and ERW contamination including the consequences thereof. Then it analyzes the current main international funding trends and focus in mine action; and explores in depth the intersections of humanitarian mine action, geopolitics and geoeconomics. It also examines the specific case of the top three funders in the past decade: the United States (US), the Commission of the European Union (EC) and Japan². Finally, it shares an outlook to future trends, among them those relating to new emerging powers and donors, some of which would constitute interesting future areas of research.

2. A land of potentials: Angola's geopolitical and geoeconomic endowments

As Hodges puts: 'If human progress depended on natural resources alone, Angola's people would be among the most fortunate in Africa' (Hodges, 2004, 101). Indeed, from a geoeconomic perspective, **Angola offers a range of opportunities** by possessing, according to estimates, 35 of the 45 most important world trade commodities (Governo de Angola, n.d.). **Oil** is by far the most attractive for external investors. With around 7.2 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves and an average production of 1.4 million barrels a day, Angola is currently the second largest producer in Africa (after Nigeria), and the 17th in the world (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) 2021)³. Most of the export goes to China (56 percent on average in the period 2012-2020), European countries (18 percent combined), India (9 percent), Asian countries (7 percent) and the United States (5 percent). The reserves are in northern offshore fields off the coast of the Cabinda enclave and the Lower Congo and Kwanza basins. Associated to the oil fields, Angola also holds proven **natural gas** reserves of some 301 million m³ (OPEC 2021). While in world comparison, this is not significant, it provides additional investment and trading potential.

Diamonds are Angola's other strategic trading commodities, generating an export value of around USD1.1 billion per year from 8.5 million carats produced (Kimberley Process 2021; Statista 2021)⁴. Angola has some of the most valuable surface and underground deposits of the world (World Trade Organization 2015, 59), with the greatest concentrations in Lunda Sul and Lunda Norte provinces in the north-east.

Angola also abounds in **renewable natural resources**. Its varied tropical and moderate climate, and fertile soil enable the production of numerous crops and the raising of cattle (Hodges 2004, 101-102) on its **agricultural lands** making up around 45 percent of its 1.24 million km² of territory. The country's rivers provide large **hydroelectric potentials** with a total estimated capacity of around 18 gigawatts (Búr 2020, 176). Its coastline of 1,650 kilometers provides ideal conditions for maritime trade and industrial fishing, with some of the richest fishing grounds along Africa's southern coast. Its natural sights and parks, flora and fauna and ethnic and cultural

² Due to limitations in length and the relatively low level and varying frequency of fund provision, the rest of the donors are not analyzed by the study. The study also does not look at the pre-1994 period as humanitarian mine action activities in Angola with bilateral international donor support started in 1994 only. Due to limitations in data availability, and to focus on the most recent and impactful trends, the period of analysis is from 2010 to 2020.

³ Average between 2017-2021. Data prior to 2017 is not available in public OPEC statistics.

⁴ Average between 2004-2020.

heritage also make Angola as a potential eco-, agro- and coastal tourism destination (Global Tourism Forum 2019).

Some analysts refer to Angola as one of the new investor hotspots in Africa (Mahajan 2009, 41). Business environment remains rather difficult though with the country ranking only 177th out of 190 on the World Bank's Doing Business rating (World Bank 2020). Since the end of the civil war, **foreign direct investment** (FDI) into Angola has been low and volatile (World Bank 2021d), and predominantly concentrated in the extractives (oil and gas) sector, with smaller investments in energy, power, and construction.

While the oil and other energy sources may provide the country with a stronger perceived position than its actual economic weight (Szilágyi 2018, 206; Tordoff 2002, 14), Angola **struggles with several challenges**, which, in turn, affect its geopolitical and geoeconomic potential. Angola still needs to diversify its oil-based economy, improve its political and economic governance, curb corruption and money laundering, and rebuild and upgrade infrastructure, much of which was destroyed during the war.

Angola only ranks 148th in the world in terms of human development, with 51 percent of its population of approx. 33 million living in multidimensional poverty⁵. Unemployment rates are 7 percent, with 16 percent among youth. Agriculture employs half of the national work force, but mainly for subsistence production only, with missing knowledge, equipment, and market infrastructure to drive the sector's growth. Some 34 per cent of the adult population is still illiterate. The combined impact of oil price fluctuations and the Covid-19 pandemic has kept Angola in economic recession in the past five years with a continuously contracting GDP, from USD122 billion in 2017 down to USD62 billion by 2020 (World Bank 2021b; World Bank 2021c).

Amidst rising economic difficulties and social discontent, **Angola's political environment** is at least relatively stable and predictable (World Bank 2021a). Internationally, it is among the promoters of peace and stability across the continent, with friendly relations with all its neighbors.

It is an active member of several global and regional entities, such as the Organization of African Unity, the Southern African Development Community, the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and others.

In sum, based on the systemization of Mendes Dias (as cited by Szilágyi 2018, 203-209), Angola demonstrates a **promising and diverse profile in terms of geopolitical and geoeconomic factors**. For now, the country lacks sufficient *force* and *power* in structural (political, economic, and military system), technological, demographic, and human, as well as transport and communication aspects. Its physical factors and natural resources, however, render it an important factor in world economy and politics, and, as the third largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, a potential future regional power (Búr 2020, 179).

