African Engagements
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CHAPTER ONE

AFRICAN ENGAGEMENTS: ON WHOSE TERMS?
AFRICA NEGOTIATING AN EMERGING
MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Ton Dietz, Kjell Havnevik, Mayke Kaag & Terje Oestigaard

Introduction: A changing world and its consequences

During the recent World EXPO in Shanghai, most African countries were housed under one roof, a huge building bustling with activity. The African dances and the loud drumming attracted many Chinese visitors, who were amazed, thrilled and shocked at the same time. The African market stalls (see book cover) were also popular. EXPO’s title was ‘Better City, Better Life’, and the organisers had tried to convince the African contributors that it would be nice to stick to that general theme. Few did, even after accepting generous Chinese support. Many of the African pavilions showed rural Africa as a paradise for investors and tourists, with scenes of Africa’s exotic nature and people and with a general message that Africa is a continent full of resources to exploit (cf. Dietz 2011: 5). But on whose terms? EXPO’s experience may be seen as symbolic of Africa being quite capable of carving out its own negotiation space. The world’s emerging multipolarity creates obvious tensions but also opportunities for the many different African players on the world’s geopolitical chessboard.

Consider the following one out of many Sino-African encounters currently taking place within Africa:

In Senegal, near Touba, the religious capital of the Murids (a Senegalese Islamic sufi order), a new road was inaugurated. This road had been financed and built by the Chinese, and, for the inauguration, the Senegalese president had come with a large following of officials, as well as the Chinese consul and his entourage. Important representatives of the religious elite from Touba attended the ceremony, too. There were many speeches, and the Chinese consul met with much enthusiasm when he spoke some words in vernacular. The crowd applauded the president, the religious leaders, and the consul. The
Murid leaders thanked the president, and the president self-assuredly took his time to receive their blessings before thanking the consul. In the meantime, in Dakar, traders were preparing a protest against the invasion of the Senegalese capital by Chinese merchants, backed by some important opposition parties.

It is clear that today’s world is not the world of the 1990s and – not surprising to Africans or Africanists but perhaps to others – this also holds true when viewed from the African continent. With the end of the Cold War, the world seemed to move from a bipolar system to a unipolar world in which the neoliberal West globally imposes its laws. However, during the last decade it has been acknowledged that other actors, such as China, India and Brazil, have become increasingly influential, creating multipolarity at the global level (DIE 2006; Dollar 2007; Clegg 2009). It is important to understand what this emerging multipolarity means for Africa. Will Africa fall victim to a new scramble over raw materials and political hegemony between superpowers (e.g. Lee 2006)? Or does this new multipolarity offer African countries greater room for negotiation and manoeuvring, eventually leading to stronger democracy, enhanced growth, and increased possibilities to address their own problems (e.g. Alden 2008; Vittorini & Harris 2009)?

From a Western perspective, non-Western actors intervening in Africa are often considered as mere geopolitical players. Transnational Islamic NGOs, for instance, are usually portrayed as part of a hegemonic project of the Arab world (Kaag 2007). The same tendency can be recognised in discussions about Chinese interventions, in which it is often stressed that these interventions are merely led by the demand for raw materials. This may be partly true, but there is more to it. Different layers have to be distinguished, as is illustrated by the Senegalese example above. Apart from the strategies of superpowers, there are also the ideologies and objectives of intervening organisations, the views and actions of the representatives of these organisations in Africa, and the ways in which African actors attract and respond to these external interventions and use them in their own complex strategies (Nolutshungu 1996; see also Kaag 2008). What also matters is that the number of emerging players seems to increase: ever more Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern governments, businesses and cultural organisations appear on the scene, partly mak-

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ing use of existing footholds (e.g. the Indians in Mauritius, Southern and Eastern Africa; the Lebanese in West Africa; Lusophone connections for the Brazilians), partly coming seemingly ‘out of the blue’.

Taking a longer-term perspective on Africa, the interventions of these ‘new’ actors are feeding into ongoing processes of inclusion and exclusion, both in the economic and political sphere. Important questions include how linkages with these non-Western actors are shaping the integration in the world market of African social groups, African countries, and of Africa as a whole. Are current business and governing elites monopolising contacts with these ‘new’ actors? Or are their interventions offering opportunities for other social categories, especially upcoming or counter-elites, to enhance their positions? They may do so by linking to such initiatives but also by publicly resisting them. Especially the rivalry between different Western and non-Western development partners may offer opportunities for actors in African society (ranging from local groups to the African Union) to enhance their position. What does all this mean for the current systems of transnational governmentality (Ferguson 2006; Olsen, this volume) and for the negotiating position of African elites therein? And what are the effects on processes of inclusion and exclusion in wider African society (Large 2008)? These are among the questions that this book seeks to address. How is Africa and how are Africans engaging the emerging multipolar world? Does the new situation offer the opportunity to get rid of the neoliberal system that many Africans feel has been enforced on them (Amoah, this volume)? Or has the neoliberal era set in motion dynamics that have taken an independent course and are difficult to stop, even after the crumbling of the system that has produced them (see, for instance, Büscher in this volume)?

It is clear that Africa is currently undergoing dramatic changes both politically and economically. In northern Africa, in early 2011, a process of change from below challenged and overturned major and long-standing regimes, including those in Egypt and Tunisia. The political implications of these changes for Sub-Saharan Africa are difficult to predict. Some African countries are experiencing rapid economic growth (Dietz 2011: 21-2). However, most of the continent’s dynamic sectors, such as minerals, gold and precious stones, and tourism and biofuel development are to a large extent influenced and controlled by external interests. In addition, many of the elites and bureaucracies of oil- and mineral-rich countries are controlling
the economic rents for their own benefit (Barnes 2005). The economic growth has thus not been inclusive, and, with a few exceptions (Botswana is always mentioned), benefits have not been passed on to the broader population. Poverty hence still remains deep in the region.

In the early post-colonial era, African governments were strongly engaged in promoting strategies of economic modernisation within the frame of the new nation states, with ‘nation’ a notion of substantial confusion. The period from the early 1960s into the 1970s saw African economies enjoy considerable economic growth as well as major improvements in education, health services and water supply. The need for weak African regimes to consolidate the nation states, however, also led to growing authoritarianism coupled with desires to engage with the world on their own terms. However, this was circumscribed by the existence of the Cold War, which presented constraints for the content and direction of the African engagements, but also opportunities for external support. For instance, a country like Tanzania charted its own development strategy in the 1960s and also benefited from playing external donors against each other (see Liu and Monson, this volume). The African post-colonial development model was, however, supported by favourable international economic conjunctures until the oil crisis in 1973 and the subsequent global economic stagnation. African countries were gradually immersed in political, economic and social crises. These crises changed, in important ways, the engagement of Africa with the external world.

The US and its Western allies had already in the early 1980s made the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank impose economic conditionalities for their further support to African states. These neoliberal reforms emphasised state withdrawal and increasing space for the private sector to unfold. The first phase emphasised “getting the prices right” (World Bank 1981) as a general remedy for recovery of economic growth. However, when the expected outcomes did not emerge (Zagah 2005), the focus shifted to creating a broader ‘enabling environment’ for development in Africa, which emphasised institutional aspects (World Bank 1989; Gibbon et al. 1993). African states on their side attempted to chart their own response to the crises through the Lagos Plan of Action in 1983 and economic reform programmes through the Economic Commission for Africa in the late 1980s. However, these initiatives had limited impact (see also Derbe, this volume).
After the fall of the Berlin Wall in late 1989, Africa’s engagement with the world changed to the direction of democracy and human rights. The shift was once more externally driven – primarily by the US and her allies, who wished to legitimise the new unipolar world order by emphasising such values. The 1990s hence saw the West imposing both political (Western-style multi-party systems) and economic market reform on Africa. The reform processes spread throughout Africa, whereas the more authoritarian Asian countries, enjoying high economic growth rates since the 1980s, did not experience similar external reform demands. However, Asian countries which had embraced economic liberalisation also experienced a severe financial crisis from 1997 onwards. Countries that had pursued more protectionist economic strategies, such as China, India, Vietnam and Malaysia, were less influenced and continued their economic growth almost unabated.

After the attack on the Twin Towers in New York in September 2001, the weakening of the US became increasingly manifest both politically and economically. The subsequent ‘war on terror’ led to drastic set-backs for global human rights, enormous economic costs for America, and untold human and material suffering in the countries against which the US and her allies waged war (Iraq and Afghanistan). Gradually, Europe was also being weakened economically. The financial and economic crises in late 2008 contributed further to this development.

In the meantime, new global actors (Brazil, Malaysia, Turkey, South Africa) have entered the geopolitical scene, while older players (China, India) have gained a renewed visibility and enlarged their domain of intervention. China is today Africa’s third-largest trading partner after the US and France. The Chinese development aid to Africa is also expanding rapidly, and by 2009 it had spent about 6.3 billion USD in Africa (Ong’ayo, this volume). In addition, India now has a presence in all African states. At the peak of the global financial crisis, the figure for India’s trade with Africa had reached an astonishing 46 billion USD in 2009, up from 36 billion USD of the previous year. Despite still being less than half of all China’s trade in the continent, this represents a 15-fold increase from a mere 3 billion USD in 2002. The buoyancy of this fast-growing economic relation is so great that the trade between India and Africa is expected to reach 70 billion USD in the next few years and even surpass this figure by 2015 (Vittorini & Harris, this volume).
The question of the influence of rising international actors in Africa has been adopted by the scholarly community, reflected in particular in the increasing number of studies on China in Africa (e.g. Mepham & Wild 2006; Alden 2007; Melber & Lee 2007; van Dijk 2009; Cheru & Obi 2010). These studies show the various ways in which China has been involved in Africa (aid, trade, investment) and critically assess the rationale for its presence. We feel, however, that despite the wealth of knowledge these recent studies have yielded, important scholarly challenges remain. First, most studies have focused on one particular international actor and its involvement in Africa and have not taken multipolarity as the central object of research. It is, however, the diversification of available partners that is one of the most important recent changes when viewed from an African perspective. Second, studies have largely focused on the actions and strategies of external actors, thus overlooking African agencies and the ways they may co-shape new global relationships. Third, most studies have taken the state level as the level of analysis. Such a state-centric perspective prevents one from exploring how emerging global players’ involvement in Africa might not only challenge global power constellations, but also reconfigure power constellations at a more local level (Evers et al., this volume) or contribute to new transnational configurations (Nauta, this volume).

Therefore, by taking multipolarity as the central focus and by highlighting the agency of Africa in co-shaping the new global world order, while also adopting a historically sensitive approach, this book serves to document and analyse the new developments described in the foregoing. What are the continuities and what are the changes in Africa’s position in the world? How does African agency play a role and co-shape the emerging multipolar world order? The contributions in this book show that African engagements take numerous forms on different terms and that relations of power and opportunities are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated, at local, national, international and transnational levels. Moreover, in a continent with over one billion people, there will be mutual and conflicting interests and engagements, both with regards to Africa in relation to the multipolar world, as well as within and among African nations, regions, communities and organisations. In addition, the continent has been colonised, exploited and deprived of natural and human resources, a fact which informs the ways in which Africa is currently engaging in the world.
In view of the observation that in the analysis of an emerging multipolar world African agency is still rather marginally considered, we think it important to reflect a little further on this issue before turning to the contributions to the present volume. In the following section, we will explore some of the reasons why it often appears so difficult to take African agency seriously (having their roots in the colonial past) and consider some recent thinking on African agency and engagements.

**African engagements: The importance of taking African agency seriously**

When Napoleon Bonaparte stood among his troops next to the pyramids after he had conquered Egypt in 1798, he proclaimed: “Soldiers, forty centuries of history look down upon you!” Although the history of colonisation in Africa is older, the French conquest began a new era for understanding Africa, African engagements and Africa’s place in world history. To whom does ancient Egyptian history belong? And how can different understandings of the Egyptian past shed light on African engagements? By using the ancient Egyptian civilisation as an example, it is possible to describe two radical and opposite views regarding African agency and engagements (and, of course, there are many views in between these extremes): one which sees Africans as incapable of cultural development and totally dependent upon external influences (from the West, the Near East and Asia), and the other which sees Africans as the major contributors to and developers of civilisations within Africa and beyond. Perhaps with the exception of Australia, no other continent has been so deprived of acknowledgement for having played any role in cultural progress and global development as Africa. However, perceptions of the ‘backward’ continent were challenged by the ancient Egyptian civilisation.

What made Napoleon’s Africa expedition different from other European colonisations was that the army was accompanied by a special *Scientific and Artistic Commission*. This commission was carefully selected and was to provide a cultural and technological background to Napoleon’s further plans to colonise the Nile valley. The commission consisted of 167 scientists and technicians – a truly inter-disciplinary team at the time. In particular, the pyramids fascinated these scholars, and few scientific expeditions have left such a legacy. The result of this expedition was an enormous work: the
twenty-volume *Description de l’Égypte*, published between 1809 and 1828. Although the Egyptian monuments were known before Napoleon’s conquest, the *Description* was a catalyst for Egyptian studies and generated in Europe a wide public interest in Egypt, which also resulted in intensive robbing and looting of Egyptian antiquities (Fagan 2004: 47-56). Importantly, Egypt and the pyramids placed the big questions regarding Africa’s development and Africans’ engagements and agencies in the world in focus.

Historically, since colonial times, a recurring debate on Africa’s development and engagements has focused on whether unique innovations emerged in the continent itself or were the results of a diffusion of cultural and technological innovations from more advanced cultures and civilisations. In the history of Africa, the models which have been used to understand the continent’s people and development have had political implications, since “models of reality have a tendency to convert into models for reality” (van Beek 2007: 311). Archaeology has had a prominent role in the processes of colonialism and nationalism, and as the archaeologist Bruce Trigger says: “Colonialist archaeology ... served to denigrate native societies and peoples by trying to demonstrate that they had been static in prehistoric times and lacked the initiative to develop on their own” (Trigger 1984: 363). Moreover, “(w)hile the colonisers had every reason to glorify their own past, they had no reason to extol the past of the peoples they were subjugating and supplanting. Indeed, they sought by emphasising the primitiveness and lack of accomplishments of these peoples to justify their own poor treatment of them” (Trigger 1984: 360). In the nineteenth century, such a philosophy was brutally expressed by, for instance, the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who proclaimed that Africa “is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it – that is in its northern part – belong to the Asiatic or European World” (Hegel 2007 [1899]: 99) and that the Africans are “capable of no development or culture, and as we see them at this day, such have they always been” (ibid. 98). Africans were denied any engagements, agencies and even humanity.

This political agenda of Sub-Saharan or ‘black’ Africa was subsumed in Western notions of Africa. However, the ‘Egyptian problem’ persisted: how could Africa have produced such a remarkable and astonishing civilisation? Europeans solved the problem by not including Egypt in their concept of ‘Africa’: “Egypt will be considered
in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit” (Hegel 2007 [1899]: 99). Africa was thus denied the capability of independent and autonomous development and cultural and technological innovations, which were seen as coming from the Near East and Asia.

Colonial archaeology saw Sub-Saharan Africa as a living, although largely static, museum of the past. Technical, cultural and political achievements in the past and present were underestimated, viewed basically as diffusion from the north, and assigned to prehistoric, so-called Hamitic peoples (Trigger 1984: 362). From this perspective it was these so-called Hamites who could explain the marvellous Egyptian civilisation. The myth about the Hamites comes from the Old Testament. Ham was one of Noah’s three sons; the two others were Japheth and Shem – whose successors were the alleged Aryans and Semites respectively. In Genesis 10.6 it is written that the Hamites include the people from Cush, Egypt, Phut and Canaan. The interpretations of the Hamites have undergone several changes, and in the early nineteenth century the Hamites were seen as Caucasians – whites in black skin. They were not like the other Africans, thus linking the Egyptian civilisation to the Bible and the Middle East. The Hamites became the great “civilisers” of Africa (Mamdani 2001: 82-6).

The denial of African engagements and agencies was also a consequence of the theoretical paradigm explaining cultural change. By the end of the nineteenth century, the paradigm explaining change was firmly based on ideas of diffusion and migration. Even the simplest inventions were not believed to have taken place more than once and at least not repeatedly. The distinguished Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius became one of the most prominent exponents for the *ex oriente lux* (‘light from the East’) school, where the origin of European civilisation in the Bronze Age could be traced to the civilisations in the Near East, a view which also appealed to many Christians and their biblical view of world history (Trigger 1994: 151, 160-1).

Thus, the understanding of the Western past during the Bronze Age, as diffusion from the Near East, was unproblematic since it was also part of a Christian ideological hegemony, and the ‘real’ origin of the European civilisation was seen as Classical Greece. The role of Africa, nonetheless, remained passive and ‘backward’. By the high point of colonialism during the first third of the twentieth century, the
ancient Egyptians were seen as explorers, missionaries, traders and colonists as well as rulers, who brought enlightenment from ancient Egypt to the rest of the Dark Continent. As Thurstan Shaw says, one may “wonder whether it is no coincidence that this particular theory of diffusionism emerged out of the heydays of the French and British Empires in Africa, when Western Europeans saw themselves as undertaking a mission civilisatrice” (Shaw 1989: 5), or as assuming “the white man’s burden”, as framed by Kipling, spreading enlightenment in the same way they perceived the ancient Egyptians did (ibid.).

The diffusionist explanation that the Egyptian civilisation came from the Near East or Asia was later abandoned on archaeological grounds. Gordon Childe (1934) and Henri Frankfort (1956) conducted comparative studies of the civilisations of ancient Egypt and southern Mesopotamia, and both concluded that the civilisations had developed in distinct ways and were fundamentally different. In fact, all early civilisations have developed substantially independently, including those of ancient Egypt and the Yoruba in West Africa (Trigger 2003). And although Jared Diamond (1997) places a question mark over it in his best-seller, Guns, Germs and Steel, he treats the Sahel, Tropical West Africa and Ethiopia (but not Egypt) as potentially independent sources of early agricultural innovations.

We can now confidently say that the ancient Egyptian civilisation had its independent origin in the African continent. From the perspective of African engagements and agencies, the colonial perceptions expressed by, for instance, Hegel have been turned upside down by proponents such as Cheikh Anta Diop (1974), who argued that the Egyptians were black, and Martin Bernal’s Black Athena (Bernal 1987, 1991), which argued that ancient Greece and European civilisation have their roots in Black Africa and Egypt and that Greek islands were colonised by Africans. Whereas Diop mainly focused on contact between Egypt and Sub-Saharan Africa, Bernal emphasised contact from Egypt towards the north, the west and the east. Both authors work within the paradigm of diffusionism.

Bernal has admitted that part of his Black Athena project was to lessen European cultural arrogance (Bernal 1987: 73), and – as such – part of pure politics. These studies together with others have stimulated Afro-centricism and other African nationalist ideologies aiming to take back African history and civilisation to Africa, a history in
which Africans play an active and central innovative role (e.g. Chami 2002; van Binsbergen, forthcoming).

Hence, one has two opposite and radical views on African engagements on African terms: on the one hand, the extreme colonial and derogatory view of Africans without engagement and cultural and technical capability for innovation and development, and on the other hand, the independent and positive engagements of Africans influencing past and present Europe and the world. These views are at odds owing to history and ideology. The first view was purely racist; and although the latter may also have the potential to be so, it could be seen more as a reaction to a past which deprived Africa and Africans of history, independent development, and even humanity.

The works of Diop, for instance, have been heavily criticised on academic grounds; but they have, however, as Martin Hall pointed out, “been highly effective in demolishing the tenets of colonial histories of Africa” (Hall 1986: 37). Or in other words, such works have been part of creating and enabling an intellectual space where African engagements and agencies have an independent and active role.

The ideas of the colonial past are still remarkably alive today, as can for instance be seen from the speech by French President Sarkozy, in Dakar in 2007, in which he stated among other things that “[t]he tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history”, noted by Achille Mbembe as reflecting an attitude “worthy of the 19th century” (Ba 2007). Of course, this example is a glaring one; but still, traces of the colonial heritage continue to pop up in many instances. One can think of the media, in which Africa most often appears only as a continent of crisis and in which Africans are rarely portrayed as citizens but instead mainly figure as anonymous masses and passive victims. Even in serious academic work, we should be aware of echoes of colonial thinking. Why is Africa, for instance, so remarkably absent from the mainstream works on globalisation? Speaking more generally, and as is underlined by Ferguson (2006: 16), Africa is still seen as the “radical other”, the dark continent, where developments are (and should be) copies of Western models. These Western models figure as the first and official version of how things should be done, and doubts always remain whether the African copy is real and ‘real development’ or only a shadow of what it seems to be and should be (think of concepts like ‘façade’ and ‘failed’ states). This is not to argue that we should do away with analytical concepts that may help to understand developments in Africa,
but that we should use them with caution and reflect on the premises underlying them. In addition, and as underlined by De Bruijn, Van Dijk & Gewald (2007), for instance, putting an accent on agency does not mean that structural factors that have an impact on the opportunities and possibilities of African actors should be omitted from the analysis. Olukoshi, Ouédraogo & Sall (2010) show how to build on this premise in their construction of a project for the ‘Africa of tomorrow’.

Returning to archaeology, which was our entry point in this subsection, the African continent as it is understood today, from the cradle of humanity to the dawn of civilisation and on to the present time, shows technological, social, cultural, political and religious innovations, and developments and achievements which have changed Africa and been part of world history. Throughout history, Africa has been engaging in the Near East, Europe, Asia and, later, America on diverse terms. In today’s multipolar world, these engagements take new forms and face new challenges. But they also ask for a new interpretation of history and more emphasis on encounters between Africans and other human populations, encounters that have hitherto been marginalised. For instance, one may expect more (and often controversial) (re)discoveries in the years to come about the relationships between Africa and Southeast Asia (cf. Dick-Read 2005) or the Arab world (Bennafla 2000; Robinson 2004; Soares & Otayek 2007) also feeding political-cultural sentiments of brotherhood and partnership.

The contributions to this volume: African engagements, trajectories and opportunities in an emerging multipolar world

This book is organised in three parts that try to throw light on different aspects of the questions asked in the foregoing but also inquire into how these aspects are interlinked. The first part, Chapters 2-7, describes and analyses new trends and tendencies in Africa. Some of these, however, are intensifications of old ones. Of particular interest is whether such trends and tendencies relate to the emergence of a new economic and political space for Africa, and what interests or powers are capturing, or trying to capture, this space. Are these trends externally or internally driven, and do they constitute an alliance between Africa and external interests – and if so, with what consequences for Africa?
The second part, Chapters 8-13, addresses the macro level by inquiring into the framing of multipolarity. What forces or interests, countries and/or continents are framing the new global economic and political multipolarity, what is the content of multipolarity, and what space does it provide for Africa’s engagements on its own terms? Or is Africa only responding to new initiatives generated externally? From an African point of view, it is the diversification of potential partners or alliances created by the move towards multipolarity that is of interest. The book attempts to address these questions through analysing different aspects related to initiatives and interventions by China, India, Europe, and the US, and also the relations between them. Are the Chinese interventions in Africa complementary to the European ones, or are they competing with them? Is India different from China in terms of its interventions? Does Africa play a role for the Obama Administration, or is the US government mainly focussed on internal problems and the waging of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

The third part, Chapters 14-16, focuses more specifically on the potential for Africa and Africans to fill the political and economic space that is a result of the emergence of global multipolarity and globalisation. The focus is also on how African values and needs ought to influence the new global context. But, has this space already been circumvented by the new trends and tendencies addressed in the chapters of Part I, or the way multipolarity has been played out, as analysed in Part II? Is Africa entering a new historical period that cannot be fixed in terms such as pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial?

Part I: New trends and tendencies in Africa

It is argued by Derbe (Chapter 2) that the most important initiative to define the position of Africa and Pan-African politics in the post-Cold War period is the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). It is claimed that NEPAD represents an attempt by a transnational alliance of African political and corporate elites to rule by intellectual and moral persuasion, rather than by coercive power. The shaping of NEPAD was based both on African governments and foreign agency; however, African intellectuals and civil society challenged NEPAD and tried to present an alternative vision for Africa. The critique of NEPAD is related to its elite and top-down-driven inception and the fact that it was submitted to the G8 for approval and funding. And further, it is claimed that its neoliberal character and
reliance on foreign aid lead to a reproduction of the colonial dependency relationships (Adedeji 2002). NEPAD is also seen, in critiques, as the culmination in the conceptual shift in North-South relations from ‘cooperation’ to ‘partnership’. Each successive step in this direction has reduced the autonomy of recipient countries, to the extent that ‘partnership’ as a principle of international interdependence no longer serves Africa.

Derbe also refers to the consensus of CODESRIA and Third World Network Africa about NEPAD that “current African economic problems emanate from the international order and its division of labour”, which act to reinforce “domestic weaknesses deriving from socio-economic and political structures”. The policy measures urgently needed for Africa’s recovery include (i) stabilisation of commodity prices; (ii) reform of the international financial system, the World Bank, and the IMF, and an end to Structural Adjustment Programmes; (iii) fundamental changes to the existing WTO regime, as well as reversal of its attempt to include investments, competition and government procurement in trade negotiations; and (iv) debt cancellation. The subsequent African Civil Society Declaration for Africa (2004) proposes that an alternative vision for Africa should be based on the principles of human rights, self-reliance, and Pan-Africanism, and the construction of a participatory state (Bond 2005).

Basing his analysis on a neo-Gramscian theory, Derbe finds that NEPAD’s function is to legitimise accumulation of surplus by an African capitalist class in alliance with global corporations and donors. NEPAD’s architects are seen as co-actors rather than intermediaries in this transnational capitalist alliance. African regional and national politics are not simply passive actors for passing on of external initiatives and changes. Hence there is, according to Derbe, a need to re-examine or recalibrate concepts such as passive revolution and hegemony as ideal typologies, in order to capture nuances and variations in Africa’s external relations.

NEPAD’s vision for Africa emphasises efficiency and capital accumulation at the expense of social equity and satisfaction of basic human needs. But it still requires support from international donors to provide material concessions in order to offset radical opposition. In a situation of donor fatigue and deep poverty, such concessions will not suffice. Increasing food and energy prices will make the situation even more precarious. Hence, NEPAD’s capacity to co-opt a broad spectrum of social classes in Africa will be severely constrained.
Simultaneously, the space will gradually open for counter-hegemonic resistance to the prevailing social and political order. Recent developments in North Africa and Arab countries, including Tunisia and Egypt, illustrate the real possibility of social movements to initiate changes from below. The African states thus need to make use of other mechanisms to protect their hegemony.

A rather new trend to this effect, according to Schouten (Chapter 3), is the rapid expansion of private security companies. In contrast to others, Schouten argues that private security does not represent a ‘hollowing out’ or retreat of the African state in favour of market forces. Instead, it indicates a reconfiguration of the political ordering of economic interactions. The expansion of private security companies (PSCs) is best understood through a critical questioning of the spatial spread of PSCs around certain spheres of economic activities. Through two case studies in South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Schouten finds that a PSC at the micro level represents “a pivotal agency shaping the interaction between formal and informal exchanges in Sub-Saharan Africa”, where the PSCs reproduce a militarised yet contested front line “between on the one hand a formal, legalistic, and neoliberal Africa compatible with global capital, and on the other an informal, useless Africa”. According to Schouten, too little emphasis has been paid to how the changing territorial organisation of security governance, often involving PSCs, relates to or is integrated in economic organisation.

Schouten’s framework allows the analysis of the politics of private security on the same level and in the same global space as the state. Thus, new insights are offered into the character and role of the state. Schouten argues that PSCs represent the front-line between the formal/neoliberal and the informal sectors and help seal off economic activities from informal straddling and redistribution. This helps promote a more predictable economic environment, which can attract foreign investments in association with African elites. This disconnecting of formal economic activities “from prevalent patterns of contestation over redistribution of gain that pervade the Congolese economy at large” (MacGaffey 1991) offers insights about the formal/informal boundaries and the role of PSCs at the economic level. Schouten argues that the new private security topography is part and parcel of state formation in a decisive way. But does the expansion of private security necessarily lead to a stronger state? Could it not represent a framework for enhanced exploitation and appropriation of
resources and labour? Could it thus lead to a further weakening of the cultural and social ties of the African state? Protected elite accumulation and consumption, through expansion of private security mechanisms, may thus lead to a lowering of material concessions to the broader population. Thus, it could also work to create space for counter-hegemonic forces, as discussed by Derbe in the analysis of NEPAD.

The contribution by Büscher (Chapter 4) on commodification or neoliberalisation of African nature indicates further pressures on African smallholders, livestock groups and rural people. Withdrawal of productive land from African smallholders already began on a large scale under colonial rule. Indications are, however, that this process is intensifying for various reasons. Foreign interests, in alliance with African states, are pushing for enlargement of existing, and establishment of new, game parks and wildlife reserves in order to promote global and ecological tourism. Climate change has, in addition, led to increasing international emphasis on global utilities (‘global common goods’). This has led to an international push for global commons, such as forests, conservation areas, and ecological systems belonging to the world and protected by international agreements. Such conservation initiatives represent a further encroachment on African smallholder land. Smallholders have to pay for the creation of global commons through restrictions on the use of their agricultural or pasture land, in spite of initiatives to create compensation systems. Büscher provides an interesting analysis of the new payment systems emerging for ecosystem- and climate-enhancing services. The idea of such payment or compensation systems is based on the notion that the value of ecosystems can be captured in monetary terms through market dynamics. Conservation and policy responses to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (carbon trade and REDD) are based on similar perspectives and function basically as instruments for tying conservation measures and mechanisms and capitalism closer together (Brockington et al. 2008).

The process of commodification of African nature is also played out through foreign acquisitions of African land for production of food and energy. In Chapter 5, Evers et al. analyse aspects of this process in Madagascar. The process of global land acquisitions or ‘land grabbing’ turned spectacular when news broke in 2009 that the South Korean company Daewoo was contemplating a 1.3 million hectare agricultural project in Madagascar. At the same time, the then
Ravalomanana government was imposing a policy of foreign land investments and implementing a land reform purportedly to secure local land rights. The Ravalomanana government was forced out in March 2009 by the military and the current government partly due to the turmoil around the Daewoo project. In their contribution, Evers et al. focus on the realities encountered in the local setting when international and local stakeholders vie for the same plot of land. They find that the negotiation context of local communities in land deals is undermined by the asymmetry of power among the negotiating partners. Existing laws do not guarantee respect for local communities’ rights and interests. Local government and local elites seem to be ambivalent since foreign investors promise jobs and local infrastructure in what are economically weak regions.

Intensified land grabbing by foreign companies and states in Africa for food and energy production has led to concern about its social and environmental impacts (Matondi et al. 2011). So far, only proposals for voluntary recommendations for the process have been put forward. The direction of the international discussion – with the World Bank in the lead – is, however, couched in terms of ‘win-win’ and the possibility of ‘responsible land grabbing’ (World Bank 2010). The conditions for win-win situations, however – and as exemplified by Evers et al. – are limited in the context of existing global, national and local power relations. Many African governments, in any case, seem to embrace the process in the belief that large-scale foreign investments may lead to modernisation of agriculture and increase export incomes. The divide between African governments and African smallholders thus stands out sharply and supports the analysis of Derbe (Chapter 2) that African elites are engaging with external interest in new ways and disregarding local interest.

In Chapter 6, Nauta presents a case where a civil society organisation, Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa, was able to fundamentally change things through a South-South alliance. By aligning itself with the Brazilian government and Brazilian and international NGOs, TAC was able to break the South African government’s refusal to widely distribute ART (antiretroviral therapy) medication. It was proved that access to life-saving medication was a viable solution even in a resource-poor setting. But a precondition had been that the Brazilian government had already broken the monopoly on high price HIV/AIDS medication of transnational pharmaceutical companies. Nauta reveals the strategies employed by
TAC in the mobilisation of global partners and examines the objectives of involvement from the Brazilian side. In addition, he shows that in the process of mobilising the support of Brazil – which Nauta refers to as the ‘significant other’ – TAC also became a valuable partner for Brazil and other global allies, as it inspired the global campaign for treatment access and demonstrated how being locally rooted could be married with global action. Nauta uses the case of TAC to reflect on the character of global activism and discusses its potentialities in the current era of emerging world powers and increased access to modern communication.

In Chapter 7, Mohamed Salih questions the relevance of the notion of ‘negotiations making use of multipolarity’ for one particular country, Sudan, after a major shift in government during the 1980s. He argues that Sudan presents the case of a country that has gone beyond negotiations with the West, by neglecting the West and building strong ties with Middle-Eastern and Asian parties. This has made Sudan a country with, on the one hand, rapid economic growth, being now one of the emerging ‘African lions’ – and, on the other hand, a country with major and violent conflict, particularly in the Darfur area and, before the peace treaty and the subsequent referendum in the South, also in many parts of Southern Sudan. After the separation of North and South Sudan into two independent states, it would be highly relevant to our theme of African engagements in a multipolar world to see how these countries go separate ways in playing off various global powers and establishing their own agency, even if it goes beyond (even much beyond) what is seen as morally acceptable by the ‘international community’ in terms of human rights violations.

Part II: Framing multipolarity

In 2009 Elisabetta Martini stated that multipolarity has been recognised as “a fact of the existing international order” (van der Lugt, this volume). However, there does not yet seem to be any consensus about the meaning of the term. In this section of the book, Chapters 8-13, different contributions approach the term through different subject areas and approaches. The aspiration is to examine perspectives, actions and initiatives by most of the major global actors – China and India in Asia, Europe/EU, and the US – so that the term multipolarity can be given a more concrete content. A particular focus is on the implications of the framing of multipolarity for Africa and how Africa
and its institutions respond and engage with the emerging multipolar reality.

In Chapter 8, Van der Lugt explores the link between the position of a country in the world order and its perspectives on humanitarian intervention, in the context of a shift in the world system towards multipolarity. She does so with a particular focus on the role of China in the increase of power of African governments to exercise sovereignty.

Since the Cold War, the West has been dominant culturally, economically and militarily, and it could therefore set the dominant discourses and the structure of the international community and international law. However, as Van der Lugt illustrates in her contribution, the position of the West is declining, and it now has to share power with emerging nations. In addition, China’s increasing influence on and cooperation with Africa has led to a change in the attitude of the West towards the continent.

A major point advocated by Van der Lugt is the impossibility in the current context of holding on to the idealistic picture of an “international order based on systemic and rule-based multilateralism”. The European Union (in 2008) proposed that China just needed to comply with international law in order to make multilateralism efficient. But the EU is not in a position to put forward such demands, and the perception by the West that international law can remain constant is considered naive. According to Van der Lugt, the changes in global power relations will result in changing international laws, in which national sovereignty will gain precedence over humanitarian intervention. This development will increase the potential for African governments to engage in international affairs and to exercise sovereignty.

This is exemplified, firstly, by China’s rising influence, which means a renegotiation of the share of voting power in multilateral organisations and the representation of other than European and North American norms and values in international law. China’s support for African countries’ demands for a seat on the Security Council reflects the depth of their cooperation. Secondly, the rise of China and other emerging powers has led to more than two global powers, which means that a good relationship with one of them is no longer sufficient to circumvent interference in one’s own national issues. This means a higher risk of intervention, which will translate into a higher appreciation for sovereignty internationally.
Olsen (Chapter 9) puts forward a different analysis of the relations of Europeans and Chinese with Africa. Olsen argues that if cooperation is to prevail between China, the EU and the African Union, the actors must share a minimum of common norms, values and interests. The chapter sets out to identify the development of such a consensus by looking at three areas: (i) interests with a focus on promotion of regional order in Africa; (ii) presence of common values and norms, through analysing security interventions of the three actors; (iii) development aid intervention aimed at economic and social development.

As for development interventions, Olsen refers to China’s explicit support for NEPAD. Some observers interpret this as Beijing _de facto_ encouraging Africa to accept liberalised capitalism and not an alternative model for the continent (Taylor 2010: 63). The overall conclusion regarding development interventions is that “both China and the EU share the same goals in Africa when it comes to economic and social development”. In addition, there seems to be a ‘securitisation’ of the approach – i.e., an emphasis on security and the appeasing of conflicts. China and the EU share an interest in stability and order, and they also agree upon the norm of demanding official UN backing in cases of deploying armed forces in conflict situations in Africa. But Olsen also refers to possible dissensions between the EU and China over Africa relations.

As to what the above findings imply for African engagement, Olsen refers to the Paris Declaration of 2005, aimed at increased recipient country influence and enhanced aid efficiency. The signing of this declaration by the EU meant that it committed itself to switch from conditionalities as critical policy instruments to giving more weight to the development objectives of the recipient countries. China has also signed the Paris Declaration. However, whereas the EU officially feels bound by the rules of the Paris Declaration, China does not, according to Olsen. In addition, a number of observers maintain that Beijing tries to organise its aid system in ways that are parallel to the norms of the West. So, as Olsen points out, the bottom line is that “the picture is mixed as far as the development interventions are concerned”. So, perhaps China after all is competing with the EU in relation to Africa rather than supplementing it in important areas? This may also give a perspective on the recent lack of interest in fulfilling the terms of the Paris Declaration by European countries, a fact also noted by Olsen.
Brautigam’s (2008) empirical analyses confirm that China operates ‘outside the global aid regime’, in the sense that its assistance would not qualify as aid according to the criteria set by OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC). China is stated to prefer bilateral arrangements with a close tie between aid and politics. This means that aid is often tied to deliveries from China and that it is project-based. Moreover, Beijing uses a whole range of financial instruments in combination, so that it is difficult to isolate Chinese development aid from other economic development instruments. The speed with which China’s support and engagements have developed in Africa means that China is conscious about the effectiveness of its aid, and, in addition, China is very proud of a long record of support to useful projects in response to requests by African leaders (Brautigam 2008: 30). This shows that the engagement of China in Africa is not of recent date, although its character and intensity have changed.

The contribution by Liu & Monson (Chapter 10) analyses aspects of one of these old and useful development projects, the TAZARA railway between Tanzania and Zambia. The African leader who requested Chinese support was the then president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. The US had first been approached to build the railway, but they declined. The construction of TAZARA took place between 1968 and 1975 and resulted in an impressive railway line being opened between Dar es Salaam and New Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia in 1976. For Zambia, a land-locked country, the line was seen as vital to its copper exports, during a time of contested relationships with its southern-African neighbours. The railway is 1,680 km long and was built with financial and technical assistance from China, amounting to more that 400 million USD. The Tanzanian workforce declined from 35,900 to 13,600 between 1972 and 1974 while the Zambian increased from 2,100 to 13,000 during the same period.

But China not only engaged in the construction of the railway. From 1976 until the present, a period of 35 years, China has provided technological and other guidance to TAZARA through so-called Chinese railway expert teams (CRETs) on two-to-three-year contracts based in Tanzania. The number of advisors in such teams has declined gradually from nearly 1,000 during 1976-8 to around 200 during the period 1989-92, to the current level of seven advisors during 2007-12.

The chapter shows the commitment and consistency of Chinese support to TAZARA over time, even in periods when technical assistance to Tanzania from other regions, such as the Nordic countries,
was found to be counterproductive (Forss et al. 1988). CRETs’ cooperative agreement with TAZARA also welcomed experts from Western countries – e.g., to implement the Ten Years’ Development Programme along the railway starting in 1985. Until the late 1990s, Western donors funded 140 million USD in support projects for TAZARA, including the US, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, and others.

The CRET protocols signed by the Chinese, Tanzanian and Zambian governments over time have consistently emphasised technological cooperation rather than technology transfer. However, during the early stages of operation, the CRET experts were powerful and could also make final operational decisions. With the Tanzanian crises from the late 1970s onwards, problems also emerged for the TAZARA railway, and in 1983 the Chinese Premier Zhao during a visit to Tanzania called on Chinese experts again “to participate in daily management of the railway, shoulder by shoulder with African friends”.

The pride about TAZARA was not only Chinese. To a large extent the railway, at least from a Tanzanian perspective, was considered a nation-building project. The chapter shows, through study of life histories of TAZARA workers in different capacities, how these workers’ identity and consciousness were formed by the project and how their skills could not be replaced. Dr. Issa Shivji, when defending the first 300 TAZARA workers who were laid off in 1982, successfully used these qualities in his defence and had the workers reinstated. However, at later stages, TAZARA was immersed in the general economic liberalisation and restructuring which led to increasing lays-offs of the work force.

The chapter provides interesting evidence on the construction and operation of a major Chinese-supported project in Africa. However, it does not provide any evidence of the operational and economic efficiency of the railway over time. The project analysis is not sufficiently broad to reveal financial and trade conditionalities connected to the project, which, as reported by Brautigam (2008), have continued into the current Chinese aid interventions in Africa.

The contribution by Ong’ayo (Chapter 11) aims to analyse the implications of the absence of African civil society engagement in China-Africa relations and dialogue processes. It also attempts to inquire into the strategic engagement between African CSOs, the Chinese government, and Chinese CSOs over the role of China in Africa. The analysis shows that NGOs lack knowledge of the context-
ual realities in both China and Africa. This knowledge gap acts as an obstacle to constructive and effective civil society engagement in China-Africa relations. It also weakens the potential for engagement with governments on fundamental issues related to China’s interventions in Africa.

The contribution, however, also acknowledges a power gap regarding civil society dissent and initiatives both in China and Africa in relation to their respective governments. It is stated that although the Chinese government’s response to dissent was brutal in the past, in particular during the Tiananmen protests and in other regions of China, recent responses to CSOs in China have been less brutal, “even though cases of detention and constant surveillance can still be observed”. In Africa, CSOs have evolved over time, “through stifling conditions underpinned by authoritarianism and dictatorship”. Both African and Chinese CSO organisations have grown rapidly since the 1980s, and their features and alliances have also shown increasing diversity. But the relationship between the state and civil society is characterised by continuous conflicts.

Ong’ayo argues for the importance of data gathering and information sharing in areas where Chinese involvement in Africa is being criticised, including workers’ rights, human rights’ situations in bilateral projects, and inter-governmental policies and agreements. Such contextual knowledge will not only increase the ability of CSOs to raise issues with the respective governments, but also, and possibly more importantly in the future, help collaboration with Chinese CSO counterparts in cross-continental solidarity initiatives. It is argued to be of critical importance that China-Africa relations do not take on the same forms as the relations with the West – i.e., where African opinions and voices were rarely accepted or heard.

Vittorini & Harris (Chapter 12) address the responses of African governments to Indian investments. India has also emerged as a major player in the new multipolar world and particularly in Africa. India’s relations with Africa are, however, not new. Throughout history, Indian populations have settled in different regions of eastern and southern Africa. They have carved out for themselves an important role in trade and commerce owing to access to capital, skills and alliances at local and international levels. In the area of technical economic cooperation, India has long had relations with Africa (since the 1960s), which, however, were limited in comparison with Western aid and technical interventions during the 1960s and 1970s.
Currently India is underlining its exceptionalism in its trade and aid to Africa and the complementary actions of its mostly private-sector investors. India is emphasising this feature not only in relation to China but also to the West. India is a democracy, which strives towards transparency in its international activities. Its relations with Africa are predominantly private enterprise-related and, in addition, India’s African engagement is based on capacity-building and human resource development. Affirmation of mutual interest, rather than altruism, and rejection of conditionality are core elements of its development assistance and relations which India and its authorities wish to underline.

This has led to positive responses to Indian engagement by some African governments, and in a few instances even preferential treatment. But the general trend seems to be that African ministers are reluctant to praise one outside party over another when benefits can emerge across the board. Ideologically, Vittorini & Harris do not see India and China promoting an alternative development model in Africa to that of the Western liberal framework that is on offer. Here they concur with Rye Olsen. However, there is a growing and general popularity amongst African leaders for the non-interference and mutual benefit approach of both India and China. Western countries are thus no longer seen to have their pre-eminent position in trade and aid, with enforced liberalisation through conditionalities. But, in addition, many African ministers and top-level administrators are trained in the West and may know (or want to know) little of options other than the liberal consensus offered by the IMF and the World Bank.

The element that might be the most important for African responses to India is that of strategic considerations. India may provide a crucial third node of economic and political power across the African continent. The presence of India and China to complement the West (and Japan) – and others such as Brazil, South Korea, and Russia, which are also lining up – may provide more space to manoeuvre for African governments. Thus, there might be a possibility this time around that Africa will not be a bystander in an external struggle over raw materials and political hegemony and fall prey to a new neo-liberal scramble for Africa. But the outcome will depend on African agency, according to Vittorini & Harris, which again is linked to the depth of the changes associated with the enforced economic liberali-
sation and democratisation during the brief era of the unipolar world order.

The contribution by Schraeder (Chapter 13) focuses on US engagements in Africa, using a historical perspective. This is conducted in a context in which the Obama Administration on the one hand is confronted by daunting challenges and on the other by extraordinary expectations. However, Schraeder shows that, historically, US foreign policy towards Africa has “demonstrated remarkable coherence and regularity despite the differences between Republican and Democratic administrations” (quoting Brian Winchester). The current period of US engagement with Africa, starting in 2001, is not unexpectedly called ‘war on terrorism: expansion or contraction?’. Schraeder is of the opinion that Obama will prioritise domestic and other international priorities before Africa. However, recent developments in Tunisia, Egypt and other North African and Arab countries are bound to be given priority by the US administration since they undermine the current US strategy of cooperation with repressive governments for security reasons. The recent development also hits at the foundation of the US’s Middle East peace strategy, where Egypt is and has for a long time been a critically important ally.

Areas for US engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa are also economic, in particular safeguarding supplies of oil and strategic minerals from the continent. Schraeder, however, also reports about several new, and the expansion of old, foreign aid initiatives concerning Africa, including doubling of foreign assistance, continuation of the successful AIDS Relief programme (PEPFAR), and revival of support to international family-planning programmes. Obama entered office in 2009 mindful that the US had not played a sufficiently proactive role in the resolution of African conflicts, including the genocide in Rwanda and the Darfur crisis. Although Obama has underscored his administration’s intention to take a more proactive approach in African conflict resolution, it is doubtful, according to Schraeder, whether this will occur, owing to the foreign policy challenges elsewhere.

The main concern for the US administration in Sub-Saharan Africa, however, seems to be related to the security agenda. This is manifest in the creation of various task forces and counter-terrorism initiatives, which have been buttressed by a continent-wide Africa Command (AFRICOM), expansion of the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and other US military aid programmes, and the Gulf of Guinea Initiative. The primary goal of the latter
initiative is to establish over time an effective regional security programme capable of ensuring safe transport of oil to the United States. The primary target for US foreign policy, however, is not unsurprisingly those countries in which core foreign policy interests intersect, such as Algeria – an important regional oil power considered crucial by the US in combating perceived terrorist threats in North Africa.

**Part III: New space for African engagement?**

According to Amoah (Chapter 14), the near universal and dominant sway of neoliberal ideas in the political and economic spheres over the last three decades has come under intense scrutiny following the global economic crisis of 2007-9. The crisis and the subsequent responses by the global North to the financial meltdown have created a policy window for African polities to reclaim their autonomous policy-space in a multipolar world. One important reason for the meltdown, according to Amoah, was the liberalisation of financial markets during the last few decades, which led to excesses and widespread misuse of such markets for rent-seeking. In his contribution, Amoah analyses policy responses of leading centres of neoliberal thought to the global financial crisis and the implications for public policy formation in Africa. Drawing from his concrete findings of the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideas in Africa, he argues that policy makers and intellectuals in Africa have not paid sufficient heed to Susan Strange’s admonition that “power derived from the knowledge structure is the one that has been most overlooked and underrated” (Strange 1988: 115). Such knowledge is, according to Strange, no less important that the other three sources of structural power: military, production and finance.

Amoah in his analysis finds that the 1970s were marked by political instability, which undermined continuity and creativity in public policy making. The tendencies towards autonomy in Africa had by the 1970s and 1980s “all but atrophied”. The neoliberal public polity thinking had presented government intervention in any shape or form and under whatever conditions in Africa as unacceptable. Amoah further finds that the policy responses of governments in the global North to the financial crisis indicate that neoliberal tenets are not consistently applied and “reflect ideological proclivities and preferences which undermine any universalistic, axiomatic and monothetic pretensions”.
Amoah sees multipolarity not merely as the re-diffusion of political and economic power at the global level but as critically linked to the legitimacy of ideas. Multipolarity is about the contest of ideas. The unfolding of the global financial crisis presents to Amoah a vital policy window for African intellectuals and policy makers “to begin the task of inventive policy formation beyond the hegemony of neo-liberal ideas”. According to Amoah, Africa needs a new mind, meaning a fresh understanding of public policy formation derived from Africa’s worldview. The construction of this mind should begin with three building blocks of critical realisations: (i) public policy formation over the last three decades has been driven by neoliberalism; (ii) the multipolar world provides Africa with the opportunity to craft her own public policy approaches in response to her existential challenges; and (iii) African policymakers and intellectuals need to provide sufficient agency for self-conscious public policy approaches to emerge. Amoah, however, does not discuss in detail the possible obstacles mentioned by Vittorini and Harris that most African leaders and top administrators are educated in the West, embracing and fully internalising Western patterns of thinking. This may constitute a great challenge for the capacity to develop the knowledge and independence required for Africans to chart an alternative development path. This problem is also alluded to in Derbe’s analysis of NEPAD in Chapter 2.

Ugwuanyi (Chapter 15) sets out to highlight the complexity in engaging Africa for development in its global demand and to articulate the need for an ideological re-birth of Africans for this purpose. Pointing to the diversity of factors that should be addressed for “a proper protection of African humanity”, factors that are partly political, partly psychological, partly economic, partly cultural, and partly related to racism, he asks himself: “What idea of globalisation will lead to the realisation of the African dream of harbouring a prosperous people in the world within the demands of modernity?” The objective is to search for an ideology that can appropriate the gains of globalisation to an African advantage and pioneer and promote African unity by “reconnecting Pro-African minds (interpreted as all who are interested in African development) in its global demands”.

According to Ugwuanyi, the African response to globalisation should take a reconstructive approach, and his objective is to initiate this. The approach or ideology is termed glo-fricanisation, which believes in the need to reconfigure the idea of African unity around
“specific needs and interests through which even non-Africans can contribute to the African development and that it is by this reconfiguring that globalisation can be made to provide a relevant effect in African life.”

Ugwuanyi identifies two significant items that characterise globalisation: (i) a cultural dislocation of mankind by values constructed by certain items of modernity; and (ii) a relocation of this culture to a cultural centre (defined as a basis of evaluation and identity), which itself is defined by a universal network of human aspirations. In essence, this translates to what can be called global needs and desires, the response to and the provision of which amounts to globalisation. After outlining the different aspects of globalisation, Ugwuanyi addresses the question related to promises of globalisation in Africa. What are the specific gains that Africans stand to gain from globalisation? The first to be anticipated is that it should lead to full adoption and adaptation of African concerns as global concerns. The second implication is that African values and principles should be sought after and desired in the construction of global values. It should also be anticipated that globalisation should add considerable value to African labour and resources. There should also be a higher value attached to consumption, as much as to production, and to consumers as much as to producers.

In his proposal, Ugwuanyi states that African development needs should lead to a coalition of the world community. Thus Pan-Africanism has to expand to provide space for the inclusion of non-Africans since this will lead to a better response to African problems. The other implication is the need to subordinate the idea of Pan-Africanism to higher and worthier goals. There are at least two justifications for glo-fracisation: first, the large African Diaspora means that what could be termed African problems can no longer be isolated to problems of continental Africans; and second, there are many non-Africans with a considerable level of empathy to the problems of African people, non-Africans who need to be encouraged to demonstrate this interest.

In the last contribution to the book (Chapter 16), Stephen Ellis introduces a controversial issue. As a matter of fact, most historians dealing with Africa’s history as well as other Africanists – and also journalists and public opinion leaders – use the colonial era as the watershed of historical periodisation. Africa’s long history is simply presented as having three periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-
colonial. Ellis questions the relevance of doing this and presents a mind shift that could enable the ‘decolonisation of the mind’ as far as Africa is concerned, not only for Africans themselves, but also for Africanists in former colonising countries. The position Ellis takes is controversial, as it might easily lead to a downplaying of the importance of the colonial era as just a ripple in the history of mankind. Particularly in countries like France, Portugal, and the UK it can strengthen sentiments downplaying the historical responsibility for the long-term impact of colonialism on Africa and on former colonies. If colonialism was only a ripple, and of little long-term effects, why bother about its moral heritage? The issue is to find a balance between reframing the periodisation of history and acknowledging the relative importance of the era in which colonial institutions influenced, often deeply, existing ‘African’ institutions. Probably it is high time to move away from the overwhelming importance of ‘1884’ and ‘1960’ and to find more meaningful markers of decisive change. But this should not result in downplaying the European (and later, also American) roles in Africa’s history during the last few centuries. It may open windows, however, for becoming less myopic.

Major issues and questions arise from the contributions to this book. Will the framing of the new multipolar world, as presented in Part II, and the new trends and tendencies in Africa, as spelled out in Part I, provide a space for global African engagement? What are the boundaries and alliances related to this space, and can they be used for negotiations that can promote African interests, values, and perspectives, as is particularly elaborated by Amoah and Ugwuanyi in Part III of the book? And then: what is ‘African’, and how should the scientific communities dealing with Africa reframe Africa’s history and place in the world? Indeed, Africa’s engagements with the world are currently being reshaped and revalued, and sometimes with breath-taking speed, but the political question behind this reshaping remains important: on whose terms? And with what impact for Africa’s prospects for improved well-being and self-determination.

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PART ONE

NEW TRENDS AND TENDENCIES IN AFRICA
CHAPTER TWO

TRENDS IN TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA: THE PROMISES OF NEPAD

Samuel Teshale Derbe

Abstract

This article examines the current political tendencies in Africa as reflected in the crafting of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). The contest between intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs to script the philosophy, programmes and strategies for African development has evoked a substantial debate. The dominant explanation in the relevant literature ascribes NEPAD to South Africa’s assumption of a sub-imperialist role in the continent. By adopting a Neo-Gramscian theoretical framework, this article shifts the focus to the vitality of transnational alliances of corporate and civil society actors in current African political engagements. It also advances the thesis that these actors are experimenting with hegemonic politics in which the ultimate goal is to rule primarily by intellectual and moral persuasion, and only marginally by sheer coercive power. A case in point is the concerted efforts of Internet Service Providers, NGOs and intellectuals to advance neoliberal policies aimed at dislodging state classes associated to national telecom parastatals. However, the NEPAD attempt to establish hegemonic rule has not succeeded for two major reasons – namely, the inability of its authors to construct a vision that galvanises a wide spectrum of social actors, and their reliance on ‘development partners’ to provide material concessions to antagonistic forces.

Introduction

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) is perhaps the most significant initiative to define the political trajectory of the continent in the post-Cold War period. Apart from its rhetoric of...
‘African renaissance’, NEPAD has set forth concrete economic and governance programmes to achieve peace, security, democracy and good governance. One of its ambitious projects, for instance, is designed to link all African countries to the global information super-highway through transoceanic fibre-optic cables. In the political sphere, NEPAD introduced a Peer Review Mechanism to streamline governance processes in individual African countries.

The purpose of this article is to mark out the trends of political engagement in Africa by taking NEPAD as an illustration. The relevant literature frames the issues pertaining to NEPAD in terms of neocolonialism and subordination of Africa to the West (Adediji 2002). According to Bond (2005a), the political actors behind NEPAD are ‘bourgeois intermediaries’ of global capital, and NEPAD itself is a South African national economic policy writ large. While acknowledging the merits of these arguments, this brief article attempts to show the deeper ramifications of NEPAD in terms other than a superior-subordinate or intermediary relationship. Neo-Gramscian concepts of hegemony, civil society and passive revolution are deployed to make a case for NEPAD as a conscious African agency that is part and parcel of a global hegemonic bloc. This conscious political stewardship is also roughly matched by a counter-hegemonic resistance by radical civil society actors in the continent.

In one of the earliest Neo-Gramscian works, Cox (1983) applied the concept of historical blocs to capture the dialectical relationship between the economic structure and the political superstructure in different eras of world history. Where these cohere in a reciprocal relationship, then we have a hegemonic historical bloc. Hegemony refers to the role of ideology and culture in maintaining a social order at state and world levels. There is a marked difference between this formulation and a realist usage of hegemony which refers to the domination of one state over other states, in the Weberian sense of exertion of ‘power over’ (Ritzer 1983; Murphy 1998; Rupert 1998).

The most important Neo-Gramscian proposition is that coercive power is necessary but not sufficient to stabilise dominance. In a hegemonic relationship, contestants for power vie to command ‘intellectual and moral leadership’. Consequently, the relationship between the dominant and subordinate social forces or classes is one of ‘opinion moulding’. The rulers resort to coercive power only in marginal cases (Bieler & Morton 2004).
The chief contributions to the Neo-Gramscian literature have explicated the historical processes by which transnational alliances of kindred classes have created hegemonic world orders. For instance, Van der Pijl (1998) expounded the thesis that successive fractions of capital which dominated other fractions in Anglo-Saxon countries were behind the hegemony of international liberalism, economic nationalism and neoliberalism.

Likewise, Gill (1990) further elaborated on the theme of hegemonic leadership in his detailed account of the role of the Trilateral Commission in constructing a neoliberal world order. The Trilateral Commission was an elite organisation comprising owners and managers of transnational corporations, national and international financial authorities, and politicians and civil servants in most developed and developing countries. It served as a forum for fostering social interaction networks and a common, if not a homogenous, outlook toward international capitalist establishments.

With regard to the North-South dimension of international relations, the concept of ‘passive revolution’ rather than hegemony has been more in use. Passive revolution refers to a situation where the ruling classes in the periphery merely absorb some aspects of the political or economic model that is hegemonic at a global level. Passive revolution takes the form of either Caesarism or trasformismo. The former describes a balance of social forces maintained by the sheer personal power of the ruler. Trasformismo relates to domestication or co-option of potentially radical ideas and subaltern groups or leaders (Cox 1981; Morton 2007). Passive revolution merely affirms the intransigence of the existing configuration of social forces in a given state.

The first two sections of this article introduce the content of NEPAD and the political reaction it engendered in Africa. The third section evaluates the validity of national interest to account for the emergence and decline of NEPAD. The last section then offers an alternative explanation based on Neo-Gramscian concepts of transnationalism, hegemony, counter-hegemony and civil society. The Conclusion suggests the causes for the current decline of NEPAD and the prospects for the future of hegemonic politics in Africa.
A number of political and economic programmes have been proposed to end the cycle of poverty and conflict in Africa. The Lagos Plan of Action of 1980, Africa’s Priority Programme for Economic Recovery of 1986, and the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation of 1989 are just a few of these policy proposals. NEPAD is the latest in this line of programmes, initiatives and discourses (Adedeji 2002).

NEPAD is the combination of two recovery plans for Africa drawn up by Presidents Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. Wade’s Omega Plan (2001) for Africa aims to tackle the obstacles preventing the continent from embracing globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation (Paras. 16-17). Wade’s major contention is that African countries could have allocated sufficient resources to improve their productivity and their international competitiveness if they had had the requisite physical infrastructure and human capital in place. As these were missing, individual African countries had to incur huge debts to finance construction of railways, harbours, airports, roads, telecommunications, and power grids for the last 50 years. Nevertheless, in spite of such efforts, most African countries still have insufficient or poorly maintained infrastructure, resulting in rising costs for businesses and investors.

The solution proposed in the Omega Plan to address the infrastructure problem is to entrust infrastructure projects to regional organisations. This will allow African states to devote their budgetary resources to macroeconomic growth, by creating incentives for private investment, managing exchange risks, reducing budget deficits, etc. (Para. 28).

According to the Omega Plan, Africa should not rely exclusively on foreign aid or debt to finance this grand infrastructure plan. Alternative sources of finance, such as foreign direct investment, creation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) for Africa, loan extension from African national treasuries, etc. should also be actively sought (Section 3.2).

Wade recommended that the Omega Plan for Africa should be managed by an international authority composed of representatives of debtors and creditors, African countries, the IMF, the World Bank, USA, Japan, the EU and Canada (Section 5.1).
The Millennium Partnership for African Recovery Programme (MAP), Thabo Mbeki’s contribution, was similar to the Omega Plan in its purport. Thus, the two were combined into the New African Initiative (NAI), which itself was later incorporated into the final NEPAD document. The MAP, which is broader in scope and ambition than the Omega Plan, constitutes the core of NEPAD. NEPAD ascribed the impoverishment of the continent to a number of factors: its colonial legacy, especially the exploitation of raw materials for the production of value-added products in the West; the subversion of traditional values, institutions and structures for imperial ends; and the heritage of a ‘weak capitalist class and weak ... accumulation process’. According to NEPAD, the poor rate of accumulation in the post-colonial period, coupled with a dysfunctional and corrupt leadership, are the gravest obstacles to Africa’s economic recovery (Organization of African Unity 2001).

Hence, in order to bolster capital accumulation in Africa, the authors of NEPAD requested Western governments to introduce fair and just rules of international trade. NEPAD insisted that the call for fair global rules of business is not only a moral but also an economic imperative. In the words of the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi:

A small minority of the world creates much of current wealth. That wealth cannot continue to grow indefinitely so long as it continues to be based on a narrow circle. The base of the wealth creation has to be expanded to include the rest of the world for it to be sustained. In the absence of such an expansive process, it is only a matter of time before the economies of the developed world stagnate with all the dire consequences of such a phenomenon ... Africa’s development is thus a necessary means of preventing ultimate stagnation in the developed world.

... NEPAD is thus based on the recognition of the fact that Africa’s development is vital to the realization of the direct material interest not only of Africans but also of the rest of the world.

(Quoted in Abraham 2003: 19-20)

African leaders, on their part, pledged to create a market-friendly environment. NEPAD assured its ‘development partners’ that “the numbers of democratically elected leaders are on the increase” in the continent and, hence, the positive outcome of this latest initiative is guaranteed (Para. 42).

Nevertheless, market assessment reports released by Western economic institutes continued to refute this claim. For example, according to the Economic Freedom of the World: 2003 Annual Report,
aside from six African countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tunisia, Mauritius, and Tanzania), the rest have a poor legal structure and weak protection of property rights. Similarly, the corruption index placed most African countries among the worst offenders. Only 14 countries were commended for spending cuts, reduction of stabilisation funds, and accelerated privatisation (cited in Loots 2003).

As a response to this criticism, NEPAD introduced a self-monitoring system known as African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), by which member states review the policies and practices of one another and exert peer pressure on those that fall short of their commitments. This voluntary review mechanism aims to ensure that the political and economic processes in member countries conform to best-practice guidelines stipulated by their ‘development partners’ (Loots 2003: 4). A total of 30 African states have currently joined the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (APRM Secretariat 2011).¹

NEPAD’s short-term target was to achieve an economic growth of 7% per annum in 15 consecutive years. The strategy chosen to achieve an accelerated economic growth focussed on increasing and diversifying exports and enhancing the competitiveness of African countries.

While globalisation has increased the cost of Africa’s ability to compete, we hold that the advantages of an effectively managed integration present the best prospects for future economic prosperity and poverty reduction (Para. 28).

The mobility of capital across the globe enables governments and private entrepreneurs to secure financial resources from global markets. To sum up, the globalization process offers Africa greater opportunity for real injection of private funding and risk taking, creation of new markets and harnessing of increased economic capacity (Paras. 29-32).

Among the specific economic programmes detailed in the NEPAD document, expansion of information and communication technologies

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¹ The review is conducted according to the following procedure: In the first stage, the APRM secretariat prepares up-to-date background documentation on the country to be reviewed. A team of experts is then sent to the country under review and gathers data from official and unofficial sources. The report of the team on the state of political, economic and corporate governance is subsequently submitted to the country under review for its verification and response. The team report and the response of the country under review are finally tabled for peer assessment by the Heads of State and Government of the countries participating in the APRM. These will offer their recommendations and, if need be, call for action against the state by regional organisations.
(ICT) is underlined as key to the strategy of integrating Africa into the global economy.

The current economic revolution has, in part, been made possible by advances in information and communications technology (ICT), which have reduced the cost of and increased the speed of communications across the globe, abolishing pre-existing barriers of time and space, and affecting all areas of social and economic life. It has made possible the integration of national systems of production and finance, and is reflected in an exponential growth in the scale of cross-border flows of goods, services and capital (Para. 29).

The benefits expected from utilisation of ICT range from enhancing opportunities for global trade, investment, and finance to creation of a common regional market and even an African Union (Paras. 104-108). The small size of African markets is singled out as the major barrier to foreign direct investment. Thus, by rolling out regional Internet connectivity, NEPAD aims to create larger regional markets that are also linked with the global information economy.

The e-Africa Commission of NEPAD was established early in 2001 with funding from donors such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, UK, Japanese and Swiss development agencies, and the governments of South Africa and Egypt. This organ is responsible for ICT initiatives. The Commission, operating in tandem with regional organisations such as Southern Africa Development Cooperation (SADC), shapes policy and a regulatory framework to facilitate telecommunications reform and e-readiness.

Finally, NEPAD required 64 billion USD every year for the implementation of its plans and programmes. Hence, ‘development partners’ were requested to provide the necessary financial resources through debt cancellation, aid and other mechanisms. However, NEPAD’s long-term plan is to increase the inflow of private capital through foreign direct investment (Para. 144).

Local engagements with NEPAD

The NEPAD development blueprint has received favourable response from donors and Western governments. For instance, the G8 encouraged all partnership agreements to be undertaken via the organs created under NEPAD (Abraham 2003; Mbaku 2004). However,
NEPAD has also attracted a plethora of criticisms by African scholars, civil society groups, and social movements (Bond 2005a).

The first criticism relates to the elite-driven, top-down process of its inception. NEPAD was first promoted by the heads of states of Nigeria, South Africa, Algeria and Senegal and later submitted to the G8 for approval. Some asked if the source and scope of its authority was compatible with the principles of equality and sovereignty of African states enshrined in the OAU charter (Adedeji 2002; Maxwell & Christiansen 2002; Tandon 2002: 10; Matthews 2004; Mbaku 2004).

According to Chabal (2002), the very nature of post-colonial politics in Africa militates against any democratic process. Neo-patrimonialism and clientelism still define African politics despite the presence of a modern institutional façade. Power is still exercised through informal patron-client relationships between the ruling elites and their support base. For instance, the civil service system often embodies a patrimonial chain between patrons and clients. Similarly, since the principles of legitimacy are still traditional, periodic elections merely serve as a forum for factional mobilisation. In summary, without changing these fundamentals, it is impossible to expect initiatives like NEPAD to pass through a participatory process.

The second theme of criticism is NEPAD’s development paradigm, which is understood to be neoliberalism. Some commentators have pointed out that NEPAD’s reliance on foreign aid leads to a reproduction of colonial/dependency relationships (Adedeji 2002). Others have contended that, as experiences of countries such as Argentina indicate, foreign direct investment (FDI) is a hazardous means to build Africa’s economy (Tandon 2002: 21). Tandon, therefore, recommends that African governments open their doors to FDI selectively, and not as a matter of general policy. In particular, the provision of social services such as electricity, education, health, etc. must not be subjected to the vagaries of foreign direct investment.

The cooperation paradigm, or partnership, is also criticised for perpetuating the inequality between donors and recipients (Maxwell & Christiansen 2002; Matthews 2004). According to Adedeji (2002), the subtle semantic and conceptual shift from ‘cooperation’ or ‘compact’ to ‘partnership’ since the end of the Cold War has culminated in NEPAD. This shift reflects the change in the character of international relations since the Yaoundé I cooperation agreement between the then European Economic Community and Africa. Each successive agree-
ment has reduced the autonomy of recipients of aid resources by introducing stringent conditionality. Adedeji argued that with the introduction of ‘partnership’, the liberal international principle of interdependence is no longer in the service of Africa. It would, therefore, be naive to expect the partnership advocated by NEPAD to signify anything other than submission of Africa to a neoliberal discipline.

It has to be noted, however, that recent initiatives such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness\(^3\) have introduced new principles governing aid relationships, such as alignment, harmonisation, mutual accountability, etc. The core principle asserted in the Declaration is that recipient states should determine their own policies and strategies, to which ‘development partners’ should align, and not *vice versa*.

This is regarded by some as a positive change towards mutual respect and equality between donors and recipients. Detractors, on the other hand, have pointed out that such principles of partnership are merely a rhetorical device to disguise an asymmetry of power. For example, recipient states are encouraged to prepare Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and decide on their priorities for aid. However, PRSPs can be vetoed by the World Bank or IMF. More importantly, the macroeconomic framework of such papers is not negotiable: it has to comply with neoliberal prescriptions (Panos Institute 2002).

Abrahamsen (2004) argued interestingly that the notion of ‘partnership’ and its components, such as ownership or recipient autonomy, are better understood as a novel formulation of power relationship between donors and recipients. By framing the issues within a Foucauldian concept of ‘governmentality’, she claimed that partnership is an exercise of power by donors “to produce consent” of the recipient countries. In this mode of exercise of power, the poor countries are ‘free’ to govern themselves according to accepted international standards. Thus, such instruments as the Paris Declaration and NEPAD ensure only that recipient states, or now partners, are willing, committed and responsible to govern their underdevelopment.

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\(^3\) The declaration was adopted in Paris in March 2005 by representatives of developing and developed countries and bilateral and multilateral donors at the Second High Level Forum on Joint Progress toward Enhanced Aid Effectiveness (http://www.oecd.org/document.html).
wisely. A good example of this is the APRM discussed above, whose objective is to make donor-imposed conditionality superfluous.

In addition, where developing countries lack the capacity to meet the standard form of self-governance or self-discipline, then donors provide the necessary assistance. In a nutshell, partnerships not only produce consent, but also constitute the subject or partner, hence signifying a more subtle and insidious form of power than mere external domination. In a partnership, evaluation, monitoring and auditing are deployed as potent gears or technologies of governance in order to create new kinds of ‘subjectivities’. In short, “to be audited, an organisation must actively transform itself into an auditable commodity: one structured to conform to the need to be audited ex-post” (Power, cited in Abrahamsen 2004: 1463).

Finally, academics and civil society groups have also articulated alternatives to NEPAD. Adedeji advocated a revival of the principles which guided the liberation struggle in Africa – namely, self-reliance, self-sustainment, the democratisation of the development process, and a fair and just distribution of the fruits of economic progress. Self-reliance, which is the core ingredient of this strategy, emphasises import substitution and internal articulation of the economy (Adedeji 2002).

Similarly, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and Third World Network-Africa evaluated NEPAD in their meeting in Accra, Ghana in 2002. The common position of the participants was that current African economic problems emanate from the international economic order and its division of labour. As these are the factors that reinforce “domestic weaknesses deriving from socio-economic and political structures” (Bond 2005a: 36), the policy measures that are urgently required for the recovery of Africa should focus on the following:

- stabilisation of commodity prices
- reform of the international financial system, the World Bank and the IMF
- an end to IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes
- fundamental changes to the existing agreements of the WTO regime, in addition to reversal of the attempts to expand the scope of this regime to new areas, including investment, competition and government procurement
- debt cancellation
Likewise, a number of radical African social movements, trade unions, youth and women organisations, religious and academic groups, etc. convened in Durban, South Africa in 2002 to denounce NEPAD. The Civil Society Indaba of South Africa, for instance, addressed each segment of NEPAD’s neoliberal policies, including private ownership of infrastructure, commercial agriculture, free trade, etc. They concluded that all these measures are detrimental to food security, employment, and environmental protection in the continent. The African Civil Society Declaration enunciated an alternative vision for Africa based on the principles of human rights, self-reliance, Pan-Africanism, and a “developmental participatory state” (Bond 2005a: 32-35).

African civil society groups remain hardly visible, mainly because they lack the resources to disseminate information or to carry out advocacy and lobbying activities. For instance, about 650 activists attended the 2004 Africa Social Forum, which met in Lusaka, Zambia. Most of the delegates were from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe and Malawi. Members from other parts of the continent were unable to participate due to material constraints. Furthermore, organisations which were putting up resistance to their governments on issues of privatisation and environmental degradation were prevented from attending this conference (Bond 2005b).

In Africa, as elsewhere, civil society groups manifest different positions with regard to the State and international financial institutions. Some civil society actors prefer a critical engagement with both, while others call for mass action and civil disobedience. This divergence in commitment may be viewed as a lack of unity leading to an inability to design an all-Africa social forum. However, this judgment is premised on an erroneous theoretical presupposition that civil society represents a homogenous and autonomous entity. Thus, the African Civil Society Declaration bears the marks of an embryonic resistance bloc that not only opposes the neoliberal path of NEPAD but also offers an alternative vision.

