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Republican Pathology to Wards a Clinical, Metric, and Preventive Approach to Republican Health

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary states, particularly in Africa, face interconnected crises involving poor governance, corruption, political instability, social fragmentation, and civic disengagement. This article proposes an integrated interpretation of these phenomena through the concept of “republican pathology”, which views the Republic as an institutional, social, political, cultural, and symbolic system susceptible to dysfunction. Drawing on the book *Republican Pathology: Nosology of Dysfunctions, Republicometric Diagnosis and Therapeutic Protocols for the Republic*, it develops three contributions: a “republican nosology” covering seven pathological dimensions; “republicometry”, which transforms observable symptoms into indicators and *Republican Pathology Indices*; and “republican therapy”, supported by monitoring, evaluation, and early-warning mechanisms. The model follows an integrated sequence: observe, classify, measure, diagnose, treat, monitor, evaluate, and adjust. It posits that a sustainable Republic must not only be governed but also continuously observed, measured, treated, and evaluated, thereby paving the way toward a “clinical science of the Republic”.

Keywords

Republican pathology, Pathological Republic, Republicometry, Republican Pathology Indices, Republican health, republican therapy, Republican monitoring, Governance.

Preliminary Note

The publication of the reference work *Republican Pathology: Nosology of Dysfunctions, Republicometric Diagnosis and Therapeutic Protocols for the Republic* [1] coincided with the preparation of the Festschrift organized on the occasion of Professor Alex Mbikay Mundeke’s conferral of emeritus status. This circumstance holds particular significance for us. Indeed, Professor Alex Mbikay welcomed us to IFASIC—now the University of Information and Communication Sciences (UNISIC)—in 2004, before formally notifying us, in 2008, of our appointment as a first-term Assistant.

Beyond this decisive stage in our academic career, his background as a doctorate holder in political science and his reflections on institutions, the State, and political life provide a particularly relevant framework for the scholarly dialogue developed in this contribution. In seeking to extend some of these scholarly concerns through the lens of “republican pathology”, we considered it appropriate to dedicate this synthesis article to him.

This contribution is therefore intended both as a tribute to his academic and scholarly career and as an expression of our gratitude for the role he has played in our own academic journey.

Introduction

More than six decades after African countries gained independence, a striking contrast remains between the continent’s considerable potential and the persistence of numerous forms of political, economic, and social vulnerability. Despite abundant natural

and mineral resources, a young population, rich biodiversity, and institutional progress achieved in several countries, many states continue to face recurrent political crises, corruption, armed conflicts, social inequalities, weak public services, declining trust in institutions, and various forms of social fragmentation.

These phenomena have generated an extensive body of literature. Fanon [2] highlighted the traumas and dislocations inherited from colonialism. Bayart [3] showed that corruption, predation, and violence can constitute systemic logics within postcolonial states. Kabou [4] emphasized the internal responsibilities of African societies and the difficulties associated with self-criticism. Mbembe [5] deepened the analysis of transformations in power, violence, and postcolonial forms of domination. In the Congolese context, Mukoko Samba [6] notably examined the paradox between the abundance of available resources and the persistence of poverty.

These contributions are essential, yet the dysfunctions they describe are frequently studied separately: corruption is assigned to governance, poverty to economics, incivility to sociology, disinformation to communication sciences, authoritarianism to political science, identity crises to anthropology, while urban uncleanness is generally treated as a matter of urban management.

Yet these phenomena are not independent. Corruption may foster impunity; impunity weakens trust in institutions; distrust reduces citizen participation; civic disengagement undermines the common good; and the weakening of the common good, in turn, encourages opportunistic practices and the predation of collective resources. An initial dysfunction may thus spread to other dimensions and produce cumulative effects.

It is this interdependence that leads to the concept of “republican pathology”. In its original medical meaning, pathology refers to the study of diseases, their symptoms, mechanisms, and causes. Transposed cautiously into the social and political sciences, the concept makes it possible to analyze persistent alterations liable to compromise the functioning of a Republic.