3. Landmine and ERW contamination: significance and consequences

The **extensive presence of landmines and other ERW** poses a **critical challenge** for Angola on its path to economic and social progress, infrastructural development, and attraction of further domestic and foreign investments, particularly in the most remote and contaminated areas.

⁵ Unless otherwise referenced, all statistics based on United Nations Development Program n.d.

In its latest, 2020 Mine Ban Treaty⁶ Article 7 Report, Angola reported a total land of 85.42km² yet to be cleared in 17 of its 18 provinces (Government of Angola, 2021)⁷. Of this, 84.41km² is reported to be contaminated by antipersonnel mines (the rest by antivehicle mines). Some 82.51km² are classified as a confirmed hazardous area, and 2.91km² as a suspected hazardous area. In addition, some 3,749 kilometers of roads are estimated to be contaminated (Mine Action Review 2020, 32). International survey and clearance operators⁸ argue that based on available evidence, the total size of contaminated land is less than the above, ‘only’ 30km² (Mine Action Review 2020, 30). Regardless, Angola still falls in the group of countries with large/heavy contamination. As people gradually return to abandoned areas, new, previously unrecorded mined areas are also likely to be discovered yet (Mine Action Review 2020, 32).

Angola joined the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty on 1 January 2003, committing to clear all its contamination within the ten-year deadline set by the treaty. Following two extension requests, it is now bound to remove all mines and ERW by at latest 31 December 2025 – a target which, based on its current progress, it is very unlikely to meet. In fact, Angola already flagged that based on the current contamination and level of funding, clearance will only finish by 2028 the earliest (“Desminagem vai ser concluída apenas em 2028”, 2021).

Mines were laid both by government and rebel UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) forces, and their allies (mainly Portuguese, Cuban and South African troops), often in a sporadic and unrecorded manner (Búr et al., 2013, 158) to prevent the enemy’s movement and access to critical infrastructure. While all provinces are affected to a certain extent, the most contaminated ones are Kuando Kubango, Moxico, Kwanza Sul, Zaire, Lunda Sul, Kwanza Norte and Bié (in this order) with a contaminated land of between 5.5km² and 17.9km² in each (Mine Action Review 2020, 32)⁹.

The following publicly available map in Angola’s latest Article 7 report (Government of Angola 2021, 13) shows the extent of current known contamination¹⁰. The red dots indicate open minefields (where clearance not yet started); the orange dots indicate fields with ongoing clearance work; and the green dots mark closed/cleared mine fields.

⁶ In full name: Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

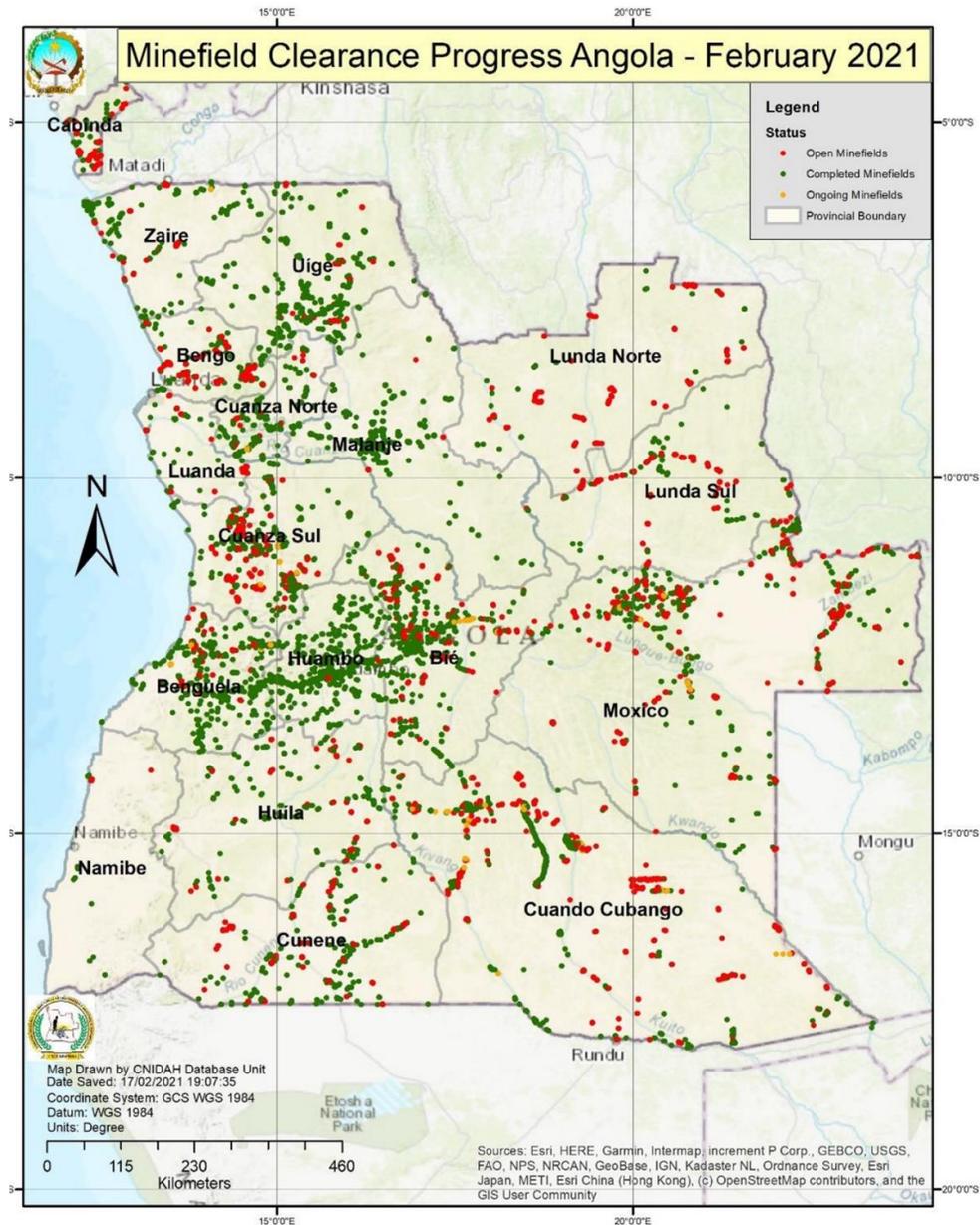
⁷ Submitted annually in compliance with Mine Ban Treaty obligations.