The role of South Africa in NEPAD

The active participation of South African elites in NEPAD has led to the charge that NEPAD is a vehicle for South Africa’s ambition to dominate the rest of the continent. Lesufi (2004, 813-814) emphasised this argument by pointing out that the characterisation of
NEPAD as a collective instrument conceals “the inequalities among the African states and thus the real possibilities of reproducing relations of domination and exploitation among them”. Bond (2005a: 13) also concurs that the major protagonists of NEPAD are Mbeki and his ministers, who later “managed to sign on” the other African leaders as partners.

This narration usually begins at South Africa’s adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy in 1996 (Tsheola 2002). The main components of GEAR included relaxation of exchange controls, reduction of tariff on imports, and privatisation of public assets. In short, GEAR embraced the primary role of capital in the post-Apartheid recovery of South Africa.

However, GEAR did not result in economic growth or reduction of income inequality. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) stated that the wages of blue-collar workers dropped by 7%, while the number of jobs dropped by 171,000 only a year after the introduction of this new policy. More importantly, the reduction of public expenditure and the push for a technocratic government eclipsed the redistributive goals of the post-Apartheid recovery programme (Vavi 1997).

According to Tsheola, despite the introduction of a favourable climate for investment by GEAR, South Africa did not register an increase in foreign investment. On the contrary, there was more capital flight from the country, aided by the relaxation of foreign exchange control prescribed by the new policy. The result was a State expenditure deficit, labour strikes, and a halt to rethink policy measures. South Africa’s geographical association with Africa, a continent which is deemed a zone of danger for free enterprise, was pinpointed as the cause for the lack of FDI. Therefore, GEAR was later transposed to NEPAD through the active leadership of Thabo Mbeki.

Akinboade & Lalthapersad-Pillay (2005) provided a detailed account of the “possible pay-offs” of the NEPAD policy framework for South African economic interests. According to these authors, African countries need the expertise, investment, and concrete business opportunities offered by South Africa “to kick start their development process”. Economic contact with South Africa “provides an opportunity to procure internationally traded goods and services at reasonable cost from an African country” (pp. 5-6).

More importantly, South Africa offers one of the largest and most deregulated financial industries, in addition to sophisticated banking
and insurance markets. The South African stock exchange market is an important source of equity financing. Moreover, South African enterprises have the expertise and the capacity to construct and maintain transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure in other African countries.

The expected gains of South Africa in this balance sheet are stated as follows:

During the apartheid years cultural, political and economic sanctions were imposed against South Africa. As South Africa embraced democracy, these sanctions were lifted. This opened up the possibility of corporate expansion of dominant South African firms into the rest of Africa as a means of maintaining economic viability and acquiring more competitive strength in a globalizing world. Also expanding into other parts of Africa could minimize the impact of policy changes that are introduced under democracy on South African business interests, and should facilitate the closer integration with Africa of an otherwise previously isolated country (op cit, 256).

The President of the Economic Society of South Africa spelt out the specific strategic advantages of South African corporate expansion into the rest of the continent (Loots 2005). Firstly, the profitability of investment in Africa is, on average, higher than in other regions of the world. Secondly, foreign investors tend to lump all of Africa together as a single destination. South Africa and China are becoming major investors in the continent partly because they do not share this perception. Adoption of favourable policies “within a stable institutional framework” such as NEPAD, therefore, provides a crucial safeguard for FDI in the entire continent.

Loots (2003) further elaborated on the function and role of the African Peer Review Mechanism in providing such a stable institutional framework. Applying concepts derived from the so-called New Institutional Economics (NIE), she outlined the role of the APRM in reducing uncertainty, promoting efficiency and, therefore, facilitating good economic performance.

NEPAD and transnational actors in Africa

A national interest approach narrows the focus of analysis since it disregards the vital role played by non-state actors. Moreover, seen through the prism of class agency in regional politics, NEPAD presents a more complex picture.
South Africa is indeed the major economic force in Africa but not the only one. Egypt and Nigeria also have huge corporate actors keen on expanding into the rest of the continent. For example, Egypt is one of those African countries with indigenous Pan-African telecom operators. MSI and Orascom, Sudanese and Egyptian private telcos respectively, had more than fourteen licences in other African countries in 2000 (Gebreab 2002: 9). These corporations have also been well represented by their state bureaucrats in the NEPAD organs. Egypt was one of the countries that financed the e-Africa Commission, the organ of NEPAD responsible for shaping regional ICT policies.

A considerable number of transnational, non-state actors have played a crucial role in shaping NEPAD’s neoliberal ICT policy and programmes. The evolution of the Open Access initiative, the key policy instrument to integrate Africa into the global information economy, was marked by the principal involvement of these actors. The Open Access model stipulates that a national monopoly telco should act as a carrier’s carrier or a wholesaler of international bandwidth, and not as a retailer. This market arrangement is designed to enable emerging ICT service providers to profit from retail and value-added services. At the same time, it aims to bar the incumbent telco from acting as a gatekeeper of this lucrative business. The national monopoly telcos were, obviously, unwilling to descend from their commanding heights; therefore, they rejected the policy of privatisation of national telecommunication assets. NEPAD served as the coordinating site for the emerging ICT entrepreneurs who were set to introduce the Open Access Model.

Before the recent introduction of fibre-optic technology in Africa, Internet users in most parts of the continent had depended on leased satellite links to connect to exchange points in the US. However, satellite connectivity was more expensive than fibre-optic technology for high-volume traffic. Furthermore, the charging arrangements for the exchange of traffic between local ISPs and global backbone providers stipulated that the former must pay for both outgoing and incoming traffic. Thus, in order to create a more viable Internet connectivity for Africa, its policy makers had to address two major challenges – namely, construction of transoceanic fibre-optic cables and negotiation of more favourable charging arrangements.

The Halfway Proposition, a policy document authored by the African Internet Service Providers Association (AfrISPA), pushed for
privatisation and liberalisation of national telcos as the key ingredients of its policy proposal. It contended that, in a competitive domestic market, private ICT entrepreneurs will find technological solutions to reduce the volume of outgoing traffic and hence the cost of connectivity for the continent. The financial resources needed for construction of fibre-optic cables were to be obtained from donor assistance. NEPAD endorsed this proposal in its information-society policy and programmes. It also enshrined the Open Access Policy as the guiding principle for its continental infrastructure projects (Derbe 2010).

It should be underlined, however, that most active members of the AfriSPA were associations from Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. At the later stage of the lobbying effort, South African political and corporate elites supported and even funded the Open Access initiative. ICT policy advisors, regional regulatory associations, NGOs such as the Open Source Institute for South Africa (OSISA) and the Association for Progressive Communication (APC), and international financial institutions such as the World Bank, European Investment Bank, etc. supported the bid to displace State classes allied to national monopoly telcos (Jensen 2006: 8).

According to Cox, no dominant class has been able to establish hegemony in the peripheral regions nor is the economy developed as in the hegemonic core. In other words, in the peripheral regions, the state is Hobbesian, where civil society is undeveloped, and the ruling class is the State class. Therefore, elites in these regions are not able to articulate hegemonic ideas that have a social basis and internal logic. Hence, political change in such circumstances amounts to superimposition of global capital accumulation over the old internal power structure (van der Pijl 1998). Major ideological and political shifts in Africa, ranging from the promotion of the New International

4 NEPAD proposed a new cable ownership model, called a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). The SPV was to be licensed in each member country to conduct the wholesale business and to distribute the proceeds to its shareholders. Other service providers and telecommunications operators would consequently be able to compete with the retail branch of the incumbent telcos on a level playing field. Hence, through this instrument, the existing monopoly over international gateways, transoceanic cables, and landing stations will be dismantled.

5 The South African government contributed 3 million Rand to the budget of the NEPAD e-Africa Commission (Jensen 2007: 20). The Commission, among others, was responsible for formulation and implementation of transoceanic fibre-optic cable projects.
Economic Order of the 1970s to the democratisation movement of the 1980s, were thus summarily explained as some type of passive revolution (Abrahamsen 1997: 149).

By its own declaration, NEPAD is a project to legitimise accumulation of surplus by an African capitalist class. It is an internal articulation of the hegemonic concepts of competitiveness, free enterprise, and open economy as strategic orientation for an ‘African Renaissance’. The ‘strategic partnership’ with global corporations and donors, which is promoted as the way to end Africa’s ‘marginalization’, is also part of this articulation. The architects of NEPAD are, thus, co-actors, rather than intermediaries, in a transnational capitalist alliance.

Likewise, NEPAD’s neoliberal agenda was opposed by a coalition of radical civil society actors at regional platforms. This engagement is a prototype of a counter-hegemonic resistance against the moral and political legitimacy of the social order represented by NEPAD. Civil society groups have been able to put forward ideas reflective of African reality and antagonistic to the hegemony of neoliberalism. These empirical developments suggest that a blanket characterisation of African regional and national politics as a mere ‘transition or conveyor belt’ of external changes may be unwarranted.6

A close examination of the political-economic changes in Africa in recent decades should be accompanied by a recalibration of concepts such as passive revolution and hegemony. A mechanical interpretation of these concepts has resulted in the narrow conclusion that all political changes in Africa fall into the category of passive revolution. However, if hegemony and passive revolution are treated as ideal types, then it is possible to challenge this general assessment.

In a recent research study on regional ICT policy formulation in Africa, the author found that there are interesting nuances and degrees of approximation to hegemony and passive revolution in different national contexts (Derbe 2010). For instance, in South Africa, GEAR has generally been regarded as a broad social contract, including civil society, political parties, and grassroots movements, both radical and moderate, under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC). As a hegemonic exercise, GEAR attempts to establish its legitimacy by invoking black economic empowerment in the post-

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6 Though Amin (2006) has noted that national populists had a hegemony in the 1950s and 1960s, he does not ascribe such hegemony to the new ‘comprador classes’ active in NEPAD.
Apartheid period (Adler & Webster 1995; Bond & Mayekiso 1996). Such empowerment generally took the form of ownership and control of state enterprises by black entrepreneurs. A case in point is the acquisition of ownership of equity in Telkom, the national incumbent in South Africa, by a black middle-class group (Engdahl & Hauki 2001; Horowitz & Curry 2007).

However, this idea of black empowerment has also been contested. Labour representatives such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) have categorically stated that the proliferation of black or African bourgeoisie merely introduces a class conflict between (black) capital and (black) labour. Thus, black empowerment should, instead, be re-oriented towards alleviation of mass poverty, urban renewal and gender balance (Labour Resource and Research Institute 2001).

A political contestation of comparable degree also transpired in Senegal where telecommunications reforms accompanied the restructuring of the State. The employees of the monopoly telco retained their privilege by becoming shareholders in the new private company. Nevertheless, a consensus was reached after a complex State-civil society engagement in which traditional authority figures (marabouts) were also involved along with the urban middle class. Certainly, the political forces pitted against each other did not articulate their ideological difference as clearly as in South Africa. In contrast, in countries like Ghana, where privatisation and liberalisation were carried out after demobilisation of opposition groups, there was no room even for an attenuated form of hegemonic politics such as the one that transpired in Senegal (Noll & Shirley 2001: 47).

At the other end of the spectrum are countries like Ethiopia and Algeria, whose leaders have been the spokespersons of NEPAD to the outside world. Here the State is a “tyranny of cousins”, and politics is synonymous with armed struggle or urban riots. In Algeria, telecommunications reform was carried out in disregard of opposition by labour unions and political parties (Um 2004). In Ethiopia, telecommunications reforms were muted until the recent push by international organisations to kick-start the country’s accession to the WTO Agreement. These are, indeed, good examples of passive revolution where a new form of capitalist accumulation is introduced without altering the existing social divisions, whether based on tradition, ethnicity, or class.
Conclusion

Important trend-setting events have transpired in Africa in recent years. For the first time, an African State ready to play an imperial role has become a palpable reality. South Africa is posing, for better or for worse, as a regional power influencing the economic policy of Africa through SADC, AU and NEPAD. Secondly, Africa also has its transnational forces, corporate elites and NGOs, which are vying to shape Pan-African policy such as NEPAD. The AfrISPA, for instance, played a key role in shaping the continent’s position on global Internet governance. These corporate and civil society actors also have close alliances with their state bureaucrats. Thirdly, African civil society actors have displayed a remarkable capability to forge a transnational counter-hegemonic resistance to global and Pan-African neoliberal and capitalist tendencies. The cases of the Jubilee Movement and the African Social Forum are cited as examples to show the potentials of transnational alliances between African civil society groups and progressive social actors in other parts of the world (Bond 2006).

The direction of transformative politics in Africa will depend on the dynamics of these trends and engagements. The first factor that limits or enables such a political possibility is the quality of intellectual and moral leadership and its ability to mobilise a wide spectrum of social forces under a common vision.

In the case of NEPAD, the attempt to reach the African masses was insignificant. Presently, NEPAD has merged with the African Union, while retaining its “corporate brand identity”. The NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Assembly of the African Union, is in charge of NEPAD’s initiatives and programmes, while the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) carries out the programmatic activities. The five founding members of NEPAD, Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal will be permanent members of this Committee, while each region of the continent will have a rotating representation. The NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) is to be supervised by the AU Commissioner and financed through the AU statutory budget, voluntary contributions by member states, and donor support (African Union 2010).

More significantly, the structural limitations on each type of agency are different. The Achilles’ heel of NEPAD lies in its emphasis on
economic efficiency and capital accumulation at the expense of social equity and satisfaction of basic human needs. This only aggravates the existing social divides in the continent. The ‘partnership’ component of NEPAD, therefore, is primarily tasked with engineering some form of internal political cohesion. The financial aid requested from development partners thus becomes crucially important to the co-opting of radical opposition through material concessions. Nevertheless, such concessions cannot be sufficient in view of the ‘donor fatigue’ accumulated over the years and the magnitude of poverty in the continent. This, in turn, widens the possibility for a counter-hegemonic resistance by social forces antagonistic to the prevailing political economy.

References


CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL TOPOGRAPHIES OF PRIVATE SECURITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Peer Schouten

Abstract

This chapter investigates the political topography arising around private security companies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The geographic spread of private security companies reveals a postcolonial landscape that is made up – like its colonial predecessor – of two distinct types of spaces, each requiring a distinct regime of government. On the one hand, there is l’Afrique utile, consisting of a number of intensely regulated and highly secured enclaves. This chapter shows how these enclaves represent the shared interest of African regimes (who depend on taxation of these enclaves for their revenue base) and – often international – formal businesses. These islands of ‘useful Africa’ are increasingly guarded and regulated by private security companies with the goal of separating them off from the grey spaces on the map, l’Afrique inutile, the informal, criminalised, ‘other’ side of Africa. Illustrated with examples from the DRC and South Africa, private security companies are argued to constitute pivotal agencies policing the boundary between these two Africas, progressively disconnecting the high-yield sphere of activities of the ‘formal economy’ from contending modes of economic exchange and disfranchising a large part of these countries’ respective populations.

Introduction

This chapter highlights a novel topography of power in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa: private security. Mercenary activities have always held a special place in the imagination of international politics.
Films such as *Blood Diamond* and *Lord of War* recount the neoliberal greed with which inevitably white mercenaries and gun traders plundered and pillaged the African continent after the end of the Cold War. But in scholarly work, also, Africa continues to be portrayed as an irrational, aberrant place, where foreign commercial interests perversely play into local conflicts. Such accounts typically involve the former South African mercenary outfit, Executive Outcomes, in Angola and Sierra Leone, or British former SAS involved in a recent coup attempt in Guinea. Yet today, the privatisation of security in Africa looms much larger than the occasional recurrence of mercenary activity. A focus on the more mundane practices of commercial security companies reveals a fascinatingly vital tendency with far-reaching political implications.

A brief overview is in order, to indicate the sheer immensity of this phenomenon. Globally, legal private security companies (PSC) have undergone an explosive growth over the past two decades. PSC have spread over the world at such a pace that the ‘privatisation of security’ is now an accepted term to denote this stunning growth market. Uniformed security guards are a ubiquitous sight across the globe; and in most countries, private provision of cash-in-transit, the guarding of retail outlets, and alarm systems and armed response are intricately part of the daily hustle and bustle of contemporary cities. G4S and Securitas, the biggest players in the market, are such a familiar phenomenon that they might be considered the McDonalds and Burger Kings of security – with the first employing 600,000 people in over 110 countries, and the latter 260,000 in 40 countries.

This tendency is equally reflected in Africa. The popular image of heavily armed guards around mining operations of dubious nature in Africa, while still valid in some cases, is generally flawed; private security in Africa as a rule rather involves badly paid, unarmed guards, amongst whom are many students and educated people. In the DRC, for instance, private security work is often mockingly referred to as *chômage déguisée*, disguised unemployment.

Over the last 20 years, we have witnessed a stabilisation of sorts of the African private security sector: through merger and takeover, in most African countries the sector is dominated by a select number of (often transnational) security giants, and some of the mercenaries of

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1 Respectively, Edward Zwick (dir.) 2006 and Andrew Niccol (dir.) 2005.
2 Source: G4S (www.g4s.com) and Securitas (www.securitas.com) websites.
before are now legitimate Private Military Companies (PMC) supporting Security Sector Reform (SSR), de-mining and peace missions across Africa (Abrahamsen & Williams 2011: 124). The UN has made it standard policy for itself and its partner or implementing organisations to employ PSC for their personnel, and in South Africa alone, 375,000 people are involved in the private security sector, with PSC outnumbering the police by 2:1 (PSIRA 2009); in Nigeria and Kenya, an average of 2,000 PSC employ at least 50,000 people (Abrahamsen & Williams 2011: 21), while G4S, the world’s largest PSC, proclaims itself the biggest private sector employer of the continent.

From a consumer’s perspective, it is estimated that wealthy Africans spend an average of 15% of their income on private security solutions (Byrd & Guimbert 2009: 6; Ramen 2009), while businesses in Africa more often than not pay for security – varying from 31% of businesses in Ivory Coast to 92% in Malawi. PSC globally have an annual turnover of somewhere between 120-140 billion USD, and with a spectacular global annual growth rate of 8%, this tendency is far from stabilised (Abrahamsen & Williams 2011: 9; OECD 2004: 6).

So what is the political significance of this tendency in light of the shifting topographies of power in Africa? This chapter provides an overview of the academic literature emerging around this phenomenon and illustrates it with examples of this ‘political topography of private security’ in the DRC and South Africa. As this relatively novel phenomenon remains under-theorised, a variety of approaches will be drawn on to elucidate distinct aspects of the phenomenon. Based on this literature and looking only at formal PSC engaged in guarding activities, the main point this chapter attempts to convey is that, from a macro-perspective, a pattern arises whereby PSC are utilised to mediate the interaction between international actors and surrounding ‘local populace’ and are a significant way for African political elites to retain control over the allocation and distribution of economic resources. What this chapter adds is that PSC fulfil this function by locally constituting both materially and symbolically the contested

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3 See below.
5 Private security companies or private military companies engaged in military-related operations, such as de-mining and police training, thus fall outside the scope of the analysis offered in this chapter.
border between formal and informal spheres of activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. The significance is that the contemporary topography of private security deepens existing tendencies of the privatisation of the postcolonial state.

**Literature overview and framework**

Three broad schools of literature speak to the political topography of private security in Africa, each highlighting a different aspect of this phenomenon. What follows is an overview of this literature, which in subsequent sections will be illustrated with examples from the DRC and South Africa.

*The topography of private security*

Political science has increasingly become concerned with the study of formal PSC, and within political science, the work of Abrahamsen & Williams (2009) represents the most recent insights into this phenomenon. At its core, their ‘global assemblages’ approach holds that security governance no longer plays out along the traditional domestic/international divide – with the police having a monopoly on domestic security governance and the army on international security – but rather in global assemblages, that is, networks of heterogeneous actors, cross-cutting both the domestic/international and the public/private divide. Such assemblages, although thoroughly sealed-off ‘local’ enclaves, are truly ‘global’, since the network of different actors present at any such site – either physically or indirectly through regulations – often extends from local security forces and PSC to corporate headquarters and regulatory authorities far away. Their

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6 See Abrahamsen & Williams (2011). It is important to note that the insights of Abrahamsen and Williams derive partly from criminology. Observing the praxis of contemporary policing, a number of scholars forcefully argue that this mode of security governance is increasingly internationalised, privatised, and localised. They describe as ‘nodal governance’ the tendency whereby high concentrations of public and private policing resources are allocated to, and mobilised around, economically or strategically vital nodes, while those unable to pay are left with lower levels of security provision (Shearing & Stenning 1981; Ericson & Haggerty 1997; Jones & Newburn 1999; Dupont 2004). In short, within contemporary criminology, the privatisation of security inserts itself in a context in which ‘policing’ refers to a Bourdieuan field of action that no longer resembles the traditional domestic security field (see Bigo 2000).
local configuration is carefully structured and configured by regulations and negotiations in global and national capitals.

Importantly for the purposes of this chapter, security assemblages are constructed around specific sites. In general, such high concentrations of security governance efforts are found around spheres of activities that are construed as ‘strategic’ or ‘critical’ infrastructure, which often amounts to spaces where formal economic activities are concentrated or upon which they are dependent (Cavelty & Suter 2009; Collier & Lakoff 2009). Abrahamsen & Williams (2011: 122) argue that whereas the international capital that circulates through such sites is highly mobile and volatile, it is not completely de-territorialized – and in those places where capital is bound to “touch down”, PSC are likely to be present. Globally, airports, urban business and shopping centres, and mining installations are archetypical examples of such highly governed and intensely secured strategic ‘nodes’, with PSC increasingly part of the setup (Parfomak 2004).

Across the African continent, the same topography is visible. Scholarly work indicates that from Nairobi to Cape Town and from Freetown to Kinshasa, PSC concentrate geographically in African capitals and around enclaves constituted by international organisations or industrial operations (often mineral resource extraction) owned and run by foreign corporations. Global businesses such as Shell frequently remind us that doing business in Africa is fraught with dangers (Cropley 2009; Energy Daily 2010), and many multinationals have by now made it standard policy to employ PSC for their international operations (Faessler 2010). PSC of course readily identify themselves with this productive aspect of their agency. As Derek Warby of the PSC ArmorGroup Nigeria puts it:

We provide a secure space in which (clients) feel free and safe to make business-critical decisions. That ‘space’ is both physical and time-defined. We help clients protect their assets – personnel first but also buildings, plant, product, revenue as well as intangibles such as reputation and the timeliness of product delivery.

From the perspective of international actors, then, PSC facilitate sustaining formal, planned operations under ‘adverse conditions’; as Abrahamsen & Williams (2011: 123) observe, the continuation of

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7 See especially Abrahamsen & Williams (2011), Hönke (2010) and Schouten (2010) for an overview of literature on this topographical distinction.

global commercial activity in Africa “involves creating security environments that permit its operations, and PSCs are key intermediaries in these arrangements”. It is however important to emphasise that, while much of the literature conveys the image that this topography is restricted to the operations of global capital in Africa, PSC nowadays equally operate on the ‘security-development-nexus’ (Stern & Öjendal 2010), mediating the encounter between the international development community and local communities (Duffield 2001, 2007; Spearin 2008; Stoddard et al. 2009). Thus, rather than a characteristic of contemporary global capitalism, PSC are part of a broader liberal mode of governing and mediate most local interactions between organised actors from the global North and perceived African ‘otherness’. While the extent of involvement of PSC in this topography is novel, the topographical landscape itself is reminiscent of the Africa of colonial times, where (often private) security governance efforts were also concentrated around l’Afrique utile, those spheres of activities of interest to the colonial regime. The image of an intensely internationalised political topography of private security in Africa is, however, incomplete: lacking is a sensibility to the dynamics of political control so particular to Africa.

*Privatisation of security and political control in Sub-Saharan Africa*

State control has hitherto been a central problem in the study of private security (Berndtsson 2009). While the previous discussion might convey the image that PSC are part of a globalised power structure in which African rulers have little say, literature concerned with the problem of the privatisation of the African state emphasises the creativity with which African regimes are able to maintain a degree of control over (even privatised) key economic activities. This view is diametrically opposed to the vast literature portraying PSC as weakening the African ‘state’.

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10 Abrahamsen & Williams 2011: 123, note 5; Balandier 1957; Boone 1998; Hönke 2010: 111.


12 See, for instance, Cornwell 1999; Small 2006.
At its core, this Africanist literature cautions us to take privatisation seriously as a mode of governance by African regimes.\(^{13}\) Political elites can actually increase their control over pivotal spheres of activities and strategic resources by privatising economic activities away from political contenders (Hibou 2004: 5). It is important to note that the core economic activities on which African regimes depend for their revenues often involve internationalised operations. However ‘weak’ in terms of direct control, it is the sovereign right of African regimes to negotiate the terms on which foreign actors are permitted on their territories (Reno 2004). Through constant renegotiation, African regimes attempt to maximise their revenue from such international operations. Hibou (2004) notes how such international sources of revenue are central points of contestation in Africa, with state and non-state actors each competing for a share in these revenues, and how privatisation can bypass such contestation by reducing political space. In this way, a normative space is carved out in which PSC are the only legitimate guardians of economic activities, rather than possibly corrupt state security forces.

Certain strategic areas within the postcolonial landscape are thus subject to intense and constant negotiations between international operations – whether developmental or capitalist in nature – and host regimes. These spaces are as much structured globally as subject to negotiations with, and usually highly beneficial to, host regimes. This chapter proposes the term ‘selective governance’ to denote the tendency whereby certain spheres of activities are negotiated with and directly regulated by a particular African regime, whereas others remain virtually ungoverned.\(^{14}\) Often, this literature indicates, the

\(^{13}\) Here it is important to note that state control does not necessarily equal direct governance through the state apparatus. Indirect government, or governing through entities and techniques outside the state apparatus (sometimes associated with Foucault’s notion of governmentality), can be an alternative yet highly effective means to attain envisioned political ends and can also confirm the idea of the state as the locus for political power and decision making (Roitman 2005: 20, note 20). Studies insisting that PSC weaken the African ‘state’ part from a conventional Weberian definition of the state, whereby direct state control over violence, equated with a monopoly over its exercise within the state apparatus, is the measure of state strength. This image is flawed in two important ways: first, we do not seem to consider the US or European states weakened by security privatisation, while security privatisation is often as extensive as or greater than in Africa; second, they consider the public and private as oppositional rather than relational (Abrahamsen & Williams 2011: 13).

\(^{14}\) Not to be confused with the related but different concept of governing by (indirect) ‘discharge’, originally coined by J.F. Bayart (op. cit.) and developed by J.
spaces targeted by selective governance involve sources of ‘extra-version’ – that is, international sources of funding, varying from resource extraction to development aid.\(^\text{15}\)

In summary, what this literature adds is an important focus on the way in which security privatisation ties into dynamics of political control by African regimes. Nonetheless, while this discussion sheds light on the political or ‘discursive’ agreement between regimes and international actors, this does not help us understand how targeted spheres of activities are locally constituted. In order to constitute a swath of land rich in minerals as a formal resource enclave, for instance, it has to be disentangled materially and socially from the networks of agencies (such as artisanal miners) that act upon the same resources in different ways; and once constituted, the resulting assemblage requires upkeep.

**Policing the formal/informal border**

Whereas the two schools of literature discussed above remain preoccupied with the international or state level, this chapter draws on a third literature in order to articulate local dynamics of contestation involving PSC. Before doing so, a theoretical digression is in order. The assemblages involving PSC are intensely governed (both by African regimes and international actors) spheres of activities and, through this, part of a different, more formal, ‘moral economy’ than their surroundings;\(^\text{16}\) they are, by virtue of the way in which they are

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\(^{\text{15}}\) A wide variety of African states has been argued to depend more on external sources of revenue and legitimacy than domestic tax revenues and democratic accountability. Many African states have been described in terms of ‘extraversion’, ‘governance states’, and ‘rentier states’: Mozambique, Nigeria, Angola, the DRC, and Rwanda, for instance, all harbour regimes in one way or another bolstered by Western money – be it aid, trade, or both. Nigeria and Angola share a dependency on oil; the DRC, Rwanda and Mozambique’s government budgets are funded more than 50% by international donors; and Congo and Mozambique’s effective governance is performed not by the state apparatus, but rather by a network of international and local NGOs. See Bayart 2009; Easterly 2010, November 25; Harrison 2004; Reno 2004.

\(^{\text{16}}\) The concept of moral economy hinges crucially on the principle of ‘embeddedness’. Initially, this notion denominated the idea that within ‘pre-modern’ moral economies, non-economic and social relations constituted economic behaviour and considerations (Polanyi 1944; Scott 1998; Thompson 1971). Within such a moral economy, the liberal ‘economic’ cannot exist as a theoretically or empirically distinct arena. Disembedding certain economic spheres of activities – that is, constituting
construed politically, subject to a different set of rules and regulations than other activities.

Echoing the ‘moral economy’ literature, Janet Roitman (2005: 3) points out that formal markets are contingent, political artefacts, which require design, regulation, policing and other interventions. This framing is far-reaching because, in general, one set of governing techniques is reserved for the market and another for illicit exchanges (Friman 2006). Thus, labelling one sphere of activities as ‘formal’, state-endorsed or ‘economic’ – and those activities not monolithically regulated and mediated by state authority as ‘informal’, ‘parallel’ or ‘black’ – has direct political consequences: it allows for practices securing the former, whereas the latter by contrast pertain to the realm of the ‘illicit’ and contrary to rational-legal development. Such ‘formal’ activity needs securing, as it is often contested in Africa – not least because state-endorsed formality means that flows of resources and benefits are channelled towards a small group of people, something not necessarily supported by by-standers who are excluded from this system.

Recently, a group of economic anthropologists has taken up this problematic from a different angle. They equally part from the observation that an economy is not a stable, pre-existing state of affairs, and – inspired by actor-network theory – they propose to study how formal ‘economic’ spheres of activities are constituted in practice, by focusing on the agencies that irrevocably accompany those efforts. Çaliskan & Callon, in two seminal articles (2009, 2010), label this agency ‘economization’, which comprises processes of both subjectification – agents that learn to behave like economic subjects – and objectification – agencies that act upon behaviour, entities, and spaces them as a different moral economy – from social and political entanglements, then, is a highly political act. While the distinction between ‘pre-modern’ and ‘modern’ moral economies is of course oversimplified and not useful to analyse contemporary societies, the notion of (dis)embeddedness does serve to theorise the differences and frictions that arise between those spaces constituted as ‘formal’ and ‘liberal’ on the one hand and ‘informal’ and ‘black’ on the other. Thus, “to say that the market (…) is not functioning ‘as it should’ (and that this is singly the result of an inefficient state) is to deny the possibility that perhaps the market is working exactly as it should in the African context” (Roitman 1990: 677, emphasis in original).

In line with what anthropologists have always argued, they consider the economy as “an achievement rather than a starting point or a pre-existing reality that can simply be revealed and acted upon” (Çaliskan & Callon 2009: 371). See Schouten (2010) for additional literature.
to constitute them *as* economic or *as* a market place. Thus, wherever a market is in place, a tremendous amount of effort has been allocated; echoing substantivists like Polanyi, they repeat that what *might* have been exchanged as a gift or through reciprocity is now rather translated as an ‘economic’ good (2009).

While the work of Çaliskan & Callon focuses specifically on the constitution of market economies, this chapter proposes that broadening their insights to shed light on the agency of PSC in Africa raises interesting theoretical questions. PSC can be considered ‘boundary objects’ at work to disembed certain ‘formal’ spheres of activities according to pre-given rationalities from surroundings that work otherwise.\(^{18}\) At the risk of oversimplifying, PSC can be considered ‘economizing agencies’ that police the boundary between the spheres of activities that form the subject of selective governance and an ‘informal’ Africa.\(^{19}\)

In summary, this perspective emphasises both the practices by which ‘formal’ spheres of activities are disentangled from their surroundings and circumscribed spatially in order to enable the productive capacity of such spaces and the meanings that these practices are given locally.

Taken together, the literature points to three ways of narrating the political importance of PSC in contemporary Africa. Subsequent sections illustrate this framework with the examples of the DRC and South Africa.

\(^{18}\) This ties into the discussion in Abrahamsen & Williams (2011: 218) on ‘global security assemblages’ as ‘boundary fields’. Also note that this discussion refers more to a general tendency and the intended effects with which PSC are deployed than to the actual effects. In practice, sometimes private security guards might well be implicated in ‘informal’ activities themselves (see note 47).

\(^{19}\) When it comes to the market-place, historically, this space of contestation and enforcement had typically been occupied by the police; as Foucault explains, the police needed to be ever-present at the urban market-places that mushroomed up with the growth of interregional trade, to represent and enforce the rules the sovereign saw fit for ‘formal’ national markets (Foucault et al. 2007: 407ff). The police, in fact, helped *constitute* the formal national economy. As discussed before, this national territorial fit between economic activity and security governance was historically absent in Africa, where economic activity was constituted only very locally and often enforced by private security forces employed directly by colonial corporations. Owing to this particular historical trajectory in which the current political topography of private security is embedded, their agency in upholding a formal ‘economy’ should be considered highly political.
The political economy of private security in the DRC

The topography of private security in the DRC

While mercenary stories still plague the DRC, the approximately one hundred PSC (sociétés de gardiennage) employing around 30,000 unarmed Congolese guards have received little attention. The only two available country studies indicate that PSC are largely concentrated in Kinshasa (de Goede 2008; Kasongo 2009) and nearly always around international actors – be they engaged in developmental work or commercial economic activity. These two spheres of internationalised activity equally constitute in large part the ‘formal’ or state-endorsed economy and the main sources of state revenue in the DRC: an annual 3 billion USD in external aid accounts for half of the state’s budget, and mining revenues account for a large part of the rest (Kavanagh 2011).

These economically vital international actors uphold normative regimes for the spaces they inhabit in the DRC that differ radically from their direct surroundings. International organisations conform to strict global standards in terms of conduct and security requirements (see subsequent section), and international mining companies such as AngloGold Ashanti and international PSC such as G4S claim to uphold global norm regimes as stipulated in corporate governance strategies or the Voluntary Principles21 for their local DRC operations. As such, the local spaces they occupy in the DRC are governed by and structured along globally set norms (Hönke 2010). PSC form an intricate part of these global assemblages. In Goma, North Kivu, approximately 80% of the roughly 2,000 guards working for 9 PSC22 are deployed around the international development community, with most of the rest working for the few industrial mining corporations surviving and a small number for other businesses – the omnipresent

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20 In 2006 and in 2010, foreigners were arrested for alleged mercenary activities. See Rice 2010; Sundaram 2006.
21 The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights were developed to guide companies in securing their operations while respecting human rights, and specifically addresses engagement with PSC and state security forces. See http://voluntaryprinciples.org/ (Last accessed 12 March 2011).
22 Whereas Büscher & Vlassenroot (2010: 267) found only four PSC in Goma (KK Security, Delta Protection, Graben Security, and Intersec) in 2008, this number has doubled in less than two years (in late 2010, these were complemented by HDW, Magenya, Royal Sec, Star Sec, Top Sec, and G4S). Source: survey conducted in Goma, November/December 2010.
mobile phone antennas and beer depots, arguably the critical infrastructure of Congolese popular life. As such, PSC concentrate spatially around those spheres of activities involving formal foreign actors and high concentrations of capital.

On closer inspection, however, Congolese PSC are themselves global assemblages, as internationalised and politicised as their clients. Again in Goma, the Kenyan PSC, KK Security, one of the largest in the eastern DRC, largely employs Kenyan senior staff. Delta Protection, while headed by a former French colonel, is largely run by Lebanese. Intersec is active in the DRC only since the regional war and is owned by Rwandans close to the Kagame regime in Kigali, protecting most of the Rwandese-owned businesses in the eastern DRC. While former military and militiamen are banned by law from working in PSC, at least 15% of PSC guards in the region are estimated to have a background in Congolese rebel groups, a number that nearly doubles for such cities as Bunia, where conflict was ubiquitous at some point. For instance, Human Dignity in the World (HDW), originally an international NGO involved in demobilisation and reinsertion of ex-combatants, began hiring them out as security guards and was recently forced to register as a PSC.

Involving ex-combatants, NGOs, and management from other countries, PSC are themselves hybrid assemblages with different social meanings and functions. For instance, not only do PSC secure international operations, but they equally provide a window of opportunity for locals to acquire employment. Everything suggests that PSC in the DRC also constitute – as Büscher & Vlassenroot indicate for NGOs in Goma – institutionalised networks of privilege, allowing the allocation of employment and funds to pre-existent allegiances.

Privatisation of security and political control in the DRC

Yet these assemblages – and their alleged legitimacy – are highly contested in the DRC. International corporations employing PSC maintain that formal economic activity in the DRC refers only to those

24 Source: interviews with representatives from the respective PSC, Goma, November 2010.
contracts signed and endorsed at presidential level; regional authorities and local communities, with which PSC are inevitably confronted, are inclined to contest and mimic this formality by trying to impose additional contracts or conditions on their local operations.\textsuperscript{26} In addition, as the situation in the DRC remains highly volatile, the enclaves around formal mining operations are also the focal point of rebel activities and other modes of informal and illicit accumulation (Schouten 2011). The topography of private security in the DRC inserts itself in these larger dynamics of contestation over the allocation and distribution of resources. Recent developments in the eastern DRC are a good example.

In September 2010, President Kabila decreed the suspension of all artisanal mining activities in the conflict-torn provinces of the Kivus and Maniema.\textsuperscript{27} The decree also stated that military activities by the Congolese army (FARDC) in the mining regions should cease. Selected industrial mining operations would, however, be permitted to continue. As very little of the revenues resulting from mining operations in the Kivus make it to Kinshasa – revenues are instead siphoned off to Rwanda or appropriated by autonomously operating generals such as the military entrepreneur and former rebel leader, General Bosco Ntaganda\textsuperscript{28} – it is not surprising that Kabila suspended all mining activities in the region save those performed by foreign industrial mining companies. In this way, Congo’s mineral wealth is rendered solely an affair of privately guarded industrial mining operations, rather than a military affair or an entitlement for local populations. This selective governance of mining through private means is intended to redirect the flow of resources away from artisanal miners, rebels, and semi-autonomous military entrepreneurs such as Ntaganda, and towards international capital and the Kinshasa political regime.\textsuperscript{29} As such, the goal is to reduce the possible political contestation around revenues emanating from mining activities and to establish a simple, straight, legal and strong flow of resources be-

\textsuperscript{26} Source: interviews with staff for international mining operations in Bunia, Mongbwalu and Nia-Nia, December 2010; cf. Hönke 2010: 121.
\textsuperscript{27} See Kavanagh 2010; Radio Okapi 2010.
\textsuperscript{28} See BBC News 2010.
\textsuperscript{29} In addition, however, everything indicates that PSC guards are more reliable since they are at least paid more regularly than their counterparts in the PNC or army. The fact that the latter are paid irregularly, if at all, is one of the reasons why they resort to alternate modes of making a living – and, by extension, why people employ PSC.
tween international mining operations conducted in far-off regions and individuals in national government, an architecture beneficial to both. NGOs, however, report that the decree is contested on all sides, as artisanal mining, hitherto legal, sustained large swaths of the region’s population, leading to intense protests in Goma and beyond.\(^{30}\)

Recent events can, however, be seen as part of a broader governmental strategy.\(^{31}\) In 2001, for instance, Kabila fortified this privately guarded economic topography by calling into existence the *Brigade de garde*, a special unit of the Congolese police (PNC) that is for hire.\(^{32}\) In practice, PSC increase their leverage vis-à-vis potential contesters by hiring some of these armed police. Fieldwork in the eastern DRC revealed that most international actors employ one armed police agent for every ten private security guards, often through their PSC. Secondly, up until today, even MIBA, the state’s diamond-mining company, works exclusively with foreign PSC.\(^{33}\) This presidential bypassing of the state apparatus actually runs counter to most established ideas on state-building and can only be understood as enhancing political control by sidestepping normative ideas on state formation. From this perspective, while often operating semi-autonomously, PSC form part of liberal strategies of selective governance to retain political control over strategic revenue against contending actors and modes of accumulation.\(^{34}\)

**Policing the formal/informal border in the DRC**

The impact of PSC in disembedding spheres of activities from the surrounding ‘moral economy’ can be illustrated with the impact of the presence of the – privately secured – development community in places such as Goma. The international development community attached to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) – with a stunning annual budget of 1 billion USD – has profoundly transformed the political economy of Goma. Büscher & Vlassenroot (2010) describe how a whole formal economy, including occidental-style hotels and supermarkets, arose in

\[^{30}\text{See, for instance, Bafilemba 2010; Schouten 2011.}\]
\[^{31}\text{See Hönke 2010: 115.}\]
\[^{32}\text{De Goede 2008.}\]
\[^{33}\text{Ibid. 45.}\]
\[^{34}\text{For discussion of the liberal technique of governing through autonomy, based on the work of Michel Foucault, see, amongst others, Abrahamsen & Williams 2011: 66; Hibou 1999, 2004; Rose & Miller 1992.}\]
Goma, mimicking the surroundings, institutions and rules humanitarians are used to elsewhere. Because of the ostentatious display of wealth involved, the development community is often perceived as an economic entity by local populations, a source of wealth through partnership, employment or theft; conversely, the UN recognises that its personnel and affiliated organisations are often subject to threats such as theft, assault, and robbery (Secretary-General of the UN 2005).

In light of this, the UN security agency (UNDSS) determined the overall threat level in the DRC at three (“considerable risk of armed conflict”) in its new Security Level System, which means, among other things, that all MONUSCO employees and employees of affiliated organisations are obliged to hire private security at their homes and offices and are only allowed to move through the highly secured spaces of Goma. As a result, security guards in military-looking outfits bar anything that does not look like a 4x4 jeep from entering barb-wired, watch-towered and fenced humanitarian spaces. What is more, since the UN – owing to its nature – needs to follow a strict policy of negotiating only with national governments, local power brokers and civil society representatives see themselves as cut off from the process of decision-making concerning the political-economic architecture that arises. Despite this, UNDSS states that it imposes an international security regime that is “globally applicable in a consistent, de-politicised manner” (UNDSS 2010: 10) upon the urban architecture. UN-employed PSC, while made up of locals, are paid to police the normative structure constituted by the UN, and by complying with UN regulations, their actions and accountability are disembedded from local power structures. It is significant, however, that the same security regime – and living standards – do not hold for the employees of local NGOs implementing much of the developmental work.

In line with what Mark Duffield (2007) argues, there seem to be two distinct normative regimes in Goma, one for those belonging

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35 Source: interviews, Goma (Congo), December 2010. As Büscher & Vlassenroot (2010: 265) note, “UN agencies and humanitarian actors today provide most of the official labour positions in Goma”.  
36 Source: interview UNDSS & UN personnel, Goma, November 2010; see also Stoddard et al. 2009.  
37 Source: interviews with civil society spokespersons, Goma/Bunia, December 2010.  
38 Source: ibid.
to the developed world, and another for the ‘locals’. Importantly, owing to UN policies, PSC patrol the local boundaries between those two spheres. Through private security, the ‘formal’, high-capital spheres of activities constituted by international organisations are disconnected from possible alternative modes of exchange, which pervade the Congolese economy at large.\(^{39}\)

In summary, by translating the resource wealth of the eastern DRC into quintessential objects for economic markets, access is restricted to (state) qualified economic actors, in effect barring those agencies which are working upon the resources in competing – informal – ways. Traditional claims to land entitlement or the ‘truck and barter’ that most local communities and artisanal miners practice are thus rendered illicit and can be kept out by PSC. But not only mining operations are contested in this way. The international development community in the DRC, an important source of demand for PSC, is often subject to the same dynamics and security setup. Whereas their stated goals and the normative international structures from which they derive their legitimacy are radically different, both types of international actors have made it standard policy – often at the global level – to employ PSC around their operations in the DRC. For the local observer, privately guarded developmental enclaves look strikingly similar to the enclaves around international mining operations, embedded as they are in a similar security regime.

**The political economy of private security in South Africa**

**The topography of private security in South Africa**

South African private security inserts itself in a very distinct historical trajectory. Historically, formal security governance in South Africa started as a colonial, private enterprise, and after roughly a century of state security control, ironically returned to being a private affair.\(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\) A classic volume on the political economy of the DRC (MacGaffey 1991) aptly shows how what we call corruption, favours, informal redistribution and smuggling constitutes the economy that sustains large swaths of the Congolese, but also inhibits the extreme profit margins associated with a formal, liberal economy.

\(^{40}\) The PSC Gold Fields Protection Services (GFPS) has followed an exemplary historical trajectory: starting out as the colonial security firm for all gold mining operations in South Africa, it became a parastatal security firm, only to be privatised and reduced to supplying security for the – now private – corporation Gold Fields in-house. Source: personal interview with CEO of GFPS, July 2010.
The end of Apartheid meant that the white ruling class moved out of the state apparatus in a veritable privatisation of the social capital of the state: in 1994 not only did most strategic industries become privatised, but also the security apparatus, with police, intelligence and army chiefs starting up and moving into private security and military firms that would guard—now private—strategic industries.

Interviews also indicated that with the progressive greying of PSC management cadres, the expertise and experience of the Apartheid security forces are beginning to be replaced by more market-oriented management staff. Through merger and acquisition, many PSC are being bought up by larger, international PSC such as G4S and Securitas, who occasionally replace South African management with foreign directors. As a result, as one Apartheid-era PSC country manager put it, “the focus of private security governance is displaced from inherently South African ideas about security towards globally set stakeholder profit margins”.

In effect, the privatisation of much of the productive South African state, combined with an explicit neoliberal agenda, has left South Africa with an economic geography that conveniently incorporates private security into its architecture (Kempa & Singh 2008). Approximately 38% of the nearly half-million active PSC guards are located in the Gauteng province, which covers only 1.4% of the country’s total land area yet contributes 35% to South African GDP and constitutes 10% of GDP of the entire African continent. Johannesburg leads the tendency of enclavisation with an estimated 300 enclosed neighbourhoods and 200 illegal road closures (Kempa & Singh 2008: 343), complementing an array of privately secured downtown business and commercial districts. In addition to Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town are other centres of gravity attracting PSC. Apart from economically pivotal urban areas, PSC are concentrated around mining operations, which constitute 21% of South African exports and 6% of its GDP, as a stunning 40% of profits from mining are subject to taxation.

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42 Source: interviews conducted in Johannesburg and Pretoria, July 2010.
Privatisation of security and political control in South Africa

The post-Apartheid privatisation wave in South Africa means that whatever clout the state had, including the management of hopes and fears, is now channelled through the market, and the market is only selectively accessible (Hentz 2000; Robins 2002). Where the Apartheid regime displayed the level of concern with social control befitting Foucault’s ‘disciplinary society’ – with state security forces controlling and restricting popular movement and flows of resources equally across the national territory (Sher 1985) – contemporary security seems allocated much more selectively to certain areas and spheres of activities (Grant 1989: 116). Increasingly, as in colonial times – and unlike the Apartheid era – it is of interest to the political regime to allow for and cooperate with PSC, as they protect the core of the South African formal economy and thus the regime’s own budget. This translates, for instance, into the many joint operations between police and PSC in South Africa (Kimani 2009). Much of Johannesburg CCTV, for instance, is run by the former mercenary outfit, Omega Risk, inside a police station, part of an effort by the city to reduce crime through intense cooperation with police and PSC.46

In addition, South Africa’s government often cooperates with business in managing joint interests and threats, largely constituted by ‘informal’ or ‘illicit’ economic actors. According to one mining corporation, “because artisanal and small-scale mining is difficult to regulate, governments are turning to large mining companies to assist in managing, structuring and/or reducing the industry” (AngloGold Ashanti 2005). Losses in private mining operations due to informal mining are linked explicitly to losses for government revenue, as evident from the following quote from a government report:

Barberton Mine loses in excess of R3 million worth of gold per month, while increased security cost the company R1 million per month. The loss of tax revenue for government exceeds R1.1 million per month.47

The way in which PSC are involved in securing this economic activity from ‘informal’ contenders is only understandable in light of this shared interest between South African business and politics.

46 Source: fieldwork, August 2010; see DefenceWeb 2009.
47 Portfolio Committee on Mineral Resources (2009: 6). It is interesting to note that the same report also mentions instances of private security guards involved in illicit mining; yet these isolated instances apparently do not outweigh the benefits of using PSC against illegal miners.
Policing the formal/informal border in South Africa

“Economic concepts and institutions”, Janet Roitman (2005: 3) reminds us, “are political technologies that serve to constitute ‘what is to be governed’ or, in this case, a field of regulatory intervention based on a set of presuppositions about the nature of economic life and economic objects”. South Africa serves as a case-in-point. The informal economy has long been a problem of government in South Africa, involving over one-third of its population (ILO 2002). It is striking that with the post-Apartheid shift of economic activity from the formal state apparatus to the market described earlier, black African economic activity shifted from being labelled ‘illegal’ to being labelled ‘informal’ – “still”, however, “often confused and conflated with illegal activities” (ILO 2002: 40). The example of Johannesburg shows how PSC are directly involved in disembedding ‘formal’ spheres of activities from this ‘dangerous’ informality.48

Johannesburg is among the most dangerous urban areas in the world, yet is part of the City of Johannesburg’s Business Plan to create spaces that are ‘competitive’, ‘understandable’, and ‘predictable’ (City of Johannesburg 2004: 8; Peyroux 2007: 12), something requiring additional efforts beyond what the state can provide.49 In an effort to revitalise Johannesburg, the municipality initiated so-called City Improvement Districts (CIDs). CIDs are geographically circumscribed areas within which all property owners pay an additional tax that is managed by a special corporate entity. With this tax, this entity supplies the entire area primarily with dedicated guarding and cleaning services.50 Because they contribute to the state budget through taxation, these organisations can determine rules of conduct in large parts of their CIDs. Each CID has its own recognisable banners, and is adorned with at least one PSC security guard at every corner, complemented by conspicuously parked PSC vehicles, manned PSC

48 This section is based on one month of fieldwork in Johannesburg, conducted July-August 2010, consisting of research visits, participatory observation, and ten formal interviews conducted with three participating PSC, the South Africa Police Service (SAPS), the Metropolitan Police, the organisation of the Central Improvement District – a voluntarily established umbrella organisation of various CIDs (see text following above) – and Urban Genesis, a company managing the improvement districts.
49 Minnaar & Mistry (2004: 39, 42) speak about the ‘policing gap’, as SAPS are limited to 120,000 employees, while there are 375,000 active PSC.
50 For more information, see http://www.joburgcentral.co.za/.
stands, or refurbished caravans, all covered in large texts referring to private security services. In a colourful mimicking of the army, PSC have deployed exactly the same guard towers that circumscribe SA military bases in the commercial heart of the city, Sandton, albeit painted in different colours. CIDs are the pleasantly coloured islands in a sea of grey on the free official maps that the Johannesburg municipality distributes (Map 3.1), and their borders refer to the boundaries of areas within which only formal and state-endorsed economic activity takes place, areas where decisions are predominantly “driven by cost-benefit calculations” (Peyroux 2007: 10).

![Map 3.1 Official map of downtown Johannesburg](Image)
(Source & courtesy: UrbanGenesis)

Heavily armed guards are at the core of the CIDs’ success, according to the operational security manager of UrbanGenesis, a commercial company in charge of the daily management of various CIDs:

Not only are they the most visible element of our efforts, they are also our hands and feet on the ground. This means that they are key in representing the interests of our members. And we say ‘security guards’, but they are
much more: if they see litter, they pick it up; they have to look well-groomed, because they are the face of the district; they tell noisy kids to behave and can give directions to any shop you’d want.\footnote{Interview in Johannesburg, August 2010.}

PSC are pivotal in constituting CID\textsuperscript{s} as spaces where, in principle, licensed buyers and sellers are the only actors legitimately present; in the CIDs, comportment befitting only a veritable \textit{homo economicus} is permitted – that is, conformity to the rules of the free market: no stealing, no loitering, no informal economy, and only transactions regulated and approved by state law. If there are any displays of deviant behaviour, a reprimand by an armed private security guard will follow: depending on the nature of the particular transgression, a friendly correction or violent arrest and delivery to the police. Much of Johannesburg’s official gross geographic product, representing 16.4\% of national GDP\footnote{Source: http://www.joburg.org.za/content/view/404/52/ (Last accessed: 28 January 2011).}, is generated inside such coloured areas, while a much larger – unchartered – informal economy surrounds them.

This grey sea on the map – often portrayed as informal, illicit, criminal, insecure and dirty – forms the stage for the daily hustle and bustle of ordinary South Africans. They are often not registered as formal sellers or cannot afford the prices of formal, state-regulated services and products. Barred from CIDs by PSC, they move through spaces which are, to a lesser extent or not at all, regulated by the state, insecure and uninsured. The borders of CIDs on the map sharply delineate the line between on the one the hand spaces where the free or formal market thrives, and on the other the informal or ‘black’ economy. Increasingly, the former are selectively policed by PSC, whereas the latter remains relatively ungoverned.\footnote{Minnaar & Mistry 2004: 38. In townships, however, informal private security arrangements have proliferated. See Comaroff & Comaroff 2004.} This new topography has far-reaching consequences for who benefits from security and how. PSC exclude informal trading from CIDs, while 90\% of those working in the informal economy are black South Africans (Muller 2003). As Kempa & Singh (2008: 346) put it: “Thus, being young, male, underdressed and walking in a group signifies lack of membership in the ‘proper’ capitalist relationships of the fortified enclave and thereby leads to private security attention”.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{51} Interview in Johannesburg, August 2010.}
In short, CID[s are – by virtue mainly of the agencies of PSC – disembedded from deviant dynamics (such as the informal economy, theft and loitering) to constitute spaces where the formal economy can thrive as an autonomous ‘field’. The normative regime applied to the spaces belonging to this privately secured topography differs from that which holds for the informal spheres of activities surrounding them. By constantly making passers-by aware of the expected behaviour within the CID[s, PSC discourage deviance and “produce ‘calculating individuals’ within ‘calculable spaces’ and incorporated within ‘calculative regimes’” (Swyngedouw 2005: 1998). In the particular historical trajectory of South Africa, this is a disturbing development. As was the case during Apartheid, movement and trading by black populations is still restricted in large parts of the core economic zones of the country; but this is now not because of their race but because of their economic status; and they are not excluded by state security forces, but by the visible hands of the market.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed a novel topography of power in Sub-Saharan Africa: private security. Based on an extensive overview of literature, complemented by the illustrative cases of South Africa and the DRC, the first main point of the chapter was to show how a political-economic landscape is emerging in which PSC play a pivotal role. The ‘structure’ of this topography has been argued to consist of ‘global security assemblages’ – that is, highly internationalised and at once extremely localised operations of international actors, developmental or corporate, at specific places in African national territories. More generally, political efforts and security in Africa are often privately allocated and concentrated around those sites of strategic interest to political regimes. The increasing presence of formal PSC in this architecture makes it compatible with neoliberal imperatives emanating from the West and should thus be considered a creative translation and incorporation of the global into the heart of the African postcolonial state. By discussing the political topography of private security in the DRC and South Africa, the chapter illustrated this emergent pattern.

54 See Kempa & Singh (2008: 347) for discussion.
Privatisation is a prevalent neoliberal mode of government that in Africa, paradoxically, deepens and legitimates pre-existing illiberal patterns of exclusion and distribution of wealth and well-being. While ‘privatisation’ has long been hailed as a remedy for state control over economic activity in favour of private actors or ‘civil society’ (Swyngedouw 2005), the second main point of this chapter has been that security privatisation can also constitute an important way for African political elites to negotiate control over the allocation and distribution of economic resources. In one way, then, PSC are nothing new; rather, they reproduce the established practice of ‘selective governance’ by African elites that exercise power by controlling access to spaces and spheres of activities strategic for accumulation. As an example, this chapter showed how in the DRC, transnational mining corporations and international organisations – quite literally the sources of revenue for Kabila’s regime – are largely embedded in a formalised regime of private security. In a situation in which the regime in Kinshasa is unable to effectively enforce taxation of mining activities in the eastern DRC through the state apparatus, economic and security privatisation allows bypassing of that (corrupt) apparatus and shrinking the political space for contestation. PSC actually help the regime retain control over the allocation and distribution of resources vis-à-vis local government officials and competing authorities. By allowing PSC for and only for formal and ‘legal’ capital flows, Kabila reinforces the tendency whereby the formal economy becomes topographically disconnected from the informal one.  

Navigating through Africa’s postcolonial political landscape, we are reminded that, as Polanyi noted, formal markets are but one mode of economic exchange; frontiers between the public and private, the national and the transnational, are not exclusionary borders but rather ambiguous zones of negotiation and contestation (Duffield 2007: 79). The third point of this chapter has been that disembedding economic activities and upholding them in this landscape requires continuous policing, a process that increasingly involves PSC. South Africa served as a case-in-point: in the privately guarded spaces of Johannesburg, only a limited array of economic activities is permitted; competing, informal modes of exchange are in effect barred by a wall of seeming legality, permitting only those modes of exchange that pay

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55 This is not to say, of course, that PSC might themselves not be implicated in illegal mining or other ‘informal’ activities; yet this has hitherto not been documented for the DRC.
heavy tribute through the government’s tax system. In this particular case, considering PSC as ‘economizing agencies’ helps to tease out their political implications. In downtown Johannesburg, PSC are ‘boundary objects’ constantly at work – even by their mere presence – in upholding the existence of a formal economy, invoking rules and precedents, constantly pointing out how to behave and what is expected in a given space, and also indicating what is not legitimate behaviour (cf. Latour 2005: 31-32). PSC force agents to act as economic agents (as buyers rather than as thieves or informal sellers) but also work towards an objectification of the spaces they protect as spaces where the formal rules of the economy are observed – which they do, amongst other things, by excluding and displacing deviant (‘informal’) actors. In more general terms, PSC sustain a liberal mode of governing and accumulation in contexts where those modes are highly contested. Finally, this chapter, rather than rejecting such ‘everyday’ practices as falling outside the scope of politics, proposes that these negotiations and straddling strategies are at the heart of contemporary African politics.

References


CHAPTER FOUR

THE NEOLIBERALISATION OF NATURE IN AFRICA

Bram Büscher

Abstract

Nature in Africa has long had a special place in the global imagination. Equally, this nature and the imagination surrounding it have long been subject to uneven processes of commodification. Under global neoliberal restructuring since the 1980s, however, these processes seem to have intensified. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of some of the contemporary ways in which Africa’s nature is being neoliberalised and to provide an indication of how this neoliberalisation is negotiated by African actors. The chapter argues that this negotiation is exceptionally difficult, as the neoliberalisation of Africa’s ‘natural resources’ goes hand in hand with the framing of those same resources as ‘inverted commons’: a special type of commons that belongs to the whole globe but for which only Africans pay the real price in terms of their conservation.

Introduction

Nature in Africa has long occupied a special place in the global imagination. Images of a ‘Wild Eden’, rugged, ‘pristine’ landscapes, and some of the most charismatic global ‘megafauna’ (elephants, gorillas, rhinos, etc.) are etched in the mainstream connotations attached to the continent (Adams & McShane 1996). Indeed, whereas references to Africa’s people are often labelled in negative extremes and associated with war, poverty and famine (Dowden 2008), Africa’s nature is habitually framed in positive extremes: nature as it ‘should be’, ‘unspoilt’ and ‘pure’. Thus, when famous Virgin millionaire-entrepreneur Richard Branson asks the question ‘what is Africa?’, there seems to be no pun intended in his answer that “Africa is its animals. That is the beauty of Africa, that’s what makes it different from the rest of the
world. And to lose those animals would be catastrophic”. Branson squarely lays the blame for ‘dwindling wildlife numbers’ on ‘Africa’s increasing (human) populations’ and argues that Africa should “increase the amount of land for the animals and by increasing the amount of land for the animals, that will help human beings”.1

Increasing the amount of land for conservation, particularly through protected areas, is one way in which conservation organisations and powerful individuals have tried to protect Africa’s wild animals and natural landscapes (Büscher & Whande 2007; Brockington et al. 2008). But while this strategy remains the ‘mainstay’ of conservation, it is clear that conservation actors have had to find ways to balance their concern for wild animals and landscapes with people’s land- and natural resource-based livelihoods (Adams & Hutton 2007). Among the many ways in which this has been attempted – most notably through ‘community-based conservation’ – market-based strategies have become increasingly dominant. Under global neoliberal restructuring since the 1980s, conservation in Africa has progressively focused on ways for wildlife and ‘nature’ to ‘pay their way’, so that local and global communities can benefit from their sustained conservation. ‘Imposing wilderness’ – as Neumann (1998) referred to it – persists, albeit no longer through colonial force but through ‘the market’. ‘Neoliberal conservation’ has become the new mantra for global conservation, triggering new challenges for Africa.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of some of the contemporary ways in which Africa’s nature is being neoliberalised and provide a preliminary and partial indication of how this neoliberalisation is negotiated by African actors. The chapter argues that this negotiation is exceptionally difficult, as the neoliberalisation of Africa’s resources is tied to a framing of those resources as ‘inverted commons’: a special commons that belong to the entire globe but for which only Africans pay the real price in terms of their conservation. As such, I update and extend Ton Dietz’s earlier argument about entitlements to natural resources (Dietz 1996) in two crucial ways: first, that a variety of conservation actors, particularly from the West, actively frame Africa’s nature as a global commons that deserves protection for all of humanity; and second, that the practical operationalisation of this tactic increasingly revolves around

‘neoliberal conservation’: Reinterpreting and reinstitutionalising African natures within ideologies of power and systems of rule dependent on market competition, commodification and intensified capital accumulation (Sullivan 2006, 2009; Igoe & Brockington 2007; Brockington et al. 2008; Igoe 2010; Büscher 2010a, 2010b; Fletcher 2010). In turn, these ideologies of power and systems of rule usually favour those that can back up their claims most effectively and with superior ‘purchasing power’ – sometimes African actors, but most often Western actors concerned about Africa’s nature. By giving an overview of contemporary neoliberalisation of nature in Africa, I aim to investigate the strength but also the limits of this argument.

Before we can proceed to this task, it is important to clarify what ‘nature’ and what ‘Africa’ we are talking about. The answer to this question is not as simple as it seems. The more straightforward answer is that the chapter focuses on the conservation of wildlife and biodiversity. As such, it does not deal with the neoliberalisation of other ‘natural resources’, such as energy, minerals and land (see McDonald & Ruiters 2005; Bond 2007; McDonald 2009). Similarly, as ‘Africa’ is an incredibly large and diverse continent, it is impossible to do justice to all the possible developments occurring across the continent; hence, the chapter focuses predominantly on Southern and Eastern Africa, and less so on Western (Sub-Saharan) Africa. While this clarifies part of our focus, it does not cover what ‘nature’ and what ‘Africa’ we are talking about, as these are not mere biophysical, material entities. We therefore need to first delve into ‘Africa’ and ‘nature’ as they are imagined within the context of global conservation by – mainly – Western audiences, and the colonial connotations these imaginations are often based upon.²

Africa’s nature in the global imagination

As stated above, Africa has long triggered global imagination of wild and pristine natures. Many conservation organisations still thrive on this imagination and indeed actively produce it to garner support and goodwill (Adams & McShane 1996; Igoe 2010). In Garland’s (2008:

² While in the rest of the chapter I will not put ‘Africa’ and ‘nature’ between inverted commas, it should be clear that I regard them as problematic categories/signifiers that need to be used carefully so as to make clear they are contested and imagined differently by different actors.
words, conservationists take Africa’s ‘natural capital’ and add value to it “through various mediations and ultimately transform it to a capital of a more convertible and globally ramifying kind”. Particular representations of an ideal ‘African nature’, then, become the lubricant of the circulation of this ‘globally convertible capital’ that manifests itself interchangeably as money and other types of symbolic, political capital. But this capital needs to be presented in a delicate way, as several examples can illustrate.

A major international non-governmental organisation, the African Wildlife Foundation, states that they are the leading international conservation organisation focused solely on Africa. We believe that protecting Africa’s wildlife and wild landscapes is the key to the future prosperity of Africa and its people – and for over forty-five years we have made it our work to help ensure that Africa’s wild resources endure.3

Similarly, Conservation International states that “Africa is a continent of incredible forests and savannas, indispensable plants, and breathtaking animals. By preserving these resources and using them responsibly, each African country can flourish”.4 The focus is on presenting a nuanced view of the need to balance the protection of biodiversity with attention to the needs of African peoples. In line with the ‘community-conservation’ and ‘sustainable development’ paradigms, conservation is wedded to and even made the foundation of African developmental aspirations (Ros-Tonen & Dietz 2005; Duffy 2010). But these exercises are not always what they seem. Indeed, much of this is ‘marketing-speak’ that obfuscates organisations’ primary objectives (usually strict conservation) and the politics they employ to reach or implement these objectives. Let us briefly look at some other illustrations of the discourses used by influential conservation organisations working in Africa.

The South African NGO ‘Peace Parks Foundation’ aims to establish large conservation areas across international state boundaries – so-called ‘Peace Parks’ because they are said to stimulate international cooperation in addition to conservation and development (Duffy 2006; Ramutsindela 2007; Büscher 2010a). In the organisation’s 1999 Annual Review, its multi-millionaire chairman Anton Rupert writes:

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“sinking beneath the weight of war and survival and of exploding populations searching for living space are Africa’s designated protected areas, the crown jewels of a tourism industry which has the potential to provide a sustainable way of life”. He emphasises that “poverty stricken Africa desperately needs alternatives to subsistence living, and the creation of jobs from tourism gives these” (PPF 2000: 2). Lastly, Rupert asserts that:

Embedded deep in the psyche of man is the oldest symbol of all, the Garden of Eden. This is a place of peace and reflection free from divisive barriers and physical constraints. Affluent Western man needs for the health of his soul to take time off from the frenetic treadmill of his existence to return to the Garden for refreshment and contemplation, and the growth of tourism to wilderness areas endorses this (PPF 2000: 2).

This comes much closer to the rhetoric used by Richard Branson at the start of this chapter (which, interestingly, Branson spoke in support of the Peace Parks Foundation). From these quotes it is clear that Rupert and the Peace Parks Foundation see wilderness-based tourism as a way for ‘affluent Western man’ (not woman!) to cleanse his tired soul and for poor black Africans to earn a little money serving whites. Moreover, whereas Africans need to be taken off the land to make a living (‘Africa desperately needs alternatives to subsistence living’), whites apparently need the land (the ‘garden’) to make life bearable. Although critical research continues to debunk these racist, colonial illusions (Sullivan 2006; Dressler & Büscher 2008), they persist in the dominant conservation discourse. As recently argued by David Hughes (2010: 133), “contemporary conservation dabbles in nostalgia for the colonial past” and “continues to produce the aesthetics, symbols, and fables of white privilege”.

A paradox thus emerges, in that colonial suffering and inequalities are superficially recognised in policy and rhetoric of major conservation actors through a focus on ‘community-conservation’ and ‘sustainable development’, while the latter simultaneously retain many of the ‘aesthetics, symbols, and fables’ of conservation as ‘white privilege’. Indeed, as noted by Rosaleen Duffy (2010: 218-9), the focus on poverty by conservation organisations is even convenient – “claiming that poor people poach and trade wildlife to make a living” – as it leaves out the ‘consumption habits of the wealthy world’:

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5 Note that although technically a racist comment, I here conceptualise racism following Hughes (2010: xviii) as ‘other disregarding’.
it is difficult for NGOs, especially, to turn their attention to their own support-ers and point out their role in creating conservation problems; they risk alienating their donors, and supporters may not be willing to accept that their own lifestyles and demand for wildlife goods creates problems far distant from where they live. NGOs might well be acting on the best intentions and have the interests of wildlife at heart, but their failure to tackle the wider context means they perpetuate unhelpful stereotypes of poor people as the enemy of wildlife, and rich people as its savior.

Tourism, Duffy and others point out (see Dunn 2004), therefore also often ends up reinforcing racial stereotypes and ‘aesthetics, symbols, fables of white privilege’. It very rarely, if ever, works to upset these symbols and fables because they involve major capital flows and international investments that few African governments are willing to forego. Nevertheless, every now and then they are challenged, and African ‘Edens’ come under ‘threat’ from African desires to use land and resources differently. When they do, they often rattle global (usually white) emotions. One such prominent occasion recently was the international debate that erupted after the Tanzanian government proposed constructing a highway through its Serengeti National Park.

The Serengeti is arguably one of the most well-known symbols of ‘Africa’s wild nature’ and its wildebeest migration plays an important part in the global imagination. Thus, when the Tanzanian government in July 2010 became serious about an earlier election promise to construct a highway through the northern part of the park, all hell seemed to break loose. International – mainly Western – audiences resisted in numerous ways that are interesting to briefly highlight to make the point that African nature is not only important in the global imagination, but indeed is seen as something that belongs to the entire globe and over which Africans have only partial sovereignty (e.g. Mbembe 2000). As the outpouring was truly prodigious, I present only some of the recent, major initiatives:

- An internet site (http://www.savetheserengeti.org/) was established that states, “This ill-conceived project changes all the rules, and would destroy the integrity of a priceless world heritage that has been protected by the people of Tanzania since the birth of their country. It would also cause grave danger to their entire tourist industry”. Like Richard Branson, the website organisers blame population growth: “Areas to the west of the Serengeti are already heavily populated. A highway will add even more human population and development”.

• An online petition was organised urging readers to send Tanzanian President Kikwete an email that ends as follows: “The world is watching and expecting good governance, and for you to find a way to preserve your great country’s natural inheritance and future potential for advancement.” Of the 248,500 signatories, the vast majority are from North America or Europe, with hardly any signatories from African countries.

• A major petition and survey was performed by ‘302 international scientists from 32 countries’7, which concludes that “the road will result in severe, negative, irreversible impacts, with little mitigation possible.” Again the vast majority of signatories are from Western countries (those that profess to be from African countries are mainly Westerners that live and work in Africa or white South Africans).

• A Facebook group ‘stop the Serengeti Highway’ was established, with over 38,000 ‘friends’ as of March 2011.8

• 24 scientists, led by Western conservationists/biologists, published an article in *Nature* entitled ‘Road will Ruin Serengeti’. They write that “the proposed road could lead to the collapse of the largest remaining migratory system on Earth – a system that drives Tanzania’s tourism trade and supports thousands of people” and ask the Tanzanian government to “explicitly acknowledge and conserve the global benefits of preserving the Serengeti National Park, one of the world’s natural wonders and one of Africa’s last surviving pristine ecosystems”9 (italics added).

In all, considerable pressure has been placed on the Tanzanian government to rethink the road, with even UNESCO threatening it might

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take the Serengeti off the World Heritage list if the plan continues. While the above is only the tip of the iceberg and the debate contains diverse viewpoints, it is clearly driven by Western conservationists and often harks back to well-trodden neocolonial arguments about wildlife and local population growth, while few direct links are made to the Western consumerism that is partly responsible for the road (namely, in order to more rapidly transport rare-earth metals from Lake Victoria to the coast for production in China). At the same time, there is hardly any mention of how the Serengeti was produced by evicting Maasai from the area during colonial times and, therefore, that the Serengeti is anything but ‘natural’ or pristine. What is particularly salient is that many of the conservationists and their supporters feel a sense of ‘entitlement’ to the Serengeti (Dietz 1996), or, as I call it, frame the Serengeti as an ‘inverted commons’, a commons that surpasses Tanzanian jurisdiction and whose value can seemingly be appropriately appreciated only by outsiders.

International outbursts over African nature like the one around the Serengeti highway are rare. African conservation politics, heated though they are, seldom attract international headlines. This, however, does not mean that many of the same emotions, arguments and political strategies do not play a role in day-to-day conservation. They do, but involving thousands of different actors across hundreds of sites all across the continent. While this diversity precludes absolute generalisations, this chapter argues that at least one major common dynamic can be identified in that many conservation strategies increasingly depend on the neoliberalisation of nature.

