Handbook of Africa's International Relations

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Introduction

The evolution of Africa's international relations

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The African continent has always featured prominently in global relations. The ancient and historical interaction of the civilizations in Carthage, Egypt and Nuba with the Roman Empire are illustrations of this fact. The issue has been that Africa's international relations have not necessarily always been on its own terms. Africa's international relations have often been defined and oriented by the dominant international and geopolitical agendas of the day. As such, Africa has more often than not been the subject of international relations dictated by external actors. As a direct consequence of this fact, the chronicles of Africa's international relations are also dominated by the perspectives of those who have invaded, enslaved, colonized and exploited the continent. This book is a timely attempt to document Africa's international relations from a range of perspectives from authors based within the continent as well as outside the continent.

In the aftermath of colonialism the Cold War became a dominant paradigm that defined the nature of the continent's relationship with the rest of the world. In the post-Cold War world, the contemporary forces of globalization are now exerting an undue influence and impact upon Africa's international relations. Historically, the continental ability and capacity to advance its interests has also been undermined by the lack of political will among African leaders to find ways to address their differences and collectively solve their problems. However, increasingly the African continent is emerging as a vocal and, in some respects, an influential actor in international relations. There is a paucity of analysis and research on this emerging trend. This timely book proposes to fill this analytical gap by engaging with a wide range of issues on which the African continent, and its constituent states, has expressed a position or advocated a set of specific policies. This introductory chapter will briefly discuss the evolution of Africa's international relations and outline the structure of the book.

The trajectory of Africa's international relations

The emerging political prominence of the African continent on the world stage is predicated on an evolving internal process of continental integration. In particular, there are normative and policy efforts to revive the spirit of pan-Africanism.[1] Pan-Africanism is the expression of this spirit of solidarity and co-operation among African countries and societies. The initial and primary aim of pan-Africanism was to end racial discrimination against people of African descent

including those in the diaspora. In the 20th century pan-Africanism was articulated by African intellectuals, scholars, politicians and citizens as a necessary prerequisite for creating the conditions that are vital to protect their right of Africans to take part and control their social, economic and political affairs, and achieve peace and development. The 21st century is witnessing the evolution of pan-Africanism, notably through the constitution and establishment of the African Union (AU), in 2002. Given the fact that there is a dearth of analysis on this phenomenon, this volume will also interrogate the notion of pan-Africanism through various lenses—notably peace and security, development, the environment and trade.

Consequently, this book will also engage with the emerging role of the AU as an international actor. The majority of Africa's common positions in the international forums have been expressed through the AU. These include the continent's positions on the reform of the United Nations (UN) Security Council; its position on climate change; its emerging controversial stand-off with the International Criminal Court (ICC); and its efforts to address the challenges of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Furthermore, the continent has adopted positions relating to development, international trade, the environment and public health issues. The continental body has a dual role of forging unity among its member states and advocating for their interests internationally. This book will assess how the AU's role as an international actor is complicated by the difficulty of promoting consensus among African states and then maintaining that consensus in the face of often divergent national interests. The book will assess a selection of issues that the AU has served as a rallying vehicle for Africa interests. In the field of peace and security, on development and trade issues as well as on climate change. This book will in part assess the role of the AU in articulating collective and joint policies and in making interventions in international decision- and policy-making circles. In addition, throughout the book the various chapters will touch upon how linkages between Africa's citizens have contributed towards continental integration and in confronting the challenges of globalization.

The colonial era in Africa

The territorial conquest of antiquity as well as the colonial empires in Africa were a form of international relations, albeit one premised on a master-slave relationship. European colonialism had the net effect of promoting development in Europe and fostering under-development in Africa, as well as other colonized regions of the world. From 1885, in what came to be known as 'the Scramble for Africa', European powers colonized African peoples and communities across the entire continent. The Belgians were in the Congo, the British in East, South, West and North Africa, the French in West, Central, North and East Africa. The Italians were in the present-day Somalia, the Portuguese in the present-day Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola and Cape Verde. The Spanish colonized what is now Western Sahara and Equatorial Guinea. The Germans, who later lost their colonies due to their defeat in the Second World War, had colonized present-day Tanzania and Namibia. The conquest and dominion of virtually the entire African continent during this colonial era persists as the real scar on the conscience of the world. The continent's erstwhile colonizers have not found an appropriate framework with which to engage the African continent. The relationship between Africa and its former colonial powers is still infused by a paternalistic attitude, informed by a need to civilize and discipline the continent, evident in some of the policy interventions which are generated by London, Paris, Brussels, Lisbon, Madrid and Berlin. As a consequence, the African continent has not yet come to terms with the historical injustice which was generated by the legacy of colonialism. There has not been any forgiveness or reconciliation between Africa and her former European colonial powers. This factor continues to inform how Africa's leaders and citizens view Europe, with a complicated and

