

THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examined the debate whether the rising Southern global powers reinforce the North-South divide or increase the diversity of alternative policies and alignments within the international system by synthesizing the works of prominent scholars. It also addressed the challenges and opportunities presented by the increasing engagement of emerging Southern partners and the strategies Africa needs to adopt to harness the positive gains of this development. In short, the essay critically analyzed the role of Southern multilateralism for global transformation in tandem with the incumbent and the implication of such developments on Africa either in producing policy space and stimulating growth or worsening the normative unequal relation. Thus, the analyzed review of literature indicated that following the rise of Southern powers and global financial crisis the foundation of the old global governance architecture was shaken and new system which is a synthesis of the incumbent and the emerging is in the making. In this regard, Africa is expected to have a bargaining capability and policy space on condition that it acts in unison. However, the rise of emerging powers and their engagement in Africa neither necessarily produces a new colonial type relationship nor automatically guarantees policy space unless Africa reacts proactively for maximizing the benefits and addressing the challenges produced by such engagement.

Keywords: Africa; conditionality; development; global South; governance; policy

INTRODUCTION

Mittelman (2016) stated that major growth mechanisms in the global economy are shifting to the East in the global South but there is lack of consensus on the impact of such changes on global governance. In spite of the lack of universal consensus, he argued that there is global repositioning characterized by an increasing pliability in neoliberal globalization with lateral and longitudinal axes representing changes in global governance institutions and the resilience of neo-liberalism respectively (Mittelman,2016). He further argued that horizontal shifts in global governance such as changes in membership are made possible by hierarchies in power relations.

Thus, global governance landscape is rapidly changing with the acceleration of South-South cooperation (Murphy,1994). In his earlier study Mittelman (2013) argued that the reconfiguration is characterized by organizational pluralism and the proliferation of Southern multilateralismsuch asBRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China), NICs (newly industrializing countries), NIEs (newly industrialized economies), LICs (low-income countries) or MICs (middle-income countries). These alliances epitomize South-South co-operation or solidarity through exchange of goods, resources, technology and knowledge to meet their development goals.

Hence, one of the expectations from the aforementioned networks was voicing for reforming the global governance system and institutions particularly IMF and the UN Security Council thought many observers remain cautious whether there are real emerging powers that could lead towards the restructuring of the global governance system (Wade, 2011). Thus, examining the role of the institutional pluralism for global transformation requires critical analysis of their interaction with the old order. Furthermore, analyzing the implication of such developments on Africa either in producing policy space and stimulating growth or worsening the normative unequal relation is very essential for charting an alternative path so that Africa could gain voices in global governance.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine critically the possible changes in the architecture of global governance in response to rise of emerging powers and to demonstrate how Africa's engagement in establishing partnership should be directed for assuming greater agency by addressing the following questions;

- What implications will the 'rise of emerging southern powers' have on the future of global governance?
- Do the new global power arrangements enhance the power of African nations in producing 'policy space or beget new inequalities?
- How can Africa gain voices in global governance?

EMERGING POWERS AND THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

This sub topic addresses the debate whether the rising Southern powers reinforce the North-South divide or increase the diversity of alternative policies and alignments within the international system.

There is no universally agreed standard of reference to identify countries as rising or emerging but the centre of gravity of global power is shifting towards the new Pacific (Weiss, 2016). The world system centered in the Atlantic and ordered by the West is gradually giving way to polycentric international structure in which new transnational South–South linkages are being formed (Philip, 2013).

This process entailed the emergence of institutions that are different in their character, organizations, regimes, norms, constituencies, spatial scope (from bilateral to global), and subject matter. Therefore, the hierarchical international system which divided the world into dominant core and dependent peripheries is giving way to a decentred world system with plural sources of authority (Subacchi, 2008).

Mittelman (2013), using a concept called global bricolage, denoting incipient assemblages in the emerging polycentric global governance, asserted that certain alteration in global order are manifest. He argued that it is not hard to track the most visible aspects like the surge in South–South trade taking Brazil whose fifty-eight percent of its external trade is with the global South. The diminishing of Western hegemony and the movement towards a polycentric and plural world system has indeed quickened over the past decade as major countries/regions of the global South have consolidated their position in world economy and develop transcontinental linkages that are reconfiguring global trade, investment and finance flow (Subacchi, 2008). Accordingly, groupings in the global South strive to achieve a higher level of institutionalization but whether these initiatives would appreciably modify the rules of global governance or deepen Western market practices is much contested. This ambiguity has produced wide spread expectation, confusion, uncertainty and anxiety over the future of global governance (Subacchi, 2008).