The neoliberalisation of nature

If we want to understand the neoliberalisation of nature, we must first clarify what we mean by neoliberalism. As the purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of current ‘neoliberal conservation’ mechanisms, I will only touch on the basic elements of the concept and refer the reader to the burgeoning literature for more in-depth discussions (see: McCarthy & Prudham 2004; McCarthy 2005; Sullivan 2006, 2009; Igoe & Brockington 2007; Brockington et al. 2008; Büscher

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Neoliberalism has been defined and used in such disparate ways and contexts that James Ferguson (2010) rightly calls for more clarity in its ‘uses’. David Harvey defines neoliberalism as an international project of the ruling class to ‘liberate’ capitalism from social, political and other constraints (especially state intervention) (Harvey 2005). In contrast, I define it as a political ideology (plus related practices) that attempts to subordinate social and political affairs to capitalist market dynamics (see Büscher 2008; Büscher et al. forthcoming). In describing neoliberalism as an ideology, I am not saying that neoliberal practices are of less importance. Rather, I wish to focus attention on neoliberalism as a world-making exercise: its proponents pursue an ideal world where rational markets and rational human beings respond to price signals and economic incentives and so create a balanced global economy and equality between individuals. This immediately emphasises a second important point: namely, the disconnect with neoliberal practices, which are – in the words of Brenner et al. (2010) – extremely variegated and geographically uneven. This reality makes the ideal – the perfect market ‘incentivisation’ of humans in combination with that same ‘incentivisation’ of biodiversity and ecosystems – into such a far-fetched proposition that it requires continuous ideological (re)interpretation (or ‘public relations’ and ‘marketing’, in business lingo) to make it legitimate and believable. But to stress the disjointed, variegated nature of neoliberal practice is not to juxtapose it to some monolithic ideology; far from it. Ideology here is seen as a set of principles and ideals that together form a framework of thought that guides actions. Some pillars of this framework are relatively coherent across space and time, but their exact combination, weight and socio-cultural, ecological and political embeddings can vary wildly (see Castree 2008).

What then are some of these ‘pillars’? I will focus on just four for brevity’s sake: commodification, competition, economic and methodological reductionism, and reregulation. Commodification encompasses the change from qualitatively defined use or inherent values of

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11 Brenner et al., however, see neoliberalism solely through regulatory mechanisms which I believe to be a reductionism that does not do justice to the teleological qualities of neoliberalism as an ideal system of societal/social behavior. Moreover, unlike Brenner et al., I distance myself from defining neoliberalism as a mere ‘tendency’.
objects and things to quantitatively defined exchange values (McDonald & Ruiters 2005: 21), while competition refers to an ‘environment’ where different players perpetually strive to outdo each other, to struggle to come out best, on top, with most assets, etc. Together, these two elements form important principles for the regulation of public affairs through devolved governance (McCarthy 2005), or what Foucault would refer to as the ‘discipline of the market’. Of course, these dynamics are much older than the neoliberal project; they are core elements of the capitalist mode of production (Harvey 2006). Under neoliberalism, however, they have received renewed legitimacy as pillars of a system of governance that has radically altered human and human-nature relationships as well as landscapes and ecologies across the globe (Moore 2010).

But neoliberalism is not just about emphasising changing relationships across reality. Carolan (2005) also points towards our vertical penetrations into it by way of the two self-reinforcing dynamics of economic and methodological reductionism. Economic reductionism prioritises ‘private ownership’, ‘market-based management’, commoditisation, and so forth. Methodological reductionism entails the managerial and technical “‘breaking’ of the world down into its constituent parts”. These tactics, he argues, have important consequences: “although science and the market seek to continually dissect reality into its constituent parts, creating in its wake a world full of unitary, unproblematic, and ontologically fixed objects, such epistemic manoeuvring denies the rooted, emergent, and interconnected qualities those objects have as ecologically embedded entities. All of which, in turn, leads to activities rife with unintended consequences” (Carolan 2005: 408-9, italics added). Thus, while neoliberal tactics across reality change, the way we see, experience and understand reality continues to be pervaded by logics of economic and methodological reductionism, thereby further substantiating neoliberal ‘world-making’ ambitions.

All of this is still very general; what is crucially missing is that these world-making ideas and practices are developed and stimulated by actors – and not just private-sector actors, but actors across the so-called ‘public-private divide’, with special emphasis on the role of the state (Büscher 2010a). Quoting Peck & Tickell (2002: 384):

there seems to have been a shift from the pattern of deregulation and dismantlement so dominant during the 1980s, which might be characterised as “roll-back neoliberalism,” to an emergent phase of active state-building and
regulatory reform – an ascendant moment of “roll-out neoliberalism.” In the course of this shift, the agenda has gradually moved from one preoccupied with the active destruction and discreditation of Keynesian-welfarist and social collectivist institutions (broadly defined) to one focused on the purposeful construction and consolidation of neoliberalised state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations.

Thus enters the last pillar, re-regulation: the crucial acceptance that neoliberal governance depends on governmental mechanisms and regulations to make capitalist markets function. While these changes can also be seen occurring in parts of Africa (particularly Southern Africa), they often remain tentative and limited to particular (geographic, thematic) areas of intervention. As Ferguson argued, capital does not spread across Africa; instead it ‘hops’, landing only in enclaves of privatised space (Ferguson 2006). This then leaves a lot of space for other (non-governmental, private foreign governmental, individual) actors to exploit the ‘governance gaps’, which is exactly what we see happening in conservation (Brockington et al. 2008). Reinforced by international donor demands and neoliberal global environmental treaties, we see NGOs and private sector organisations (often in unison) taking the lead in neoliberalising nature in African settings. Let us now move to some of the major ways in which this is currently pursued.

**Important neoliberal conservation tactics**

While this disclaimer has already been made, it deserves repeating that the neoliberal conservation tactics in the discussion that follows below are being pursued in very different ways across the African continent, with very different outcomes for peoples and nature. Duffy & Moore (2010) stress the importance of Brenner and Theodore’s ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ to remain attentive to the fact that neoliberalism is not all-powerful and monolithic, but variegated geographically, socially, culturally and ecologically. With that in mind, I will elaborate upon what I believe are important neoliberal conservation tactics currently pursued across Africa: the commercialisation of parks’ management, ecotourism, payments for ecosystem services, and carbon trade and the ‘REDD’ mechanism (reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation). Two newer tactics that I believe will play important roles in the coming decade are conservation through Web 2.0/social media and new financial mechanisms such as
conservation derivatives, species banking, and sustainability enhancement investments. All these were chosen on the basis on research on neoliberal conservation in Southern Africa over the last eight years and therefore not the result of a rigorous survey of ‘experts’ or others. Moreover, the way they will be discussed is tentative, incomplete and partial, touching only on some major developments and issues in an associative manner. Many important issues, caveats and trends are no doubt missing, and I therefore hope this overview will invite readers to extend (empirically/theoretically) and/or amend where needed.

Commercialisation of park management

One of the most obvious but often ignored ways in which the neoliberalisation of nature is pursued is the commercialisation of the management of protected areas (but see Child 2004). Even Brockington et al. (2008) – in their otherwise very complete overview of conservation, capitalism and protected areas – only touch indirectly on this aspect through a focus on private parks (pp. 182-5). Park management structures in many countries in Africa are often long-standing state institutions, though capacity, experience and organisational and institutional capabilities differ enormously. One of South Africa’s provincial conservation agencies, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, for example, is better funded, better organised and has more capacity than many similar institutions throughout West Africa combined. The point is that many of these public institutions, especially in Southern Africa, have commercialised park management – for example, through the outsourcing of catering and facilities, introduction of ‘new public management’ principles in financial and organisational management, and the overall reconstitution of parks as ‘business units’. In South Africa, especially, this has been going on for quite some time. Dressler & Büscher (2008) describe how South African National Parks, the national parks authority in South Africa, has systematically changed park management, particularly that of its major ‘cash-cow’, Kruger National Park, to fit the neoliberal mantras of commercialisation, competition and economic reductionism (see also Child 2004). This change, however, is no easy or linear process. South African National Parks was recently (October 2010) forced to take back ‘in-house’
their ‘Wildcard’ reward programme after the private company, Infinity, reneged on their contract.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite these ‘hiccups’, a clear trend is visible in several parts of Africa to neoliberalise public park management. This is accompanied by a strong surge in the establishment of private parks (see Brockington et al. 2008). Again, mainly in Eastern and Southern Africa, private protected areas have seen rapid growth over the last decade, both in numbers as well as total area of land under conservation. In South Africa, a rapidly growing industry has developed around the conversion from farmland to private wildlife farms and parks (Spierenburg et al. 2011). Another model of private park development is the ‘buying up’ of public parks and reconstituting them on business principles. The ‘classic’ example here is the organisation ‘African Parks’. Founded by millionaire Dutch wildlife enthusiast Paul Fentener van Vlissingen in 2000, African Parks communicates their mission as follows:

Many of Africa’s national parks and protected areas face an uncertain future. Governments have committed large tracts of land to the establishment of national parks to conserve their natural heritage, but suffer from the same constraints – a lack of financial resources and limited management expertise and commercial skills that drive successful businesses worldwide. At the same time there is pressure from surrounding communities who often derive little benefit from the existence of parks and hence often use the resources unsustainably. The African Parks Network was established as a solution to this situation. It manages parks in public-private partnerships with Governments on a long term basis, by combining world class conservation practice with business expertise.\textsuperscript{13}

African Parks is also a ‘classic’ case in another sense: it neatly fits Hughes’ remark that conservation still dabbles in colonial nostalgia,\textsuperscript{14} while – contra rhetoric – they do not always take local communities seriously as ‘partners’. In 2004, African Parks caused a major uproar by being implicated in the displacement of several thousands of


\textsuperscript{13} http://www.african-parks.org/apffoundation/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=71 (Last accessed: 27 December 2010).

Mursi people living in and around Ethiopia’s Omo National Park. \textsuperscript{15} Ultimately, African Parks withdrew from Ethiopia completely, and now concentrates on DRC, Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia.

While African Parks may be an extreme case, they are not alone. Private parks often feel they need to dabble in colonial nostalgia in order to attract those that supposedly provide the solution to many problems: tourists.

\textit{(Eco)tourism}

“In the last two decades tourism has become the key rationale used to underpin the maintenance of protected areas through claims that conservation will ‘pay its way’ via the development of tourism” (Brockington et al. 2008: 131). While there is no space to go into this subject in depth, the one point that needs to be made is that tourism is by no means a ‘neutral’ force balancing conservation and development in Africa. Rather, as argued by Duffy & Moore (2010: 743), “the tourism industry is one means by which nature is neoliberalised, since it allows neoliberalism to target and open up new frontiers in nature”. This is especially achieved through ecotourism, which “has even greater claims attached to it: that it is \textit{the} environmentally sustainable form of development for Africa” (Duffy 2006: 131, emphasis in original). What it also does is tie biodiversity closer into the continent’s increasingly neoliberal political economy: “Tourism and ecotourism are underpinned by a market oriented strategy that neatly fits with the outlook of neo-liberalism” (idem).

In the literature, it is often pointed out that ecotourism depends on certain constructions of ‘Africa’, which, as argued by Dunn (2004: 487), are reminiscent of colonial times: “It is clear that Africa is often presented as an exoticised destination in which to see and consume both ‘nature’ and the ‘native’. This disposition, informed by and built upon colonial travel narratives and tropes, entails the practice of commodifying Africa and marketing it for Western consumption”. Similarly, Nelson argues that “the emotional power of these images for European and American audiences is not in doubt; nor is their usefulness for fund-raising purposes” (Nelson 2003: 80) – and, one can add, for tourism purposes. This ‘usefulness’ has steadily increased in the last two decades to the point where tourism has become

one of the fastest growing industries and foreign exchange earners in many countries in Africa.\textsuperscript{16} In 1999, the UN World Tourism Organisation already indicated that “the great international interest in wildlife conservation will place Sub-Saharan Africa in an advantageous marketing position if conservation programs are pursued in the region”.\textsuperscript{17} This was prescient, at least from a profit-oriented perspective: while tourism numbers across the world plummeted during the 2008-9 financial crisis, they remained stable in many African countries, sometimes even increasing.

\textit{Payments for ecosystem services}

While the commercialisation of parks and tourism are by far the major neoliberal conservation tactics pursued across Africa, others are also making inroads. One of the main, new trends is Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), the idea that the value of ecosystems should be captured in monetary terms and conserved through market dynamics. Where tourism relies on outside investments from tourists, PES aims to create a market from existing socio-ecological settings by reconstituting social relationships in neoliberal terms. A report published by the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project, a major conservation initiative across the border of Lesotho and South Africa, explains PES as follows:

\begin{quote}
Payment for environmental services provides an incentive for directing landowners towards environment management actions that address priority environmental services, such as water security. As a payment system directly links buyers and producers of environmental services, it builds relationships between people who are economically linked and allows market based transactions to take place, reducing the need for further state regulation. Furthermore it focuses on measurable deliverables and consequently sharpens the performance of conservation actors (public, private or communal) (Diedrichs & Mander 2004: 5).
\end{quote}

This is an obvious case of economic reductionism, where social relations, individual behaviour and their environmental effects are reduced to market incentives, calculated in quantitative monetary terms. Moreover, PES relies on elements of commercialisation and competition as ways to ‘efficiently’ share costs and benefits of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{16} For figures, see www.world-tourism.org.
\item \textsuperscript{17} http://pub.unwto.org/WebRoot/Store/Shops/Infoshop/Products/1116/1116-1.pdf, page 11 (Last accessed: 28 December 2010).
\end{itemize}
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conservation. However, how PES actually functions in various African settings is largely unknown, as few cases have been empirically investigated. As such, the debate focuses mainly on the conceptual level, with proponents and opponents in often heated exchanges (see Redford & Adams 2009). What is certain, however, is that PES in Africa is stimulated by many influential actors. An example is the Katoomba Group, an ‘international network’ “working to promote and improve capacity related to markets and payments for ecosystem services”, supported by major international organisations, donors, conservation NGOs and private companies, including UNDP, the World Bank, FAO, DFID, Conservation International, IUCN, The Nature Conservancy, Tokyo Electric Power Co and the Zurich Bank.\(^\text{18}\) Four of its recent events were held in Africa, the last one (October 2009 in Ghana) seeking to “incorporate the value of nature’s services into West Africa’s economy”.\(^\text{19}\)

\textit{Carbon trade and REDD}

One of the major threats to conservation in Africa and across the world is climate change. With ever more carbon pumped into the global atmosphere, it is obvious that ecosystems across the globe are under increasing and sustained pressure and might lose many of their so-called ‘services’ that PES initiatives aim to conserve. But, as Brockington et al. (2008: 176) point out, “the conservation and policy responses are fascinating because they demonstrate that concerns about carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases are becoming yet another means for conservation and capitalism to work closely together”. Indeed, instead of questioning the system responsible for producing the enormous greenhouse emissions that trigger climate change, the neoliberal response is to see this challenge as another frontier for commodification, market competition and economic reductionism. Two major tactics are carbon trading, where carbon polluters can ‘offset’ their emissions by buying ‘stored carbon’ in other parts of the world, and REDD (reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation), “a proposal to provide financial incentives to help developing countries voluntarily reduce national deforestation rates and


associated carbon emissions. Countries that demonstrate emissions reductions may be able to sell those carbon credits on the international carbon market or elsewhere” (Gibbs et al. 2007: 2).

REDD and carbon-trade-based offsetting schemes are being pursued throughout Africa, including west and northern Africa. While REDD projects are mainly focused on forests, offsetting schemes come in many different formats. The majority of projects also focus on forests and plantations, but energy efficiency schemes such as cooking stove replacements are also popular. While Africa is responsible only for 3% of the global carbon trade (Bond et al. 2009), this percentage is likely to increase as African countries are increasingly seen as attractive places for carbon offsetting. Moreover, after the recent (though half-hearted) endorsement of the REDD scheme at the 16th Conference of Parties of the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancun, REDD projects are likely to increase across Africa, making this another neoliberal conservation tactic which Africans, particularly local peoples that are the focus of many NGOs’ worries about REDD, will have to negotiate.

Web 2.0, social media and new financial mechanisms

The foregoing neoliberal conservation tactics are all fairly well established, though PES, carbon trading, and REDD are still in their early stages. While these already seem enough to deal with in terms of understanding and negotiating their technical and political complexities and actual impacts on peoples and nature, further strategies are continuously added to the mix. Two are worth mentioning: new internet-based conservation strategies and new financial conservation mechanisms.

Social media and Web 2.0 applications allow people to share, form and rate online content, and have become crucial new ways for conservation organisations to reach audiences and – vice versa – for concerned citizens to take action and be ‘green’. An example of a Web 2.0 site that supports conservation initiatives in Africa is Pifworld, a website that argues that ‘doing good’ can be done by ‘Playing it Forward’. One can “Join Pifworld and invite three friends to do the same. If your friends also invite three friends and these friends invite three others we will reach the number of ten million people in 20

no time”.21 ‘Doing good’ involves many things: “enable kids to go to school, free child slaves, protect endangered animals or even build a massive wildlife park”.22 This wildlife park is the Kavango-Zambezi transfrontier conservation area between Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and the money from Pifworld goes directly to the Peace Parks Foundation (see above). While no doubt the claims made by Pifworld are exaggerated, these new technical-communication and information-sharing mechanisms provide conservation organisations with new means to pursue support, legitimacy and – especially – funding.

Finding financial means is a constant pressure on conservation organisations and in order to connect these financial needs with – mainly Western – consumers and companies’ needs to contribute to solving environmental problems or off-set their environmental impacts, an increasing number of new financial mechanisms are being developed. Examples are conservation derivatives, species and wetland banking, and sustainability enhancement investments.23 Like the carbon market, all these turn the conservation of nature into quantifiable financial mechanisms that allow consumers, developers and others to ‘off-set’ their impact on species, wetlands and ecosystems by buying credits that guarantee ‘no net loss’ of what was destroyed (Pawliczek & Sullivan, forthcoming). These mechanisms are also in the beginning stages and are highly dependent on ‘reregulation’ to develop standards for quantification and trading. Interestingly, although it is unclear whether these mechanisms have any impact, they have already attracted institutional speculators betting on the survival of species or ecological integrity of wetlands. This, however, is mainly in the US and Europe – but they are also finding their way into African spaces, as is evident from progress tracked through the www.ecosystemmarketplace.com website.

Both these mechanisms – Web 2.0 and new financial conservation constructs – drastically complicate the ways in which biodiversity and nature are turned into capital that circulates through the global economy, in terms of both finance and the imagination that link Western consumers to African environments. All this will happen with uncertain and uneven effects; but if history is anything to go by, we

22 Idem.
23 See http://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/ for an overview of such financial conservation mechanisms.
should be profoundly sceptical of solutions based on the same logic that created the problems in the first place. However, to confirm this scepticism, the conceptual and empirical study of these new mechanisms will be of utmost importance.

**Negotiating neoliberal conservation?**

As is clear from the foregoing, neoliberal conservation is developing rapidly in Africa, with different outcomes for people and nature. Moreover, it is clear that, despite the recent financial crisis, they are thriving, even intensifying (Büscher & Arsel, forthcoming). All this leads to the question of how this barrage of neoliberal conservation is negotiated by Africa and Africans? This is a very difficult question that cannot be answered in a short chapter. Therefore, this section merely aims to outline some major issues at stake, in the hope that they will add to the other arguments presented in this volume.

The first point is that it is obviously not only non-Africans who put forth neoliberal conservation. As we have seen, some of the strongest proponents are Africans themselves, such as the Peace Parks Foundation. Nevertheless, these remain the minority. Overwhelmingly, many of the neoliberal conservation proposals are proposed, stimulated and financially backed up by – mainly Western – non-Africans, making it safe to say that the vast majority of African actors (individuals, organisations, governments) need to find ways to respond to and deal with the various tactics. Therefore, whereas the variations in ‘actually existing neoliberalisation’ are enormous, and generalisations about the particular outcomes of the neoliberalisation of nature in particular places across the continent cannot be made (Duffy & Moore 2010), what can be generalised is the need for Africans to negotiate the tidal wave of neoliberal conservation.

One important way of negotiation is simply welcoming and/or accommodating neoliberal conservation mechanisms that bring in funds, potential jobs and so forth. Many African governments actively work together with international donors, companies and NGOs to accommodate PES, carbon trading, commercialisation of park management and – especially – tourism. From Kenya’s coasts to The Gambia’s beaches, from South Africa’s wildlife parks to Uganda’s reserves, tourism is pursued on a substantial scale across Sub-Saharan Africa, with massive new infrastructure developments taking place. At the same time (as is clear from other contributions to this volume),
many if not all of these schemes are appropriated locally, caught up in local, regional and national politics and necessarily involve many contradictory dynamics and struggles. Like capitalist development more generally, neoliberal conservation developments are inherently geographically uneven (see Harvey 2006), and this unevenness is likely even more pronounced in many African settings (Ferguson 2006). Moreover, this unevenness is perpetuated by new ways in which ‘outsiders’ can lay claims on and entitlements to African nature, particularly through the above-mentioned Web 2.0 and new financial mechanisms. All this provides opportunities for negotiation and appropriation, as well as new challenges. The major challenge is that power structures in neoliberal conservation settings are incredibly diffused (Peck & Tickell 2002).

This is not to say that there is no resistance to neoliberal conservation in Africa; on the contrary, there are many active NGOs, particularly in South and Southern Africa, resisting the neoliberalisation of nature in Africa. One major example is the Climate Justice Now! Network, which in 2004 launched the Durban Declaration on Carbon Trading (see Bond et al. 2009): “As representatives of people’s movements and independent organisations, we reject the claim that carbon trading will halt the climate crisis. This crisis has been caused more than anything else by the mining of fossil fuels and the release of their carbon to the oceans, air, soil and living things”.24 The network is very clear about what the type of conservation mechanism they are dealing with:

History has seen attempts to commodify land, food, labour, forests, water, genes and ideas. Carbon trading follows in the footsteps of this history and turns the earth’s carbon-cycling capacity into property to be bought or sold in a global market. Through this process of creating a new commodity – carbon – the Earth’s ability and capacity to support a climate conducive to life and human societies is now passing into the same corporate hands that are destroying the climate.25

Interestingly, Africans are becoming increasingly active on the internet, one of the major public spaces where ideas are formed, support garnered and information spread. Here also, resistance to neoliberal conservation can be heard, albeit the African voices often drown in a cacophony of non-African comments. But while most of the com-

25 Idem.
ments on www.savetheserengeti.org are from Westerners condemning the ‘destruction’ of the Serengeti, a Tanzanian commentator writes:

As a Tanzanian I find the comments here … to exemplify the hypocrisy that is western conservation ... where many exhibit a love of African landscape, resources and wildlife but not its people ... I believe this is a conspiracy not only against Tanzania and Tanzanians but Africa in general, ... designed to create conditions where the continent and its people continue to subsidise the rest of humanity and thus help restore the sanity of the western world as the quintessential custodians of the environment. I have heard statements such as “I love the Serengeti, ... it’s the last heaven on earth; but in truth, these views are narrow and hollow sentiments emanating from the sensation you westerners and your allies get upon regaining a sense of humanity following a site visit to Serengeti or any similar protected area in Tanzania or Africa.”

While these acts of resistance target the heart of the matter when it comes to Western-imposed neoliberal conservation, other acts of resistance/negotiation are less clear about what they are targeting. An example comes from Nobel-prize winner Wangari Maathai. She authored the manifesto ‘Africa Speaks up on Climate Change’, which states:

Africa is the continent that will be hit hardest by climate change. Unpredictable rains and floods, prolonged droughts, subsequent crop failures, and rapid desertification, among others, have in fact already begun to change the face of our continent. Africa must not remain silent as rich nations fight over ways to stop climate change. Africa must speak up against activities that accelerate the looming climate crisis, and it must do so loud and clear!

At the same time, Maathai endorses carbon trading, something that earned her criticism from grassroots organisations, activists and academics.

One could go on listing examples of different negotiation tactics by African actors, but the overall argument I wish to make is that this negotiation is exceedingly difficult because the neoliberalisation of Africa’s resources works through global ideologies of power and systems of rule where African actors have historically had – and continue to have – a weak position. This goes for international environ-

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mental fora, but also for many local situations between unequal ‘partners’. This is particularly poignant when neoliberal conservation is brought in via the ‘back door’, as ‘sustainability initiatives’ by big companies that wreak environmental and social havoc. An example is the conservation work by mining corporation Rio Tinto in Southeast Madagascar. As shown by Seagle (2009), Rio Tinto – in response to the pollution of water, the limiting of access to land and other negative socio-environmental impacts – began several ‘integrated compensation packages’ revolving around ecotourism, conservation management, plantations, etc. About these measures, Seagle (2009: 66) notes:

By working with local leaders to enforce conservation, Rio Tinto creates divisions within communities, reminiscent of the French colonial State's political tactic of “divide and rule” (turning the population against each other in order to better control them). The dina (a Malagasy tradition to acquire social obligations) also puts added responsibilities on local communities in terms of natural resource management and policing protected areas, creating tensions within the village.

From Seagle’s study, it is clear that power differences made negotiating neoliberal conservation more difficult, as Rio Tinto has a powerful position owing to the resources and political connections it commands. Moreover, the company pursues conservation as something ‘good’ in a reaction to its own profitable actions which are regarded as environmentally and socially negative for local Malagasy. This takes attention away from the fact that conservation itself can also have negative impacts on how Africans can relate to or keep control over their land, cultures, and livelihoods.

But the real ‘big picture’ here is that African nature is often framed as ‘inverted commons’: a special type of commons that belongs to the whole globe but for which only Africans pay the real price in terms of their conservation. The last section will briefly dwell on this while providing some concluding thoughts.

**Conclusion**

Through tactics such as the commercialisation of parks’ management, ecotourism, payments for ecosystem services, and carbon trade and ‘REDD’, Africa’s nature is being reconstituted in neoliberal terms. While this neoliberalisation of nature in Africa is variegated, profoundly uneven and never linear, this chapter has argued that, on the
whole, this neoliberalisation is a sea-change in the relations between Africans and their biodiversity and wildlife, one that will have massive implications for both. It has also showed that there is resistance to and appropriation of some of these processes, but these are mostly localised and unconnected. In the face of the potential power that capital is placing behind the neoliberalisation of nature in Africa, the odds are extremely uneven and stacked against ordinary, local Africans. This reality, however, is obscured behind a peculiar ‘politics of neoliberal conservation’ that depends on win-win consensus constructions and anti-political rhetoric (Büscher 2010a). Most especially, as argued in this chapter, Africa’s nature is being commodified through a rhetorical strategy that I refer to as ‘inverted commons’: a common resource whose global ecological, political and emotional importance trumps desires and rights of local African actors. This tactic is cynical, particularly in the light of historical and contemporary world politics, which has consistently violated African rights and desires. Moreover, the framing is ironic in that ‘inverted commons’ statements about Africa’s nature do not say under what type of regimes these are governed. When these governance regimes are increasingly neoliberal, they even function to further wrest control of African ecosystems and wildlife from Africans themselves, as African nature – that global commons – is increasingly sold to Western, white investors.

While this framing makes it very difficult to negotiate the neoliberalisation of nature in Africa, it is important to remember that notions of ‘inverted commons’ can be deflated quickly when the argument is turned around. While doing fieldwork in Zimbabwe, I once heard a Zimbabwean colleague make the comment that if – in this case – Dutch people were so concerned with African elephants and wanted to conserve them so badly, then Zimbabwe could put all their elephants on several mega-ships and transport them to Rotterdam harbour, adding they would do this ‘free of charge’. Dutch people could then do with them whatever they wanted. These types of ‘turn-arounds’ bring the message home quite vividly: the pressure put on African actors to conserve their wildlife and biodiversity often omits the role of outside actors in these pressures and the sacrifices local Africans have to endure living with (often dangerous) wildlife. It is time to put the spotlight back where it belongs.
References


THE NEOLIBERALISATION OF NATURE IN AFRICA


CHAPTER FIVE

FOREIGN LAND ACQUISITIONS IN MADAGASCAR:
COMPETING JURISDICTIONS OF ACCESS CLAIMS

Sandra Evers, Perrine Burnod,
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Abstract

The 1.3 million hectare agricultural project proposed by the South Korean company Daewoo Logistics in 2009 illustrates the paradoxical position of the Malagasy government on land management issues. At the time, the Ravalomanana government (2002-9, dissolved by the military and the current president, Rajoelina, in March 2009) was simultaneously encouraging foreign land investment and implementing land reform to secure local land rights. The public spotlight on the Daewoo project, a project which has since been abandoned, also drew attention to other types of land acquisition by foreigners, such as for forestry and mining. This chapter analyses the realities encountered in the local settings where local and international stakeholders vie for the same plots of land. Even though the new land laws offer legal protection of local rights, the interpretation and enforcement of these new laws do not guarantee the respect of existing land rights, whether secured or not by title deed or certificate. Contrary to the opposition voiced against Daewoo at the national level, local reactions have been somewhat muted, largely owing to the fact that local State representatives and village leaders are often, at least initially, interested in the economic opportunities promised as accompaniment to the international land projects. The authors also underline how local populations lack the necessary information to properly assess envisaged projects.
Introduction

During autumn 2008, a planned large-scale land acquisition in Madagascar attracted the attention of international media. The Financial Times revealed that a South Korean company, Daewoo Logistics, had undertaken negotiations with the Malagasy government to acquire 1,300,000 ha of arable land in four coastal regions (Blas 2008). Daewoo intended to produce 500,000 tons of palm oil in Eastern Madagascar and 4,000,000 tons of corn in the West, most of which was to be exported to the Korean market. It also planned to mobilise about 6 billion USD over 25 years to develop agricultural production and infrastructure (1,170 schools, 170 private hospitals, 250 markets, 120 churches, 60 power plants, 8 airports, 30 factories and silos, and 8 ports) and 70,000 jobs. This very large-scale project at first appeared as a powerful tool in the fight against poverty. However, its implementation required large tracts of arable land already subject to rights and in part cultivated.

In December 2008, a political crisis erupted in the capital of Madagascar. The opponents to Ravalomanana’s regime included the Daewoo project as symbolic of their plight, citing it as an example of how President Ravalomanana was stripping the country’s national resources. The revelation of another agribusiness project, involving 465,000 ha, led by the Indian company Varun International, reinforced the charge (Hervieu 2009). International NGOs were perceived as supporting the protests and played a role in mobilising Western public opinion. In Madagascar, this support fuelled national protests and contributed to the fall of the Ravalomanana government in March 2009. The current president, Rajoelina, was front and centre of opposition to these foreign projects. Eventually, the two agribusiness projects – Daewoo and Varun – were suspended and their main promoters left the country.

Rajoelina’s rhetoric relied heavily on the spectre of foreign investors like Daewoo and their attempts to destroy local land-based livelihoods by usurping ancestral lands. In Madagascar, land is a source of livelihood for approximately 80% of the population (MAEP 2005). In the vast majority of cases, cultivators hold no official title to the land they have been cultivating for generations. Land also anchors identity, as it is the portal to the ancestors, repository of culture and authentication of social status. Many Malagasy fear losing their lands more than anything else, as they commonly believe that land issues...
are the prerogative of the ancestors. Groups often claim autochthonous status using the rhetoric that their ancestors are buried on their family lands. This for them is the ultimate proof of family authenticity in their region, and for these groups it is a far stretch of the imagination that foreign people could lay claim to their land (Evers 2005).

The impact of large-scale agricultural, mining or forestry investments in Southern countries is becoming an increasing focus of scholastic inquiry (Cotula et al. 2009; Shepard & Mittal 2009; von Braun & Meinzen-Dick 2009; Mann 2010). The main issues are resource access and land-use competition between investors and local populations. In many Southern hemisphere countries, local communities’ land rights are not legally recognised and the land is considered as State-owned. Large-scale transfers (lease or purchase) risk ignoring and breaching local land access practices and notions of ownership legitimacy. FAO, UNCTAD and the World Bank (2010) have laid down high-minded principles for agricultural investment and urged that it be subject to the obligation of “respecting land and resource rights” (Borras & Franco 2010), but this ideal faces the hard reality that local groups and international claimants to land legitimise their land claims on the basis of competing legal jurisdictions, based respectively on local practices of land access (lex loci) and positive law (lex fori).  

This chapter examines the possibilities to regulate these agricultural investments in Madagascar within a context of competing jurisdictions asserting control over land. It aims to analyze how actors mobilise and interpret the lex fori and lex loci rules in order to negotiate land deals or react to them.

The chapter discusses first the conflicting directions of two dominant policies currently at work in relation to investment and land issues in Madagascar, one aiming to promote private investment, the other to secure local land rights. This contradiction does not arise out of any specific conflict of legislation but rather from the tension between the legislation and its effective enforcement. On the basis of the investors’ land access strategies, the second part analyses the

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1 Lex loci is the concept which refers to the law of the place and includes local land access practices that are deemed legitimate in terms of local land ownership perceptions. Lex fori refers to the law of the forum, or court; that is, the positive law of the State, country, or jurisdiction. Courts, where the suit is brought or remedy sought, are an integral part of lex fori.
“social working of law” (Griffiths 1992). It studies how officials, intermediaries, and stakeholders react to this legislation and why, in the end, local land rights are at risk. Thirdly, the chapter presents and explains why overt social reactions at the local level are few in number in contrast to the large protest against Daewoo. The last section deals with the tensions between the various legal systems and analyzes how these large-scale land acquisitions force the local landholders to change legal forum, from *lex loci* to *lex fori*.

Investment projects in the agricultural sector are generally negotiated behind closed doors. Information available to Malagasy citizens, decision makers as well as international organisations, is limited and impossible to verify. This chapter, in line with studies on biofuel and land acquisitions in Madagascar (Üllenberg 2008, 2010; Burnod et al. 2009) presents the status of land investment projects by differentiating the projects that were simply announced from those projects that are effectively underway. Data on actors’ land strategies were collected through sixty in-depth interviews with agents from public institutions, regional or local governments, private developers, populations, and other key informants. The interviews were conducted in the capital city, Antananarivo, and in two regions favoured by investors (Boeny and Sofia). In addition, this chapter benefits from the sustained fieldwork and studies conducted and supervised by Sandra Evers in the context of her research project on poverty and natural resource management in Madagascar.

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2 Part of the research project on Commercial Pressure on Land led and funded by the ILC (International Land Coalition), this study was realised by the Malagasy Land Observatory (Observatoire du Foncier à Madagascar – Rivo Andrianirina Ratsialonana and Landry Ramarolohany) and CIRAD (Centre de Coopération Internationale pour la Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement – Perrine Burnod and André Teyssier).

3 This project is a collaboration between the VU University Amsterdam, the University of Antananarivo, and the Dutch NGO ICCO (Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation).
climate (2005) and in compliance with its recommendations, the government implemented an incentive policy and focused on the promotion of foreign investments. It did this notably through the creation of a one-stop office for investors (Economic Development Board of Madagascar, EDBM) in 2006 and the adoption of an investment law in 2008. Based upon this institutional framework and through an increase in the scope of projects, foreign direct investment flows increased from 95 million USD in 2005 to 1,445 million USD in 2008 (UNCTAD, FDI database, March 2010). Although these investments were mainly oriented towards the mining sector, a new phenomenon began to appear in the agricultural sector.

Between 2005 and 2010, approximately 50 agribusiness projects were announced or revealed in media and research reports (Andrianirina Ratsialonana et al. 2011). Indeed, the Daewoo Logistics and Varun projects, targeting respectively 1,300,000 ha and 465,000 ha, have masked agricultural projects of lesser scope. An aggregate total of nearly 3,000,000 ha of land were affected (65% for food production, 32% for biofuel, 3% for forest plantations) (op. cit.). This surface area was significant considering that the 2.5 million family farms cultivate in total, and on the whole island, only 2,000,000 hectares. It also represented – although the methodologies and definitions used are open to question – 15 to 37% of potentially arable land. These lands are estimated to be about 15 to 20 million ha by FAO (2007), and 8 million ha by the Ministry of Agriculture (2008).

Notwithstanding his anti-foreign investment rhetoric, President Rajoelina has maintained the policies of the former government with regards to international investment. The government has concluded several contracts in the mining sector and granted new authorisations for farm-land prospection for agribusiness projects. While the government advocates land leases for foreign investors, the new constitution, proposed by Rajoelina’s party and accepted by referendum in December 2010, is ambivalent. It refers to the existing investment law which includes the right of non-national investors to acquire land (see infra). The Daewoo case and the large-scale land acquisition issue were probably more a case of political rhetoric to destabilise the former President than a real opposition to foreign large-scale land investments.

The government’s desire to promote foreign direct investment and to lease large tracts of agricultural land would appear to be a difficult fit with the stated aim of securing land access at the local level. In any
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event, in 2004, with the support of various international development agencies, the Ravalomanana government launched a new land reform which is still in effect today. In accordance with international institutions’ recommendations, this new land policy aims at the recognition of local land rights and at the decentralisation of land management (Teyssier et al. 2009).

Prior to 2005, all land subject to claims of customary ownership and untitled land were deemed to be State-owned. The only way to legally secure land was to obtain a title deed delivered by the State land registry services. Now, under the new land reform, two major changes have been implemented. Firstly, untitled but occupied land is no longer the property of the State. Land claimed by local people may be deemed ‘untitled private property’. Secondly, local governments (municipalities) have been granted new powers. By creating a local land registry office, they are responsible for recognizing private property rights and issuing land certificates. As the applicant can be an individual or a group, the certificate can also be individual or collective. The property is no longer created by the State administration officers but recognised by a local commission, on the basis of pre-existing customary rights. The originators of the reform thus hoped to reconcile legality and legitimacy, lex fori and lex loci.

In less than three years, 350 Malagasy municipalities, or one-fifth of the total number, have set up land registry offices. They have delivered approximately 52,000 certificates in about four years, while the State land services has delivered on average 1,500 land titles per year. The average cost of a certificate is 15 USD and the process takes usually six months – a cheap and quick process compared to the delivery of the title deed which costs on average 507 USD and takes 6 years (ECR 2006, 2008; Teyssier et al. 2009).

This new law comprises a dual legal system for land management: the formalisation of property rights through a title deed falls within the remit of the national government; the formalisation of property rights to untitled land through certificates is a new power granted to local government (Teyssier 2010). Users can choose the means of formalizing their land rights. Title deeds and certificates confer similar property rights. In spite of this legal system, land access in Madagascar is still commonly arranged on the basis of custom, and

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4 This local commission is comprised of elected representatives of the village and neighbours of the concerned claimant.
most local land rights based on custom are not formalised through titles or certificates. Indeed, only one-fifth of the local governments has a local land registry office and among these localities, only some individuals or households have asked for a certificate on one or several plots of their land patrimony.

The policy favouring investment would appear at first glance contradictory to policies favouring local rights, but these policies can be seen as complementary. Indeed, under the new land laws, only State-owned land can be leased to investors and developers. For international or national companies vying for land, the State land services demand compliance with several steps in order to verify that the relevant land area does not encroach or include titled private property, special status zones (national parks, land reserves) or un-titled private property. If the targeted land is genuinely unoccupied in its ordinary sense, “vacant and without master”, the State land services can establish a title or a long-term lease contract (bail emphytéotique). In addition, when the land area required exceeds 50 hectares, investors must obtain authorisation from the Ministry of Town and Country Planning.

Recently, the State-owned land services and the National Office for the Environment (ONE) decided to make lease issuance subject to the granting of an environmental permit. This license is subject to prior validation by way of an impact assessment that comprises environmental and socio-economic criteria, including the populations’ rights. This assessment, based on local consultations, should also contribute towards a better protection of local land rights.

However, in practice, land laws are not fully respected and do not really secure all pre-existing rights. In addition, the impact assessment process is not proving sufficient to allow claimants to voice and defend their rights. The tension between legislation and enforcement puts the policy promoting investment at odds with the new land policy. Even if the government has legal and institutional tools to regulate investment, preliminary case studies reveal that it does not effectively deploy them – at least during their negotiation phase. On the contrary, the State’s strategic position gives its representatives opportunities to promote investment without coordinating the management of public affairs at the different government levels (local,

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5 In accordance with the Decree to Make Investments Compatible with the Environment (MECIE Decree), all agricultural projects larger than 1,000 ha must obtain an environmental license.
Investors’ land access processes

Since 2009, investment flow into Madagascar has substantially decreased. Of the 52 projects announced between 2005 and 2009, one-third of the projects proceeded no further than land prospection or were halted (see Figure 5.1 for projects announced and on-going projects). The new government’s seizing of power and the insecure investment climate discouraged some investors. But the political crisis was not the main cause. As observed in numerous developing countries, many investment projects did not materialise due to the world financial crisis and the stabilisation of food prices (World Bank 2010).

Nevertheless, in Madagascar the flow of investment has not entirely dried up. The targeted land area currently totals about 150,000 ha, 20 times less than the surface areas contemplated by the 52 projects. Biofuel, for national and international markets, is the main objective (96% of project lands).

Thirteen private companies have commenced their agricultural projects. They are mainly funded by foreign investment (11 out of 13) – for the most part by European backers. They aim to produce jatropha-based biofuel (10 out of 13). These companies, the majority with little experience in the agricultural sector, plan to develop large-scale plantations to an overall land area of between 5,000 and 30,000 ha, based on mechanisation and a wage system. To date, they remain at the phase of first plantations (nurseries or trials). Surface areas effectively cultivated represent only 23,000 ha.

Fifteen other companies are currently in the preparatory phase of drawing up their investment plans: five foreign companies are planning large-scale plantations of cereals or jatropha, while ten Malagasy companies are targeting sugarcane-based biofuels’ production, hoping to add value to the raw material produced by small farmers.

In the following sections, we will focus on agricultural projects planning to develop large-scale plantations in settings where land allocations risk resulting in loss of land for local people.

Giving priority to political contacts rather than technical entry points, investors rarely follow the recommended trajectory of applying to the Economic Development Board, the State land services, and
the National Office for the Environment. A few major investors directly address government members, following the example of Daewoo. The majority of investors approach the main representative of the regional government or the local mayor. They are usually redirected to the State land services, first at the regional level, subsequently at the national level.

With the exception of one consortium of Malagasy investors planning to buy approximately 20,000 ha, other developers (all foreigners) favour leasing rather than outright ownership. Most of them hope to get a 50-year lease *(bail emphytéotique)* and land rents for about 2,000 ariary/ha (i.e. about 0.80 USD/ha). Legally, the outright purchase of land by foreigners is complicated. Since 2008, the new law on investment permits this through the delivery of an acquisition permit *(autorisation d’acquisition)* for all foreign investors possessing a Malagasy company (Law N° 2007-036), which in practice is quite straightforward because the only condition is to have one of the associates registered as a resident. However, the modalities of enforcement of this authorisation are still vague in the absence of the enabling decree. According to investors, this preference for leasing

![Figure 5.1](image)

*Figure 5.1* Announced and on-going projects
Map 5.1  Targeted surfaces and land actually cultivated by investors
instead of buying land arises from a desire to limit initial capital costs or valuable fixed assets, allowing mobility and – in the event of technical, economic, or political problems – shutting down operations and mitigating financial prejudice.

Investors hoping to develop large-scale crops seek land with common characteristics: good pedoclimatic conditions adapted to the planned crop and mechanisation; from 10,000 to 30,000 ha; ‘non- or under-productive’, ‘un-owned land’ – the targeted land is thus supposed to be State-owned; and for the most part, the proximity of a national road or a port for the transportation of inputs (large economic investors, like Daewoo and Varun, were not as limited by the constraint of accessibility and envisaged the construction of infrastructure). They identify these lands upon the recommendation of a Malagasy intermediary, the regional services, or maps and aerial identification.

Investors look mainly for tanety (flat land) and not for shoal land suitable for rice production. These tanety, even if they are qualified as non- or under-valued by investors, are likely to be pastures or reserves of woods (firewood being the household’s primary source of energy). Moreover, investors look for large single tracts of land so as to facilitate the inclusion of crop plots. Thus, targeted land is likely to be already claimed by local people. Moreover, despite the potential arable land announced (8 million to 20 million ha), investors found themselves competing for land (on the seven jatropha projects underway, three cases of disputed claims were observed opposing three developers). These zones of disputed entitlement prove that the land fitting all the favourable investment criteria was not as extensive as initially forecast.

Let us now examine the process used by investors to gain access to Malagasy land, and the ways in which actors interpret the laws (lex fori).

First, in the formal procedure demanded by the State land services, the investors must obtain the mayors’ approval. Whether they engaged in this formal procedure or not, investors commonly obtain authorisation easily for the establishment of their project (see infra).

The second step, not included in the formal procedure but systematically undertaken, is a field visit. The investors, the developer, its team, the mayor and the leaders of the villages (the local elites, com-
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monly called *tompon-tany*, ‘masters of the land’)
undertake a field survey in order to define the boundaries of the land to be developed. During this visit, the mayor and the developer explain the project to the villages’ leaders. If there are cultivated plots on the land targeted for development, the developer usually undertakes to not use these lands. If there are pastures, the developer promises to furnish fodder. On the basis of these negotiations, the developer and the mayor list the different developers’ commitments (priority access for locals to jobs, construction of school, well or community clinic, payment of land fees). Occasionally, but not always, these engagements are written into a convention approved by all the local councillors or, in some rare cases, by the main representative of the region. This oral or written convention is not reviewed by the State land service. Thus, this first agreement is based on the parties’ interpretation of positive law and local/customary land rules. It proceeds neither from the *lex fori* nor from the *lex loci*. The investors, the mayor, and often the villages’ leaders consider most of the targeted area as State-owned land. The investors and mayors also judge whether most of the local and customary claims of land ownership will be respected. Some village leaders are aware that their rights to use the pasture will be denied but might think that the decision, viewed as coming from the State and concerning State-owned land, is impossible to circumvent. Owing to the convention, the investors often manage to escape or postpone the long and costly formal land access procedure. Private developers can first realise plantations on these plots, not only to carry out initial agronomical trials but also to attract new sponsors. An Australian developer (GEM) established a 45,000 ha jatropha plantation through informal land leases negotiated only with certain mayors (but the plantations, hastily realised to attract new investors, have for the main part failed owing to hasty seeding on poor soil, no use of fertilizer, insufficient knowledge of soil quality, and insufficient rain). One Indian developer procured a 5,000 ha land lease, signed by a former main representative of the regional government but not duly registered by the State land registry service.

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1 The concept of *tompon-tany* is known throughout Madagascar. It is translated as ‘master(s) of the land’ and not ‘owner(s) of the land’ because, despite the fact that *tompon-tany* land claims might be deemed legitimate at the local level, they often do not have officially registered certificates or titles of their land.
During a third phase, some developers wish to duly formalise their land rights, notably when some sponsors demand the land lease or the title. Only a minority of developers had engaged in these procedures by 2010. They had to pay the State land registry service in order to obtain a map of the relevant tract of land. However, maps used by the government’s land services are not necessarily up-to-date: they may not show all the titled property and may not represent the untitled private property. Landowners’ rights, even if secured by title deed, remain precarious (Land Observatory and CIRAD fieldwork).

In theory, the State land service officers’ fieldwork must compensate for the lack of a comprehensive inventory. A recognition commission must disclose in a statement the presence of existing claims to lands on the targeted area and to restrict land available for development to genuinely “vacant and ownerless” tracts. This commission is normally comprised of a government land service agent, a surveyor, a representative of the local technical services (agricultural, forest and environment, etc.), the mayor, and leaders of the village concerned.

However, the composition of the commission and its mission statement are not in accordance with black letter law. Some members of the commission, such as the neighbours of the land targeted for development, owners of the titled or untitled land included in the targeted area, or the representative of the technical services are not represented. These commissions usually do not follow procedures to include views of the various population groups in the region, which might have very diverse tenure arrangements. In addition, in cases when the local government had a local land registry office, the local officers were not invited to attend the commission. Whatever the reasons (technical difficulties due to large land areas, corrupt practices, wish to see the project succeed, wilful ignorance of the new land law recognizing the untitled private property), the statement issued by the commission is often restricted to the sole entry “nothing to declare”. This "nothing to declare" means local objections to the envisaged land project are rarely officially registered. As there is no formalised opposition, the targeted land is defined as State-owned land and the State is then allowed to register it in the name of the national investor, or in the State’s name to transfer rights of use to the investor. In only one case, local users in charge of forest management and organised in associations formally recognised by the Ministry of Environment have made one complaint (see infra).
Currently, the Ministry of Town and Country Planning has approved two projects but has not yet signed any lease. This delay, lengthened by the current political crisis, has placed the projects on hold. This was also aggravated by the fact that investors, who accepted the low price of the rents (less than 1.40 USD per ha), did not properly assess the high transaction costs to access land (several appointments with the State’s land office, at the regional and central level, long delays between two appointments, several costs to obtain the formal documents, and registration costs).

Owing to insufficient knowledge of the new land laws, inconsistent interpretation, and all-too-frequent non-compliance, existing land rights – whether secured or not by title deeds – risk being denied. Legal safeguards which are designed to protect the population’s land rights are being ignored. Despite the new land laws, land use by local people can continue to be labelled State-owned land and even titled land is not secure.

Local resistance is weakened by competing interests and lack of information

A strong contrast is apparent between the social movement against the envisaged Daewoo project at the national level and the social reactions against smaller agricultural projects at the local level.

Firstly, the opposition to Daewoo came mainly from Malagasy and international organisations and was politically exploited by political opponents to the Ravalomanana government. This opposition initially found little echo in the local population of the region where the Daewoo project was planned. In Madagascar, when the Financial Times revealed the Daewoo case, only one Malagasy media outlet, La Gazette, confirmed the information and specified that Daewoo was already prospecting land. Apart from the interventions of a local association (Observatoire de la Vie Publique à Madagascar) and one local leader, little opposition was openly expressed until the political crisis erupted (Rakotondrainibe & Randrianarimanana 2010). Opposition to this land transfer came from the Malagasy Diaspora, particularly the Collective for the Defence of Malagasy Land2, in connection with the vigilance against land appropriations organised by vari-

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2 http://terresmalgaches.info/. The Collective launched a petition from January 2009 against “the Daewoo affair”.
ous international organisations,\(^3\) and this played a major role in the media attention to the protests, thanks to Internet and media connections. This media buzz then reverberated back in Madagascar. The network of civil society organisations working on land issues (*Solidarité des intervenants sur le foncier*, SIF) and one agricultural union publicly voiced their doubts and fears. The political opposition forces seized upon this sensitive issue and successfully mobilised the masses (op. cit.). Rajoelina, the leading opponent to the regime, denounced the plan to transfer the *tanindrazana*, the “land of the ancestors”, to foreign companies. These discourses provoked shockwaves in national public opinion. Rajoelina announced in his first public speech his opposition to the Daewoo project but never really ceased to raise the subject, even after Daewoo’s agents had declared their intent to withdraw. Thus, the opposition to Daewoo’s project was successful due to the efforts of the NGOs and to the use of the issue in political debate.

A major issue now remains to be discussed: do the mayors and the local elites involved in negotiation with investors make any objections in order to protect local land rights? Is the population informed about the project? And are the objections raised reinforced and relayed by organisations or political groups?

As previously mentioned, the mayors generally welcome the agribusiness projects. On the basis of our initial interviews, certain mayors consider the rural dwellers as landowners but think that the land is legally defined as State-owned land. They are unaware of the 2005 legislative amendments and hesitate to voice their opposition in the presence of other State representatives (Land State Service Officers, main representatives of the regional government). Moreover, the territory they manage is vast (commonly over 200,000 ha) and sparsely populated (approx. 30 hab/km\(^2\)). As the lands targeted for development are mainly pastures, they consider that stock herders have alternative pastures. The Mayors also believe that the developers will respect the rights on the lands cultivated, without really bearing in mind that the land registration in the name of the developers precludes all potential legal recognition and protection of the local land rights.

However, the mayors are often attracted by the economic benefits associated with the agribusiness project. The promise to develop eco-

\(^3\) Among the most known are: [http://farmlandgrab.org/](http://farmlandgrab.org/), [http://www.grain.org/](http://www.grain.org/), [http://www.viacampesina.org/fr/](http://www.viacampesina.org/fr/).
economic activities (jobs, social infrastructure, and land fees) in their rural areas, not to mention personal perks, is usually enthusiastically received. Job opportunities are usually rare in the locality, and the construction of social infrastructure often depends on international agencies’ projects. Above all, owing to land fees paid by the investor, the mayor can notably increase the local government budget. The budget for a rural municipality is typically between 5,000 and 12,000 USD. With land fees of approximately 1 to 2 USD per ha, the land fees from a 5,000 ha agribusiness project are therefore very profitable. Mayors are aware that the project will be more advantageous to some local groups – such as the stock breeder or the coalman – than to others, but they perceive the project as a real opportunity to increase local development.

In addition, the mayors accept the projects because they connect them to other foreign-directed and national NGOs in their region (nature reserves, reforestation projects, etc.). Some mayors attempt to secure the potential advantage associated with these projects, such as financial infusion for existing projects, ranging from environmental projects such as a nature reserve park, a project of local management of forestry resources, or the development of a local land registry office (data from ongoing fieldwork by Observatoire and CIRAD). Some mayors are even proactive in acquiring projects. Acting as a broker (Bierschenk et al. 2000), they attend official meetings, living part-time in the main town of the region and frequently exchanging news with State or regional representatives. In several municipalities surveyed, two or three private agribusiness developers are present or even competing. This competition strengthens the mayor’s bargaining power in the land transactions: the mayor can increase the list of advantages he wants for the local population (school, well, community clinic).

In addition, it may be of interest to the local tompon-tany⁴ to collaborate with land registration projects or assessment procedures for international investments in land. The tompon-tany see themselves as guardians of the land they inherited from their ancestors. They may be attracted by the prospect of generating revenues by temporarily

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⁴ In this regard, it is important to note that the delegates of the municipality are usually appointed after formal elections. Although there may be overlap between the municipality delegates and the tompon-tany, it should be stressed that the interests and agendas of the mayor or the municipality delegates on the one hand and tompon-tany village elites on the other are not automatically in harmony.
leasing out their land to foreign investors (fieldwork data, Evers 2007), having their own land fees paid by the investors, and obtaining job opportunities for villagers. They also fear opposing projects which enjoy the support of the mayor and other State representatives. The problem, however, is that the positive laws formalise these flexible land-use rights in a bail emphytéotique (long-term land lease), ignoring the local customs where land can be leased and reclaimed by local tompon-tany without formal notice.

Weak publicly expressed opposition by villagers to projects or land acquisitions are primarily due to a dearth of information. Consultation of local people is only compulsory within the framework of the environmental impact assessment. As observed in other countries (Sulle & Nelson 2009), locals are neither properly represented nor actually informed about planned investments, and their opposition or suggestions for amendments do not force the investor to withdraw or to substantially modify a project.

In cases where local village leaders are consulted, they do not necessarily represent the community at large, as local communities in Madagascar can have very disparate hierarchical structures in terms of land access. Social distinctions can be based on autochthonous versus migrant status, intra-ethnic hierarchies (see as an example, Evers 2002, 2006), and/or age and gender differences. Groups and individuals may have different interests and positionings towards projects. Some may be able to benefit from international players arriving in the local setting and may serve as brokers and mediators or may be able to acquire labour contracts, whereas others may stand to lose the few livelihood possibilities they derive from their small plots of land.

In addition, local people sometimes may say yes to something offered to them even when they disagree, or they frame their discontent in a statement which implies that they fail to understand what is being proposed. Indeed, it is not uncommon in Madagascar to find that pretending not to understand is used as a strategy by local groups and leaders when they disagree with something. They prefer this approach to just saying no to a project (van Dijk 2010: 54-55) because they fear that saying no might have consequences. These attitudes go back to memories related to pre-colonial and colonial times when non-compliance was not advisable. In fact, the French colonial period was marked by the appropriation of lands, forced labour, and heavy taxation, and resistance was not tolerated (Campbell 1991).
Limited, publicly expressed opposition by locals to large-scale foreign land acquisitions is also a result of the way land issues are handled. If there are village-level ‘consultations’, the land issues and the fact that people might actually lose their land is not directly discussed. The accent is usually on the benefits for local groups, such as access to services (school, health centre and roads) and jobs. In practice, villagers attending these meetings are not really consulted, as they have no power, for example, to veto the projects.

Finally, if land users are informed, they are not always in a position to assess the consequences of the scale of the envisaged international project. They may, for example, presume that they will retain access to agricultural land and tomb areas which are intrinsically bound to the ancestors, while surrendering only a portion of pastures. In three case studies undertaken by the Malagasy Land Observatory, pastures were the objects of negotiation between the developer and the population. Local people accepted giving up control of their pastures for compensation (development of new pastures, production of grazing crops by the investor) and promises of jobs and social infrastructures. Local groups, however, have little power to enforce these agreements. Local people are often lured into the projects when promises are made, but the full scale of projects is concealed, and adverse impacts are downplayed (Magrin & van Vliet 2005).

Despite the above, it should be stressed that if local groups are confronted with the consequences (such as dispossession) of international land acquisitions of their land, they in fact do react more openly, as witnessed currently in the Rio Tinto mining project near Fort Dauphin (Seagle 2009) or, in the past, in the case of a plantation of 2,000 ha of Anacarde in the Boeny region. In the latter case, 1,500 ha of the 2,000 ha of tree plantations were reportedly burned down by local populations (fieldwork data of Land Observatory, 2010). It is also currently the case in one area where coalmen, organised in associations, are manifesting their opposition to the State land service. Local reactions thus take various forms, ranging from violent protest to less visible forms of resistance. However, the arena of negotiation and the nature of the debate can quickly become inaccessible or too complex for local rights’ holders, and their defence often depends upon the support of third-party organisations or political networks.

Historically, dislocation from land has triggered violent conflicts between the State and local communities. During the pre-colonial Merina kingdom, when internal slavery was implemented on the is-
land to meet specific political and economic objectives (Campbell 1991: 111), land was forcibly taken from farmers, breaking links between Malagasy people and their ancestors and eventually making them andevo (slaves). Andevo were “lost people”, lacking links to ancestral lands and permanent tombs and thus precluded from becoming ancestors themselves – the essence of the Malagasy identity (Evers 2002, 2006). Colonial-era policies aimed at export production, ‘colonial conservation’ (see Sodikoff 2007) and forced labour regimes continued to break local links with the land, as many forests were appropriated for logging concessions (Jarosz 1993). Today, the term andevo still means someone who lacks anchorage in land through tombs, land and history (Evers 2006: 417).

In short, the prospect of losing land is the worst fear for many Malagasy, as this risks severing the link with the ancestors. Furthermore, losing land to foreigners has an additional association with slavery and colonialism. Thus, with the arrival of international stakeholders competing for land, local tompon-tany potentially have much to lose in terms of their local prerogatives in dealing with land access issues.

Change of legal forum

In many instances, disputes over land access are dealt with within the context of local dispute-resolution mechanisms; people rarely seek to remedy their disputes in lex fori (positive law courts). Even in cases where ‘forum shopping’ (von Benda-Beckman 1981) is possible – whereby people select the forum they think will produce a result favourable to their position – small Malagasy farmers often do not have the necessary skills to engage in the subtleties of this practice (Pronk & Evers 2007).

In effect, by collaborating with private developers, tompon-tany have changed legal forum, something they are rarely aware of. In the domain of lex loci, while leasing out land, local leaders settled land access and conflict at the local level. Indeed, in many regions, authenticity demonstrated through the family tomb of a particular family is an important factor in assessing rights, competing claims, and conflicts. With the arrival of the international stakeholders holding nationally approved (lex fori) leases, tompon-tany theoretically can lose their land for a considerable period of time – or possibly forever – as they cannot just reclaim their land whenever they wish.
Arguments of family authenticity, based on tombs in the region, by a particular family may do little to uphold local land claims. Local means of dispute resolution in land access matters are then no longer the relevant forum, as the international stakeholder can sustain its claim via an official lease. Local populations must then change legal forum in order to fight for their rights. They will have to deal with a *lex fori* environment, where courts determine who has rights and on what basis. Lack of knowledge, money and relevant networks to engage in positive-law legal procedures discourage many local stakeholders from bringing their land claims to court, and it is therefore not a theoretical possibility that they will lose their land to international stakeholders laying claim to the land.

**Conclusion**

Existing laws provide a framework to guarantee the respect of existing land rights, whether secured or not by title deed or certificate, but investors and State representatives’ practices or interpretation of the law often ignore or bypass official legal channels. Land rights, relative to the domain of *lex loci* (customary land ownership arrangements), are partly not respected due to the imperfect implementation of the law and not to the absence of adequate legislation.

Local-level representatives and elites seem to be in an ambivalent situation. They may attempt to attract agricultural projects to secure financial and status resources; however, at the same time, they potentially weaken the rights of other local groups (such as migrants leasing land) and eventually their own land rights and prerogatives. Thus, large-scale land transfers to investors risk breaching local land rights. Moreover, as the land-lease contract is legitimised by positive law, local actors must change legal forum in order to fight for their rights. They will have to deal with a *lex fori* environment, where courts determine who has rights and on what basis.

Local communities’ negotiation powers in these land deals are weakened by the asymmetry of power between the parties but also by the reluctance to refuse a project promising jobs and local infrastructures in poorly developed regions. Local communities’ negotiation powers are also weakened by the low value – defined by the market or appreciated by investors and decision-makers – attached to local livelihood strategies and the cultural meaning of land when compared
with the assets and inputs the developers offer (capital, know-how) or promise to provide (Cousins 2009; Vermeulen & Cotula 2010).

The legal recognition of local land rights is necessary but not sufficient to increase local communities’ negotiation power with investors (Vermeulen & Cotula, 2010). The consolidation of land reform, through the reinforcement and the expansion of the network of local land registry offices, presents an opportunity to legally empower local communities in terms of tenure security. The demarcation between “unoccupied land” and “untitled private property” cannot be unilaterally defined by the State’s land services but should involve the local governments and other local stakeholders. The involvement of local land registry office agents and representatives chosen by the villagers, in the commission for State-ownership recognition and in the committee of environmental impact assessment, can lead to a better respect of non-titled property. However, the risk that local elites remain the only ones voicing their opinions remains a challenge. There is an urgent need for anthropological assessments of local land tenure situations which go beyond mere descriptions of local power structures. Such assessments should seek mechanisms to include marginal groups and ensure that their voices are heard prior to and during the implementation of the land project. In order to make local stakeholders truly more equal partners, they should also have a power of veto where aspects of a project are deemed to offend their fundamental interests.

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CHAPTER SIX

MOBILISING BRAZIL AS ‘SIGNIFICANT OTHER’ IN THE FIGHT FOR HIV/AIDS TREATMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN (TAC) AND ITS GLOBAL ALLIES

Wiebe Nauta

The globalization of politics is not a one-way street. If relations of rule and systems of exploitation have become transnational, so have forms of resistance ... (Ferguson 2006: 109).

Abstract

This chapter examines how a local South African HIV/AIDS NGO negotiated an emerging multipolar world and turned for inspiration and support to Brazil, a ‘significant other’ in the global fight against HIV/AIDS due to its early model for universal access to AIDS medication funded by the state. The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) mobilised the Brazilian government, NGOs like Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), and a host of activist organisations to ensure that ordinary South Africans could access life-saving medication. At the same time it meant to demonstrate to the South African government that a universal AIDS medication programme was a viable solution in South Africa also, even in resource-poor settings. In the process, the TAC became a valuable partner for Brazil and other global allies because it inspired the global campaign for treatment access and demonstrated how being locally rooted could be married with global action. Eventually Brazil, TAC, and others in the transnational activist HIV/AIDS network even managed to positively influence the Doha Declaration in terms of trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS), which made it possible to distribute generic medication for public health emergencies.
Introduction

In the second decade of the 21st century, the prominent role of China in Africa is hotly debated. Without denying the importance of this development, this chapter aims to shift focus to another emergent actor in Africa: Brazil. By focusing on the first decade of the 21st century and the fight against HIV/AIDS in South Africa, the role of Brazil is examined. This is done through the lens of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) – the most prominent HIV/AIDS organisation in South Africa and also a global actor – which vigorously battled the South African government that refused to establish a universal HIV/AIDS treatment programme. The TAC negotiated an emerging multipolar world and turned for inspiration and support to Brazil, a global model for universal access to publicly financed antiretroviral therapy (ART)\(^1\) and at the same time a dominant actor in striving to strengthen the position of the Global South through improved South-South links and coalitions.

In the last two decades, Brazil seems to have shed its veil of modesty and transformed from a relatively humble actor to a much more dominant player on the global level. Although nearly everyone is aware of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) initiative, countervailing the power of the Global North, the recent IBSA initiative, also known as the G3, is less well known. According to Arkhangelskaya, India, Brazil and South Africa formed the India, Brazil and South Africa Dialogue Forum in 2003, with the aim to promote South-South cooperation “in the spirit of the 1955 Bandung Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement” (2010: 1). Its establishment is described by Celso Amorim (2010: 231), Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time under popular President Lula da Silva:

> On President Lula’s second day in office, I hosted Minister Nkosazana Zuma of South Africa and she raised the need for new mechanisms of coordination among some major countries of the South. Having gone through … so many failed attempts of establishing such groups, … I suggested we should try something relatively simple: a small group – only three countries – one in each continent of the South, all of them vibrant multiethnic, multicultural democracies, with an ever-increasing role in the world: India, South Africa and Brazil.

\(^1\) The drugs that suppress the HI virus in a HIV-positive patient and prevent the patient becoming ill with full-blown AIDS.
As Arkhangelskaya (2010) describes, the forum became active in various fields – international relations, trade and investment, exchange of technology, but also health care and, for example, tourism – and on various levels – government, civil society, business, media, and academia. In the light of this chapter, it is relevant that IBSA became a leading actor in recent WTO negotiations:

Leading the G21 coalition of developing countries in the Doha Round, India, Brazil and South Africa demanded the establishment of global market conditions that would allow the developing countries to benefit from their comparative advantages in agriculture, industry and services. Thus, the troika has cooperated with a view to eliminating the high non-tariff barriers to trade imposed by the developed countries. Other demands aim to reform the Bretton Woods institutions ... (Flemes 2009: 6).

Although the BRIC initiative seems to be more influential in today’s world, Arkhangelskaya (2010) argues that IBSA is crucial for the position of Africa in the world. Moreover, quite recently BRIC and IBSA have begun to cooperate, as is illustrated by the establishment of a joint BRIC/IBSA business forum in April 2010.

In my view, the role of Brazil in the IBSA and BRIC initiatives illustrates the country’s ambition to become a global actor. Its recent leaders such as Cardoso and Lula were ambitious, as is illustrated by a quote from President Lula:

This is a country that has suffered from low self-esteem ... Brazil needs to recover its pride. And I think things are happening. I hope those who come after me can work to transform Brazil into a great economy (Newsweek 2009).

Interestingly, this ambition often comes with a human face, both nationally and internationally, as is illustrated by another recent initiative in the field of global health: UNITAID. This international drug purchase facility was established in 2006 by Brazil, Chile, France, Norway, and the United Kingdom and was funded by levies on airline tickets. It aims to contribute to the development of HIV/AIDS medication for children, expand access for the poor to newer generation HIV/AIDS drugs, and scale up prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programmes in developing countries (UNITAID 2011).

These examples leave no doubt that Brazil and its new allies refuse to be ignored on the world stage. In this chapter, however, I go back in time and focus on an earlier phase of Brazil’s involvement in the emerging global HIV/AIDS movement, with the aim to reveal
why this South American giant became such a valuable ally to a South African NGO and why the South African NGO and its global civil society partners became important assets for Brazil’s global agenda. The TAC mobilised the Brazilian government and a host of activist organisations and NGOs like Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) through a transnational activist network, aiming to make ARTs available in Khayelitsha – one of the largest townships in South Africa – so that ordinary people could access life-saving medication, while at the same time demonstrating that a universal ART programme was a viable solution in South Africa, even in resource-poor settings. Ultimately, this global activist network for treatment access became a crucial tool in turning public opinion, globally and nationally, against the South African government for failing its poorer citizens, and against ‘big pharma’ and Western interests for valuing profits over lives. For Brazil it offered an opportunity to pursue its social, economic and political goals and extend its global influence.

After a brief account of HIV/AIDS in South Africa and the emergence of the TAC, the chapter explores why Brazil became relevant as a ‘Significant Other’. Subsequently, the chapter examines theoretically whether the concepts of ‘global civil society’ and ‘transnational activist network’ help us understand what we witness in the case of the global HIV/AIDS movement, or whether different interpretations of these concepts may in fact cloud our understanding of such phenomena and the powers at play. Lastly, as some scholars believe that we are entering an age of unprecedented South-South cooperation, this case is thought to contribute to our understanding of such arrangements and their future potential.

**HIV/AIDS in South Africa and the Treatment Action Campaign**

After the destructive influence of Thabo Mbeki\(^2\) on the development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic as Deputy President under Mandela and in two terms as President,\(^3\) we seem to be witnessing a reversal of HIV/AIDS politics in South Africa. Under his successor, Jacob

\(^2\) Mbeki denied the dominant role played by the HI virus and regularly caused controversy: “Personally, I don’t know anybody who has died of AIDS” (Washington Post 2003).

\(^3\) He did not complete his second term.
Zuma, the fight against HIV/AIDS is a real break with the past, particularly with the implementation of widespread distribution of antiretrovirals (ARVs) in public facilities. According to Chigwedere et al. (2008: 410) “more than 330,000 lives ... were lost because a feasible and timely ARV treatment programme was not implemented in South Africa”. As a result, South Africa’s epidemic is “the largest in the world”, according to UNAIDS, with an estimated 5.6 million South Africans living with HIV in 2009 (2010: 28), although “the annual HIV incidence among 18-year olds declined sharply from 1.8% in 2005 to 0.8% in 2008, and among women 15-24 years old it dropped from 5.5% in 2003-2005 to 2.2% in 2005-2008” (ibid.). In other words, after decades of negligence, the South African government is now facing a mammoth task to reverse the massive suffering and dying of its population.

The civil society organisation that became one of Mbeki’s main adversaries as it fought for universal treatment of the afflicted is the TAC, established on 10 December 1998 in Cape Town (Geffen 2010) as a campaign within the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA). Inspired by South Africa’s new constitution, TAC demanded “that the South African government introduce a national programme to prevent mother-to-child ... transmission (PMTCT)” of HIV (Heywood 2009: 20). Since the main argument of the government for not implementing PMTCT was based on the price of the drugs, such as AZT, TAC used the South African constitution to argue that the right to health of South Africans should prevail over the profits of international pharmaceutical companies. Since these companies, members of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PMA), had already legally challenged South Africa’s Medicines Act, which opened up avenues for parallel importation to reduce the cost of patented drugs, it was clear who the enemy was (Grebe 2008; Heywood 2009). Initially, as Heywood (ibid.) and Geffen (2010) noted, TAC did not envisage that in the years to come the South

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4 Zuma himself has also been a controversial figure in the past, in terms of HIV/AIDS – for example, during his alleged rape trial when he suggested that a shower had a positive effect in preventing HIV infection.

5 At the launch of an ambitious HIV testing campaign, Health Minister Motsoaledi mentioned that there are approximately 5.7 million South Africans living with the virus (M&G 2011).

6 “AZT: Zidovudine (formerly called azidothymidine (abbreviated AZT), a drug used against human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS” (www.Medicinenet.com 2011).
African government would become one of its main opponents, as it was not yet apparent that leading figures had come under the influence of AIDS denialism. Thus, the first meetings between the TAC leadership and the government seemed fruitful, ending with joint calls for reduced prices of ARVs.

However, in 1999, especially after Mbeki became President in June, the relationship between TAC and the government soured badly, as the cabinet, including the new Health Minister Tshabalala-Msimang, began to question the connection between an HI virus and AIDS while also stressing the toxicity of ARVs. Although this chapter can easily be filled with many examples of the delusions of Mbeki and leading ANC politicians, one of the most obvious examples of Mbeki’s association with denialists became the inclusion in the Presidential AIDS Advisory Panel, established in 2000 (van der Vliet 2004), of someone like American scientist Peter Duesberg (2000), who claims that “AIDS is caused by non-contagious risk factors and ... HIV is a harmless passenger virus”.

Yet, although the TAC became one of Mbeki’s fiercest critics, it must be emphasised that the TAC throughout its history had always attempted to maintain some kind of constructive relationship with the South African government and government bodies at the provincial and local levels. In this regard, the TAC always combined idealism and activism with pragmatism, to ensure that as many lives as possible were saved. In 2001, for example, TAC registered as ‘friend of the court’, alongside the South African government in its legal battle against the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (Nattrass 2004; Vliet 2004). A particularly significant development was the cooperative relationship that was established with the Provincial Government of the Western Cape, the only province not ruled by a majority of the ANC, as it disagreed that ARVs were toxic and acted in opposition to the national cabinet. The fact that the province began supplying AZT and formula milk to pregnant women in two township clinics as early as 1999 can be regarded, according to Van der Vliet (2004: 57), as one of the “first signs of political rebellion against national policy”.

As this section is meant to introduce the polarised political atmosphere around HIV/AIDS in South Africa and the important role the TAC played in rallying support for the universal treatment of the

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7 For a detailed account, see Geffen (2010) Debunking delusions.
disease, in defiance of the national government of South Africa, I end the section by highlighting two very influential events in which the organisation was actively involved in 2000. In my view, these reveal its essence as a determined and creative civil society organisation, combining a relative embeddedness in ‘ordinary’ local South African society with a well-established global connectedness. These are, first: the Christoph Moraka Defiance Campaign; and second: the Global March for Treatment ahead of the Durban International AIDS Conference.

