



Madeleine Goerg is a programme officer for the General Marshall Fund's (GMF) Wider Atlantic programme, where she is responsible for outreach to and research on Atlantic African countries. She monitors EU and U.S. policies and politics toward Africa and also manages a leadership development and training programme for rising leaders from around the Atlantic Basin. Her range of expertise includes African foreign policies, regional integration, development cooperation in Africa, North-South and South-South cooperation, and African security.

States in a Changing Global Order: Where does Africa fit?

Madeleine Goerg

For centuries the international system has been structured around sovereign states. First concerned with maintaining domestic order within a given territory, sovereignty later came to imply autonomy from other states and therefore non-interference in their domestic affairs. For centuries, however, access to sovereignty remained limited to a small set of countries. The values articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which are structuring values for the international system as we know it, find their root in European nineteenth century culture. These values, which originated in a specific cultural and historical context, took on a decidedly universal character following the end of the Second World War, the creation of the United Nations system, and the establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions. Whilst very few actors, including emerging powers, propose radically different values to those prevailing in the international system, their interpretations of these values differ, and the degree to which they adhere to them varies. Decolonisation meant the inclusion of a host of newly sovereign countries in the international system, changing the basis for their participation in the global arena and putting economic development higher on the global political agenda. The emerging powers, current champions of the global South, are a set of countries that have managed to make the leap from developing country status to that of challenger of the economic and political dominance of advanced economies. Over the past three decades, the rise of new centres of economic and political power that were historically colonised and which demonstrate a strong will to assert their autonomy from previous forms of domination has brought

the importance of state sovereignty back to the fore. Emerging powers have also exerted pressure on the post-Second World War international architecture and questioned the principles of the Washington Consensus on which it remains largely based.

While this development is often framed as a clash of values between established and emerging powers, the tensions arise in large part from a divergence of interests and the profound shift in economic and political power which has led to the increased ability of developing countries to guard and defend their sovereignty against the interference of external actors. Indeed, respect for sovereignty largely depends on whose sovereignty is being curtailed.

In the midst of this rebalancing the question arises of how African nations fit in the changing international configuration. Sovereignty remains a key organising principle but continues to be limited in practice, with significant intrusion by external actors into the domestic affairs of African states. While sovereignty as a principle of international law remains applicable, sovereignty as effective autonomy and authority over a given territory is much more tenuous. The rise of new centres of power presents an opportunity for African states to better guard their sovereignty and to craft and implement national policies, especially with regard to their economic and political development trajectory. In an attempt to address this issue, a brief discussion of sovereignty is developed along with considerations pertaining to existing formal and informal hierarchies in the international system. A closer look is then taken at four key countries, namely China, Brazil, India, and South Africa, whose strategies impact Africa's place in the international system. While South Africa is an African state, its unique history and relations with the African continent find it straddling the line between the BRICS¹ grouping and its regional bloc. Chinese, Brazilian, Indian, and South African articulations of their Africa policies broaden the range of options available to African states, especially with regard to development strategies. These approaches have tended towards a greater respect of sovereignty and non-interference, providing leverage for the re-negotiation of Africa's place in the international system. The New Development Bank founded by the BRICS is an interesting attempt by emerging powers to provide new models and alternatives for developing countries. Advanced economies, particularly the United States and the European Union, have been harshly criticised for the dissonance between their professed principles and practice. As emerging powers continue to rise and their relations with the African continent grow more complex, their credibility as alternatives will hinge on their ability to keep the gap between principle and practice narrow. While the rise of new centres of power represents an opportunity for some, for those less able to defend their sovereignty, intervention and interference from external actors is never far. New partnerships need to be approached differently so as to avoid reproducing existing hierarchies. Pooled sovereignty and regional integration have been attempts to redress the imbalance.

¹ The BRICS grouping comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. While Russia is also an important challenger to the current order, its interaction with African states decreased sharply with the end of the Cold War. This paper will therefore focus on those countries providing Africa with alternatives for development.

Setting the Scene: Sovereignty and the International System

Hans Morgenthau, a leading twentieth-century analyst of international politics, once defined sovereignty as “the supreme legal authority of the nation to give and enforce the law within a certain territory and, in consequence, independence from the authority of any other nation and equality with it under international law.”² Despite differences in size, power, and age, states are recognised as having final authority over a defined territory and population and are equal under international law. Mutual recognition is a key component of sovereignty and membership in the international system on the basis of this recognition grants access to a set of goods. At the basic level, actors recognised as sovereign have the right to exercise authority within their borders with limited, if any, interference from other actors. They are also given a seat at the table and are able to participate in international governance, which non-sovereign entities are not. Other specific goods, such as peacekeeping, loans, or disaster relief are also available to them by virtue of their status as members of the international community. While the rise of new centres of power such as the BRICS countries has upset the balance in the international system, it has not yet managed to change it entirely, supporting Lora Anne Viola’s observation that a system’s recognition criteria tend to be conservative and to favour the political aims, interests and values of the dominant members of the system at any given moment.³ Advanced economies, with the United States front and centre, continue to dominate the system and use recognition as a means of demanding conformity to dominant norms. For instance, Chinese and Russian accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) required their adherence to previous agreements and a degree of adaptation on their part.