⁸ Landmine clearance and risk education operations in Angola are carried out by national operators (National Institute for Demining - INAD and Association of Mine Professionals – APACOMinas) and international operators (APOPO, The Halo Trust, Mines Advisory Group and Norwegian People’s Aid). Each operator is tasked to a specific province in the national demining work plan.

⁹ The provinces of Huambo, Malange, and Namibe are approaching completion.

¹⁰ More detailed maps are held by the coordinating government agency and national and international clearance operators.

Fig. 1: Minefield clearance progress in Angola as of February 2021.



Source: Government of Angola 2021, 13.

Landmines pose a risk to people’s lives and physical security. In the absence of a comprehensive and up-to-date national casualty surveillance system, the number of victims (killed or injured but survived) in Angola is estimated to be between 60,000 and 80,000 (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021a). As many accidents go unreported, this number may be higher. Generally, 80 percent of victims are civilians and at least 30 percent are children, most of them boys (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021c, 34). All victims, including those directly affected by an accident (whether killed or survived) and their close family and/or household members require continuous support, such as emergency medical care, long-term rehabilitation, psycho-social assistance,

and socio-economic integration. New casualties still occur, at least one every other week, with (at least) 98 people killed or injured in 2019-2020 (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021a, 5; Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021c, 45).

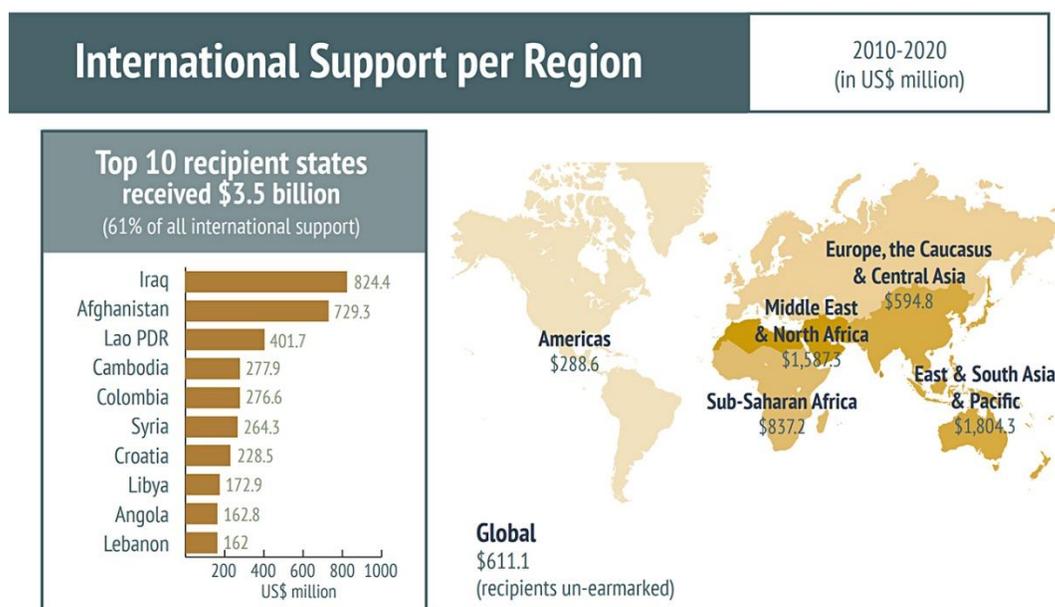
Landmines also **prevent Angolans to access basic services**, such as healthcare, education, jobs, and markets. People cannot move around safely and freely; use agricultural lands, roads, rivers, bridges, and railways; (re)build homes; and develop infrastructure. Large areas remain uninhabited and uncultivated due to landmine and ERW contamination, which is a critical issue in a country, where more than half of the population is engaged in subsistence farming. Landmines and ERW **hinder post-conflict reconstruction, economic and social progress, and the achievement of long-term and stable peace, social cohesion, and human security**. Mine contamination is an obstacle to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since development projects cannot proceed without prior clearance of land (Downs, 2009, 82-84).

4. Funding mine action activities – focus and trends

State parties to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty are legally bound to stop the use, production, and transfer of mines and ERW; to destroy all stockpiles and to clear contamination in areas under their jurisdiction. Those in the position to do so, are also required to assist landmine survivors, their families, and communities; and support or conduct risk education to help prevent new accidents. Assistance to victims is also included in a range of other binding legal instruments on human rights, children’s rights, women’s rights, disability rights and political, economic, social, cultural, and civil rights.