“Republican pathology” therefore refers to the set of structural, normative, behavioral, and symbolic dysfunctions that durably affect the functioning of a political system founded on the principles of liberty, equality, justice, citizen participation, and the pursuit of the common good. This normative horizon is rooted in the republican tradition of the social contract [7] and in contemporary reflection on democratic legitimacy and the quality of government [8].

Correspondingly, a “pathological Republic” refers to the condition of a Republic in which these dysfunctions become persistent, interconnected, and sufficiently severe to compromise social cohesion, institutional legitimacy, or the State’s capacity to secure the common good.

This approach leads to conceiving the Republic as an organism that

can be observed through a clinical and metric logic. Its purpose, however, is neither to medicalize politics nor mechanically equate human societies with biological organisms. The clinical metaphor serves a heuristic function: it organizes the scientific approach around a sequence extending from the observation of symptoms to their classification, measurement, diagnosis, treatment, and monitoring. The epistemological precaution is important: following Canguilhem [9], the distinction between the normal and the pathological is not a simple opposition between statistical regularity and deviation, while Foucault’s genealogy of the clinical gaze [10] invites critical attention to the conditions under which symptoms are observed, classified, and interpreted.

Nosology → Diagnosis → Screening → Therapy → Monitoring → Evaluation.

Problem Statement and Hypotheses

Problem Statement

Research on crises of the State and governance highlights a plurality of phenomena: corruption, institutional weakness, social anomie, crises of legitimacy, personalization of power, identity fragmentation, disinformation, incivility, and deterioration of public space. These phenomena are generally examined through specialized disciplinary frameworks that allow certain dimensions to be explored in depth but make it more difficult to understand them as interdependent manifestations of a single system of dysfunction. A systemic reading of these crises also resonates with complexity theory, which emphasizes interactions, feedback loops, and emergent effects rather than isolated causal chains [11].

The scientific challenge therefore lies not only in identifying problems; it also concerns the ability to meet four successive requirements:

- Identify the main categories of dysfunction;
- Transform them into observable and measurable phenomena;
- Determine their degrees of severity and their interactions;
- Connect their diagnosis to mechanisms of correction and prevention.

The central research question is: How can an integrated approach be constructed to identify, classify, measure, diagnose, treat, and monitor the dysfunctions affecting the vitality of a Republic?

- Q1. What are the main categories of pathologies likely to affect the functioning of a Republic?
- Q2. How can their qualitative manifestations be transformed into indicators and indices capable of assessing their intensity?
- Q3. How can republicometric diagnosis be linked to interventions aimed at restoring republican health?
- Q4. What monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can prevent relapses and ensure the long-term regulation of the Republic?

General Hypothesis

The model is based on the following general hypothesis: The persistent dysfunctions of a Republic form a multidimensional system of interdependent pathologies whose identification,

measurement, and monitoring make it possible to establish a diagnosis of republican health and guide corrective and preventive interventions.

- H1 – Pathological multidimensionality. Republican dysfunctions result from the interaction of ethical, institutional, social, political and civic, cultural, communicational, and urban disorders, whose accumulation affects the overall vitality of the Republic.
- H2 – Multidimensional therapy. The sustainable restoration of a Republic in crisis requires interventions corresponding to the structure of the diagnosed pathologies. A systemic pathology cannot therefore be sustainably corrected through an isolated or exclusively sectoral reform.
- H3 – Prevention and monitoring. The consolidation of republican health depends on the existence of a structured monitoring, evaluation, and alert system capable of identifying early signs of deterioration, measuring the effects of interventions, and ensuring their continuous adjustment.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this article is to present and systematize the “republican pathology” model as a clinical, metric, and preventive framework for analyzing the health of republican systems.

More specifically, it seeks to define the concept of republican pathology and clarify its epistemological scope; present the nosology of the main pathologies of the Republic; explain the principle of republicometry and Republican Pathology Indices; demonstrate the articulation between diagnosis, therapy, monitoring, and evaluation; and discuss the scientific scope, validation requirements, and limitations of the model.