Juridical equality between sovereign states does not preclude a *de facto* hierarchy within the international system. Indeed, sovereign equality does not guarantee the equal distribution of resources or governance rights for all members. Most analysts accept such categories as major powers, emerging powers, regional power or hegemons as opposed to ‘ordinary’ states, thereby distinguishing subsets of states. In other words, advanced economies, BRICS countries, and African states might all be sovereign and equal before the law, but they are treated differently in the international system. The BRICS ability to challenge the current international order, which remains anchored in the Bretton Woods system, owes in large part to their size and power.

Institutions like the United Nations General Assembly or the WTO, while predicated on the one-state-one-vote principle, still reflect dynamics of dominance. The United Nations Security Council, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank (WB), on the other hand, have gone a step further, institutionalising the hierarchy in the international system. It follows that a large number of sovereign states remain ‘rule takers’ despite being important stakeholders in particular issues. With regard to development cooperation, as practiced by the members of the OECD’s Development

² Morgenthau 1967 in Mathias Albert, Barry Buzan and Michael Zürn, “Introduction: differentiation theory and international relations,” in *Bringing Sociology to International Relations: World Politics as Differentiation Theory* ed. Mathias Albert et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 12.

³ Lora Anne Viola, “Stratificatory Differentiation,” 118-119.

Co-operation Directorate⁴, the ability of recipient countries to decide on allocation of funds or priority areas is greatly constrained. Successive declarations have attempted to address the issue of ‘ownership’ of development cooperation with limited success. Furthermore, consensus on norms and common goals in development cooperation has often been taken for granted by advanced economies or traditional donors. The assumption of agreement on norms and “what should be done” has supported expectations by traditional development partners of an “automatically positive response to their calls for ‘good governance’, including fighting corruption, or adherence to the Millennium Development Goals.”⁵ The perception of traditional powers that weaker countries’ acquiescence is the same as agreement is at the core of the criticism levelled at the international system. Whilst very few actors propose radically different values from the prevailing ones, the interpretation of these values, the relationship between values and policies, and the ability of actors to enact these values are contested.

The international community, which advanced economies have gradually sought to build since the end of the Second World War, looks different when viewed from the United States and the European Union than it does from the global South. Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu distinguishes between an international community and an international society. According to Moghalu, a community is a “close-knit entity that regards itself, really, as an extended family. A community is held together by custom and by norms that, written or unwritten, spring from a common understanding and frequently, a common heritage. What happens in one community member’s home is of concern to other members, and for this reason they become their neighbour’s keeper.”⁶ A society, on the other hand, is a “group of people who have come together, as in a social club, recognising their different backgrounds but reaching agreement to pursue clearly identified common objectives. Members of a society return to their individual homes after the society’s meetings. They agree at their gatherings on when to meet again and what each member will do to contribute to realising the society’s objectives.”⁷ Most members of the global South, in part due to their colonial past, seem to lean towards an international society rather than an international community. With the BRICS countries leading the charge, the issue of state autonomy and freedom from interference, especially with regard to development trajectories, is gaining traction.

⁴ The DAC currently has 29 members: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁵ Goran Hyden, “After the Paris Declaration: Taking on the Issue of Power,” *Development Policy Review*, 26-3 (2008): 262-263.

⁶ Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, *Emerging Africa: How the Global Economy’s ‘Last Frontier’ Can Prosper and Matter*, (UK: Penguin, 2014): 238.

⁷ Moghalu, *Emerging Africa*, 238-239.

Challengers and Reformers: The Emerging Powers and Africa

Thinking about development cooperation differently...

The rise of countries from the global South has put the concept of sovereignty back in the debate. China, Brazil, India, and South Africa, have been particularly keen to challenge former colonial powers and the United States as regards their relations with African states. Emerging economies' interest in Africa has had significant implications for the continent, contributing in large part to its economic growth and increased political weight. As they are also part of the developing world, their growing presence in Africa has mostly been framed in terms of South-South cooperation and solidarity. South-South cooperation is defined as much by its actors as by the approaches, methods, and justifications such actors choose to use. Unlike development cooperation with traditional donors, which stays within the confines of official development aid, most economic relations and forms of development cooperation undertaken by states of the global South fall under the umbrella of South-South cooperation. South-South development cooperation does however encompass elements closer to western definitions of official development aid, such as grants, loans falling under official development aid requirements, debt relief, or technical assistance. It also includes trade, investment, and private loans. Yet, whereas traditional donors have long used a discourse of charity, altruism, and compassion to justify development aid, emerging powers frame their decisions in terms of solidarity, mutual benefit, and shared identities, highlighting the shared experience of colonialism, post-colonial inequality, and the current imbalances in the global system of governance. On the basis of this shared identity as developing countries, China, Brazil, India, and South Africa reject the hierarchy inherent in the donor-recipient relationship, emphasising mutual respect and equality. These have become tropes for leaders and are used to frame the narrative of speeches, high-level meetings, and fora. Self-reliance and self-help, two core principles of southern development cooperation, are also articulated so as to emphasise the win-win outcomes of southern cooperation.⁸ Rejection of conditionalities – which are a central feature of traditional development aid and were initially introduced by the IMF as a guarantee for repayment – as well as a strong commitment to the respect for sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs are also core principles upheld by emerging powers. South-South cooperation is a quid pro quo in which recipient countries present clear economic opportunities for their partners. A closer look at the Chinese, Brazilian, Indian, and South African approaches to African states provides insight into their interpretation of these principles.