It is sometimes forgotten that people who are infected with the HIV virus need treatment on two fronts. The first concerns the opportunistic infections patients battle with and the second is the HIV virus itself. With regard to the former, one of the great frustrations of the late 1990s was that essential medications to fight opportunistic infections were very expensive and unavailable to the masses. A common enemy of many AIDS sufferers, thrush, for example, could be very effectively cured with Fluconazole, an anti-fungal drug of the Pfizer Company. As the drug was too expensive for the poor, Christopher Moraka, a TAC volunteer, had died. In his memory, the organisation decided to send its leader, Zackie Achmat, and a colleague to Thailand in October 2000, where they purchased Biozole, a generic version of the drug, for a fraction of the cost. Although initially the TAC activists were under threat of prosecution, public opinion helped convince the Medicines Control Council (MCC) of South Africa to use its legal discretion to grant permission for the continued importation of the drug. Eventually, TAC would name this campaign the Christopher Moraka Defiance Campaign, in honour of its deceased volunteer (Grebe 2008; Heywood 2009; Geffen 2010).

As the 13th International AIDS Conference was the first to be hosted on the African continent, the eyes of the world came to be focused on the African epidemics and particularly the controversial role played by the Mbeki Administration. It turned out to become an historic conference, and the Global March for HIV/AIDS Treatment, according to Heywood (2009: 32) has come to be understood as “a turning point in acceptance of the right of access to treatment for people in Africa and other developing countries”. The conference itself became famous for the failure of Mbeki to leave his denialist

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8 A fungal disease, mostly of mucosal tissues.
9 For the price of 60 Pfizer capsules, 1000 Biozole capsules could be purchased (Geffen 2010: 50).
position and reach out to the world.\textsuperscript{10} Furthermore, it led to the so-called \textit{Durban Declaration}, signed by 5,000 prominent scientists (\textit{Nature} 2000), which presents the scientific evidence to prove that “HIV causes AIDS” and states strongly that “to tackle the disease, everyone must first understand that HIV is the enemy. Research, not myths, will lead to the development of more effective and cheaper treatments, and, it is hoped, a vaccine” (ibid. 15-16). In terms of a call for universal treatment of AIDS patients, whatever their background and wherever they live, the speech by High Court Judge Edwin Cameron was highly significant:

My presence here embodies the injustices of AIDS in Africa because, on a continent in which 290 million Africans survive on less than one US dollar a day, I can afford monthly medication costs of approximately US\$400 per month. Amidst the poverty of Africa, I stand before you because I am able to purchase health and vigour. I am here because I can pay for life itself. To me this seems an iniquity of very considerable proportions ... (Cameron 2005: 110).

In the march ahead of the conference, organised by TAC and its local and international allies, approximately 5,000 local and international activists participated. According to Grebe (2008: 26):

The TAC drew heavily on its civil society networks, particularly its extensive links within South African trade unions, NGOs and CSOs to mobilise support for the march and its demands ... While the principal focus of mobilisation was local ... (i)t was endorsed by at least 258 organisations from across the world, activist organisations, NGOs, academic groupings and trade unions ...

This march came to symbolise the strength of TAC as an activist organisation by illustrating its global connectedness, while simultaneously illustrating its roots in local communities. This combination of local and global connections would become a valuable resource in the decade to come.

\textit{Brazil as ‘significant other’}

In behavioural sciences and sociology, the term ‘significant other’, coined by early 20\textsuperscript{th} century sociologist G.H. Mead, refers to a key person in our social group whose behaviour we copy, particularly as children (Mead 1934, cited in Rotarua et al. 2010: 331-2). In my

\textsuperscript{10} “(W)e could not blame everything on a single virus” (Mbeki 2000).
view, this term is useful when one discusses the role of Brazil with respect to the fight against HIV/AIDS in South Africa. On the one hand, Brazil, with its successful universal ART programme, is frequently referred to when describing South Africa’s failures; on the other hand, Brazil became actively involved in the solutions meant to break South Africa’s deadlock, as this chapter explores. Brazil became the significant other that acted admirably and responsibly and eventually helped to bring about change in South Africa.

Many scholars who have written about the controversial and failed HIV/AIDS policies in South Africa have referred to its successful, ‘significant other’, Brazil (Farmer et al. 2001; Nattrass 2004; Gauri & Lieberman 2006), since Brazil is famous for its universal distribution of ARTs since 1996. Moreover, Brazil and South Africa are often compared because they share similar characteristics, as small parts of their societies are very wealthy and highly developed while large parts of their societies are still poor. Seekings (2007: 2) writes, for example: “it was hardly surprising that South Africa competed with Brazil and a handful of other countries for the indignity of having the most unequal distribution of income” – and indeed, as Gauri and Lieberman (2006) argue, both are middle-income countries that are among the most unequal societies in the world, with a Gini index of 57.8 for South Africa and 55.0 for Brazil (UNDP 2009).

According to Bastos (1999), the epidemic in Brazil initially had all the characteristics of HIV/AIDS in ‘the West’, affecting mainly the well-known risk groups: homosexual men and injecting drug users. For a while even, the disease was framed in the media as a ‘disease of the rich’. However, when women started to appear more prominently in the statistics in the early 1990s – in 1983, forty men for every woman; in 1996, three men for every woman (Biehl 2004) – speculation of an ‘Africanisation’ of HIV/AIDS – meaning a heterosexual spread through malnourishment, poverty and promiscuity12 – is said to have contributed to the realisation that the epidemic in Brazil needed to be tackled more forcefully. In South Africa, although also associated with gay men – Zackie Achmat of

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11 Interestingly, the World Bank in its country briefs claims that the Gini coefficient for South Africa has deteriorated from 0.64 in 1995 to 0.67 in 2008, while the Gini coefficient for Brazil has improved from 0.596 in 2004 to 0.54 in 2009, owing to, amongst other factors, social programmes.

12 Promiscuity, in particular, is one of the potent myths that is frequently mentioned when it comes to explaining HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nauta 2010).
the TAC and High Court Judge Edwin Cameron – HIV/AIDS was particularly recognised as an heterosexual ‘African’ problem, as a statement by Conservative Party member Clive Derby-Lewis illustrates: “If AIDS stops black population growth, it would be like Father Christmas” (Debates of Parliament 18 May 1990, col. 9797; cited in Van der Vliet 2004: 51).

When comparing the HIV/AIDS response of Brazil with that of South Africa, one date in particular is revealing and significant: 1996. This was the year that Brazil’s President Cardoso signed legislation making ARTs universally available to all registered HIV/AIDS patients. Within a year, Brazil provided ARTs to 175,000 patients, mainly funded by the government (Gauri & Lieberman 2006; Bass et al. 2009). This should be contrasted with the establishment of a universal rollout programme in South Africa as late as 2004, with only 1,500 patients on drugs funded by the government and 21,000 funded through other means (Nattrass 2004; Gauri & Lieberman 2006; Heywood 2009). It exposes how fundamentally different the approaches were, particularly if one takes into account the number of HIV-positive people in each country: 610,000 in Brazil and 5,000,000 in South Africa in 2002.¹³

Some scholars, such as Bass et al. (2009: 155), explain the dedicated and progressive response in Brazil, mainly by a prominent role of civil society organisations:

Brazil was a notable country in which activist groups in civil society pressured the government to take activist stances itself, ultimately forming a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), policy makers, scientists and pharmaceutical manufacturers which would prove to the world that it was possible for a less-developed nation to effectively address its AIDS crisis.

Others, such as Biehl (2004), also stress other important factors, such as economic factors and the role of the World Bank, to explain the Brazilian response. Below, this question is examined in more detail. However, I first explore how the global AIDS movement should be understood in theoretical terms. Is it an example of an emerging global civil society? Or should one conceive of it in terms of a transnational activist network?

In his book about Africa in the neoliberal world order, James Ferguson (2006) asks pertinent questions about the usefulness of concepts like ‘local’ and ‘civil’ when scholars examine the role of international NGOs like Oxfam and MSF in African contexts where they have taken over state-like functions. In addition, he questions the implications of a globalisation of politics and argues: “The globalization of politics is not a one-way street. If relations of rule and systems of exploitation have become transnational, so have forms of resistance ...” (2006: 109). This is indeed what this chapter seems to confirm when describing and analysing the role of the TAC vis-à-vis the South African government. It becomes clear that the organisation is firmly embedded in a global network of activists, activist organisations, and NGOs in the field of HIV/AIDS. In this way, TAC inspires and is inspired by this multitude of HIV/AIDS actors which it, directly or indirectly, interacts with. In fact this system, this network or collection of networks, has become very vibrant, complex and influential in the global fight against HIV/AIDS and includes a very diverse array of people, organisations and institutions. In order to make sense of this ‘constellation’, I aim to use three articles: Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics, by Margaret Keck & Kathryn Sikkink (1999), The idea of global civil society, by Mary Kaldor (2003), and The limits of global civil society, by Neera Chandhoke (2006). These may be of help in understanding the constitution and workings of such networks and their weaknesses and strengths.

The literature, grappling with the phenomenon of the global fight against HIV/AIDS, frequently refers to the work of Keck & Sikkink (1999), who quite clearly and systematically analyse the type and functioning of the networks consisting of diverse actors. In their view, the term ‘transnational advocacy networks’ best describes what they wish to understand. In their words, “a transnational advocacy network includes those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services” (1999: 89). In fact, they “refer to transnational networks (rather than coalitions, movements, or civil society) to evoke the structured and structuring dimension in the actions of these complex agents” (ibid. 90). Moreover, the authors explain that these transnational networks participate at the same time
“in domestic and international politics ... to affect a world of states and international organizations constructed by states” (ibid. 90). In their view, these transnational advocacy networks are distinct from what others have called ‘global civil society’. However, when Kaldor (2003: 588) describes the development of global civil society in the late twentieth century, she states:

During the 1990s, a new phenomenon of great importance was the emergence of transnational networks of activists who came together on particular issues – landmines, human rights, climate change, dams, AIDS/HIV, corporate responsibility. I believe they had a significant impact on strengthening processes of global governance, especially in the humanitarian field.

In other words, she conceives of these networks as part of global civil society in the 1990s, which is something I return to below.

Although I am also critical, as will be discussed below, the Keck & Sikkink article is very useful, as it does away with our usual understanding of advocacy and activists, in which we mainly envisage the Seattle anti-WTO protesters or NGO activists. In their view, we should conceptualise these actors as being much more diverse, including international and domestic NGOs, research and advocacy organisations; local social movements; foundations; the media; churches, trade unions, consumer organisations, intellectuals; parts of regional and international intergovernmental organisations; parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments (1999: 92). In my view, particularly this last category is rarely envisaged when we describe activism with a global reach. In this regard, the review article by Orenstein & Schmitz (2006: 482) about ‘new transnationalism’ – which “studies the regular interactions between state and non-state actors across national boundaries aimed at shaping political and social outcomes at home, abroad, and in an emerging global sphere of governance” – is also useful. Interestingly, they also caution us in our understanding of governments, which are normally defined as more or less encapsulated entities which negotiate or interact with each other on a global level. They refer to the work of Slaughter (2004), who contends that:

... state entities such as the judiciary, the legislature, and governmental bureaucracies react to globalization by developing horizontal transgovernmental networks to their equivalent units in other nations ... (These) transnational governmental networks regulate and coordinate state behaviour with counterparts in other states and other transnational and international actors. Viewing states as fundamentally interconnected in complex webs of inter-
dependence presents a radical critique of the traditional comparative politics paradigm but also offers new opportunities for an expanded reach of a new kind of comparative research (Slaughter 2004, cited in Orenstein & Schmitz 2006: 491).

In this regard, it is useful to discuss the *boomerang pattern*, a frequently cited heuristic tool by Keck & Sikkink (1999: 93):

Where governments are unresponsive to groups whose claims may nonetheless resonate elsewhere, international contacts can ‘amplify’ the demands of domestic groups, pry open space for new issues, and then echo these demands back into the domestic arena.

It is useful as it illustrates the value of global ties for the domestic struggles of local groups with their government. However, it may also hide aspects of the ways governments operate in the globalised era. One such aspect was also highlighted by Keck & Sikkink when they described how governmental actors on various levels in diverse fields are themselves part of transgovernmental networks. The boomerang pattern, therefore, as it stresses the unresponsiveness of the government may reinforce stereotypes of ‘explanatory nationalism’ (Pogge 2008: 18), whereby the grave problems in developing countries are usually explained in terms of local problems – authoritarian regimes and corruption. Such analyses are flawed because they fail to recognise the role of Western governments and Western transnational corporations and how these operate to guarantee a steady flow of cheap raw materials and resources from the South.

Before continuing to critically appraise Keck & Sikkink’s contribution, it is useful to first consider the writing of Chandhoke (2006) and Kaldor (2003) about *global civil society* in order to aid us in determining other critical issues in understanding the global dimensions of activism. Let us begin with Kaldor’s (2003: 590-1) definition:

Global civil society is a platform inhabited by activists ... NGOs and neoliberals, as well as national and religious groups, where they argue about, campaign for (or against), negotiate about, or lobby for the arrangements that shape global developments. There is not one global civil society but many, affecting a range of issues ...

This definition is crucial, as it problematises the various meanings of the term ‘global civil society’. In this way, Kaldor warns us against an understanding of civil society, particularly promoted by the international financial institutions (IFIs), which dominates the thinking
about development and North-South relationships, and which she refers to as “the neoliberal version” (2003: 588-9). It mainly includes NGOs as “tamed social movements”, which Edwards (2009) has described as the neo-Tocquevillian version of civil society. In addition, Kaldor describes two other understandings of civil society – namely, the transnational networks of activists, or what she calls the “the activist version”, and the new religious and ethnic movements, which she calls “the postmodern version” (ibid.).

It is particularly this ‘neoliberal’ understanding of global civil society and its dominance in development policy circles and theoretical debates that we need to be aware of. In this connection, it is useful to turn to Chandhoke (2006), who formulated several critical issues in her debate with scholars who may be too positive about the role and potential of global civil society to fundamentally alter the global economic, social and political order:

... the notion that global civil society can institutionalise normative structures that run counter to the principles of powerful states or equally powerful corporations, which govern international transactions, should be treated with a fair amount of caution. Of course, actors in global civil society have made a difference ... But they function ... within the realm of the possible, not within the realm of the impossible ... within inherited structures of power that they may modify or alter but seldom transform ... a state-centric system of international relations that is dominated by a narrow section of humanity and within the structures of international capital that may permit dissent but do not permit any transformation of their own agendas (2006: 52).

Chandhoke argues that such agendas are often dominated by Northern-based professional international NGOs – or, in Kaldor’s terms, the neoliberal version of activism:

Global civil society organizations have emerged as a powerful and influential force on the world stage, affecting as they do both domestic and international policies, deciding as they do the fate of some authoritarian governments at least, and laying down agendas as they do (Chandhoke 2006: 40).

According to Chandhoke, particularly the concept of good governance, promoted in the 1990s by the IFIs and effected through international NGOs, came to signify a type of governance that was stripped of politics. In her view, such “associational activity at the global level tends to acquire a life of its own” (2006: 46), whereby “the post-Washington consensus ... views protest and struggle, which happen to be an integral part of civil society, as problems that have to be resolved through managerial techniques” (2006: 45). In fact, it is
precisely this more political Habermasian interpretation of civil society – civil society as public sphere\textsuperscript{14} – that is usually ignored by mainstream development actors. Accordingly, Chandhoke agrees with Kaldor (2003: 589), who quotes Mahmoud Mamdani: “NGOs are killing civil society”. Hence, Chandhoke struggles with the question whether global or international NGOs actually help ordinary people in the South to be empowered or disempowered, to be politicised or be depoliticised:

... it is possible that participants in demonstrations are handed a political platform and an agenda that has been finalized elsewhere. This is hardly either democratic or even political, it may even reek of bureaucratic management of participatory events (Chandhoke 2006: 48).

Thus, Chandhoke warns that activists in the Global North, or the affluent bubbles of the Global South, may be too dominant in setting the activist agenda, particularly as they may have much better access to modern communication technology and resources to travel to international conferences. Thus, she seems to disagree with Keck & Sikkink (1999: 100), who optimistically argue that such global activist networks “are not conveyor belts of liberal ideals, but vehicles for communicative and political exchange, with the potential for mutual transformation of participants”. According to Chandhoke, such mutual transformation may be limited or even impossible, as our world is dominated by powerful states, corporations and modern capitalism. This is especially true in the realm of ‘development’, where an understanding of civil society as a public sphere is frequently ignored.

It is therefore worthwhile to examine the global activist network in the field of HIV/AIDS, and in particular the network that developed between Brazil, the TAC, and the coalition of international activist groups and international NGOs. According to Follér (2010: 216):

The Brazilian state has different roles to play, one of which is the foreign policy goal of expanding the Brazilian pharmaceutical industry into the global market. The other is in the realm of domestic policy, namely that when it comes to AIDS governance Brazil has taken on the role of an ‘activist state’. Thanks to these efforts, and those of the Brazilian social movements, a solidarity-based globalization is taking place that benefits people living with HIV/AIDS in Brazil and also in other countries.

\textsuperscript{14} For a useful discussion, see Edwards (2009), Chapter 4 ‘Civil society as public sphere’ (pp. 63-81).
In my opinion, although Follér does indeed refer to the possible economic motives of Brazil, her conclusion that we are witnessing a solidarity-based globalisation may be a bridge too far, as Chandhoke has shown above. Furthermore, it is necessary to critically examine the role of state actors in these global activist networks. The fact that Brazil is now frequently described as an ‘activist state’ could, in reality, cloud our understanding of what is really going on. Lastly, it is indeed important to critically examine the role of influential global NGOs. Let us keep these questions in mind in the next section.

The global treatment access network at work

In order to understand the emergence of the global treatment access network, I will begin to sketch how the TAC rallied the help of its Brazilian and international allies to prove the feasibility of universal ART treatment.

Generic drugs in Khayelitsha

We pick up the story of the TAC and its global allies after the 13th International AIDS Conference in Durban in 2000. Although the relationship with the government had become rather strained after the conference, a huge victory could be celebrated in early 2001 as the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PMA) withdrew its lawsuit against the South Africa government and its Medicines Act, thereby opening up avenues for parallel importation. Yet, while the pharmaceutical industry finally withdrew its case, particularly because the TAC successfully rallied international attention for the case, Nattrass shows that the South African government in an out-of-court settlement ultimately “agreed to rephrase the Act to make clear that compulsory licensing was not being provided for” (2004: 53). At the time, however, the TAC believed that the withdrawal signified the beginning of universal treatment of the poor: patient rights over patent rights.

This could not be further from the truth. First of all, the government persisted in foot-dragging in implementing a national programme to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Although PMTCT was scientifically proven to markedly reduce HIV infection of newborns of HIV-positive mothers; and although South Africa had the means to implement such a programme, the cabinet actively ob-
structed the free distribution of Nevirapine to pregnant mothers owing to its denialist stance. This injustice led to a moral outcry and prompted the TAC to initiate legal proceedings against its own national government (Heywood 2009: 32) and the provincial governments in South Africa (except for the Western Cape, which cooperated closely with the TAC). In a landmark ruling on 14 December 2001, the judge ordered the state “to provide Nevirapine to prevent MTCT in all public health facilities” (van der Vliet 2004: 70). This signified another major victory on the slow road to realise a universal ART programme in South Africa. However, although the government did indeed begin to roll out PMTCT, it took years before a country-wide MTCT programme was effectively in place, with poor facilities and staffing frequently given as the excuse. When it was finally in place, it saved the government “the costs of medical care for tens of thousands of infants who would otherwise have been infected with HIV” (Heywood 2009: 25).

After this victory, the TAC had to battle new arguments invented by the government to prevent it from rolling out a universal ART programme: 1) unaffordability and cost-effectiveness; and 2) the benefit of good nutrition (as opposed to the toxicity of ARTs). For the sake of brevity, I focus mainly on the first argument. According to Nattrass (2004: 59):

The discourse of ‘unaffordability’ is protected from public scrutiny by what amounts to a technocratic argument on the part of the state that only the government is in a position to evaluate and rank the full spectrum of social objectives/needs/priorities; and that having reviewed all competing claims, has determined that full-scale roll-out of anti-retroviral treatment for all is ‘unaffordable’ ...

In other words, the government limited the official debate in South Africa to the narrow boundaries of permissible fiscal expenditure on health care. Moreover, it has been repeatedly suggested that members

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15 Mbeki on the risks of ARVs: ‘it would be a criminal dereliction of duty if our government did not say, how do we cope with the toxicity of these drugs ...’ (Mbeki 2001).

16 For those interested in how the government abused the necessity of good nutrition as an excuse to promote a recipe of garlic, lemon, beetroot and olive oil and get into bed with quacks like Matthias Rath, the excellent study of Geffen (2010), Debunking Delusions, provides good reading.
of the cabinet did not want to spend huge amounts of funds saving the unproductive poor.\textsuperscript{17}

In order to effectively surmount these obstacles, the TAC built on its success in the Fluconazole campaign and mobilised local South Africans on the ground and all its global contacts, particularly its close ally MSF, to prove to the South African government that treating HIV/AIDS with cheap generic drugs was cost-effective and could even be achieved in areas with limited health facilities in resource-poor settings. The pilot project that was deemed most suitable was situated in the township of Khayelitsha, not far from Cape Town:

In April 2000, in collaboration with the Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, MSF set up three HIV/AIDS dedicated clinics within Khayelitsha’s primary health care centers. In May 2001, the HIV/AIDS clinics began to offer ARV treatment to people in an advanced stage of HIV infection. (It) was initiated to demonstrate that treating HIV/AIDS with antiretroviral (ARV) drugs in a primary health care setting and in a resource-limited environment is feasible and replicable. In addition, it aimed to prove that developing countries can provide affordable HIV/AIDS care with low-cost ARV drugs (WHO 2003: 2).

In order to gain access to cheap drugs, the TAC and MSF South Africa contacted MSF Brazil and its local partners, particularly Dr. Eloan Dos Santos, head of Brazilian state pharmaceutical company Farmanguinhos.

In January 2002, three TAC members – Zackie Achmat, Matthew Damane and Nomandla Yako – accompanied by someone from labour union COSATU went to Brazil to visit Farmanguinhos. The goal was to learn more about the production of generic AIDS drugs, bring back generic medication for the antiretroviral pilot programme in Khayelitsha, and, thus, encourage the South African government to issue compulsory licences on essential medication. As was explained by Achmat on his return at a press conference attended by TAC, MSF, Oxfam and COSATU:

We want the government to demonstrate the political will to bring the Medicines Act into operation, to ensure that there are compulsory licences so that we can have local production of generic medicines, to ensure that the price comes down and that we can treat people (Beat It! 2002).

\textsuperscript{17} At a cabinet meeting, Trevor Manuel is alleged to have stated: “It does not make financial sense to spend money on people dying anyway, who are not even productive in the first place” (cited in Gumede 2005: 163).
According to a TAC document, “Farmanguinhos ... manufactured and sold these medicines to MSF Brazil. MSF Brazil has donated these drugs to the MSF antiretroviral pilot programme in Khayelitsha” (TAC Unknown: § 10). Indeed, as Dr. Eric Goemaere of MSF South Africa explained in an interview, a clever scheme was devised to ensure success, based on the lessons learned when TAC illegally imported a generic version of Pfizer’s Fluconazole from Thailand (as was described above).

First of all, Farmanguinhos sold the drugs to MSF Brazil at cost price in order to ensure the lowest price possible. Dr. Eloán Dos Santos was an important ally, countering criticism by Western pharmaceutical companies that accused Farmanguinhos of being able to produce cheap generics because of unfair subsidies and employing slave labour:

The workers of Farmanguinhos are paid by the production of Farmanguinhos. That is the first point: there is no subsidy. Second, slave labour is what they do (with) the Third World. They indebt the Third World so that the G7 countries get richer: that is slave labour! When we work ... (the) fruit of our labour enriches the G7, and that is exactly the aim of the IMF, to make us dependent, always subordinate. In that way we are slaves. The law of slavery has been replaced by another logic: IMF globalization!

Second, by selling the generics to MSF Brazil, Farmanguinhos avoided being accused of exporting the drugs illegally and Brazil having to face the wrath of the United States. In other words, MSF Brazil became responsible for the ‘export’, by donating the drugs to MSF South Africa. Thirdly, the doctors in Khayelitsha had already started a number of patients on the Brazilian generic drugs before this highly visible PR stunt was broadcast and publicly announced. This was strategically important because “this was very provocative and the whole idea was that it was much more difficult to stop patients who have started treatment than to prevent some people to go on treatment ...”.21

18 Telephone interview, 10 March 2011.
19 Dr. Eloán Dos Santos in the documentary, Beat it! (2002). Quote based on subtitles, original in Portuguese; my emphasis.
20 As Goemaere explained, some figures in Brazil’s central government were somewhat embarrassed at first when TAC and MSF announced the shipment of the drugs at a South African press conference.
21 Telephone interview with Dr. Eric Goemaere (former Head of MSF South Africa; now Medical Coordinator at MSF), 10 March 2011.
Although ultimately the South African government would not issue compulsory licenses, the pilot programme in Khayelitsha proved a great success. According to the WHO (2003: 9):

MSF obtained permission from the South African Medicines Control Council under the Medicines Act ... for the use of unregistered generic ARV drugs. Authorization required sufficient evidence about drug quality ... The price of the first-line regimen ... was half the cost of the lowest possible price offered by the proprietary companies to governments (US$ 3.00 per person per day) and nearly a quarter of the price in the private sector ... . Later in 2002, the price of this Brazilian combination dropped further to US$ 1.08 per person per day.

It would prove to the South African government that a universal ART programme was feasible, even in poverty-stricken areas. Although Brazil subsequently offered to assist South Africa through technology transfer\textsuperscript{22} to establish a South African state pharmaceutical plant, the government of South Africa would eventually decide to produce generics through the private sector (Aspen Pharmacare).

In conclusion, it is important to understand how these local struggles of the TAC in South Africa, supported by its global allies, were related to the critical negotiations at the Doha Development Round. In the next section, I explore how both the TAC and Brazil functioned as part of this global activist network.

\textit{Brazil and the global activist network}

As the TAC battled the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PMA) and the South African government, and – in the process – managed to successfully mobilise quite a following, the global struggles for affordable treatment were also at their height. Eventually these struggles would cross-fertilise each other, and TAC would prove to be a valuable member in this global network of activists. While, according to Grebe (2008), the government of Brazil took a lead role in getting the Doha Declaration adopted and MSF did crucial work to ensure that developed countries would not oppose it, Achmat contends that “the Doha Declaration could not have occurred without the PMA case and the attention it focused on the relationship between intellectual property rights and access to AIDS treatment thanks to the

\textsuperscript{22} According to Goemaere (2011), Dr. Eloa dos Santos came to South Africa to offer the government the assistance of Farmanguinhos in terms of technology transfer.
TAC and its allies” (cited in Grebe 2008: 28-9). This is confirmed by Nunn (2009), whose book, *The Politics and History of AIDS Treatment in Brazil*, describes the significance of the PMA case for the global campaign for access to generic medication.

Furthermore, local American activists played a major role in putting pressure on the US government, as did Brazil, arguing that even the US had recently pressured Bayer to lower anthrax drugs’ prices when the country was gripped by the fear of powder bombs in the post-9/11 era. As is argued by Smith & Siplon (2006: 123), “the Doha Round would go down as a victory, though not a complete one, in the activist/developing country column”. The authors refer to Paragraph 4 of the Doha Declaration, which states that “the TRIPS agreement does not and should not prevent members from taking measures to protect public health” and that “the Agreement can and should be interpreted and implemented in a manner supportive of WTO members’ right to protect public health, and in particular, to support access to medicines for all” (WTO 2001; Smith & Siplon 2006: 123). If one wants to understand the role of Brazil, it is useful to turn to Biehl (2004), who has written extensively on the role of the Brazilian government in the fight against HIV/AIDS, domestically as well as globally. Why was Brazil so proactive, and what motivated the government and non-government sectors to become such influential actors in support of local and global treatment access?

Initially, when HIV/AIDS surfaced in Brazil, which was still under a military dictatorship, local gay activists compelled local health services in Brazil to institute HIV/AIDS programmes. As a result, “in São Paulo, for example, such a mobilization led to the creation in 1983 of a state-wide public health AIDS program, the first of its kind in Latin America” (Biehl 2004: 107). At the same time, grassroots organisations and NGOs were established because the state public health sector was “underfunded and understaffed” (ibid. 108). Moreover, as Petchesky (2003: 98) has shown, “the onset of the epidemic in the early 1980s in Brazil coincided, in a critical historical conjuncture, with the end of dictatorship and the flurry of civil society and democratisation movements …”, such as the gay movement.

In the 1990s, the World Bank provided loans to Brazil and pushed for a programme to fight HIV/AIDS, which broadly fitted a neoliberal agenda. The programme stressed prevention and was rolled out through the active non-governmental sector (Biehl 2004; Flynn 2008), with only a limited role for the government and its crumbling
state pharmaceutical sector and public health facilities. It was in a period when Latin America faced structural adjustment programmes that were highly criticised “as catalysts for dismantling public social welfare programs, undermining national markets and facilitating the Euro-American takeover of strategic sectors of the economy” (Petras & Veltmeyer 2002: 292). However, when it became clear that HIV patients in the US and Europe were successfully treated with ARV drugs, Brazilian activists used the Brazilian constitution of 1988, which “made health everyone’s right and the state’s duty” (Biehl 2004: 108), to pressure the Cardoso government (1995-2002).

Ultimately, as described above, this resulted in the signing, by President Cardoso, of a law to make AIDS medication universally available. However, what makes the scholarly contributions by Biehl (2004) and, for example, Nunn (2009) valuable is that – while recognising the significance of the activist community – they also probe beyond it in order to expose other agendas of the Brazilian state. According to Biehl, one should first take into account the importance of the fact that, months before, Brazil had signed the treaty on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights known as TRIPS – yielding to pressure by the global pharmaceutical lobby – because Brazil was keen to attract foreign investments. Thus, the “antiretroviral law (fit) into President Cardoso’s plan to internationalise Brazil’s market” and to increase competition on the domestic market in order to drive the prices down (2004: 112). By 2004, Brazil had become the eighth largest pharmaceutical market in the world (ibid.).

However, the government did not accept the high prices of these foreign drugs and devised strategies to reduce the cost of essential medicines. On the one hand, Health Minister Serra repeatedly threatened to issue compulsory licenses in order to force the drug companies to lower their prices (Flynn 2008; Nunn 2009); and, on the other hand, the government took action to reduce prices even further by allowing “the entrance of generics in the Brazilian market and (giving) incentives to their local production” (Biehl 2004: 116). Lastly, as described above, Brazil became instrumental in the Doha Declaration victory. According to Biehl (2004) and Nunn (2009), Health Minister José Serra became a powerful figure:

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23 As Garrett (2007: 2) argues: ‘practically overnight, tens of thousands of infected men and women in wealthy countries started new treatments, and by mid-1997, the visible horrors of AIDS had almost disappeared from the United States and Europe’.
Seizing a window of political opportunity, Serra was able to harness the energy and technical abilities of Brazil’s public drug facilities, the domestic AIDS and (activist) movements, the Brazilian AIDS program’s high-profile public image ... and an international movement for AIDS treatment to his advantage. Through concerted efforts to change global essential medicines institutions, Serra ... lowered Health Ministry HAART costs, enhanced his own political profile, and contributed to important changes in global essential medicines institutions (Nunn 2009: 140).

A last issue that informed the Brazilian strategy to provide AIDS medication to all in need, or “biotechnology for the people” (Biehl 2004: 105), was an economic evaluation of the costs and benefits of such a programme. Universal treatment would be cheaper because it saved costs. Not only did the programme within a few years lead to a decline in AIDS deaths, it also led to a decrease in the number of hospitalisations due to TB and pneumonia (Biehl 2004). According to Achmat & Simcock (2007): “Historical evaluations suggest that (Brazil’s) ART policy led to a 40-70% decrease in mortality, a 60-80% decrease in morbidity, and an 85% decrease in hospitalisations” (Greco 2006, cited in Achmat & Simcock: 14). However, before celebrating Brazil’s achievements, Biehl also warns us that the Brazilian AIDS programme may fail to reach the poor and marginalised who do not use public health facilities and who do not seek “assistance, medical or pharmaceutical” (2004: 120).

According to former President Cardoso, one can only understand the role of Brazil if one recognises that we are witnessing “a new phase in capitalism [which] does not necessarily limit states; it also opens up new perspectives”. This “new concept of a state” is a type of state that is able to act effectively against monopolies and play a significant role in regulation, while at the same time it is “a porous state so that society can act in it” (Cardoso 2003, cited in Biehl 2004: 114). Although one could disagree with the label ‘activist state’, conceived by Biehl (2004: 114), it is clear that the non-governmental sector was strong, due to earlier neoliberal interventions by the IFIs and the fact that, in the HIV/AIDS field, many of the old activists had successively migrated to the government. According to Petchesky (2003: 99):

What also makes the Brazilian context unique, however, is the responsiveness of government officials, particularly in the national, state and municipal

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24 HAART: Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy.
25 Of the TAC.
health departments, to popular and NGO demands. This is not an accident, since many of these officials, especially at middle bureaucratic and municipal levels, have come out of the gay, lesbian and feminist movements.

This last issue leads us to consider how the global network of activists came about. Who was involved? How did these activists meet? How were common agendas forged?

First of all, it is important to consider the role of international AIDS conferences. According to Nunn (2009: 120):

After the Vancouver AIDS conference, in the late 1990s, a variety of international advocacy organizations in several different countries became increasingly vocal about the global need to address global HIV/AIDS treatment challenges ... Médecins Sans Frontières ... that had historically focused on providing direct medical services ... in developing countries, began its Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines ... after learning that many of its field offices could not provide adequate medical services to underserved populations because of prohibitive costs of many medicines, particularly ARVs.

In addition to MSF, American organisations like ACT UP began to focus on global treatment, after HIV/AIDS in the US and Europe had become more or less a manageable disease. Its members became very active in Health Global Access Project Coalition (Health GAP) (Smith & Siplon 2006). It became a crucial node in the global activist network and an important actor in so-called listservs, internet communication channels used to share information about the pandemic and local and global activist strategies and challenges. Furthermore, according to Nunn (2009), Health GAP “prompted and provided momentum for a series of important policy changes during the Clinton Administration that paved the way for a series of global institutional changes”, such as the Doha Declaration (as was described above). Eventually, “as public policy issues grew increasingly interdisciplinary and complex, a coalition of NGOs such as MSF, CPTech, Oxfam International, Health GAP, TAC, and others were no longer engaging solely in campaigns, political action, and international advocacy” (2009: 121). Grebe (2008: 28) describes how the TAC became part of this network:

Achmat attended an MSF conference on access to medicines in Amsterdam in late 1999 at which he met activists already active on intellectual property rights issues, notably ... from Consumer Project on Technology (CPT, now Knowledge Ecology International) as well as American AIDS activists ... from ACT UP Philadelphia. After the conference, [he] maintained contact ... principally by email, including through the IP-Health mailing list ...
Or, as Heywood (2009: 17) shows, “links were made with groups such as the Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC) and ACT-UP, who in 1999 came to South Africa to provide training to the first cadre of TAC treatment literacy activists”, who in turn would be educating the general public about HIV/AIDS science. Even today, this network is still strong, as is described by Follér (2010: 211-2):

A recently started South-South project between AIDS NGOs ... was a satellite-conference on “Access to AIDS Treatment and Intellectual Property” that took place at the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City in August 2008. The Brazilian partners were The Working Group of Intellectual Property (GTPI) and the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA). [They] initiated and designed the project together with NGOs from Colombia, India, China, South Africa, and Thailand.

Another example is the establishment of the Pan-African Treatment Access Movement in Cape Town in 2002, in which the Brazilian HIV/AIDS NGO Grupo Pela Vidda also participated.\(^{26}\) It is indeed these types of South-South coalitions that are increasingly important.

In conclusion one can say that Brazil, over the last two decades, has become a prominent actor in the strengthening of the Global South. Brazil and its new allies can no longer be ignored on the world stage. At the same time, one must not be naïve and must remain aware that the West will not concede power without a fight:

... much of what the U.S. government and the pharmaceutical industry gave away in the headlines covering the Doha Declaration they managed to quietly recoup ... in bilateral trade agreements with a whole raft of countries and regions in the following two years ... Among the conditions ... are limitations to compulsory licensing, increasing what is considered to ‘patentable’, extending the terms of patents beyond what the WTO requires, and eliminating the right to parallel imports ... (Smith & Siplon 2006: 124).

According to the authors, it exemplifies the challenges of transnational advocacy networks when it comes to ‘real power’.

*Discussion and conclusion*

This chapter has illustrated how the Treatment Action Campaign – a local South African NGO – negotiated an emerging multipolar world and turned for inspiration and support to Brazil, a ‘significant other’ in the global fight against HIV/AIDS due to its early model for

\(^{26}\) Interview with Dr. Eric Goemaere, 2011.
universal access to ARTs, access funded by the state. The TAC mobilised Brazilian government actors, NGOs like Médecins sans Frontières, and a host of activist organisations through an emerging transnational activist network to ensure that ordinary South Africans could access life-saving medication. At the same time, it demonstrated to the South African government that a universal ART programme was a viable solution also in South Africa, even in resource-poor settings. From the point of view of Brazil and other allies in the transnational activist network for global treatment access, the TAC became an example and a valuable partner, as it had organised the Global March for Treatment ahead of the 2000 International AIDS conference in Durban. This inspired the global campaign for treatment access, in which Brazil played a pivotal role and demonstrated how being locally rooted could be married with global action. In addition, the TAC had successfully defeated a consortium of international pharmaceutical companies, companies which had mounted a legal challenge against the South African government over its Medicines Act, aimed to block avenues for parallel importation to reduce the cost of patented drugs. Eventually, this victory would inspire and contribute to the success of Brazil and the transnational activist network for global HIV/AIDS treatment access to positively influence the Doha Declaration in terms of TRIPS, thereby opening up the possibility to distribute generic medication in cases of public health emergencies.

When examining the role of new global actors like China, this case has shown that Brazil is also aspiring to increase its political, economic and social influence in Africa. It actively pursues a South-South agenda – for example, the BRIC initiative and the IBSA forum – and aims to challenge the dominant position of the global North in multilateral fora. Nevertheless, one also needs to be cautious when celebrating the victories of Brazil and the global activist network(s) in which government officials were also active. In this regard, it is useful to heed Chandhoke’s warnings and her contention that activists in global civil society may achieve some progressive change, but will not fundamentally alter our modern capitalist world dominated by powerful states – as exemplified by the way the US undid much of its defeat in the Doha Declaration on TRIPS in subsequent bilateral trade agreements – and powerful transnational corporations. I disagree, therefore, with Biehl (2004), who has described the role of Brazil as an ‘activist state’. More research is needed, for example, to determine
the impact of governmental actors on transnational activist networks. Although it is indeed clear that former NGO activists – for example, from the gay movement – have become influential government actors in Brazil, it has also been shown that Brazil had clear economic motives – in its struggle with powerful actors in the North, such as the US and the EU – to become involved in the fight for global treatment access.

Another crucial issue raised by Kaldor (2003) and Chandhoke (2006) is the dominance of certain international NGOs in global civil society, particularly in the field of development. This not only demonstrates the problematic aspects of concepts that we use to understand and interpret the modern world, such as ‘local’ versus ‘national’ or ‘global’, as Ferguson (2006) has argued, but also reveals that more locally rooted community activists are in danger of becoming disempowered. In my view, we should indeed become much more aware of the dominance of the more depoliticised interpretations of global civil society and civil society in general, which snugly fit neoliberal agendas, while Habermasian interpretations of civil society as public sphere tend to be ignored. Thus, I would agree with Chandhoke (2006) that the concept of ‘global civil society’, as it is usually hailed in terms of its transformative potential, may cloud our understanding of global activism by veiling the continued dominance of the Global North, 21st century capitalism, and sanitised forms of politics and democracy. Nevertheless, an international NGO like MSF seems to be the exception to the rule. It became a driving force in a transnational activist network for global HIV/AIDS treatment access and has proven that it is possible to combine an empowering role, by consciously choosing to involve local organisations and local people, with programmes that ensure real material benefits for the poor. The TAC, in turn, managed to negotiate an emerging multipolar world and effectively marry its local struggles and global concerns.

What we do have to realise, however, is that it is frequently the more educated local activists, with access to modern communication like internet, mobile phones and resources to travel, that tend to play a dominant role in these networks. Although the TAC has always striven and managed to recruit and include community activists in its global endeavours – such as the trip to Farmanguinhos in Brazil – the transnational activist network seems to be dominated by the more educated in the Global North and South. On the other hand, the 2011 revolution in North Africa and the Middle East may in fact illustrate
the next phase in modern communication, where mobile phones have become so affordable, widespread and advanced – cameras, internet applications, email, Twitter – that these means of communication are now accessible for the masses. Are we actually witnessing transnational activism 2.0?

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Abstract

Sudan’s prolonged conflicts (South, East and West) have produced several enduring trajectories that have already shaped its present and will likely shape its future developments. Paradoxically, despite the tenacity of the conflicts and their colossal human and material cost – putting large parts of the country out of food and export crops production – Sudan has been able to maintain steady GDP growth for more than a decade.

The stark contrast between the devastation of war and the steady economic growth involves more than Sudan negotiating a multipolar world order. In fact, Sudan has engaged a reconfigured post-Communism unipolar world order, which until the rise of China, India and Brazil was dominated by the United States. The classic notion of bipolarity has given way to an emergent multipolarity, in which non-Western countries (for example, China, India and Brazil) have gained considerable economic leverage. These raw materials-, oil- and minerals-hungry economies have made their presence felt in Africa, in general and in particular Sudan. This has fundamentally changed the geopolitics in which Sudan operates and has led to the operation of fundamentally different trade, economic relations and political cooperation.

This chapter argues that while resource-rich economies such as Sudan could have been crippled by economic sanctions imposed under the unipolar world order dominated by the US, this scenario is most unlikely under the current multipolar world order. Sudan, therefore, is reaping the economic opportunities provided by engaging non-Western development cooperation partners, while steadily moving away from negotiating with the West.
Introduction

Sudan is a member of the group of former British colonies (Nigeria, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Somalia) which experienced various episodes of destructive civil wars at various stages of their post independence development. Certainly, Sudan’s independence was consummated in bloodshed, with the South Sudan rebellion erupting in August 1955 even before the British left in January 1956. In a country that has not enjoyed two consecutive decades without war since independence and that was governed by quasi-democratic regimes for less than only 15 years during its 55 years of assumption of self-rule, Sudan’s post-independence history is messy, wanting, bloody and – to some extent – a source of shame to its ruling elite and Western foes and friends alike.

In addition, in common with other former British colonies, Sudan’s independence period has been characteristically that of development into a neocolonial state, whose trade orientation – indeed, its economy and foreign policy – orbited in the periphery of the previous coloniser, with a short-lived and largely failed experience with socialism.¹ Similarly, and no differently from many other African countries, Sudan became heavily indebted to the West and therefore received dictates rather than being able to negotiate or even make policy choices of its own.² What was left of Sudan’s economic sovereignty was not only compromised but also ceded to the IMF and the World Bank, under the aegis of the ill-fated Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).³

If configured alongside a theme of negotiating multipolarity, Sudan has passed through three stages of International Relation (IR) regimes: bipolarity during the Cold War, unipolarity during the first decade after the end of the Cold War, and the current multipolarity. Typically, during the Cold War, developing countries such as Sudan played or were forced by circumstances to play the game of international diplomacy and choose (for genuine geopolitical considerations, ideological expediency or economic necessity) between Western and Eastern blocs. It was in this game that Sudan changed hands from the West, particularly when Sudan was ruled by quasi-democratic regimes (1955-8, 1964-9, 1986-9), to the East, when it was

¹ Niblock 1987; Khalid 1985.
ruled by the Sudanese Socialist Union regime (1969-85). The post-1989 rupture with the West, thanks to its newly found non-Western development partners (see the following section of this paper), makes Sudan a reverse case for the theory of hegemonic stability, a case in which superpower hegemony has deepened rather than lessened political instability. In fact, Sudanese officials see the hegemonic power of the West as a source of instability rather than otherwise.

The following sections of this paper interrogate the current developments in Sudan’s cooperation with non-Western partners as alternative to cooperation with Western countries, which has resulted in an outstanding economic growth despite the prevalence of a brutal and destructive civil war. Together, these sections deal with Sudan’s ability to go beyond negotiating multipolarity to engaging new non-Western development cooperation partners.

The determinants of Sudan-Non-Western cooperation in the new world order

The emergence of Sudan’s Islamist regime of Omar Al-Bashir (1989-to-date) coincided with the onset of unipolarity and what was coined in the West as the triumph of liberalism over communism – in which the United States was to dominate the landscape, being the only superpower in possession of superior capabilities and able to advance its particular interests across a wide range of political, military and economic issues. What turned the US and its Western allies against Sudan was not the war in South Sudan – although it claimed the lives of at least two million people and created four million internally displaced people and more than two million refugees in neighbouring countries. Rather, it was the radical Islamist posture of Hassan Al Turabi, the then ideological leader of the National Islamic Front, which provided enough reason to make Sudan appear in the West as democracy’s new enemy after the collapse of communism.

The case of Sudan illustrates that the end of bipolarity has augmented the US and Western hegemonic tendencies in the new uni-
polar world to look for new enemies, and hence to search for new allies in the war against terrorists and Islamists and anti-democratic regimes. Sudan fitted the formula, and unipolarity has not only not reduced the intensity of the civil war but exacerbated the conflicts, which in turn have taken new magnitudes and more complex dimensions, including their internationalisation. Owing to Western involvement, the South-North civil war in Sudan not only continued but also proliferated, engulfing regions which were previously peaceful, such as the Nuba Mountains, Eastern Sudan and Darfur.9

The return of containment as a policy instrument to prevent Sudan spreading radical Islamist ideology to neighbouring countries was reminiscent of the Cold War,10 where the US and the West used their allies in a given region to support such a policy. Weary of the spread of radical Islamist ideology among its rebellious Oromo Muslim population, the Ethiopian regime was an ally of choice. The collapse of the Marxist-Leninist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia and the emergence of Eritrea as new allies of the US and the West made them the most appropriate instruments for containing Sudan’s Islamist regime. The worsening Sudan-Ethiopian relations surfaced following an attempt by Sudan-based Egyptian extremists (Islamic Group) to assassinate then President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Addis Ababa in June 1995.11 The Ethiopian and Eritrean governments accepted the role of serving the United States’ Sudan containment policy – for internal political considerations, not least the presence of strong Islamist opposition groups. As a result, they allowed the Sudan People’s Liberation Front (SPLA) and the coalition of the opposition

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9 See Johnson 2003; de Waal & Flint 2005; Young 2007.
10 According to Tucker & Hendrickson (1992: 24), “The postwar policy of containment can be traced to roughly the same considerations. The domination of Western Europe by the Soviet Union would have threatened the nation’s security. Containment responded in the first instance to the imperative of maintaining a balance of power and to the fear that Soviet control over Western Europe might shift the global balance decisively against the United States. At the same time, containment went beyond a conventional security interest and expressed a broader interest – coincident with the nation’s purpose – in preserving and extending the institutions of freedom. Throughout the long postwar period, these two faces of containment, the organization of power and the vindication of purpose, had seldom been clearly distinguished by administrations despite the repeated efforts of critics to do so.”
11 For a detailed account, see Global Jihad:
Sudan National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to operate openly and launch military attacks at the Eastern Front.\(^{12}\)

The Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) received financial support from the US following the 13 June 2001 resolution of the United States House of Representatives to provide Sudanese rebels with ten million dollars’ worth of assistance. It also received US weapon shipments, using Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), and military training by special operations, according to Wayne Madsen.\(^{13}\)

Whether for political reasons (fear of an SPLA/M attack on the oil installations) or purely economic considerations, Chevron Oil of California – the first ever company to invest in oil in Sudan – decided to halt its oil explorations in the Abyie region of South Kordofan, the oil rich contested frontier between South and North Sudan.\(^{14}\)

The new world order nurturing unipolarity under United States leadership, supported by a multilateral regime steered by the United Nations, was short-lived. Two US-led multilateral interventions yielded two different outcomes. The first Iraq war cemented the US conception of the new world order, with the lingering question: why should the US get involved in protecting Kuwait’s sovereignty against Iraq’s invasion? Tucker & Hendrickson (1992) argue that the reason was the possibility that, even in the new world order, great power relations might be adversely affected by conflicts on the periphery. The justification for US-led multilateral intervention was to be found in the periphery itself because, if such conflicts are permitted to go unchecked, these states – by virtue of their threat to international order – might well come to represent the functional equivalent today of the great power threat of yesterday.\(^{15}\)

The second case of US-led interventionism was Somalia, which was meant to consolidate the new world order gains in Iraq, with the US spearheading military operations under the auspices of UN multilateralism.\(^{16}\) In Somalia, the US came face-to-face with the dangers that could confront the only world superpower’s ambition to become the world’s policeman.\(^{17}\) The failure of the US Somalia mission

\(^{12}\) Young 2007.
\(^{13}\) Madsen 1999.
\(^{16}\) Clarke & Herbst 1997.
\(^{17}\) Bose & Perotti 2002.
questioned its ability to go it alone.\(^{18}\) The US hesitance to send troops for the so-called multilateral humanitarian intervention in Africa was evident – for example, in the cases of the Rwanda genocide and the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan.

At least four factors shaped post-Somalia US policies, and Sudan is directly or indirectly considered the culprit. 1) The East African bombing or the terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es-Salaam (1998). 2) The Al-Qaeda connection: Osama Bin Laden lived in Sudan from 1991 until 1996, when the Saudi and US Governments put pressure on Sudan to expel him. He then left for Afghanistan, where 3) he stood accused of the East Africa bombing. Osama Bin Laden and his terrorist organisation, Al Qaeda, were later indicted for the 11 September 2001 bombings, based on the 8 June 1998 indictment for the East Africa bombing. Sudan shared intelligence concerning Bin Laden and affiliates’ years in Sudan.\(^{19}\) 4) The sanctions’ regime imposed by the UN and the US on Sudan, which has driven it further away from its traditional Western allies.\(^{20}\)

While these four factors can be considered negative incentives for the US and Europe for rapprochement with Sudan, they have strengthened their resolve vis-à-vis the Islamist regime. Sudan’s estrangement from the West heralded its new-found strategic partnership with non-Western countries, including China, India and others. In a sense, the emergence of China as a leading non-Western partner provided Sudan with an alternative to a West that is not interested in negotiating with Sudan. The sanctions the West imposed on Sudan did not permit business as usual in the areas of economic cooperation and trade. According to the US Internal Energy Agency Report, published in November 2010:

The second conflict in Darfur brought with it international condemnation, internally displaced populations and sanctions affecting the country as a whole. The conflict has prevented oil exploration in the Darfur region, and the

\(^{18}\) However, a few years later, the US had gone it almost alone in Iraq in 2003.

\(^{19}\) Wax 2004.

\(^{20}\) On 3 November 1997, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13067, imposing a trade embargo against the entire territory of Sudan and a total asset freeze against the Government of Sudan. The sanctions imposed on Sudan by UN resolution 1591 (2005) include: arms embargo, travel ban, and consolidated asset ban and assets’ freeze. In response to these Resolutions, on 27 April 2006, President Bush issued Executive Order 13400, expanding the national emergency declared in Executive Order No. 13067, to block the property and interests in property of certain persons connected with the conflict in Darfur.
sanctions have prevented some international investment. The fighting itself has led to considerable infrastructure damage further limiting development ... Sudan also faces sanctions from the United Nations and the European Union which include arms embargos, travel bans and restrictions on financial activities that may impede the peace process – without specifically addressing the petroleum sector.\textsuperscript{21}

Negotiating with the West on economic cooperation was dealt a blow when US, European and Canadian companies which entered partnerships with non-Western oil consortiums (for example, the Swedish oil company Lundin Petroleum and the Canadian Talisman Energy) were forced by sanctions to relinquish their interests and wrap up their investments in Sudan.\textsuperscript{22}

In summary, with the US, EU and UN sanctions firmly in place, it should therefore come as no surprise that Sudan had to look elsewhere – and then found non-Western economic development partners. From China’s strategic perspective, the Western sanctions against Sudan were imposed at an opportune moment, particularly when it became apparent that Sudan’s proven oil reserves were upgraded, according to \textit{Oil and Gas Journal (OGJ)}, to five billion barrels of proven oil reserves in January 2010. This was up from an estimated 563 million barrels in 2006, thus rating Sudan as Africa’s third-largest country in terms of proven oil reserves.\textsuperscript{23}

The relationship between Sudan and its former Western development partners deteriorated from bad to worse, amid accusations of human rights abuses, non-democratic practices, genocide, and crimes against humanity. However, at the same time and as will be explained in the following section, under Western and United Nations sanctions, Sudan has shifted its trade, investment and development cooperation towards its new partners in oil investments.

\textsuperscript{21} US Government, November 2010.


\textsuperscript{23} US Government, Energy Administration Information, November 2010; also cf. SFT 2007.
Sudan’s shift to non-Western development cooperation

On the eve of the June 1989 Islamist military coup of President Omar Al-Bashir, Canada, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Britain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were Sudan’s major development aid (cooperation) and trading partners. By 1990 the economy of Sudan was in steep decline, with the government unable to comply with an IMF standby programme and with substantial accumulated arrears on re-purchase obligations. A four-year economic reform plan that had been announced in 1988 was not pursued. A Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was designed and announced in 1989. The Programme contained a familiar IMF/World Bank package designed to reduce public sector deficit, end subsidies, privatise state enterprises, and encourage new foreign and domestic investment. The consequences of SAP for Sudan were disastrous, and in 1993 Sudan’s voting rights were suspended together with its right to make withdrawals under effective and fully disbursed loans and credits. The European Union followed suit and suspended Lomé/EU Agricultural Credit Funds, totalling more than one billion EUR.  

With the sanctions firmly in place, Sudan turned to non-Western, mainly OPEC and Islamic countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Persian Gulf States and Malaysia) and the emergent Asian giants represented by China and Indonesia. Prior to oil export, Sudan’s exports to these countries consisted of cotton, gold, sorghum, peanuts, gum arabica, sugar, meat, hides, live animals, and sesame seeds. Western countries disappeared from Sudan’s economic radar.

Amongst Sudan’s non-Western economic and development cooperation partners, China is the most discerning, with a clear, focused strategic vision on how to engage Sudan in a mutually beneficial economic cooperation devoid of Western human rights’ and democracy promotion packages. This is understandable, given the fact that China’s own human rights record is under scrutiny by the West. According to Van Dijk, China uses four policy instruments in support of its Africa policy: 1) provide aid and loans; 2) promote trade and investments; 3) forgive debts; and 4) eventually work to make the country part of its free-trade area.

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25 Van Dijk 2009; see also De Beule & van den Bulcke (2009) in the same volume.
China’s strategic policy instruments (in Sudan and elsewhere in developing countries) are not different from those designed and deployed by the US and its Western allies prior to the imposition of sanctions following the military coup of 1989. The only difference is that Sudan has enjoyed more debt forgiveness from China than from the West, and at the time when Western countries withdrew from engaging Sudan and imposed sanctions, China and other non-Western countries replaced them as Sudan’s major development cooperation partners. Table 7.1 shows that – led by China – India, the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development, and the Islamic Development Bank have become Sudan’s major development cooperation partners.

There are three major aspects to Table 7.1, all consequences of the stringent sanction regime and Sudan’s forced shift of its development policies away from negotiating with the West. 1) Sudan, with no

| Table 7.1  Sudan’s major development cooperation partners 2006-9 (in million USD) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Disbursement    | 2006            | 2007            | 2008            | 2009            | Total           |
| source          |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| China           | 288.80          | 809.00          | 950.80          | 1,076.60        | 3,125.20        |
| India           | 15.40           | 280.00          | 403.90          | 403.00          | 1,102.30        |
| Arab Fund for   | 100.90          | 129.20          | 71.20           | 120.00          | 421.30          |
| Social and      |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Economic        |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Development     |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Islamic         | 54.76           | 129.04          | 144.90          | 111.30          | 440.00          |
| Development     |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Saudi Fund for  | 29.50           | 61.00           | 57.20           | 60.00           | 207.70          |
| Development     |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Kuwait Fund for  | 33.10           | 49.00           | 49.80           | 20.00           | 151.90          |
| Arab Development |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Abu Dhabi Fund   | 33.00           | 29.20           | 30.00           | 20.00           | 112.20          |
| for Development  |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| International    | 11.74           | 16.90           | 14.00           | 15.30           | 57.94           |
| Fund for         |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Agricultural     | 5.70            | 9.50            | 14.50           | 18.80           | 48.50           |
| Development      |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| OPEC Fund for    | 4.20            | 12.00           | 15.00           | 15.00           | 46.20           |
| Development      |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Turkey           | 4.20            | 12.00           | 15.00           | 15.00           | 46.20           |
| Iran             | 4.20            | 12.00           | 15.00           | 15.00           | 46.20           |
| Grand Total      | 577.10          | 1,539.84        | 1,768.30        | 1,875.00        | 5,760.24        |

Source: Ahmed (2009), Appendix 4: Development Cooperation Disbursement by Project 2006-9 (pp. 74-9).
other choice, opted for engaging South-South development cooperation, with China becoming its main partner. 2) Sudan shifted from Western-style budget support to targeted sector-specific development cooperation, cooperation in which resources are targeted to achieve pressing development objectives not tied to sector conditionality (the West, for instance, refused to support infrastructure projects) – see Table 7.2 for detailed sector-targeted disbursement in the case of China. 3) Although neither China nor Sudan is a liberal democracy, the new development dispensation is more transparent and provides accountability through Sudan’s National Assembly, where members of Parliament can trace budgeted development activities ear-marked for their regions or provinces.

In order to illustrate the three points mentioned above, Table 7.2 shows a disaggregated China development cooperation with Sudan from 2006 to 2009. Items are listed project by project, with the disbursement being specified per project. There is similar information available per project for all other non-Western development cooperation partners of Sudan, something unheard of during Sudan’s cooperation with the West. During those years there was a lack of consolidated, transparent, and publicly published information on projects, which encouraged corruption and lack of accountability. Given democratic dispensations, such quality of information on development cooperation disbursements can provide tangible accountability instruments to safeguard public resources from private abuse.

The structure of Sudan’s non-Western development cooperation aid is completely different from that of pre-1989 Western development aid in a number of respects: 1) The 2006-9 disbursements show a clear bias towards the development of infrastructure facilities and the production sector in areas critical for Sudan’s economy. 2) The aid operates within Sudan-owned development priorities with no conditionality or priority sectors identified by its non-Western development cooperation partners, including the four largest ones (China, India, Islamic Development Bank, and Saudi Fund for Development). 3) Development cooperation effectiveness is ensured through human resources capacity development, whereby Sudanese engineers, technicians and workers are simultaneously trained by their Chinese counterparts to assume operation and maintenance of equipment and machines when the Chinese leave. 4) Another important aspect is that no new project will start before the implementation of similar projects.
Table 7.2  Disaggregation of China Development Cooperation disbursements to Sudan by project (in million USD), including new expected loans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nyala water supply CAMC C.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dali and Mazmoum water</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Sudan water project (CMIC Comp)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>138.90</td>
<td>115.80</td>
<td>115.80</td>
<td>370.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Gedarif Water Project</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>67.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiangin comp. 150 water well project</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>9.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water equipment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Water wells project (North Kordofan)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water equipment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dongla water supply project</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matama – Abu Hamed – ElDaba water supply</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>26.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply of HDPE pipes</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>19.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medani water supply project</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costi-Rabak water supply project</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8.90</td>
<td>14.80</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>20.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of Khartoum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North heat station</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gari 2 station</td>
<td>18.20</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>45.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gari 4 station</td>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third circuit transmission – Elroseres- Khartoum (electricity)</td>
<td>18.60</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>18.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmission lines project (electricity)</td>
<td>297.00</td>
<td>95.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>392.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amri agricultural project</td>
<td>12.70</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Mekabrab project</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydro-mechanics Project</td>
<td>16.10</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>22.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation of weaving machines</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Kordofan solar project</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain storage (grainaries)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>22.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rufaa bridge</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Duim bridge</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation equipment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>10.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected new loans</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>400.00</td>
<td>650.00</td>
<td>900.00</td>
<td>1,950.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>288.80</td>
<td>809.00</td>
<td>950.80</td>
<td>1,076.60</td>
<td>3,125.200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Compiled by the author from Ahmed (2009), Appendix 4: China Cooperation Disbursement by project 2006-9 (pp. 74-79).
are completed and lessons learned about the various constraints which hindered or slowed down implementation. 5) Sudan’s non-Western development cooperation partners have not burdened their development packages with NGOs and social welfare provisioning. There is recognition in South-South cooperation, at least in the manner it is practised in Sudan, that the dominant scope is for development projects that provide incremental development and improvement in the quality of life and employment, so that people can use production-oriented facilities and infrastructure to earn a living rather than receive charity.

Sudan’s non-Western development cooperation partners are also actively engaged in the oil sector, which provides them better guarantees for subsequent repayment and avoids massive accumulation of arrears. The security against defaulting arrears is provided by steady, predictable and long-term oil production. For example, in 2009 Sudan produced close to 485,000 barrels per day and consumed approximately 90,000 barrels per day. The remaining crude oil was exported almost exclusively to Asian markets. According to international trade data, in 2009 China imported close to 250,000 barrels per day from Sudan (65% of total Sudanese exports and 6% of Chinese imports), followed by Indonesia’s import of 60,000 barrels per day and Japan’s import of 50,000 barrels per day. Additional importers of Sudanese crude oil include India, Malaysia, and Thailand. Sudan also exports some processed fuels to Ethiopia, which imports most of its fuel from Sudan and some oil goes to Europe, via the Netherlands.

In October 2009, China Petroleum Engineering Construction Corporation – a subsidiary of China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) – emerged the winner (out of 13 bidders) of 7 engineering contracts in Sudan, followed by India. In September 2009, one of CNPC’s subsidiaries was also selected for a 260-million USD contract for engineering and construction for Block 6 of proven oil reserves. Moreover, CNPC won contracts for various other projects, including the expansion of a power plant (the CPF station expansion), the construction of two 50,000 cubic-meter crude oil tanks, the FNE Flow station, the Jake Flow station, the installation of a power grid system, and development of oil wells in various parts of the Sudan.

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27 Mining Top News 2009.
In the field of minerals, Sudan’s proceeds from minerals in recent years has contributed 2 billion USD to the GNP, mainly under the control of the private sector. In 2011, it is expected that the total contribution of mining to GDP will amount to 3.7 billion USD with the fruition of 54 contracts signed to develop the sector. The signed contracts are in the fields of gold, iron, manganese and kaolin.\(^{28}\)

Strategically for China – the world’s largest producer of steel – in the field of iron ore, the Sudan plant has an annual capacity of 400,000 tons of magnetite concentrate, grading 62 to 64% following an expansion in June 2008. Production in 2008 from the XNS/Sudan complex was estimated at over 300,000 tons, with sales revenues peaking at 130 USD per ton of concentrate. In early 2009, revenues averaged 85 USD per ton, with operating costs averaging around 50 to 60 USD per ton. A three-fold increase in capacity to 1.2 metric tons per annum is planned by the end of 2011, funded entirely by incremental cash flow.\(^{29}\)

Sudan’s newly exploited wealth (not merely potential wealth, as it was described prior to the Western withdrawal as major development cooperation partners) has enabled it to shrug off sanctions and produce growth rates unprecedented in its history since independence. Paradoxically, the economic growth has occurred not amid peace with itself and its marginalised regions in the South, East and West, but despite political instability and brutal civil war.

*Economic growth amid brutal civil wars and sanctions*

In a book entitled *Southern Sudan: The Foundation of A War Economy*, Professor George Tombe Lako, the then Dean of Economics and Social Studies at Juba University, Sudan, illustrated the war impacts on Southern Sudan as follows (1993: 79-89):

- A US$ 20.00 million annual Central Government contribution to South Sudan has completely stopped during the war;
- For example, in Equatoria Region (pre-1983 designation), the production of the main staple food crops (sorghum, maize, cassava, groundnuts, millet and beans) was interrupted and duly declined from 10,500 metric tons to less

\(^{28}\) Sudan Government. Cabinet report on minerals and a financing agreement between Sudan government and China, 20 January 2011.

than 1,000 metric tons. Cash crop production (coffee, tea and tobacco) has
decrease sharply with the export of tea and tobacco completely halted by
1993. The same applies to livestock (cattle, sheep and goats) trade between
Equatoria in the South, and Northern Sudan and the neighboring countries
(Central Africa Republic) has declined to 30% of its pre-1983 situation.

- In the social services sector, 85% of total primary schools, 73% of junior
  secondary schools and 72% of high secondary schools in South Sudan
  stopped functioning. The overall destruction of health facilities is estimated
  at the staggering figure of 85% of all health facilities, thus increasing the
  number of patients to 50,000 per doctor and 20,000 per nurse. Only mini-
  malist services were provided through the national health service sector,
  national and international NGOs in the capital cities (Juba, Malakal and
  Wau) and in the SPLA/ SPLM controlled liberated areas of South Sudan,
  the Southern Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains.

It is estimated that about two million Southern Sudanese lost their
lives, 3.7 million were internally displaced, and about 750,000 refugees fled into Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda alone.  

Although up-to-date information is not available during the writ-
ing of this chapter, the corroborating evidence shows that, since the
signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, only mini-
mal improvements have occurred in the health, education and water
supply sectors. These improvements have by and large bypassed the
rural areas and concentrated mainly on the major towns of South
Sudan. However, despite significant transfers from the central Gov-
ernment, which amount to 50% of the oil revenue, the overall picture
in the South is as desperate today as it was during the devastating
civil war.

The situation in Northern and Central Sudan is starkly different.
With the emergence of China and India as major energy, minerals and
commodity consumers and the UN and Western sanctions in place,
Sudan has been able to pay attention to its own resources. It has
opened the door to non-Western investment on an unprecedented
scale, resulting in a tangible success story as far as economic growth
is concerned. In evidence, I quote at length the IMF Programme Note
on Sudan (23 August 2010):

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30 Information Management Unit (IMU) for Sudan and Office for the Coordina-
tion of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). South Sudan IDP and Refugee Return Popu-
31 Loko 2009.
32 For more details on the impact of war, refer to World Bank 2009; for an early
account, see Elbadawi 1999.
Real GDP growth surged from about 5% in the 1990s to 7.5% in 2000-08, one of the strongest in the African region.\textsuperscript{33} Overall changes and improvements in Sudan’s economic outlook have brought about significant changes in the structure of the economy. For instance, the contribution of agriculture to GDP has decreased from 46.3 in 1998 to 25.8% in 2010, with the increase of the contribution of industry and manufacturing to GDP from 13.7% to 34.1%. The contribution of services to the economy has increased from 38.4 to 40.1% of the GDP in 2008.\textsuperscript{34}

Increased production and the hike in international oil prices in 2008 contributed to Sudan’s staggering economic growth performance. However, Sudan was adversely affected by the global crisis through a decline in oil and other external receipts. Table 7.3 shows real GDP growth for Sudan (2001-10).

In December 2009, the World Bank (2009: 1) assessed Sudan’s economic growth performance as follows:

The size of its economy, measured by nominal gross national product, has grown fivefold – from $10 billion in 1999 to $53 billion in 2008. Per capita income, a summary measure of the living standard of average citizens, has increased from $334 to $532 (constant 2000 USD) over the same time period. This is in sharp contrast to the pre-oil period when real per capita income kept mostly within the $200–300 range during a four-decade period.

Sudan’s real per capita GDP growth (Table 7.3) has, according to the IMF, contributed to progress in meeting some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including reducing the prevalence of undernourishment, increasing immunisation of one-year-olds, and increasing the percentage of births attended by health professionals. However, parts of the country (war-stricken ones) remain in the grip of civil conflict and “large numbers of people live in poverty”.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Sudan’s real per capita annual GDP growth rates (in %), 2000-10}
\begin{tabular}{lcccccccccc}
\hline
\hline
GDP growth & 6.2 & 5.4 & 5.1 & 5.9 & 6.3 & 11.3 & 10.2 & 7.0 & 4.9 & 5.4 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{33} Several sources (IMF, World Bank, African Development Bank, USAID, OECD) corroborated positive economic growth data with variations of 1–2%, but these do not affect the overall upbeat record.

\textsuperscript{34} IMF, Programme Note on Sudan, 23 August 2010.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. 2009.
Although Northern Sudan’s access to the oil resources which propelled Sudan’s growth will decrease as a result of the imminent declaration of independent South Sudan in June 2011, North Sudan’s economic growth will continue to increase for two reasons. 1) South Sudan will remain dependent on North Sudan for oil exports to the international market (at least for the next 5-10 years) and the use of processed oil (Sudan’s three refineries are all located in the North), transport and other facilities until it builds its own oil infrastructure. 2) Journalists and Western media have embarked on a misinformation campaign, claiming that oil is exported exclusively from South Sudan or that there are no proven oil reserves in North Sudan (including troublesome Darfur). While most oil is located in South Sudan, currently at least 25% is produced in the North, with 30% of the proven oil reserves also located in the North. 3) South Sudan’s independence will also mean that North Sudan no longer has to shoulder any annual transfers from the Central Government to South Sudan – or finance a military presence in the South at a cost of 6% of the national gross product (estimated average, 2005-10).

Sudanese opinions on what path to development should be charted differ markedly between, on the one hand, parts of the political elite that can be regarded as traditionalist and mostly educated in the West, and on the other hand, the younger generation, whose consciousness has matured during the economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s – known as the dark days of SAPs – and who believe that the West has failed Sudan. Some of the younger generation even go further, attributing current political problems and civil wars to the heritage of colonialism and post-independence Western meddling in its internal affairs. Sudan’s experience with the West has not been an easy one, a fact that is partly the responsibility of Sudan but to a greater extent the responsibility of the Western powers which contrived to use it as a domain of influence. This younger generation is convinced that when Sudan chose a different ideological stand, the West decided to discipline it by supporting internal strife and any liberation movement capable of carrying arms.

Obviously, the current state of analogue between Sudan and the West does not make the West an unattractive future partner, even if the sanctions are lifted and the Darfur crisis is resolved for political expediency or self-serving purposes. However, both opponents and proponents of the West agree that the Western disengagement from Sudan has been a blessing in disguise because it has enabled the
country to tap its oil, mineral and other resources and to develop home-grown economic development goals that would not have been conceivable under the heavy Western conditionality regime.

**Conclusion**

Although Sudan’s current development cooperation is not without problems and cannot be seen as a panacea or a sign of a country without economic difficulties, it has shown that the Western monopoly over development is slipping away – either because its development policy architects have run out of steam and ideas or because its development policies were not originally developed to produce positive effects in the economies of the ex-colonies.

In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate that, beyond negotiating multipolarity, Sudan’s development options rest with negotiating a context shaped by Western sanctions and excessive interference in its internal affairs (under the pretext of the “Responsibility to Protect”) and the inherent tension between self-determination – which could include armed struggle as supported by the UN – and state-building – which may require that the state use force to maintain territorial integrity. The West’s propensity to be a development agent in Sudan is not in retreat but had already retreated – and with it went its ability to become a force of economic growth, other than feeding the hungry and protecting war victims, a noble endeavour in its own right. As events in Tunisia and Egypt have illustrated, while the West is capable of using its self-chosen supported dictators to serve its strategic foreign policy interests, it is absolutely incapable of influencing the direction of political change and engineering democratic development. Hegemonic stability and neo-containment policies do not work in war-ravaged, resource-rich countries, with non-Western cooperation partners readily available to fill the void. The case of Sudan shows that, for some countries, negotiating a multipolarity is irrelevant when they come to the grim reality that one of the poles is not amenable to negotiating in terms other than its own. Therefore, claims for using sanctions and other conditionalities to discipline Sudan, induce regime change, or propel democracy into being have already produced the opposite effect. These measures have instead infuriated Sudanese nationalists and antagonised the

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36 Salih 2010.
private sector, which found it impossible to conduct business with the West under the current sanctions regime. The result is that Sudan’s imperative is to engage non-Western development cooperation partners rather than negotiating multipolarity.

