



The African state after internationalism: what will the demise Of Liberal internationalism¹ mean for African states?

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The outcome of these profound movements may well be the final defeat of the state in Africa as we have known it in recent years. But it might equally well be a deepening of the state's indigenization, – or, more radically, its replacement by dispositifs that retain the name but have intrinsic qualities and modes of operation quite unlike those of a conventional state.

– Achille Mbembe, “On Private Indirect Government” (2001)

Executive Summary

Modern African states have usually defined themselves with reference to foreign norms shaped by foreign power, whether economic or military: norms imposed under colonialism and refined in the postcolonial, international-community dispensation. However, the geopolitical situation today suggests that Africa is revisiting the point it was at in 1990, when the OAU's assembled leaders, facing the end of the Cold War, jointly voiced what amounted to a fear of abandonment: “the real threat of marginalisation of our Continent.”² For reasons to be discussed below, such an abandonment, however partial, might now actually be taking place. If that is indeed the case, then the foreign-power relations (economic or military) that have undergirded the evolution of the African state will change dramatically, and therefore the African state will need to adjust to a political landscape that, for the first time, lacks a strong normative foreign element. This is not to suggest that foreign powers as such are withdrawing from Africa – the opposite seems more likely – but rather that there will be no unipolar, multipolar or bipolar order with which to measure the progress of the African state.³

This will leave African states dependent on each other for defining their own relationships, with little or nothing in the way of supranational third parties – such as the international community – for purposes of triangulation. There is no clear historical precedent for this. In some ways it resembles the late pre-colonial period, when aggressive African sovereigns were able to dominate their peripheries while managing their own entries into the newly globalized markets of the 17th and 18th centuries. In other ways it most resembles Europe in the mid-19th century, before the flattening of dialects into the consensus languages of modern nations and the corralling of their peoples into citizenships demarcated by arbitrary borders (still contested today, of course). But in most ways Africa is simply what it is in 2018, experiencing, like every other part of the world, a dissolution of the international order within which, for more than half a century, it had become accustomed to making sense of itself, of its relations with other regions of the world, and, most importantly, of the relationships states have with each other.

Every part of the world is undergoing its own renegotiation of the relationships among states and between individual states and larger systems: a reimagining of the relationship between nationalism and globalization that cannot resolve into one gaining victory over the other. What this renegotiation and reimagining might look like for Africa is the subject of this admittedly speculative policy paper.⁴

Key Points

- ❖ The Western-led international community is in broad decline and losing interest in solving so-called African problems, with the fragile exceptions of migration and terrorism. This has heavy implications for the continent.
- ❖ External actors are not quitting the continent; rather, they are proliferating. However, they are animated by national interests and geopolitical competition, not ideology or internationalism. This may create geopolitical arbitrage opportunities but will mainly have negative policy effects.
- ❖ In the absence of broad external interest, Africans alone will have the political motivation to solve African problems.
- ❖ Solutions will be African in origin and development and build on existing trends: popular demand for democratic governance and accountability; acceptance of an ongoing, dynamic relationship between ethno-linguistic affiliations and structure, on one hand, and national, regional and continental structures, on the other, with a sizable role for diasporas in both; and the development of political leadership, security coalitions, and market mechanisms across state boundaries.
- ❖ These trends may not be derived from pre-colonial African reality but they are grounded in more than a century of African experiences in confronting modernity, some of those experiences being unique to Africa, some of them not.

The Long Goodbye of Liberal Internationalism

In the 1990s, the United States was convinced it had won the Cold War through military containment, economic success, cultural virtue and ideological superiority. The rest of the West went along, often reluctantly, as Europe postponed certain existential questions in favor of carving out for itself a Kantian zone of perpetual peace. With the cost of change seemingly higher than the cost of continuity, Russia was enabled to retain the Soviet Union's veto-wielding seat on the UN Security Council. China officially kept its head down while pursuing a "peaceful rise". There were frequent mild calls for a re-thinking of the international system, but in the end the U.S. showed little interest in diluting its own preponderance, which it saw as, at worst, a harmless hedge against future misfortune. At best, it was the guarantee of a liberal order capable of solving global problems. America thought it enjoyed a hegemony of choice, not of necessity.

This lazy internationalism fed an Edwardian complacency expressed in the alleged inevitabilities of globalization. That complacency survived the Balkan wars, the war on terror, and much else, culminating in the brief, successful coordinated response of the Group of 20 to the 2008 financial crisis. Then it began to weaken and an alternative narrative to emerge.

The striking geopolitical reality of the past decade has been the parallel growth of nationalism and globalization. I've argued elsewhere that this began earlier, with the Asian financial crisis of 1997, when several countries that had embraced the open capital markets of the Washington Consensus found themselves suddenly collapsing, while China, having avoided those same policies, managed to navigate the crisis smoothly.⁵ The quick adoption of rather neo-mercantilist policies across Asia — more a reversion to the Asian norm in any case, as

established years before by Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore – laid the political and policy groundwork for the spectacular reductions in poverty that many Asian countries have enjoyed under globalization. Their entries into global supply chains were therefore premised on a certain national sovereignty. Such policies also established a sense of the relationship between citizen and state, including the expectations each had of the other, that could accommodate and shape a rising Asian middle class. This new middle class, at once dependent both on the state that nurtured it and on the theoretically state-eroding globalization that provided it with the markets it needed, turned toward nationalism. The emergence of a nationalist middle class shaping, and being shaped by, the state is, of course, classically associated with the emergence of modern nation-states in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, though how valuable that comparison is may be debated.