Chinese articulation of its Africa policy is anchored in history, with references stretching back to the 15th century and a narrative of continuity from the 19th century through to the Cold War. Positioning itself in stark contrast to the IMF, the World Bank, and traditional donors, China's foreign policy relations with Africa are marked by a discourse of political equality, mutual benefit, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and 'win-win

⁸ Sachin Chaturvedi, "Development Cooperation: Contours, Evolution and Scope," in *Development Cooperation and Emerging Powers: New Partners or Old Patterns?* ed. Sachin Chaturvedi et al. (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012): 18.

cooperation'. Beijing's refusal to openly set conditions for cooperation with African states (with the exception of the non-recognition of Taiwan) follows the principle of non-intervention in the politics of a sovereign state, and illustrates its general reluctance to prescribe policy preferences and options. This attitude sets it apart from traditional donors, providing an alternative for African governments. It is frequently emphasised that despite the unequal economic relations that characterise China's engagement on the African continent, China recognises its African counterparts as politically equal.⁹ Beijing sees its approach as exceptional or unique in that it represents a new form of engagement, distinct from the post-colonial links African countries share with Europe and the United States; by defining itself as a "developing donor," China eschews comparisons with traditional donors.¹⁰ Embodying the more pragmatic nature of South-South cooperation, Chinese cooperation with African states favours practice-based methods and outcome-based approaches. Unlike the EU's budget support, China privileges projects with concrete end products where it can retain a significant amount of control over expenditure and quality. The Chinese firms and workers largely employed during these projects represent a means of exercising oversight, in line with China's professed goal of advancing its own national economic interests. China's relative flexibility, apparent lack of conditionalities, speed of decision making, less risk-averse approach, and willingness to work with imperfect institutions all make for attractive elements for African governments seeking to further national development goals, especially with regard to infrastructure development.

Development cooperation has historically been a central principle of Brazil's foreign policy and the country has long positioned itself as a bridge between developing and developed countries. With the election of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) in the early 2000s, Brazilian foreign policy shifted to South-South cooperation, primarily through the BRICS grouping, and relations with Africa. Lula's emphasis on Brazil's cultural affinities with Africa and on the shared experience with Lusophone Africa served as the backdrop for increased engagement with African countries, an engagement which has been consistently framed in terms of Brazil's developmental and commercial aims. Brazil, which shares basic values with advanced economies such as representative democracy and the protection of human rights, has justified its non-interventionist stance by arguing that these are domestic issues for states to contend with. President Lula's administration instead put the emphasis on denouncing hierarchies within the global governance system, using a discourse of opposition to the United States and, to a lesser extent, Europe. Development cooperation with Africa goes beyond the borders defined by official development aid to encompass a wide range of activities and actors. For instance, due to the relative success of social and economic development programmes domestically, Brazil has become a primary exporter of 'social technology', particularly with regard to agriculture, health, and vocational training. In addition, Brazil has encouraged, and at times created, a seamless link between private sector interests and development cooperation, with a pivotal role played by

⁹ Christopher Alden and Daniel Large. "China's Exceptionalism and the Challenges of Delivering, Difference in Africa." *Journal of Contemporary China*, 20-68 (2011): 21, 28-30.

¹⁰ Zhou Hong, "China's Evolving Aid Landscape: Crossing the River by Feeling the Stones" in *Development Cooperation and Emerging Powers: New Partners or Old Patterns?* ed. Sachin Chaturvedi et al. (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012): 156.

the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES). According to Alden, Brazil's large private firms, such as Vale and Odebrecht, were instrumental in shifting Brazil's foreign policy focus, often drawing the parallel to the Chinese approach of linking state diplomacy with commercial interests.¹¹ The Brazilian private sector is an active contributor to development cooperation across Africa and, in turn, development has become central to Brazilian firms' sustainable commercial interests. The Brazilian government actively encourages large Brazilian companies present in African countries to employ the local workforce, to use local goods and services, and to make parallel investments in social services for local communities directly or indirectly affected by their activities. However, Brazilian engagement towards Africa has largely tapered since the election of President Dilma Rousseff in 2010 due to an overall less active foreign policy.