References


PART TWO

FRAMING MULTIPOLARITY
CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW DOES THE CHINESE INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AFFECT AFRICAN SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHANGING NATURE OF POWER?

Sanne van der Lugt

Abstract

Both the physical presence of Chinese actors in Africa and the rise of China as a global power in the international system are influencing the international position and relations of African nation states. This chapter discusses briefly the understanding of African statehood, the recent developments in the change of power distribution in the world order, and how the general perspectives of the EU, China and Africa on the recent development towards a multipolar world order influence the political space for African positions. By using Cox’s framework on social forces, forms of states and world order, it argues that China’s new position in the world order and the Chinese involvement in the continent influences the power that African nation states have to exercise sovereignty. The conclusion is that current changes in the world order are about to change the social forces. However, in order to reap the benefits and make use of this window of opportunity, African state leaders need to change their idea of what makes their power legitimate. They need to depend less on strong external actors and more on their own peoples.

Introduction

China’s influence in the world is rising and the question whether or not China will become a superpower can be answered: China is already a global power, albeit a poor one. Last year China surpassed Japan and became the second-largest economy (in absolute terms) in the world, after the United States. Besides being an economic power,
China’s cultural influence is also increasing rapidly with the Confucius Institutes mushrooming all over the world. Does the fact that poverty is still a common phenomenon in China result in different behaviour from established global powers in international politics, and how does China’s rise affect the African continent?

Africa has been important for the rise of China. For both political and economic reasons, Chinese actors have become more active on the African continent in recent decades. Firstly, politically: because of the votes from African countries, China was able to win a permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council and thereby greatly increase its influence in the international arena. Secondly, the economic developments in China require resources of which the African continent has an abundance. Both the physical presence of Chinese actors in Africa and the rise of China as a global power in the international system are influencing the international position and relations of African nation states. This paper attempts to assess the following question:

*How does the Chinese involvement in the African continent affect African sovereignty in the context of the changing nature of power in the world system?*

There exist different theories within International Relations (IR) to explain the behaviour of nation states. The Critical Theory of Robert Cox appears most useful in explaining how changes in the power distribution in the world order can possibly lead to an increased ability of African state leaders to exercise sovereignty, as this paper argues. The first section will discuss the main theories in IR and their approaches towards power distribution in the world system, then turn to the Critical Theory of Cox, which is regarded to be the most useful approach for studying change in the distribution of power.

Sections 2 and 3 will discuss briefly the understanding of African statehood and the recent developments in the change of power distribution in the world order and how the general perspectives of the European Union (EU), China and Africa on the recent development towards a multipolar world order influence the political space for African positions. Using Cox’s framework on social forces, forms of states and world order, the fourth section discusses sovereignty and how China’s new position in the world order and the Chinese involvement in the continent influence the power African nation states have
to exercise sovereignty. The conclusion is that current changes in the world order are about to change the social forces. However, in order to reap the benefits and make use of this window of opportunity, African state leaders need to change their ideas about what makes their power legitimate. Using the example of China’s success in increasing their ability to exercise sovereignty by looking more inwards and being as independent as possible of foreign actors, the author of this paper advocates a turn from focusing on external legitimacy (common in a Westphalian state system and largely a reaction to the experience of colonialism in Africa) to internal legitimacy. The debates around ‘failed states’ and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) show that internal state functions are central in the international discourse. These debates constitute a threat to the sovereignty of African nation states. One effect of the increasing influence of China in the international arena is the renewed focus on sovereignty because of China’s advocacy of non-interference. However, the conclusion of this paper is that, in order to make use of this opportunity to increase their ability to exercise sovereignty, African state leaders need to depend less on strong external actors and more on their own peoples.

The changing nature of power in the world system

Different theories explain the behaviour of nation states and their international relations. This section will focus on the different ideas about power distribution within the two most dominant theories in IR – namely, Realism and Liberalism – and will reveal the gradual change from a positivist towards a more constructivist approach within both theories.

Realism

Realism was the most dominant theory in IR during the Cold War. Realists provided simple but powerful explanations for war, alliances, imperialism, obstacles to cooperation, and other international phenomena that suited the context of the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union (SU). According to Realists, the absence of a global government causes nation states to pursue their own interests.\(^1\) Power is thereby “crucial to the realist lexicon and tra-

\(^1\) Waltz argued that the key difference between domestic and international order lies in their structure. In the international system there is no higher authority to
ditionally has been defined narrowly in military strategic terms” (Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 93). Or, in other terms, Realists focus on ‘hard power’. However, by focusing on hard power (i.e. military strength), smaller states are considered to be unable to protect their own interests. According to Realists, the only solution for smaller states seeking to survive against the threat of hegemonic states is to join forces and establish a formal alliance to preserve their independence. However, in reality there are many different forms of power based on geographical position, possession of raw materials, military strength, popular culture, historical and cultural connections, number of population, etc. that need to be taken into account by assessing the relative power between two nation states. Therefore, the willingness to form coalitions is based on many other factors that Realism does not take into account.

Realists believe that the mechanism of the balance of power in the world seeks to ensure equilibrium, in which case no one state or coalition of states is in a position to dominate all the others. It is an interesting observation that power distribution tends to move towards equilibrium; however, what does it matter if some states still dominate one or a number of other states? Structural Realists argue that the balance of power will emerge even in the absence of a conscious policy to maintain the balance. Classical Realists, however, are more likely to emphasise the crucial role state leaders and diplomats play in maintaining the balance of power. In other words, the balance of power is not natural or inevitable, according to Classical Realists; it must be constructed (Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 102).

Realism provided an explanation for the tendency to changes in the distribution of power towards equilibrium and was especially suited to explain the situation during the Cold War; however, it has the tendency to reaffirm the status quo instead of explaining empowerment. This is also the critique of Robert Cox, who developed the Critical Theory. I will come back to Cox, after discussing the other popular theory in IR – namely, Liberalism.

Liberalism

Liberalists argue that power politics itself is the product of ideas – and, crucially, ideas can change. According to Dunne & Schmidt prevent and counter the use of force. Security can therefore be realised only by self-help (Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 102).
(2001: 110), “the historical project of Liberalism is the domestication of the international”. In other words, Liberalists agree with Realists that war is a recurring feature of the anarchic state’s system and they try to govern the international system. Liberalism seems to be contradictory in itself because it pulls in two directions – namely, its commitment to freedom in the economic and social spheres on the one hand, and robust and interventionist institutions to safeguard a democratic political culture with basic freedoms on the other. The kind of economic liberalisation advocated by Western financial institutions, particularly in economically impoverished countries (such as many African countries), frequently comes into conflict with the norms of democracy and human rights2 (Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 118). Traditional Liberalists (e.g. Bentham in Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 113) believed in a natural harmony of interests. The First World War, however, shifted liberal thinking towards recognition that peace is not a natural condition, but a condition which must be constructed. “Co-operation is not automatic”, Keohane argues, “but it requires planning and negotiation” (in Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 116). There is indeed a lack of a natural harmony in international institutions such as the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Criminal Court (ICC), etc. The current structure of these institutions disproportionately benefits the established countries; people from developing countries are poorly represented at the top of these organisations and the institutions themselves are based upon liberal values originated from the West. Critics of Liberalism argue that the universalising mission of liberal values, such as democracy, capitalism, and secularism is undermining the traditions and practices of non-Western cultures (Gray in Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 120). This undermining happens both consciously and unconsciously. Some Liberalists, for example, literally perceive their norms and values as “a ‘gift’ from the powerful to the weak” (Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 120).

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2 Dunne (2001: 118) provides three examples to illustrate how economic liberalisation advocated by Western financial institutions comes into conflict with the norms of democracy and human rights: 1) the more the West becomes involved in the organisation of developing states' political and economic infrastructure, the less those states are able to be accountable to their domestic constituencies; 2) in order to qualify for Western aid and loans, states are often required to meet harsh economic criteria requiring cuts in many welfare programs; 3) the hegemonic institutional order has fallen prey to the neo-liberal consensus which minimises the role of the public sector in providing welfare and elevates the market as the appropriate mechanism for allocating resources, investment, and employment opportunities.
To elaborate more on the necessity of constructing the conditions for peace, some scholars in the liberal tradition (Jeremy Bentham, for example) argue that a legal and institutional framework that includes states with different cultures and traditions must be established. The established countries (‘the West’), however, are not going to surrender their position in the world order and seem to be obsessed with preserving and extending their control of institutions, markets and resources (Dunne & Schmidt 2001), and therefore use the same liberal discourse. It is, for example, interesting to look at the words George Bush used to describe the 2003 war against Iraq: ‘freedom’s war’ and ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’. Another example is the promotion by the EU of ‘effective multilateralism’, which means that “the development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective” (Odgaard & Biscop 2006: 2). Although this strategy was first and foremost established as the EU’s answer to internal splits on the Iraq issue and meant to keep the US within international law, it also appears to be a strategy to get the emerging powers on board for the Western way of dealing with international issues. ‘Effective multilateralism’ is, for example, mentioned in papers on the proposed EU-China-Africa tri-lateral cooperation, in which the concerns of the EU – based on a different approach towards human rights – about China’s increasing influence in Africa are expressed. A key point that proponents of ‘effective multilateralism’ tend to forget, however, is that international law is not fixed and is in some respects itself an institution based upon Western values. Therefore, a multipolar world order will inevitably also lead to changes in international law.

In summary, both Liberalists and Realists believe that the absence of a global government creates a situation in which nation states feel the need to protect themselves with self-help or by forming alliances. The difference is that Liberalists believe that cooperation within international institutions is possible and will decrease the possibility for war, whereas Realists do not believe in the promise of cooperation to end war because of the relative gains from cooperation. In both Liberalism and Realism there is a tendency towards a more constructivist approach; however, in both theories some aspects of international relations are still considered natural, universal or inevitable. Although some Liberalists acknowledge that many ‘international’ institutions are in fact based upon Western norms and values, the major-
ity still seem to ignore the fact that a true multipolar world order cannot be managed by a few.

Social Constructivism / Critical Theory

The ontology\(^3\) of both Realists and Liberalists in IR theory seems to have changed into a slightly more relativist ontology: it is more and more recognised that the balance of power and peace are not natural phenomena, but need to be constructed. Typically, constructivists subscribe to relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology and methodology. Although tendencies towards a more constructivist approach to IR are visible within the two dominant IR theories, Social Constructivism is regarded as a separate theory in IR. Constructivism is said to have countered the dominant neo-realism and neoliberalism theories by highlighting how ideas define and can transform the organisation of world politics, shape the identities and interests of states, and determine what counts as legitimate action (Barnett in Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 161). One step further is the more pragmatic approach from the Critical Theory of Robert Cox. Cox explains how structures can be changed when the power of ideas is recognised. Critical Theory, according to Cox (1981: 87), has the aim “to become clearly aware of the perspective which gives rise to theorising, and its relation to other perspectives; and to open up the possibilities of choosing a different valid perspective from which the problematic becomes one of creating an alternative world”. According to Cox (1981), neo-realism is unable to explain social change because it focuses on fundamental and unchanging substrata – namely, the nature of man, the nature of states, and the nature of the state system. Liberalism is also incapable of explaining change, since Liberalists tend to look for solutions within the existing system. Cox (1981) calls this ‘problem-solving theory’.

Cox (1981) proposes a theoretical framework in which three levels of action are interrelated: social forces, forms of states, and world order. He argues that “changes in the organisation of production generate new social forces which, in turn, bring about changes in the structure of states; and the generalisation of changes in the structure

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\(^3\) Ontology concerns the question: What is reality? The question that needs to be asked to determine one’s ontology is: ‘Is reality external to individuals – imposing itself on their consciousness from without – or is it the product of individual consciousness?’ (Cohen & Manion in Coll & Taylor 2001: 216).
of states alters the problematic of world orders” (1981: 100). This is in strong contrast to the fixed natures of man, states and the state system within neo-realism. He explains that social forces, forms of states, and world orders can be considered separately as particular configurations of forces. These forces are, according to Cox, ideas, material capabilities and institutions. He argues that the utility of his framework is in “drawing attention to factors which could incline an emerging world order in one direction or another” (1981: 113).

According to Cox, “the social forces generated by changing production processes are the starting point for thinking about possible futures” (ibid.). However, this paper will take the changes on the level of world order as a starting point to answer the main question mentioned in the Introduction – namely, how does the Chinese involvement in the African continent affect African agency in the context of the changing nature of power in the world system? The next section will provide a brief history of the formation of states in Africa to understand the capacity of African states to exercise sovereignty and to explain the importance of international recognition for African leaders today. The situation in Africa will then be compared with the situation in China where, in public discourse at least, the idea is that the relation between the leadership and its people is more important to maintaining stability in the country than relations with outside international actors.

Discussion of ‘the African state’

The African continent has been greatly affected by the interests and ambitions of external powers for centuries. According to Chazan et al. (1992: 412) “economic scarcity and political fragility have made Africa vulnerable to foreign influence”. However, this statement can also be turned around since foreign interference in the social, political and economic systems on the continent have led to economic scarcity and political fragility. However, as much as foreign actors have used the opportunity provided by the relative weakness of African states in order to lay hands on its resources, so have African states made use of the moments in history of changes in power to improve their international position. For example, after WW-II, when the colonial rulers from Europe were weakened and the US and SU began an arms race for the power in the world, Africans seized the opportunity to become independent. Chazan et al. (1992: 412) also argue that African actors
have been able to retain some margin for manoeuvre, because “external powers act competitively”. The recent financial crisis of 2008-9 has shifted international influence from the US towards the emerging countries. The crisis revealed the weakness of the international financial institutions, and the retreat of Western companies and governments from Africa created a gap for companies and governments from emerging countries such as China to close business deals and strengthen diplomatic relations. In order to answer the question of how Chinese involvement in Africa affects African agency/sovereignty, it is important to gain a better understanding of the nature of African nation states.

Clapham (1996) argues that contemporary African states possessed juridical rather than empirical statehood at independence, that the rules and operation of the international system during the Cold War tended to reinforce this status quo, and that the rules Africans devised for themselves – most importantly through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) – had the same effect. This had important consequences for both the domestic and external politics of African states. Domestically, international recognition gave a decisive advantage to holders of state power relative to their internal opponents (Clapham 1996). In other words, the legitimacy of African state leaders is, since independence, based upon international recognition more than domestic support. Many African state leaders have made use of foreign military support to suppress their peoples and financial support to keep their economies running and keep their citizens content. This strategy made African state office holders reliant upon the international system. A consequence is that, as Clapham (1996) argues, even the juridical statehood of African states is being undermined. This is due to the triumph of the West after the collapse of the SU, which allowed the West to influence the formation of international institutions, as discussed in the previous section.

According to Chazan et al. (1992: 412), the only feasible means for African states to have more impact on the external environment is collective action. This is in line with the Realist theory that weaker states can defend their self-interests only by making alliances and with the Liberalist theory that cooperation is possible and will prevent conflict. However, African countries are very diverse in many aspects; cooperation is therefore not easy and will not automatically lead to the protection of the interests of all these countries.
It is interesting to compare the strategy of African leaders with the strategy of Chinese leaders, the Chinese having decided to look inwards in order to restore pride and build up their country again after the colonial powers left and Japan was defeated. With little assistance from outside, the Chinese government was able to restore the nation, develop its industries, and lift millions of people out of poverty. History is subjective and depends on the teller, and the Chinese wisely pointed to the period in which it was ruled by foreign powers as a rupture with the past and the coming to power of Mao Zedong as a restoration of the Chinese tradition. According to Chinese tradition, a leader should act like a father to his people and do everything in his power to govern the country in the best way possible. The focus of the Chinese government for its authority is therefore more on its people and less on its relations with foreign actors.

The dependency of African leaders on foreign relations in order to acquire and maintain power is a very important factor that influences their ability to exercise sovereignty. The next section will discuss briefly the recent developments in the change of power distribution in the world order and how the general perspectives of the EU, China and Africa on the recent development towards a multipolar world order influence the political space for African positions.

Towards a multipolar world order

In November 2008, the US National Intelligence Council declared in its Global Trends 2025 report the advent of a ‘global multipolar system’ as one of the worlds ‘relative certainties’ within two decades (NIC 2008). What makes this statement highly significant is that it comes from the country with the largest cultural, economic, and military influence in the world for decades. Representatives of other great powers have also commented on the tendency towards a multipolar world order. However, their opinions about how this multipolar world will come about is very different: China and Russia are promoting a multipolar world order (Turner 2009), the European Union (EU) wants to take part in shaping the new multipolar order (Spanish prime minister, José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, in Presidencia Española 2010), and the United States (US) is attempting to build a multipolar world (US Vice President, Joseph Biden, in Dickinson 2009). These different attitudes towards how a multipolar world order can be achieved make one wonder whether these great powers are actually
talking about the same phenomenon. Are we heading towards a world system wherein diverse poles exist that are equal in their political weight and justification, as the EU puts forward? Or are we heading towards a just and equitable new international political and economic order, as China would have us believe (Beijing Declaration of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, Beijing, 20 September 2006)? Or, as the US suggests, will the US remain the single most powerful country – with the addition of newer players having increasing amounts of power, however, and bringing new rules to the game (NIC 2008)? The existence of these many different discourses on the shape of a multipolar world order is, interestingly enough, a proof of multipolarisation.

According to IR theory, ‘polarity’ is any of the various ways in which power is distributed within the international system. The three main types one can distinguish are unipolarity, bipolarity, and multipolarity. Multipolarity is a distribution of power in which more than two nation states have nearly equal amounts of military, cultural, and economic influence. Influence, however, is difficult to define and subjective – and therefore difficult to measure. The different words used by representatives of the various global powers to describe the process of the change in the distribution of power indicates that all actors share the idea, although on different levels, of being able to actively change the power distribution in the international system. However, in order to successfully change the power distribution in the world in a more equitable way, it is important to recognise the current distribution of power: the three social forces mentioned by Cox – material capabilities, ideas, and institutions. In order to illustrate the political space for African positions this section will continue with an evaluation of the European, Chinese and African perspectives on the recent developments towards a multipolar world order.

**EU**

The EU is a multilateral organisation. A strong historical conviction prevails in the EU that multilateralism is the best avenue towards peace, since it is believed that the unification of Europe greatly reduced the chances for war in Europe. However, the kind of multilateralism that the EU favours for the world system is very specific, as mentioned before: namely, “an international order based on systemic and rule-based multilateralism” (Odaaard & Biscop 2006: 12). This is referred to in Brussels jargon as ‘effective multilateralism’
One of the aims of the EU is to get the emerging powers on board for the EU’s way of dealing with international issues by focusing on the enforcement of international law.

At the moment, the EU deems their attempts to promote good governance in Africa to be constrained by China. According to representatives of the EU, the choice of the Chinese government to deal with countries that are boycotted by the EU undermines the effort of the EU to stimulate these countries to become democratic. From the EU’s perspective it would be more effective if both China and the EU would adjust their strategies for Africa in order to make them more alike. Berger & Wissenbach (2007: 1) argue that “China needs to be engaged, consulted and involved in common agenda setting in order to make policy effective and avoid conflicting approaches”. These adjustments should, following the line of reasoning of the representatives of the EU, reflect international rules and laws. The idea is to make international interaction more predictable and more controllable. This seems to be logical from the perspective of the EU; however, this way of reasoning hides a very large assumption: that international law is fixed.

If the perspective of the EU becomes the dominant perspective on multilateralism, a multipolar world order will not significantly increase the space for African positions, since it is denied that there exist different positions on the interpretation of international law. This impacts the dominant perspective on the R2P, the legitimation of humanitarian intervention, and therefore the right and ability of African nation states to exercise sovereignty.

**China**

For many centuries China was the richest and most powerful regional hegemon in the world. From 618 until 907 CE the Chinese Tang Empire exercised most of the cultural, economic, and military influence in the East-Asian region, and the distribution of power within the region can therefore be regarded as unipolar. China was often called ‘the Middle Kingdom’, (which is still the literal translation of the Chinese name for the country, Zhong Guo) because its people saw their civilisation as the centre of all that honoured it. Between 600 and 1450 CE it was even more difficult for one empire to dominate the entire globe than nowadays, largely because of slow transportation and communication. Therefore, the best any empire could do was to establish regional hegemony. When interaction between the
regions became closer and more frequent (owing to innovations in the transportation and later also the communication sector), a world order came about with differences in power distribution over the different regions.

During, or right after, periods of attempts to conquer parts or all of China by neighbouring countries, some Chinese emperors decided to shut the country off for some time and to turn to internal strengths. However, this tendency to isolate itself would eventually lead to worldwide humiliation. During the transition towards a more interconnected international arena, China’s influence in the world, as well as in its own region, decreased when it turned inwards because of internal problems, and increasingly when parts of China were colonised by powers from the West. The Chinese, who had been a superpower in their own region, felt greatly humiliated by this intrusion by Western powers. The humiliation reached its peak when China was invaded by Japan during WW-II. After WW-II, Mao Zedong worked on restoring the pride of the Chinese. China teamed up with the SU and other communist countries to form part of one of the two most powerful blocs in the world. However, when the SU collapsed and the Cold War ended, both China and Russia were excluded from the subsequent unipolar world. The leaders of both countries felt “disillusioned” (Turner 2009: 161). In reaction, they began to promote a multipolar world system together, in order to oppose the new unipolar world order in which the US was the sole great power in the world, with the largest cultural, economic, and military influence. China’s active push for a multipolar world is a sign that the time of China’s inward focus is definitely over.

While China’s influence in the world is increasing rapidly and people are beginning to think of it as the new superpower, the Chinese government states that it is China’s long-held policy to pursue peace and development and to never seek hegemony (Turner 2009: 169). Chinese President Hu Jintao stated in his speech at the APEC conference in Singapore in 2009 that China seeks the advancement of a just and reasonable world order (Global Times 2009). The Chinese Government is presenting itself to Africa as a partner from the South, emphasising that it is a developing country itself and has also been colonised in its past. During the Second FOCAC Legal Forum in Beijing last September, Chinese representatives emphasised the need for developing countries to work together to make international law more inclusive. The promotion of a just and reasonable multipolar
world order by one of the most powerful states in the world at the moment is a good prospective for African nation states and could be a window of opportunity.

Africa

Amongst many African governments the tendency towards multipolarity has been perceived as a positive change: witness South African President Thabo Mbeki during the September 1995 conference, South Africa’s Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan 2010, and Libya’s Colonel Gaddafi (in Daniel & Cambero 2009) at a two-day meeting organised by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez with African and South American colleagues in order to discuss the promotion of a multipolar world order. When the African countries were granted their independence, the world system was bipolar: the power was divided between the East and West, between a communist bloc and a capitalist bloc. On the one hand, African countries felt victim of the fierce competition during the Cold War, a situation that subsequently ensured and sustained further conflict on the African continent. On the other hand, however, many African countries took advantage of the fierce competition between East and West and sought and received support for their independence struggles. When the SU collapsed and the capitalist West triumphed, the culture, economy and military of the West – and the US in particular – dominated the international system. Africa became dependent on the West – again, in a crucial time.

The dominant position of the West means that the international arena has been shaped by a capitalist, neoliberal ideology. This has resulted in African countries suffering under the yoke of the World Bank and IMF. However, more recently, the increasing influence of emerging countries such as China, India and Brazil, has begun to challenge the power of the US in Africa, and African governments have again been presented with a choice. From an African perspective, a multipolar world system equates to choice.

China’s role in the changing power of African nation states to exercise sovereignty

In order to assess whether or not the tendency towards a multipolar world order and China’s rising influence on the continent is an op-
portunity for African nation states to increase their ability to exercise sovereignty, it is necessary to understand sovereignty and its sources of power. This section will discuss these different sources of power, using Cox’s framework, and assess the current changes in these sources that either increase or decrease the ability to exercise sovereignty.

According to the definition of the UN, a sovereign state should have an effective and independent government within a defined territory. A popular idea in the West is that sovereignty is connected to the ability of the state to guarantee the best interests of its own citizens. In other words, if a state cannot act in the best interests of its own citizens, it cannot be thought of as a ‘sovereign’ state and ‘the international community’ has the ‘responsibility to protect’. It is generally held that sovereignty requires not only the legal right to exercise power but also the actual exercise of such power. A division can be made between internal and external sovereignty. Internal sovereignty concerns the relationship between a sovereign power and its own subjects. The central concern is legitimacy: by what right does a political body (or individual) exercise authority over its subjects? External sovereignty concerns the relationship between a sovereign power and other states. The main concern here is recognition by other states. As was discussed in Section 2, African state leaders have in the past focused on international recognition as their main basis for legitimacy. Their dependence on foreign actors decreases the ability of these states to exercise sovereignty, since the governments are not fully independent. Therefore, in order to have more agency, African state leaders should focus more on internal sovereignty and acquire the legitimacy to remain in power from their own subjects. The shift in power on the level of the world order will cause changes in the sources of power for African states and thereby present a window of opportunity to increase their ability to exercise sovereignty.

Material capabilities

In order to be able to exercise sovereignty, a state should have both an effective and independent government. To mention some of the material sources of power in connection with sovereignty, this means that the government needs at least good infrastructure, trained government officials, and the financial capability to run a country. The rise of
China has led to a couple of opportunities for African countries to increase their material capabilities. First of all, China’s thirst for resources has led to an increase in commodity prices and therefore an increase of income for resource-rich countries in Africa. Another way China has increased the material capabilities of some African countries is by inventing innovative structures for lending money. Some African countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), had reached their limit and were not permitted to borrow more money from the IMF. China came with an alternative solution and proposed that the Congolese government exchange mineral resources for infrastructure. The Chinese government lends the money directly to Chinese companies, who construct the infrastructure and obtain mining concessions in return. With the profits these Chinese companies make from the mines, they repay the Chinese government. Technically speaking, the Chinese government is not lending money to the DRC. This structure does restrict the Congolese government’s ability to exercise its sovereignty; however, the Congolese government does not seem to have a real alternative, and the Sicomines Barter Deal is actually increasing the ability of the Congolese government to exercise its sovereignty. The Congolese government can choose the infrastructure projects it needs; and without having the option to borrow more money or to exploit its mines, it would not otherwise be able to develop the country’s infrastructure.

Institutions

The earlier sections of this paper discussed how China is actively promoting a multipolar world order. The Chinese government is demanding a more inclusive international law and better representation of the world in multinational institutions. For example, China is calling for African representation in the UN Security Council. The West has ignored the issue of equal representation on the level of world politics for too long. For example, in a press conference at the UN Headquarters, the French President Nicholas Sarkozy (United Nations Press Conference 2008) stated that he was among those shocked that there is no permanent member in the Security Council representing Africa. It is, however, very much an open question

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4 This model is referred to as the Sicomines Barter Deal and is very similar to the model the Chinese government used in Angola, known as the Angola Model.
whether and how this reform will be implemented, since the potential African candidates are strongly competing for these seats on the UN Security Council.

Another example that illustrates China’s willingness to include Africa more in the international system is their invitation to South Africa to the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) meetings. BRIC is not, however, an official institution and started initially as an acronym coined by Jim O’Neill from Goldman Sachs to point to their similar advanced economic development. The official discourse is that China invited South Africa in order to represent all continents and South Africa is regarded as the regional leader. However, the inclusion of South Africa into BRIC has more benefits for China, not least so in that it will decrease the importance of IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), of which China is not a member.

The prospect of reforms in international institutions for a better representation of the world create possibilities for African countries to increase their ability to exercise sovereignty. Seats on the Security Council, in particular, could change the general attitude towards humanitarian intervention in the UN, for example. However, before this happens, the African nation states need to appoint two countries who can represent the continent in international institutions. Before this happens, the African nation states need to develop a common agenda. In other words, there is currently the opportunity to increase the African voice in the international arena, but first the African voice needs to be defined and the most suitable representatives need to be selected. The combination of the current situation in Egypt, the reluctance of Nigeria to act upon the situation in Côte d’Ivoire, and the invitation from China to join BRIC form together an ideal situation for South Africa to seize the opportunity to claim a seat on the Security Council.

I Ideas

Besides potentially enhancing the material capabilities and creating an international platform for African nation states, the rising influence of China is also changing popular ideas connected to exercising sovereignty. First of all, China’s rhetoric about South-South cooperation emphasises the need for donor countries to actively work together with the receiving countries and involve them in the designing, decision-making and implementing phases of projects. The Chinese discourse about Africa has much more positive connotations than the
European discourse about Africa. The Chinese regard Africa as the continent of opportunities. These positive discourses from China about Africa have two possible positive consequences for African countries’ ability to exercise sovereignty: 1) African leaders can receive a boost from these positive discourses and decide to become more independent of foreign actors; 2) these discourses increase the attractiveness of China to Africa, and China can offer therefore a good alternative to the traditional foreign actors in Africa.

**Conclusion**

The Chinese involvement in the African continent is another window of opportunity for African state leaders, despite their weak economies and political fragility, to increase their ability to exercise sovereignty. According to Cox’s Critical Theory, structures can be changed when the power of ideas is recognised. This paper is an attempt to examine the concepts ‘multipolar world order’ and ‘sovereignty’ by using Cox’s framework to analyse whether and how changes at the level of the world order can change the ability to exercise sovereignty at the level of states in Africa. The paper provides a discussion of the different discourses on a multipolar world order and how the dominant discourse(s) can be changed. According to Cox, the sources of power to change are ideas, institutions and material capability.

The argument in this paper is that the Chinese involvement in the continent potentially increases power for African nation states in all three categories. However, in order to seize the opportunity to increase their sovereignty, African state leaders should focus less on strong external actors for legitimacy of their power. Whether it is ‘the West’ or an emerging power such as China, external actors have their own agenda that will generally not follow the important items that should be on the national agenda of African nation states. It is therefore recommended that African countries develop their own strong, and regional, agenda in addition to a long-term strategy, in order to benefit from the current window of opportunity and increase their ability to exercise sovereignty with and for their own people. In other words, it is the responsibility of African governments to decide how to use their increasing policy space.
References


CHAPTER NINE

CHINA INTO AFRICA:
CONFLICT OR THE TRIUMPH OF WESTERN ORDER?

Gorm Rye Olsen

Abstract

China’s conspicuous entry into Africa has raised critical voices, not least from the European Union and the United States. Western powers fear that the increasingly strong position of China in Africa will lead to conflict and confrontation. This chapter argues the opposite. It argues that China is increasingly adopting a number of Western values and norms which guide the behaviour of some important non-African powers – in relation to interventions in the field of security and development assistance. The chapter looks at the interactions of China, the EU, and the US with the African Union within these two policy areas. It concludes that it is possible to identify the contours of an African governance regime covering both security interventions and development assistance. China, the EU, and the African Union participate in this regime, whereas it is doubtful that the US does. It appears that China, the EU, and the African Union share a minimum set of values and norms guiding their behaviour. In comparison, the US is so preoccupied with its own national interests that it shares hardly any norms and values with the other actors.

Introduction

During the past 10 years or so, China has engaged strongly in Africa. The official rhetoric of the Chinese government is that the Chinese-African relationship is not a threat to anyone. Rather, it is a win-win situation based on the principles of non-interference in domestic affairs and on the principle of non-conditionality in the provision of development aid and direct investments. Nevertheless, non-African
actors and, in particular, the European Union and the United States have been sceptical and openly critical towards Chinese policies and initiatives launched towards the poor continent. The underlying expectation seems to be that the Chinese progress in Africa will inevitably lead to conflict and confrontation with the Western powers.

The rise of China in Africa is certainly a challenge to the traditional positions of the European Union, the old colonial powers of France and Great Britain, and the United States. However, the Chinese involvement on the continent will not necessarily lead to conflict with Western powers. It may just as well lead to cooperation, owing simply to the increasing political and economic interdependency among all the actors involved. Because of the growing ‘complex interdependency’, conflict is also simply too costly for all parties if the confrontation is restricted to Africa.

It is the argument of this paper that the increasingly strong positions of China in Africa do not lead to conflicts. On the contrary, it is possible to observe the contours of an emerging governance regime where China, together with the African Union, increasingly adopts Western norms and values in relation to the promotion of security and economic and social development. In this context, governance refers to the acceptance of a limited number of rules and norms guiding the interaction of countries and organisations sharing several goals in the policy field. The paper has chosen to examine two areas in Africa: security interventions and development assistance interventions.

In order to draw the lines of the analysis, the following section briefly introduces the international debate on China’s entry into Africa. The next section introduces the theoretical reflections which have inspired the empirical analysis, a framework which emphasises the significance of aims, values and norms when discussing cooperation between the three non-African partners (China, the US, and the EU) and the African Union.

*China into Africa: Conflict or cooperation?*

China’s growing involvement in Africa in the current decade has produced a number of reactions pointing in different directions. The rhetoric of the Chinese government has been that the Chinese-African relationship represents a ‘win-win’ situation for the two parties, based on the principles of non-interference in domestic politics and non-conditionality in the provision of aid and investment (Alden &
Hughes 2009). In Africa and among Africans, different positions can be observed, ranging from a relatively positive to a negative position towards the consequences of China’s conspicuous presence on the continent. The positive position maintains it is an advantage for Africa to have China as yet another actor contributing resources, which are, moreover, without any conditions attached to them. The middle position maintains that, at best, China’s impact on Africa’s place in global politics and in the global economy is uncertain (Tull 2006: 475-477). The negative evaluation of the consequences of the Chinese entry into Africa can be summarised in Ian Taylor’s harsh statement from 2004, which is quoted by Denis Tull (2006: 476): “There is virtually no way around the conclusion that China’s massive return to Africa represents a negative political development that almost certainly does not contribute to the promotion of peace, prosperity and democracy on the continent.”

The active Chinese foreign policy towards Africa has led to two different reactions among external (i.e., non-African) policy-makers (Carmody & Owusu 2007). The most critical positions are found in the US warning against China’s increasing influence on the continent (Brookes & Shin 2006: 9). On a broader basis, it is argued that the rise of China presents a potential challenge to the development policies and strategies of the industrialised countries. The policies of China, it is argued, openly challenge the priorities concerning trade liberalisation, market reforms, and conditionality on good governance and human rights (Gill et al. 2007; Gu et al. 2008: 285ff). In recent years, the US critical attitude has developed into a more constructive position, increasingly calling for an American strategy which both politically and economically could ‘engage China’ (Campbell 2008). The current American position is that cooperation will ensure that China follows a generally constructive policy in Africa (Shinn & Eisenman 2008: 6-7).

The European Union has also reacted to the entry of China into Africa. In the European debate, it is possible to identify two different evaluations of the Chinese involvement. It is worth noting that the negative and critical voices have been much more cautious in Europe compared with the debate in the US. However, this does not imply that the European perceptions of China’s engagement have been less critical. On the contrary, China has been accused of economic exploitation and diminishing Africa’s prospects for economic development. In political terms, the Chinese principle of non-interference has
been criticised for being irresponsible, tending to undermine human rights and democracy on the continent (Tull 2008: 5ff).

However, it did not take long for the EU and the EU Commission to state publicly that the EU and China had strong and shared interests in promoting stable and sustainable development in Africa (Ferreira 2008). It became common to talk about trilateral cooperation, to focus on synergies of the EU’s and China’s contribution to the development of Africa (Wissenbach 2009), and this was recognised by both parties at the 10th China-EU summit held in Beijing in November 2007. Among the important areas where the two parties ought to cooperate, ‘peace & security’ and ‘development policy dialogue’ were emphasised (Commission 2008). The High Representative of the CFSP, Javier Solana, stated that “Africa is an important focus for the EU’s comprehensive strategic partnership with China. The EU and China are both committed to helping deliver peace, stability, development, prosperity and good governance in Africa” (Solana 7 February 2007).

In summary, at least two positions can be observed in the international debate on the consequences of China’s entry into Africa. It is worth noting that the original critical position has moved towards more positive and, much more cooperative attitudes. Currently, cooperation with the Chinese is considered the main tool to convince China to adopt Western approaches to addressing the challenges facing Africa.

The theoretical framework

The argument of this paper is inspired by two debates. First, it draws on the discussions on what type of global system or world order we are currently faced with. Second, the paper is inspired by the debate on international regimes. The debate on the current world order is to a large extent promoted by liberal thinkers, who have been preoccupied with issues such as the formation of international institutions, international networks, and the possible emergence of elements of global governance. Some observers emphasise the existence of a liberal world order, arguing that this particular order is characterised by the strong presence of democratic regimes and the almost total acceptance of the principles of the liberal market economy. It is argued that one strong indication of the existence of a principled commitment to a liberal world order taking on a responsibility towards the poor parts
of the world is found in the Millennium Declaration endorsed by more than 150 states in September 2000 in the UN General Assembly (Sørensen 2006: 258). The existence of such globally accepted values, norms and principles is important to liberal thinkers, as they see them as fundamental to understanding both the nature of the international system and the central aspects of cooperation in the global system (Hurrell 2007: 25-50).

The liberal debate on the current world order is also preoccupied with the emergence of new global powers such as China and India and with what they mean to the existing order. It is argued that the current order cannot be taken for granted, simply because these newcomers on the global scene do not feel ownership of the prevailing institutions and the prevailing institutional order (Ikenberry 2010: 80; Koivisto & Dunne 2010: 616). John Ikenberry maintains that one of the roots of the current crisis is the increasing difficulty in realising common interests among the major powers, now that bipolarity has disappeared. Nevertheless, Ikenberry argues that the Western order has a remarkable capacity to accommodate rising powers such as China. “The Western order’s strong framework of rules and institutions is already starting to facilitate Chinese integration” (Ikenberry 2008).

Georg Sørensen qualifies this statement by suggesting a distinction between a ‘thick’ and robust liberal order and a ‘thin’ and less robust liberal order. The first is found among the consolidated democracies in the North Atlantic area, whereas the second is found in other areas of the globe. The thin liberal world order “is based on global liberal progress ... in that sense it is founded on interdependence, institutions and common values. But interdependence is less developed and contains fewer mutual benefits and more problems than in the Western order ... most importantly, common values are agreed upon in principle, but this does not reflect a deep commitment to such values in the states ... that have agreed to them” (Sørensen 2006: 257-8).

The second source of theoretical inspiration comes from the liberal debate on international regimes. Liberalism in IR is strongly preoccupied with interdependency and with the pressure for international cooperation which follows from the increased interdependence among countries and regions. The pressure from interdependency may lead to the development of a regime. The original definition of regimes, introduced by Stephen Krasner, stressed the significance of
“principles, rules and norms and expectations within a given issue area” (Krasner 1983: 2). A recent definition emphasises that an international regime can be adequately defined as “social institutions consisting of agreed upon principles, norms, rules, procedures and programmes that govern the interactions of actors in specific issue areas” (Levy et al. 1995: 274).

The development of a regime usually takes place in a number of stages and it is possible to divide the process of regime formation into distinct stages (Levy et al. 1995: 268ff; Young 2005: 95ff). The first of these stages is agenda setting, referring to the process through which an issue emerges as a policy concern and how it is framed for consideration in the relevant policy arenas. An issue may gain so much international attention that it justifies the initiation of negotiations, which is the second stage of regime formation. Negotiations and bargaining involve a number of actors and, thereby, the interests of the participants are brought into the framework. This paper has chosen an interest-based approach to understanding international regimes (cf. Krasner 1995; Mayer et al. 1995: 408ff; Hasenclever et al. 1997: 2ff).

In summary, the paper is strongly inspired by the liberal approach to understanding the features of the emerging world order and in particular Africa’s position in this new order. It argues that an African governance regime is emerging within the specific area covered by security and development. The governance regime is characterised by agreement in principle upon a limited number of common aims and interests, norms, rules, and procedures that govern the interactions of China, the US, the EU and the African Union. Within the area of security, it is about the fundamental aim to maintain security and stability and, in order to maintain this security and stability, to intervene with military means only on the basis of a UN Resolution. Within the development aid area, it concerns principled agreement upon norms and rules linked to the Millennium Development Goals, where one of the important aims is to increase the volume of aid. In addition, the paper discusses rules and principles related to improving the effectiveness of aid, as they are set out in the 2005 Paris Declaration and the Accra Declaration. In conclusion, it is important to stress that the argument applies only ‘thin’ and not necessarily ‘robust’ commitment to the rules, principles and procedures.
Interests and aims

There is general agreement that China is in Africa mainly for economic reasons. Chris Alden argues that a number of interrelated issues motivate China’s engagement on the continent: resource security, the need for new markets and investment opportunities, development cooperation, symbolic diplomacy, and the forging of strategic partnerships (Alden 2007: 248; Yi-chong 2008: 23ff). There is also a political-strategic interest in Africa, as the traditional Chinese approach to international cooperation, which emphasises state-to-state cooperation, gives Beijing significant influence over its African partners. The overall aim is to make allies and, by doing so, Beijing expects to strengthen the African voting bloc within the UN and also to have a bloc of like-minded countries challenging the global dominance of the US and the West.

The increasing demand for raw materials and strategic resources is closely linked to the rampant industrial growth in China. China is now the world’s second largest consumer of oil, and Africa has become very important for servicing this demand. In 2007, China imported as much as 30% of its total oil imports from Sub-Saharan Africa (Jiang 2009: 593). The percentage is expected to increase in the years to come (Jiang 2009: 590ff). It is not only oil but also other natural resources from Africa which are important to the Chinese growth strategy. Apart from copper, China imports significant proportions of its consumption of iron ore, cobalt, platinum, cobalt, timber and other raw materials from Africa, and Chinese companies are investing heavily in these sectors. With China becoming a net importer of food in 2003, food security has also become a growing concern for Beijing. Therefore, the Chinese government has encouraged investments in African agriculture and fisheries (Naidu 2008).

Moreover, Africa is of interest to Chinese companies as they increasingly seek new markets for Chinese goods. “The outward expansion is also motivated by the Chinese government’s ‘Going Global’ strategy geared towards making Chinese Multinationals more competitive in the international economy and to benefit from global commercial learning (R&D)” (Naidu 2008). Chinese companies located in Africa may be able to export food at concessional rates to the US and EU markets. Therefore, on the one hand, African markets have become lucrative for Chinese products. On the other hand, Africa is also of interest to China because Chinese companies can
attempt to exploit the traditional trade links between the continent and the US and the EU, both of which provide concessionary access to their large markets.

There are two main concerns of the United States towards Africa in the post 9/11 period: the global war on terrorism and the increasing dependency on oil imports from the continent. In 2004, an advisory panel of Africa experts authorised by Congress to propose new policy initiatives identified five factors that have shaped American interests in Africa in the past decade: oil, global trade, armed conflicts, terror, and HIV/AIDS. The global war on terror following 9/11 made the US realise that Africa is an important component within the international security architecture. Moreover, the increasing global demand for energy has turned the outside world’s attention to the oil resources in Africa. In 2007, the United States received as much as 15% of its total oil imports from Africa, expecting the level to increase to 25% by 2015 (Pham 2005: 19).

China’s conspicuous entry into the African continent led not only the United States but also Europe to realise the importance of Africa within a broader global context. The new global context places the traditional EU aim of promoting social and economic development in a new setting, linking development very closely to security. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the official Africa policy of the EU from 2005 recognises the close link between development and peace and stability (European Communities 2005: 10, 26). More generally, it can be argued that the EU is pursuing a wider external relations’ agenda linked to Africa with the aim of establishing itself as an influential global actor (Carbone 2011: 235ff).

With the Cotonou Agreement in 2000 between the EU and African countries, the link between aid and security was strengthened by foreseeing the funding of peace-building and the prevention and resolution of conflict (Carbone 2011: 334). It seems rather obvious that France and the UK have used the European Union to engage more in security and defence issues in Africa, which may obscure the picture of which interests are being served by the European Union’s interventions on the continent. Tony Chafer and Gordon Cumming note that “by collaborating, they (France and the UK) could help to keep the Africa-EU Strategic partnership on track and ensure that the European Development Fund monies continue to be earmarked to support European peacekeeping initiatives in Africa” (Chafer & Cumming 2010: 1144).
It may be added that the new Africa policy with its emphasis on security may provide new legitimacy to the development policy of the Union (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2009: 790-91). This particular focus may be in the institutional interest of the Commission, which has the responsibility for this large development policy area. At the same time, the Council Secretariat also has a strong interest in Africa and in promoting an active European Foreign and Security Policy and European Security and Defence Policy towards the continent. The Secretariat considers Africa’s security a field of experiment for implementation of the CFSP and therefore important in realising the official ambition of the EU to become a strong international actor. Finally, some member states – in particular France – have an interest in the Europeanization of their bilateral Africa policies, and the EU is seen as a good means for taking care of this national French interest (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2009: 790-91).

Last but not least, the African Union (AU) is an important player in the possible development of an African governance regime. At the Durban summit in 2002, the AU accepted that it has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on the continent. In addition to the African Peace and Security Council (PSC), the AU has established a number of mechanisms and instruments as elements in the promotion of stability and peace. According to the AU Peace and Security Council, political and economic stability is an essential prerequisite for preserving peace, security and stability on the continent. The understanding of the intimate link between stability and development is related closely to the establishment of the NEPAD-programme in 2001. NEPAD is an instrument of the AU to strengthen political and economic stability and regional cooperation and integration on the continent. Moreover, the AU set up the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2002 within the framework of NEPAD to promote democracy, human rights and good governance (Melber 2006: 5-6).

In summary, it appears that both China and the US have strong interests in Africa. Both have significant economic interests, and the US in particular has considerable interests in fighting terrorism and maintaining security and stability on the continent. The European interests are less clear, among other things because the increasingly close cooperation between Paris and London on Africa makes it difficult to distinguish between the interests and aims of the old colonial powers and those of the EU (Chafer & Cumming 2010). The AU
obviously has clearly stated aims in promoting peace and stability on the continent. In addition, it is important that the AU shares with the EU the understanding that there is a close link between stability and development. The adoption of the NEPAD programme with its sub-themes can be taken as an indication that the AU officially holds a strong interest in promoting not only stability but also economic and social development on the continent.

Security interventions

In this section, the focus will be on a number of international security interventions in Africa, which have been carried out bilaterally by the three non-African actors, China, the European Union, and the US, or have been carried out in cooperation with the African Union. The most remarkable of the foreign operations were the naval missions that took place off the coast of Somalia. The most surprising aspect of this particular operation was that China since late 2008 contributed with a limited number of naval vessels, among them two destroyers to patrol the waters around the Horn of Africa (Pham 2009). Several circumstances explain the Chinese deployment of a naval force off the coast of Somalia. There was a narrow national interest in protecting Chinese ships and, not least, tankers transporting oil from Port Sudan. There was also a strong wish to improve the international image of the country and show China as a responsible rising nation. “It is a signal to many that China wishes to participate more actively in international security” (Ji & Kia 2009: 1).

The European Union also deployed naval vessels in the Gulf of Aden and in the Indian Ocean. As of December 2008, it was decided to deploy an EU force to contribute to deterrence and the prevention of piracy. The ‘EU NAVFOR Somalia – Operation Atalanta’ had two aims. On the one hand, it was to protect the vessels of the World Food Programme delivering food aid to Somalia; on the other hand, the EU force was to protect vulnerable vessels and to deter piracy (European Union 2008).

The United States has launched an international naval force specifically to target Somali pirates terrorising ships in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. The Combined Task Force 151 was a spin-off from an existing force in the region that addresses a range of security issues, including drugs smuggling and weapons trafficking. Thus, the deployment was aimed at taking care of US traditional national
security interests, even though it should be noted that the US cooperated with other nations with ships in the area. For the present discussion, it is primarily important to stress that all three non-African actors accepted the commonly accepted norm that the deployment of foreign ships be backed by United Nations Security Council resolutions which unanimously endorsed the use of force (Treves 2009).

Since the turn of the century, China has increasingly been involved in UN peacekeeping operations both globally and in Africa in particular. Almost 75% of China’s peacekeepers are deployed on the continent, where they have been engaged in a number of high-profile conflicts. Beijing has deployed peacekeepers in Darfur in Sudan, in the DRC, in Côte d’Ivoire, in the Eritrea & Ethiopia border mission, and in several other conflicts. It is characteristic that the Chinese troops participate only in multilateral operations which have an explicit UN mandate (Shelton 2008; Gill & Huang 2009).

The increasing involvement in UN peacekeeping operations is the result of political choices made by the Chinese political leadership. It is clearly aimed at building an image of the country as ‘a responsible great power’ which takes on its role in advancing global peace and stability (Shelton 2008; Gill & Huang 2009). “It appears that China’s emerging role in peace operations is a part of a pragmatic reorientation and reassessment of Beijing’s political interests by policy makers, who are now more concerned with looking like a responsible great power and less of a developing country bent on protecting state sovereignty at all costs” (Taylor 2008: 8).

The US has been heavily engaged in African security since 11 September 2001. The Americans have bilaterally launched a number of regional security initiatives sending a signal that Africa has become an important region in general and in the global fight against terrorism. It is characteristic that the American approach to Africa and to security on the continent has been influenced by traditional great-power thinking combined with a strong bureaucratic influence. Laura Nathan points out that the US has been so preoccupied with its own concerns that it has tended to forget its African partner (Nathan 2009: 60). The unilateral establishment in 2007 of Africom and the lack of prior consultation with African leaders is considered as a “failure of the US administration ... It is not to be seen as a ‘communications lapse’ but as indicative of the superpower’s arrogance, ignorance of
African politics and disregard for the efforts of Africans to enhance their own security” (Nathan 2009: 60).

In the last decade, the European Union has launched no less than three military operations aimed at managing violent conflicts on the continent. The first took place during the summer of 2003 in the Ituri province of the DRC. The next operation was also in the DRC, when the EU deployed 1000 troops to support the UN mission already in the country with the aim of stabilising the situation in Kinshasa during the election process in 2006. The third EU mission took place in Chad from early 2008 until early 2009 with the aim of protecting and supporting refugees from Darfur and internally displaced people (Olsen 2009). All the ‘bilateral’ EU military missions in Africa have been backed by Security Council Resolutions.

In summary, focussing on the possible development of common norms related to governing Africa’s violent conflicts, it is important to note that the deployment of Chinese peacekeepers as well as the launching of the three EU military missions were backed by UN Security Council Resolutions. The Americans differ from the other two actors by being so clearly focussed on taking care of their own interests. This does not necessarily imply that the US violated international norms and rules; it means only that the bilateral security initiatives of Washington did little to contribute to the development of an African regime aimed at governing security and conflict management.

The African Union in conflict management missions

In recent years, the AU has increasingly assumed responsibility for stability and security in Africa. It has sanctioned a number of countries after coups and other irregularities (Gebrewold 2010: 86). The Peace and Security Council of the African Union has stressed that the AU should play a more active role in resolving the Darfur crisis and also that the organisation should work closely with other actors, such as the EU, in maintaining peace and stability in the region. Therefore, the AU has deployed troops under the AMIS I and the AMIS II operations to protect the civilians in Darfur.

The AU has carried out a number of other conflict management operations, and AU military missions have been deployed in several countries (Cilliers 2008; Siradag 2009: 2ff, 28ff). The AU has been involved in activities in the DRC related to promoting peace, security
and stability for a number of years. Since 2003, the AU has been engaged in maintaining peace and security in Burundi by deploying more than 3,000 troops from South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique to monitor the peace process and provide security (Murithi 2008: 74-76; Siradag 2009: 66-73). The AU mission in Somalia is the most surprising and also the most difficult of the four missions launched since 2003. From the start, the operation was under-resourced and undermanned. It was obvious that the AU could not pay for the mission and, therefore, it relied on financial assistance from the EU, several Western states, and later the UN (Williams 2009: 519-520).

By means of the African Peace Facility, the EU generously supported the AU peacekeeping missions mentioned above with both financial and human resources. This was most clearly the case with the AMIS I and the AMIS II operations. The EU-AU division of labour was prominent during the conflicts in the DRC, as well as in Burundi where the African Union deployed the troops and the EU supplied economic resources (via the African Peace Facility) and advice and technical advice, including support of disarmament and the general elections in 2006 (Siradag 2009: 59-66). “In fact, without the African Peace Facility, it is unlikely that the AU would have been able to undertake any of these missions. Since implementation of the African Peace Facility, the relationship between the AU and the EU has developed quite strongly, resulting in the EU strategy for Africa and recently the extension of the joint EU-Africa strategy in December 2007” (Cilliers 2008: 12).

In summary, it is particularly remarkable that the European Union was such an important, not to say indispensable, partner to the AU in performing their tasks within the field of security and conflict management. If it is possible to speak about the development of an African governance regime within this particular policy field, there is no doubt that the close cooperation between the AU and the EU points in such a direction.

*Development aid interventions*

Chinese development aid is one of the policy instruments that have caused most worry and political critique among traditional aid donors. In many cases, it is difficult to isolate Chinese development assistance from other economic development instruments, as Beijing uses a whole range of financial instruments in combination. It is
characteristic that there is a close linkage between aid and politics, with aid being tied to deliveries from China and also that the aid is on a project basis, a factor in contrast with the current Western aid philosophy that officially prefers sector-wide approaches and budget support (Mohan & Power 2008).

However, China has signed the OECD’s 2005 Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, a declaration whereby signatories are committed to enhancing the quality and impact of their aid. The declaration means that the countries are committed to adopting a number of common policy guidelines and that the donors have committed themselves to increasing the efforts to harmonise their policies and to sharing information with each other (OECD 2005). Apparently, Beijing does not feel bound to abide by the general principles laid down in the Declaration. China does not take part in the efforts of the OECD countries to achieve harmonization and nor does it provide information on the volume, focal areas, and instruments of its donor programmes (Mutume 2008). The reluctance to participate in the activities of the Development Assistance Committee within the OECD is explained by the fact that the Chinese do not consider the aid from Western countries as particularly effective in reducing poverty in Africa (Tull 2008: 5).

There seems to be general agreement that Chinese assistance does not qualify as aid according to DAC criteria (European Parliament 2007: 10, 12; Brautigam 2008: 212). Deborah Brautigam stresses that China’s aid and state-subsidised loans are bundled into a non-transparent system that violates many of the norms in the current OECD-directed aid system (Brautigam 2008: 32). On the other hand, it seems as if Beijing has an obvious interest in approaching the norms and rules which are described in the Paris Declaration. Thus, a number of observers argue that increasingly China will share interests with Western countries in promoting good governance and stability, as these two assets are simply preconditions for China to reap the benefits from its involvement in African countries (European Parliament 2007: 11, 12, 12/12; Ferreira 2008: 4). In addition, Jing Gu, John Humphrey & Dirk Messner maintain that the Chinese government seems very much aware of the fact that international stability and a positive international perception of its global rise are important preconditions for a smooth domestic transformation process (Gu et al. 2008: 289).
US government assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa has increased rapidly in the current century (Radelet & Bazzi 2008). Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that American aid policy is strongly influenced by national security interests, the 2002 National Security Strategy having emphasised that development assistance was a legitimate tool for enhancing US national security interests rather than a means to promote economic and social development in recipient countries (Hills 2006). Therefore, it is hardly a coincidence that USAID has an official homepage stressing that core US priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa are related to issues of security and good governance. The aim to “stimulate Africa’s economic development and growth” is only goal number seven out of nine mentioned on the homepage.¹

Moreover, at least one third of the total assistance must be classified as ‘military’ (Dagne 2006). It appears that debt relief, humanitarian assistance, and HIV/AIDS programmes accounted for a considerable proportion of the increasing aid, meaning that a significant share of the increasing American development assistance to Africa is difficult to categorise as development aid. It should also be noted that, since the year 2000, a decreasing share of the American aid to Africa has gone to the poorest countries (Radelet & Bazzi 2008). Thus, even though the US has signed the Paris Declaration, Washington is far from fulfilling its commitments.

Since 2000, it has been a central component in the EU’s development policy to pursue a more proactive, coordinated and coherent development policy. A crucial component in this has been the commitment to increase the collective volume of aid from 0.33% of GNI to 0.56% in 2010 and 0.7% by 2015. These commitments have been supplemented by a new emphasis on the quality of aid, leading to the untying of aid, multi-annual programming and country-based harmonization leading to the adoption in 2005 of the European Consensus on development (Carbone 2010: 336f). The aim to promote a coherent common policy towards Africa resulted in the adoption of the Africa-EU strategy. The European Commission’s signing of the Paris Declaration means, among other things, that the EU has committed itself to switching from conditionalities as a crucial policy instrument towards paying more attention to the developing countries’ own development objectives and aims.

Repeatedly, the EU has stressed its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, which – among other things – require significant increases in the relative as well as the absolute volume of aid, increases which have not been realised by the EU and its member states. The initial implementation of all the measures related to improving the effectiveness of aid and policy coherence for development showed that the EU faced a serious ‘implementation deficit’ (Carbone 2011: 339). Not only does this situation contradict the international commitments of the EU, but also – most remarkably – the Union’s development aid continues to be driven by the donors’ own priorities. This means a violation of the provisions of the Paris Declaration insofar as it hampers the achievement of developing-country ownership of aid as well as reduces the level of aid effectiveness.

In summary, all three donors have signed the Paris Declaration, but none of them have lived up to their commitments. On the one hand, it can be argued that China shares interests with the EU and the US as far as promotion of certain Western values are concerned. The tripling of American aid to Africa from 2000 to 2007 is worth noting in this context. On the other hand, much of the American aid, and not least the increase in aid disbursements, must be explained with reference to US security interests, a fact that raises the obvious question whether the Americans really share values and norms with the AU, the EU and China. The increase in European development assistance in the current century is much more difficult to explain if referred to narrow European interests. It seems more probable that the European Consensus on Development and the adoption of the Paris Declaration reflect a considerable commitment to promoting development in Africa. Moreover, by making firm commitments on increasing aid levels and on aid effectiveness, the EU can influence the behaviour of other donors (Carbone 2010) within what might be described as an increasing African governance regime. Thus, the European Union placed the issue on the international agenda, and it has been able to initiate negotiations ending with a positive result such as the Paris Declaration.

**NEPAD and economic development**

NEPAD is the economic development programme of the African Union. It was launched in 2001 as a vehicle to promote Africa’s economic and social development. The objectives are contained in its
Article 68, stating that NEPAD aims at meeting the Millennium Development Goals, including the crucial goal of reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half between 2000 and 2015 (Omotola 2010: 121ff). From the beginning, the European Union has actively supported the initiatives promoted by NEPAD, particularly its ambitions concerning the promotion of good government. For the European Union, NEPAD was considered an additional mechanism for the partnership between the EU and Africa. For the EU it has been important to emphasise that it shares a number of common values with its African partners (Taylor 2010: 52ff). On the negative side, several authors point out that when it comes to implementing the so-called common principles and norms, it is the responsibility of the individual African government and its political system characterised by the influence of ‘big men’. “Most fundamentally, most African states do not have the political will, internal legitimacy and capacity to cope with the responsibility imposed by the new initiative” (Omotola 2010: 126; Taylor 2010: 56ff).

China has been quite explicit in its support for NEPAD. At the second Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2006, Beijing agreed to strengthen cooperation with Africa on priority sectors identified under NEPAD. The summit witnessed the establishment of a new strategic partnership involving new trade and infrastructure relations. A number of initiatives to strengthen the partnership were announced; among other things, it was promised to double China’s 2006 development assistance to the continent by 2009 (Cambell 2008: 98ff). Ian Taylor explicitly states that by giving strong support to NEPAD, Beijing de facto encourages Africa to accept the precepts of liberalised capitalism and that “does place a different twist on the much-hyped notion that China presents an alternative model for the continent, one somehow qualitatively different form the West’s” (Taylor 2010: 63). The overall conclusion to this brief comparison between the two external actors is that both China and the EU share the same goals in Africa when it comes to economic and social development. The goals are economic development, stability and predictability for their investment, alongside the promotion of liberalised markets in close cooperation with the AU (Taylor 2010: 64).

In summary, from the information presented above it appears that a community, and thus a regime, is developing between China, the European Union and the AU on economic and social development. It builds on common understanding and possibly also common values...
as far as economic and social development in Africa are concerned. Moreover, both Brussels and Beijing support the NEPAD programme. Combining the observation on the bilateral policies and the information on the cooperation with the NEPAD programme points towards the conclusion that a governance regime is developing in Africa within the field of development assistance. The regime comprises only the AU, the EU and China. The US is probably not taking part in the development of such a regime simply because it is so much focussed on its own interests. The bottom line to the discussion is that the entry of China and its increasing presence on the continent will not lead to conflict among the external actors simply because they share a minimum of common values and norms.

Conclusion

It is the argument of this paper that the entry of China into Africa will not necessarily lead to conflict and confrontation. On the contrary, it is possible to argue that, slowly but steadily, China is adopting a number of Western values and norms related to the promotion of security and economic development on the continent. The adoption of these values points towards cooperation and peaceful competition and not towards conflict and confrontation. This means it is possible to maintain that we are witnessing the emergence of an African governance regime comprising security interventions and development aid interventions. Assuming this holds true in the years to come, it confirms the words of John Ikenberry that the Western order represents a strong framework of rules, norms and institutions which is increasingly integrating China into this order. With reservations, the empirical analysis seems to confirm the argument, even though it has to be stressed that it is a ‘thin’ Western or liberal order.

There is no doubt that the apparent Chinese acceptance of these common values does not reflect a deep commitment. It reflects only a principled agreement. It is true for the security interventions where China abides by the legal requirement of having UN backing for the deployment of troops and naval vessels. The picture becomes ambiguous when development aid interventions are scrutinised. Beijing has signed the Paris Declaration, but it does to live up to the commitments, at least not without reservation. On the other hand, a number of sources argue that China has a basic interest in following the rules and norms of the international regime aimed at promoting aid effi-
ciency. The cooperation between China and the AU on the NEPAD programme definitely supports this evaluation.

In comparison with China, the US appears to be much more on the fringe of the African governance regime. This is the case as far as the security interventions are concerned, and it is certainly also the case within the field of development assistance. In both fields, the initiatives of Washington are clearly influenced by narrow, American national interests, whereas the concern for African interests is more or less absent. Finally, the European Union seems to be pivotal for the development of the African governance regime in both policy fields. Perhaps it is possible to argue that the European Union is the driving force in this development, in more or less close cooperation with the African Union.

Framed theoretically, the increasing interdependency between the three big external powers, the EU, the US and China, points to the slow but probably steady development of an African governance regime, which builds on a limited number of Western norms, values and rules, directing interventions in the fields of security and development assistance. This leads to the conclusion that, until now, China’s entry into Africa does not point towards conflict; rather, it points towards increasing cooperation.

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CHAPTER TEN

RAILWAY TIME: TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER
AND THE ROLE OF CHINESE EXPERTS
IN THE HISTORY OF TAZARA

Liu Haifang & Jamie Monson

Abstract

During the construction of the TAZARA railway in Tanzania and Zambia in the 1970s, African and Chinese workers not only laboured side by side but also engaged in what was known as ‘technical cooperation’ as Chinese railway experts trained their African counterparts in the workplace and in technical training workshops. This cooperation continued to develop over the years following the railway’s completion, as a total of 14 successive teams of Chinese experts were sent to Dar es Salaam to provide technical support. Far from being a ‘white elephant’ stuck in the politics of an earlier era, as some critics have claimed, TAZARA has been changing over the past 34 years in the context of political and economic liberalisation. Yet it has at the same time retained many of the qualities that made it a ‘vanguard’ of Chinese development assistance at its inauguration.

TAZARA and the rhythm of time: 1968-2010

Inside the offices of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA) headquarters in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the clocks on the wall stand still, quietly telling visitors that they were brought here from Shanghai as early as the 1970s. Under this apparent stillness lies a different and more dynamic story, the story of the diverse forces that have shaped the current of time that flows towards the past. The flow of time for TAZARA is calculated according to many different rhythms, not only the ‘railway time’ so familiar to railroad observers but also the successive protocols of technology cooperation that have been signed between the Chinese, Tanzanian and Zambian govern-
ments since 1967. Throughout the history of these multi-year protocols, the guiding principles of cooperation between the three countries have been calculated and negotiated. Their implementation in practice has been undertaken by the members of the Chinese Railway Expert Teams (CRET), who have continued to work together with their Tanzanian and Zambian counterparts over the past 34 years, bearing witness to the flows of time and history.

On the third floor of TAZARA headquarters, immediately opposite the main stairway, is the door to the office of the Chinese expert team leader. It bears a white nameplate identifying it as belonging to ‘CRET’. A slightly faded red Chinese knot hanging on the door is the only ‘Chinese characteristic’ of this room – the Chinese working inside it share the same office facilities with TAZARA’s other employees and managers, including the resting clocks, the unreliable plumbing of the toilets, and the worn-out air conditioners.

The atmosphere is brightened now and then by warm words of greeting in Chinese, “ni hao?” or “how are you?”, sometimes followed by delighted laughter and a small conversation in broken Chinese, English, Kiswahili or some mixture of the three languages. The keen African practitioners of the Chinese language may have brought it back with them from China many years ago along with the formal degrees they earned from Communications (jiaotong) or Railway Universities in the 1970s; others learned Chinese on the job during and after construction of TAZARA. Younger African workers have had more recent opportunities to practice Chinese as they travel to China for technical training, often supported by the latest protocol agreements. The Chinese experts also try to improve their English and Kiswahili through daily contact with their African colleagues, although each expert still brings an interpreter (also categorised as an expert member of the team) whenever they speak with their counterparts ‘officially and seriously’. If it happens that one of the support staff responsible for the everyday needs of the Chinese experts comes to headquarters for some reason, he will make conversation with the Tanzanians in the building using very fluent Kiswahili. As the primary administrator and purchaser for the CRET workers’ residence, he is the most integrated with the local Tanzanian culture.

Some 110 miles westwards from Dar es Salaam, there is similar evidence of ‘time standing still’, which belies the dynamic flow of TAZARA’s history from 1976 to the present. At the former TAZARA workshop in Mang’ula, where steel foundries, lathes, drills and
massive cranes were operating day and night during TAZARA’s construction, there is today an eerie stillness. A tour of what remains in the once bustling workshop reveals that each machine bears a label displaying its origin in China: this one from Shanghai, that one from Tianjin, yet another from the far north in Harbin. Wiping away the dust-coated Chinese characters reveals their original dates: 1970, 1972, 1973. Like the clocks in Dar es Salaam, these machines tell their own silent stories. But the workers who were trained to operate them, many of whom still continue to work in the workshop, have their own personal stories to tell about the changes they have witnessed in their lifetimes. They tell their stories with another sense of time: theirs is the story of a ‘railway generation’, a group of workers that learned to operate the technical equipment in their youth and are now retiring at the end of their working years. These retiring workers also remember many Chinese phrases, most of them learned from their Chinese mentors on the job in Africa or during technology training in China. Like the Chinese members of the CRET team who stayed on in East Africa for longer terms of service and often returned more than once, these Tanzanian and Zambian workers are the living witnesses to the changes that TAZARA has undergone since construction. They were present at the celebratory moment when the railway was inaugurated in 1976, and have accompanied TAZARA through its phases of liberalisation, structural adjustment, commercialisation and impending (though not yet confirmed) privatisation.

And finally, at the very end of the railway line at Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia, something novel was starting to happen in July 2010. A set of 25 rehabilitated goods wagons were hauled from the workshop at Mpika to New Kapiri Mposhi as part of the inauguration of TAZARA’s historic new ‘turnaround’. The Mpika workshop, unlike its counterpart at Mang’ula, still belongs to TAZARA and is being used as part of a strategy to repair and rebuild TAZARA’s rolling stock and infrastructure. With support from the most recent protocol agreements and an infusion of financial aid from China (40 million USD in December 2010), TAZARA management is calling this new era the ‘light at the end of the tunnel’.¹ Recent projections claim that TAZARA will turn a profit in 2011 for the first time since the inauguration of railway services, thanks to China’s recent forgiveness

¹ TAZARA souvenir calendar, 2011.
of half of the Authority’s loan debt. Will this be the long-awaited comeback moment for the railway?

From the date of handover on July 14, 1976 to the present, technical cooperation between China and TAZARA has continued to function, changing over time according to shifts in the global political and economic climate as well as in the dynamic domestic contexts of each of the participating countries. Themes of economic opening and liberalisation dominated TAZARA’s technical cooperation policies during the 1980s, while commercialisation and anxiety about competition from an independent South Africa ruled decision-making through the 1990s. Throughout the last three decades and into the present, the implementers of technical cooperation on the ground have been the CRET leaders and their African counterparts. Their relationships have also changed over time, sometimes involving more substantial involvement by the Chinese experts and at other times a more hands-off approach. Given that TAZARA is the biggest infrastructure project in the history of Chinese development cooperation in Africa, in fact one of the largest in the world, it is surprising that there has not been more attention paid to the themes of technology transfer and its implementation, and in particular to the roles played by those who were most directly involved in putting the successive protocols into practice: the members of the CRET teams, and the African managers and workers.

Existing studies have focused primarily on the period of construction, in part because of the scarcity of source materials (Yu 1970; Shen 2009; Monson 2009). At the same time, there has been a popular discourse that TAZARA is a static ‘white elephant’ whose role has continued from its inception to be based on political irrationality rather than rational economic investment. In this literature the Chinese experts have been viewed as nothing more than a political instrument: the most secretive participants in the already highly secretive TAZARA project (Marson 2008; Hall 2010). For these reasons it is necessary to undertake a thorough investigation of the history of the CRET teams and the particular role that they have

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2 China’s most recent protocol, signed in Lusaka in February 2011, wrote off half of TAZARA’s construction debts or about 150 million USD. The railway has projected 3 million USD in operational profits for the 2010-11 financial year, an unprecedented gain. Kapembwa Sinkamba, ‘TAZARA JV generate more than USD 2 million operational profit for 2001-11’, Steel Guru, 18 February 2011, citing TAZARA sources.
played in technology transfer over the last three decades of TAZARA’s existence. At the same time, it is essential to comprehend the experience of technology and work for the Tanzanian and Zambian workforce that was trained (and continues to be trained) by the Chinese and that bears the bulk of responsibility for day-to-day operations. For time never ‘stood still’ for TAZARA, any more than it did for any other development project in Africa, despite the implications of the ‘white elephant’ epithet. The railway experienced the ebb and flows of political and economic currents from the level of the three individual states to that of the global stage. Comprehending this history and its rhythms – through the experiences of those who participated in it and who therefore serve as the primary witnesses to it – has become especially significant given the current hot debate over China-African relations and international aid and development assistance (de Haan 2009).

Workers and mentors

The TAZARA railway was designed and constructed between 1968 and 1976. The 1,860 km long project was built with financial and technical assistance from China, amounting to well over 400 million USD, in the form of a long-term interest-free loan. Known as the “Freedom Railway”, TAZARA was conceived to provide the critical outlet to the sea that landlocked Zambia needed in order to break free from its dependency on Rhodesian, Angolan and South African rails and ports. TAZARA was therefore a transnational as well as a Pan-African project, intended to serve as a symbol of revolutionary Third World solidarity and resistance to the forces of colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism.

China had agreed to assist with the construction of the project on 5 September 1967 after several Zambian requests for support from Western countries had been unsuccessful. Chinese-led survey and design teams carried out an intensive study from 1968 to 1970, after which railway construction was ready to begin, initially with the construction of access roads and the development of base camps. Construction was organised through the twelve base camps, each of which had a resident work team and was responsible for a given section of the railway line. The first teams of Chinese railway experts

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supervised the workers, who were divided further into sub-teams directed by Chinese field assistants and African foremen. The sub-teams worked in even smaller gangs, sometimes as few as eight to ten people, which allowed for personal relationships and mutual language learning to develop among these isolated groups of workers. The work gangs were spread out along the railway line during the day, some two to three miles apart. One field team could be made up of thousands of workers; at Mwale base camp in 1972, there were 64 labour gangs involving about 5,500 labourers.\(^4\)

Despite the difficulties of working through the unpopulated wilderness landscape of the Selous Game Reserve, the first 110-mile length of track from Dar es Salaam to Mlimba was completed within one year. By June 1973, the most challenging construction work had been completed – the tunnels section between Mlimba and Makambako, and most of the basic structures for the permanent way up to Kasama in Zambia. Track-laying followed and the rails reached Kasama in December 1973. The TAZARA railway was completed in 1975, and operations began in July 1976, with elaborate celebrations in Dar es Salaam and New Kapiri Mosh.

The three governments recognised from the start that they needed to create a detailed plan for training the Tanzanian and Zambian personnel in railway construction, maintenance, operations and administration. In the 1969 agreement it was explicitly stated that the “training of technical personnel in various fields shall, in the main, be carried out in the practical work of construction of the Tanzania/Zambia Railway and be supplemented with necessary theoretical lectures”.\(^5\) In other words, the African workers would be provided with technology training on the job, and the Chinese railway experts would serve as their teachers and mentors while at the same time working together with them at the construction sites. This is how one Tanzanian worker remembers the experience: “We did all of this work together with the Chinese who were both our teachers and our fellow workers”.\(^6\)

African workers had already begun to assist the Chinese survey and design teams in 1968, and some of the lessons learned about technology transfer during this phase of the project were applied to

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\(^5\) TAZARA 1969 protocol agreement, National Archives of Zambia.