Regardless of whether the nationalist-globalization synthesis originated in Asia, a similar phenomenon appeared in Europe (including Russia) and the United States after the 2008 financial crisis, which, like the Asian crisis a decade earlier, introduced a sudden and vertiginous sense of vulnerability to the seemingly whimsical flows of international capital – and a belief that, in the end, the nation-state was the principal actor to which an anxious middle class could look for the defense of its interests on the global stage. The West and Asia, more or less at opposite ends of the globalization spectrum, arrived at the same point: a nationalist political economy in an internationalist age.⁶

The institutions of liberal internationalism were not prepared for this. The missed opportunity after 1992 to revise the international institutional order – through, for example, Security Council reform – was a weak tragedy that issued years later into the vicious farce of Libya and then Syria. Liberal internationalism had not necessarily lost its applicability, nor even its

appeal, but by 2016 there was no longer much political will behind it. Like globalization, internationalism increasingly had become seen as a technical question of money, technology, regulatory rule-making and cultural disposition rather than the distribution of actual power. Like globalization, liberal internationalism had drawn strength from belief in its inevitability, and when that belief faltered, sometime after the Arab Spring, so did liberal internationalism's strength, by which time, in the face of rising great-power nationalism, the window for reform had closed. With the election of Donald Trump, all major powers (with the partial exception of Europe) and many minor ones recognized that internationalism may have won the wars but nationalism intended to win the peace.

The outliers to this trend of waxing nation-state sovereignty, so far, have been Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, none of which have experienced on a similar scale the state-focused nationalist surge so common elsewhere. For purposes of this paper, I'll focus on Africa.

The African State and Nationalism

Nationalism in the conventional sense – attachment to a nation-state based on some ethno-religious-experiential shared culture – has never been an easy fit in Africa. This is not to say that it was precisely easy anywhere else; it is nearly impossible to find a modern nation-state that did not emerge from a coercive, often quite bloody process of internal homogenization, suppression, and highly suspect cultural “revival”.⁷ But Africa presents distinctive features. African polities prior to the Atlantic slave trade were normally based on coastal or trade-route powers whose writ did not extend very far geographically or culturally; they depended on tribute (in labor or goods) drawn from mobile populations practicing non-intensive agriculture.⁸ Colonial borders, drawn mainly in the 19th century, had little or no basis

in pre-existing ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliations, and were either hostile or indifferent to such loyalties except when they created opportunities for indirect rule involving the empowerment of one group over others.⁹ At the same time, those African polities that did grow to a nation-state scale in the 18th and 19th centuries were themselves often built on the connections and practices of the international slave trade;¹⁰ as large-scale slavery in the New World and elsewhere waned after 1810, it remained a common characteristic of state development within Africa itself into the 20th century.¹¹ With some exceptions, modern African nation-states faced a difficult choice between external dependence or internal disenfranchisement; often, of course, they had both. Large-scale settler societies could, for a time, square the circle by imposition of a whites-only nationalism, as their ex-colonial counterparts in North America and the antipodes had done. But even this appalling, and temporary, stratagem was not available on most of the continent. European abolitionism was indeed one rather minor reason for the Berlin conference of 1884-5, which resulted in the imperial partition of the continent; once colonial partition was under way, European abolitionism *in situ* weakened considerably as internal slaveholding structures were yoked to imperial purposes or tolerated as a price of colonial stability.¹² All this entangled modern African nation-state construction in multiple serious contradictions from the beginning.

When African nationalisms did strengthen in the 20th century they were shaped by the dynamics of colonialism. There were several dominant, often overlapping currents. A race-based nationalism (as in *négritude* and some versions of pan-Africanism) reconfigured the externally imposed concept of a black or African race – the same concept that animated the immiseration of the continent after the trans-Atlantic trade joined and vastly expanded the pre-existing internal, Indian Ocean, and trans-Saharan slave trades¹³ – and turned “black nationalism” into a basis for revolution and empowerment. Tellingly, this

racial nationalism was a joint effort of the African diasporas resulting from the international slave trade, particularly the diaspora across the Atlantic, and their counterparts on the continent. A second current was tribal nationalism, the form closest to the concurrent nationalisms elsewhere in the world. A third current was class-based nationalism that more or less accepted colonial boundaries and expressed itself chiefly through trade unions, which were sometimes the only form of civil society tolerated by colonial authorities. The fourth current was the nationalism espoused by popular anti-colonial movements that sought to take power from colonialists and seize control of the polities created by the colonialists themselves, reconfiguring them, in principle, as non-tribal nation-states sovereign within the colonial boundaries.

Three of these currents depended on either acceptance of the spurious, chance polities of colonialism or allegiance to principles, whether racial or class-based, that were themselves anti-national – or both. Only tribalism held out the promise of avoiding these tensions, but given the fissiparous and fluid nature of precolonial tribal structures, their transformation by more than a century of large-scale slavery and slavery-compromised nation-formation, and the many invidious uses of tribalism by colonial powers, ethno-nationalism promised even less stability for modern nation-state formation in Africa than it had provided in Europe, Asia, or the settler societies of the New World – all of which were, in somewhat different ways, torn apart by it themselves, once or many times, between 1810 and 1945.