While Brazil's claim to being the largest African country outside of Africa links it to the African continent, historical ties also link India and Africa. The large voluntary and involuntary movement of Indians to East and Southern Africa over the past few centuries has led to the presence of significant Indian communities in certain parts of the continent. As one of the first decolonised countries, India was also a key supporter of the decolonisation struggles in the African continent. Starting in the early 2000s, the Indian government began to place greater emphasis on outreach to diaspora communities, including in Africa.¹² India is a development aid partner for a number of African countries, with a recent focus on energy-rich West and Central African countries. Technical assistance has included areas such as capacity-building in information and communication technologies (ICT) and access to agrarian technologies. Indian foreign assistance also includes lines of credit, which blend development and commercial interests.¹³ Entrepreneurs and small-scale businesses have spearheaded Indian economic relations with Africa rather than state-owned enterprises, as is the case with China. This difference accounts in part for the dissimilarity in profile of India-Africa and China-Africa relations. India's economic interests in Africa were given a considerable boost from state support in 2007. The third India-Africa summit set to be held in New Delhi in October 2015 could further advance relations between the two, marking an attempt by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a continent-wide approach. Given other key priorities, Africa, however, is not likely to climb significantly up India's foreign policy agenda; since his election in May 2014, Prime Minister Modi has not yet visited a single African country.

Another significant actor impacting Africa's clout in the international system is South Africa. The democratic transition of 1994 marked a shift in South Africa's approach to development cooperation. Apartheid South Africa launched numerous destabilisation campaigns against neighbouring states. Post-apartheid South African governments used development aid as a means of repaying the African continent for its support during the anti-apartheid struggle and of repairing the damage done by previous

¹¹ Christopher Alden, "Resurgent continent?", 17.

¹² Dhruva Jaishankar, "India in the Southern Atlantic: An Overview," in *China and India: New Actors in the Southern Atlantic* (Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund):26.

¹³ Emma Mawdsley, "Development and the India-EU Strategic Partnership: Missing incentives and divergent identities," *European Strategic Partnerships Observatory, Policy Brief 14* (2014): 3.

administrations. Successive African National Congress (ANC) governments have used South Africa's development cooperation as a means of bolstering the country's African identity, countering apartheid South Africa's narrative of being a 'European' outpost on the African continent. South Africa's development cooperation is rooted in the idea of solidarity with national liberation movements and former supporters of the anti-apartheid movement. South Africa's development cooperation is based on the normative priorities of promoting peace, stability and economic development of and within the African continent. These principles are articulated in South Africa's so-called 'African Agenda' and via South-South cooperation. South Africa has also moved away from the terms and practices of traditional donors, using the discourse of partnership rather than donor-recipient and rejecting the use of conditionality.¹⁴ South Africa's role as a BRICS country and as the only African member of the G20 has further elected African concerns to the global stage. While it aims to represent African interests abroad and to be a gateway into the continent, South Africa has at times struggled to balance pursuing its own national interests and strategies with its bid to represent the continent as a whole.

The broad principals of South-South cooperation are present in the foreign policies of the four emerging powers discussed above. In response to the lack of reform of global lending institutions like the IMF and the World Bank to adequately reflect new political realities, the BRICS countries are providing developing nations with an alternative. The creation of the New Development Bank (NDB), as the first international development finance institution proposed by major developing countries, could lead to the institutionalisation of these principles. Samir Saran argues that the NDB has the potential to change "the ethos of development finance irreversibly."¹⁵ The proposal for the bank and its announcement at the 6th BRICS Heads of State and Government Summit, in Fortaleza in July 2014, reenergised the debate on the reform of global lending institutions. This is a sign that the bank could have ripple effects and, "through competition as well as complementarities, [generate] valuable externalities in the rest of the development finance institutions."¹⁶ The NDB, which was launched in July 2015, still raises more questions than it answers with regard to the future of its own governance structure; the possible inclusion of other developing countries, including African states, as contributors and shareholders; the ability of the private sector to weigh in; the potential for conditions on loans; and the possibility of technology and skills transfer.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that having been built on the model of the World Bank and other regional development banks, it will add to the existing lending architecture rather than fundamentally changing it. The ability of emerging powers to create alternate institutions, however, represents a major step in rebalancing the existing system. The World Bank could become one of many lending

¹⁴ Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, "South Africa: Development, International Cooperation and Soft Power" in *Development Cooperation and Emerging Powers: New Partners or Old Patterns?* ed. Sachin Chaturvedi et al. (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012)

¹⁵ Samir Saran, "Waking up to the BRICS," *The Hindu*, August 6, 2014, accessed August 5, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/waking-up-to-the-brics/article6284755.ece>

¹⁶ Stephany Griffith-Jones, "A BRICS Development Bank: A Dream Coming True?" *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*, 215 (2014): 15.

