

John W. Harbeson & Donald Rothchild (Eds.) *Africa in World Politics: Reforming Political Order*. Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2009. 392pp. ISBN 978-0-8133-4364-8

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Africa in World Politics: Reforming Political Order clearly-written and well-organized book sheds light on many dimensions and issues presented by these encouraging developments and the persistent omnipresent shadows cast over them. These shadows include the legacies rooted in the continent's colonial and postcolonial past and the ever-present hurdles to an enduring political and economic renaissance that remain. Not for the first time have prospects for an African political and economic renaissance emerged only ultimately to be proven illusory wholly or in part. The mid-twentieth-century independence of nearly fifty African countries from colonial rule and exploitation itself created the expectation of a vastly expanded, culturally diversified global civilization accented by African commitment to nonalignment and self-reliance as between the Cold War alliances.

In chapter five, sub-Saharan African countries as a group have made notable strides in the observance of civil and political liberties since 1990, and most have undertaken constitutional reforms to some degree. One heartening manifestation of the new African constitutionalism has been the insistence by civil society in several countries that presidents honor, and desist from seeking to circumvent, two-term limitations on their tenure in office. Indeed, the number of African countries practising democracy at or above global standards, as defined by several dimensions of democratization, have expanded from two prior to 1990 Mauritius and Botswana to approximately one-third of all African countries, as measured by Freedom House, Polity IV, and the World Bank's Governance Matters surveys. The Afrobarometer surveys suggest a widespread, if variable, popular preference for democratic government over the obvious alternatives, although citizen satisfaction with the efficacy of new democratic institutions and practices has appeared to be qualified, at best, in these surveys.

Aili Tripp's chapter in this volume, "In Pursuit of Authority: Civil Society and Rights-Based Discourses in Africa," details the broadening rights-based agendas of vibrant civil society in many African countries, belying the claims of civil society's critics. Those critics inaccurately presume that its defenders rely upon definitions of civil society that treat it as being synonymous with what Western donors are charged to fund and support rather than grounding it in a broader understanding of civil society that commensurate with realities on the ground in many countries. On the other hand, Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder have prominently asserted that democratization, implicitly defined to be synonymous with elections, has proven detrimental to the viability and stability of weak states. Their contention that autocratic states must first take on other characteristics implicitly associated with democracy, such as the rule of law, acceptance of civil society, and transparent governance, has been criticized as unrealistic. But these criticisms have appeared to understate the possibility that democratic processes, broadly conceived to include these features, may be factors in the creation of state stability as well as

democratization rather than simply outcomes of state stability. This may indeed be what has begun to occur in Africa's more successful democracies to date.

In Chapter seven, "The AIDS Crisis: International Relations and Governance in Africa," Alan Whiteside and Anokhi Parikh chronicle the incidence and consequences of this pandemic. The costs of lives lost, life expectancies foreshortened, and diminished human resources profoundly threaten the viability of African societies, economies, and politics in the long term, although it appears that they have been surprisingly resilient in the short term. Notwithstanding the significant current mobilization to address this crisis, the authors decry the absence, to date, of the requisite depth, scope, and uniformity of commitment, in Africa and worldwide, to arrest the spread of HIV/AIDS, treat the afflicted, and redouble the search for ultimate cures. In chapter nine, by William Zartman, these organizations reflect the ever-increasing breadth of African experience and capability in diplomatic negotiations, which began in earnest at independence in the mid- twentieth century with negotiations on constitutional and other terms for separation from the retiring colonial powers. Specifically, the APRM institutionalizes the commitment of participating states to conform to "agreed political, economic, and corporate governance values, codes and standards." Thus, the APRM serves to ground NEPAD's broader objectives, which are (1) to promote accelerated growth and sustainable development, (2) to eradicate widespread and severe poverty and (3) to halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process.

Chapter ten, by the late Donald Rothchild, explains that U.S. initiatives to promote political stability, peace, democracy, and development in Africa have generally had a low profile relied upon soft power and have often been effectively conducted through regional or global multilateral coalitions rather than unilaterally. While, Chapter eleven, by Princeton Lyman, addresses the challenge of achieving a proper balance ideally complementarity between needed enhancement of security programs and continued measures to encourage improved governance, relieve poverty, and extend democracy and human rights. "Any crackdown on terrorist activity," he observes, "has to be carried out with great sensitivity to the historic grievances of marginalized groups, the incipient struggle for human rights, and the relatively weak civilian oversight of the military and security institutions." China's ascendancy as a major global economic power has dramatized the emergence of an increasingly multipolar global economic order, in which India, Brazil, and other economies have become significantly influential players.