Angola, just as most countries, is unable to fulfil all these obligations without international support. Over the past ten years (2010-2020), it has been the ninth biggest recipient of international funding for humanitarian mine action, with a total of USD159.93 million (some 2.8 per cent of all international mine action support worth USD5.7 billion globally) (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021g, 1).

Fig. 2. Angola’s share of all international support between 2010-2020.



Source: Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021g, 1.

Table 1 shows the international institutional donors that have allocated dedicated funding for either of the five pillars of mine action (stockpile destruction, clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance and advocacy) in Angola between 2010-2020. It also includes national contributions provided by the government of Angola to its own mine action sector in the same period.

Table 1. International and national institutional contributions to humanitarian mine action activities in Angola between 2010-2020.

Allocations (in USD million)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total by donor	Rank among internationals	Total of all international allocations
United States	9,85	8,35	8,68	6,00	6,00	5,30	3,75	2,00	4,00	4,10	7,00	65,03	1,00	40,66%
United Kingdom	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,06	2,04	4,76	4,11	10,97	4,00	6,86%
Japan	2,75	1,12	1,68	2,10	0,08	0,20	0,55	0,84	0,79	1,37	2,22	13,70	3,00	8,57%
Norway	0,66	-	-	0,08	-	-	0,30	0,18	0,25	0,51	1,00	2,98	8,00	1,86%
Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,37	0,38	0,75	9,00	0,47%
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,19	0,05	-	-	-	0,24	11,00	0,15%
EC	26,52	-	-	-	25,10	-	-	-	-	-	-	51,62	2,00	32,28%
Finland	1,07	1,05	1,16	1,30	1,40	1,15	-	-	-	-	-	7,13	5,00	4,46%
Netherlands	0,64	1,93	0,80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,37	6,00	2,11%
Denmark	0,48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,48	10,00	0,30%
Italy	0,20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,20	12,00	0,13%
Germany	0,07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,07	13,00	0,04%
Czech Republic	0,05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,05	14,00	0,03%
France	0,01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,01	15,00	0,01%
Belgium	-	0,84	1,39	0,60	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,50	3,33	7,00	2,08%
ALL INTERNATIONAL	42,30	13,29	13,71	10,08	32,58	6,65	4,79	3,13	7,08	11,11	15,21	159,93	n/a	100%
Government of Angola	29,18	59,61	76,71	115,40	121,10	59,17	24,50	45,08	26,46	15,70	6,11	579,02	n/a	n/a
GRAND TOTAL	71,48	72,90	90,42	125,48	153,68	65,82	29,29	48,21	33,54	26,81	21,32	738,95	n/a	n/a

Note: Contributions are rounded to the nearest two decimals

Source: own compilation from data in Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021h.

As Table 1 shows, mine action activities in Angola were supported by a total fifteen international institutional donors in the period of 2010-2020 in a total value of USD159.93 million¹¹. International funding has significantly dropped after 2010 and has generally seen a trend of shrinking volume, especially between 2011-2013 and 2015-2018¹².

By far the biggest mine action donor in Angola is the **United States**, having contributed some 40.6 percent of all international support (USD65.03 million) in the period of analysis. It is followed by the **EC**, with some 32.3 percent of all foreign funds (USD51.62 million). Other two bigger donors have been (in this order) **Japan** and **the United Kingdom**, although their total shares are significantly lower compared to the United States and the EC (some 8.6 percent and 6.9 percent, respectively). This is in line with global trends, with the top six donor states consistently including the United States, the EC and Japan (in this order) and the United Kingdom (in place six) (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021b).

¹¹ Although this study only focuses on the last ten-year period (2010-2020), it must be added that Angola also received a total of USD144.65 million of international contribution and a total of USD80.58 million of national government contribution in the period 2005-2009. International contributions per year were as follows: 2005: USD35.77 million; 2006: USD48.11 million; 2007: USD19.79 million; 2008: USD22.14 million; 2009: USD18.84 million. Detailed donor breakdown of international contributions is not publicly available. Therefore, this five-year period was not included in the present analysis. Source: Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021h.

¹² The significant decrease from 2010 to 2011 and from 2014 to 2015 is partially due to that statistics list EC contributions under one single year, when they were awarded. However, these allocations cut across several years, thus if broken down per year, the annual total international contributions would be higher than those in the table 1.

In 2019, Angola also reported receipt of **funds from oil and gas companies** such as British Petroleum and ENI, worth USD39.19 million, which is considerably higher than the USD26.81 received from institutional donors only (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021a, 7).

In terms of sectors, the predominant part of international contributions has been (and continue to be) earmarked for clearance, risk education and capacity-building (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021h). Although Angola has one of the highest casualty rates (and number of survivors to support) globally, since 2012 no funds have been dedicated by any donor for victim assistance. Prior to that, only three donors – Japan (in 2009), Germany (in 2010) and the Netherlands (in 2010 and 2011) – contributed some funds to this pillar¹³.

Angolan government contributions must also be briefly highlighted when analyzing funding trends in mine action, since these have consistently exceeded the volume of international contributions, in most cases to a significant extent. Between 2010-2020, Angola contributed some USD579.02 million to its own mine action efforts, which is 3.6 times more than all international contributions in the same period, and just over 78 percent of the entire mine action budget. Government funds support national entities in support of national development plan priorities, such as the Intersectoral Commission on Demining and Humanitarian Assistance and the Executive Commission for Demining. The latter funds development projects and associated demining operations carried out by the Angolan armed forces, the National Reconstruction Office, and the largest clearance operator in country, the National Demining Institute¹⁴.