¹⁷ Discussions, African Development Bank Annual Meetings, May 25-29, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

institutions available to developing countries and thereby lose the ability to dictate terms. Although the NDB is not an Africa-focussed bank, African states are expecting loans from the new institution to function as additional financing mechanisms to bridge the infrastructure gap on the continent. Whether these expectations will be met remains to be seen.

... but hierarchies persist within the South-South context.

South-South cooperation provides new models and alternatives for developing countries. References to the global South, however, tend to obscure hierarchies between developing countries. Ambiguities in the positions and policies of emerging powers reflect the differences within the global South and the discordant tone between discourse and reality. Indeed, when examined in practice, core principles of South-South cooperation such as non-conditionality, non-interference, and solidarity come second to economic interests. While states will, and should, seek to pursue their national interests, the dissonance between values, discourse and policy is at the core of the criticism levelled against traditional partners. As emerging powers continue to rise, they too will be faced with criticism on the part of their developing nation peers.

As has been noted above, a distinctive feature of emerging power relations with Africa, and with other developing countries, is the apparent lack of conditionalities. Both China and India, however, use what have been termed “indirect conditionalities,”¹⁸ provisions that ensure Chinese and Indian firms will secure significant portions of the work financed. India expects partner countries to procure between 65 and 75 percent of the goods and services associated with projects and lines of credit from Indian firms.¹⁹ The same is true of projects financed by China, which are largely carried out by public or private Chinese contractors, in effect circumventing the need for conditions but also curbing the positive externalities such as training, job creation, and technology transfer, which might arise from a given project. According to Alden, “technology and skills transfer [are] standardly not privileged in any Chinese sponsored projects unless negotiations require their inclusion.”²⁰ China rather prefers the use of “extensive technical training and exchange programmes which run in parallel with particular projects.”²¹ Chinese firms signed contracts worth around \$40 billion in Africa and “by the end of 2007, 114,000 Chinese were legally working on the continent, and 67,000 of them had arrived in the preceding 12 months.”²²

With regard to the principle of non-interference, China has come to draw a line between involvement with the approval of the host within the framework of a

¹⁸ Barry Sautman and Hairong. Yan. “Friends And Interests: China’s Distinctive Links With Africa.” *African Studies Review*, 50-3 (2007): 86.

¹⁹ Samir Saran and Vivan Sharan, “Behind the Lines of Credit,” *Business Standard*, March 28, 2015, accessed August 5, 2015. http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/samir-saran-vivan-sharan-behind-the-lines-of-credit-115032800908_1.html

²⁰ Christopher Alden and Daniel Large. “China’s Exceptionalism,” 37.

²¹ Christopher Alden and Daniel Large. “China’s Exceptionalism,” 37.

²² Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, *Emerging Africa*, 359.

multilateral intervention – and involvement which may be perceived as interference, which could have a negative impact on nation-building and the ability of a state to exert authority over its territory. In May 2007, China deployed 1,800 peacekeepers to missions in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia/Eritrea, and the Western Sahara. According to Adekeye Adebajo, this contribution, though small compared to the 80,000 UN peacekeepers deployed globally at the time, was greatly appreciated by African governments, especially when compared to the more selective and often interest-driven European and American peacekeeping engagements.²³ Contributing to peacekeeping missions falls under the umbrella of acceptable involvement with country approval and international backing. China's response to the failure of respective African governments to prevent violence against Chinese nationals in Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa and the Sudan, along with the decision to ship small arms to Zimbabwe on the eve of contentious elections in March 2008, however, are examples of interference into domestic affairs. Alden argues that China's position on Darfur, having pressured the Sudanese government into curbing the activities of its militias and strongly encouraged Khartoum to accept the African Union-UN peacekeeping force, was a clear departure from the principle of non-intervention.²⁴ In 2014, China's support of the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was a reflection of concerns for the safety of Chinese investments in the country and included provisions for the protection of these investments. The U.N. resolution issued was criticised for undermining the neutrality of the U.N. and intervening at the national level to protect existing Chinese interests. This attitude on the part of China – backed by the United States, Britain, and France – is reminiscent of American approaches to peacekeeping.²⁵ Talks of setting up naval facilities on the Horn of Africa and the non-combatant evacuation operations in Libya point to a new phase in Chinese engagement with African countries. The protection of economic assets, the evacuation and protection of Chinese nationals or the establishment of permanent military facilities will come to play a more significant role in China's cooperation policies, as it does for traditional powers²⁶.

The solidarity that emerging powers profess towards the developing world is also put to the test when interests do not align. A recent study on protectionist measures enacted by states after the 2008 financial crisis and their impact on trade for least developed countries (LDCs) pointed to the detrimental effect of behind-the-border measures such as export subsidies which have negative effects upon LDC trade. Among the top 10 trading partners of LDC's responsible for the most adverse export incentives, Brazil, China, and India rank the highest. In the case of Brazil, for instance, the post-crisis protectionist measures put in place affect 357 products or

²³ Adekeye Adebajo, *Curse of Berlin – Africa After the Cold War*, (South Africa: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2010):168.