Nor could colonialism itself be seen as a system of stable governance. The racial-supremacist settler rebellions against imperial rule of the late 1700s (in the Americas and elsewhere) began barely a century into the modern imperialist era, as did the rebellion in Saint-Domingue in 1791, followed by the Bolivarian revolutions beginning in 1808, the great rebellions of 1857 in India and

the 1890s in China, the Philippines, and elsewhere, as well as innumerable smaller uprisings throughout the imperial period. Modern imperialism in Africa began only in the 1870s and was waning by the mid-1940s; across much of the continent, it had never been very strong and was “governed” by private companies as much as by any state apparatus.¹⁴ However common, modern imperialism was never stable for long, even in its late expression as the Soviet bloc (building on earlier Russian expansionist efforts).¹⁵ Indeed, modern nationalism, including among imperial powers, was itself nearly always conceived as a form of sovereign defense against foreign encroachment and domination, whether in Ethiopia, Turkey, Japan, China, the United States, Italy or Mexico. Even imperial powers often thought of what they were doing as a national defense of sorts against domination by other imperial powers. The nationalist kernel in imperialism helped keep it unstable.

The long twilight of imperialism in Africa after 1945 was animated chiefly by nationalist movements aiming at sovereignty within colonial borders, again with the cross-currents of supra-national identity movements (racial and/or pan-African), class-based agitation and tribal nationalism, all of which threatened whatever coherence the beset colonial sovereignties might have provided. In opening the 1963 conference that founded the Organization for African Unity, Haile Selassie highlighted the opportunity “to rouse the slumbering giant of Africa, not to the nationalism of Europe of the nineteenth century, not to regional consciousness, but to the vision of a single African brotherhood bending its united efforts towards the achievement of a greater and nobler goal.” Kwame Nkrumah launched his book *Africa Must Unite* at the summit (with free copies handed to delegates).¹⁶ The arguments were strong then as now: the continent’s existing polities, each on its own, would be permanently in a weak position faced with foreign capital and weaponry; their wildly different national endowments, especially when exploited piecemeal by foreign investors, would serve

simply to perpetuate continental inequalities; the overall effect would be miniature underdeveloped markets that cannot move up the value chain, inside borders that cannot really be defended.

Nonetheless, national sovereignty was, in the moment, allied to freedom itself, and the importance of the sovereign nation-state was placed at the heart of the final OAU declaration. The assembled leaders were understandably wary of diluting their recently acquired powers. Tellingly, Nkrumah, the most aggressive advocate of unity, came to the meeting having striven to increase his own sovereign state’s size at the expense of a neighbor.¹⁷ It was reasonable to suppose that the nation-state, despite its colonial-era boundaries, was nonetheless a political reality without which African post-colonial modernity would lurch into chaos, and perhaps even into a repetition of the vulnerability that had been so ruthlessly and effectively exploited by the colonial powers within living memory. Senghor (among others) had looked toward a federation model specifically to avoid what he called “Balkanisation,” but he came around, too. At least a sovereign state gave you something to defend.¹⁸

The capture of post-colonial governments by one dominant ethnicity or another, sometimes in the name of state consolidation, made certain ethnicities more politically relevant at the expense of others, storing up resentments for later. In this sense, state politics became more tribal, yet tribalism itself became no more politically legitimate, and perhaps less: the partial ethnicization of the aspirationally supra-tribal modern state also weakened the legitimacy of the state itself. Class-based, transnational militancy did not survive the 1960s.¹⁹ *Négritude* and pan-Africanism did last through and beyond the liberation and postcolonial periods, if not on the scale of the hopes once placed in them. The 2018 film *Black Panther*, in important ways an Africa-America co-production, can reasonably be seen as a *négritude* artifact; it set cinema-attendance

records across sub-Saharan Africa.²⁰ Paul Kagame²¹ of Rwanda is devoting his considerable energies to reviving the pan-African project, particularly in terms of economic and infrastructural harmonization as well as continental governance – all leading themes in the 1960s.²²

So, after five decades of frequent turmoil, the African political furniture still has not changed that much; arguably, the major changes were successful state consolidation followed by disillusion with the promises of independence; weakening of states (partly as a result of structural adjustment) and the growth of insurgencies (like that of Yoweri Museveni in 1986) aiming at capture of the metropole; a post-Cold War collapse (the Rwandan genocide and the Great Lakes war) along with democratic consolidation in the 1990s, followed by disillusion with multiparty politics and the “third wave” of African protests.²³ The nation-state as such remains poised uneasily between ethno-linguistic affinity groups on one side and supra-national ideas and institutions on the other. A nationalist tradition has not grown, while the state’s capacities, and citizens’ expectations, are both too low for one to expect the nation itself to acquire gradually the charisma of nationalism common in Asia, Europe and North America. The African state remains weak.

The African State in Internationalism

The international system is based on states. No matter how weak a state might be, it remains the primary actor with regard to other states and to international institutions within the system. In Mali, Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan, to take four examples, international security efforts have been focused on somehow resurrecting the central state even as the instant societies themselves seem to reject it. The international system deals uneasily with non-state units like tribe, clan, and

religious group. If the international system cannot find a state, it will all but invent one.