paradoxical mixture of admiration, suspicion and mistrust. This fact is for the most part lost on European governments, which still retain a 'messianic' attitude of going to save Africa and its people from themselves. The European engagement with Africa is also paradoxical in nature. On the one hand the superior European attitude of going to salvage Africa from the ravages and excesses of her leaders and governments still persists, whilst at the same time European governments and multinational companies are amongst some of the most corrupt and exploitative actors when it comes to extracting Africa's natural resources. It is these very natural resources that if genuinely utilized to benefit Africa's peoples, rather than a few political and business elites, could reframe the nature of the continent's relationship with her former colonizers.

The Cold War and Africa

At the height of the Cold War, the era of decolonization began in African countries. As African nation-states began to acquire independence in significant number, they concomitantly sought to organize themselves in a more co-ordinated manner with the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on 25 May 1963. Africa, like the rest of the world, was caught up in the proxy battles that were fought during the Cold War. The playing out of superpower rivalries on the African continent had a destabilizing effect on peace and security on the continent. Whether it was through overt or covert support, governments and armed resistance movements could always find willing supporters from the Soviet or US geopolitical strategic camps.[2] As a result undemocratic leaders could always find the means to suppress their people and wage perpetual wars. The continental organization at the time, the OAU, was not effective in projecting stability or restraining the excesses of state power. During the Cold War African countries began to find that they could occasionally build consensus on a number of issues such as development, trade, debt cancellation, infectious diseases, small arms and light weapons, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, climate negotiations, transnational crime prevention, and on the election of Africans to various UN activities and bodies. On other issues, particularly where there is a strong national interest, such as security issues and conflict situations, African countries have not always maintained a united position or a common front for negotiations and voting. The problems and competing state interests continue to pose a fundamental challenge towards the forging of a coherent continent posture towards the rest of the world.

The legacy of the Cold War has left behind instability which still prevails on the continent. Techniques of repression and suppression that were perfected during colonialism and the Cold War are still being used with impunity. Instability prevails in most of the regions of Africa. Illegitimate rulers and quasi-democrats have created conditions in which the rule of law is still being undermined. The net effect of all this is that the issue of conflict is still a dominant security challenge for a significant portion of the continent. Ongoing conflicts have ramifications beyond the borders of Africa. With the failure by Africa's erstwhile enslavers, colonizers and Cold War exploiters to acknowledge the political, social and economic exploitation and crimes committed during their reign and dominion of Africa, the continent's people will continue to harbour mistrust for the global North.

The post-Cold War world and the struggle for Africa's ascendancy

In the post-Cold War world, some would question whether African countries have sufficiently coalesced as a group and developed a coherent identity to influence effectively international policy development. With the acceleration of globalization the African continent remains a paradox as far as international engagement is concerned. On the one hand it remains one of the

most marginalized continents in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI), which for Africa is currently about 5% of global investment. On the other hand a number of state actors and transnational corporations are scrambling to exploit Africa's resources and extend their influence over the politics and economics of the continent.

Externally driven hegemonic agendas continue to manifest in Africa's international relations, most notably due to the fact that the continent is one of the fastest growing oil exploration and production zones in the world and one of its last under-explored regions. Demand for oil in the world is increasing due to the instability that prevails in the Middle East. Since 2000, one-third of the world's new oil discoveries have been in Africa.[3] The continent also possesses some of the wealthiest deposits of uranium, coltan, cassiterite, gold, copper and timber, and is endowed with fertile agricultural land, but its people are amongst the poorest in the world. These natural resources, some of which are utilized in the burgeoning mobile telephony and space technology industries, are not the causes of conflict but have proven to be a catalyst in fuelling conflict on the African continent. In addition, with the collusion of an unprincipled leadership in African countries, foreign state and transnational corporate actors are engaged in a 'New Scramble for Africa', to exploit these resources and secure mining and extraction concessions which funnel profits out of Africa rather than being utilized to promote education, provide health care and build infrastructure on the continent. The qualitative difference between this scramble for Africa and its historical antecedent in the 19th century, is that African leaders and governments are the primary agents and facilitators of this exploitation. This new scramble for Africa is therefore more akin to a 'self-imposed exploitation', as African political and business leaders have become co-opted as 'willing intermediaries' in the fleecing of their own continent.