Methodology

Nature of the Article

This article constitutes a theoretical, conceptual, and methodological synthesis of the book *Republican Pathology: Nosology of Dysfunctions, Republicometric Diagnosis and Therapeutic Protocols for the Republic* [1]. It does not constitute a new independent empirical investigation. Rather, it condenses the scientific architecture developed in the book in order to identify its central concepts, relationships among dimensions, metric principles, and main operational propositions.

General Approach

The source work is based on an inductive approach, starting from the observation of social, political, institutional, cultural, and communicational phenomena in order to progressively construct the concept of republican pathology.

The approach combines a comparative perspective, enabling regularities and differences among manifestations to be identified, with a clinical perspective, organized around five operations: nosology, diagnosis, screening, therapy, and monitoring.

It also adopts a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative

and quantitative data. Qualitative analysis is used to understand the meanings, causes, manifestations, and relationships among dysfunctions. Quantification subsequently seeks to transform some of these phenomena into comparable indicators that can be used for diagnosis and decision-making. This articulation is consistent with mixed-methods research, in which qualitative and quantitative procedures are deliberately combined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena [12].

Qualitatively understand → Operationalize → Measure → Compare → Interpret → Intervene.

Operationalization of Republican Pathology

Operationalization is based on seven dimensions: ethical pathology, institutional pathology, social pathology, political and civic pathology, cultural pathology, communicational pathology, and urban pathology, particularly urban uncleanness. Each dimension is broken down into factors, symptoms, and observable behaviors.

The Republican Pathology Meter developed in the book comprises 248 observable symptoms or behaviors, organized on a five-point Likert-type scale of frequency or intensity.

Concept → Dimensions → Factors → Symptoms → Items → Indicators → Indices.

Construction of the Indices

Republicometry distinguishes several levels of aggregation. Behavioral indices correspond to elementary observed manifestations. Symptomatic indices group together several manifestations belonging to the same symptom. Factorial or morbidity indices synthesize several symptoms contributing to a structured pathology. Dimensional or categorical indices aggregate factors belonging to the same category of pathologies. Finally, global indices provide an integrated assessment of the overall state of the republican system.

Among these is the Global Republican Pathology Index (GRPI), designed to measure the overall severity of dysfunctions. Its positive counterpart can be expressed through a Republican Vitality Index, which places greater emphasis on the Republic’s capacities for functioning, regulation, and resilience.

Item → Behavioral Index → Symptomatic Index → Factorial Index → Dimensional Index → Global Index.

Results: The Nosology of Republican Pathologies

Ethical Pathology

The first category concerns the deterioration of values and norms that sustain social cohesion and collective life. It manifests itself particularly through excessive individualism, normalization of transgressions, loss of a sense of the general interest, declining solidarity, crises of trust, and weakening of collective norms.

The concept of anomie, developed by Durkheim, constitutes a fundamental reference here. When social rules lose their regulatory capacity, individuals increasingly lack collective reference points capable of guiding their behavior. In a pathological Republic, corruption, fraud, lying, or violence may gradually lose their exceptional character and become ordinary practices. This analysis draws more specifically on Durkheim's accounts of social regulation, solidarity, and anomie [13,14].

Institutional Pathology

Institutional pathology concerns alterations in the functioning of the State and public institutions. It includes corruption, clientelism, nepotism, patrimonialism, misappropriation of public resources, impunity, instrumentalization of the justice system, and confusion between private interests and the general interest.

The distinction between individual anomaly and systemic dysfunction is essential. An institution retains a certain degree of health when it is still capable of identifying, sanctioning, and correcting deviant acts. Pathology emerges when transgression ceases to be exceptional and becomes a normalized mode of functioning. Institutional persistence also depends on formal and informal rules that structure incentives and constrain action [15], while normalized practices may become embodied dispositions reproduced through everyday action [16]. In African postcolonial settings, such institutionalization of informal and predatory practices has been analyzed through the “politics of the belly” and the broader dynamics of politics from below [3,17].