The weakening of the international system would, then, appear to be one more blow to the weak African state, which had come to depend on it. This dependency was nearly unique to Africa. Notoriously, the institutional structures of internationalism, whether the International Criminal Court or the World Food Program, the World Bank or the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations or the Security Council, all took Africa, and African states, as their main laboratory for exploring the teleologies of development and political maturation on which international structures were premised. It is hard to know whether the international system discovered this dependency of the African state and sought to reduce it, or worked, perhaps inadvertently, to perpetuate it.²⁴ What is clear is that the West, the principal architect and funder of this system, is losing interest in it. The developmental paradigm has been in decline the longest; official development assistance as a percentage of the gross national income of donor states has been in uneven decline for decades and is currently more than a third less than it was in 1960.²⁵ This has hit African states hard,²⁶ particularly those that needed aid the most.²⁷ On the security front, U.S. enthusiasm for security missions in Africa never really recovered from Operation Restore Hope (1993). Ambiguous or negative results in Darfur, South Sudan and Libya lowered interest even further to its present nadir under President Trump. The hopes placed in the AU-led Somalia mission have not been fulfilled over the past decade; the European Union has been trying to reduce its funding for some time.²⁸ Even the advocacy of human rights, surely the least expensive form of internationalism, has been attacked as a type of neo-imperialism or at least bad faith.²⁹ Counter-terrorism (for the U.S.) and immigration control (for Europe) have, somewhat perversely, provided lifelines of a sort to certain state budgets, but the U.S. is moving away from its CT emphasis³⁰ while the possibilities for Europe’s

outsourced border patrol becoming a backdoor means for development financing (to address “root causes”) seem weak.³¹ The pillars of post-colonial international support for African states have, in short, steadily fallen away.

This has probably destroyed the basis for the characteristic triangulation of the African state. By triangulation, I mean the settling of relations among African states by reference to a third point— e.g., the international system. In the twilight of the international institutions, African states are losing their point of triangulation. Their distinct, rather alienated process of assessment by reference to an external model (Mbembe’s “conventional state”) or authority is disappearing. They are then left to invent or re-invent themselves.

African states might yet look abroad for models, for instance to Europe. But what is the European nation-state model? As many have noted, the European nation-state itself has been impressively unstable for its modern existence. Its origins were in war and the destruction of indigenous cultures and beliefs; its period of thriving coincided not with harmonious internal consolidation but rather decades of outward-directed aggression of unprecedented destructiveness in human lives, not least African lives; this was followed by two wars of nationalist expansionism led by colonialist latecomers like Germany and Italy; and, finally, a long process of anti-nationalist reconstruction leading to a weakening — a deliberate and aspirationally virtuous weakening — of that same modern nation-state which was earlier supposed to have been the model for the world. Finally, the past decade has seen in Europe a waxing of the old nation-state idea even alongside the continued repudiation of that very same idea by the broad political center. Whatever might be said of the European nation-state, it is not stable and therefore not really plausible as a model or method for stability in Africa. In a further irony, the partial adoption of the European Union as a model by the African Union appears to have

coincided with the beginning of the EU’s own, lengthy crisis.

African states might likewise look to Asia, but the modern Asian state is also a product of rigid ethnic homogenization as well as authoritarian, or at least single-party, rule. Ethno-nationalism as a support for nation-state legitimacy is stable or rising in most of Asia, along with an enduring hostility toward immigrants or ethnic out-groups and increases in military spending and ambition. These might be seen as prices worth paying for prosperity, but it should be recalled that the Asian takeoff occurred in a period of sturdy rich-world demand, plummeting transport and communications costs, and unprecedented technology transfer. This combination of factors is not likely to recur; indeed, there is a growing belief on both right and left in the West that Asian prosperity came at the expense of the Western middle class and technology transfer was the result of a type of theft.³² That is a fundamental change in politics as well as markets and is shaping the withdrawal of the West from its internationalist vocation. The contemporary Asian nation-state as a model for Africa is ambiguous at best.

Ways Forward

In the absence of viable outside models, what are the best options for the African state going forward?

Jeffrey Herbst, in *States and Power in Africa*, makes a compelling argument for certain distinctively African continuities, from the pre-colonial period to the present, in state formation. Nonetheless, in the conclusion to the 2014 revised edition of his book, Herbst leaves the power, creativity and responsibility mainly in the hands of the international community. For example, regarding “subnational groups” he writes: “By recognizing and legitimating those groups, the international community has the opportunity to ask that they respect international norms regarding human rights and also has a chance to

bring them into the international economy.... Alternatives to the nation-state are being developed now; it is simply a question of whether the international community will recognize them. International acceptance can be calibrated to the actual power being exercised.”³³ Just four years later, such confidence in the capacity of an “international community” to transform the African (or any other) political landscape appears like a window into a lost world.

What seems more likely, given the fraying of the international community and its institutions when faced with rising nationalism, is that certain existing trends – some distinctively African, some not – are likely to strengthen and should be managed or encouraged, as Achille Mbembe foresaw in 2001. What follows is a forward-looking analysis of those trends. Taken together, they suggest how the African state system might evolve in the absence of a strong extra-continental normative pole.

Devolution

African devolution is primarily a means for weak states to reconcile themselves to the durability and dynamism of ethnic affiliations.