In spite of the inconclusive debates over the implication of the growing influence of emerging powers of the global South on the institutions and actors that have defined the global governance, some observers see them as an opportunity for ‘complete emancipation of the global South’ in the redistribution of global power by correcting the old order and demanding a genuine Southern voices (Cheru, 2016) where as pessimists are warning the dangers of a misplaced enthusiasm on the informal pluralism replacing more formal and systematic multilateralism. Thus, the investigation of impacts of the rising powers to the current global governance which was substantially shaped by the West falls in competing narratives with three possibilities; the consolidation of the status quo, reforming the architecture and radical repudiation.

Optimists argued that the traditional system of global governance led by Western powers through the Briton woods institutions or the liberal international order, and the system of global governance that was embedded within it, would not only survive but also co-opt the emerging powers(Wade,2011). In this sense, studies identified that rising powers do not aim to subvert the international order that has led to their emergence.It argues that the rising powers firmly located within the Western-centered neoliberal world order (Kevin and Murphy, 2013) and they will adhere to the existing system for negating the institutional formula that has brought them success will endanger their national interest(ibid).The most optimistic take is that the emerging powers may even become defenders of the liberal order.

The other group argued on the possibility of reforming the global governance through bargaining originating from the accommodative reaction of the incumbent to the strategies of the rising powers (Wade, 1997; Kemal, 2005). It is based on the possibility of arriving at mutual consensus of modifying the incumbent architect through protracted deal. Accordingly the impact of the emerging powers on the global governance is unlikely to be either revolutionary or conservative but reformative.

Accordingly, the liberal international order can survive by accommodating greater political diversity of the emerging powers like China which is distinctly illiberal. This accommodative bargaining is also part of the official preferences of emerging powers in the global South both before and after the financial crisis which was focused on securing greater influence in the dominant global economic institutions through moderate reformers at best intent on maintaining domestic policy space against international norms and rules that were often developed without their participation.

Therefore, they argued that the emerging powers will not diverge substantially from the current institutional and normative statuesque rather seek for a reform to maximizing recognition as great powers in the existing order. For instance, though emerging economies are portrayed as proponents of an alternative state centered development model grounded in longstanding ideology inimical to the existing rules of global governance, the United States government adopted State intervention policies in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008.

Hence, global conflict is believed to be unlikely among the incumbent and the emerging powers. The basic defense for this position is simple and strait forward; rising powers has no reason to engender the institutions that had brought them success in the global order. This argument is also based on the evaluation of the pragmatic strategies perused by the global South especially China, India and Brazil which is centered on getting influence through expanded voting shares on key formal global governance institutions.

Contrary to this optimistic position, we have alarmist scholars who had far more credible justification of global governance's future than the somewhat nostalgic narrative which holds that the emerging powers can be absorbed into Western-dominated international order. This pessimistic view of convergence argues that emerging powers seek to exert an alternative model of political and economic organization that seeks purposive state intervention to guide market rather than relying on self regulated market growth and power transition presents high risk of conflict as the incumbent react preventively (Steve, 2008). They expect that convergence introduces heightened risk of conflict and disorder primarily manifested in military competition between China and US unlike common theorization that see China as being integrated within US hegemony and against the accounts that claim the terminal crisis of US hegemony accompanied by a hegemonic transition toward China.

They argued about the incompatibility of the engagement of rising powers from climate change mitigation to global trade governance or sustainable development guided with different norms and preferences. For example, rising powers place priority on domestic economic development and refuse binding commitments on emissions reductions. The US-China trade imbalance which now counted as the onset of post cold war trade war is another case in point. However, proponents of offensive realism argue that increasing capabilities will themselves transform preferences in a radically revisionist direction

(Mearsheimer, 2001). In actual fact the capabilities of influencing global governance architect by the global South is also constrained by national and international calculations (Stev, 2008).

While the emerging powers may accept certain aspects of the existing liberal order but there would still significant variance between the liberal order and the domestic imperatives and social purposes including sustaining regime security of these powers, especially in East Asia. The emerging powers shake the old order because of its broken promises in the past for openness and accommodation. The legitimacy and the future of the order is not just a matter of material benefits it confers on the rising powers but there are also ideational and identity considerations including the resentment among the rising powers who associate the liberal order, its ideology, and its institutions with Western dominance and exploitation.

This broader narrative directed towards the inevitable transition towards a multiplex world that can accommodate the role of the old institutions and an emerging needs. In other words, it is sort of a global version known for its inclusivity, informality, pragmatism, expediency, consensus building, and non confrontational bargaining as contrasted with the adversarial posturing in Western multilateral negotiations. However, according to Amitave (2016) there is far reaching change in the architecture of global governance following the emergence of new actors and demands questioning the future of the multilateral institutions around which the global governance was anchored along with the new multilateral arrangements, and various forms of partnerships involving government, private, and civil society actors. Accordingly, the effects of the emerging arrangements are felt on the prominence, authority, and legitimacy of the global multilateral institutions.