Social Pathology

Social pathology refers to mechanisms of disorganization within the social fabric. It may manifest itself through increasing inequality, structural poverty, exclusion, crime, violence, weakening of education, difficulties in accessing healthcare, and deterioration of solidarity.

These phenomena frequently reinforce one another. Exclusion fosters distrust; distrust weakens cooperation; and weakened cooperation reduces the collective capacity to build or defend the common good. From a Durkheimian perspective, the erosion of solidarity weakens the integrative bonds through which collective life is sustained [13].

Political and Civic Pathology

The Republic is theoretically founded on popular sovereignty, citizen participation, and the legitimacy of power. Political pathology emerges when this relationship deteriorates: personalization of power, electoral fraud, capture of institutions, political manipulation, low participation, civic passivity, marginalization of citizens, or weakening of checks and balances. The result is a gradual breakdown of the social contract and an increasing distance between rulers and citizens. This dimension refers both to the social-contract foundation of legitimate authority [7] and to the civic attitudes and participatory orientations that support democratic stability [18]. It also raises the contemporary

problem of “good government”, understood not only through institutional procedures but through the quality of the relationship between governing institutions and citizens [8].

Cultural Pathology

Cultural pathology refers to the weakening of the symbolic frameworks that enable a society to construct an identity and shared points of reference. It may take the form of cultural alienation, uncritical imitation of external models, devaluation of endogenous knowledge, instrumentalization of ethnic or community affiliations, and deepening identity divisions.

The issue is not to defend a static culture, but to prevent cultural transformation from leading to collective disorientation and the loss of a society's capacity to produce shared meaning. Culture is therefore understood as an instituted and instituting universe of meanings [19], reproduced through practical dispositions [16] and through symbolic classifications of order, purity, danger, and transgression [20]. In postcolonial contexts, this question also intersects with the critique of cultural alienation and the struggle to reconstruct political subjectivity after colonial domination [2], as well as with Arendt's [21] concern for the transmission and preservation of a common world.

Communicational Pathology

Communication constitutes one of the Republic's vital systems. Media manipulation, disinformation, fake news, spectacularization of violence, discursive polarization, glorification of deviance, or impoverishment of public language can profoundly affect the quality of democratic debate.

In the digital age, the virality of content further amplifies this problem. Communicational pathology thus affects a society's capacity to represent itself with sufficient reliability and to distinguish facts, opinions, manipulation, and strategic narratives. These dynamics can also be read in relation to contemporary forms of political hostility and the production of antagonistic representations of the other [5].

Pathology of Urban Uncleanliness

Urban uncleanliness constitutes a particularly visible manifestation of republican dysfunction. It is not merely a matter of deficient public hygiene. It may simultaneously reflect institutional incapacity to manage shared space, weakened civic responsibility, devaluation of the common good, and normalization of disorder. Public space thus becomes a material mirror of the relationship among citizens, institutions, and collective norms. From an anthropological perspective, the symbolic boundaries between cleanliness and pollution also express classifications of social order and disorder [20].

Republicometry: From Observation to Measurement

Identifying pathologies is a first step, but it is not sufficient. Two Republics may display the same type of dysfunction with different levels of intensity, frequency, or institutionalization.

Republicometry is proposed as an approach for measuring, comparing, and interpreting these variations. It may be defined as a methodology for assessing the dysfunctions and vitality of a Republic through indicators and indices constructed from observable phenomena.

Its purpose is not to reduce politics to numbers; rather, it seeks to make the relationship between what is observed and the resulting diagnosis more explicit.

Facts → Items → Indicators → Indices → Diagnosis → Decision.

Measurement thus becomes an interface between theoretical understanding and action.

The Integrated Conceptual Model

Republican pathology can be represented as a clinical cycle.