This is only partially an “indigenization” (as Mbembe has it) of the African state. It has long been tempting to look for state forms in the pre-colonial period as a somehow more “natural” form of state construction for the continent. However, discovering such forms would be very difficult to do and their selection, were it possible, would verge on the random: selecting whichever state forms happen to be recoverable and were victorious at some arbitrary date in the past. African state forms that coincide with early-middle modernity, between 1650 and 1850 or so, are not necessarily a better source of inspiration: they would have succeeded because of their ability to thrive, in competition with their African competitors, in an increasingly internationalized African political economy shaped principally by slavery and early colonial exploitation.³⁴ Success

under those conditions does not necessarily provide any guide for the present. Reconstructing a past African state or states would be less arbitrary than imposing the Westphalian model of the 19th century in Europe. But not a great deal less arbitrary.

The exception is the tribe. Here again, the model is amply compromised by the past. Precolonial tribal systems were not necessarily models of peaceful coexistence; colonizers then often lifted one or more tribes above their peers; in the postcolonial period these invidious distinctions sometimes increased; and as some postcolonial African states have fragmented or collapsed (Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Mali, Central African Republic, DRC), tribal or otherwise “ethnic” configurations have been there to hurry the decline.

Yet that destructive power is also a sign of political viability. As the new state of South Sudan has fallen apart, the nation’s tribes have become vital to its citizens as a source of succor and protection. These tribes, it is important to emphasize, have not been pure and unchanged since ancient times or the reign of Mahdism (which was notably against tribalism and pro-slavery)³⁵ or the 1970s or even the 1980s, when some tribes revived a tribal tradition of enslaving people from other tribes.³⁶ Tribes are rooted in the past but survive and even thrive because they can adapt, for better and worse, to the present.

Devolution seeks to harness this dynamism to support the nation-state rather than undermine it. Devolution (usually as “decentralization”) has been in vogue since the 1980s,³⁷ with a view toward making the state better at local service delivery, more responsive, less dominated by one or a few ethnicities, and more stable. Ethiopia has had more varied experience with this than most. Referring to the Marxist centralizing government of Mengistu and its downfall, Bahru Zewde writes, “One of the most nationalist (some would say ultra-nationalist) of regimes in modern Ethiopian history fell under a barrage of ethno-

nationalist insurgency....The elites of the oppressed and marginalized nationalities vigorously pushed the ethno-nationalist agenda both as an effective recipe of mobilization and as a sure guarantee of what they considered to be their legitimate share of scarce resources. Yet, the ethno-nationalist opposition had its own tensions."³⁸ The resulting ethno-federalism is not necessarily stable – the most recent major revolt against it was itself undertaken on a tribal basis, led by the Oromos.³⁹ And if weakening tribalism is the goal, then ethno-federalism is perhaps not the means. But it might be helping to bring Ethiopia closer to more popularly responsive – in a way, democratic – government than it has ever been.⁴⁰

Kenya accepted the necessity of devolution as a result of the constitutional reform process following post-election violence in 2007-8.⁴¹ It was explicitly designed to weaken the tribal competition for national state power: to, in effect, give tribes enough regional power (through devolution to 47 counties) that the presidential contest would no longer be a winner-takes-all battle. The aim was not so much transformation as stabilization. Assessing Kenyan devolution in 2016, d'Arcy and Cornell found: "Going 'with the grain', in expanding rather than undermining patronage, has helped devolution to become embedded. However, in most Kenyan counties it seems to have entrenched at the local level the practices that have been so problematic at the national level: rent seeking by politicians and ethnic patronage politics. Our findings both confirm the validity of claims that 'going with the grain' can enable reforms to become embedded, and also highlight the pitfalls of this approach: that there can be reform without change."⁴² Two years later, d'Arcy told an interviewer that "devolution has brought some level of resources and development to the local level and particularly to counties that have been marginalised from national politics for a long time. It's true that resources haven't always been used effectively. Corruption remains an issue at the county level. Nevertheless, in many

counties there are new health centres, roads and street lights that wouldn't be there without devolution."⁴³

Kenya President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga recently recognized in a joint statement that "ethnic antagonism and divisive political competition have become a way of life" but also that "devolution has so far been the most successful story in the recent process of building a strong nation."⁴⁴ This is neither de-tribalization nor re-tribalization, but something in between.

Mobility and kinship

The political vitality of the tribe across distinct political-economic eras is related to the phenomenon of mobility. Mobility has been a feature of African political economy since pre-colonial times. In an economy largely dependent on forms of agriculture that do not require substantial fixed capital, and with a sufficient abundance of arable land for small-scale farming, populations that did not like the terms of trade or tribute imposed by one or another power astride the commercial routes could simply take their labor elsewhere. This characteristic mobility, involving innumerable small-scale movements organized along kinship lines, continued into the colonial period. As Cooper writes, "Africans in much of the continent had considerable social resources, and they used mobility, kinship networks, and the ability to move between modes of economic activity to avoid too much dependence on white employers in cities or mines or would-be African capitalists in the countryside."⁴⁵

Such mobility continued into the post-colonial period. State borders were not and are not very enforceable; the distances are too great, budgets too small, and incentives too weak. Despite the proliferation of tariffs, duties and other imposts – with roots in the import-substitution orthodoxy of the 1960s, but difficult to repeal – cross-border trade is frequent. Refugee and migrant flows, sometimes due to war and climate

change, continue to cross the continent. There are far more refugees on the continent than outside it, although the ratios are narrowing. The most recent comprehensive study found that 53.4 percent of African migrants are within Africa, and 46.6 percent are outside the continent.⁴⁶

The constant movement of individuals and groups in search of better political or economic conditions has been a reality of African life since before the colonial era, throughout it, and beyond it. Some of this movement is away from the continent. African migrants outside Africa are succeeding in creating value in the places they go to, as can be seen most clearly and most obviously by the amount of remittances they send back to the continent. These remittances represent earnings above maintenance; they're a surplus. Cash remittances grew to 51 percent of private capital flows to Africa in 2016 (from 42 percent in 2010), a share that is made yet more important by the decline in official development assistance over the same period. In some countries, remittances exceed annual export earnings. Above-board remittances, as in the 51 percent figure above, are only a portion of the total, as remittance costs to Africa are much higher than in other regions – a market distortion begging for technological disruption.⁴⁷ Intra-continental and intra-national remittances are also very important sources of finance, whether for family consumption or business investment.