²⁴ Christopher Alden and Daniel Large, "China's Exceptionalism and the Challenges of Delivering, Difference in Africa." *Journal of Contemporary China*, 20-68 (2011): 21, 33-34; Christopher Alden and Christopher R. Hughes, "Harmony And Discord In China's Africa Strategy: Some Implications For Foreign Policy," *The China Quarterly*, 199 (2009): 570, 568.

²⁵ Colum Lynch, "U.N. Peacekeepers to Protect China's Oil Interests in South Sudan," *Foreign Policy* (June 16, 2014), accessed August 21, 2015 – <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/06/16/u-n-peacekeepers-to-protect-chinas-oil-interests-in-south-sudan>

²⁶ Interview, Andrew Small, Transatlantic Fellow, Asia, The German Marshall Fund of the United States.

tariff lines which amount to over 75% of tariff lines exported by LDCs. The number and reach of the adverse export incentives put in place by these three emerging powers far outpace the negative measures introduced by the EU and the United States (which rank 8th and 9th, respectively).²⁷ With regard to development cooperation in Africa, an ethnographic study on triangular partnerships showed that Brazilian development workers in Mozambique are criticised for the same superior attitudes western aid workers have long been guilty of. Southern development actors are no more immune to the attitudes that donor status seems to bring about than their Northern counterparts.²⁸

Furthermore, despite the rapid increase in interest and economic ties between emerging countries and African states, advanced economies still remain more important to emerging powers politically and economically.²⁹ The fact that emerging powers, with the exception of South Africa, failed to support the Nigerian candidate over the American candidate for the presidency of the World Bank in 2012 was a case in point.³⁰ The credibility of emerging powers as system-challengers and alternatives to the current dominant actors will hinge, in part, on the coherence of their policies and on limiting the dissonance between their discourse and their actions. Furthermore, the discourse of South-South cooperation obscures significant differences in interests between countries of the global South. While the rise of new centres of power is an opportunity for the creation of new partnerships as well as for the renegotiation of old ones, African states must act with a strategic and interest-driven approach to South-South cooperation so as to avoid reproducing traditional hierarchical relationships with their new partners.

Sovereignty viewed from Africa

When delving into questions of nation-states and nation building, many have asked themselves why African states are how they are and remain, in large part, fragile. With a few notable exceptions, such as South Africa or Nigeria, the focus of these studies has remained inward-looking with a general dearth of scholarship on African foreign policies, especially in recent years. Little attention has been paid to their place in the international system. In assessing the importance of state sovereignty in an African context, the discrepancy between formal sovereignty and the actual ability of states to enforce said sovereignty is key. Or, as Janice Thompson argues, “sovereignty is limited to those who possess the material resources to defend it while the less powerful are nominally sovereign.”³¹ Pure sovereignty, or autonomy, does not exist and powerful states are also subject to encroachments on their sovereignty. The degree to which

²⁷ Simon Evenett, “Throwing Sand in the Wheels: How Protectionism Slowed Export-Led Growth for the World’s Poorest Countries” (paper presented on June 17, 2015).

²⁸ Madeleine Goerg, “Development in the Atlantic: Between Cooperation and Competition,” Atlantic Future Scientific Paper (2014): 8.

²⁹ Adekeye Adebajo, *Curse of Berlin*, 186.

³⁰ Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, *Emerging Africa*, 271.

³¹ Janice Thomson, “State Sovereignty in International Relations: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Empirical Research,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 39-2 (1995): 220.

states are able to guard against such encroachments, however, varies greatly and in the case of African states is often negligible.

African states, although they have, for the most part, inherited arbitrary borders and have young and fragile institutions, are not overly prone to separatist movements. Despite the great cultural diversity and the many challenges they face, the frequency of separatist conflicts and challenges to territorial integrity in Africa is less intense than that of other regions. With recent exceptions such as the Sudan and South Sudan or Mali, most civil conflicts in Africa have taken place within state boundaries in competition for the resources of existing state structures. According to Pierre Englebert, “[g]iven the undiversified nature of Africa’s economies, their lack of industrialization, their dependence on commodity extraction, and their small and parasitic private sectors, the continent offers a significant material premium to internationally recognized sovereignty, tilting the odds for elites in favour of staying within the state, even if they do not immediately benefit from power at the centre.”³² While certain champions have emerged on the continent over the past decade with stronger institutions and growing private sectors, Englebert’s observation still applies to the majority of African states. The importance placed on state sovereignty in the international system allows states to both impose their laws and structures upon their citizens, thereby giving state institutions and personnel “substance, structure and power”³³, shielding them from outside interference, as well as to access the substantive goods that membership in the international system confers, such as foreign aid, loans, or foreign direct investment. The respect for state sovereignty and for the principle of non-intervention is a bone of contention between African states and traditional partners. Emerging powers, with their adherence to non-intervention, whilst not replacing relations with advanced economies, represent an alternative for African states and can be used as leverage with traditional donors to change the basis of their engagement.