- **Phase 1 – Observation:** Facts, behaviors, discourses, institutional practices, and social manifestations constitute the empirical material.
- **Phase 2 – Nosology:** These manifestations are classified into the different categories of republican pathologies.
- **Phase 3 – Republicometry:** Observations are converted into items, indicators, and indices.
- **Phase 4 – Diagnosis:** The indices make it possible to identify the nature of the dysfunction, its intensity, its spread, and whether it is cyclical or structural.
- **Phase 5 – Therapy:** The diagnosis provides the basis for defining interventions.

- **Phase 6 – Monitoring:** Indicators are tracked over time in order to identify trends and weak signals.
- **Phase 7 – Evaluation:** The results obtained are compared with the objectives pursued.
- **Phase 8 – Adjustment:** Policies and strategies are maintained, strengthened, corrected, or redirected.

Observe → Classify → Measure → Diagnose → Treat → Monitor → Evaluate → Adjust → Observe again.

Gondwana: An Illustrative Function of Republicometric Diagnosis

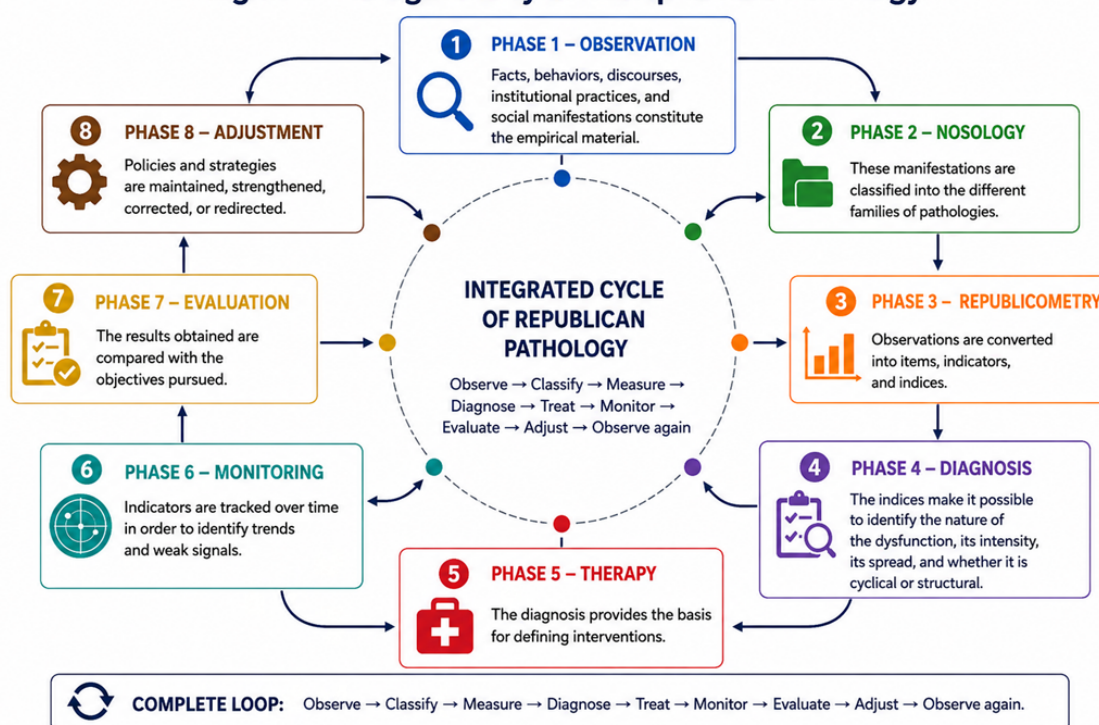
To illustrate the operationalization of the framework, the book applies the model to the fictional Republic of Gondwana, drawn from Mamane's satirical universe.

This methodological choice makes it possible to portray numerous phenomena characteristic of republican crises: concentration of power, institutional weakness, corruption, disconnection between official discourse and social experience, fragmentation, and incivility.