These are huge sums of private “smart capital” dedicated to investment in Africa. They indicate the adaptive utility of population movements by Africans and the tensile strength of ties across all borders to family, kinship groups, region and even nation – although the nation-state per se is likely more a hindrance than a help, as the principal causes of excessively high remittance costs are uncompetitive practices within receiving states and state regulation (including for counter-terrorism). Overall, migration benefits Africans,⁴⁸ in a continental and global political economy that in some ways parallels, but dwarfs, the nation-state system and its

attendant narratives. In Somalia, remittances (from within and outside Africa) exceed foreign aid – remittances to a “state” that has barely existed for 30 years.

There have been efforts at managing and even encouraging free movement of peoples for several decades. The most recent is a protocol to the treaty on African economic community: the Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, signed by 32 of 55 states as of July 2018 and ratified by one (Rwanda).⁴⁹ This is in contrast to the 49 (by July 2018) signatories to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.⁵⁰ In both cases, the largest sub-Saharan economies (Nigeria and South Africa) did not sign at first. None of the North African countries agreed to the free-movement protocol. The reason customarily given for not signing is security: within the AU, border issues have been the domain of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA).⁵¹ The need to combat “transnational criminal activity” was central to the African Union Border Programme as well, in 2007.⁵² But isn't “a place to prevent transnational crime” more or less the definition of any national border? The reality is that only about a third of African national borders have been successfully demarcated, let alone patrolled or defended, over the past half-century.⁵³ Sub-Saharan countries are at least as concerned by transnational crime as their northern counterparts, yet both ECOWAS and the EAC have pursued open borders, however imperfectly, for over three decades.⁵⁴ (Arguments over whether ECOWAS's free-movement protocol, ratified in 1980, is good or bad for security have gone on ever since its ratification.⁵⁵) The choice is between cross-border movements within a framework of legality and cross-border movements without such a framework.⁵⁶ The former is likely to be less criminal than the latter. It is also much more likely to lead to economic growth.⁵⁷

Whether or not the North African states join in, population mobility will be a distinctively African feature in a period of strong anti-mobility trends elsewhere in the world.

Economic integration

Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other regional organizations are financed mainly by external donors, especially but not only European ones. As economic bodies, they are not perceived as being very successful.⁵⁸ (In peace and security, by contrast, some are seen as powerful players.) States use them when they like and otherwise ignore or undermine them. With the decline of liberal internationalism, external funding and political support for regionalism might wane, but over time this might actually strengthen the RECs.

Economic integration is a long-standing aspiration of African economies and has often been blocked or weakened by the demands of national sovereignty. The first iteration of the East African Community (EAC), itself a descendant of colonial-era initiatives, famously collapsed beginning in 1971 after Idi Amin's coup in Uganda led to heightened distrust among the member states. Soon the train system was being dismembered, discord spread to joint management of ports and air travel, and the community slid downward to impose restrictions on free movement of people.⁵⁹

Part of the difficulty is in state finance. In the absence of conquest — noticeably not a feature of African state development compared to that in many other regions — states can finance themselves through rents or taxes or currency manipulation. Personal and corporate tax collection is not very successful in Africa, which makes tariffs (and indirect taxes like VAT) an important source of state revenue.⁶⁰ Sovereign protectionism, as in tariffs and non-tariff barriers, becomes more precious to states as other revenue sources stagnate or decrease. Such measures are especially important for states that do not enjoy

important resource revenues (from petroleum or mining), which continue to be the dominant state-revenue form for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, with all the well-known resource-curse problems that entails. The swift descent of oil-rich South Sudan from surplus to deficit is as good an example of those problems as one could want. Uganda, when its oil resources finally become exploited, will struggle to escape something similar.⁶¹

Nonetheless, economic integration, led by RECs as the operational agencies lightly overseen by the African Union, remains the main hope for economic growth through trade and the workings of comparative advantage. As de Melo et al. write, "The RECs have been the driving force at integration across the African continent, where small fragmented and isolated communities with a very unequal distribution of economic resources and geographic characteristics make a compelling case for integration on a regional basis to exploit scale economies, reap efficiency gains and reduce the thickness [of] borders."⁶² RECs have had their own characteristic weaknesses, notably a proliferation of regimes that only slows progress on a continent that does not have bureaucratic capacity to spare. (Many African states are members of two RECs, and some are in three.) The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) could trump the slow-moving RECs, although the political obstacles to such continental centralization are considerable, as they have been for decades.⁶³