Systematic encroachment on the sovereignty of African states has been facilitated in part by traditional foreign assistance and the mechanisms associated with it, conditionalities chief among them. The national plans developed by African governments of the 1960s and 1970s – and their ability to pick and choose the type and area of support – gave way to economic and political conditionalities starting in the 1980s. The introduction of the structural adjustment programmes and the good governance principle in the 1980s and 1990s was used to justify a significant degree of intrusion into the national policy making process of African states.

Sovereignty, viewed as authority rather than control and a state’s ability to make authoritative political decisions, is undermined by the weight – within national policy-making – of non-state actors, such as international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international institutions. Through conditionalities, global institutions like the IMF and the World Bank or donor agencies are heavily involved in the structure of policy-making at the national level, limiting the autonomy of the state. To be

³² Pierre Englebert, “Let’s Stick Together: Understanding Africa’s Secessionist Deficit,” *African Affairs*, 104-416 (2005): 412.

³³ Pierre Englebert, “Let’s Stick Together,” 413.

sure, this has happened to varying degrees across the continent. Caryn Peiffer and Pierre Englebert point to the case of Chad and Benin in the ability of states to resist donor demands for institutional, democratic change. Chad, with its natural resources and geostrategic importance in the fight against terrorism, has – in relative terms – more flexibility and autonomy from specific political demands of donors than Benin, which, with fewer resources, can only offer political concessions, including regime change, for additional revenue.³⁴

In addition to the activities of foreign governments and international organisations, African states with limited capacity to provide public goods and services have also had to contend with the presence of foreign NGOs as alternative centres of power within their borders. African states' relations with traditional partners have, to different extents, been characterised by systematic institutional intrusion, if not intervention. Institutional intrusion refers here to the process of imposing new institutions or policies, which are only accepted by the recipient because of significant power imbalances or structural constraints, and in a context where the recipients have few other choices.³⁵ The rise of emerging powers and their growing interest in Africa could serve to widen the range of policy choices, giving African states more political leeway. However, African countries, more than others in the world, become the subject of international discussion when perceived as failing to govern themselves. Exhortations by the United States and the European Union that emerging powers become responsible stakeholders of the international community seek to bring these new actors into conversations about Africa. Such asymmetry has significant implications for the sovereignty of African states and their self-respect as members of the international system.³⁶

African states have not been passive but have attempted to redress existing asymmetries by developing 'pooled sovereignty' in the form of regional and continental organisations. These organisations provide their own interpretations of the values of the international system. A continental shift took place in the early 2000s with the creation of the African Union (AU). African states, which had until then staunchly adhered to the principle of non-intervention, took stock of the crises of the 1990s in Rwanda and Somalia among others. The AU then recognised the right of other African states to "intervene in the internal affairs of its members in egregious cases of gross human rights abuses and to stem regional instability".³⁷ African states rallied around the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, and campaigned to increase the international peacekeeping operations on the continent. However, tensions arose between African states and traditional partners during the Libya crisis and what the AU perceived as NATO's agenda for regime change. The AU's relations with the International Criminal Court

³⁴ Caryn Peiffer and Pierre Englebert, "Extraversion, vulnerability to donors, and political liberalization in Africa," *African Affairs*, 111-444 (2012): 356-62.

³⁵ Landry Signé, *L'innovation en stratégies de développement en Afrique. Acteurs nationaux, régionaux et internationaux de 1960 à nos jours* (Karthala: Paris, 2015):119.

³⁶ Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, *Emerging Africa*, 329.

³⁷ Adekeye Adebajo, *Curse of Berlin*, 153.

(ICC) also became strained in recent years with the AU's refusal to cooperate in the arrest of President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, in 2009 and with the charges brought against Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2011. In 2014, the AU decided to exempt senior government officials from prosecution by the ICC, reverting to a stricter interpretation of non-interference by outside actors. The AU, however, continues to take positions against unconstitutional changes of government on the continent, as showcased by the suspension of Mali (2012), Guinea-Bissau (2012) and Egypt (2013) following military coups. All three have since been reinstated and the Central African Republic is the only country currently under political sanction by the AU. The AU further expressed concern at the role of the military during the political transition in Burkina Faso (2014) and condemned the use of violence by President Pierre Nkurunziza in Burundi (2015).

Regional organisations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), also have regional protocols on democracy promotion and have sanctioned member states that underwent military coups.³⁸ Meanwhile, the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) voice traditional, if not European, interpretations when it comes to issues regarding development. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), one of NEPAD's main instruments, however points to the enduring attachment to the principle of state sovereignty. The APRM, which was launched in 2002, aims at developing best practices for democratic institutions, political governance, and economic governance. In 2004, 23 countries had signed the APRM's protocols. The APRM expresses the "good governance" principles of traditional donors and international financial institutions but did away with the constraints associated with conditionalities since adherence to the mechanism is voluntary.³⁹ The launch of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) in June 2015, bringing together three of Africa's major regional economic communities – namely the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) – is another attempt at strengthening African markets and furthering regional integration. As for many other initiatives by African states, implementation remains wanting. The TFTA, however, could serve as the basis for a continental free trade agreement with a significant impact on intra-regional trade. Increased intra-regional trade would further rebalance African economic relations, providing states with a set of viable regional options in addition to international partnerships. While African states might tolerate interference by peers on the continent, which generally has more bark than bite, their acceptance – at the rhetorical level – of interference by traditional partners is waning.