EMERGING POWERS AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

Virtually all of the African countries were the colonial subjects of Western European powers whose economy and institutions were emulated after them. Thus, the search for fitting organic approaches that can bring sustainable development in African has been preoccupying the national project generations (Cheru, 2009). The first consideration was centered on experimenting capitalist path under the dictation of the Bretton woods institutions which prescribed good policies camouflaged as the 'White Men Burden' for healing the wounds of African economy. But, these prescriptions were ways of disguising the secrets of success or deliberate deception strategies (Chang 2002).

The second path which appeared as an alternative model was the socialist approach. Negating classical renditions, the majority has folloed an indigenized African socialism which again ended with failure. Now in 21st century again Africa became object of a new global race with most dynamic protagonists coming from the emerging Southern powers whose engagement is more evident in Africa than elsewhere in the World.

Thus, this sub topic attempted to address whether this engagement could enhance the power of Africa by providing policy space or perpetuate the unequal relations of the old order given the rise of emerging southern powers and reconfiguration of global governance system. Hence, this section will address the challenges and opportunities presented by the increasing engagement of emerging Southern partners and the strategies Africa needs to adopt to deal with the active engagement and harness the positive gains of this development.

There are many contending narratives about the possible impact of the active engagement of rising powers in Africa. Cheru (2016) has classified them into four namely the alarmists, the skeptics, the critics of new imperialism and the cheer leaders. Accordingly, the alarmists regard the emerging Southern partners as rivals of the West who might turn Africa in to proxy war and cause loss of its traditional development partners.

The skeptics are critiques of the policy of no conditionality or the evolving aid architecture which is most often pursued by the emerging powers. They defend the established aid system admitting its shortcomings but resent the new move believing that it will demolish aid effectiveness by downgrading transparency and compliance mechanisms along with problem of fragmentation and proliferation (Cheru,2016). According to him, this belief is also accepted by academic critiques who aspire for the ‘democratization of the current aid architecture.’

The third category which regard the active engagement of the emerging power as new imperialism fall in what Cheru called in his earlier study as colonization by invitation (Cheru, 2014). Accordingly, the emerging Southern partners of Africa are counted as new imperialists whose primary interest is merely the extraction of the natural resource wealth of the continent rather than promoting development. Western academia, politicians, business persons and activists present themselves as defenders of the African people. Europeans whose companies were deployed in Africa since colonial times also criticized their presence linking with the exploitation of the continent, but the same actors were advising them not to waste time and resources in the futureless continent with no economic value (Paulo, 2014). However, the Southern powers reacted that their engagements with Africa has nothing to do with imperialism but development.

The last but highly optimistic category which is overwhelmingly supported by eminent scholars including Cheru (2016) as a blessing for Africa is the position of the pragmatic cheerleaders of the continent. The applauding to this position come out of the desire to escape the age old chain of the old order that kept its people under acute unfreedom following the opening up of new possibilities and policy space for African countries with the engagement of Southern Powers. According to Cheru (2016), emerging powers such as China and India are creating significant opportunities and hope for African development and the continent is experiencing sign of new international assertiveness. Africa’s economic growth with question on its sustainability produced a mantra ‘Africa Rising’ but the commodity boom from 1997 to 2007 accounts for much of the positive commentary about African development coincided with the newly emerging partners demand for resources within the continent that are seen as strategic necessities to power their own growth and modernization(Mzukisi,2012). The later was used for justifying why much of Africa experienced growth while west has undergone painful financial crisis.

According to Cheru (2016), African first reaction to the active engagement of Southern powers was welcoming due to the fact that their investment in critical infrastructure and commodity export were followed by higher returns along with the provision of cheap consumer goods. In addition to heightening the volume of aid, Brazil, China, India, South Africa, and the Gulf countries have also demonstrated their willingness to make a departure from conditionally driven official development cooperation architecture and promote horizontal cooperation based on the principles of equality, partnership and mutual

interest (Fahimul, 2013). The fact that these powers are less prescriptive about economic policy has opened up space for policy experimentation and learning based on African rather than Western conditions.

For instance, Chinese development aid is devoid of policy reforms, structural economic changes or good governance prescriptions rather it is influenced by its policy of mutual respect of sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence which were adopted during the Bandung Conference (ibid). However, after 1971 Beijing applied one China policy and later the Beijing Consensus which appears to be guided by the principles of equitable growth, positive social change, self-determination and state control. Moreover, the Chinese financial aid is very dynamic being available in a much faster period.

Moreover, the increasing projection of the influence of Southern powers in Africa is creating a South space which seeks to achieve greater autonomy from the West. Sino-African relation is good instance of South-South Cooperation which is contributing for creating a Southern geopolitical space defined by a shared history of exploitation and Western intervention (Paulo, 2014). The involvement of these new partners in Africa widens sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture, and state-driven capital acquisitions from China, and intensifies private sector engagement from India (Mzukisi, 2012). However, the South-South co-operation and win-win globalization is also deepening power inequalities between Africa and China.