Whether through RECs, AfCFTA, or some combination, integration is necessary for African economies to escape domination by a few large, resource-based economies — that is one reason why such economies, like Nigeria, have resisted AfCFTA and small economies, like Rwanda, have embraced it — and develop services and manufacturing companies that can bring Africans into the de-localized value chains characteristic of a globalized economy. This implies both a strengthening of the rule of law,

which would probably be led by AfCFTA or RECs but will need at least the passive assent of states, and a weakening of state sovereignty in the sense of a loss of control over the direction of national development. It also implies, for example through reduction of tariffs, a very steep challenge to securing state finances. But, in this specific sense, a weakening of the state would help the African economy reduce the continent's relatively high trade costs, which otherwise will keep Africans at a continued disadvantage in escaping resource or aid dependency (as the case may be) and climbing up the value chain.⁶⁴

In some ways the greatest obstacle is the unequal distribution of resources emphasized by de Melo et al. and the limits that places on integration in the absence of redistribution ("any deep integration will necessitate large within-REC transfers").⁶⁵ Africa has its Germanies and its Greeces. The EU, with the will, resources and institutions to systematically lift up its poorer economies, has mainly demonstrated that such redistribution is very difficult. It can have serious political repercussions; both the immigration controversy in Europe, which is greatly a result of free movement of labor, and the rise of xenophobic ethnic populism can be viewed as reactions to EU and euro policy. Certainly Europe's populist and anti-immigrant political forces see it that way. The solutions of "more Europe" have gone from conventional wisdom to wishful thinking in just a few years. Africa can learn from the European experience before the "more Africa" solutions advocated by Kagame and Niger's Mahamadou Issoufou go the same way.

The weakness of the African nation-state and the transnational vitality of kinship ties might at least save Africa from the counter-productive wall building that is currently fashionable in Europe. Africa will have a harder time avoiding its own Germany problems. As Mathieson has written, "Continued sustained progress towards EAC integration largely depends on Kenya as a regional hegemon and the continued interest that

the Kenyan government and private sector have in deeper integration. However, one of the reasons the original East African Community (EAC) collapsed in 1977 was Kenya's dominance. As such there is an important balance between driving and dominating EAC integration."⁶⁶ The same is true of other RECs, dominated as the case may be by Ethiopia, South Africa, Nigeria, and others.⁶⁷

Ultimately, major African states need to accept that the economic empowerment of smaller states within their respective regions is in their own national interests. The decline of liberal internationalism might hasten this acceptance. One feature and cause of that decline has been the diversification and proliferation of energy inputs: tight-oil extraction has transformed the politics of energy in North America while powerhouses like Germany and China are putting enormous resources into increasing the energy efficiency of manufacturing and developing alternative energy sources.⁶⁸ Discovery of new oil and gas deposits in Brazil, the eastern Mediterranean, Uganda and elsewhere further fuel this diversification and proliferation of energy inputs. One result is that the resource rents in, say, West Africa or the Northern Corridor will not be quite the rent-seekers' prize they once were, either for resource-rich states or, inversely, the multinationals that finance extraction and pay the rents.

This goes directly to the question of state finance and trade and development finance that has bedeviled African economic integration efforts. Until very recently, integration has been caught between an over-abundance of external finance for the extraction of African resources of value to major non-African economies and a chronic weakness of finance (external or domestic) for very much else. The growth of China (and, up to a point, India) as trading partners relative to the U.S. and Europe might be seen as increasing African room for maneuver – ideally, providing more partners to play off against each other – but it isn't quite working out that way. China and

India have both erected or preserved far more barriers to African domestic production than either the U.S. or Europe, whether through the exclusion from trade agreements of product lines that theoretically might lead to actual African competition or the use of non-tariff trade barriers, protection of their own export sectors, insistence on rules of origin that effectively prevent insertion of African companies into disaggregated supply chains, and so on.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, debts incurred by African governments that have accepted large-scale Chinese investment, notably on infrastructure, are beginning to weigh.⁷⁰ China and African states alike are beginning to lean toward private-public partnerships that spread the risks.⁷¹ China is also, through its Made in China 2025 initiative and other policies, shifting its focus toward consolidating its position as the political-economic hegemon at the center of a rising and rich Asia, complete with non-African energy sources in Central Asia, Russia and the Middle East and non-African consumers and high-value-added suppliers in the West (as well as Asia itself). The China honeymoon is ending, as Ethiopia has recently come to recognize.⁷² And given the great-power vogue, changing resource markets, and other factors already discussed above, as well as the decline of liberal internationalism itself, there is no pre-rise-of-China *status quo ante* to return to. Non-African economies are doing what they can to reduce whatever existing dependencies on Africa they might have.

Therefore, the RECs and their major state players will have to finally implement policies that improve the terms of trade for African companies both within a given REC and within the continent and thereby enable the insertion of African companies into global supply chains. They need to do this not as an act of charity to lift up the continent's many Greeces that are either too resource-poor or too kleptocratic to grow their economies under the old rules of the game.⁷³ They need to do it for their own economic survival.

Regionalization of security

Regionalization is also critical to state survival in security terms. The three main *points d'appui* for post-Cold War African security – the U.S., EU and UN – are all weakening, and there are no countervailing trends to suggest that they will not continue to weaken. This does not mean that African security will free itself from foreign referents. On the contrary, a post-liberal-internationalist world opens the way for multiple non-African players to insert themselves in African security questions. The proliferation of foreign actors in Somalia is one example; the role of multiple external actors in preventing the post-Qaddafi consolidation of Libya is another. The disintegration of the international community increases the number of destabilizers.