5. Intersections of humanitarian mine action, geopolitics and geoeconomics

Following nineteenth century colonization and twentieth century cold war rivalry, the twenty-first century sees a **new round of ‘scramble for Africa’**. The main motives of the third round are as before: resources, energy, and raw materials (Marshall 2016, 170). The scramble’s exploitative nature has not changed much over time: foreign actors still focus on maximizing the benefits and opportunities offered by African lands and economies (Pásztor 2020, 57). The market potential of sub-Saharan Africa also attracts a growing number of new actors such as China and mid-size power emerging economies, such as Brazil, India, Russia, and Turkey.

Generally, the economic development of a country is in the interest of both parties: the host country and its foreign partners. By definition, official development aid is provided by foreign donors to developing countries to further economic development and welfare (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, n.d.). It is long-known that, beyond altruistic reasons, the provision of aid also serves to promote donors’ own political, economic, and often military-security priorities (Holdar 1993, 453). Luttwak and Lorot have already emphasized the new era and increasing weight of geoeconomics (vis-à-vis geopolitics) (Szilágyi 2018, 199). Blackwill and Harris argue that aid remains one of today’s main geoeconomic instruments, together with trade and investment policy, economic and financial sanctions, financial and monetary policy, energy and commodities, and cyber space (Schneider-Petsinger, 2021).

The promotion of economic development and livelihoods features high on donor states’ agenda when it comes to funding humanitarian mine action activities. Donor focus has gradually shifted from the early 2000s from simply removing mines and supporting victims to maximizing the impact of clearance for socio-economic development,

¹³ Exact amounts for 2009 and 2010 are not broken down in public statistics. In 2011, the amount was only USD1.92 million provided by the Netherlands. It must be noted, however, that victim assistance is also and often provided as part of other, general social sector support budget allocations (e.g., for emergency health care system development, disability inclusion, economic integration of vulnerable groups etc.). Thus, other international development and humanitarian funding may potentially cover and benefit mine and ERW victims, even though this may not always be possible to ascertain, including the exact amount.

¹⁴ Angola’s national budget also has some lines that may also include mine and ERW victims as part of other envelopes for financing socio-economic development.

including in Angola (Devlin 2010, 5). This includes enabling economic and human development plans through clearing critical and non-critical infrastructure at future or ongoing development project and investment sites. It also includes victims' socio-economic reintegration and helping them rebuild their livelihoods. In addition, it aims at reducing the risk of new accidents to minimize the number of new victims and, ultimately, to strengthen human security¹⁵.

The most **common factors that generally influence funding allocations** (by bilateral donors) are as follows¹⁶ (in this order of ranking): the magnitude of identified needs (*that is, results and impact that can be gained with return on investment*); integration of mine action needs in consolidated funding appeals (*that is, easiness of providing coherent support to validated requests*); links to development opportunities, national development plans and donor development programming (*that is, socio-economic impact and economic development gains*); links to peace-building (*that is, indirect security and conflict prevention considerations*); other external reasons (*e.g. 'competing' crises, foreign policy aims, etc.*). Socio-economic impact and the ability to report back on results are also named by donors as two key factors that are necessary for continued funding (alongside better survey results on minefields, enhanced local capacities and national ownership).

In terms of **which countries are selected for support**, donors typically follow fourteen main criteria¹⁷, namely (in order of donors' ranking): the target country's commitment to the Mine Ban Treaty; the needs and the humanitarian imperative; the donor's geographic strategy; link to the donor's overall development and humanitarian policy; level of national ownership; constraints to development; concentration of other donor funds, the donor's thematic priorities; and lastly, impact, sustainability, capacity-building and peace-building. In most cases, the countries which receive support for mine action are also recipients of other forms of development and/or humanitarian aid from the same donor. Donors rather focus on a smaller number of countries (in line with the Aid Effectiveness agenda) and select those with which they already have a 'special relationship'.

All this generally reinforces that 'humanitarian mine action' is no longer considered purely humanitarian. In contrast, it is part of the **broader foreign policy agenda**; and falls under donors' **broader development and humanitarian support** to further, among others, socio-economic development. In many cases, mine action is also linked to national and international **security considerations** in support of peacebuilding, disarmament, conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery.

5.1 The case of the United States

Interestingly, the United States is the '**number one' mine action donor (in terms of volume of funding) both in Angola and worldwide** even though it has not acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty¹⁸. The majority of US mine action funding is channeled through the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, which sits within the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (BPMA) of the Department of State (DoS). BPMA is the direct link of the DoS to the Department of Defense, and its main mission is to build 'enduring security partnerships to advance US national security objectives' and provide 'policy direction in the areas of international security, security assistance,

¹⁵ The increased importance of human security is also reflected in the fact that donor policies now cover all types of explosive devices that may or do pose a threat to human security, not only landmines but also ERWs, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and cluster munitions.

¹⁶ Own analysis in italic, based on Devlin 2010, 22.

¹⁷ Paragraph based on Devlin 2010, 11.