Therefore, in the words of Cheru (2016)'competition between manufactured products from emerging countries and African local products; indirect competition in export markets valuable to the continent, limited local in-sourcing, poor labor and environmental practices associated with massive importation of low-skilled labor are becoming source of divergence. Unearthing dark side of the policy of non-interference in the domestic politics to incumbent African political elites who tend to stay in power substantially longer than their counterparts in other world regions is also important because political elites in Africa have been very skilful in converting and leveraging international relations to bolster their own regimes and authority.

Again, there has been close strategic integration between the primary vectors of interaction between Africa and the emerging economies in the operations of the later in Africa. It is clear from this that while emerging economies have a strategy of deepening links with African countries in areas critical to the growth of their economies; Africa is bereft of strategy towards the emerging economies.

The high capital intensity of the extractive sector means that there are limited broad-based developmental benefits to be gained in the form of employment creation. The multiplier effect into other sectors of the economy is limited as well, unless African leadership re-invests the rents generated from resources to develop other sectors, in particular to promote knowledge development, agriculture, industry, and services. There is no coherent strategy from the group for helping develop Africa. Though Southern networks such as BRICS declared the principles of openness, solidarity, equality, mutually beneficial co-operation and inclusiveness but rhetoric of win-win globalization masks huge and deepening power inequalities (Padraig, 2013).

Generally, emerging economies provide many opportunities but at the same time their growing presence poses risks to Africa's future. The presence of emerging economies in Africa may promote both complementary win-win, and competitive win-lose outcomes. Some of the impacts of interaction may be direct and visible, reflected in bilateral relationships, while others may be indirect and less visible like competition in third-country markets. The struggle to ensure equity as result of rebalancing and increasingly Eastern centered global order is unfinished business and the future of the continent increasingly hinges on the outcomes of these struggles.

Africa's cooperation with new and emerging development partners has created both opportunities and risks. Within the new geo-economic context, the main challenge for African countries is how to benefit from the new opportunities, while minimizing the potential negative impacts. Thus, this dualistic effect demands designing best strategies for ensuring African economic and social development, its integration in global flows, reversing marginalization and autonomous diplomacy. In this regard, the most crucial issue that demands particular focus of attention is Africa's agency in global governance to exercise ownership over these growing interactions. Liberal internationalists viewed agency in global governance in narrow terms focusing on the West and ignoring the role of the global South in building global governance.

Therefore, African countries need to define, their development interests in precise terms and how to leverage their relationships to ensure optimal outcomes. There are a number of ways Africans can reorient their relationship with emerging powers to generate greater benefits. First, they should look beyond the rhetoric of solidarity, and realize that today's world is extremely mercantilist, and the link is primarily a business relationship. Again, the resource endowment of the continent should give Africans the confidence to bargain for better returns rather than selling their countries' trophies on the cheap. It is important to ensure that cooperation with new partners leads to economic diversification and industrial development in Africa, as well as supporting the continent's integration into the global economy. Africa's impoverishment and weak institutions could limit the extent of technology absorption and skills formation but apart from gaining advantages in infrastructure deals, African countries need to set out clear conditions that are linked to technology transfer, skills development, and institution building. The ultimate and the binding issue to maximize their bargaining power is the availability of unified negotiation policy and a strategic focus by analyzing strategic objectives of emerging economies, opportunities and threats arising from their entry (Paulo, 2014). However, it's highly unlikely that Africa will speak with one voice in foreign policy matters or act in unison.

The distortion of positive relation between the emerging Southern powers and Africa affects their national economy and hence, they need to recognize that their long-term access to Africa's natural resources depends on developing a non-exploitative relationship that provides for win-win outcomes supported with preferential market access. Besides, China and other key investors from the South should support Africa in its integration into the global economy, but not on the basis of commodity dependence through critical support of regional integration initiatives.

By the same token, flows of finance to Africa will entail future repayments, and that every effort should be made to avoid Africa from entering into a new era of debt dependency and work towards the Accra Agenda for Action for ensuring country ownership of aid inflows and addressing transparency to prevent corruption. Finally, African countries should share amongst themselves knowledge and expertise

Generally, the rise of emerging powers and their engagement in Africa neither necessarily produces a new colonial type relationship nor automatically guarantees policy space (Cheru 2016). Thus, transforming the new relationship towards a win-win partnership demands African agency embedded in broader development plan, institutional and leadership capacity for engaging strategically. However, as its discussed in the works of Cheru, charting out an African way of development still awaits a generation to come. According to him, Africa which had been ‘grave yard of dead and experimented ideas of the West,’ is expected to escape the age old chain that kept its people under acute unfreedom by promoting its agency and policy space.

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