Denis Tull's chapter thirteen highlights the challenges that China's rapidly expanding engagement with sub-Saharan Africa poses for the G8 countries as well as for the continent itself. As it has ever since African countries achieved independence, China has presented itself, in competition with India, as the champion of developing countries in their struggle to level the playing field with industrialized nations. In its current African *démarche*, however, China may have presented the continent with a Faustian bargain. Tull details the ways in which China has projected its own insistence on unfettered state sovereignty, thereby giving aid and comfort to African countries struggling with a range of Western political and economic conditionalities, including the reduction of poverty through the Millennium Development Goals. Chapter three, by Thomas Callaghy, authoritatively traces the evolution of Paris Club approaches toward sub-Saharan Africa, from debt rescheduling to debt forgiveness, to a new commitment of aid for poverty alleviation. He attributes this transformation substantially to the emergence of nongovernmental organizations as players in international economic governance and to Africa's newly

enhanced geostrategic importance since September 11, 2001. The new regime of debt forgiveness and the Millennium Development Goals, combined with continuing insistence on neoliberal political and economic reform, undoubtedly reflects a more nuanced sense by the industrialized nations of their own best interests. But it also reflects their deeply held convictions about what Africa requires in its own interests and that has come gradually to include the kinds of economic assistance African countries themselves have long demanded in resisting structural adjustment.

The salient question, as Callaghy observes, is “whether Africa is ready to take full advantage of these new opportunities.” He cautions against indulging in “analytic hurry” seeing a desired trend as fact before the evidence shows that it is sustainable particularly when donors perceive that trend to be vital to their interests. Prospects for realizing these strategically important outcomes depend critically upon more than the wisdom, determination and commitment of African countries to use these new resources wisely. Equally important will be the degree to which this increased aid for Africa will be administered and extended in line with best practices derived from more than half a century of often unhappy experience with aid packages. Will the aid promote sustainable, replicable development? Will it duly take into account the expressed interests and knowledge of the recipient peoples? Will it be free of inappropriate, unrealistic, debilitating, and unnecessary conditionalities?

In this regard, Chapter twelve, by Gilbert Khadiagala, sounds a note of warning and skepticism. The Cotonou Partnership Agreement of 2000 committed African states to economic partnership agreements (EPAs), which, in response to World Trade Organization pressure, signal the demise of non - reciprocal trade agreements calculated to give African countries favored access to European markets. But Khadiagala observes that European countries have used their continuing dominance in relationships with African countries to secure EPAs “while perennially renegeing on G8 aid promises that ultimately seek to equip African countries to absorb and deal effectively with the EPAs.” To what extent will diminished marginalization in economic and political terms become commensurate with its growing global prominence in cultural and religious terms as examined in Ali Mazrui’s chapter? At the same time, the measure of African states’ performance will be their skill in utilizing, mediating, and adapting this increased and multifaceted international engagement in ways that reflect, enhance, and are accountable to the best interests of their citizens’ not just ruling elites as they understand those interests. Chapter two, by Crawford Young, documents the authoritarian practices of the African colonial state and their deep imprint and continuing influence on postindependence African states. At the moment of African independence, the insufficiency of coercive colonial-era rule for postindependence development was not adequately appreciated; the fragility of postindependence political institutions and their metastasis into patrimonial rule was neither foretold nor anticipated. In Chapter fourteen, Francis Deng asserts that the cascading demands for domestic and external performance and accountability thrust upon the African state since the end of the Cold War amounted to “a formidable national identity crisis in which sovereignty is being contested by forces in internal confrontation and their external supporters.”

The chapters of this book underscore the importance and de facto reality of this fundamental amendment of Westphalian norms, for the extent to which the premise of noninterference by states in each other’s affairs has been compromised by events, especially since the latter years of the twentieth century. In this way, democratic participation in the reformation of the state, so conceived, becomes a key component of state strengthening and a potential bulwark against state descent into

neo-patrimonialism, which was missing in Africa's first independence. If there ever was a book written about Africa that offers prospects for hope on such a grim subject, then it is this one. The book resulted from the work of numerous authors who have ably assisted the editors, and whose expert views on Africa, politics and world are fresh, provide food for thought, and urge Africa to awake from slumber and seize her moment.

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