¹⁸ The United States has not signed the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions either, but it is party to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (including its protocols). The country has a particular stance on the use of anti-personnel landmines by itself. As of 31 January 2020, the Department of Defense has adopted a new policy that allows the use of landmines in major combats in future conflicts if those are equipped with a self-destruct/self-deactivation function, are detectable with commonly available detection equipment and can self-destruct within thirty days. This decision represented a major step back in previous US efforts to eradicate landmines and received a strong wave of criticism from domestic and foreign human rights, humanitarian and even military circles. Source: United States Department of State 2021e.

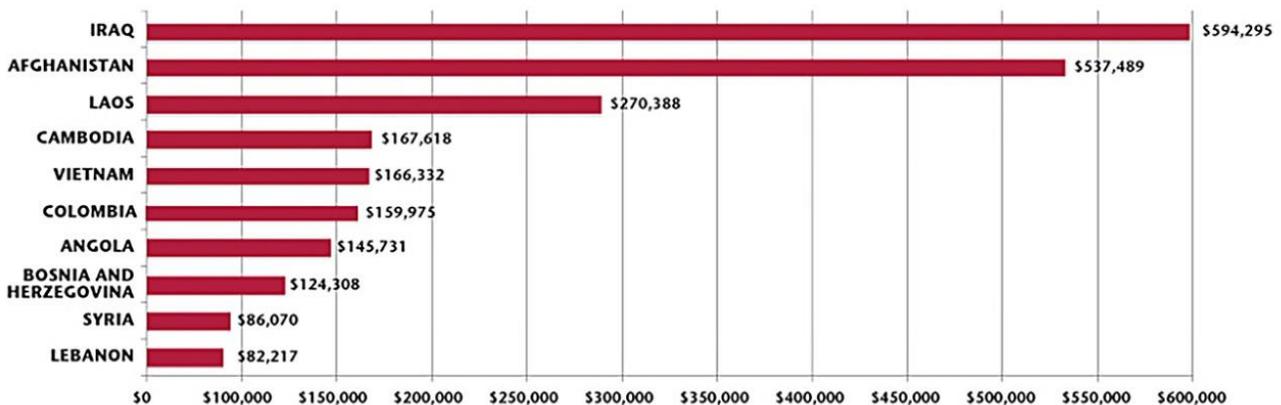
military operations, defense strategy and plans, and defense trade’ (United States Department of State 2021b). This demonstrates that humanitarian mine action is embedded in the security field, which, in turn, is normally influenced by geopolitical considerations. The United States is among the four donors (alongside Austria, Belgium, and Germany) that have stated that the biggest part of their mine action funding is ‘not linked to the broader development cooperation agenda’ (Devlin 2010, 9).

Regardless, US funding does further economic development objectives (alongside security ones), at least in its official communication. The two mine action related aims of the US’s Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) program (part of which is mine action) are (United States Department of State 2021c): a) ‘to remediate explosive hazards contamination, returning land to safe and productive use’; and b) ‘to promote US foreign policy interests by broadening international support for CWD efforts’ (the latter also extends to the destruction and securing of small arms and light weapons at risk of proliferation to terrorists, insurgents etc.).

The latest annual report on mine action achievements cites similar objectives, with only slight rephrasing: a) to ‘improve stability and prosperity by clearing ERW and returning land to productive use’; and b) to ‘build trust and deepen relationships with key partners to accelerate achievement of broader US foreign policy objectives’ (United States Department of State 2021d). The report makes clear: ‘The measurable, tangible results that flow from the US government’s commitment to CWD programs strongly support US foreign policy priorities. In addition, these programs help to protect the lives and livelihoods of civilians so they can more safely remain in their own countries.’ CWD programs aim at mitigating both transnational threats to the security of the United States, and national and regional threats to stability and human security. Analysts such as Kennedy have already pointed earlier to the importance of stability in developing states from the perspective of ensuring US national interests (Szilágyi 2018, 139).

Globally, Angola ranks seventh on the list of countries supported by US mine action funding from 1993; and it ranks number one among the 26 African countries that have received US support ‘to promote peace-building, economic growth and prosperity’ (United States Department of State 2021d, United States Department of State 2021a). The funds of USD145.7 million received by Angola represent 28.6 percent of the total funds (of USD509 million) spent by the United States on the continent, and 3.6 percent of the total funds (of nearly USD4 billion) globally.

Fig. 3. Top ten countries funded by US CWD programs between 1993-2020 (in thousand USD)



Source: United States Department of State 2021d.

Despite the low share (of 3.6 percent) in global US CWD funding, including for mine action, Angola has long had a **firm place on the priority list of the United States**. During the Cold War, the country was important from both geoeconomic perspectives (as source of oil) and geopolitical ones: being one of the venues of the political-ideological ‘battle’ and expansion efforts vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Backing the rebel movement UNITA, the United States in fact has indirectly contributed to today’s landmine problem in the country; the same issue that it works to tackle today. Angola also saw one of the ‘most bizarre constructions of the Cold War’ (Búr 2020, 177). The investments of the US multinational oil company Chevron were protected by Angolan government forces backed by Cuba and the Soviet Union against the rebel forces of UNITA, who were, in turn, supported by the United States and others. At the same time, the high extraction fees and taxes paid by US oil companies helped Angola to finance the military support received from Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Today, US companies have the largest market share in Angolan oil production (Chevron with 26 percent, Exxon Mobil with 19 percent) (International Trade Administration, 2021). The Angolan government intends to engage more US companies for multi-billion-dollar projects in the oil industry, including exploration, development, transportation and storage, refineries, and associated infrastructure (International Trade Administration, 2021). US government sources point to a range of investment opportunities as Angola works to diversify its oil-based (and -dependent) economy, for instance, in public transportation, tourism, alternative energy, extractives, agriculture, fisheries, telecoms, and ports rehabilitation and management (United States Department of State 2021f). Latest US government policies aim at strengthening economic and trade relations across sub-Saharan Africa, promoting US investments, creating a favorable business environment for US firms, and maintaining peace and security, stabilizing resource supplies and other infrastructural developments (Pásztor 2020, 56). Under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the US ensures preferential trade benefits for Angola, its third largest trading partner on the continent (thanks to petroleum), although only the 85th globally.