Gondwana should not, however, be interpreted as a definitive empirical validation of the model. It essentially constitutes an illustrative and heuristic case study, intended to demonstrate how nosology and republicometric indices can be mobilized within a structured diagnosis.

Application of the model identifies dysfunctions across the various

Figure 1 – Integrated Cycle of Republican Pathology



dimensions and yields a Global Republican Pathology Index of 60.5, associated with a republican vitality level of 39.5.

The significance of these results lies less in the numerical values themselves than in demonstrating the transition: from dispersed symptoms → to dimensional indices → and then to an integrated interpretation of the system.

The Gondwana case should therefore be understood as a methodological proof of concept, calling for subsequent validation on real empirical settings.

From Measurement to Republican Therapy

Diagnosis is meaningful only if it can guide action. Republican therapy refers to all interventions aimed at reducing the causes and manifestations of identified pathologies. It rests on an essential principle: There can be no rigorous therapy without prior diagnosis.

An ethical pathology cannot be treated solely through legislation; an institutional pathology cannot be corrected through an awareness campaign alone; a social pathology cannot disappear through a change in discourse; and a communicational pathology cannot necessarily be reduced through administrative reform.

Therapy must therefore be differentiated, proportionate, and multidimensional.

Prevention

Prevention is based on civic, moral, and citizenship education, the transmission of collective norms, the development of critical thinking, and the strengthening of a sense of the general interest.

Repair

Repair intervenes when dysfunctions are already established. It may involve institutional reforms, transparency mechanisms, strengthening the justice system, rehabilitating public services, or restoring public accountability.

Monitoring

Monitoring makes it possible to observe changes in the indices following intervention and determine whether the policies adopted are actually producing effects.

Diagnosis → Intervention → Measurement → Reassessment → Adjustment.

Republican Monitoring

A Republic may improve and subsequently regress. Monitoring must therefore be organized according to a permanent logic of republican monitoring.

Republican monitoring may be defined as a structured mechanism of observation, analysis, evaluation, and alert designed to detect changes in dysfunctions and risks of deterioration.

It fulfills three main functions. Describe: monitoring periodically establishes a health profile of the Republic. Alert: it identifies weak signals indicating possible deterioration. Evaluate: it measures the effects of policies, reforms, and therapeutic mechanisms implemented.

Republican monitoring therefore introduces a learning logic into public action. In this respect, monitoring is not merely a control mechanism: it can support institutional learning through feedback, error detection, and the revision of governing assumptions, in the sense of organizational learning developed by Argyris and Schön [22].

Towards an Institutional Architecture of Republican Health

To be sustainable, republican monitoring cannot depend exclusively on occasional initiatives. The book envisages an organization structured around a National Center for Republican Monitoring, regional or sectoral observatories, local monitoring and intervention units, as well as institutional, academic, and civil-society partners.

Such an architecture must nevertheless meet several democratic requirements: methodological transparency, plurality of actors, scientific independence, publication of results, and the possibility of contestation and critical scrutiny. These requirements are consistent with an institutional perspective in which durable rules must structure accountability and constrain arbitrary action [15].

Republican monitoring must never become a mechanism for the political surveillance of citizens. It must focus on the health of the republican system, not on the arbitrary control of opinions or political opposition. This safeguard is particularly important in light of Foucault's [23] analysis of disciplinary surveillance and the ways in which observation can become an instrument of power.

Discussion

Defragmenting the Analysis of Crises

The model's first contribution lies in its systemic character. It enables phenomena generally distributed across several disciplines—corruption, poverty, institutional crises, incivility, disinformation, cultural fragmentation, and urban deterioration—to be considered together. Republican pathology does not seek to replace existing disciplines but rather to construct a framework for convergence. Its integrative ambition also follows a logic of complexity: dysfunctions are treated as interacting components of a system whose effects cannot be reduced to the sum of isolated sectors [11].