\(^6\) Interview with Lucas Msemwa, Chimala, 24 July 2010.
the later construction and post-construction phases. Philemon Kigola remembers his experiences learning survey techniques in Tanzania when he worked with the team that scouted the tunnels’ section starting in 1969. His team was made up of around 60 Tanzanians working together with 40 Chinese surveyors. After the survey was completed, Kigola was chosen along with 30 other survey team workers to join the next phase of railway construction work, ultimately finding himself constructing and operating the sawmill at Mang’ula. In this way, each phase of the project influenced the recruitment and training strategies of subsequent phases, as technical lessons were learned and workers deemed to be well qualified were retained from one phase to the next. The promotion and transfer of African personnel was a deliberate effort on the part of the Chinese experts to provide their counterparts with ‘all around’ technical skills.

As one worker remembered, “when we were working with the Chinese we were transferred from one kind of work to another, because they wanted us to understand many kinds of work and this was done in order to help us and also to help our nations”. 7

Once the survey and design period was completed in 1970 and formal construction work could begin, there were further discussions about what type of recruitment and training would be most suitable. The project planners anticipated that 6-7,000 local African workers would be needed at the beginning stages, with a target level of 12,000 at any given time. The recruitment should stress many qualities, according to one report, including a good and disciplined work standard, good health, and a minimum education of Standard 7 or 8 (completion of the primary level). Beyond that, recruits would need to be loyal and dedicated, because the project faced “hostile forces working against it” and needed to “ensure unimpeded progress” in order to achieve its goals. Recruitment should also be carried out “across the length and breadth” of both countries to ensure that there was national and international representation in the labour force. Thus a new vision was put forward of a disciplined, hard working, dedicated group of young men who would represent the diversity of ethnic and national identities between the two countries. They would be selected on the

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7 Interview with Magani Gani, Chimala, July 2010. Interviews with retired Chinese railway workers also stressed the ‘all around’ nature of skill transfer (for example, interview with Du Jian in 2007).
basis of their good character and good health, and would have attained at least a basic level of primary education.\textsuperscript{8}

Salum Mwasenga was one of the workers who received extensive training during the railway’s construction and who stayed on afterwards as an engineer in the Mang’ula workshop. In oral interviews, Mwasenga remembers that he was able to develop a close one-on-one relationship with the Chinese technician who was his mentor during construction. His ability to learn Chinese allowed him to learn technical skills more easily, and this led to his rapid promotion. There were about 800 Africans in the engineering section at the Mwang’ula camp at the time and about 300 Chinese, a ratio of less than 4:1 that allowed for close mentoring to take place.\textsuperscript{9}

Once construction was underway, more formal training workshops were established in Tanzania and Zambia from 1971 to 1974. Railway training schools were opened at Mang’ula (1971), Mgulani (1972) and Mbeya (1974) in Tanzania, and at Mpika in Zambia (1974). Mang’ula offered courses on four topics: construction and maintenance of the permanent way and bridges; telecommunications; signalling; and locomotive driving. 200 African students were sent to China’s Beijing Communications (Jiaotong) University to study more formal engineering skills from 1972-5, and several went back in the 1980s to complete their degrees. TAZARA workers have continued to receive training at several Chinese technical schools and universities since that time. In the classrooms and workshops of these training schools, hands-on experience was highly valued and practiced as a primary learning method. During examinations at Mang’ula, retired workers recall, they were given practical tests in which their teachers would require them to diagnose and repair a set of problems that had been rigged up for this purpose on real railway machines.\textsuperscript{10} Those who went to Beijing for further studies were sent out to factories in cities like Tsingdao and practised their skills as conductors on Chinese railways.\textsuperscript{11}

The Chinese railway experts who were recruited to work on TAZARA were older and more experienced than their African coun-

\textsuperscript{8} NAZ MFA 1/286/144, ‘TAZARA Brief Progress Report, March 16, 1970,’ p. 5.
\textsuperscript{9} Interview with Salum Mwasenga, Mang’ula, 8 August 2000.
\textsuperscript{10} Interviews with retired railway workers, Mang’ula, July 2010.
\textsuperscript{11} Archive of Beijing Jiaotong University; conversations with retired railway workers.
terparts at the time of TAZARA’s construction, having been recruited from China’s regional railway bureaus throughout the country. The Chinese workers were selected on the basis of their good character and, in the context of the time, their political credentials. Foremost among their best qualities remained their technical background, for the railway was China’s most visible and politically important project overseas and it was essential to recruit and deploy the most highly qualified personnel possible. The Second Railway Bureau’s training school in Chengdu was specialised in teaching the construction of tunnels and bridges.\textsuperscript{12} Mr. Rao Xue De remembers that 204 workers from his department in the Second Railway Bureau were recruited to work on TAZARA, after which he was posted as their team leader. Other members of his team also served as instructors. Workers from the Third Railway Bureau, meanwhile, had taken part in the Korean War and were known for their strong wills, toughness under pressure, and high level of discipline.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{From construction to operations in the 1970s}

The three governments were already considering the question of how to provide technical assistance and support for TAZARA’s operations long before the official handover and creation of TAZARA as a bi-national administrative authority in 1976. On 30 December 1974, the Ministry of Communication of the Chinese Government issued a circular that set forth the plans for dispatching the transitional team of railway experts who would finalise TAZARA’s construction in 1975 and pave the way for African leadership. The total number of experts at this stage would be reduced by half from the previous year, “in order to motivate local friends’ dynamics”, yet at the same time more skills and knowledge were required in order to meet the needs of the new mission: “to guide, instruct and teach local friends”. This policy was in alignment with what Chairman Mao had said to Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere in 1974: “Our task is to teach you so that you could operate (the railway) yourselves when we leave”.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Interview with Peng Ping Pan, Chengdu, 3 September 2008. (Interview by Ye Xiaolin; translation by Claire Yanjing Du).
\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Zhang Deshun, Taiyuan, 20 October 2008.
\textsuperscript{14} Beijing Communications University Archive, ‘On the plan of dispatching personnel to continue the construction of Tan-Zam Railway in 1975, December 30th, 1974’.
This transitional batch of 2,081 railway experts came from thirty-six different railway “working units” (danwei) throughout China. In addition to their task of transferring necessary skills to the local workers and managers, some of these experts even began to sort out data, including taking photographs of the entire railway over a period of one year, in preparation for the handover. Following the formal transfer of the railway in 1976, some 1,000 of these experts were selected to stay on in either Tanzania or Zambia to compose the first batch of Chinese Railway Experts to continue the task of technology transfer in the operations period. As was the case with earlier teams, therefore, this group was exceptionally qualified and capable, reflecting the nation-wide distribution of China’s railway bureaus. Today, retired Chinese workers and engineers who participated in the construction of the railway recognise this unique composition of the TAZARA CRET teams, believing that this would not have been possible in any other historical period than that of the Cultural Revolution.

Throughout the history of TAZARA – from construction through to the present – familiarity with the railway was the top criterion for selection of CRET team members and their leaders. Many of them returned to the project again and again; one CRET leader even grew up with the railway. He first came as a young man working with the survey team as an interpreter in the late 1960s. In the late 1980s he served in the Mpika workshop and he ended up working for three straight terms as a CRET leader during the first five years after 2000. He turns out to be the longest-serving CRET leader in the history of the expert teams.

After the handover of TAZARA to the two governments of Tanzania and Zambia, the CRET teams became a new temporary working unit of Chinese technology cooperation. In this capacity they operated under the immediate leadership of the Chinese Embassy and its Economic and Commercial Representative in Tanzania. In China they were directly affiliated with the Department of Foreign Aid of the

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15 Interview with a member of this batch, Mr. Du Wenming, Beijing Restaurant in Dar es Salaam, 12 July 2010.

16 Interviews from 2008 to 2010 with retired Chinese engineers and workers working for the railway; ‘We will definitely make TAZARA better – Interview with Hua Mao, the former Chief Engineer of Ministry of Railway and head of TAZARA survey group’, Oriental Outlook Weekly, 4 August 2010.
Ministry of Railways\textsuperscript{17} and after 2003 were administered by the China Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC) under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC) and the Ministry of Commerce.\textsuperscript{18} Through the 12\textsuperscript{th} protocol in 2007, according to TAZARA’s internal calendar, the whole team was structured into three layers: the CRET leader and some experts worked in the headquarters in Dar es Salaam; some experts were divided among the Tanzanian and Zambian regional bureaus; and below this level other experts worked in affiliated institutions, such as the machine workshops, under both regional organisations. All of the positions on the Zambian side were removed at the beginning of the thirteenth term (2007), and the number of CRET experts has remained the same since that time, with only seven working in the TAZARA headquarters building. In Table 11.1, the composition and mission of each successive CRET team is laid out.

During the initial years of CRET involvement in TAZARA, the Chinese government decided to leave the smallest possible number of experts needed for smooth and orderly operations (even after the sabotage by Southern Rhodesian forces of the Chambeshi Bridge in Zambia in 1978). At the same time, because their Tanzanian and Zambian counterparts had not yet fully developed independent railway operations skills, the first and second batches of CRET members were distributed throughout all of TAZARA’s workshops and at every station at second-level and above.\textsuperscript{19} As one CRET member of both the first and second terms said, “The Chinese were very powerful and could make the final decision for TAZARA issues at that moment”.\textsuperscript{20} Many interviewees remember that in this period the CRET members took over actual departmental positions along the railway wherever and whenever they were needed.\textsuperscript{21} During the decade of the 1970s,

\textsuperscript{17} The Ministry of Railway was incorporated with Ministry of Communication just for the period of Cultural Revolution.
\textsuperscript{18} The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC), which was incorporated into the Ministry of Commerce in 2003, used to be the ministerial organisation which looked after foreign aid issues.
\textsuperscript{20} Interview with Du Wenming in Dar es Salaam, 12 July 2010.
\textsuperscript{21} Interviews with retired Chinese railway workers and experts, during period 2008-10.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Duration (yrs)</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Missions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jul-76 – Jul-78</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>Technological guidance for operation &amp; management, to train technicians &amp; managers, to assist general business building</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jul-78 – Jul-80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>Technological guidance for operation &amp; management, to train technicians &amp; managers, to assist general business building</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jul-80 – Aug-83</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Technological guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Aug-83 – Aug-86</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>Technological guidance for operation &amp; management, to take part in management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aug-86 – Aug-89</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>Technological guidance for operation &amp; management, to take part in management</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aug-89 – Dec-92</td>
<td>3 1/3</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Technological guidance for operation to TAZARA, to take part in management (specifically: planning, traffic, finance, machine, security, electricity and supply)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dec-92 – Dec-95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>Technological guidance for operation to TAZARA, to take part in management</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dec-95 – Dec-97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Management advice and technological guidance to TAZARA</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Dec-97 – Dec-99</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Project coordination, technological guidance, liaison office among three governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dec-99 – Dec-01</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Jan-02 – Dec-04</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Project coordination, technological guidance, liaison office among three governments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Jan-05 – Dec-06</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chinese Railway Expert Coordination Team (CRET) to provide coordination and advisory service</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Jan-07 – Dec-08</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chinese Railway Expert Coordination Team (CRET) to provide coordination and advisory service</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Jan-09 – Dec-11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chinese Railway Expert Coordination Team (CRET) to provide coordination and advisory service</td>
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</table>

* This table was created using sources from the website of the Chinese Embassy in Tanzania (http://www.tz.china-embassy.org) and partly from the CRET archive in TAZARA Headquarters, Dar es Salaam. Co-author Liu Haifang would like to thank CRET leader Mr. Miao and his colleagues for their patience and assistance during her collection of these materials during June and July 2010.
therefore, the Chinese members and leaders of the CRET teams were recruited in large numbers from throughout China, even after hand-over when over 1,000 experts remained to take part in technical training and operations. Although the Chinese government hoped to minimise the total number of CRET staff after handover, whether as part of an effort to reduce the appearance of ‘neocolonialism’ or to avoid ‘interference in internal affairs’ of management in the African countries, the CRET members continued to pay an active role throughout the railway line until the 1980s.  

Liberalisation and layoffs in the 1980s

The decade of the 1980s saw a number of inconsistencies and vacillations, both in TAZARA’s internal policies and in the policies implemented by the CRET team members. At this time in both China and in the two African countries, economic liberalisation was beginning to take hold. By 1985 Tanzania had agreed to adopt the conditionalities of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, paving the way for an international donor group of Western nations to become involved in TAZARA for the first time. Meanwhile, China began the decade by drastically reducing the number of CRET members from 750 to 160 in 1980, only to increase them again to 269 in 1983. For the TAZARA workers, meanwhile, the changing economic climate meant that in 1982 some 300 Chinese-trained Tanzanian employees were laid off, leading to a now-famous law case in which a University of Dar es Salaam professor, Issa Shivji, successfully argued that they should be reinstated on the basis of the technology skills they had obtained through Chinese technology training.

The third protocol, beginning in 1980, saw a significant reduction in the number of CRET team members. Only 160 Chinese experts were kept on in a retreating gesture, for the African counterparts were expected to fully operate the railway by themselves at this stage, with the Chinese experts providing only technical guidance. Meanwhile, the three governments reached an agreement during the signing of the 1980 protocol in Lusaka that allowed for the purchase of fourteen

German diesel electric locomotives to improve TAZARA’s motive power. Near the end of this protocol between 1982 and 1983, Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang spent nearly a month visiting eleven African countries, including Tanzania. After discussions with the TAZARA leadership and Tanzania’s President Julius Nyerere, Premier Zhao called upon the Chinese experts to play a larger role, “to participate in the daily management of the railway, shoulder to shoulder with African friends”. Consequently, the number of members of the fourth-term CRET team was increased, including the transfer of Mr. Jin Hui, who had been the Chinese leader during both the survey and construction period, to Tanzania for a three-year term. From 1983 onwards, the CRET team began to take part in cooperative management of TAZARA, and this, together with the improvement in locomotive capacity due to the addition of the new German engines, caused the railway’s revenues to increase for the first time since construction.

The entry of the Chinese experts into cooperative management of TAZARA marked an important shift in Chinese policy at the time. It is widely believed that the former ideological barrier of non-interference needed to be broken down, as it was when Premier Zhao Ziyang stated that to help with railway management would “help them to build self-reliance”, and that the former policy of non-interference had been widely regarded as a deep “sovereignty trap”. The shift in China’s approach to TAZARA through the role played by the CRET team was also related to the process of domestic reform within China itself, where the relationship between government and private enterprise was undergoing an adjustment. This experimental approach to jointly managed technology cooperation was regarded later

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3 CRET archive, ‘Record of Premier Zhao Ziyang’s visit to TAZARA’, 10 January 1983.
on as a feasible model for the reform of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), and was exceptionally successful in Mali.  

Meanwhile, Western donors were preparing to become more involved in TAZARA’s future and convened a donor’s conference in Arusha, Tanzania in 1985, the same year that President Ali Hassan Mwinyi replaced Julius Nyerere as president of Tanzania and ushered in a new period of economic reforms. The aid packages pledged for TAZARA’s recovery totalled 150 million USD, almost a third of the original cost of the railway itself. A series of ambitious donor-funded projects followed, including the purchase of 17 new locomotives, a new locomotive workshop in Mbeya, spare parts and technical training.  

The joint cooperation of Chinese and Western donors provided the CRET team members with an opportunity to work together with what they termed ‘blond-haired and blue-eyed European and American experts’, perhaps the first instance of the ‘trilateral cooperation’ among Western, Chinese and African counterparts that has been part of the debate about China’s so-called ‘new engagement’ with Africa. As George Yu observed in Tanzania in the 1970s, the Chinese took an approach that was a “fairly open pattern of international cooperation” within the framework of a “partial informal alliance”. CRET team members describe feeling greatly challenged initially by the Westerners’ ability to communicate easily with locals owing to the advantage of having a shared language, and by their grasp of more advanced technologies. Some described feeling quite upset by this. Yet with time, the CRET team members opened their eyes to learn fully from the strengths of their Western colleagues and they gained more confidence.  

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8 TAZARA, *Ten years of TAZARA Operations: review and perspective*. Lusaka and Dar es Salaam, 1986, p. 16; TAZARA, *TAZARA Ten year development plan*. Participating donor countries included the United States (providing locomotives), West Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Yugoslavia and Sweden.  
9 ‘Blond-haired and blue-eyed’ is the usual way that Chinese describe racially white people. In interviews with CRET members, this phrase was commonly used to refer to all kinds of Europeans and Americans they met.  
11 CRET archive: Transcription of CRET internal meeting, 3 March 1987.
The Chinese railway experts who joined the survey, construction and post-construction technical cooperation teams described in interviews the special role that they played in the history of TAZARA. Many of those who joined the project went back to Africa more than once, either because they were especially valued and recruited (for example, the case of Mr. Jin Hui cited above) or because they themselves felt a close personal or professional connection to Africa and to TAZARA. Following their retirement and into the present decade, many have offered advice and suggestions for the railway based on their long experience and familiarity with the project.12 Their African counterparts who stayed on to operate the railway over the last thirty years, express a similar sense of having held a special and collective place in history. These “railway generations” – whether they are the African workers who have continued to work on TAZARA since the 1970s, or the Chinese experts who served in different teams yet continue to stay connected in person or in memory – were part of a “unique project in a unique time”, according to TAZARA historian Zhang Tieshan.

This sense of collective consciousness was both reinforced and complicated during the decade of the 1980s in Tanzania and Zambia. At the same time that Premier Zhao Ziyang was promoting a shift in China’s policy towards management of TAZARA, the railway authority was laying off workers as part of labour re-organisation measures. The period from 1982-7 for the TAZARA workforce was therefore one of significant activism and worker consciousness. Some 300 TAZARA workers were first laid off in 1982 and then defended successfully in court by Issa Shivji (as mentioned above).13 In oral interviews, Dr. Shivji has discussed the ways TAZARA workers themselves related to him their own sense of being a special generation, based on their unique skills and experience as railwaymen who were trained by the Chinese. Dr. Shivji used this as evidence in his courtroom arguments, describing the laid-off workers as members of a unique cohort of workers whose skills could not be replaced.14 The significance of the technical education that the workers had received through the mentoring, tutoring and classroom education provided by

12 Many of these suggestions are retained in the CRET archive in Dar es Salaam.
14 Interviews with Issa Shivji, August 2010 and August 2007, Dar es Salaam.
the Chinese – in particular their relationships with the Chinese expert teams – was held up as a primary reason for their reinstatement.

The decade of the 1980s was in many ways a decade of contradictions. After starting out initially with a sharply reduced number of Chinese railway experts, the Chinese side increased both the scale and the shape of technical cooperation as they redefined their role in management and policy implementation. Meanwhile, new sources of technology and expertise, new kinds of relationships, and new avenues for technology transfer were made available through the adoption and funding of the multinational ten-year plan for TAZARA. It was also in the 1980s that TAZARA began to increase its revenues and services, in response to the acquisition of new sources of motive power and increased involvement of the donor community, including the new role played by the Chinese experts. This took place despite the collapse of copper prices in Zambia at the time (the buying power of Zambia’s exports declined by a factor of three from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s). At the same time, this marked a new period in the development of worker consciousness, as the laid-off TAZARA workers made their case nationally and internationally for reinstatement, following layoffs that appeared to target those who had played the most significant historical role in the history of the railway.

**Commercialisation in the 1990s**

The decade of the 1990s was a time of hope for many in southern Africa, for the settler-ruled countries of Namibia and South Africa gained independence in 1990 and 1994 respectively. For the TAZARA management, this was on the one hand a long-awaited fruit of the support provided by Tanzania and Zambia for the struggles for independence (it was, after all, the ‘freedom railway’). On the other hand, however, it was a source of economic concern, as southern Africa’s freedom also opened up rail routes to the south. The combination of pressure for economic liberalisation together with the need to compete with a broader range of southern African rails and ports led to the development of new plans for commercializing TAZARA. At the donors’ conference in 1992, participants discussed the need for TAZARA to develop improved and aggressive marketing

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strategies in response to “the crumbling of apartheid and opening up of South Africa”.

Plans were announced in 1994 and 1995 that would streamline the railway operations and workforce, focus intensively on commercial ventures, and create two national “cost and profit centers”, one for Tanzania and one for Zambia. These initiatives were in line with broader policies of economic liberalisation imposed at the time in the two countries, and also took into account the reduction in copper shipments from the Zambian mines. Commercialisation prospects therefore included the diversification and expansion of TAZARA’s customer base to reduce reliance on the copper industry. The TAZARA workforce was slated for substantial reductions at this time, from 6,600 to 4,000. For the TAZARA workers, an equally troubling outcome of the commercialisation policy was the division of the workforce into two classes, one for managerial staff and one for labourers. This reclassification, implemented in 1996, was accompanied by differential allocation of salaries, benefits and privileges.

The Chinese railway experts, meanwhile, proposed a different approach to commercialisation, one that was linked to China’s own domestic economic reform. Rather than emphasizing reductions in expenditures, as reflected in the donor-sponsored plan, the Chinese side focused on improving revenues. The CRET team referred to the Chinese trend to emphasise better managerial mechanisms with a contract responsibility system. They promoted TAZARA management taking ownership of the railway’s future and not simply capitulating to the ‘shock therapy’ reforms recommended by the Western donors. At the same time, CRET proposed to the Chinese government that they “completely transform the technical cooperation into economic cooperation”. In the process, they would gradually reduce the number of CRET team members.

Beginning with the 8th Protocol in 1995, the number of CRET workers was reduced from 122 to 35 (refer to Table 11.1 above for protocol staffing figures).

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In a meeting with the Managing Director of TAZARA in 1996, according to a CRET transcript, CRET leader Mr. Yang divided CRET’s technical cooperation with TAZARA into three stages: during stage one, from Term 1 to Term 3, the Chinese played the major role; in stage two, from Term 4 to Term 7, the Chinese took part in railway management together with their TAZARA counterparts; from Term 8 onwards (after 1995), CRET stopped taking part in management and provided only management advice and technical guidance, while TAZARA’s leaders began to play the major role. This description of the way CRET had phased out the bilateral cooperation since handing over TAZARA revealed the way the African workers and managers had gradually improved their capacity as a whole, a theme that is often neglected in much of the analytical literature.

At the same time that CRET was moving towards a lower managerial profile, China was changing its overall approach to supporting TAZARA. When Premier Zhu Rongji visited Tanzania in 1995, he almost reversed the course – a similar role to that played by Premier Zhao in 1983 – by deciding to rehabilitate the railway through providing more assistance. This time China would provide a dramatic amount of interest-free loan funding to TAZARA in order to rehabilitate its infrastructure and machines. This new trend can be understood with reference to the track of China’s transformation of development assistance aid more broadly, which was directed towards invigorating private-sector development in Africa. It is also important to recognise the role that was played by TAZARA itself in the transition to commercialisation as the railway authority developed its own transition to commercialisation. Since the late 1990s, TAZARA has been relying on Chinese interest-free loans issued through the terms of each protocol. It has been CRET’s main responsibility to coordinate with TAZARA management to plan and implement these terms phase by phase, including the scale of the loan and the specific renovation projects.

In the late 1990s there was also talk and investigation by parties interested in the privatisation of TAZARA, including the possibility that the railway might be operated as a joint venture with a Chinese company or consortium of companies. In 2004 the CRET team changed its mandate and title once again, this time to reflect the new

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19 CRET archive, ‘Transcription of Mr. Yang meeting up with MD of TAZARA’, 28 December 1996.
emphasis on consultancy rather than direct management. From 2004 onwards the CRET team was renamed a “coordination team” (see Table 11.1 above). Their new function was to coordinate closely with their African counterparts in order to carry out the current cooperative projects on the one hand, and on the other hand to find the best way forward for TAZARA. While this was articulated as a ‘new’ mandate, in fact it was very much in line with CRET’s original and continuing role in relationship to TAZARA.

For the now-retiring generation of TAZARA workers, the decade of the 1990s was a difficult one. Not only did they experience layoffs and reclassification of the workforce through the streamlining policies implemented in 1996, but they also failed to receive their pensions at the time of retirement starting in 2000. Workers who retired between 2000 and 2005 have not received their full pensions, or have received them piecemeal over time, from the deductions that were taken from their salaries during their working years. Most of these retiring workers were members of the group of construction workers who were trained by the Chinese and then hired on in 1976 as permanent railway staff. Some have elected to take their case to court, some citing lessons learned during the 1980s when they turned to Dr. Shivji for his assistance. “We were all hired at the same time and we have all been given retirement at the same time (but without pensions)”, explained one retired worker. “It is a big issue and a national question”. In response to worker claims, the TAZARA management has requested that the governments of Tanzania and Zambia find the resources to settle the pension issue. But this will take time. Meanwhile, it is not only the loss of financial resources but the symbolism of the issue that is important to the construction generation. They feel that although they have made a great contribution to the building of the railway and to their nations, this has not been recognised, in part owing to the changes in policies of the last two decades. In interviews, retired railway experts in China who joined the TAZARA project express some of the same sentiments, as those who were celebrated for their heroic deeds and brotherly solidarity during the railway construction period feel that their contributions have been forgotten.

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The retiring TAZARA workers have a shared memory of having worked in service to the nation and contributed to the larger project of Pan-African and transnational solidarity. Retired Chinese workers and engineers share this vision of the past, and their memories raise important questions about continuity and change over time. For the CRET team at TAZARA headquarters in Dar es Salaam, a ‘new’ mandate appears to be very much like the original one from the time of the railway’s handover, suggesting that even during a time of dynamic and global change due to economic liberalisation, there have also been continuities. Thus, while time may not have ‘stood still’ since 1976, it would also be inaccurate to characterise the last 34 years of technology transfer and cooperation as a complete rupture with the past.

Light at the end of the tunnel?

TAZARA’s fortunes have declined over the decade since 2000, with falling revenues, maintenance backlogs, and worker discontent over pension problems among the many difficulties the railway must contend with. The persistent rumours of privatisation, which have been fuelled by a number of railway surveys carried out by the World Bank and by Chinese railway specialists, have contributed to worker anxieties about the future. Yet there appears to be hope on the horizon, according to TAZARA managers who have launched an ambitious ‘turnaround’ process for the railway authority. A guiding principle behind this initiative is to improve and repair the existing rolling stock and other resources belonging to the railway, while at the same time investing in worker training and management. The turnaround initiative has been supported by a 40 million USD loan from China, signed in December 2009 as part of the 14th Protocol, much of which has already been utilised under the agreement to acquire new rolling stock and locomotives.21 At the same time, the announced Chinese debt reduction is providing relief for the railway authority that makes the prospect for improved revenues brighter.

The seven CRET team members currently serving in Dar es Salaam at TAZARA headquarters will take the lead in implementing the policies and contributions from China that are part of this latest

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protocol. As they do so, they will be playing a very similar role to the one played by the team of almost 1,000 experts that launched the first term of technical cooperation in July 1976. Many of the CRET workers who have continued to return to East Africa as advisors do so not only for technical reasons but because they feel some personal as well as professional connection to the project and continue to embrace its purpose. Thus while some things have changed over time – most glaringly, the number of CRET team members – others have remained the same. Perhaps there are some ways in which time really has stood still for this railway project, even in the midst of such significant global transformations as economic liberalisation and commercialisation of state-owned enterprises.

There has been much discussion lately in the media and in academic circles about how to characterise China’s current role in Africa – with most analysts reaching a conclusion about the different ‘stages’ of China’s engagement, tracing a trajectory from an earlier period of ideology, socialism and ‘friendship’ to the current era of what Barry Sautmann and Yan Hairong have called globalised capitalism and, more recently, agro-imperialism.22 Yet this differentiation of Chinese engagement into distinct stages or categories runs the risk of what Katherine Verdery has called the ‘blackboard’ approach to understanding post-socialism: according to this framework first ‘socialism’ was written upon the blackboard of state ideology, after which it was completely erased (by the state) and replaced by ‘capitalism’.23 Verdery’s work has been accepted widely enough in Eastern European studies that few scholars would now claim to identify a sharp distinction between ‘what was socialism’ and what came after, nor would they ascribe all agency to the state. Yet, as analysts attempt to untangle the puzzle of China in Africa in the twenty-first century, they seem willing to repeat the language of the ‘blackboard’ approach rather than seeing China’s engagement after its economic ‘opening’ as what Verdery described as a palimpsest of layered, overlapping and

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indistinct transitions. In a recent article, Julia Strauss helpfully illustrated the ways that China has been replaying old scripts in development work in Africa – while others show the ways that China has helped itself to the new scripts of the West by embracing such themes as ‘greening’ and corporate responsibility. Thus, we are at least beginning to understand the complex ways that this relationship has had both continuities and ruptures over time.24

The experiences of the Chinese CRET teams that have worked with TAZARA since 1976, together with the memories of the Chinese and African workers who laboured ‘side by side’ during TAZARA’s construction, belie the categories that observers would like to assign to them. In their lifetimes they have lived through multiple transitions, economic and political. They consider themselves to be uniquely experienced and qualified because of their knowledge gained on a Pan-African, transnational post-independence and socialist project. Yet these railway experts and workers have had highly differentiated experiences and interests. And over the years there has not been a neat division between eras but rather movements into and out of political and ideological positions.

During construction in 1972 the Chinese professors who were called back from the countryside to teach African students at Beijing Jiaotong University were those who had the most experience with international (especially Western) education and training. Thus, they were not the purest of the ‘red experts’ who were called upon to undertake China’s biggest Cultural Revolution-era development project.25 The students recruited from Tanzania and Zambia to study in Beijing in the 1970s were not all chosen from the ranks of the least educated, but included middle class secondary school leavers who had set their sights on earning a good salary in a technical or managerial position.

And the current batch of CRET team members, while dramatically smaller in number than their predecessors, have quite different backgrounds in terms of their technical education and training. As young graduates from Chinese universities they may be motivated by per-


25 Interviews with faculty and staff at Beijing Jiaotong University; archival materials.
sonal dreams – for example, the higher salary or, as in the case of one retired professor from Beijing Foreign Language University, currently an interpreter for CRET, the opportunity to learn to “really speak English”. Yet they are still responsible for day-to-day coordination of Chinese policy in their office in the TAZARA headquarters in Dar es Salaam. The main theme of the story of the CRET teams and TAZARA management and workers has been one of cooperation rather than conflict, as technology transfer has been applied in different domestic and global contexts over time.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS:
THE RELEVANCE OF STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT
OF AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
WITH CHINA

Antony Otieno Ong’ayo

Abstract

This chapter aims to analyse the implications of the absence of African civil society engagement in China-Africa relations and dialogue processes. The main argument is that this absence will lead to a missed opportunity for strategic engagement which could open avenues for a better understanding of the Chinese approach to Africa. Secondly, it is argued that China differs from Western governments in its approach to civil society groups, and therefore it requires alternative approaches and strategies by African civil society groups to strategically engage with China outside the state-state relations’ framework. Thirdly, such an approach is likely to open up the space for constructive dialogue with China, in which African civil society groups are able to effectively channel their concerns to the Chinese government and engage with their Chinese counterparts on cross-cutting issues entailed in China-Africa relations.

Introduction

The presence of China in Africa has received much attention in recent years, as shown by the diversity of opinions and perceptions (Sautman & Hairong 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Taylor 2006; Chidaushe 2007; Melber 2007; Brautigam 2008, 2010a; de Oliveira et al. 2008; Guerrero & Manji 2008). From within Africa, views largely express some sense of appreciation but also fears and caution with regards to the implications of the role of China in the continent. To many Africans, China’s recent intensification of relations with Africa pre-
sents new opportunities for generous and unconditional lending, faster infrastructural development (Centre for Chinese Studies 2006; Bosshard 2007; Foster et al. 2009), and increased opportunities for trade and foreign direct investment (Marafa 2009; van Dijk 2009). This has been described in the principles of China’s African policy (Yu 1988; Anshan 2005, 2006) as ‘mutual benefit’ or ‘win-win’ situations (Marafa 2009). Some recent debates have also entailed comparative analyses of China’s role in Africa with those of European powers and the United States (Tjønneland et al. 2006; Bates et al. 2007; Brautigam 2010b).

Reactions have emerged from both state and non-state actors alike. Civil society organisations (CSOs), as part of the latter category, are beginning to be vocal at the national level in most African countries, even though to a lesser degree at the Pan-African level. However, despite these noises, African CSOs have yet to come up with strategies for effective engagement with their own governments on China-Africa relations (Ong’ayo 2010). Moreover, African CSOs have not paid attention to the necessity of engaging with the Chinese government and CSOs in China, despite the magnitude of inroads China has made into many parts of Africa and the ramifications of its engagement with different governments in the continent. A related concern is the absence of Africa’s own perspectives in the China-Africa discourse. While the debate is gaining momentum at local and global levels, the voices of Africans – especially their CSOs – still echo those of their Western donors.

Current changing global power relations between Western and emerging global powers such as Brazil, China and India (Broadman 2007) are likely to have an immense impact on Africa. These developments and what they mean for Africa (Goldstein et al. 2006; van Dijk 2009) have, however, not received much attention in terms of case studies that could reveal the actual impact in specific country contexts and on government policy initiatives in response to the broader framework of China’s involvement in Africa. However, since 2006, the China-Africa debate has intensified and elicited interest both in the West and in Africa, with various institutions, academics and CSOs beginning to take keen interest in the subject in an attempt to unravel the factors behind this phenomenon and the paradigm shift in Africa’s receptiveness and embrace of China. Earlier examples of such initiatives within the African context include the work undertaken at Stellenbosch University, which has provided a platform
for research and dialogue on China-Africa relations. From a Pan-African civil society perspective, Fahamu\(^1\) has been the only organisation facilitating exchanges and publishing regular reports and articles on China-Africa. Missing in this process are the various CSOs, which even though beginning to be vocal about the various dimensions of China’s impact in Africa, have yet to come up with strategies for influencing Chinese relations with African governments and the policy processes that are entailed in this relationship.

This paper therefore aims to analyse the implications of the absence of strategic engagement between African civil society and the Chinese government and Chinese civil society over the role of China in Africa. Based on field work undertaken in China and Africa since 2007, the paper argues that the absence of African civil society engagement and dialogue with China will lead to a missed opportunity for strategic influence. Such an engagement and dialogue could open the avenues for a better understanding of the Chinese approach to Africa and increased knowledge on issues to take up with governments. It will also contribute to informed engagement between African and Chinese CSOs over the role of China in Africa. This argument is underpinned by the observation that a confrontational approach towards China is less likely to advance the cause of fundamental issues being raised by African CSOs. China in this context differs from Western governments in its approach to civil society groups, yet it is an emerging global economic and political power whose presence and impact in Africa is already being felt in the socio-economic and political environment, natural resources exploitation, and security. In recognition of the impact of China’s activities in these areas, CSOs in Africa need to re-think their strategies in dealing with China. Such an approach is likely to open up the space for constructive dialogue with China, in which African civil society groups are able to channel their concerns to the Chinese government and its African counterparts. This chapter will attempt to address these concerns by firstly presenting an overview of the presence of China in Africa and recent development in China-Africa relations. Then, perspectives from within China and Africa will be presented in order to highlight the main issues under contestation in the China-Africa debate. Following that, an attempt is made to describe the con-

\(^{1}\) Fahamu is a Kenyan/UK/South Africa-based information service on development, human rights, social justice, politics, and advocacy in Africa. See http://www.fahamu.org/pambazuka/.
ditions under which CSOs function in China and Africa and their different characteristics. The chapter also systematically traces the recent attempts towards civil society-academia engagement on China-Africa relations at various levels in Africa and China and asks what lessons can be learnt so far. Finally, the chapter explores what prospects there are for effective civil society engagement in China Africa relations.

The debate over the presence of China in Africa

China’s engagement with Africa in recent years has attracted much attention, especially with regards to its economic and political activities in Africa. This attention comes from both scholars and non-state actors, in Africa (Naidu & Corkin 2006; Akwe 2007; Manji & Marks 2007; Mensah 2010), the West (Taylor 1998, 2006; Alden 2007; Melber 2007; Large 2008; Southall & Melber 2009), and China (Fei 1995; Anshan 2005, 2006, 2010; Gong 2007; Sautman & Yan 2008; Hungwu & Jiemian 2009; Yuhua 2010). From an African perspective, the attention can be explained by the negative historical experiences that Africa has had with colonial powers, especially with externally imposed governance systems and the failure of colonial powers to support infrastructure development (Sogge 2002). It is also influenced by the mediocre performance of most African leaders in the post-colonial period and the mal-governance that has characterised much of contemporary Africa. The situation has been exacerbated by a plethora of externally imposed economic prescriptions, such as Structural Adjustment Programmes (Mkandawire & Soludo 1999) and development models exemplified by Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the Millennium Development Goals, which have not resolved Africa’s development failures. In the context of global challenges and their manifestations in Africa, the African situation is often analysed – in relation to the actors engaged in the continent – either as a solution to or a continuation of the problems in Africa. Moreover, global power relations in terms of geo-political and economic interests have often been played out in Africa (Mensah 2010). Because Africa is still attractive due to its resources (Taylor 2008), all global players have an interest in partaking in the new scramble for Africa (Melber 2007).

The current intensified Chinese engagement with Africa (Chidaushe 2007) is drawing much attention owing to its perceived
enormous socio-economic and political impact. Economically, the Chinese foreign direct investment in Africa focuses on such essential sectors as energy, minerals and raw materials, and agricultural and manufactured products. These activities therefore have implications for natural resource management (Butts & Bankus 2009), trade balance, labour conditions, and the development of infrastructure (Centre for Chinese Studies 2006; Bosshard 2007). To date, China is Africa’s third-largest trading partner after the US and France, offering a growing market for Africa’s agriculture and light manufacturing (Rotberg 2008). The Chinese development aid to Africa is also characterised by unconditional industrial and infrastructure development, technical support, and training, and by the end of 2009 about 6.3 billion USD had been spent on over 800 projects in Africa. Although it is acknowledged that China benefits from the supply of African raw materials (Naidu & Corkin 2006; Naidu & Davies 2006), African economies are also noted to benefit from the trade with China in terms of high commodity prices (van Dijk 2009). African consumers are able to access cheap Chinese-manufactured goods in contrast to the expensive manufactured goods from high-income countries (Ye 2010: 19). The benefits for Africa are visible in the accelerated trade between China and Africa. For instance, Africa maintained an annual GDP growth above 3% between 2000 and 2009, 5.6% between 2003 and 2008, and 5.5% in 2009 (ibid. 19). However, in environmental terms, the Chinese presence in Africa has raised concerns about potential degradation through the extractive activities that dispossess and threaten the livelihoods of local communities (Askouri 2007, 2008; Bosshard 2007; Ma & Croese 2008; Kabemba 2010; Ribeiro 2010).

At the political level, concerns have been raised about China’s impact on governance and human rights. China’s political engagement with Africa dates back to the 1950s, when it supported nationalist movements and independence struggles. In the 1970s, the relationship resulted in the Chinese support for construction projects, medical teams, and scholarships for Africans (see Taylor 2008; Marafa 2009). A pragmatic and economic-oriented Chinese engagement with Africa began in the 1990s, but since 2000 it has developed into more structured and strategic China-Africa relations (de Oliveira et al 2008). These steps have been followed by a series of high-level ministerial and head-of-government meetings – namely, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000 and the Head of States meeting in
2006. At the latter meeting, much emphasis was laid on the principle of South-South cooperation, the building of a new partnership based on political equality and mutual trust, and a win-win economic cooperation with no strings attached. Other engagements include the African Development Bank meeting in Shanghai in 2007 and the Fourth Ministerial Conference in November 2009 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation 2009).

In the context of these developments in China-Africa relations, claims about what actually constitute the benefits for Africa would require time for accurate analysis. However, judging by the current rhetoric, some of the perceived benefits and loses can be deduced from the rapidly increasing perspectives on China in Africa that are highlighted in the following section.

**Perspectives on China-Africa relations**

The level of engagement between China and Africa is not likely to decrease in the foreseeable future but will witness an increased intensification, while at the same time revealing its true impact in different African countries as well as domestically in China. In general, perspectives on China’s inroad into the continent are replete with misinformed rhetoric and simplistic representations of the actual facts on the ground in Africa. These perspectives also vary markedly depending on whose views are presented. In most cases, perceptions about China-Africa border on fear, prejudice, and in some cases genuine concerns, expressed both from within and outside Africa. Samples of these views are captured in the following excerpts: “there is nothing new about the looting of Africa” (Melber 2007: 6); the Chinese approach to Africa is merely another face of “neo-liberalism with Chinese characters” (Harvey 2005: 120). According to Patrick Bond (2006: 134), the “Chinese penetration only presents the ugly face of predatory capitalism”. In contrast, Barry Sautman (2006: 35) has suggested that “China provides a model for developing states based on rapid industrialisation fuelled by a high level of investment and concentration on exports and unlike the West”.

Seen from the perspectives of the Chinese, there is a lot of curiosity and enthusiasm and eagerness to know more about Africa.² This

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² This can be observed in the curiosity shown on Tiananmen Square, when Chinese from outlying rural areas/provinces of China seek to take pictures with Africans
can be linked to the recognition of the value of the African continent vis-à-vis China’s need for natural resources for its economic growth (Butts & Bankus 2009). Other factors behind this attention relate to the increasing Chinese population in Africa (Politzer 2008) including periodically returning workers in the construction sites. These constitute vital links for information from Africa to China. Also important for the increasing awareness of Africa within Chinese society is the Western media, which largely portray China in a negative light. The criticism of China – ‘China-bashing’ – in the Western media is something that many Chinese people are increasingly becoming aware of, and as a consequence they are beginning to develop interest in the continent that gives them this bad publicity. In reaction to ‘China-bashing’, most Chinese begin to retreat, become defensive, and start to develop perspectives about Africa beyond the stereotypes about China in Africa. This shift is increasingly receiving impetus from travel experiences by Chinese government officials, the business community, tourists, and the construction workers currently spread over the African continent – but also the many Chinese scholars currently engaged in research and exchange programmes in Africa. Hungwu & Jiemian (2009) have succinctly captured the outcome of these Chinese efforts in their comprehensive book on Chinese perspectives on Sino-Africa relations.

Actors from Chinese government circles, however, tend to portray China as a developing country with a treacherous development history that can well be compared to that of Africa. The Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister noted that the current relationship with Africa “showcases the strong vitality and great promise that will be released when the largest developing country and the largest developing conti-

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3 Examples include field studies in Zambia by Li Pengtao, Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University 2010; Fahamu’s two-day CSO FOCAC workshop in Nairobi on 26 and 27 November 2009; “Recent Chinese migrations to South Africa: new intersections of race, class & ethnicity” (Park 2009); Sautman & Yan’s study (2008) of 10 countries, concerning African reactions to the Chinese presence; and the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Fahamu Academic and Civil Society Dialogue and Exchange, 2007-10.
nent in the world join hands and move forward” (China Daily, 8 January 2010). To the Chinese, the latest developments in China-Africa relations – including access to economic opportunities, political support at the international level, and infrastructural development projects – are being postulated as indicators of what to expect from Sino-Africa relations. For instance, in 2010 the Chinese Foreign Minister had this to say:

Having withstood the vicissitudes for more than half a century, China-Africa relations are enjoying broad popular support and a solid political foundation. We should build on the past achievements and forge a new type of strategic partnership to increase the vitality and creativity of co-operation and bring more tangible benefits.

He added that “the attractiveness of China to most African people is the example of what hard working and strict discipline can achieve” (Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister, cited in the Daily Nation, 7 January 2010).

Looking at the African side, it can be established that, similarly, Africans have little knowledge about China. The information and ideas about China in the continent are largely influenced by the African media, which in their turn are influenced by Western media and their concerns. Take for instance the ‘myth’ that the many Chinese workers brought to the construction sites in Africa are mainly prisoners placed in Africa as part of their prison sentences. Such prejudicial and stereotypical statements are floating about in many African countries, yet there are no facts to back them up. Although the number of Africans having opportunities to visit China is still limited, making it difficult to rectify this stereotypical thinking, exchanges at institutional and government levels and political and business visits are on the increase. At the political level, the Chinese Communist Party gives training to political parties from different African countries. The interactions provide the basis for insights and more information about China for Africans who participate in these programmes. Moreover, Africans who have been able to study and start businesses in China (Obiorah 2008: 3) have very different stories to tell about China and its people (see also Bodomo & Ma 2010).

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5 Interviews in Zhejiang Normal University, 22 October 2010.
6 Interviews in Yiwu City, 23 October 2010.
Their experiences and in-depth knowledge of the Chinese context and language have become a reliable source of information about China for their families, friends and institutions in Africa. However, the level of media coverage of China and China-Africa relations in both contexts is still under-studied. This makes it difficult to obtain an accurate assessment of the level of access to information and public awareness of the impact of China-Africa relations.

In recent times, voices from within Africa have pointed out the necessity of development initiatives to emerge from within the continent. This mainly relates to the issue of better leadership and good governance as key determinants of a positive outcome of Africa’s relations with external powers, including China. In this regard, China’s impact on the governance agenda, human rights, and resource wars in such countries as Sudan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola are aspects of China’s relation with Africa that are genuinely criticised. China is accused of giving loans to odious regimes – but one could argue that it has learned this from the West. However, it has been pointed out that loans from China do not find their way into Swiss bank-accounts and that the Chinese are certainly doing well compared to the African countries they do business with. It is therefore up to Africans to ensure that the outcome of China-Africa relations benefits the majority of Africans and not only the political and economic elite. For instance, Africa has been closely aligned to the West and its financial institutions, but resources involved have not been invested or used to finance infrastructure and major development projects (Sogge 2002). This is in contrast to the Chinese approach in recent times.

*Why it is important for African CSOs to engage with China?*

Increasing numbers of Chinese companies are developing connections in Africa and expanding trade between China and the continent. The impact of Chinese actions in Africa is already being felt in the socio-economic and political spheres of life; therefore, any distance taken on China-Africa relations by African CSOs is a costly omission at this critical juncture. Interventions and efforts to influence the direction and nature of China-Africa relations through CSO involvement is much more feasible at this moment in time, when contracts and bilateral agreements are being signed. At the same time, the impact of China’s quest for natural resources and its environmental
impact is not likely to wait for African governments to formulate policies that ensure environmental protection and guarantees better governance structures.

The developments in China-Africa relations are not going unnoticed – hence the emergence of contested positions and debates. Discussions are taking shape within Africa, but the few voices that are critical of China are largely drawn from Western-backed CSOs. The problem with these critiques is that they seem not to be well informed due to lack of knowledge of the Chinese context. Most African governments seem to have a positive view of China, and this could be informed by the high demands by Western governments on issues around good governance and accountability as pre-conditions for continued relationship and donor support. In contrast to the Western donors, China has adopted a policy of non-interference, a position that is favoured by many regimes in Africa, who are not comfortable with Western demands, slow aid delivery, cumbersome procedures, and aid ineffectiveness. Although most governments across the continent have taken positions that are less critical of China’s approach or the ‘values’ that the Chinese put on their engagement with Africa (win-win, non-interference, and economic development first), they hardly pay attention to the likely long-term impact of the Chinese strategic policy choices for resource exploration on the development of the continent.

China’s emphasis on basic socio-economic rights as more important for the poor resonates well in most African countries, even though political rights are also highly valued by Africans. Therefore, the preference of many African governments to ‘look East’ raises pertinent questions about how to deal with this development and its consequences for political rights. These developments also raise questions about how to engage with China in a strategic manner, using approaches that are likely to be constructive and productive with regards to issues of concern in China-Africa relations. CSO involvement in China-Africa relations is an opportunity that has the potential to open up avenues for a better understanding of the Chinese approach to Africa. It also provides an opportunity to seek effective ways of raising issues with the Chinese government. CSO engagement on China-Africa relations creates an opening for collaboration not only with Chinese CSOs but also for the development of strategies for effective lobbying of respective governments.
In the case of African governments, regime interests often override the common good, as confirmed by the nature of agreements and concessions on resource exploitation at the expense of environment as well as livelihoods of communities in resource-rich countries. From these tendencies, CSOs derive their justification for activism that targets Foreign Direct Investment. The Chinese policy of non-interference (Hess & Aidoo 2010) does not help in this context. While the West could be accused of historical injustices and constant meddling in the management of affairs in most African countries, the Chinese approach can be detrimental in two respects: first, if it engages with Africa but disregards the threats to livelihoods; and second, if China claims not to interfere – yet the non-interference produces similar or worse outcomes as a result of the perpetuated state of bad governance in Africa. While most governments in Africa derive their legitimacy from the people through representative democracy, the extent to which they bring the wishes of their constituents on board in the interstate relations with China is a subject that still requires further investigation.

Recent initiatives in the civil society-academic dialogue on China-Africa relations

The first China-Africa civil society and academia dialogue meeting took place on the sidelines of the African Development Bank’s annual meeting, hosted by China in Shanghai in May 2007. The meeting was organised by Fahamu, in collaboration with a number of international CSOs, and aimed at highlighting China’s new role in Africa and the South (Guerrero & Manji 2008). A second meeting took place in Nairobi in April 2008 and brought together African and Chinese scholars and civil-society representatives. This second dialogue process was jointly organised by the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s regional office in Nairobi, Kenya, works on gender equity, ecology and sustainable development, and the promotion of peace and dialogue.

The third and most recent initiative on China-Africa civil society-academia dialogue was a conference in Beijing and Zhejiang Normal University in October 2010. This was organised by the Beijing office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in collaboration with the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University. The conference brought together both academics and CSOs from Africa but also facilitated exchanges and fact-finding missions enabling participants to see for themselves the presence of African investors, traders, students, and families in China. The conference also provided an opportunity for interaction with institutions and key actors within the Chinese establishment, in order to gain insights into the principles and dynamics behind the Chinese ‘Going out’ policy from both political and economic perspectives.

While it is too early to draw any substantial conclusions on the recent initiatives and ongoing CSO-academia dialogue processes, it is safe to highlight the fact that some of these efforts are valuable in that they facilitate the creation of frameworks for engagement and exchanges outside formal state-state relations. Although the process is in its infancy stages, it has broken the ground for future encounters as China’s engagement with Africa intensifies. In this regard, recent encounters and exchanges have been useful for the overall pursuit of a deeper understanding of the two contexts from a socio-economic and political perspective and of the factors that underpin the current policy priorities and agenda of governments in the state-state relationship between China and Africa. Looking at the conception and implementation of the dialogue process, the level of ownership both from China and Africa is low and domestic support for the process is still lacking. While fingers have been pointed at the Western approach in working with civil society and NGO groups in Africa as one that

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9 Field visit to Yiwu market, Zhejiang Province, 23 October 2010.
encourages dependency and lacks a home-grown agenda and initiative, the China-Africa civil society dialogue process might also not escape the same tragedy. It is difficult to see how the CSOs and academia in Africa will be free from such influence in terms of ideas, agenda setting, and issues being discussed about China-Africa, if China decides to back CSOs in Africa with financial resources. In order to understand the dynamics that shape these relationships, it is imperative to grasp the respective contextual experiences. This is illustrated in the following section.

How do civil society organisations work in China and Africa?

Chinese CSOs and Chinese government

Looking at the relationship between the Chinese government and its CSOs, a common assumption has been that China does not have real CSOs or civil spaces, and that the Chinese government suppresses initiatives from NGOs. This view has been reinforced by observations in the literature on political space in China (Huang 1993; Han 2002; Hung 2005), which point to the difficult environment in which Chinese NGOs operate. The political culture and ways in which the Chinese government deals with alternative views differ markedly in comparison with Western governments and most developing countries. For instance, China’s response to dissent has been brutal in the past, especially in the 1980s during the Tiananmen protests (Chu-Yuan 1990; Human Rights in China 1990; Hung 1991, 2005; Miles 1997), recent years in Tibet, and in other regions of China where local communities have held protests.

The idea of civil society in China came about in the reform years of the late 1970s. Since then, China has seen an enormous growth of CSOs, especially business, professional, and academic associations, with estimates in 2002 putting the total number at 870,000 (Bentley 2004). Within the broader categories of CSOs, there are NGOs and government-organised NGOs (GONGOs), as well as grass roots organisations which are informally organised (Tao 2008). However, the prevailing political culture makes it difficult to question authority, while at the same time the government is often unwilling to consider the views in policy matters of those outside government. As a result, very few NGOs have the courage to define their objectives in political
Government policy and laws on NGOs (Karla forthcoming) limit the possibilities for civil society to make policy recommendations and organise activities freely. The NGOs that are unregistered find themselves in a very precarious state since they face problems of legitimacy and resources, while those that are registered also encounter limitations when undertaking their activities.\textsuperscript{11}

The Chinese government approach to civil society might be described as a strategy of co-optation (Unger & Chan 1995), in which several NGOs are coordinated under one umbrella organisation, the Chinese Association of Non-governmental Organisations (CANGO). This group is made up of GONGOs, which are routinely criticised for leaning towards the government (Xiaoguang & Li 2004). However, such claims need to be justified in the context of what possible alternatives could exist for Chinese groups that wish to operate within such a constricted environment. In this case, co-optation by or corporation with the government is not only a characteristic of Chinese GONGOs (Yuhua 2010). The same is also observable in the African context or in Europe, where various stakeholders are engaged with governments at various levels within the principles of corporation with non-state actors. The Chinese government reaction to the CSOs can be explained partly by the way in which CSOs have been projected in the Western discourse about state relations with non-state actors, which China seems to resist by developing its own discourse (Ma 1994). The state-civil society relation is a contested terrain and a relationship in which “the state does not rise up against civil society but is engaged in a continuous conflict with it” (Mamdani & Wambodia-Wamba 1995: 604). It is an engagement in which civil society “coexists with the state in a complex relationship of creative tension” (Bratton 1994: 5).

In the course of these debates, it is imperative to seek an understanding of the ongoing transformations in China. As the Chinese economy continues to grow and millions move out of poverty (Ravallon & Chen 2004) the gap that is created by the fast economic growth is also likely to impact on social stability. In the face of these challenges, as acknowledged by the Chinese Communist Party during its 2010 Congress in Beijing (\textit{China Daily}, October 2010), the mitigating role of Chinese civil society cannot be ignored. Recent dis-

\textsuperscript{10} Interviews in Beijing, 17 October 2010.
\textsuperscript{11} Interviews in Beijing, 23 October 2010.
asters in China revealed the presence of a vibrant civil society in China, even though it may not be equated with the Western models, also found in Africa and Latin America. Moreover, Chinese citizens associate and play an active role in community and public affairs outside the government and the party through unorganised interest and collective action (Zhou 1993). Most of these groups mainly provide essential services to the underprivileged, with a focus on such issues as poverty reduction, education, health and the environment. This form of organising and activism by the local grassroots organisations shows that despite the difficult conditions imposed by the government, these informal groups act in a relatively autonomous way, which is a step towards fully-fledged civil society (Chan 2005; Chan et al. 2005; Ma 2006).

China is thus increasingly witnessing social organising whereby the many NGOs (such as the various environmental groups) outside the GONGOs represent a new form of CSO organisation (Bentley 2004; Xiaoguang & Li 2004; Economy 2005). These groups present a kind of proactive engagement, which partly derives from Western models as well as local experiences and innovation. The fact that the Chinese government allows some NGOs to operate, even if not freely, is an indicator of a perceptual change towards CSOs from a distrusted grouping to an active co-participant in governance (Bentley 2004). For instance, China’s State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) has emerged as a strong supporter of NGO activity and works very closely with NGOs. Moreover, changes are continuing within Chinese civil society itself. In order to compete for resources and satisfy the expectations or requirements of stakeholders, Chinese NGOs have begun to explore such concepts as accountability (Tsai 2007), moral standards, self-disciplinary mechanisms, and NGO-sector culture (Xiaoguang & Li 2004). The increased level of societal engagement in China is partly owed to the increased connectivity and use of the Internet (Zheng & Wu 2005; Yang 2010). This is a development that has created ‘space’ for the Chinese CSOs to be able to function relatively well, while the majority of Chinese NGOs – especially those in rural areas – until recently had no contact with the international community. Through increased connectivity and interaction with similar groups outside China, Chinese CSOs have been boosted by the power of modern communication technology (Qiang 2003), making it possible to function despite the limited political space (Hung 2005).
Most Chinese CSOs also establish affiliations with government or academic institutions. This is vital for advancing CSO interests as well as engaging the relevant authorities and stakeholders on societal issues that are experienced by the Chinese people. The Chinese government seems to be acknowledging the critical role of CSOs, not only as opponents of the state but major actors that fill in the gaps in service delivery. However, the political context and transformations taking place in China and the ways in which CSOs are dealing with the government can provide lessons for African CSOs. African CSOs are beginning to emerge as strong critiques of China in Africa but using strategies that might not be effective in dealing with the Chinese government and its representatives in Africa.

**African CSOs and African governments**

African CSOs have emerged and evolved over time, often through stifling conditions underpinned by authoritarianism and dictatorship. The relationship between CSOs and governments in Africa has been largely characterised by confrontational approaches adopted against African regimes, mainly in the form of street protests, demonstrations, advocacy, lobbying, and litigation both locally and internationally. The push by CSOs for reforms in Africa was also influenced by the developments in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the former Soviet Union. These events gave the impetus for agitation for political reforms in Africa, buoyed by donor support in the form of funds and advocacy techniques. The local NGOs basically implement activities shaped by Western donor priorities and funding, echoing Western discourse on such issues as human rights, good governance, transparency and accountability, democratisation, and environmental issues. These symbolic repertoires (Hagmann & Péclard 2010) have formed the basis of the evolution of modern CSOs in Africa.

Significant external influence and local political dynamics have since shaped the character of CSOs to the extent that interest mediation seems to play a critical role in whatever issues the CSOs take up with governments. It is in this context that the entry of China also brings to the fore new questions about the role of CSOs. For instance, what could the evolution of a combination of Chinese and local elite interest mean for advocacy strategies by the CSOs? In the context of the convergence of these interests, will African CSOs begin to ‘look East’ and take sides if China opts to safeguard its interests by using its increasing economic and political power to influence the activities of
African CSOs? If this is a plausible scenario, could China be in a position to support a paradigm shift and probably the evolution of a new discourse about the role of CSOs vis-à-vis Western perspectives and influence on African CSOs? These are questions that still demand answers during the process of documenting and analysing the Chinese relations with and presence in Africa from a civil society-state relations’ perspective.

Western CSO practices have enormous influence on their counterparts in Africa in terms of how CSOs engage with governments. This relates to approaches, strategies, and choice of issues to pursue, but there are also significant differences in the way African CSOs operate in comparison to their parent/sister organisations in Europe and North America. For instance, most CSO approaches in relation to states in the West can be described as corporatist. Examples include the place or influence of Western CSOs at the United Nations, European Union, and national level where various groups lobby on different issues without taking a confrontational and militant stand. Their strategies have included the use of evidence-based activism, combined with lobbying, advocacy, and cooperation with Southern hemisphere CSOs in Africa, Latin America and Asia (ODI 2009; Uhlin 2010). Therefore, African CSOs need to adopt strategies that are likely to work in the long run when dealing with the new political space in Africa and the re-emergence of China as an influential emerging power in Africa. This does not imply a call for compromise of principles when dealing with China, but seeking ways and means of getting the Chinese to understand African concerns through an engagement that recognises the role of both CSOs and governments in the development process in Africa.

What are the challenges and lessons for civil society engagement in China-Africa relations?

The current literature and debates on China-Africa relations have been one-sided and often loaded with abstractions that are devoid of empirically informed analyses. This gap is informed by an inadequate grasp of the huge difference between the Chinese and African contexts. Although China and Africa share some common features in terms of diversity and complexity in their political structures and available spaces for non-state actors, they differ markedly in the way they tackle socio-economic and political issues. It is against this
background of contextual complexity that more information and knowledge about the Chinese experiences and their domestic development model should be made available and comprehensible to Africans. This could help create space for Africa in the discourse about China in Africa. It could also stimulate change of attitudes in Africans in order to become more pragmatic in addressing issues affecting them in much more clear terms when dealing with external actors. Although decades of relationship with the West show that Western donors rarely accept African opinions, a paradigm shift in this area requires gradual and practical ways of responding to the West, China, and other emerging powers with interest in Africa.

The limited contextual information from China further hinders African countries from gaining a deeper understanding of China’s development model and what motives inform their aid model. This gap poses a huge challenge during negotiation of contracts and signing of bilateral agreements – and, as shown in the case of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), African governments may commit their resources to decades of inaccurately quantified exploitation. It is against this background that such knowledge could help in designing suitable strategies for advocacy and efforts to influence the negotiations for Chinese aid conditionalities, while at the same time learning from the past Chinese development experiences in aid management within the developmental trajectory they undertook over the last decade. This type of challenge and experiences can also be discussed parallel to the questions about what kind of development Africa needs and what steps need to be taken towards such a development path, in terms of how Africa manages aid from China and other powers for increased economic growth and development.

The fact that African CSOs still function from a position of entrapment by the Western donor agenda and discourses also calls for a shift. This implies a move towards generation of local discourses, resources, and strategies which reflect the realities on the ground in Africa. Furthermore, the voices of ordinary Africans that are conspicuously absent from the debate also continue to deny the debate the nuanced and necessary perspectives that could shed light on what happens in specific country contexts. In the absence of purely African-led initiatives in China-Africa relations, agenda setting and critical local voices in the China-Africa debate will still remain an externally imposed approach. Such omissions are likely to lead to a repetition of the kind of relationship that African CSOs have had with
Western donors, which is characterised by dependency and lack of sustainability. Understanding the context in which Chinese civil society works is also critical for a re-evaluation of the role of the state in China-Africa relations and of the ways in which CSOs could strategically engage without being co-opted, bearing in mind that contacts between Chinese and African governments are pretty advanced.

The other challenge for African CSOs is how to make a shift away from a confrontational approach, since such an approach towards China is less likely to advance their cause. The same applies to the ongoing transformation in Africa where many countries are beginning to democratise. These developments call for new approaches and strategies if the African CSOs are to remain relevant. Finding a middle ground, without compromising principles, could inform CSO approaches and efforts to influence government actions. Furthermore, engagement with the state does not necessarily lead to co-optation, but provides an avenue to engage in dialogue that could create room for influence. CSOs ought to desist from an out-of-the-box approach and should instead develop strategies for working within the state-state relations framework and a state-civil society framework in order to develop the most effective ways to channel concerns to the Chinese and African governments. Civil society organisations in this context can contribute to democratic governance by ensuring state transparency and accountability in China-Africa relations. Through its watchdog role, civil society in collaboration with academia could also play a role in communication, information dissemination, and awareness of development challenges and by influencing policy debates and policy formulation in China-Africa relations. However, it needs to be taken into account that civil society-state relations constantly change, which requires tracking and documentation. African CSOs need to analyse the Chinese context with a focus on making a distinction between a variety of perspectives, including those of “the government, general public, academia, the business community and Chinese CSOs” (Yuhua 2010: 215). For instance, one promising area thought missing from the current debates and yet to be investigated is the presence and activities of Africans in China. This relates to business people, students, African governments, and political parties that receive regular training from the Communist Party. These ex-

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12 Field visit and interviews with Communist Party officials in Beijing, 23 October 2010
periences could pave the way for in-depth knowledge of how the Chinese system works and what motivations inform their actions towards Africa. In the foregoing, any effective advocacy in Africa and China would require that CSOs themselves have to be accountable. In the context of challenges in China-Africa relations, bringing in alternative voices to policy debates and dialogues, providing services, and acting as a watchdog for state activities requires much more than rhetoric. It has been noted: “Just like the government institutions that they seek to improve, non-state actors themselves need to be subject to the same principles of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness” (UNDP 2006: 88). These concerns also relate to the issue of legitimacy and representation.

**Conclusion**

Although it is still too early to draw conclusions on the actual state of civil society engagement on China-Africa relations, three main conclusions can be derived from several lessons that emerge from the observations made so far. First, little is known about China-Africa relations within the African and Chinese contexts. In Africa this relates to the limited experience and knowledge sharing about the impact of China-Africa relations, state-civil society engagements, and what approaches work or not in specific country and regional contexts for the different local NGOs. Likewise in China, inter-CSO collaborative frameworks for information sharing and exchange of experiences at national and local levels have not gained much ground except for GONGOs. Therefore, envisioning a strategic engagement between Chinese and African CSOs without bridging this knowledge gap would pose an uphill task for CSOs and academia. This therefore means that a combined effort is necessary within both China and Africa in order to tap into the contextual realities at both sides. This could also facilitate an in-depth grasp of the character of Chinese and African civil society, their way of organising and the context in which they function. The media could play a significant role in this endeavour by increasing the flow and dissemination of information. The identified gaps limit the full potentials of CSOs’ watchdog role and deny them the necessary tools for effective intervention and mitigation. Data gathering and information sharing on areas in which China’s involvement in Africa is being criticised are necessary. Such contextual knowledge will enhance the ability of civil society not
only to raise issues with respective governments but also to seek collaboration with Chinese counterparts in cross-continental solidarity, exchange of information, and sharing of experiences.

Second, the recognition of China’s impact in Africa has elicited varied responses; however, what is still missing is a structured and strategic framework for response that links the continental, regional and national levels. The few cases that have been reported in the recent past are still far from broad in scope. Difficulties lie in the coordination of African CSOs, owing to diversity, fragmentation and competition. The fragmentation within the African CSOs is often informed by competing interests of donors and local elites – hence the need for a change in strategy if CSOs are to become more effective in advocacy and holding governments accountable. Fragmentation and disjointed efforts within countries across the African continent does not augur well for a common position or a united front when engaging with external powers such as China, the US or the European Union. In order to address this gap, some initiatives at the African level could include regional- and continental-level exchange programmes, platforms, institutions, and bodies modelled along the lines of the East African Community (EAC), Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADEC), and the African Union (AU). Such efforts could lay the foundations for a Pan-African CSO dialogue process aimed at the establishment of a coherent Africa policy position on the economic and political relations between African countries and emerging powers such as China, India and Brazil. This would also provide an impetus for a paradigm shift and pragmatism towards an ‘African consensus’ on development and other bilateral and multilateral relations with the developed countries. Africa’s development through its relation with external actors must entail both socio-economic and political rights, regardless of the actor. As noted by NEPAD, “China knows exactly what it wants from Africa, how to go about getting them, but does Africa knows what it wants from China or does Africa have any defined trade and investment strategy?”

Third, inter-state cooperation and dialogue with CSOs and academia on China-Africa relations is necessary. A broad and comprehensive dialogue framework that entails an established working relation

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between governments, CSOs, and academia can generate useful insights for improved practices. Although various actors, especially at the nation-state level, are responding to Chinese advances differently, some of these initiatives cannot be implemented in a vacuum and in isolation from the other major stakeholders. For CSOs and governments, efforts towards effective engagement in China-Africa relations need to be incorporated into an overall strategy that includes both the national level and community levels. A national policy and an activity coherence and framework for exchange of experiences and information sharing could be extended to academia, politicians, and the business community. Such an approach potentially has enormous benefits for consolidating a nation-wide strategy, through broad consultations and reflection on policy choices and their likely socio-economic and political impact on local communities. It is well-recognised that unfavourable conditions for the functioning of CSOs in most African countries continue to exist – and that the state in this context still remains the most relevant and significant player in China-Africa relations and is therefore impossible to ignore or sideline. For African countries, it is the African leadership that needs more conversion and change of attitude towards self-reliance if a China-Africa relation is to produce tangible developmental outcomes for Africa. Against this background, honest historical accounts of the relationship between Africa and the West could provide insights into the increasing tendency to ‘look East’ among most African leaders in recent years. Although the real reasons behind this shift have not been well established, current explanations are somehow speculative. In this regard, most analyses provide simplistic representations of why China is intensifying its involvement in Africa. Economic and political reasons are given as the main reasons, but which foreign power engaged with Africa is exempt from this temptation? If the question is Africa’s ‘development’, then the motivations and behaviour of external actors and the convergence of their interests with those of local elites have to be brought into perspective. The longstanding Western relationship with Africa therefore serves as a good measure for the emerging Chinese influence in Africa.

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14 This includes CSO, government, business, academia, and local communities who experience the impact of Chinese investment in a much more direct way.
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CHAPTER TWELVE

NEW TOPOGRAPHIES OF POWER?
AFRICA NEGOTIATING AN EMERGING
MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Simona Vittorini & David Harris

Abstract

Just behind China in terms of proliferation and a long way behind their northern neighbours in controversy, India has only recently emerged from under the radar as a major player in a new multipolar world and in particular in Africa. Indeed, unlike in East and Southern Africa, India is almost a brand-new actor in West Africa. Accompanying India’s expansion is Indian rhetoric of difference from both Chinese and Western methodologies. There are signs that African governments are beginning to react to expanded Indian engagement and to the new multipolar world. Equally, there are few indications as yet that this is shaking the foundations of African politics; but it would be unwise to discount the possibility of a changing arena of African politics, given that the last shift from a bipolar to a unipolar world at the end of the Cold War had substantial if somewhat conflicting political effects in simultaneously weakening and partially democratising African states. The new shifts in the international balance of power and the concurrent strengthening in the African negotiating position, allied to domestic democratic semi-consolidation, at least present us with a new environment. Despite still facing the severe difficulties of weak states, much is in the hands of African governments as to what extent and in what manner they react to such changes.

New and rising Indian interest in Africa

India’s now rapidly expanding economy and the concurrent re-assertion of its strategic global importance have led to its designation as
a new ‘Asian Driver’, second only in importance to China. Despite the severely uneven distribution of wealth at home, the Indian economy has grown at an average rate of 9% per annum since the early 1990s, its industries have modernised and its middle class grown, leading India to now need and be able to expand its reach and its influence to many parts of the globe and – of particular concern to this chapter – into Africa. At the same time, African governments are beginning to respond to the advances of India and the emerging powers. Of importance in this developing relationship is, on the one hand, how India sees and promotes itself in Africa and what its economic, strategic and diplomatic priorities are. The first part of the chapter dissects this half of the association. On the other hand, African governments are not idle by-standers and the second part investigates African responses to India’s business practices, political stance and ideological disposition and to the changing global order to which India makes an ever greater contribution.

Skewed relations

India’s presence on the continent dates back to early colonial times, but the Subcontinent’s African relations were severely uneven. For a long time, independent India’s African relations were largely restricted to East African states such as Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, where there is greater proximity across the Indian Ocean and large populations of Indian descent dating back to early African colonial times. From the mid-17th century, Dutch merchants had shipped Indian slaves from the coasts of Bengal and Coromandel to the then Dutch Cape Colony and sold them to the early Dutch settlers as domestic servants or manual labourers in newly established farms. By the beginning of the 19th century, there were already over one thousands Indians in the Cape, almost 40% of the slave population of the colony.

With the abolition of slavery in 1833 and to meet the demand for manual labourers, British authorities began a system of indentured labour first in Mauritius and then in its East African colonies. ‘Coolies’ were mostly employed as agricultural labourers to tend the sugarcane, tea and sisal plantations of the British settlers, but they were also recruited to work in the mines (in South Africa they made up over 40% of the total labour force) and on the construction of Eastern and Southern African railways. Many of the labourers re-
mained in Africa after the end of their contracts, setting up – together with what came to be known as passenger Indians – the first nucleus of the Asian community in the region. By the end of World War II, there were approximately 320,000 Indians in East Africa, where they controlled a good share of the region’s commercial trade and, particularly in Uganda, part of the industrial sector as well.

By contrast, in the Western part of the continent, India’s African relations were for a long time circumscribed before and after India’s independence. West African relations were heavily biased towards Anglophone countries owing to the former imperial connections through London and the language advantages, and conversely, to the ties between most Francophone African states and France which remained strong and required solidarity with France on the world stage. Post-1947, India’s West African relations were often limited to small-scale projects, such as military courses. The links, particularly to Ghana and Nigeria, were however cemented from the first days of African independence, when African students began to populate universities in India. Indian teachers were sent to work in rural areas of the two countries, and India assisted in the establishment of the still-influential military university, the Nigerian Defence Academy at Kaduna, in 1964 (Singh 2007).