Other US support, mostly under official development assistance programs, includes health system strengthening, infectious disease prevention, professional military education, maritime security, technical assistance to the financial sector, strengthening of democratic institutions, and development of tourism through environmental conservation and mine clearance (United States Department of State 2021g). These objectives – as part of overall economic growth and investment promotion – require safe and accessible lands. Analyzing its mine action funding history, the United States to date has shown being considerate of the need to fund clearance resources on known or suspected hazardous areas to support such expansion plans.

5.2 The case of the European Commission

Despite its withdrawal after 2017, the EC has been the **second biggest mine action donor in Angola** (with USD51.62 million, that is, 32.28 percent of all foreign support) in the period of 2010-2020. The EC is also Angola’s main partner for import and third biggest commercial partner (Delegação da União Europeia em Angola, 2021).

In 2010, the EC allocated a total of USD26.52 to mine action in Angola in line with its 2008-2013 Angola country strategy from the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) (Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor 2021h). Sub-grants were awarded to international NGOs and a French commercial company for clearance and for building national mine action coordination and operational monitoring capacities¹⁹ over multi-year project timeframes. In 2014, the EC disbursed another USD25.1 million (still from the 10th EDF) for the period of 2014-2016, albeit with eight months of delay.

¹⁹ Previously, capacity-building activities were funded as part of a comprehensive capacity-building initiative by the United Nations Development Program between 2003-2011. After co-funding certain activities, the EC took it over fully from 2011 until 2015.

At the 14th Meeting of States Parties in 2015, the EC stated that it would continue funding those countries ‘that need support in meeting their commitments under the Ottawa Convention’ (AP Mine Ban Convention 2015, 2). This was (and has still been) certainly the case in Angola, even though the country eventually fell off the EC’s priority list. Since 2017 onwards, the EC did not provide any funds for mine action activities in Angola, even though needs were flagged and discussed in in-country consultations (AP Mine Ban Convention 2018, 3).. Mine action was also not mentioned anymore as a priority in the joint National Indicative Program (NIP) for 2014-2020 of the EC and Angola (European Commission 2015). Instead, technical, and vocational education and training and higher education, sustainable agriculture and water and sanitation were selected for support. Additional priorities noted in the document were: strengthening the democratic political culture; increasing institutional capacities; intensifying the fight against poverty and against corruption; improving transparency and accountability; establishment of a competitive and diversified economy and more favorable trade and investment climate; sustainable and inclusive growth, creation of decent jobs, extension of the national social protection floor and strengthening of civil society.

The withdrawal of EC stands in contrast with the fact that is among the top three donors in mine action globally. Between 2016-2020, it allocated more than USD415 million, which was 35 percent more than between 2011-2015 across at least nine countries (Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor 2021d), even though not in Angola anymore. Based on official statements and other communication, supporting mine action is among the ‘high priorities of European Union foreign policy’ (Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor 2021d; European External Action Service 2018, 8). Mine action is linked to development programming (notably, the achievement of the 17 SDGs), humanitarian response, conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. Funding is allocated from the EC’s Neighborhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument that finances sustainable development, democracy promotion, human rights, stability and peace-related initiatives, among them humanitarian mine action. Thus, regardless of its withdrawal from Angola, the EC also clearly demonstrates a **close interconnection of geopolitical and geoeconomic considerations and the thematic areas it funds, including mine action**, as it has been the case while it was still a main donor for the country.

5.3 The case of Japan

Japan has been the **third largest and a consistent mine action donor in Angola** between 2010-2020 (just as it is also among the top donors globally). Even though its share has been much lower than those of the United States and the EC, it has provided 8.5 percent of all international contributions in a total value of USD13.7 million in this period.

Japan’s mine action objectives are three-fold: a) support to seriously affected countries; b) promote south-south and regional cooperation; and c) support mine victims and survivors (United Nations Mine Action Service 2021, 12). Accordingly, Japan generally provides comprehensive support including clearance, risk education and victim assistance, and related support such as construction of schools and revitalization of economic activities to promote stability and development (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021e). Although in the context of Angola, Japan has to date focused on clearance and risk education, only supported victim assistance once in 2009. Japan also emphasizes the need for efficiency and building on technological development including utilizing Japanese demining technology and engineering expertise for advancements and local capacity strengthening²⁰. Japan’s long-term support to mine action, including financial contributions from its official development assistance, has been continuously reinforced at the various pledging conferences (Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament 2021).

²⁰ Japan was a former mine producer (in addition to importing mines from the US) until its accession to the Mine Ban Treaty.