Africa has become the terrain for global competition between the USA, the European Union (EU) and the People's Republic of China, as well as other emerging players like India. The changing international dynamics have witnessed the emergence of China and India as rivals to the USA and other Western countries for Africa's raw materials, markets and allegiances. Regrettably, the majority of trade and investment is 'focused on extracting natural resources rather than developing local economies'.[4] The AU has also strengthened its links with emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil. The AU as an institution has benefited directly from these linkages and its new main headquarters, officially opened in January 2012, was built through a grant provided by China. There has been a Western backlash against the AU's overture towards emerging economies, in particular China. China's approach has been to de-link the issue of economic development from the promotion of political and civil liberties. Some commentators have argued that this has generated a sense in the West, particularly European former colonial powers, about its waning influence with African countries, due to the counter-balancing impact of Chinese resources particularly with regards to infrastructure development and mineral extraction. However, this may be more a case of perception rather than reality because Europe remains one of Africa's major trading partners.

Despite these challenges there is an emerging spirit of pan-Africanism within the Africa continent, which seeks to reverse the historical relationship between the continent from one of paternalism to genuine partnership. Paternalism can best be characterized as a top-down uni-directional relationship where one party establishes the framework and issues strictures for the development of a second party. Partnership on the other hand involves a mutually enriching relationship based on respect and collaboration established through dialogue.

The emergence of the African Union, in 2002, was the result of the logical progression of pan-Africanism and a realization by the continent's leaders and citizens of the need to adopt a policy platform to engage the world on a more equal footing. For example, in March 2005, the

AU issued a declaration known as *The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: The Ezulwini Consensus*, which was a statement in response to the Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change issued in December 2004. In this Common African Position the AU highlighted issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS and security, poverty, debt, environmental degradation, trade negotiations, the responsibility to protect, peace-keeping and peace-building.[5] In addition, the AU issued a position on UN reform and in particular on the reform of the Security Council by noting that 'in 1945, when the UN was formed, most of Africa was not represented and that in 1963, when the first reform took place, Africa was represented but was not in a particularly strong position'.[6] The AU goes on to state that 'Africa is now in a position to influence the proposed UN reforms by maintaining her unity of purpose', furthermore noting that 'Africa's goal is to be fully represented in all the decision-making organs of the UN, particularly in the Security Council'.[7] At least on paper the AU was endeavouring to establish and maintain a common position. However, due to internal dissension some African countries, particularly Egypt and South Africa, effectively broke rank with the Ezulwini Consensus and sought ways individually to ascend to become permanent members of the Security Council. This in effect undermined efforts to demonstrate African 'unity of purpose'. This is further reinforced by the fact that time and again African countries have shown that they are unlikely to vote as a collective on matters before, or pertaining to, the UN Security Council. Governments generally tend to adopt positions that best serve their interests or that enable them to receive certain benefits from more powerful countries that pick and choose with which African countries they want to work. Therefore, the logic of 'national self-interest' and political realism still prevails among African countries, and other member states, at the UN. This fact continues to deter the emergence of a coherent stance as a collective in terms of Africa's international relations. So the paradox of Pan-Africanism is evident in that there is a willingness, at one level, to make the transition towards a unified African voice, but this is tempered by the enduring habits of national sovereignty and the reluctance to cede genuine power to a supranational entity to govern the affairs of the continent. In this sense, Africa's international relations remain an enigma, which emphasizes the need for a book such as this one, to assist in deciphering the complexity of the continent's engagement with the world.

The structure and outline of the book

The book is structured into five parts, namely:

- Theories and historical evolution
- Institutional developments
- Africa's international relations: Issues and policy areas
- Global governance and Africa
- Africa and international partnerships

Theories and historical evolution

The African continent is engaged with the process of globalization but not on its own terms. The emergence of predatory economic globalization and the global business of profiting from countries, including those affected by war, suggests that the 'New Scramble for Africa' has pernicious side effects that have to be arrested if sustainable peace, security and development are to be achieved on the continent. This section delves into some of the existing theoretical