Sovereignty implies authority and responsibility over a territory and its population. Although many African states struggle to defend their sovereignty, they are members of the international system which grants them access to a set of goods and tools by which to pursue their national interest. Hans Morgenthau noted, "[...] it is not only a

³⁸ Gilbert M. Khadiagala, "South Africa and Nigeria in the Liberal Order," in: *Liberal Order in a Post-Western World* (Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2014): 103.

³⁹ Landry Signé, *L'innovation en stratégies de développement en Afrique*, 214-215.

political necessity, but also a moral duty for a nation to always follow in its dealings with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action: The National Interest.”⁴⁰ African states need to identify and pursue domestic interests, just as advanced economies and emerging powers do. Moghalu argues that “international economic governance [is] a framework for cooperation at best, and hegemonic domination by self-interested sovereign states in an anarchical international society, at the worst.”⁴¹ Following this line of thought, African countries have no other alternative but to develop ‘home-grown’ approaches to their development. The national strategies developed by countries such as Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, or South Africa are steps in the right direction but it will all hinge on implementation. African states need to create structures for strategy formulation, execution, and monitoring as well as risk management. While the presence of emerging powers might afford African states some breathing space in their relations with traditional partners, they will also need to develop clear, collective strategies towards countries like China, in order to make the most of these new partnerships.⁴² Above all, African states need to develop what Moghalu refers to as a worldview or an understanding of how the world is structured, a national vision and values, and a knowledge system supporting national transformation.⁴³ Said worldview should act as the basis for how African states see their place in the international system and how they choose to act within it.

Conclusion

Although the international system’s prevailing values stem from a particular historical and cultural context, they have attained the rank of universal values with very little open and radical opposition. In the main, emerging powers do not challenge core values of the international system but present alternative interpretations of and approaches to them. The respect for state sovereignty, which is central to the worldviews of emerging powers, does not represent a change in values but rather a shift in the ability of states to defend their sovereignty. While dominant actors, such as the United States and the European Union, can brush off attempts at interference into their affairs, many developing countries do not have the means of guarding against intervention and intrusion, including African states. Sovereignty guarantees equality before international law but the international system remains defined by formal and informal hierarchies. Emerging powers, which aim at challenging the dominance of traditional powers, represent their own set of hierarchies within the global South.

- › The rise of emerging powers has renewed the debate on the primacy of sovereignty and provided weaker states with alternatives for new partnerships and relations. The principles put forth by the Bretton Woods institutions have been undermined by their failure to bring about real economic development, especially in Africa, and shaken by the 2008 financial crisis. Advanced economies, emerging powers, and developing

⁴⁰ Hans Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest* (University Press of America, 1982) quoted in Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, *Emerging Africa*, 21.

⁴¹ Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, *Emerging Africa*, 275.

⁴² Adekeye Adebajo, *Curse of Berlin*, 169.

⁴³ Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, *Emerging Africa*, 347.

countries should launch discussions anew, setting goals for the reform of the Bretton Woods institutions and reviewing their overarching assumptions and principles.

- › The global rebalancing of the past decades provides African states with a window of opportunity to leverage competing partnerships and re-assert their sovereignty and ability to determine the future of their nation. If Africa is to be the next growth frontier, its governments must construct worldviews on which to base their individual and collective strategies for development along with the institutions and implementation mechanisms to support them. The shift from rhetoric and declarations to implementation will be crucial.
- › African states also need to take on strategic and interest-driven approaches to South-South cooperation so as to avoid reproducing existing hierarchies with new partners, and improve their standing when it comes to relations with traditional ones. Increased regional integration, especially intra-regional trade and investment will further diversify relations and move African states away from the tendency of overreliance on one or two main partners, whether advanced economies or emerging powers.
- › Traditional powers, which have dominated the international system, have come under harsh criticism due to a dissonance between the values they profess and defend on the international stage and their actual activities and practice. As emerging powers gain more clout in the global arena, their credibility and capacity to provide alternate interpretations of the prevailing values will hinge on their maintaining a level of coherence between policy and discourse.
- › Advanced economies, particularly the United States and the European Union, should move away from placing a moral value on the partnerships that African states are creating with emerging powers and other developing countries. Relations with emerging powers are no better or worse than relations with traditional powers but are tools for sovereign African states to pursue their political and economic interests and development goals.

Sovereignty endures as an organising principle of the international system. African states, most of which were only granted sovereignty in the 1960s and 1970s, are increasingly reclaiming and guarding their ability to make political and economic decisions in pursuit of national development trajectories.