At the same time, India’s post-independence aspirations to the role of leader and spokesperson for the developing world led to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the 1955 Bandung Conference and laid the foundation of a general, long-lasting Afro-Asian solidarity. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s stress on Asian unity was soon undermined by the Sino-Indian War of 1962, but the concern for Afro-Asian solidarity suffered no such major setbacks. Nehru strongly advocated decolonisation in Africa on the global stage and referred to Africa as a neighbour and a sister continent (Diskhit 1990). Two founding fathers of African nationalism, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, both acknowledged their admiration of Indian leaders, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania was conferred the Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1976. Nkrumah visited India in 1958, just one year after Ghanaian independence, and Nehru visited Lagos in 1962, two years after independence in Nigeria. However, despite these contacts, the scope of the relationship anywhere outside of Eastern Africa and South Africa was for a long time very restricted.
Today, the scenario is entirely different. Although the East African connections persist, the whole of Africa is now becoming a great attraction for Indian companies and the Indian government. India has a presence in all African states. Indeed, at the peak of the global financial crisis, the figure for India’s trade with Africa has reached an astonishing 46 billion USD in 2009, up from 36 billion USD in the previous year. Despite still being less than half of all China’s trade in the continent, this represents a 15-fold increase from a mere 3 billion USD in 2002. The buoyancy of this fast-growing economic relation is so great that the trade between India and Africa is expected to reach 70 billion USD in the next few years and even surpass this figure by 2015. According to the Government of India, trade between the two regions has grown at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 19% since 1996 (Focus Africa) and Africa now constitutes just over 8% of India’s total trade. Certainly, India’s substantial liberalisation of its economy at the beginning of the 1990s has contributed to shaping its Africa strategy to now be consistent with Delhi’s new economic ambitions. India is interested in finding new energy sources and export markets, creating business opportunities, and setting up strategic partnerships – as can be seen in emerging trade, investment and developmental assistance in the continent.

Despite an Indian economic and strategic presence in most African countries, by disaggregating the trade figures, it is clear that India’s efforts are very much regionally and sectorally concentrated. Oil, ore, metals and precious stones dominate India’s imports from Africa. Therefore, countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, and Sudan make up the lion’s share of all Africa’s exports to India and are Delhi’s major partners in the continent. Energy security is certainly a preoccupation for India, and Delhi’s energy interests are the most significant in Africa. Nigeria – the world’s fourth producer of crude oil – for instance, is India’s largest trading partner in the region with a

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bilateral trade of just over 10 billion USD (Arun 2010). India sources around 25% of all its crude oil imports from Nigeria\(^3\) and is Nigeria’s second-largest crude oil buyer. Angola is another important partner of India. Bilateral trade between the two countries surged from only a few million dollars five years ago to 4.24 billion USD in 2009-10, mainly owing to oil imports.\(^4\)

At the same time, investments are also very important to India’s interests in Africa. Major large Indian corporations such as Tata, pharmaceutical firms (Ranbaxy and Cipla), and vehicle companies like Mahindra and Mahindra look at Africa as a market for their goods and for opportunities to set up factories. India has recently announced that it is keen to enter separate Free Trade Agreements with each country on the continent, in acknowledgement of a rising number of consumers with greater disposable income not only in India but also in Africa and the need to strengthen the commercial corridor between India and Africa to move goods and provide services more effectively.

**Indian claims of exceptionalism**

Undoubtedly, it is not just energy considerations that are driving India’s Africa strategy. India also tries to position itself as a valuable partner for Africa. India offers Africa a transferable business and development model that its proponents say will work for Africa. It is an attempt, made elsewhere by other Indian officials on many different occasions, to declare Indian exceptionalism in its dealings with Africa and to distance the Subcontinent not just from China but also from the West.

First, as India is a democracy, there is a stress on the transparent nature of Indian activity, as opposed to Chinese autocratic and allegedly opaque dealings. India is said also to differ from the West. Despite Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s assertions on democracy,\(^5\) there is no talk emerging from India of conditionalities or boycotts if African countries stray from the path of political and economic liberalisation and good governance. There is, however, like China,
much talk of ‘mutual benefit’ and respect for African state sovereignty, principles of which India’s first Prime Minister – Jawaharlal Nehru – would have approved.

Second, there is also an emphasis on the predominant role of private enterprise in Indian trade and investment in Africa, as opposed to China’s ostensibly more state-coordinated and state-owned efforts. Delhi’s claims of a unique partnership with the continent are furthermore strengthened by its unique business model, which some have called Indiavation.\(^6\) Stressing the comparative advantage that Indian companies possess when they operate in Africa, this Indian business model which provides low-cost high-volume business with the delivery of ‘triple-A technology’ – i.e., appropriate, affordable and adaptable – is said to be particularly suited to Africa. Bharti Airtel’s recent acquisition of mobile communications in 15 African countries has been touted as a good example of the various facets of Indiavation. Unlike Chinese investments, India also claims that its engagements are providing very much sought after added value: “The first principle of India’s involvement in Africa (is) unlike that of China. China says go out and exploit the natural resources, our strategy is to go out there and add value”.\(^7\) Equally, according to Harry Broadman in his study of four African countries, including Senegal and Ghana, Indian companies, in contrast to their enclave-style Chinese counterparts, are better integrated into domestic markets and opt more for African staff, including managerial posts (Broadman 2006).

Third, India’s engagements with Africa are also distinct from another perspective. There is a particular focus on capacity building and human resource development in Delhi’s Africa policy. One prominent example of the growing partnership between India and Africa in this sector is perhaps the Pan-African e-Network, which seeks to provide tele-medicine and tele-education through fibre-optic network. But India’s commitment to designing African human capital development programmes goes further. As envisaged in the 2008 Delhi Declaration, in December 2010 the locations were finalised for 19 training institutes to be set up across Africa in the next two years. With the help of a variety of Indian agencies, vocational training centres in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, as well as flagship projects that include the India-Africa Institute of Foreign

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\(^6\) World Economic Forum (2010).

\(^7\) Jairam Ramesh, in Dawes (2008).
Trade in Uganda, the India-Africa Institute of Information Technology in Ghana, the India-Africa Diamond Institute in Botswana and the India-Africa Institute of Education, Planning and Administration in Burundi, will be testament to India’s human capital development programmes for Africa (Chand 2010).

Finally, India might also offer Africa a model of a developing country that has reformed and achieved significant growth whilst still adhering to the standard of democracy. However, such an agenda is not being pushed by Delhi, concerned as it is with respect for African sovereignty. Until such a time as India decides to become involved in its own ‘social transformation project’ in Africa or democracy promotion or other such enterprises, the direct role-model idea is far-fetched. It would certainly contradict decades of Indian non-interventionist foreign policy. In any case, the staggering levels of rural and urban poverty in India and the state-led oppression of poorer, indigenous people inhabiting mineral rich areas calls into question what model India might uphold. Its economic growth has indeed been spectacular, but the rewards and costs that this has entailed have been spread very unevenly.

India’s relationship and the New South

India has always claimed that its relationship with Africa is different from other countries’ interests in the continent. There is certainly the long history of political solidarity between the two regions that makes this relationship distinct, as is often stressed by Indian politicians and business delegates alike. This unique relationship is rooted in history and can be traced back not only to Mahatma Gandhi – for whom India’s independence was not to be considered complete until Africa was free from the colonial shackles – but also to the steadfast commitment of Nehru to Afro-Asian solidarity and support of liberation movements in the continent. It was those like Nehru that then set the foundation for a long-lasting relationship of mutual cooperation and India’s investment in capacity and institution building for Africa through programmes such as Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) since the 1960s.

The Indian government has made much of its current purported exceptionalism in trade and aid and the complementary actions of its mostly private-sector investors. Writers such as Sushant K. Singh see an opportunity for India to forge a new and consistent path in Africa.
Details, however, are elusive in this optimistic outlook. Solutions to long-standing problems that have eluded the West and Africans themselves are limited to the provision of “technology and entrepreneurship unencumbered by any historical or diplomatic baggage” and the advantages of “the ‘softness’ of the Indian state and its democratic procedures as well as its incoherent approach”, particularly in comparison with the “hard-nosed business concerns” of China (Singh 2007: 12-13; and Singh & Asher 2008). Karine Lisbonne-de Vergeron is, though, convinced that despite “the difficulties of retaining a clear purpose of any kind in a world increasingly dominated by competition for scarce resources and in the face of major powers, with, perhaps, very different priorities ... there is also no doubting the determination of the new Indian elite to follow India’s unique destiny” (Lisbonne-de Vergeron 2006: 39-40). India’s assertions of exceptionalism then may well go beyond mere rhetoric. Indeed, at a recent World Economic Forum meeting, India’s Minister for Commerce and Industry, Anand Sharma, declared that there is not in fact an Indian strategy in Africa but a commitment to build a partnership to share resources, institutions and developmental experiences.

All this points to the affirmation in the last decade, and certainly since the onset of the global economic crisis, of a rhetoric of a New South cooperation that is fast becoming the dominant paradigm used to describe the commercial and financial interactions between countries of the South and their strategic alliance for economic development. Different from the old South-South cooperation that emerged from the 1955 Bandung conference, this New South cooperation is also distinct from the so-called North-South relation, which revolved mainly around the delivery of development assistance with attached liberal conditionalities from the developed countries to the developing nations.

By placing itself at the centre of this New South relationship, India underlines the new strategic and diplomatic ambitions that are at the core of the linkages between the two continents. High ideological considerations appear somewhat to go hand-in-hand with Delhi’s international geo-political strategies. Its concerns regarding issues of poverty and underdevelopment (seen as products of an imbalanced world economic system) and unbalanced structure of global governance and financial institutions are reflected in India’s call for a comprehensive reform of these institutions, in the ways in which they operate and in order to reflect the growing importance of the dev-
developing world. Notably at the 2008 India-Africa Summit, all African delegates signed up to sustain India’s aspiration to a permanent seat in the United Nation (UN) Security Council – recently also backed by Barack Obama’s November 2010 visit to India. Adding to its claim to a larger role in the international arena, by dispatching its forces to Sudan in April 2010, India has of late become the largest UN contributor with over 7,000 troops deployed in peace-keeping missions under the UN banner.

Moreover, to gain more leverage in the international arena, development cooperation has been used as a foreign policy tool (Jobelius 2007). From being the world’s largest recipient of foreign aid in the 1980s, India has made the transition from aid recipient to aid donor and in September 2010 announced that it might stop accepting aid from the UK in 2011 (Ranjan 2010). In the past few years, India has declined international assistance after the devastating earthquake that hit Kashmir in 2005 and after the tsunami of Boxing Day of 2006 that wrecked the Andaman Islands and India’s southern coasts, whilst all along offering aid to America after Hurricane Katrina and pledging considerable sums for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Successive Indian finance ministers since the early 2000s have launched several initiatives aimed at reflecting the country’s growing stature in international affairs and its desire to acquire greater responsibility in promoting development in other regions. In 2003, the then finance minister Jaswant Singh launched the India Development Initiative. This was followed by the Indian International Development Cooperation Agency (IIDCA) in 2007. Despite the ill-fated destiny of some of these initiatives (IIDCA has recently been dismantled), these moves bore some fruit. In his 2008 visit to India, the then UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, backed India’s plan to become an aid donor and a global partner in poverty reduction. And significantly, in a following move, the UK Department for International Development (DfID) partnered with India to identify development strategies to be exported to Africa. Interestingly, India’s disbursement of aid to developing countries has increasingly gone to Africa. In the last decade,
India’s aid to Africa has grown at a CAGR of 22% (Ramachandran 2010); and according to recent data, among the ten top recipient countries of India’s aid money, four are African – Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali, and Ghana. However, despite some plaudits for Indian assistance in unfashionable infrastructure building, Matthias Jobelius notes how the Indian government is not committed to guidelines and operative processes of the OECD donor community, and that “India appears in another country only when it is also an investor, trade partner or political ally, or can become one” (Jobelius 2007: 2).

Considering that India allows no tied aid into India, it is at least inconsistent to tie most of its own foreign aid. It is also unclear how these policies fit with a unique Indian vision for development within a pluralist and democratic framework (Manning 2006: 378).

Ultimately, a significant part of India’s economic diplomacy is to gain political and economic mileage and build stronger alliances. But as one senior official at India’s Ministry of External Affairs noted, this is not entirely an end in itself:

We are hopeful of support from the countries that we assist in international forums on issues that are vital to us. But we’re not driven entirely by political expediency or by competition with China. We’re saying that India is a big economic power now, to be reckoned with globally – and that we have resources and expertise with which we can help less developed nations. We want to be seen as their partners in sustainable development (Gupte 2004).

In effect, India’s engagement with Africa is different in motivation, intent and history from other donors. Affirmation of mutual interest rather than altruism and a rejection of conditionality are at the core of India’s development assistance. According to this view, India sees recipients of its aid as development partners linking the delivery of assistance to political solidarity. Harking back to the Cold War period, this cooperation is considered to be mainly based not on resources’ transfer but on experience and knowledge sharing.

loans, credit on favourable terms or in line with market requirements, investment aid, technical cooperation and other forms of development assistance – are rare and if made, do not appear to be deliberate.”


10 On India’s non-commitment to DAC’s guidelines, see also Manning (2006).

11 Rathin Roy, Director of International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) Poverty Practice, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, in Ramachandran (2010).
There are distinctions to be made here. The statements and policy directives of New Delhi are a different proposition, theoretically and practically, from the activities of Indian business. Inevitably, though, the two sectors are inextricably linked, especially considering the financial and political government backing of business, and a line can be drawn between points of view which takes in both of the sectors. On the one hand, there is the rhetoric of government incorporating the purported advantages of Indian exceptionalism for Africa alongside the notion that Indian business and technology is better oriented and equipped to benefit African partners. On the other hand, there is the suggestion that Indian development initiatives are subordinated to the economic and diplomatic concerns of New Delhi and that Indian business is little different from its Chinese and Western counterparts.

However, India’s global ambitions are also driving this strategic relationship with the developing world and with Africa in particular. In many circles in Delhi, gaining great power status is considered paramount. Potential domestic backlash against the disbursement of India aid to developing countries, when the Subcontinent is itself home to half of the world’s poor, may be overlooked for the sake of India’s own realist interest. The shift in status from a recipient of aid to a donor, the launch of schemes such as the India Development Initiative, India’s call for a reform of global governance institutions, and its aspiration to a permanent seat in the UN Security Council are all part of a strategy of re-branding of India as a superpower, shifting the world’s attention from its domestic problems of poverty and inequality and focusing on its emerging economic status.

**African governmental responses**

The other side of the equation concerns the African response to such a changing environment. In this section and the subsequent two sections, we endeavour to track reactions on the part of African governments and, since many of the developments are so new, to suggest possible avenues that may be taken in the near future. As noted above, there are demographic and historical differences across the continent which affect relations between Indians and Africans within African countries. In this instance, East Africa might be seen as qualitatively separate from the rest of Africa, given the much larger number of Kenyans, Tanzanians and Ugandans of Indian origin. Equally, Indian-East African relations have often been turbulent.
Nationalisation of Indian assets in Tanzania and the expulsion of Ugandan Indians under Idi Amin are testament to difficult relations and demonstrate two responses of East African governments in the 1960s and 1970s to the major economic role played by those of Indian extraction. Despite the notion that East African Indians might be an advantage for new Indian engagement, current East African government responses to Indian involvement is also partly informed by a legacy, sometimes of deep mistrust of Indians, which other parts of Africa do not possess.

Responses to Indian rhetoric

Bearing in mind such considerations, one can also take a broader view. First, it might be considered that, given Indian rhetoric and growing evidence of a specifically Indian way of engagement on the continent – including partnerships, appropriate technology and knowledge sharing, more private and transparent business practices, more added value and the use of African personnel – African governments might assign Indian companies and agencies preferential treatment. Indeed, the Ghanaian government has enjoyed close connections with its Indian counterpart and has rural electrification, an emerging new Mahindra & Mahindra tractor assembly plant and technology transfer centre, and a grand presidential palace for which to thank the Indians. Anand Sharma has visited Ghana on many occasions in various Indian governmental guises and was awarded the top Ghanaian civilian award, Companion of the Order of the Volta, in 2008 in recognition of his commitment to South-South Cooperation. The African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, Jean-Pierre Ezin, recently and boldly announced that Indian education initiatives can transform the African continent (Chand 2010). Many African countries have signed up to back India’s expanding demands for greater Indian involvement in the global political architecture. However, poignantly, Senegal’s six-year old Tata bus assembly plant was taken over in 2009 by a Chinese company. Most African countries deal with Chinese, Western and Indian interests, and, unsurprisingly, African ministers are very reluctant to praise or court one outside party over another when benefits can be derived across the board.

On the other hand, there is mounting popularity amongst African leaders for the non-interference and mutual benefit policies of both
India and China. This is particularly so for those countries with poor relations with the West, such as Zimbabwe – whose President Robert Mugabe stated, “We have turned east, where the sun rises, and given our back to the west, where the sun sets” – but is also the case for most African regimes (Meldrum 2005). However, there are signs that non-interference has limits, such as China’s pressure on Sudan to allow in peacekeepers and India’s block on the import of Zimbabwean rough diamonds. Equally, there is little clear evidence, outside of pariah states like Zimbabwe and Sudan, of systematic bias towards the new Asian giants.

**Responses to Indian ideology**

Second, on an ideological basis, we must consider whether alternative models of development to the dominant Western liberal framework are now on offer. The Washington Consensus of the 1980s and 90s and the ensuing post-Washington Consensus – both built around liberal assumptions of the advantages of simultaneous economic liberalisation and democratisation – may no longer have the pre-dominant position in the last two decades. Two factors have started the erosion: first, given the presence of other international actors, the West no longer has its pre-eminent position in aid and trade from which to enforce liberalisation through conditionalities; and second, the recent global economic downturn has seemingly harmed the West more than its Eastern competitors, India having survived particularly well.

Statements have been made that might suggest an ideological turn. President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal has said, on the one hand, that “the Chinese model for stimulating rapid economic development has much to teach Africa” and, on the other, that “Africans can well appreciate India’s complex historical experience with multiculturalism and colonial intrusion and learn from India’s emergence as a world-class economic power”.

However, despite the falling Western pre-eminence, the accompanying fall in ideological influence does not seem yet to have occurred. The post-Washington Consensus still largely holds sway, particularly in small and poor countries such as Liberia or Sierra Leone. The hold is not as great in oil-rich countries like Angola or Nigeria, and there is leeway in countries like Mozam-

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12 Wade (2008a, 2008b).
bique or even Sierra Leone – where the need for some successes for the liberal agenda is pressing and ‘demonstration rents’ can be extracted by African governments – but this has little to do with India or China.

One might begin an explanation of continuing Western influence by noting that neither India nor China has a social transformation project remotely akin to the liberal agenda for Africa. Indeed, China considers itself to have had a unique development path, given its Communist past, its authoritarian present, and economic policies which have moved from self-sufficiency to export-orientation. The most that China seems willing to do is to contribute to the thinking behind other unique paths in other countries. India is somewhere in between the West and China, with its emphasis on the New South and the history of colonialism, pluralism, and democracy which it proclaims it shares with Africa, but it is not active in pursuing such a line of thinking beyond the rhetorical. There appears, as yet, to be little substance to a Beijing Consensus and even less to a framework centred on thinking from Delhi.

Equally, a creeping ideological conversion of senior members of African governments can be discerned. Many African ministers and top-level administrators are trained in the West and may know little of other options to the liberal consensus. For instance, Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is steeped in Western orthodoxy, having worked for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Citibank, and Samura Kamara, the Sierra Leonean Minister of Finance recently noted that he would welcome more British involvement in shaping the character and nature of this country, not less (Little 2010). From the Western angle, while there remain so many unfulfilled promises, Western aid and prescriptions, albeit altering slowly over time, are likely to stay. Aid disbursement will most likely also remain at a level that is at least considerably higher than any aid that emerges from India (or China), however generously and broadly one might define aid and however optimistically one might see the continuance of Asian aid when faced with so many competing internal demands.

*Responses to India and China in a multipolar world*

Third and probably most importantly, there are African strategic considerations, where India provides a crucial third node of international
economic and political power across the whole African continent. Having swung from a bipolar Cold War world and passed through a unipolar post-Cold War arrangement, there are at least three poles of external power in contemporary Africa. Now there is the presence of India and China to complement that of the West, plus others such as Brazil, South Korea and Russia in the wings. One might then deduce that the African governmental room to manoeuvre which significantly decreased at the end of the Cold War would increase once again. The notion of a ‘shift of power from West to East’, noted by Wotan Swiegers, Chair of the Namibian Atomic Energy Board, is not an unexceptional remark and shows that African governments are not underestimating the new change of environment.\(^{13}\)

There are events that might begin to substantiate this theory. One might note that many Western mining deals in the Democratic Republic of Congo were renegotiated in the wake of the huge 9 billion USD Chinese agreement in 2008. Equally, the Liberian government deal with the Indian-run company Mittal for the extraction of iron ore was renegotiated in late 2006. In Niger, former President Mamadou Tandja had moved closer to China and subsequently broken the 40-year old French monopoly on uranium mining. Payments to accrue from a new French uranium deal had also been increased by 50% before his rather timely removal from office in a military coup in early 2010. The deal between the UK-based African Minerals and the Government of Sierra Leone in 2010 went ahead in the teeth of opposition from Western donors. While Indian companies build irrigation projects, railways, a bus assembly plant and a satellite station for the Pan-African e-Network in Senegal and main national economic policies remain unchanged, Wade is also able to pursue his grand projets, often with Arab funding. An undertaking such as the massive 27 million USD North Korean-built Monument de la Renaissance Africaine has little post-Cold War precedence in Africa. It does, though, have considerable Cold War precedence. In the Cold War bipolar period, show projects, such as Felix Houphouet-Boigny’s massive cathedral in Cote d’Ivoire and Mobutu Sese Seko’s expansion of his tiny home village in northern Zaire into a modern town with an airport which could take Concorde, were rife. It would be too much to assume that correlation of these events with multipolarity

\(^{13}\) Quoted in ‘The New Scramble for Africa’, BBC Radio, 12 April 2009.
excludes all other factors, but there are several indications that there is more space for African regimes.

As can be seen in the examples above, it is not always clear to what extent these deals are of greater benefit to society as opposed to the ruling party. The Ghanaian presidential palace was costly and domestically highly contentious. The African Minerals deal was very favourable to the company and suggestions that backhanders headed straight for ruling party coffers to fight the 2012 election were common. Wade’s monument is heavily criticised as a huge waste of money and wholly un-African at home and abroad. On the other hand, contracts have been renegotiated to better benefit the governments, and considerable much-needed infrastructure building is always part of the deal. Equally, aid in kind, the preferred method of India and China, reduces opportunities for diversion of funds in African capitals. Indeed, Indian and Chinese money rests in Indian and Chinese banks waiting for the moment of disbursement, often to Indian and Chinese companies. However, while such a methodology may be more efficient, it does at the same time suffer the drawback of the virtual elimination of African state and government from the process, thereby risking a further emasculation of state authority and capability.

_A changing political arena?_

While there is apparently little political change as yet, there are signs and possibilities. There is talk of an alternative development model even if there is no action as yet. There is equally talk of Western countries and agencies having to improve their game, given the new competition. The purported exceptional Indian approach may well begin to show enough advantages to be attractive to African governments above all other contenders. Perhaps most importantly, despite the still considerable Western trade and aid presence, it is the perception of greater African governmental muscle caused by Indian and Chinese presence which is causing the most ripples in the contemporary African political pond.

However, there are some reasons to speculate that greater change may be coming. We should not entirely adhere to the idea of the new multipolar world as old wine in a new bottle. The notions, on the one hand, that Africa will once more be a by-stander in an external struggle over raw materials and political hegemony and fall prey to a
neo-imperial scramble for Africa or, on the other, that African expertise in the processes of extraversion will once more allow elites to control exchanges with the outside world and seal the political status quo, must both be questioned (Clapham 2006; Lee 2006). Any domestic political changes will certainly be slow and non-uniform in space and time. It is, though, important to note that the political changes that took place in Africa whilst shifting from the bipolar Cold War world to the unipolar post-Cold War world were substantial. Three key and conflicting processes can be discerned. Economic liberalisation and democratisation enforced in a unipolar arena have had considerable effects in Africa. In particular, despite a handful of recent military coups, democracy can be said to be the only political game now in town in many countries. Although there has not been a fundamental shift away from the key political modus operandi of patron-clientelism, democratic consolidation is not totally absent. Conversely, the liberalised African state is now only a shadow of even its pre-1990s weak incarnation, in terms of its ability to impose its directives on society (Young 2004). Equally, while political space was being opened up during democratisation, policy space was closed down by Structural Adjustment Programmes, the successor Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, and liberal conditionalities in general.

How far-fetched is it to suggest that changes of an equal magnitude are possible now? Some are of the opinion that the most plausible hypothesis is that the West will take up more economic infrastructure development in response to the Chinese/Indian focus and African governmental interest in this sector (Oya 2010). Indeed, the EU is now the lead road-builder in Sierra Leone. However, given greater muscle and choice on the international stage, might we not see a limited re-strengthening of the state (notwithstanding the partial bypass of state authority as noted above), at least in its scope for policy implementation? Equally, given elements of democratic consolidation, there is also the possibility of ‘politically well-managed’ governments. Such administrations are not seen here as exhibiting ‘good governance’ in a strict liberal sense, but instead a relatively sustainable balance between responses to political patron-cliental demands, reform and developmental government.14 At a minimum, the interweaving of electoral accountability – based however partially on national developmental concerns and the re-strengthening of the

14 For a discussion of the notion of post-clientelism, see Manor (2006).
African governmental position vis-à-vis the international – holds at least the prospect of a changing domestic political arena.

The need for African governments to resort to patron-clientelism to stay in power has not gone away. Nor has African society been transformed. Equally, there is now a global economic downturn to consider, although there are indications that India with its relatively healthy domestic market is riding the storm better than others. The possibility, though, that politics and development can be more successfully managed in a semi-democratic political arena with a paradoxically greater state autonomy may in some cases be growing. The outcomes are of course still constrained by parameters that have constrained African leaders since they inherited their postcolonial weak states and bifurcated nations (Migdal 1988; Mamdani 1996). However, as the examples above show, outcomes are also dependent, within certain limits, on African agency – in other words, the response of African governments to such a new environment.

References


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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION’S ENGAGEMENTS IN AFRICA WITHIN HISTORICAL CONTEXT: GREAT EXPECTATIONS VERSUS DAUNTING CHALLENGES

Peter J. Schraeder

Abstract

Barack Obama’s election as the first African-American president of the United States raised extraordinary expectations among Africans and Africanists concerning the future of US foreign policy toward Africa. Africa nonetheless has remained the region of least concern within the global hierarchy of US foreign policy during the first two years (2009-10) of his administration, as the White House by necessity has focused on domestic issues and other regions of perceived greater importance, most notably daunting challenges associated with the ongoing crisis in the US economy and overseeing two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This chapter assesses how US foreign policy toward Africa has fared in an Obama Administration, when extraordinary expectations are confronted by daunting challenges, most of which do not originate on the African continent. It also assesses what one can expect from US foreign policy toward Africa during the second half (2011-12) of Obama’s elected term of office as he confronts an increasingly critical Congress in which one chamber (the House of Representatives) is dominated by the Republican Party.

Introduction

Barack Obama’s election as the first African-American president of the United States raised extraordinary expectations among Africans and Africanists concerning the future of US foreign policy toward Africa. In addition to being a product of the African Diaspora and publishing two well-received books in which Africa is referenced
Obama is the first sitting president to have visited the African continent prior to taking office, including travelling to his father’s Kenya for five weeks in 1998 before starting Harvard Law School, and to Chad, Djibouti, Kenya, and South Africa for two weeks in 2006 as part of a US Senate mission. He also made a two-day presidential visit to Ghana in July 2009 (six months after entering the White House) while returning from a Group of Eight (G-8) summit in Italy. Africa nonetheless has remained the region of least concern within the global hierarchy of US foreign policy during the first two years (2009-10) of the Obama Administration, as the White House by necessity has focused on domestic issues and other regions of perceived greater importance, most notably daunting challenges associated with the ongoing crisis in the US economy and overseeing two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The purpose of this chapter is to assess how US foreign policy toward Africa has fared during Obama’s first two years in office, when extraordinary expectations have been confronted by daunting challenges, most of which do not originate on the African continent. It also assesses what one can expect from US foreign policy toward Africa during the second half (2011-12) of Obama’s elected term of office as he confronts an increasingly critical Congress in which one chamber (the House of Representatives) is dominated by the Republican Party. The remainder of this chapter is divided into three sections: the historical context of US foreign policy toward Africa, a description of five factors that have constrained the foreign policy manoeuvrability of the Obama Administration, and a discussion of six trends in Obama’s foreign policy toward Africa. In this regard, please note that ‘Africa’ includes all five regions of the African continent, including North Africa, which I argue cannot be examined in isolation from the rest of the continent.

**Historical context of US foreign policy toward Africa**

A common thread of Africanist scholarship is that US foreign policy toward Africa during the Cold War era was marked by indifference at worst and neglect at best. A corollary of this argument is that, regardless of who has occupied the White House, policies were marked more by continuity rather than change. In his presidential address to one of the annual meetings of the African Studies Association, for example, Crawford Young underscored the “essential continuity” that marked US foreign policy toward Africa since the founding in 1958
of a separate Bureau of African Affairs within the State Department. Although he carefully added that “noteworthy fluctuations” have occurred, he concluded that “these variations have been above all of style, tone, and the subtler chemistry of policy articulation, and not its underlying substance” (Young 1984: 14).

The adoption of an extended historical perspective demonstrates that one can distinguish between at least five periods of continuity and change, in which US involvement in Africa has either expanded or contracted. The first century of the American Republic (1776-1861) was marked by revolutionary fervour and the gradual expansion of US activities in all regions of the world, including Africa. This period was marked by the young Republic’s involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, whaling and other economic activities along Africa’s extensive coastlines, and the spread of missionary movements, colonisation societies, and explorers throughout Africa. This period also witnessed the opening of dozens of US consulates and embassies throughout Africa (Duignan & Gann 1984).

Many of these diplomatic missions were downgraded or closed as a result of the US Civil War (1861-65) and the period of retrenchment which followed, as the federal government focused on internal reconstruction and development. During this second period, the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, which the US attended as an observer nation, not only consecrated the formal creation of European empires and spheres of influence throughout the African continent, but impeded US efforts at regaining influence enjoyed prior to the US Civil War. This second period of US involvement (1861-1947) is thus best described as one of significant retrenchment in which future involvement was constrained by the existence of European colonial empires.

A renewed period of US expansion occurred during the Cold War (1947-89). The combination of declining colonial influence on the part of Belgium, Britain, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain (with France being the exception) with the growing diplomatic activities of the Soviet Union and its allies prompted Washington to open US embassies in almost every African country achieving independence. The hallmark of this era was the enunciation of a variety of presidential doctrines that, beginning with the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and culminating in the Reagan Doctrine of 1985, underscored Washington’s right to intervene against communist advances throughout the world, including in Africa (Ohaegbulam 1988). This approach transcended partisan loyalties as Democratic and Republican admini-
strations sought to enlist African leaders on the side of the United States in an emerging East-West rivalry with the communist bloc, contributing to Africa’s emergence as an arena of great power competition (Schraeder 1994b).

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signalled the end of the Cold War but not the end of international rivalry in Africa. The ideologically-based Cold War between the US and the former Soviet Union was replaced by a ‘cold peace’ in which the great powers increasingly struggled for economic supremacy in all regions of the world, including in Africa (Garten 1993). Although this cold peace manifested itself in rising US-French tensions in francophone Africa during the 1990s, not least of all due to an expanding US economic presence that was aided by proactive Clinton Administration policies (see Schraeder 2000), the Cold War’s end not surprisingly fostered a re-evaluation of US foreign policy, which resulted in a certain degree of US retrenchment from the African continent from 1989 to 2001 (albeit not nearly on the same scale as what occurred in the aftermath of the US Civil War). This period of retrenchment included the initial eight months of the Bush Administration (January–August 2001), which underscored the need to pursue a more ‘realist’ or ‘hard-headed’ analysis of concrete US foreign policy interests in which the African continent figured little if at all. A statement during the 2000 presidential campaign was particularly revealing. In response to a question concerning Africa’s place within a future Bush Administration, Bush noted that the continent did not “fit into the national strategic interests of the US as far as I (Bush) can see them” (quoted in Schraeder 2001: 390).

The final and most recent period of foreign policy expansion revolves around the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and their aftermath. These attacks exerted a profound influence on US foreign policy as the Bush Administration announced a global war on terrorism, replete with an official doctrine (the Bush Doctrine) and pledges to aid countries threatened by terrorism, that harkened back to the initial stages of the Cold War, when President Truman pledged to aid countries threatened by communism. Among the various domestic initiatives undertaken included enactment of the Patriot Act, which provided new, aggressive powers to law enforcement agencies; creation of a Department of Homeland Security to oversee borders and coordinate domestic counterterrorism activities; reorganisation of the military’s global command structure to add a Northern Command that
would be responsible for military activities in Canada, Mexico, and the US (the first time a military officer had been appointed to such a post since World War II); and, after much pressure from the public and the Congress over the intelligence failures preceding the attacks of 9/11, creation of a new cabinet-level position, Director of National Intelligence, who would be responsible for coordinating the diverse intelligence activities of fifteen agencies.

It is important to note, however, that there is a lack of consensus within the policymaking establishment over Africa’s importance to the United States. In many respects, the determination of US interests in Africa varies depending on the portion of the policymaking establishment that is defining those interests. The Congressional Black Caucus and other African-American organisations such as Trans-Africa Forum not surprisingly emphasise the importance of socio-cultural interests, owing to the reality that 42 million US citizens (13.6% of the US population) claim an African-American heritage. Other members of Congress and activist organisations, such as Africa Action, underscore the importance of US humanitarian interests in alleviating chronic drought, famine, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Department of Commerce not surprisingly focuses on economic interests, including trade, investment, and the growing amount of oil imported from the African continent. The Department of State focuses on political interests, such as the electoral weight of 53 African votes within the United Nations. The Department of Defense naturally focuses on security interests, including ensuring access to bases and the ability to project power to strategic ‘choke points,’ such as the Straits of Bab el Mandeb in the Horn of Africa. In short, there is no consensus within the US policymaking establishment concerning Africa’s importance to the United States, although recent attempts at raising Africa’s standing in the US foreign policy hierarchy have emphasised the need to look ‘beyond humanitarianism’ and to instead focus on Africa’s strategic importance to the United States (Lyman & Morrison 2006; see also Morrison & Cooke 2001; Copson 2007)

An objective analysis of the broad historical sweep of US-African relations nonetheless suggests that two sets of interests (security and economics) have competed for pre-eminence in US foreign policy toward Africa. The pursuit of economic self-interest historically has been in the forefront of US-African relations since the founding of the American Republic in 1776. Returning once again to our five major phases of contraction/expansion, it is noteworthy that economic inte-
rests largely dominated US policy considerations from 1776 to 1947, as well as from 1989 to 2001. When viewed from this long-term historical perspective, Washington’s pursuit of strategic interests during the Cold War (1947-89) and current (2001-present) eras represent anomalies in an otherwise economically inspired approach to US foreign policy toward Africa.

**Constraints on Obama administration foreign policy toward Africa**

The optimism that Obama’s election generated among Africans and specialists of US foreign policy toward Africa was captured by an African colleague, Korwa Adar, who noted during a conference in South Africa: “How many US presidential candidates prior to taking office can say that they took an HIV/AIDS test in Nairobi to raise awareness about the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, or walked with President Nelson Mandela on Robben Island in South Africa?” The answer, of course, is none. Optimism was further fuelled by Obama’s own statements: “Obviously I’ve got a personal connection to Africa that makes the trip special”, explained Obama in reference to his 2006 trip as Senator. “I also have a deep abiding interest in what happens to the African continent as a whole” (quoted in Zeleny 2006).

With history as our guide, however, it should come as no surprise that Africa has remained the region of least concern within the global hierarchy of US foreign policy, as the Obama Administration by necessity focuses on domestic issues and other regions of perceived greater importance. The sobering reality of domestic and international challenges unrelated to Africa was already evident during the presidential campaign. “The experience of Barack Obama has raised extraordinary expectations in Africa”, explained Witney W. Schneidman (2008), an advisor to the Obama campaign, “but we need to be realistic about these expectations, especially given the financial pressures in the United States”. Richard Holbrooke (2008: 2) similarly cautioned in an article in *Foreign Affairs* that the next US president would be confronted with a “daunting agenda” as he “inherits a more difficult set of international challenges than any predecessor since World War II”.

Five sets of constraints have limited the manoeuvrability of the Obama Administration, reinforcing a certain degree of continuity in US foreign policy toward Africa. Whereas some are related to more
recent socio-economic and political-military trends (crisis in the US economy and inheritance of a residual fear of 9/11), others are indicative of long-term constraints inherent in the US policymaking process concerning Africa (historical White House and congressional neglect of the African continent and bureaucratic influence in the policymaking process).

The first constraint is the continuing crisis in the US economy. Obama's number one priority if he wants to be re-elected (and all presidents enter office with the goal of winning a second term of office) is responding to the crisis in the US economy. Not since Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933 has a new president inherited an economy in such disastrous shape, including as of January 2009 (the month of Obama's inauguration) a credit crisis that led to a financial bailout of more than $767 billion; decreasing home values and foreclosure crisis in the US housing market (typically the one greatest investment of average Americans); dramatic decline in the stock market, which devastated retirement accounts; rising unemployment, which did not peak until late 2010; a growing health care crisis, in which one out of five Americans did not have health insurance; structural decline in the US auto industry, historically one of the mainstays of the US economy; rising national debt from $5 trillion in 2000 to $10 trillion in 2008; and a serious contraction in the US economy.

Several recent statistics stand out. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) announced on its website (see www.congressionalbudgetoffice.org) in January 2011 that it expects the annual US budget deficit to exceed $1.5 trillion in 2011 and also that the National Debt will exceed $15 trillion during that year. The CBO also predicted that joblessness would remain above 9% during 2011 and that unemployment would be approximately 8.2% on election day in November 2012. It is commonly noted by experts on US elections and party politics, such as Alan Gitelson, that if this latter statistic does not go down to at least 8% by the next presidential elections, Obama may end up being a one-term president like Jimmy Carter (1977-80) and George Bush senior (1989-92), both of whom were blamed by the electorate for poor management of the economy.

Responding to this domestic economic crisis has consumed a significant portion of Obama White House energy, as witnessed by the historic amount of legislation that the Obama Administration successfully shepherded through Congress during 2009-10. Legislation tar-
geted toward preventing the further collapse of the US economy ranged from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (signed into law in February 2009) to the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act (signed into law in December 2010). The most divisive legislation involved the signing into law in March 2010 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, which together provided new health care protections to the US population, and which the Republican Party is attempting to overturn via both new legislation and the US court system. One can also add important socially-oriented legislation to this list, such as the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (the first piece of legislation signed into law by the president in January 2009, which relaxed the statute of limitations for equal-pay lawsuits brought by women) and the more recent “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act”, signed into law in December 2010, which repealed earlier legislation preventing gay and lesbian individuals from serving openly in the US military. The challenge, of course, is that the White House and the president personally had to expend tremendous amounts of political capital to get the above legislation passed, leaving little political oxygen for international initiatives, let alone those on the African continent.

A second constraint involves the Obama Administration’s inheritance of a residual fear of another 9/11 attack. Although subsiding significantly in the last nine years and especially in the face of the recent economic crisis, this fear nonetheless remains within the fabric of US society. This reality was demonstrated by Obama’s signing into law in January 2011 the Defense Authorization Bill, which includes a provision that imposes strict new limits on transferring detainees out of the Guantanamo Bay prison, dealing a major blow to Obama’s vows to shut down the centre and give federal court trials to many of the prisoners. This provision prevents the transfer of any detainees into the US during 2011, even for the purpose of prosecution; bans the purchase or construction of any facility inside the US for housing detainees now being held at Guantanamo (the Obama Administration was pursuing the option of refurbishing a prison in southern Illinois); and forbids the transfer of any detainee to another country unless the Secretary of Defense signs off on the safety of doing so (i.e., that the prisoner will not be tortured or otherwise mistreated). These provisions have essentially ensured that Guantanamo will not be closed during Obama’s first term in office, despite his campaign pledge and
determination to do so. This legislation was extraordinary in that it was passed when both houses of Congress were controlled by Democratic Party majorities, which is also Obama’s party. It is extremely unlikely that this legislation will change now that the House of Representatives is controlled by the Republican Party.

A third constraint involves historical White House neglect of the African continent amidst domestic and other international priorities. Throughout the Cold War and its aftermath, presidents traditionally have devoted less attention to Africa compared with other regions of perceived greater concern, most notably Europe (including Russia and the other countries that were once part of the Soviet Union) and more recently the Middle East and South Asia. Historical neglect of Africa at the highest reaches of the US policymaking establishment is the direct result of a wide variety of factors: a president's typical lack of knowledge and therefore the absence of a deep-felt interest in a region that historically enjoyed few enduring political links with the US when compared with the former European colonial powers; a tendency to view Africa as the responsibility of those same European colonial powers, especially France, whose leaders were often willing to take the lead in crisis situations; the impracticality of one person monitoring relations with 193 countries worldwide, including 53 in Africa, and therefore the necessity of delegating responsibility for handling foreign policy for those regions considered marginal to the White House; and, most important, the necessity of balancing domestic priorities with foreign affairs necessities, especially during a first term in office in which the ultimate priority of all presidents is to assure re-election, with simple electoral logic typically suggesting that Africa is not a priority for the vast majority of the voting public.

Even if we recognise that Obama is different from all previous presidents, especially concerning his personal connection to the African continent, his White House has been consumed by foreign policy issues in other regions of perceived greater importance, leaving little time for high-level White House attention to Africa. In addition to prioritising US relations with Europe and the other northern industrialised countries (as witnessed by the December 2010 ratification of a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia), the Middle East is second in the foreign policy hierarchy, as witnessed by the mandatory focus on the war in Iraq, the decision to make the pursuit of a Middle East peace an administration priority, an unprecedented early diplomatic overture to Iran, the president’s Cairo speech of summer
2010, and the necessity of responding to the dramatic political changes occurring throughout the Middle East that were sparked by the overthrow on 14 January 2011 of the Tunisian dictatorship of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. The third region of foreign policy concern is South Asia, as witnessed by evolving foreign policy debates that resulted in a massive increase in the US combat presence in Afghanistan and the decision to increase unmanned drone attacks in the tribal areas of Pakistan. The potential shortcomings associated with a foreign policy misstep in this region were captured in an article that questioned whether Afghanistan and South Asia in general would emerge as ‘Obama’s Vietnam’ (Blight 2009). Subsequent regions of concern include Asia and evolving partnerships with China and Japan, as well as Latin America. The key question that one must ask: Where is Africa in this US foreign policy priority? The answer: Near or at the bottom of the foreign policy hierarchy, and at best second to last only ahead of Latin America.

A fourth constraint is historical congressional neglect of the African continent. A variety of constitutionally mandated prerogatives, including the confirmation of presidential appointees, the convening of hearings, and the drafting and voting of key legislation, suggests that Congress theoretically should play an important role in defining US foreign policy toward Africa. Like their White House counterparts, however, members of Congress historically have neglected Africa relative to other regions of perceived greater interest. Re-election pressures and time constraints imposed by terms of office (two years for Representatives and six years for Senators) force them to select and prioritise the domestic and the international issues which will receive their attention. Since the primary objective of most members is to be re-elected, and since most US citizens know or care very little about the African continent, conventional wisdom suggests that it is politically unwise to focus too much time on Africa. As a result, membership on the Africa subcommittees is among the least desired congressional positions in both houses of Congress, and is often relegated to relatively junior Representatives and Senators, such as Barack Obama, who served on the Africa Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

This neglect ensures that even highly motivated chairpersons of the Africa subcommittees face an uphill task in pushing African issues to the forefront of congressional debate. In the absence of crisis, partisan and ideological differences within Congress prevent activist
groups from achieving congressionally mandated changes in US foreign policy toward Africa. Even during short-term crises when an issue may attract the attention of a significant number of members of Congress, control of the policymaking process naturally flows to the White House and the bureaucracies of the executive branch. It is precisely for this reason that Congress only sporadically passes Africa-related legislation, which during 2010 included the Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, signed into law in May 2010, and the “Provision for Special Disclosures on Source of Conflict Minerals” that was included in the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, signed into law in July 2010. In both cases, legislation provides more of a preferred policy roadmap than restrictive guidelines. As regards the legislation on the source of conflict minerals, for example, US corporations are not prevented from importing or trading such minerals, but rather must simply report what efforts they are undertaking to trace their origins.

Even this modest record is unlikely to be repeated in 2011, owing to the November 2010 mid-term congressional elections in which a conservative anti-Obama wave, including many members of the ultra-conservative Tea Party Movement, captured the House of Representatives and significantly reduced the Democratic Party majority in the Senate. Obama in public interviews has repeatedly referred to this victory as “humbling” and as a “shellacking”, as the White House is now forced to pivot from an inherently more friendly relationship with the Democratic Party-controlled 111th Congress (2009-11) to what is already proving to be a more conflicted relationship with the 112th Congress (2011-13), which is at least partially dominated by the Republican Party. The House of Representatives now boasts 241 Republicans (87 of whom are newly elected) and 193 Democrats (one seat was vacant as of February 2011). In the Senate, the Democrats control 51 seats, Independents control two seats (but caucus with the Democrats), and Republicans control 47 seats (twelve of which are newly elected). An increasingly conservative Congress is likely to push US foreign policy in a more hawkish direction. This conservative wave, in part at least due to the demands of Tea Party members, is also heavily focusing on deficit reduction (one of their pledges has been to trim an additional $100 billion from the current 2011 budget), which will at best lead to little new spending outside of the global war on terrorism and the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and at
worse lead to cuts in existing spending, including foreign aid to Africa.

An additional piece of the congressional puzzle is the nature of the ongoing relationship between the 43-member Congressional Black Caucus and the country’s first elected African-American president. Contrary to expectations, relations between Obama and the Congressional Black Caucus have been periodically strained, not least of all due to the fact that some members feel that they are “getting far too little support from the nation’s first black president – a man they once believed would be their strongest champion” (Lerer & Henderson 2010). It is important to remember that the Congressional Black Caucus is focused first and foremost on the high unemployment rate among African-Americans – not the African continent. It is precisely for this reason that some members have been critical of Obama’s perceived lack of interest in offering programmes targeted toward alleviating the high unemployment rates among African-Americans. As a result, Africa during the last two years has been neglected by the Congressional Black Caucus relative to earlier periods, as this caucus has focused first and foremost on the increasing economic plight of African-Americans. This trend is likely to continue during 2011-12.

A fifth and final constraint is that the net result of White House and congressional neglect of Africa is that US foreign policy toward Africa, perhaps more so than that toward any other region of the world, remains largely delegated to the high-level bureaucrats and political appointees within the bureaucracies of the executive branch. Exceptions of course exist, such as the willingness of both the White House and the Congress to pressure Sudan’s government to seek a peaceful resolution of civil conflict in the southern portion of the country, but these are rare occurrences typically due to pressures from grass-roots constituencies that have the ear of the president and senior congressional leaders and that most importantly are considered crucial to re-election. In the case of Sudan, for example, a wide array of Christian groups deemed essential to Republican victories in 2004 effectively lobbied the White House to ‘do something’ to stop what they perceived as a genocidal policy that a northern-based Islamic regime was carrying out against a southern-based, predominantly Christian population, including the practice of southern Christians being sold as slaves in northern Sudan.

In order to fully understand US foreign policy toward Africa, one must therefore focus on the policies and interactions of the African
affairs bureaus of the traditional national security bureaucracies, such as the State Department, the Pentagon, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as well as their counterparts within the increasingly important economic realm, most notably the Department of Commerce. To be sure, the White House sets the overall parameters of US foreign policy toward Africa, as was the case with its predecessors during the Cold War. But the unique nature of the US policymaking system ensures that specific policy initiatives often emerge from and are coordinated by the national security bureaucracies with little White House input.

The net result of what can be referred to as ‘bureaucratic influence’ in the policymaking process (Schraeder 1994a), and hence why it can be referred to as a constraint, is that it fosters the continuation of established policies, even when an administration with seemingly different beliefs than its predecessor takes office, such as in the shift from the Bush to the Obama Administration. One of the keys to potential change is who leads the State Department and especially the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs, which traditionally has assumed a leading role concerning US foreign policy toward Africa. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who narrowly lost the electoral contest for the Democratic Party nomination for the 2008 presidential elections, and whom Obama wisely brought into his administration with a serious policymaking role, has clearly set a tone of heightened US interest in Africa, as set by her husband’s Administration and continued under the Bush Administration. Clinton sought to underscore Africa’s priority within the Obama Administration by undertaking in August 2009 an 11-day visit of seven African countries: Angola, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, and South Africa. During this trip, which was widely hailed throughout Africa, Clinton highlighted the issue of sexual violence against African women, especially within the continuing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Once this trip was over, however, Clinton’s primary focus returned to other regions of more pressing importance, including Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

The bellwether of Administration interest in Africa was the selection of Johnnie Carson, former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. He previously served as the National Intelligence Officer for Africa for the National Intelligence Council and Senior Vice President for the Nati-
nal Defense University. In the State Department, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador to Uganda (1991-94), Zimbabwe (1995-97) and Kenya (1999-2003), and as a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) in Botswana, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Portugal. He began his service in Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania. Carson’s long-term experience as a career Foreign Service Officer within the State Department nonetheless ensured that he was unlikely to press for substantial new directions in US foreign policy, instead attempting to make existing policies more effective. Moreover, his substantial involvement in the intelligence arena also meant that he was an unlikely candidate for significantly altering the Bush Administration’s substantial investment in military initiatives. His extended experience in East and Southern Africa nonetheless has boded well for enhanced foreign policy attention to these regions, including confronting election irregularities and corruption in Kenya and pressuring the authoritarian regime of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe to accept greater political pluralism.

**Emerging trends in Obama foreign policy toward Africa**

At least six trends in US foreign policy toward Africa have emerged during Obama’s first two years in office (2009-10) that are likely to continue as we approach the 2012 presidential election campaign, which in actuality will begin in 2011 as Republican candidates jockey for position and Democrats decide if they wish to mount a primary challenge to Obama (highly unlikely). First, Obama’s foreign policy campaign team included an unprecedented number of close advisors with impressive backgrounds in Africa, which signalled that the Obama White House would have a heightened interest in Africa. This group included Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under the Clinton Administration, who helped lead Obama’s campaign foreign policy bureaucracy, and who serves as US Ambassador to the United Nations; and Samantha Powers, Harvard human rights expert and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, who resigned from the campaign in March 2008 after calling Hillary Clinton ‘a monster’, and is currently Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs at the National Security Council. Other Africanists joined the Administration after the election, such as Michelle Gavin, former foreign policy advisor to Senator Russell Feingold (Democrat-Wisconsin), who serves as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Africa in
the National Security Council. The transition of these Africanists from campaign workers to political appointees in an Obama White House provided a clear sense of Obama’s priorities in Africa. Three characteristics common to this core Africa foreign policy team included early opposition to the war in Iraq, a tendency toward liberal internationalism, and an emphasis on the use of ‘soft power’ (diplomacy and economic aid) to advance US interests abroad.

The White House foreign policy team also included a number of core advisors with military experience, with important implications for how Obama would approach military initiatives on the African continent. This group included Jonathan Scott Gration, retired Air Force major general who voted for Bush in 2000, accompanied Obama to Africa, refers to Obama as ‘America’s Mandela’, was raised as the son of missionary parents in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), speaks fluent Swahili, and who currently is White House Special Envoy to Sudan; Mark Lippert, Obama’s former Senate foreign policy advisor, who in 2008 returned from a tour of duty in Iraq as a Navy Seal, who initially served as White House National Security Council Chief of Staff, and who at the end of 2009 returned to active duty for the US Navy; and James L. Jones, a career military officer who rose to the rank of General in the United States Marine Corps and who served as Obama’s first national security advisor. Denis McDonough, one of Obama’s top foreign policy aides, national security coordinator for the campaign, former foreign policy advisor to Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, and currently White House Deputy National Security Advisor, is also a key player within this group. Together these individuals ensured that an Obama White House would be sympathetic to the continuation of Defense Department initiatives in Africa, such as the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) that was created under the Bush Administration and that Obama visited as Senator in 2006 along with General Gration. Despite criticism from African partners opposed to the possibility of this new command being stationed on the African continent, the liberal wing of the Democratic Party that hoped for a decrease in US military initiatives in Africa, and career Foreign Service Officers who did not appreciate what they perceived as the Pentagon’s encroachment on classic State Department turf, AFRICOM has enjoyed expanding resources and support under the Obama Administration (LeVan 2010; Office of Inspector General 2009). Indeed, it is arguable that the Ob-
ma White House has the most military-influenced National Security Council in the post-World War II history of the United States.

Obama’s reshuffling of presidential advisors, which coincided with the 2010 mid-term congressional elections, has signalled an increasingly corporate-friendly overlay to its national security structure so as to repair relations with the corporate world, who were perceived as bruised owing to the array of financial reform and regulatory legislation promoted by the White House during its first two years in office. Jones was replaced as national security advisor by Thomas E. Donilon, a partner in the prestigious Washington law firm of O’Melveny & Myers. Similarly, Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel, who returned to Chicago to run in the city’s first open mayoral race in decades, was replaced by Bill Daley (the brother of Chicago’s current mayor, Richard M. Daley), who served as chairman of the Midwest region and head of the Office of Corporate Responsibility for JP Morgan Chase, having previously served as president of SBC Communications. The implication of these administrative changes is that Obama is desirous of a more Washington-savvy and corporate-friendly core as he prepares to run in the 2012 presidential elections. As a result, Africa initiatives dealing with trade and investment, such as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), will receive a warm welcome at the White House.

A second trend, which focuses on Obama’s governing ideology, is the continuation of a pragmatic traditional realist approach, albeit one with strong tendencies toward liberal internationalism, in US foreign policy toward Africa. Obama is far from being a typical liberal, and is in fact much closer to being a traditional realist, at least in the realm of foreign policy, sometimes being referred to by critics and admirers as an ‘optimistic realist’ or a ‘realistic optimist’. As succinctly summarised by one observer during the presidential campaign, Obama does not speak in the moralistic tones of the more recent Bush Administration, does not use the soaring rhetoric of Bush’s freedom agenda, rejects the Bush Administration’s obsession with elections, and argues that people’s aspirations are broader and more basic, including food, shelter, and jobs.

The foreign policy impact of this pragmatic realism has been Obama’s embrace of a variety of national security initiatives inherited from the Bush Administration, which critics, such as the Association for Concerned Africa Scholars (see http://concernedafricascholars.org), had hoped would be significantly altered once the Democratic
Party won the White House. One of the best examples of this inherited national security structure is a set of three regionally-based counter-terrorism programmes in the Islamic coastal regions of the African continent, including the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) that includes North Africa, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) that is responsible for the ‘Greater Horn of Africa’, and the East African Regional Strategic Initiative (EARSI), which replaced the East African Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI). These counter-terrorism initiatives are buttressed by AFRICOM, the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and other US military aid programmes, and the Gulf of Guinea Initiative, the primary goal of which is to gradually build up an effective regional security programme capable of ensuring the safe transport of oil resources to the United States (Ploch 2010).

Together these regional security programmes provide useful insights into the evolving priorities of US foreign policy toward Africa. First, these programmes serve as the core of an evolving foreign policy approach that, during the Bush Administration and continuing under the Obama Administration, has divided Africa into at least four spheres of variable foreign policy interest: (1) those regions (North and East Africa) destined to receive priority attention owing to their connection to the wider Middle East, sizeable Muslim populations, and US struggle against global terrorism; (2) regional powers, typically Nigeria and South Africa, but also including Algeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Senegal, that are perceived as crucial to the maintenance of regional stability and therefore as ‘regional anchors’ of US foreign policy initiatives; (3) countries deemed important to US economic interests, most notably oil-producing countries in the Gulf of Guinea region; and (4) the remainder of Sub-Saharan Africa, which remains relegated to the back-burner of US foreign policy. Not surprisingly, US foreign policy increasingly focused on those countries in which core foreign policy interests intersect, as in the case of Algeria, a regional power with oil resources that is considered crucial to combating perceived terrorist threats in North Africa.

A third reality of Obama’s Africa policies has been a sober reckoning concerning Africa programmes that require significant financial resources. Obama early on proposed several new foreign aid initiatives or the expansion of existing foreign aid initiatives concerning Africa. During the campaign, for example, he noted his intention to double US foreign assistance to Africa (which had already trebled
during the Bush Administration) as part of a promise to double the annual foreign aid budget from 25 billion USD to 50 billion USD by 2012. He in particular underscored a desire to showcase the Bush Administration’s highly successful President’s Emergency Programme for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which he also pledged to increase from 15 billion USD in total funding during the Bush years to approximately 50 billion USD by 2012. There has been a sober reckoning in this regard, especially in light of the economic meltdown in the US economy. Although slight increases in PEPFAR levels beyond the levels of the last year of the Bush Administration are likely to remain unchanged, it is difficult to imagine how the Obama Administration will be able to ‘sell’ foreign aid increases to both the American public and the US Congress when so many Americans are either jobless, losing their homes, confronting catastrophic health care costs, and/or all three together.

Swift movement nonetheless has been and will continue to be evident concerning liberal initiatives favoured by the base of the Democratic Party that are not dependent on additional US financial resources. One of the best examples of this trend occurred on 23 January 2009, when Obama officially rescinded US restrictions on international family planning policies officially known as the ‘Mexico City Policy’ but typically referred to as the ‘global gag rule.’ Originally put in place under Ronald Reagan, maintained by Bush senior, lifted by Clinton, and subsequently re-imposed by Bush junior, the gag rule remains a charged ideological policy that serves as a litmus test on both sides of the abortion debate. As explained on the Population Action International (PAI) website (see www.populationaction.org), this policy ensured during the Reagan and both Bush administrations that no US family planning assistance could be provided to foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs) ‘that use funding from any other source to: perform abortions ... provide counselling and referral for abortion; or lobby to make abortion legal or more available in their country’. This policy, and others like it, has been or will continue to be reversed by an administration intent on demonstrating the fruits of electoral victory to its supporters. Most recently in February 2011, the Obama Administration rescinded a large portion of a 2008 rule put in place by the Bush Administration that had provided broad-based protections to medical providers who opposed abortion and other related procedures based on religious or moral grounds.
A fourth trend in Obama Administration foreign policy toward Africa has been a cautious approach to conflict resolution that is nonetheless willing to use the White House as a ‘bully pulpit’. Obama entered office mindful of the fact that the US has not played enough of a proactive role in recent years in resolving conflict on the African continent. In Rwanda, Obama was critical of the Clinton Administration’s unwillingness to act and, in fact, its refusal to label what was happening in Rwanda as genocide. Obama was similarly critical of the Bush Administration’s refusal to take a more forceful approach to the Darfur crisis, despite the Bush Administration’s willingness to describe as genocide the policies of the Bashir regime. Obama instead promised to take a more proactive approach to African conflict resolution.

Although Obama’s knowledge of and reference to these conflicts during the campaign was laudable, an important policymaking reality is that effectively resolving any one of these conflicts would require the sustained attention of the White House. Moreover, the number of conflicts requiring attention has grown, as witnessed by the fact that the International Crisis Group (ICG) lists a total of twenty ongoing conflicts in all regions of the African continent (see www.icg.org). To its credit, the Obama Administration appears to have focused on prioritising a select number of conflicts for attention, beginning with the Sudan, and including the Democratic Republic of Congo and the wider Great Lakes region, and Somalia and the interlocking conflicts in the Horn of Africa. The challenge, of course, is that foreign policy challenges and priorities outside of Africa, including Obama’s pledge to make the Arab-Israeli peace process a White House priority, has not permitted the degree of high-level White House attention necessary to make effective conflict resolution in Africa a reality. And, a potentially contradictory element of administration conflict resolution measures is that US funding for peacekeeping operations, arguably crucial to maintaining stability in post-conflict transitional environments, declined from 530 million USD in 2009 to 332 million USD in 2010 and 286 million USD in 2011. The amount reserved for African peacekeeping operations declined even further, from 382 million USD in 2009 to 188 million USD in 2010 and 138 million USD in 2011 (Department of State 2010).

Obama’s handling of conflict resolution in the Sudan – arguably the African conflict that has received the greatest amount of US attention during the last two years and that has resulted in a relatively
peaceful and historic referendum vote in favour of the secession of southern Sudan – demonstrates both the potential pitfalls and promise of presidential involvement in the conflict resolution process. Specifically, although the Sudan case was relatively unique in that a presidential envoy was appointed and the White House had promised to make it a priority, the demands of the US domestic economy and other regional priorities meant that there was not sustained attention on the part of either the White House or Obama, which is necessary to make effective US leadership in conflict resolution a reality. Indeed, in mid-2010, John Prendergast, co-founder of the Enough Project, an initiative to end genocide and crimes against humanity (Prendergast & Cheadle 2007), severely criticised the Obama White House for a largely hands-off approach and the lack of sustained involvement on the part of the president. “Six months before the self-determination referenda for South Sudan and Abeyei, US policy is not contributing in a meaningful way to peace and justice in the Sudan”, explained Prendergast (2010). “Complicating matters greatly, the Obama Administration is not implementing the policy of benchmarks, incentives, and consequences articulated by Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Rice in October 2009, a policy which appears to have either been put on hold or abandoned”. Criticism by the Enough Project and from other sources was at least partially responsible for greater White House involvement, including Obama’s meeting with Sudanese leaders in September 2010 and his op-ed piece in The New York Times just prior to the Sudanese referendum setting out both carrots and sticks:

Today I am repeating my offer to Sudan’s leaders – if you fulfill your obligations and choose peace, there is a path to normal relations with the United States, including the lifting of economic sanctions and beginning the process, in accordance with United States law, of removing Sudan from the list of states that sponsor terrorism. In contrast, those who flout their international obligations will face more pressure and isolation (Obama 2011: A11).

It is precisely this type of high-level presidential involvement that is necessary to create an effective and coordinated US approach to conflict resolution but will invariably be lacking outside of the Sudan case.

A fifth trend in Obama foreign policy toward Africa is a heightened focus on socio-economic and development issues. Obama during the 2008 presidential campaign criticised the fact that US development assistance to the poorest African countries decreased by nearly 50% from 2000 to 2008. He similarly criticised the fact that
the percentage of development assistance provided to the best-governed African countries had declined even more (by nearly 66%) during the same period. These trends were at least partially due to an overemphasis during the Bush Administration on military policies as part of the global war on terrorism. The Obama Administration pledged to reverse this trend by strengthening a variety of non-military programmes designed to promote socio-economic and political development, including the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), and PEPFAR.

One of the most noteworthy proposals in this regard is Obama’s pledge to restore the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to a position of pre-eminence in the foreign aid hierarchy. USAID funding was severely curtailed during the Bush Administration, as increasing amounts of aid were channelled through the US military establishment and newly-created quasi-independent foreign aid programmes, such as PEPFAR. The Obama Administration’s vision for restructuring the foreign aid structure entailed the moving to USAID of foreign aid programmes currently under more than a dozen different executive branch agencies. The key to this process is the belief that USAID, and not the Pentagon, should play the central role in the formulation and implementation of development and other related foreign policy strategies, not only in Africa, but in all regions of the developing world. Although the USAID budget was increased from 1.2 billion USD in 2009 to 1.7 billion USD in 2010 and 2011, critics note that USAID Director Rajiv Shah was nominated only in November 2009 (ten months after Obama took office), and as of autumn 2010 as many as 12 senior management positions had yet to be confirmed by the US Senate. “USAID cannot be the premier development agency everyone envisions without appointed and confirmed leaders at the helm of its regional and functional bureaus”, explains Staats (2010). “Nor can it elevate development across the US government – as Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and even Secretary of Defense Robert Gates have called for – without a full cadre of assistant administrators to inform major development policy reviews taking place right now and congressional efforts to rewrite foreign assistance legislation”.

A final trend is a mixed record concerning the democratic deficit in US foreign policy toward Africa. Historically speaking, when the normative goal of promoting democracy has clashed with the stra-
ategic goal of containing terrorist threats, the strategic goal typically has won, often associating the US with unsavoury African regimes. The State Department’s Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations for Fiscal Year 2011 demonstrates how this trend has continued under the Obama Administration. In the case of Central Africa, for example, positive rationales are provided for maintaining foreign aid levels to Rwanda and Uganda, despite the fact that both countries are dictatorships that have become increasingly authoritarian in recent years. One of the rationales offered is that both countries constitute valuable regional partners, especially in the military realm. The Rwandan Defense Force (RDF) is lauded as the sixth largest contributor to global peacekeeping forces, most notably the joint United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), where a Rwandan is overall commander. Similarly, the Ugandan Defense Force (UDF) is described as constituting the backbone of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). In short, both regimes are rewarded for their support of U.S.-favoured military operations in Africa at the expense of normative goals, such as democracy promotion.

The US response to pro-democracy movements in North Africa and the wider Middle East at the beginning of 2011 nonetheless demonstrates the importance of having a president who has a personal understanding of Islam (a good portion of his early life was spent in Indonesia) and who is more likely than his Republican Party predecessors to be supportive of democratic openings, including in strategic US allies. For example, Obama sought to underscore an opening to the Islamic world by deciding to grant his first television interview as president (26 January 2009) to an Arabic-language television network, Al Arabiya, an event that was followed by his June 2009 speech in Cairo, Egypt, in which he underscored the need for a “new beginning” in the relationship between the United States and the Islamic world. One of the first major tests of Obama’s beliefs in this regard was demonstrated by his administration’s response to ongoing political crises in the Middle East and North Africa that were sparked by the January 2011 overthrow of the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia and the subsequent overthrow of Hosni Mubarak from power in Egypt in February 2011. In these and other cases, including in pro-US Bahrain where the US Fifth Fleet is based, the Obama Administration has made clear its unswerving support for the rights of oppressed populations, including unfettered access to the internet and other social
media, and has resoundingly denounced any use of government force against demonstrators. In the case of Egypt, Obama and other administration officials publicly warned of dire implications for US aid to Egypt if the Egyptian military used force against the demonstrators. Such statements were certainly critical in the Egyptian military’s decision to ultimately remove Mubarak from power, an act that was resoundingly decried by Israel and conservative opponents of the Obama regime as having abandoned a long-term strategic US ally who was key to the Arab-Israeli Middle East process. It is difficult to imagine the Bush Administration setting the same tone both publicly and privately with such close US strategic allies in the Middle East.

Conclusion

Barack Obama’s election as the 44th president of the United States constituted an historic event for the US and the world in general, and his background and personal connection to the African continent have raised extraordinary expectations concerning the future of US foreign policy toward Africa. He and his administration, however, are confronted with daunting challenges that have limited his manoeuvrability concerning Africa. Critical among these is the continuing crisis in the US economy, which invariably focuses presidential attention on the domestic arena at the expense of foreign policy and forces the White House to make difficult budget choices. Even if the US economic crisis were resolved tomorrow, Africa would still find itself marginalised against the backdrop of competing foreign policy concerns from other regions of perceived greater importance, not to mention the restrictive political constraints associated with the fact that as of January 2011 the White House must deal with a US Congress that is partially dominated by the Republican Party and its Tea Party allies. Moreover, the beginning of the 2012 presidential campaign (which began in January 2011!) means that little if anything of substance will emerge concerning Africa in either 2011 or 2012 beyond reacting to events that emerge on the African continent. As a result, the next potential period of change will be January 2013, when either Obama is returned to the White House and is no longer constrained by having to win another election (and therefore his true foreign policy interests can shine) or the White House is occupied by a newly elected Republican president with presumably different foreign policy priorities from his predecessor. Either way, 2011 and 2012
are unlikely to yield major changes in US foreign policy toward Africa.

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PART THREE

NEW SPACE FOR AFRICAN ENGAGEMENTS?
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PUBLIC POLICY FORMATION IN AFRICA IN THE WAKE OF THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL MELTDOWN: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A NEW MIND IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Lloyd G.A. Amoah

"... let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction."

Frantz Fanon (1967)

“But, soon rather than later, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil.”

John Maynard Keynes (1935)

Abstract

The near-universal and dominant sway of neoliberal ideas in the political and economic spheres in the last thirty-odd years has come under intense scrutiny following the global financial crisis (2007-9). In the global North, governments fashioned out of their taxpayers’ money ‘rescue plans’ to save hitherto globe-spanning, affluent private companies. Some thinkers are wondering what happened to notions of the small and limited government and to the omniscient, omnipotent and unfailing ‘market’, along with other foundational claims of neoliberal public policy formation.

For developing polities in Africa, such critiques (and rebuttals) take on an added urgency and engender a certain necessary introspection, on account of the neoliberal development paradigms which the continent’s development partners have both foisted on and convinced her to pursue. We will argue that the policy responses of the global North to the financial meltdown essentially undermine the axiomatic and nomothetic pretensions of neoliberal policy prescriptions, creating a policy window for African polities to reclaim policy autonomy in a multipolar world. This work will highlight the processes by which neoliberal thought has exerted such a formidable in-
fluence and hold on policy formation in Africa and provide hints by which a sustained, workable response can be forged.

Introduction

There can be no debate about the mauling effects of the global financial crisis of the first decade of this century (2007-9). As if to underscore the pervasive scale and extent of this latest global economic paroxysm, naturalistic metaphors have been enlisted to describe what is still an evolving process. Perennial job shedding, sluggish consumer spending and the spectacular collapse of highly respected, centenarian, affluent global companies have been part of the most enduring impacts of the global financial crisis.

That the latest global financial meltdown stands at the head of a host of others, both minor and major, is not in question. What is salient and requires interrogation is that this bout of global economic malaise demonstrated robustly, to borrow the words of Nell and Semmler (2009: 251), the “decades long liberalisation of financial markets leading to excesses, and the widespread misuse of such markets for rent-seeking”. This decades-long liberalisation of financial markets must, in our considered view, be seen as part of the neoliberal domination of the global public policy formation agenda which was bolstered by the elections of the Thatcher government in 1979 and the Reagan administration in 1980. As these two governments consolidated their power with electoral victories, their neoliberal policies (among others, de-regulation in the financial and other sectors of the economy, reduction in the size of government – both in

1 Melamed (2009: 45) makes this point but argues perceptively that such a rendering masks the human agency involved in the making of what is “the product of decisions that could have been made differently, and may have led to different outcomes”.
2 The Irish economy was on the cusp of bankruptcy in December 2010 and had to be propped up with billions of dollars.
3 At a White House Press Briefing on 30 October 2010, President Barack Hussein Obama indicated (according to the FT Weekend newspaper of 31 October 2010) that the US economy was barely recovering from “nearly two years of job loss”.
4 Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc, a leading global financial services company founded in 1850, collapsed in 2008.
5 Among others, the Latin American Debt Crisis of the 1980s, the US Crash of 1987, the Japanese Stock Market and Real Estate Crisis of the 1990s, the Mexican Peso Crisis of 1994, and the Asian Crisis of 1997-8 readily come to mind.
The neoliberal project: Historical antecedents

The case can be reasonably made that a conscious, deliberate and organised process\textsuperscript{9} was set in motion a little over seven decades ago to place neoliberal ideas at the centre of public policy formation globally. On the periphery of power in the heartland of capitalist Europe, wary of suspicions directed at liberal thought triggered in part by the socio-economic dislocations of the First World War and the Great Depression, a new breed of liberal intellectuals and businessmen sought to re-brand liberal discourse and practice. A first step in this direction was the meeting of liberals in Paris in 1938 at the urging of the French philosopher, Louis Rougier, ostensibly to discuss Walter Lipmann’s book, \textit{The Great Society}. According to Plehwe &

\textsuperscript{6} Underlined by Cold War rivalry and animosity between the East and the West.
\textsuperscript{7} See Sachs (2005) and Stiglitz (2003).
\textsuperscript{8} Certainly, Fukuyama seems to have reconsidered his stance in later writings. See for example \textit{The Fall of America, Inc}. http://www.newsweek.com/2008/10/03/the-fall-of-america-inc.html (Last accessed: 5 December 2010).
\textsuperscript{9} This section draws liberally from Plehwe & Walpen (2006).
Walpen (2006: 30), “a total of 26 intellectuals participated in this effort to create a framework for the innovation of liberalism”. The list of participants at the Paris meeting could be likened to a roll-call of the intellectual leading lights of neoliberalism, including as it did – among others – names such as Friedrich August von Hayek, Raymond Aron, Ludwig von Mises, Alexander Rustow and Michael Polanyi. This meeting in Paris was to provide liberalism its new sobriquet: neoliberalism. Mont Pèlerin, a tiny village close to Lake Geneva, was to serve as the venue for another significant attempt at moving the neoliberal agenda forward after a nine year hiatus. Out of this meeting emerged the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS).