Japanese foreign policy clearly **links humanitarian mine action with the broader development, poverty reduction and social reintegration agenda** through its support being channeled through the official government agency, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Infrastructure and Peacebuilding Department (Japan International Cooperation Agency Infrastructure and Peacebuilding Department 2016, 2). Further, the Tokyo Guidelines also state that landmines are not only of humanitarian concern but are a threat to peace and stability, and obstacles to reconstruction and development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1997). Japanese foreign policy and development aid has human security at its center in the effort to promote sustainable development (Carvalho 2011, 315). This explains why Japan has long supported Angola (among other war-torn African countries) to transition to long-term peace and development, an essential component of which is to help enable progress in humanitarian mine action. Carvalho argues that the human security and peace-building focused development approach of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) – originally established in 1993 to create trade and investment opportunities and promote sustainable development – has contributed to Japan’s soft power role in international politics. Human security has helped Japan to create a formal link between aid and security for development purposes, the latter being clearer as Japan’s direct national security interests were not at stake in case of the Angolan landmine problem.

Other analysts claim that by referring to the aims of promoting peace and human security, Japan furthers own national security interests, whereby its new official development assistance regulations now allow for providing aid to military forces. Goto argues that Japan’s support to African countries (through TICAD) ultimately aims at promoting own economic interests (Goto 2015), and only partially an altruistic image. As Japan’s demand for natural resources, in particular fossil fuel, increases, it focuses on the most important sub-Saharan counterparts for supply and markets. In addition, it is trying to counter-balance the expansion of emerging donors, most importantly its major competitor on the continent, China. These point to a combination of commercial (*geo-economic*) as well as strategic-political (*geopolitical/geostrategic*) considerations behind the provision of the different forms of aid, including for security purposes.

The Angolan - Japanese economic and trade relations are not yet very significant (USD60 million of exports to Japan, mainly oil and raw materials, and USD35million imports from Japan in 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1997), but both parties seem to be keen to scale up cooperation in the future (Embassy of the Republic of Angola in Japan 2015).

Conclusion and future perspectives

Most donors link the issue of humanitarian mine action and provision of bilateral international support to traditional geopolitical and geo-economic considerations and priorities. These may range from humanitarian efforts and development agendas to stability, peace, and security-focused motives (Bindseil and Mansfield 2020, 9). These allow donors to develop or strengthen their ‘soft power’ role and build bilateral linkages with the supported country with potential spill-over effect(s) in other areas of common interest, such as political and economic cooperation, trade, and a strong social and human capital.

Securing financial resources for the mine action sector has been a critical challenge over the past years for Angola (Mine Action Review 2020, 34). It also means the biggest challenge for the country to meet its current, 31 December 2025 clearance deadline, extended for the second time already (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021a, 3). According to latest government and clearance operator calculations, an estimated amount of between USD180 and USD 265 million would still be required through 2021-2025 to achieve full clearance of all known contamination (Government of Angola 2021, 11; Mine Action Review 2020, 34)²¹.

²¹ The latter not including already registered 2020 contributions.

Donors' aid budgets have also been greatly affected by the pandemic (as a consequence of global economic impacts) with subsequent cuts in mine action envelopes. The United Kingdom has for instance reduced its total mine action budget by 75 to 80 percent for the period of 2022-2024 (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2021f), with no funding planned for Angola from 2022 (Cormack 2021). This is despite that the country became a new mine action donor for Angola from 2017; and in terms of fund volume, quickly became the overall fourth largest supporter in the period of 2010 -2020.

The question arises **which countries will remain the key funders over time and for what reasons**, as the global economy remains being hit by shocks influenced by oil prices, pandemics, and security and development challenges.

Will, for instance, **China**, that is already Angola's biggest trade partner (through the oil exports) appear on the landscape of humanitarian mine action donors? Will it pursue purely humanitarian or developmental or rather specific economic and commercial motives? China did fund mine action activities in the past in certain countries through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defense based on needs, local conditions, and guarantees for capacity-building and sustainability, though with a relatively low annual budget. It also provided demining staff, equipment, and trainings, among them to Angola. Since 2008, it did not officially report however any financial contributions neither globally nor to Angola (Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor 2010), even though at a recent United Nations Security Council debate, it noted examples of support in some countries from 2015 to date (United Nations Security Council 2021). Regarded as one of the biggest geoeconomic players of our days, China's main interests in Africa are access to resources, markets and investments and political stability to ensure undisturbed transport (Marshall 2016, 166). While it pays little attention to issues such as human rights, governance, equal distribution of wealth and opportunities, corruption and so on.

Will **the UK** eventually return as a key mine action donor after recovering its economic situation and the earlier level of its aid budget? Will other emerging mid-size or larger powers, including from the **BRICS** group (Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa) or **Turkey** decide to fund mine action activities alongside increasingly focusing on economic and investment opportunities on the continent? These provide intriguing themes for further research from both the perspectives of humanitarian mine action (funding) as well as the disciplines of geopolitics and geoeconomics.

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INSIGHTS INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ISSN 2669-0195 (online) <http://jssidoi.org/jesi/>

2022 Volume 4 Number 4 (December)

[http://doi.org/10.9770/IRD.2022.4.4\(10\)](http://doi.org/10.9770/IRD.2022.4.4(10))

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INSIGHTS INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ISSN 2669-0195 (online) <http://jssidoi.org/jesi/>

2022 Volume 4 Number 4 (December)

[http://doi.org/10.9770/IRD.2022.4.4\(10\)](http://doi.org/10.9770/IRD.2022.4.4(10))

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