From Denunciation to Objectification

The second contribution lies in republicometry. Statements such as “corruption is widespread”, “citizens no longer trust the State”, or “institutions are failing” must be capable of being translated into observable variables.

The scientific questions therefore become: How do we know?

Based on which indicators? At what level of intensity? According to what temporal evolution?

Measurement thus introduces a requirement of justification into diagnosis.

Linking Knowledge and Action

The third contribution concerns the relationship between diagnosis and decision-making. Measurement is not intended merely to rank states. It should help prioritize needs, target interventions, and evaluate their effects. Republicometry thus becomes an instrument of institutional regulation and learning. This conception links knowledge to adaptive public action and echoes the distinction between single-loop correction and deeper revision of governing assumptions in organizational learning [22].

Introducing Prevention into Governance

Governance often remains reactive: it intervenes once a crisis is already established. Republican clinical analysis instead seeks to strengthen a preventive logic based on screening, monitoring, and the detection of weak signals.

From reaction to prevention; from impression to measurement; from denial to diagnosis; from occasional reform to continuous evaluation.

Limitations and Epistemological Precautions

The approach nevertheless presents several limitations.

The first concerns the risk of excessive medicalization of politics. Disagreement, protest, opposition, and conflict must never automatically be equated with pathologies. They are normal components of democratic life.

The second limitation concerns normativity. Defining republican health requires specifying the values used as reference points: liberty, equality, justice, participation, responsibility, solidarity, and the common good. These norms must remain explicit and open to debate. The normative framework must therefore be justified rather than presumed: republican liberty and the common good can be related to the social contract [7], democratic civic culture [18] and the requirements of legitimate and accountable government [8].

The third concerns the validation of the Republican Pathology Meter. An instrument comprising 248 items must still undergo extensive empirical analyses of internal consistency, reliability, construct validity, and stability.

The fourth concerns cross-cultural comparability. The same behavior may have different meanings depending on historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. Cross-cultural interpretation must also recognize that practices acquire meaning within historically constituted symbolic systems and social dispositions [16,19,20].

The fifth concerns the weighting of dimensions. Not all pathologies

necessarily carry the same weight in the overall deterioration of the system.

The sixth limitation concerns political instrumentalization. Republicometry must never become a mechanism used by those in power to label their opponents or any form of political criticism as pathological.

These precautions invite us to consider republicometry as a scientific program to be validated and improved, rather than as a definitively completed system.

Conclusion

Republican pathology proposes an integrated way of understanding dysfunctions affecting the State, institutions, and society. Its starting point is the observation that ethical, institutional, social, political, cultural, communicational, and urban crises do not necessarily develop independently. They interact, reinforce one another, and may progressively constitute a pathological system.

Republican nosology provides an initial level of classification. Republicometry then transforms observable manifestations into indicators and Republican Pathology Indices that make it possible to assess their intensity. Republican diagnosis interprets these indices and identifies the nature and depth of imbalances. Republican therapy seeks to act upon their causes and manifestations. Finally, republican monitoring and evaluation embed action within a permanent logic of anticipation, learning, and correction.

Observe → Classify → Measure → Diagnose → Treat → Monitor → Evaluate → Adjust.

The essential contribution thus lies in moving from a primarily denunciatory interpretation of crises toward a structured approach to knowledge and intervention. From this perspective, the Republic is neither permanently healthy nor permanently ill. It is a dynamic system whose vitality depends on its capacities for regulation, learning, correction, and prevention.

The Gondwana case demonstrates the methodological possibility of applying this architecture, but remains illustrative. Scientific validation of the model now calls for applications in real-world settings, comparative and longitudinal studies, metric validation of the Republican Pathology Meter, empirical analysis of weighting procedures, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the proposed therapies.

A resilient Republic is not a Republic without dysfunctions; it is a Republic capable of recognizing them early enough, measuring them without complacency, correcting them proportionately, and continuously learning from its own transformations.

It is in this capacity for self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-regulation that the transition lies from the mere governance of the Republic to a genuine “science of its health”.

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