Fredrich August von Hayek provided the intellectual raison d’être for the MPS in his article, The Intellectuals and Socialism, at the second meeting of the organisation held in Seelisburg, Switzerland from 3-10 July 1949. Hayek’s central thesis in this work was that the increasing attractiveness of socialist ideas in post-World War II Europe was attributable to the existence of intellectuals who promoted such ideas (influencing policymakers in the process) and the organisational infrastructure for developing and disseminating such information. The MPS was thus formed to provide a counterpoise to such socialist ideas by utilising the same processes through which such ideas had gained widespread currency and acceptance. Central to the processes in question were intellectuals and a network of organisations such as universities, institutes, foundations, journals and the media.

The neoliberal project unleashed: Of nodes and networks

We adopt Plehwe & Walpen’s (2006) position that it is through a vast, dense, hegemonic network of institutions and intellectuals spanning the entire globe that neoliberal ideas have come to dominate public policy thinking in the last three decades. Neoliberal hegemony in this regard must be construed as operating along multiple levels (national, transnational, world-regional and global) in the attempt, via neoliberal intellectuals and institutions (transnational civil society), to invest and saturate Susan Strange’s (1988) global knowledge system.

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10 It is significant to note that this second effort was financially supported by institutions such as the London School of Economics, the University of Chicago, and the William Volker Fund.
with their ideas and practices. Nkrumah (2004: 239) draws attention to this global knowledge system in his trenchant analysis of the mechanisms of neocolonialism when he avers that:

In order to halt foreign interference in the affairs of developing countries it is necessary to study, understand, expose and actively combat neo-colonialism in whatever guise it may appear. For the methods of neo-colonialists are subtle and varied. They operate not only in the economic field, but also in the political, religious, ideological and cultural spheres. (italics mine)

The MPS is the central node in the global network of neoliberal organisations and their processes, discourses, and practices which sought to dominate the global knowledge system with their ideas. With a membership of approximately 50 at its founding, the MPS could boast of over 1000 members spread over the five continents by 1998. Having initially neglected Africa in its early years (it had just a single member in Egypt in the 1950s), South Africa had by the 1990s become the beachhead of the MPS surgical forays into Africa. Driving this global network is the knowledge production and dissemination process which encapsulates a phalanx of advocacy think tanks, intellectuals, media outlets, corporate entities and policymakers. Plehwe & Walpen (2006: 36-7) underscore the last point when they assert that:

Apart from the numerous ties of MPS members to more than 100 think tanks, foundations and neoliberal societies organised on a national basis (e.g. the US Philadelphia Society or the German F.A. von Hayek Gesellschaft), MPS members participate in other global elite groups such as the World Economic Forum (WEF) with eleven members participating so far. (italics mine)

Our claim here then is that the MPS has by and large been influential in making neoliberal ideas and practices the dominant component of the global knowledge infrastructure via “an expansive network that

11 Strange asserts that the global knowledge system, which in her view has been neglected in the analysis for far too long, constitutes the fourth and final primary dimension conditioning the international political economy.

12 Plehwe & Walpen’s (2006) data indicates not unexpectedly that 438 members of the MPS in the 1990s were economists; a significant statistic if one considers the MPS’s focus on dominating ideational contests related to especially economic policy formation.

13 Such policymakers include, among others, highly visible and influential individuals, such as Vaclav Klaus, former Czech head of government, Germany’s ex-chancellor Ludwig Erhard, and Andrei Shleifer, who served as American advisor to Russia on privatisation in the 1990s.
ranges across diverse institutional arenas, including academia, business, politics, and media” (Plehwe & Walpen 2006: 37). This has had implications for public policy formation in Africa: policymakers especially (and intellectuals too) have arguably lost completely, at the very least, any pretensions (let alone conscious, undisguised expressions) of ideational independence in the face of an ascendant neoliberalism. Another implication is that the seemingly anodyne presence, discourses, and practices of transnational civil society are understood and analyzed in Africa without any doubts regarding their existence and operation as putatively disinterested purveyors of socio-economic and political transformation. In the face of the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideas in Africa, it is arguable that the continent’s policymakers and intellectuals have not paid enough heed to Strange’s (1988: 115) admonition that:

power derived from the knowledge structure is the one that has been most overlooked and underrated. It is no less important than the other three sources of structural power (military, production and finance) in the international political economy but is much less well understood. This is partly because it comprehends what is believed (and the moral conclusions and principles derived from those beliefs); what is known and perceived as understood; and the channels by which beliefs, ideas and knowledge are communicated – including some people and excluding others. (italics mine)

Post-independence public policy formation in Africa: The search for autonomy

Ato Quayson’s (2000: 9) perceptive argument that postcolonialism must be understood as a process of postcolonializing – the latter term denoting “a process of coming into being and of struggle against colonialism and its after-effects” – provides a useful analytical mode for understanding the postcolonial African nation state as an ongoing project of construction and even reconstruction. Certainly, some governments in the first decade after independence sought to capture this “process of postcolonializing” in their development policy choices. For visionary post-independence leaders like Kwame Nkrumah (1957), the central task of the postcolonial African state was finding/creating the space and developing the capacity (technical, managerial, diplomatic, political, and economic) to pursue autonomous, self-directed national development. Autonomy here implies that the new African nations will respond to their existential chal-
Challenges on the basis of their concrete, historico-cultural realities and the national interest and welfare of their citizenry. In other words, public policy formation will not be ‘directed from outside’ (Nkrumah 2004: ix). Nkrumah (1973: vii) considered this a matter of survival:

Once this freedom is gained, a greater task comes into view. All dependent territories are backward in education, in agriculture and in industry. The economic independence that should follow and maintain political independence demands every effort from the people, a total mobilization of brain and manpower resources. What other countries have taken three hundred years or more to achieve, a once dependent territory must try to accomplish in a generation if it is to survive. (italics mine)

Nyerere’s Ujamaa policies represent a classical example of this search for development policy autonomy in the Africa of the 1960s.

In the global South in the 1960s, the quest for autonomous development was to find transnational organisational expression in the Non-Aligned Movement, essentially a collective attempt by developing countries to respond to Cold War rivalries, rivalries which tended to serve as a meddlesome backdrop to any attempts at self-directed development in former colonies. By the 1970s and 1980s, what we will label the ‘autonomy tendency’ (described above) in Africa had all but atrophied. The 1970s were marked by political instability which undermined continuity and creativity in public policy making. As if this was not debilitating enough, the oil crisis and commodity price fluctuations of the 1970s meant that Africa entered the 1980s politically and economically enervated.

3G public policy formation in Africa: The neoliberal vise-grip

The formation of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944 was to prove seminal in the development trajectory of African countries. Newly independent African nations, which emerged in a global financial and economic infrastructure defined and maintained by the global North and circumstanced ab initio as a corollary, had little option but to join these institutions. It is instructive to note that Ghana, for example, joined the WB (and its affiliate organisations) and the IMF six months and fourteen days after independence on 20 September 1957. In our view, these two institutions in particular have served as the key vectors of neoliberal ideas in Africa and have been particularly successful at this in the last three decades. In other words, what
we call “3G Public Policy Formation”\textsuperscript{14} in Africa has been driven by neoliberal ideas and practices promoted in the main (and initially) by the WB and the IMF. Honkaniemi (2010: 1), commenting on Ghana’s relations with the WB as recently as 2009, underscores this point when she states that:

\begin{quotation}
... Low income countries such as Ghana remain under the influence of the Bank, especially regarding the management of their primary industries and natural resources and in relation to the design of sensitive policy areas such as fiscal policy and public sector reform. (italics mine)
\end{quotation}

Through, firstly, the agency of economic conditionalities (later followed by political ones), by the 1990s the neoliberal policy paradigm had taken hold in African countries as the most dominant. This neoliberal paradigm in its African variant has been particularly strenuous in its insistence on rolling back the state in order to ensure the dominance of the market mechanism (Amoah 2005, 2008). In the period in question, policy narratives in Africa have come to be decidedly marked by concepts such as – among others – down-sizing, retrenchment, contracting out, efficiency, institution building, privatisation, and public-private partnership, all framed in a rationalistic, axiomatic and nomothetic language. If the WB and the IMF were the arrowhead for the adoption of neoliberal ideas and practices in Africa, then an assortment of policy advocacy groups, think tanks and non-governmental organisations have been instrumental in the entrenchment of neoliberalism. We posit neoliberal knowledge production and dissemination linkages (direct and indirect) between the WB, IMF and such neoliberal transnational organisations as the MPS, which targeted Africa (especially in the wake of the end of the Cold War) as a neoliberal policy redoubt. It is not for nothing that the MPS at its 29\textsuperscript{th} meeting\textsuperscript{15} held in Vancouver, Canada in 1992 (a year after the collapse of the USSR) placed Africa on its agenda for discussions for the first time ever.

\textsuperscript{14} 3G Public Policy Formation refers to what we describe as third-generation public policy approaches of the 1980s to date in Africa, which tend to be heavily influenced by neoliberal ideas and practices such as privatisation and de-regulation which the Washington Consensus framework encapsulated. In our view it is important to draw such an analytical distinction between two earlier periods of public policy formation in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, which were not so thoroughly influenced by such neoliberal ideas.

\textsuperscript{15} See the Liberaal Archief (http://www.liberaalarchief.be/engels/indexengels.html), which provides an account of MPS meetings from its founding to 1998.
In Africa, the emergence of a neoliberal African elite has been a product of the vast neoliberal network of organisations encompassing universities, institutes, foundations, journals, the media and the incentives (material and non-material) underpinning it all as it seeks to reproduce and maintain neoliberal ideational hegemony on a global scale. Neoliberalism’s ideational hegemony in Africa is undoubtedly facilitated and undergirded by the asymmetrical power relations (especially financial) between the postcolonial African state and neoliberal transnational organisations. Thus, while the WB and the IMF provide critical budgetary support in addition to other kinds of financial succour to African nations, these neoliberal transnational organisations bankroll seminars, workshops, conferences and, crucially, think tanks. What we are saying in effect then is that neoliberalism’s ideational hegemony in Africa is both a function and a product of the continent’s impecuniousness.

The chink in the neoliberal armour

On the responses to the global financial crisis, Nesvetailova & Palan (2010: 798) argue that:

notwithstanding the emerging diversity of the interpretations of the crisis, the global credit crunch raised serious doubts about every single aspect of finance theory, policy and practice associated with a set of dogmas commonly described as ‘neoliberalism’. (italics mine)

Regarding these “serious doubts”, we will focus here on the axiomatic and nomothetic claim by neoliberalism that the market provides the most efficient and unfailing means for the allocation of resources. The upshot of such a claim, bolstered by the intellectual disquisitions

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16 On how neoliberal knowledge production fosters such a process, see Schüller & Groh-Samberg (2006).

17 Power is a contested concept, but there is a consensus in the literature on the way in which it shapes reality. Clegg & Haugaard (2009: 3) highlight this point: “one of the characteristics of the development of the literature over the last thirty years has been a move away from this ‘common sense’ view to more systemic, less agent specific, perceptions of power that see it as more generally constitutive of reality.”

18 In Ghana the WB is now also sponsoring a variety of social events such as musical concerts and documentaries.

19 These have become industries in their own right and provide an iterative means by which neoliberal ideational hegemony reproduces and maintains itself in Africa.

20 Das (2009) makes much the same point in relation to the WB and global HIV/AIDS policy.
of Hayek and Friedman, was public policy formation that was completely averse to encumbering the market. In other words, across the globe neoliberals championed the operation of the market mechanism free of any fetters (read regulation/intervention from government). In the global North this logic was thoroughly manifested in the financial sector, where on account of the sector’s complexity all assets are financial: they are denominated as capitalization of ‘expected future profits and interest payments, adjusted for risk and discounted to their present value’ (Nesvetailova & Palan 2010: 805).

In such a milieu, where any interference with the market mechanism was considered heretical, anything (read innovation) was possible. The credit boom of 2002-7 provided empirical proof that markets left on their own were the surest way to prosperity. Certainly, the prosperity that the credit boom fostered spawned an impenetrable wall behind which physicists and mathematicians (turned financial gurus) crafted esoteric formulae that made the creation of Collateral Debt Obligations (CDOs) possible. The CDOs were the crucial link in the global financial meltdown, on account of being essentially ‘toxic assets’: debts that in reality could never be repaid by debtors who simply did not have the means. As major financial institutions faced imminent collapse and threatened the entire economy of the global North (and the world), governments tapped into the public purse to remedy the situation with what has become known in the literature as ‘financial bailout’ and ‘rescue packages’. As one scholar (Palma 2009: 829) put it, this turn of events was a classical case of “the revenge of the market on rentiers”, and governments (not the market) were scrambling to mitigate the full force of this vengeance. The North American automobile industry, for example, was one of the key industries that had to be rescued by national governments. The global response to the strains in the industry was an uncharacteristic direct

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21 Indeed, it was Friedman & Schwartz (1971) who formulated a quantitative theory of money which construed inflation as a purely monetary phenomenon and displaced the Keynesian understanding of inflation as driven by investments. The corollary of this is the contemporary penchant for the insulation of monetary policy from so-called government interference, evidenced in the passing of legislation aimed at underlining the independence of central banks across the globe. The Bank of Ghana Act, 2002 (Act 612) is a typical example.

22 CDOs are tradable financial assets which structured finance constructs out of debts (accruing from mortgages, car purchases, credit card use and the like). See Nell & Semmler (2009).
intervention by governments (Stanford 2010: 384). The American government (first the Bush II administration and then the Obama administration) provided support for both Chrysler and GM, totalling 81 billion USD; in global North countries like the UK, France and Germany, the public purse provided pecuniary relief to ailing automobile companies (Stanford 2010: 396). The reified market that was theorised as infallible and unerring by neoliberal thinking was ailing and needed the intervention of its arch nemesis: government.

Neoliberal public policy thinking had presented government intervention in any shape or form and under any condition in Africa as unacceptable. The market and, by extension, the private sector was the famed ‘engine of growth’. Under the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP)/Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the WB and the IMF, subsidies on public goods (not cars!) like health and education were categorically and summarily scrapped. In effect, neoliberalism in Africa had ensured that government intervention even under critical circumstances was outlawed. In the centers of global financial and economic power (the citadels of neoliberalism), however, government could act directly in the policy arena as and when the demand arose and it saw fit. In our view, the policy responses of governments in the global North to the financial crisis indicate that neoliberal tenets are not consistently applied and reflect ideological proclivities and preferences which undermine any universalistic, axiomatic and nomothetic pretensions.

A multipolar world: The ideational sub-text

In our view, multipolarity is not merely about the re-diffusion of political and economic power on the global level but crucially linked to the legitimacy of the ideas (worldview) undergirding the political and economic power of the new entrants (who make a multipolar world possible) to the global power context. In other words, multipolarity is also about the contest of ideas. There have emerged in recent times writings on the geo-political implications of an emergent China (Eisenman et al. 2007; Kurlantzick 2007; Lagerkvist 2009;

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23 Wrestling with this inconsistency, Block (2008) has labelled the US a ‘hidden developmental state’.

24 We focus on China here (and by implication Asia) in our analysis of multipolarity because in our view it is the one nation in the last half century which, at the very least, has been central to the re-calibration of global power. China has become
Tan 2009; Amoah 2010b; Contessi 2010; Mahbubani 2010) which draw attention to the ideational riposte or counterpoint that the new powers of the 21st century portend. Some of these new powers, it would seem, especially refuse to take as a priori truth neoliberal public policy thinking. Commenting on the ideational impact of the financial crisis on Asian policymakers, Mahbubani (2010: 205) is unambiguous:

The first real result of this crisis is the loss of any lingering faith that Asian policymakers may have had with the Reagan-Thatcher revolution in governance and economic philosophy.

Again, in sharp contrast to neoliberalism’s market fundamentalism, Mahbubani (2010) argues that Asian policymakers forged a pragmatic balance between the market and the state. It bears adding here that, at the very least, the material well-offness attained in the last three decades by countries such as Singapore and China shows that there can be workable ideational alternatives to neoliberal public policy formation.

The Chinese scholar, Justin Yifu Lin (2007: 14),25 in his Marshall Lectures delivered at Cambridge in 2007, underscored the importance of ideas for the rapid socio-economic transformation of developing polities:

The failure of many former socialist and developing countries to achieve dynamic growth in their transitional processes is due also to their governments’ specific transition strategy based on inadequate ideas ...

In Lin’s (2007: 17) view, new powers like China emerged on back of the capacity to escape “the dominant social thinking”26 of the 1960s through to 1990s. Our argument then is this: if hitherto dirt-poor and circumstanced societies have managed to transition to the centre of global power, powered in part by a very self-conscious ideational independence, such a stance ought to commend itself to Africa’s policymakers as a matter of necessity.

one of the key drivers of the global economy and is increasingly influencing the WB and the IMF. The emergence of the G-20 is a case in point.

25 Justin Yifu Lin (the first Chinese to earn an economics PhD from North America) was a key advisor to the Chinese government during the gaige yu kaifang (Reform and Opening Up) era and is currently the chief economist of the WB, a post formerly held by Joseph Stiglitz.

26 In the 1980s and 1990s, such “dominant social thinking” considered the market supreme and declared government the problem.
Towards a new mind: Building blocks for a post-financial meltdown public policy formation framework in Africa

The unfolding of the global financial crisis presents, in our view, a vital policy window for Africa to begin the task of inventive policy formation beyond the hegemony of neoliberal ideas. Writing on how policy change occurs, in his understanding, Kingdon (2006: 165) describes the policy window, a key moment for driving policy change, as “an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or push attention to their special problems”. As explicated earlier in this chapter, the global financial crisis exposes the disingenuousness of the axiomatic and universal law claims of neoliberal policy thinking with regard to the market mechanism and by extension the role of government. It is therefore critical for Africa’s intellectuals and policymakers to use the policy window offered by the global financial crises to draw vigorous attention to and respond to this very special problem: the ideological warfare underpinnings of neoliberal ideas of the market and government.

As Morçöl (2002: 13) has noted, “ontological assumptions are not discussed frequently or openly in policy analysis, but they are implicit in every analysis conducted”. In other words, public policy formation is also an arena where worldviews vie for legitimacy and even dominance. African policymakers and intellectuals need to be sensitive to the worldview question attending public policy formation. This in our view is a crucial first step in countering the influence of, to borrow Lin’s (2007: 17) phrase, ‘dominant social thinking’, of which neoliberal thought in the last thirty years has been the most enduring and visible expression.

If Lin (2007) is right, then Africa’s development in the coming decades must be a function of the fresh ideas that the continent’s policymakers and thinkers will craft to guide public policymaking. The changing geo-political architecture of the world provides the crucial ‘leg room’ for policy innovation for Africa. The WB’s president, Robert Zoellick, very much acknowledges the emergence of a multipolar world:

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We are now in a new, fast-evolving multipolar world economy in which some developing countries are emerging as economic powers; others are moving towards becoming additional poles of growth…

Zoellick adds further (and uncharacteristically) that a multipolar world needs to recognise “different perspectives and circumstances” and also that development is not about “ideological panaceas, blueprints, or one-size-fits-all”. Clearly then, African polities need to seize the policy initiative in an emergent multipolar world where a multiplicity of policy ideas, not just a dominant one (neoliberalism), are advertising their utility. Africa must add to this kaleidoscope of policy ideas, which should ultimately power her also to the table of global significance. In other words, we are arguing that the financial crisis, occurring as it did in a changing geo-political milieu, provides a crucial opportunity for Africa to craft a new mind for her public policy formation. By ‘a new mind’ we mean fresh understandings of public policy formation (derived from an African worldview), encompassing novel epistemological and methodological moorings. The construction of such a new mind should begin with the following critical realisations, which we call ‘building blocks’:

- public policy formation in the last thirty years has been driven by the ideological claims of neoliberalism with regards to the market and the state.
- a multipolar world provides Africa with the opportunity to craft her own public policy approaches in response to her existential challenges.
- African policymakers and intellectuals must provide the needed agency for self-conscious public policy approaches to emerge.

Without such a new mind, we ask, how can Africa perceptively, self-interestedly and creatively engage her own world and the larger world on her own terms, without hegemonic encumbrances?

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28 See Amoah (2010a).
29 Margaret Stout (2010), for example, has drawn attention to the possibilities for such new theoretical approaches in the field of public administration.
Possibilities and first principles: The rise of Africa’s neo-elites

If a new mind for policy formation is to emerge in Africa there must arise as a matter of necessity (and a crucial first step) a vanguard of intellectuals, a critical component of what I characterise as the neo-elites, who will be conscious of and engage the ideational challenges of the constantly shifting (overt and subtle) nature of the international political-economy.

Who then are the African neo-elite? This refers to the select group of people who will come to understand as their historical task the provision of the strategic ideational, managerial, organisational, inspirational, and leadership inputs for the task of national transformation in African states. The neo-elite must be understood in terms of a national transformation network linking vital segments of society such as (among others) academia, business and civil society. In this construct then, the notion of the neo-elite entails the critique and rejection (appropriately the historical task of the neo-elite intellectuals) of the ‘one-dimensional thinking’ orientation of Africa’s neoliberal elites, who in the last thirty years have become powerful and influential. The neo-elite class is hypothesised here as a prescriptive notional counterpoise to Fanon and Chinweizu’s corrupt elites,

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30 This section restates positions already articulated in Amoah (2010c). The concept of neo-elites is derived from a close reading of the socio-political processes which spurred Singapore and China’s rapid transformation in the last half of the twentieth century.

31 The-market-is-good versus The-state-is-bad worldview and all that this entails for policy formation.

32 Chinweizu in his later work has been trying to flesh out his own pathways for the emergence of a new African elite. See, for example, Chinweizu (2010). Fanon (1967: 142) also holds out such a possibility in his trenchant critique of the post-colonial African bourgeoisie:

“But deep-rooted contradictions undermine the ranks of that bourgeoisie; it is this that gives the observer an impression of instability. There is not as yet homogeneity of caste. Many intellectuals, for example, condemn this regime based on the domination of the few. In under-developed countries, there are certain members of the élite, intellectuals and civil servants, who are sincere, who feel the necessity for a planned economy, the outlawing of profiteers and the strict prohibition of attempts at mystification. In addition such men fight in a certain measure for the mass participation of the people in the ordering of public affairs.”

Fanon (1967: 142-3) continues, and tellingly:

“In those under-developed countries which accede to independence, there almost always exists a small number of honest intellectuals, who have no very precise ideas about politics, but who instinctively distrust the race for positions and
whose agenda in Africa and Latin America has tended historically to be fundamentally the pursuit and protection of their ideational, material, pecuniary and other interests at the expense of their societies.

In an increasingly multipolar world, as has emerged in the first decade of this century, a multiplicity of policy ideas vie for attention. China’s policy empirics (and those of other major countries in Asia such as South Korea and Singapore), for example, cannot be neatly explicated by recourse to well-worn neoliberal ideas. This reality, combined with occurrences in the global political-economy such as the global financial meltdown (2007-9) – the responses to which point up the inconsistencies, pretensions, and limitations of dominant policy narratives – provide at the very least vital ideational space for counterviews, initially within the national context and then on a broader global level. The neo-elite intellectual is constantly alert to the possibility of the emergence of such ideational space, which he or she appropriates discursively as part of a broader movement in the search for autonomous national transformation and the re-configuration of global power. In other words, the neo-elite intellectual is conscious of the ideational problematic that needs to be resolved and lies at the heart of national self-actualisation. Certainly, such consciousness without action will atrophy. Thus, it is critical for the neo-elite intellectual to also actively seek out spaces of action which ideally should span the academic, social, political and other life worlds. This is to ensure, and crucially so, that critiques of dominant policy narratives find expression in actual (and inventive) policy formation which will respond effectively to the existential challenges of Africa in situ.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have mapped the processes by which neoliberal ideas have come to dominate global public policy formation. We focused especially on neoliberal ideas of the state and the market and pensions which is symptomatic of the early days of independence in colonised countries. The personal situation of these men (breadwinners of large families) or their background (hard struggles and a strict moral upbringing) explain their manifest contempt for profiteers and schemers. We must know how to use these men in the decisive battle that we mean to engage upon which will lead to a healthier outlook for the nation.”

Not that this has not been attempted (Berger 2006).
the axiomatic and nomothetic claims underpinning them. In our view, the dominance of these ideas was effected through a very deliberate, organised and focused agenda to dominate the global knowledge system through an intricate network of knowledge-producing transnational organisations. The policy responses in the citadels of neoliberal thought to the global financial crisis point up the inconsistencies in the application of neoliberal ideas. We argue that an emergent multipolar world implies a contest of policy ideas on the global level. Such a backdrop should provide Africa with the possibility for re-engaging critically with the neoliberal paradigm, an engagement that must of necessity lead to a new mind for public policy formation on the continent in a post-global financial crisis world. In this regard, the emergence of the neo-elite intellectual is postulated as a critical first step. Such a new mind as the neo-elite intellectual will contribute to building is crucial if Africa is to engage the world on her own terms, void of the hegemonic deadweight she has laboured under in the last five centuries. This is the vital calling of Africa’s policymakers and intellectuals in the coming decades.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ALIGNING AND HARNESSING THE GAINS OF GLOBALISATION TO AN AFRICAN ADVANTAGE: TOWARDS ‘GLO-FRICANISATION’

Lawrence Ogbo Ugwuanyi

Abstract

This chapter sets out to highlight the complexity involved in engaging Africa for development in its global demands and to articulate the need for ideological re-birth of Africans for this development. The chapter will make a case for ideological re-birth to accommodate the large block of the Pro-African world globally. The argument to this effect is that, in addition to the large African Diaspora, there are Pro-African minds scattered across different parts of the world who should be accommodated under a large ideological umbrella to contribute to and influence African development. Given the complexity of what is involved in the proper protection of African humanity at the moment – some of which is clearly political (as exemplified in the problem of Africans in the continent); some psychological (as exemplified in the divided personality of Africans in the Diaspora, who appear politically and economically secure but culturally insecure); some racial (as exemplified in the Pro-Arab Africans, who define Africa in terms of ideals and values that emanate from the Arab world); and some clearly economic and racial (as is the case with the Afro-Brazilians, who appear to suffer racial inequality because of their African origin and for whom the idea of Africa demands a salvific mission) – what idea of globalisation will lead the realisation of the African dream of nurturing a prosperous people in the world within the demands of modernity? This chapter sets out to search for this ideology, an ideology that can appropriate the gains of globalisation to an African advantage and pioneer and promote African unity by re-connecting Pro-African minds (all who are interested in African development) in its global demands.
**Introduction**

The chapter sets out by articulating the idea of globalisation and its implication for African humanity. Thereafter, the chapter will attempt to provide the basis on which Africa can benefit from the gains of globalisation, by articulating the need for an African ideological response to globalisation. It will examine the extent to which popular African ideologies, such as that of Pan-Africanism, can serve this purpose. Through a critical response to Pan-Africanism in relation to globalisation, the chapter will provide a fresh proposal in this direction through the ideology of ‘glo-Africanisation’.

The need for the attempt arises from the complexity involved in engaging Africa for development in its global demands and the need for ideological re-birth to accommodate the large block of the Pro-African world globally. Globalisation is a very influential process in the world at the moment – a process not wrong in itself, but rather an inevitable wind blowing across the world. Thus there is the need to provide a productive response to the forces of globalisation.

A cluster of works have appeared from African scholars, which are devoted to a critique of globalisation. These include such works as those of N. Gordimer (1998), J.F.E. Ohiorhenuan (1998), E. Madunagu (1999), A. Momoh & D. Seteolu (2000), D. Nabudere (2000), S. Odion-Akaine (2000), F. Oriakhi (2000), B. Enwegbara (2001), E. Toyo (1999, 2000), and F.B. Nyamnjoh (2003). These works provide severe criticisms of the idea of globalisation in a manner that suggests that they would rather opt for a reversal of the process, especially in relation to Africa. Similarly, there are public presentations, such that on the World Bank (Bagshaw 2004), which promote an unfair criticism of globalisation by locating the problem of the failure of globalisation in Africa as caused simply and solely by Africa. These two extremes are what this work sets out to contest and review through an ideological response to globalisation.

Even if globalisation harbours some harmful potential, might it not be worthwhile to consider some positive benefits that could be deduced from the idea? Indeed, even if globalisation is, as articulated by the late, ebullient Nigerian political theorist Claude Ake (1987), merely “the match of capital all over the world in search of profit, a process reflected in the wishes and power of multinational companies”, there is still the need to examine and even propose how this match can turn into a positive gain for African people – for even if the
immediate outcome of globalisation is not profitable, especially to Africans, there is obviously the promise of a better human community in the very idea inherent in the ideology: the promise of turning the world into one human family, at least in terms of some shared ideals as opposed to the era of Cold War and ideological conflict. Thus, the African response to globalisation should not just consist of a destructive criticism of the idea, but rather of a reconstructive approach. To initiate this turnaround, especially in relation to Africa, is the focus of this chapter.

I will first articulate the idea of globalisation and its implication for African humanity. Thereafter, I will articulate globalisation in relation to what I will refer to as the African irony: the fact that globalisation as it operates at the moment does not serve the anticipations and desires of African people. The chapter will then go on to present the need for a better ideological response to the challenges of globalisation – that is, one that will position Africa in a better way to respond to the challenges of globalisation. To this end, I will attempt to provide a critique of a predominant ideology which appears to have the potential to solve this problem but which, in view of the claims of this chapter, is grossly deficient for this purpose. Here I have in mind the ideology of Pan-Africanism. Through a critique of this predominant African ideology, an ideology which offers the idea of globalisation at an African level but which in reality is not properly positioned to play this role, the chapter will provide a fresh proposal in this direction thorough the ideology of glo-fricanisation. This fresh ideology believes that there is a need to reconfigure the idea of African unity around specific needs and interests for which even non-Africans can contribute to African development, and that it is by this reconfiguring that globalisation can be made to produce a positive effect in African life.

The idea of globalisation and its implication for African humanity

Globalisation is the growing intensification of links and connections among the world community, by which an event in any one part is influenced by or caused by events in other parts. According to Ali Mazrui (2001: 4), globalisation is “the gradual villagization of the world ... compressing distance, homogenizing culture, accelerating mobility, and reducing the relevance of political borders”. Similarly, Ibrahim Babangida (1998: 18) refers to globalisation as “the liberal-
ization and the intensification of international linkages in trade, finance, markets, production, research, transportation, energy, medicine, education, politics and culture, that is accelerated by discoveries in microelectronics, information processing, communication and biotechnology”. Globalisation, in brief, can be understood as a process whereby the human community is turned into and operates as a common sphere of socio-cultural interaction, where an event in one part of the globe has the capacity to produce results and lasting consequences in another part, even when the locations are considerably far apart. These events can be divided into three types: social, economic, and political. In each case, the world seems to be ‘shrinking’, and people are increasingly aware of this.

From the above, we can see that globalisation is the networking of the human community through politics, economy and technology to form what can be called a supranational and supraterritorial village of humanity.

Two significant items characterise globalisation. The first is what can be called a cultural dislocation of mankind through values constructed by certain aspects of modernity. The second is a relocation of this culture to what can be called a cultural centre (defined as a basis of evaluation and identity) which itself is defined by a universal network of human aspirations. In essence, there are what can be called global needs and desires, needs and desires to which the response is globalisation.

Globalisation is to a large extent multidimensional. We can talk of economic globalisation, political globalisation, environmental globalisation, technological globalisation and cultural globalisation. Economic globalisation can be conceived of as the growing interconnection among the hitherto disparate economies of the world, whereby economic policies and practices formulated in one part of the world produce effects on other parts of the world. It manifests itself in what can be called industrial globalisation and financial globalisation. Financial globalisation is the interlinkage among the financial industries of the world community by which the inflow and outflow of financial capital in one part of the world affects other parts of the world. Similarly, industrial globalisation is the growth of multinational companies, whose activities influence human lives and produce effects in any parts of the world where they are located. Examples of these companies include Cocoa-Cola and Shell BP.
Political globalisation manifests in the growing culture of democracy all over the world, as a result of which it is now possible to talk not just of the international community but what can justifiably be called the ‘intra-national community’. By intra-national community we mean a community of people across the world linked by what can be called a shared political aspiration, especially as it relates to political ethics and values. Hence, in many modern states of the world, there is at the moment a human rights community who are devoted to the cause of human rights.

Another aspect of globalisation is globalisation of information and technology. By this we mean the expansion of information technology all over the world, a world in which the information industry (the generation and dissemination of information) has now become almost the largest industry globally. This aspect of globalisation is such that there are virtually no areas of knowledge, however hidden, that cannot be reached by other human beings across national and international boundaries. For instance, with such powerful and widely connected television networks such as Cable Network News (CNN), Al Jazeera, and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), there is no relevant news that cannot be shared among the world community if desired.

The final aspect of globalisation which we shall itemise is what can be called cultural globalisation. This is the emergence of global tastes and attitudes, arising from the same or similar consumption patterns among mankind. It has to do with taste as it pertains to the material aspects of culture – such as clothes, food, and music – and the spiritual aspects such as values, ideas and ideals. It has also to do with the growing appreciation of science and the values it offers to the world, leading to a state of affairs where the scientific is considered more valuable than the non-scientific.

Having outlined the different aspects of globalisation, the question is as follows: what are the promises of globalisation for Africa? By this I mean the specific gains which Africans stand to gain from the project of globalisation. The first gain that could be anticipated from globalisation is that it should lead to a full adoption and adaptation of African concerns as global concerns. By this I mean that the problems identified as peculiarly African should transmute to become ones that are more than African and carry the weight of global concern. What this means is that there should be what will be called ‘de-localisation’ of Africa to a globalisation of Africa, a process by which African
problems and prospects should form an important item in the formulation of world policies and programmes.

The other implication is that African values and principles should be consciously sought after and studied in the construction of what should constitute global values. For instance, if through the project of globalisation it is discovered that there are specific values with their roots in African culture which have the potential of fostering the growth of the global human community, these should be adopted.

It should also be expected that the idea of globalisation should add strong value to African labour and resources. By this I mean that the quality of goods and services derivable from Africa should assume a stronger relevance. These include agricultural labour and products, resources, and/or capital. For instance, with the idea of globalisation it should be anticipated that African food crops will become more popular, whereby the gains of African labour should increase. It should also imply that greater weight and values should be attached to human worth and dignity in Africa.

At the moment, African countries reflect an increasing population growth per family. This growing number of people in Africa has come to mean a growing culture of consumption of goods from other parts of the world. This benefit should imply higher value for the human being in Africa because it is consumption (which is basically built on the human) that defines and directs production. Thus, there should be a higher value attached to consumption, a value as great as to production – and a higher value attached to consumers, a value as great as to producers.

Globalisation and the African irony

The irony in the scenario captured above is that the African situation is nowhere close to the expectations that we have outlined. Globalisation has not defined itself in these terms in Africa. Whereas the effects of globalisation are strong in Africa, these effects cannot be said to be in the terms we have highlighted. Globalisation in Africa is still one in which the productive potentials of Africa are on the weak side – because African labour and resources, both human and material, do not attract much relevance and gain. The African force driving globalisation is still minimal or weak. By African force I mean the African population, African tastes and resources. Thus, globalisation in relation to Africa is still one of unequal force, for which the labour,
resources, potentials and gains are judged based on what can be called an ‘imperial primordiality’ or conversely ‘primordial imperialism’. By this I mean that globalisation is still anchored in the expansionist philosophy of economic relations among the world community, whereby economic dominance defines and dictates social and human interaction.

Globalisation in relation to Africa is still characterised by gross inequality of rights, privileges and opportunities because Africa and the Third World are merely fringe players in the global economy and politics. The causes of this scenario are many, and they need be itemised for a proper understanding of the ideology of globalisation in relation to Africa. The first among these is the ideology that drives globalisation.

Globalisation is still an ideology driven by interest, defined in terms of accumulation and appropriation of human and material resources of the world community. There is yet to be what can be called ‘neutral globalisation’ – that is, a globalisation that is not in furtherance of geo-political interest. For this reason, financial and political gains still define and dictate the tune and pace of globalisation. Hence, the Nigerian socialist thinker Edwin Madunagu aptly refers to globalisation as globalisation of capitalism. According to him:

Globalization is the globalization of capitalism, not the globalization of a “neutral” economic system or globalization of post-capitalism as the imperial intellectuals and their slaves in the underdeveloped countries would have us believe (Madunagu 1999: 53).

Inferring from the above, we can hold that globalisation harbours all the defects of capitalism. Capitalism as it is widely known implies the principle of benefit and interest, which in itself is an outcome of the desire for gain and profit. Capitalism finds its human route in the appropriation of labour for larger gain, gain which is often defined in terms of how the outcome of labour is greater than the investment therein. For this reason, capitalism is squarely anchored in a profiteering tendency. But the profiteering tendency of capitalism, especially in relation to globalisation, would only lead to what can be called ‘capitalisation of globalisation’ – meaning that the entire project of globalisation would be conditioned on how much gain it can yield – rather than the evolution of a more human and equal world. Capitalism is essentially a predator on human potentials, and there can be no capitalism without this tendency. For this reason, when globalisation operates essentially within this logic, then it will of necessity turn
to prey on one section of the world community to the benefit of the other and will only be judged successful to the extent that it best serves this interest.

A relevant question to ask at this point is the following: what are the roots of this problem and how can we address it to make globalisation more relevant for Africans and any other marginalised portions of the world? The first cause of this problem which can be listed is the lack of attention given to the mental structures on which globalisation can be constructed. By this I mean the ideas, ideals, values and platform on which the human structures that drive globalisation should be built. It is scarcely believable that in a global world, which by implication suggests a philosophy of oneness and ‘intra-community’, the principle of individualism (an ethics that approves human actions according to their ability to defend egoistic tendencies) is still a preferred basis for social interaction, more so than is the principle of communa (which suggests a more interactive principle). The implication or the suggestion that arises from this is that globalisation is basically the attempt to link structures and systems together instead of persons and principles. Thus, while we can think of an implied link between physical, technological and environmental concerns, this is not translated into any form of link between human and moral concerns, even though it is a well-known fact that the latter is the sub-structure on which the former is built. This undesirable feature has led to the inhuman features of globalisation. This is what perhaps has led to the very critique of the idea of globalisation, especially from the marginalised portions of the world to which Africa belongs, which are de-humanised rather than being ‘re-humanised’.

The other root of the deficiency in the project of globalisation which operates against Africa arises from the consumption of Africa and the consumption of African cultural and agricultural products. Here, what is seen within the regime of cultural globalisation is the export of consumable items from one part of the world to another, without a reciprocal balance of movement of African products to other parts of the world. For instance, African tuber crops such as yam and cassava are rarely found in other parts of the world, even though similar agricultural products from other parts of the world are imported into Africa with speed and devotion.
Globalisation and the need for an alternative ideological response

In the midst of the demands and desires of globalisation in relation to Africa – in particular, the need to reposition Africa to participate in the gains of globalisation and foster a project of equality and economic justice and to relate to Africa on the basis of human dignity – there is the need to explore an ideological framework to address this problem. Before I do that, let me attempt to explore the quality of the ideological development in Africa to see whether this alternative is already available. In doing this, I mean that the African formula for responding to globalisation does not lie just in opposing the trend but in taking it in a more positive direction by way of locating the solutions to Africa’s problems.

In the effort to establish the ideology that could serve the cause of globalisation, let me begin with a review of a prominent ideology that has served the cause of African development, to see whether it can serve this objective. Here I have in mind the ideology of Pan-Africanism. A review of Pan-Africanism is relevant in this regard because Pan-Africanism promotes building a larger coalition of Africans, such as is suggested by the ideology of globalisation. Indeed, the African scholar Ali Mazrui (2001) took this position strongly in his essay, ‘Pan-African Origins of Globalization’, when he attempted to link the origin of globalisation to the origins of Pan-Africanism.

First of all, let me articulate the meaning of Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism is the ideological movement that emphasises the sameness and oneness of the African family, seeking from there to provide a framework for the unity and growth of African peoples. Initiated in Paris in 1891 by W.E.B. Du Bois, this movement anchored itself in a racial consciousness of the African identity, believing that the African destiny world-over is inter-linked and that efforts made to improve the lot of Africans on one front must be aimed at improving the lot of Africans elsewhere. The ideals of this movement can be summarised in the words of Sekou Toure, foremost Guinean political icon, who held that “Africa should be considered like the human body, when a finger is cut off, the whole body suffers” (Sekou Toure, The Doctrine and Methods of the Democratic Party of Guinea, quoted in Mutiso & Rohio 1975: 352). Other pioneers of Pan-Africanism include Marcus Garvey, Wallace Johnson, George Padmore and Ras Makonnen, Kwame Nkrumah (pioneer president of Ghana), Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Patrice Lumumba, etc. The latest efforts to sustain the ideals of
Pan-Africanism include the Pan-African Congress held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, 19 to 27 June 1974, and a periodic publication of *Third World First*, an important journal of Pan-African studies, as well as *Pan-African Movement Newsletter*. In the five Pan-African Congresses preceding the independence of African states from their colonial governments, Pan-Africanism placed emphasis on autonomy, unity, education, and freedom as important ideals for the African peoples. Indeed, the fifth congress, held in 1945 in Manchester, made the official demand for black African autonomy and independence.

We can identify several brands of Pan-Africanism. First, there is Sub-Saharan Pan-Africanism, an assertion of solidarity among black Africans south of the Sahara. Secondly, there is trans-Saharan Pan-Africanism, emphasising the links between Africa south and north of the Sahara (the Organization of African Unity, which has currently transformed into the African Union, is based on the principle of trans-Saharan Pan-Africanism). Thirdly, there is Trans-Atlantic Pan-Blackism, constituting links between Africa south of the Sahara and the Black Diaspora, the solidarity of shared blackness that is extended to black Americans, West Indians, black Brazilians, and other black people in the Western hemisphere. Fourthly, there is Trans-Atlantic Pan-Africanism, bringing together the black Diaspora in the Western hemisphere with all Africans in the continent, both black and Arab (Mazrui 1980: 26).

For Nkrumah, the idea of Pan-Africanism can be summarised as the need for “a continental government for Africans” (Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, quoted in Mutiso & Rohio 1975: 344) and “the need to maintain a common currency” (ibid. 345). This includes the establishment of a unified military and defence strategy, and the need to adopt a unified foreign policy and diplomacy to give political direction to their “joint efforts for the protection and economic development of our continent” (ibid. 345). Nkrumah’s position is anchored on the fact that:

Africans need the strength of our combined numbers and resources to protect ourselves from the very positive dangers of returning colonialism in disguised forms. We need it to combat the entrenched force dividing our continent and still holding back millions of our brothers. We need it to secure total African liberation. We need it to carry forward our construction of a socio-economic system that will support the great mass of our steadily rising population at levels of life which will compare with those in the most advanced countries (ibid. 344).
Nkrumah’s vision of Pan-Africanism underlines the need for an “inward look into the African continent for all aspects of its development” (ibid. 345).

For Julius Nyerere, another prominent African leader, the need for Pan-Africanism arises from the fact that “each of the African states is separately weak in relation to the outside world and so dependent on it” (Mutiso & Rohio 1975: 328). Thus, his theory of Pan-Africanism arises from the need to create a powerful centre which could be vested with some powers to protect and direct the future of each state. For Nyerere:

The objective of unity demands that an All-African body should have power in certain vital matters. And that the constituent parts of Africa should cease to have power in these matters. In relation to the outside world there must be just one authority in Africa (ibid. 329).

Nyerere’s idea of Pan-Africanism is built on the need to create “one source of ultimate power as far as non-African powers are concerned” (Mutiso & Rohio 1975: 329). For this reason, he recommends that Pan-Africanism should imply the “cessation of natural sovereignties” (ibid. 329) and their replacement “by the sovereignty of Africa as a single unit, incorporating all the separate units” (ibid. 329). In practice, Pan-Africanism should translate into “African self-policing”, into “a common market”, “a single currency”, and “free trade” (ibid. 329). Thus the substance of Nyerere’s theory is a demand for a form of Pan-Africanism which would lead to “a continent-wide state, single and indivisible ....” (ibid. 330).

Nyerere supports the possibility of attaining this goal with the view that there is already a form of emotional unity in Africa, which finds its expression in the concept of “African personality” (Mutiso & Rohio 1975: 334). But in his view, this emotional unity should be allowed to express itself in a more realistic manner through strong economic and political unity, which will lead to a United States of Africa. This, he believes, should lead to “unity of action together with the greatest possible degree of local self-expression on things which affect only that locality” (ibid. 334), for, as he puts it further, “only with unity can we be sure that African resources will be used for the benefit of Africa” (ibid. 335). Nyerere goes forward to map out strategies to achieve his idea. One of these is the formation of a “loose association of states” among African states and the “constant exchange of visits” (ibid. 335) by heads of states of associating states. He advocates the formation of an East African Federation of States...
comprising Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, which he considers “comparatively easy to achieve” (ibid. 335) as a beginning.

The idea of Pan-Africansim supported by Kenneth Kaunda demands more rigour than those of the two leaders discussed above. Kaunda suggests the principles that should define the Pan-African project of unity with a criticism that the idea of Pan-Africanism should not be built on what he calls “fond illusions” (Mutiso & Rohio 1975: 348). He suspects the assumption that the desire for freedom in Africa as reflected in the Manchester conference amounts to a collective desire for unity and backs this suspicion with the example of the position of the first Nigerian Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa who, in 1960 when Nigeria gained independence, said that “Nigeria has not the slightest intention of surrendering her sovereignty, no sooner has she gained independence, to anyone else ....” (ibid. 348). His view, arising from this suspicion, is that while the project of Pan-Africanism may be desirable, erecting such a bond of unity may not be fruitful without an attempt to dialogue with the components of the desired union. He notes that such unity should be founded on dialogue and an evolution of ideas and values, an evolution that could lead to an ethics of Pan-African morality. Without such morality (that is, shared worldview that regulates a common value) the unity desired by the project will not be productive. For a step in the achievement of such a moral and intellectual base for this idea, Kaunda endorses the recommendation of Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, that there is a need to establish an African university where “the future leaders of Africa can be trained in an atmosphere of continental brotherhood” (ibid. 349). In such a university, “the supra-national aspects of African life would be emphasised and study would be directed towards the ultimate goal of complete African unity” (ibid. 349). As implied by the above citation, such a university would give rise to Africans who would be educated to see Africa whole and to see it steadily. From among the products of such a university, the idea of Pan-Africanism can gain its relevance.

After a short survey of the basic tenets of Pan-Africanism, let me now turn to the next task: to present what I consider to be the problems with the idea of Pan-Africanism in relation to globalisation. This is important because it will serve as the basis for locating the need for an alternative ideology to serve this cause.
Critical review of Pan-Africanism in relation to globalisation

A summary of the concept of Pan-Africanism prevalent in the views of the three leaders outlined shows that it is aimed at the formation of a higher and stronger governmental force that will direct the affairs of African states and protect Africa from undue hegemony from the imperial world. Such higher force will serve to moderate the activities, policies and programmes of independent African states by appealing to the spirit of an assumed African brotherhood that pre-dates the emergence of the states. This, it is believed, will make the states less vulnerable to foreign imperial forces that would attempt to intervene in the attainment of the desired progress of these states. This position appears attractive, especially in the light of the youthful stage of African modernity or the modernisation process in Africa at the time when this was conceived, modernisation which includes the process of state formation in its modern colouring.

However, some issues outstanding need to be addressed to further highlight the need for a review of the idea in relation to globalisation. The first is to determine the demands of the idea in relation to Africa. The second (flowing from this) is to see whether the ideology of Pan-Africanism can provide the basis for meeting this demand. By ideology here is meant a theory of social action through which the African can achieve the positive gain that inheres in the ideology of globalisation. I apply the term ‘inhere’ because the idea of globalisation contains some seed which, if properly ‘transplanted’, can generate some gains for Africa – but which, if left in its current form, portends dangers for the African.

The idea of globalisation in relation to Africa demands that it should lead to a full adoption and adaptation of African concerns as global concerns. By this I mean that the problems that are identified as peculiarly African should transmute to become ones that are more than African and carry the weight of global concern. What this means is that there should be what will be called “de-localisation” of Africa to a globalisation of Africa, in which African problems and prospects should form an important item in the formulation of world policies and programmes.

The other implication is that African values and principles should be consciously sought after and desired in the construction of what should amount to global values. For instance, if in and through the project of globalisation it is discovered that there are specific values
that have their root in African culture but that have the potential of fostering the growth of global human community, these should be sought after and adopted.

In light of the above, the question is the following: can the idea of Pan-Africanism address this problem? To address this question, let me quickly point out what I consider to be a major deficiency of Pan-Africanism. This deficiency has to do with the idea of unity as desired by the project of Pan-African project of unity. The idea of unity implied by Pan-Africanism is one that should lead to union — a sort of bonded unity. This unity is anchored in the principle of an assumed African family. What this means is that non-Africans are not eligible to be considered within the framework of Pan-Africanism. But this idea of unity needs to defend the claim that only an internal force can galvanise the kind of unity desired by Pan-Africanism.

The unity implied by the idea of Pan-Africanism is one that should lead to a union of African states in what would amount to a common state to be known as the United States of Africa. But this idea of unity does not serve the same purpose as globalisation, which in essence is first and foremost the intensification of linkages among the world community to gain from the benefit of science and technology and to address some common world problems. Thus the challenge that faces Pan-Africanism in this regard is how to achieve a sense of unity that will enable them tap the wealth of non-Africans without losing the gains arising from African solidarity. For this reason, Pan-Africanism cannot serve this purpose. Thus there is the need to explore another ideology that can solve this problem. To this I now turn.

_Glo-Africanisation as a pragmatic response to the challenges of globalisation in Africa_

In the preceding part of this chapter, I have been able to articulate the idea of globalisation and its implication for African humanity. I have articulated the basis on which Africa can benefit from the gains of globalisation, by articulating the need for an African ideological response to this process. To do this, I have provided a critique of the idea of Pan-Africanism, to locate the extent to which such popular African ideologies can serve this purpose. Through a critical response to globalisation, I have been able to point out the deficiencies of Pan-Africanism in this regard.
But globalisation needs an ideological intervention for it to be gainful to Africa. The question then is: which ideology? To address this question it is important to note that, at the moment, the proper protection of African humanity from the pains of globalisation is a complex venture. This is because Africans live in virtually all continents of the world, both as diaspora Africans and as African emigrants, and virtually all of them suffer various grades of pain and economic injustice as a result of globalisation. Thus, any ideology that attempts to respond to Africa’s problems in relation to globalisation must attempt to capture these differences. While some problems of African nationals are clearly political (as exemplified in the problem of continental Africans), others are cultural (as exemplified in Pro-Arab Africans, who define Africa in terms of ideals and values that emanate from the Arab world). In a similar vein, some problems are socio-cultural (as exemplified in the divided personality of Africans in the Diaspora, who are politically and economically secure but culturally insecure), while others are clearly economic and racial (as is the case with Afro-Brazilians, who suffer because of their African origin and for whom the idea of Africa demands a salvific mission).

I propose that the route to African gain from the globalisation project is the intensification of linkages around African needs and interests and the larger coalition of the world community around specific African needs. This proposal is what I refer to as glo-frication. This proposal implies that specific needs of African people should constitute the work of specific interest groups, which can be interlinked by instruments of global interaction. By this proposal, African developmental needs – be they political, economic, social, and educational, etc – should lead to a coalition of the world community. The implications of this proposal are many and they need to be itemised. The first is that the idea of Pan-Africanism has to expand to give room for inclusion of non-Africans, especially as this will enable a better response to African problems. The other implication is the need to subordinate the idea of Pan-Africanism to a higher ideal – that is, to let Pan-Africanism serve a worthier goal.

The justifications for the idea of glo-frication are also many and they need to be known. The first is that – at a theoretical level, with what amounts to what has been called the “sexy variation of globalization” (Irobi 2008) such as we have at the moment – a functional notion of globalisation that will serve the interest of Africa must respond to the hybridity of African experience and humanity. By
this I mean that it should be able to produce positive effects on African nationals everywhere, as well as enable a participation of Pro-African minds everywhere in the growth of African humanity. In other words, such an idea of globalisation should be “universalizing and globalizing, yet at the same time Africanising” (van Binsbergen 2008). The implication of this is that while globalisation should lead to what has been aptly characterised as “trans-African universalism” (ibid.), the concept of the global and the universal must be held to the benefit of the African and for the maximum benefit of African peoples. With the increasing spate of migration to different parts of the world and a cluster of Diaspora Africans scattered in different parts of the world, what could be an African problem can no longer be limited to the problems of continental Africans. It should also include the problems of Diaspora Africans. The other justification for this proposal is that there are non-Africans with a considerable level of empathy towards the problems of African people, and these empathisers need to be encouraged to demonstrate this interest through an idea of Africa that has global relevance and concern – and through an idea of globalisation that admits an engaging notion of Africa, one in which African problems have a space in the interests and concerns of the global human community.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to articulate the need for ideological re-birth of Africans to enable Africans to achieve a positive gain from the idea of globalisation. The chapter has made a case for ideological re-birth to accommodate the large block of the Pro-African world globally, through an idea of globalisation that carries along the totality of the weight of African experience. The argument to this effect is that there are Pro-African minds scattered in different parts of the world, in addition to a large bulk of the African Diaspora, who should be accommodated under a large ideological umbrella to contribute to and influence African development. The chapter has attempted to source an ideology that can appropriate the gains of globalisation to an African advantage and pioneer and promote African unity by re-connecting Pro-African minds (all who are interested in African development) in its global demands. It is hoped that the position advanced here will stimulate development experts to explore
how this adjusted notion of globalisation can be applied to explore the practical gains inherent in the idea.

References


CHAPTER SIXTEEN

AFRICA IN THE WORLD: A HISTORICAL VIEW

Stephen Ellis

Abstract

Africa’s true postcolonial period ended in the last quarter of the previous century. Since then, Africa has entered on a new chapter of its history, as defined by the manner of its insertion in world affairs. This has implications both for understanding Africa’s place in the contemporary world and for the academic disciplines used in studying it.

Introduction

Historians commonly use chronological periods as a way of arranging the data they retrieve from records of the past. They discern the outlines of a given period by identifying a set of conditions that distinguishes a particular era from its predecessor. It is when this set of conditions changes significantly that a given period may be considered to have come to an end, and a new one to have begun in which the fundamental nature of historical change must be defined anew.

Historical periods are thus artefacts, which can be brought into being only in retrospect, but they are not arbitrary. At the moment people are actually making history they can never be sure of the exact nature of the times they live in – this becomes clear only when they see the consequences of their actions, by which time it is too late to go back and do things differently. Grand names for past historical periods are thus the artificial creations of historians, journalists, or others who attribute meaning to events long after they have happened.

In the case of Africa, it is conventional to regard the key periods in its history as precolonial, colonial and postcolonial. Really, this trinity amounts to a suggestion that the entire history of the world’s oldest continent, where people have been living for tens of thousands of
years, is given shape and meaning only by the period of formal colonial rule. Yet in most of Africa colonial rule actually lasted for no more than perhaps three generations. It is therefore a bold proposition indeed to attribute such enormous importance to this period. There is an added risk in using the colonial period not only as the hub around which Africa’s history is considered to turn, but also as the point of reference for specifying the nature of what preceded it by using the term ‘precolonial’. This label derives meaning only from the colonial rule that we know to have been imposed subsequently, and yet it is routinely applied to the great mass of Africa’s history before the late nineteenth century. The description of what happened before the late nineteenth century as ‘precolonial’ verges on teleology, the practice of interpreting past events only in light of what happens subsequently, which is regarded as a poor exercise of the historian’s craft. For, while historians indeed interpret the past in the knowledge of how things eventually transpired, they also try to understand matters as contemporaries did, by attempting to penetrate the thoughts of people who lived in a previous era. By assuming that everything happening before the partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 was precolonial, we imply that people alive at earlier periods were somehow aware that they existed in the precursor to the colonial period and that they acted in the consciousness of a future event that they could not actually have known would occur.

If the colonial period appears so central to Africa’s history, it is because it was a point on which both colonial rulers and their nationalist successors could agree. It is easy to understand how colonialists, in an age of social Darwinism, when Europe dominated world affairs, might believe that their assumption of formal control over Africa represented a new phase in the continent’s history. The argument that government by Europeans meant progress, generally described as ‘the civilizing mission’, was the main justification offered for Africa’s colonisation. Less immediately obvious is why African nationalists should have agreed with them on the importance of colonial rule. But this was in fact just one among many items of colonial ideology and practice that was assimilated by African nationalists, who frequently assimilated colonial ideas or prejudices and simply turned them upside down. Thus, the generation of pioneering African nationalists who animated debates on matters of state in the mid-twentieth century attached great significance to the imposition of colonial rule, but in a negative sense, experiencing it as humiliation and oppression.
Both proponents and opponents of colonial rule did, however, agree on its central importance.

The political rhetoric of the time was just one of the key features of the golden age of African nationalism that can be said to have existed from the mid-twentieth century. A second feature of the time was the effect on Africa of the worldwide economic boom, of unprecedented size and scope, that lasted from 1945 until the mid-1970s. It was at the mid-point of these years that most African countries acquired political sovereignty. Favourable economic conditions, plus the massive social engineering favoured by colonial governments in their last phase and also adopted by the new nationalist rulers, led to profound changes in the way people lived. Throughout this period, development through modernisation seemed to be an obvious way for Africa to make progress. ‘The view prevailing for ten or fifteen years was that all you had to do was to pour in tractors, bulldozers, pipes, pumps and other machinery and money – the recipients preferred money, unfettered cash – and something called “know-how”, a magic especially in the gift of the Americans, to put Afro-Asians on the way to becoming something like Canada’ was how a cynical Australian diplomat remembered the atmosphere in the 1950s and early 60s (Crocker 1971: 21-22).

Among the other suppositions shared by both colonialists and nationalists was that Africa had previously lagged behind Europe in various respects and that it could catch up by adopting the techniques of social engineering included in the slogans of nation-building and development. It was generally assumed that African political life would henceforth revolve around the state and other formal institutions in much the same way as it had come to do since the seventeenth century in Europe, so many of whose political institutions had been exported to Africa.

The continuity of colonial rule

It is now quite widely accepted by historians that there was actually a great continuity between colonial rule in its last phase and the first years after African countries had acquired sovereign status under the leadership of nationalist rulers. Postcolonial regimes that were presided over by Africans rather than Europeans continued to make abundant use of the practices, routines and mentalities of their colonial predecessors. In fact, postcolonial states at first implemented
colonial techniques and policies more intensively than ever, using them as a platform for a more ambitious form of political monopoly than anything to which their colonial predecessors could aspire. The former colonial metropoles were also pleased to make use of the continuities between colonial and nationalist rule for purposes of their own. The discourse of development was used by both Africans and their foreign partners to give legitimacy to this edifice (Young 2004).

This postcolonial phase of Africa’s history, in which nationalist regimes acted in so many ways like their colonial forebears, did not last long, however. Within a short time, various global crises and problems were producing pressures, external and internal, for the economic and political reconfiguration of Africa’s states, although the radical changes then occurring were often obscured from view by the fact that governments could enjoy the protection of one or other superpower as long as the Cold War continued. It was only after the end of the Cold War, by the 1990s, that it became clear just how much some of Africa’s polities had lost their quality of ‘state-ness’. Talk emerged of ‘collapsed’ (Zartman 1995) or ‘failed’ states, the latter being a phrase popularised by the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. Today they are more generally known as ‘fragile’ states. In places designated by these terms, there was a renewal of informal politics, as local societies adapted to the diminished presence of a bureaucratic state and the services it could provide.

It is useful to consider what brought Africa’s postcolonial period to an end. Some confusion arises on this matter from the fact that the term ‘postcolonial’ remains current in the academic world to designate rather vaguely a set of debates about the relationship between power, discourse and certain political institutions and practices. Nevertheless, considering the postcolonial period in a strictly political sense rather than in a vaguely cultural one, it is apparent that governments in most of Africa were undermined in the first instance by profound changes in the global context in the 1970s, especially in regard to finance. These included notably the ending of the Bretton Woods system of currency stability provoked by the USA’s delinking of the dollar from gold in 1971, the oil price rise of 1973-4, the rapid fluctuation of commodity prices and worldwide inflation that followed, and an increase in debt as petro-dollars were recycled, turning credit and debt into an instrument of power more formidable than ever before (Gowan 1999), to which could be added the development of information technology. In this changing context various global
actors took decisions that shaped a new financial globalisation that has been with us ever since. Key measures included market reforms undertaken by the Chinese government from 1978, the abolition of foreign exchange control in the United Kingdom in 1979, deregulation and tax cuts enacted by the first Reagan administration in the USA, the European commitment to create a single European market, the collapse of the USSR, and India’s move away from protectionism in 1991. These major shifts combined with domestic factors to produce a clear watershed in most African countries.

Although many Africans experienced the late twentieth century as a series of setbacks or even calamities, there were others who saw the changing environment as providing an opening for reform. But the opportunity for renewal was seized above all by the international financial institutions and other aid donors, who used their enormous influence to determine the tempo and content of economic reforms in the form of the structural adjustment programmes that most African governments were obliged to accept, under one name or another, during the 1980s. The determined, and highly ideological, campaign against big government led by the international financial institutions towards the end of the last century contributed greatly to the implosion of some African states and their literal dis-integration. Yet there is a further twist to this tale, since it now appears that an imploded state can be compatible with certain forms of capital investment. Often described in terms of a flow, capital investment can be seen in the case of Africa to have more of a tendency to hop, skip or jump, concentrating in certain strategic sites while it avoids others. This process is accompanied by new geographical patterns of order and disorder (Ferguson 2006). In countries where the state has no monopoly of violence and where the rule of law is weak, mining companies can work in enclaves that are more or less cut off from the societies in which they exist, creating micro-environments of prosperity and security in an otherwise troubled landscape. The most extreme example is offshore oil-platforms, where expatriate personnel can live for weeks with little contact with the mainland.

The changes that occurred in Africa during the late twentieth century were of a type and scale such that it is permissible to regard them, collectively, as marking the end of one historical era and the start of another. In narrowly political terms, the postcolonial period in Africa in fact came to an end in the last quarter of the twentieth century.
The contemporary phase

Nearly every analyst in the immediate postcolonial period seems to have supposed that the features of African life that were commonly identified as being the most dynamic in the 1960s and 1970s were henceforth permanent fixtures of the continent’s existence. In bringing new sovereign states into existence, no one seems to have thought hard about what would happen if any of these states were unable to live up to the expectations held of it, either on the part of its own people or on the part of the other states that make up the international community. Looking back from the present era, it is plain to see that the achievement of state sovereignty in Africa did not actually have such a straightforward connection with development as many commentators and analysts once assumed.

This is but one reason for regarding much of the standard discourse concerning Africa as inadequate (Ellis 2011). Many African economies have been growing at a rate of five percent or more for most of the last ten years, with the financial crisis that began in 2007 on US mortgage markets and spread to world markets in 2008 having relatively little impact on the continent. Africa south of the Sahara is attracting record direct investment. Moreover, Africa now has no fewer than a billion people, after the fastest population growth in the entire history of the world (Iliffe 2007: 2). Even if most of these people are poor, they represent a big consumer market, and mobile phones especially have helped enormously to integrate this market. Furthermore, Africa has some of the world’s last wide-open spaces, which are attracting foreign investors. Africa is said to contain some 80 percent of the 250-800 million hectares of land suitable for agriculture that are currently ‘available’ – in quotation marks, because most land is claimed by someone or other, and availability is therefore hard to determine (Ellis 2011: 4, 79-80). Several Asian countries are now looking to Africa not only to grow food for their own use, but also biofuels for the world market. In the Middle East, some shrewd operators foresee rapid growth in trade based on African exports of raw materials and on its growing appetite for Asian consumer goods. These conditions mark a definite contrast with the late twentieth century. Put together, they suggest that the times we live in are in many respects highly propitious for Africa (Severino & Ray 2010).

Yet one cannot convincingly claim that Africa is simply fulfilling, rather belatedly, many of the expectations that were vested in it fifty
years ago. The whole world has changed in the meantime. Not least, some of Africa’s most economically dynamic countries do not comply with standard measures of good governance and there seems little reason to suppose that they will do so at any time in the foreseeable future, and yet their governing elites have every possibility of reproducing themselves. They constitute what two observers refer to as ‘successful failed states’.¹ The description of so many African states as fragile, failed or failing disguises a variety of ways in which such entities are actually the vehicles for ways of living that are of considerable antiquity in Africa. Otherwise expressed, they have a history. In view of this, it is not appropriate to assume, as was generally done in the golden age of African nationalism, that the generation of greater wealth among Africans will gradually result in the emergence of Weberian states.

At the same time, one of the most obviously important features of Africa’s current renegotiation of its place in the world is its changing relationship to Asia. A leading role in this regard is played by China, which has a vast thirst for African commodities and – less often noted – a political need for African support in international diplomatic fora in order to legitimise its new role as a great power.

China’s commercial dynamism, combined with the pragmatism of its government and its vast piles of cash, could conceivably stimulate African development in a way that a trillion dollars in aid never did. Nonetheless, it is not hard to imagine how Asian interest could, perhaps more easily, turn to Africa’s disadvantage. An uncontrolled rush for commodities could strip Africa’s subsoil bare in a display of what is called in French capitalisme sauvage. Asian manufactures could destroy what little industry Africa has. As the veteran South African columnist Stanley Uys puts it (2009), ‘the Chinese (will) be like goats: after staying in a country for the required period, extracting the minerals they want, their legacy is – scrub, rocks and sand’.

How Africa’s place in world affairs and its domestic arrangements evolve throughout the current, new chapter of the continent’s history will depend largely on how Africans themselves handle their situation politically. Historically, Africa’s dependency on outside actors has been shaped not only by the overbearing actions of foreigners, as was consistently argued during the nationalist period, but also on the

demonstrable propensity of Africans themselves to cultivate a relationship of dependency (Bayart 2000). There is a possibility, or a risk, that the historical tendency of Africa to accept such a relationship of dependency will be repeated with regard to China and its other Asian partners, especially if African rulers accept rents that may advance their personal or factional interest only rather than wider numbers of people or that are not used to promote policies that may favour long-term economic development (Clapham 2006). As a Ghanaian former finance minister puts it, ‘if we go on like this, African resources will be used for Chinese development like they were for European development before’. There is nothing inevitable about such a process. It depends on human actions and inactions that are not historically determined.

Asian investors have an outlook, sometimes associated with the trust characteristic of family firms, and linked to the nature of their relations with their home governments, that often makes them more confident in African environments than their European and North American rivals. In the Western tradition, capitalism is dependent on the sanctity of private property, ownership of which has to be firmly established in law. In China, the spectacular rise of a capitalist economy has been overseen by an authoritarian government and has not been associated with the rule of law or the emergence of individual rights in the same way as in the European experience that has shaped the views of economists and sociologists. Yet discussion of African affairs, at least among intellectuals and journalists in both Africa and the North Atlantic area, continues to be framed within an older rhetorical corpus that was formed after the mid-twentieth century, during the golden age of African independence. Prominent in this corpus are specific notions of liberation and development that had some grounding in the conditions of that time, but that are now outmoded in the forms in which they were propagated throughout the last half of the twentieth century.

In short, while Africans, like everybody else, live with the burden of the past, they also live in a world that is different in significant ways from that of fifty years ago, when so many of the nostrums of development and nation-building were formulated. It is therefore appropriate to review many standard theories and standard methods of analysis in light of present realities.

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2 J.H. Mensah, quoted in Wallis & Burgis (14 June 2010).
A challenge to academia

The golden age of African nationalism – say from 1945 to the election of a black president in South Africa in 1994 – began at a time when intellectuals and politicians in both the First and Second Worlds, as they were then called, were generally convinced by the power of social science. It was widely held that various disciplines in this field had the power not only to provide accurate explanations of political and social phenomena but also to serve as a guide to action. The social scientists of a half-century ago, using methods originally conceived in the mode of natural science, often believed that their theories carried with them a high degree of predictability. Their counterparts in the Third World had every incentive to share the expert view that societies could be governed, politics regulated, and economies stimulated by a range of techniques that could be identified and implemented by the established methods collectively described as ‘modernisation’. This was perhaps the key concept of the ideologies of both Left and Right extant at the time of Africa’s independence (Chazan et al. 1992: 15-17). Influential political scientists saw Africa as the site of nation-building and party formation (Apter 1955; Coleman 1958); economists and sociologists considered it ripe for development (Leys 1966: 3-44).

In the current context, however, it has become difficult to share assumptions like these. Modernisation, the mode in which development was conceived in nationalism’s golden age, has been denounced over and over again by leading writers over the last twenty-five years, to the point that it is thoroughly discredited as a formal theory. The emergence of a new historical age in Africa therefore poses a challenge not only to politicians and others, but also to academics.

One of the most convincing criticisms of the social sciences has been that theories about how societies operate and evolve have too often been based on an assumption that all societies, as they develop, will become more like the countries of the North Atlantic, or what one might label in shorthand as the West. The economist Deepak Lal (1998: 177), for example, refers to Western social science having been affected until quite recently by ‘a particular form of dualism’ in which “modernization” and “westernisation” were lumped together and contrasted with “backwardness and tradition’.’ The philosopher John Gray (2009: 14) has made a similar point about economics, which until the financial crash of 2007 was quite widely seen as the
most truly scientific of all the social sciences. Economics is, according to Gray, ‘culturally parochial’, like other branches of the study of society. ‘Its underlying concepts’ he believes to be ‘based on a few centuries of Western experience’.

In spite of these critiques, a theory or a set of theories hardly distinguishable from modernisation actually remains the basis of a wide range of policies among people working in administrations that aim to develop poor countries, which includes just about all of Africa. In other words, specifically in regard to Africa, important areas of bureaucratic activity are in the hands of practitioners who are guided by a theory that is generally outdated in academies of learning. Officials of powerful administrations articulate policies such as democratisation, inculcating the rule of law, making countries receptive to investment, or fighting against poverty, all of which suppose that certain social conditions are not only desirable, but that informed manipulators of society know how to achieve them, their knowledge being based on a rather idealised reading of the histories of Western Europe and North America (Mbembe 2001: 9-11). Many leading theorists would agree that such boons as human rights and democracy were historically attained in North Atlantic countries as a result of long struggles involving states characterised by a need for large-scale and regular funding that was inseparable from their military requirements, as the sociologist Charles Tilly (1985) demonstrated. One may regard democracy and human rights as virtues, but supposing that they can simply be legislated or engineered into existence in African countries amounts to basing a theory of political development on historical data separated from the relevant political history (Lal 1998: 177).

These observations may sound very familiar, and even trite, to the many social scientists, perhaps anthropologists especially, who abandoned the concept of modernisation many years ago. The point of making these observations is not to kick in a door that has been open for years, but to point out some of the consequences of its unlocking. Not only social scientists but also politicians and policy-makers in general have had difficulty facing up to the practical consequences that resulted from the implementation in earlier decades of policies based on theories produced from within social science, during what may now be seen to have been the heroic period not only of social science but also, in Africa, of nationalism and development.
Development has been the watchword of policy towards Africa from the middle of the last century. Whatever is meant by development, in Africa’s recent history it has been associated with massive programmes of social engineering, applied by functionaries and based on social scientific theories. One well-known critic, Achille Mbembe (2001: 7), has rather severely described various relevant disciplines or sub-disciplines as still being ‘in thrall’ to the teleology represented by theories of social evolution and ideologies of development and modernisation. He went as far as to assert that many social science disciplines have ‘undermined the very possibility of understanding African economic and political facts’ (ibid.). While these remarks were published ten years ago, it has to be said that the disciplines that Mbembe attacks with such ferocity remain key to development thinking.

If this is so, then it is not a reason to abandon any attempt to analyse societies by the use of rigorous methods. Nor does it mean that it is fruitless to think about how countries could be made richer, and their governments more adept at managing the conditions of modern life. It does mean that, to be convincing, such endeavours will have to be on the basis of data drawn from a wider range of human societies than has been usual until now.

Africa has entered a new historical age, one that as yet has no name, since we cannot call it post-postcolonial. The realisation that this is so should cause us to rethink many aspects of Africa’s history free from much of the thinking of earlier generations, so closely connected to nationalism, which itself took over so many fundamental assumptions from European intellectuals and even from the colonisers themselves. Perhaps the time is ripe for a new and more profound type of liberation: one of minds.

References


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