As ever, individual African states, statelets and non-state actors are mostly too weak to impose settlements but strong enough to attract external sponsors with one goal or another – preferential resource access, ideological glory, competition with foreign rivals – all goals that operate at cross-purposes to a stable state system. Regional security apparatuses like ECOWAS, IGAD, and SADC were intended to advance peace and security while avoiding overweening AU power (never really much of a risk) but they are also well suited to negotiate with external powers.⁷⁴ The challenge is in achieving enough regional solidarity and coherence to avoid manipulation from outside.

The evidence that this is possible is mixed at best. ECOWAS is generally thought to have enjoyed some success.⁷⁵ IGAD has played an important role in South Sudan, although it isn't clear whether IGAD in that case provides a forum more for interstate rivalries or interstate cooperation; it aims at the latter but has displayed a remarkable amount of the former. However, security groupings are always shaped by competing national interests and by actual power dynamics. They are not and cannot be gatherings of like-minded and agreeable people whose

fundamental interests are all alike. The UN Security Council's inability to adjust its processes to changing political realities is a source of weakness; the same is true of some of the EU's one-nation-one-vote processes. The decision to enable majority voting in the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC),⁷⁶ among other innovations of the OAU-AU transition, was a wise recognition of the problems encountered by the UNSC and similar bodies. However, oversight of RECs like ECOWAS and IGAD by the PSC and other AU bodies remains weak. This is well known and among the leading topics in ongoing AU reform discussions, but ironing out the AU-REC relationship on security matters remains very much a work in progress. The determination of AU reformers to have member states agree on a levy that would enable the AU to approach being self-financing – and therefore to begin making African security self-financing – also faces many obstacles, not least opposition from larger states who would need to be the main providers of funds.⁷⁷

Indeed, the most interesting development in regional security goes in a direction rather opposite to that of the AU reforms: the “ad hoc” coalitions of the G5 Sahel force and the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad basin. Both grew up in response to non-state insurgencies, bringing together the militaries of directly affected states. The model is not entirely new. The Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) began in 2011 to combat the LRA insurgency, bringing together local militaries to solve a particular problem. The governing structure of RCI-LRA was administered by the AU. Significant funding came from the European Union, while military assistance (including intelligence) came from the United States. The RCI-LRA resembled in some ways the much larger AU-led, EU-funded, US-assisted mission in Somalia (AMISOM), although there were and are more foreign players in Somalia as well as a much more complex governance challenge.

And yet the MNJTF (2015-) and G5 Sahel force (2017-) are different. They embody a franker recognition that the states most affected by a security issue will be the ones to solve it, if it is to be solved. It is worth recalling that the AMISOM mission was initially designed to keep neighboring powers like Kenya and Ethiopia as far out of the Somalia equation as possible.⁷⁸ But in the end, triangulation of this kind – that is, using one or more external points, such as the UN or the EU, as a way to manage interstate relations within a conflict region – is very difficult. Kenya and Ethiopia eventually became important troop contributors to AMISOM.⁷⁹ The MNJTF began as an anticrime force in 1998, supported by three governments (Nigeria, Chad and Niger). As the Boko Haram insurgency gained strength, Cameroon and Benin joined the original three and coordinated with the RECs ECOWAS and ECCAS as well, of course, as the AU and the MNJTF's foreign donors (of advisers, intelligence, equipment and logistics as well as money). The result is inelegant but necessary. As Ndiaye writes, “Interlocking and flexible models for institutional relations between the AU and the RECs/RMs, and also among RECs/RMs themselves, are needed because the requirements of peace operations will continue to pull these institutions into various arrangements for collaboration. These developments will require the pragmatic evolution of mandates and modes of operation of peace operations towards a more diverse and less hierarchical approach.”⁸⁰

The fragmentation of the extra-continental political environment – Brexit, the U.S. move away from counter-terrorism and toward great-power confrontation, chronic UNSC weakness, and so on – will only encourage such ad hoc approaches.

Regionalization of technology⁸¹

African media and politicians, and to a lesser extent African and foreign investors and businesspeople, have sounded hopeful notes on technology as a savior of African economies.⁸²

Specifically, the argument has been that the Internet is a global platform that can or will be accessed as easily from Africa as from anywhere else, and therefore that it presents an opportunity to escape the geographical realities that confine most other economic activities; that the cost barriers to entering the virtual marketplace are low, and the technical abilities necessary to do so are relatively easily acquired; and that with the adoption of feature and smart phones across Africa, people and companies alike can “leapfrog” over the requirements of a laptop or desktop, reliable power, and a large-scale, fixed-line network for Internet connection. The optimistic conclusion is that Africans will, for the first time in the modern era, operate on a level global playing field in terms of adopting transformative technology and building companies.⁸³ Because Internet-related technology and entrepreneurship are associated with youth, and because Africa is facing a youth bulge that, on an aging planet, seems fated to be either a great boon or an utter disaster, the expectations around Africa and technology are particularly intense.

The flaws in this vision are not hard to find. First, the playing field is not level. American, Japanese, Chinese, and to a lesser degree Russian and European, companies have a decades-long head start. Together, their markets account for much of global GDP and the preponderance of investment capital, as well as most of the world’s computer-science expertise, academic and physical infrastructure and venture-capital expertise. Moreover, this Internet-related technical domain is increasingly being developed along national lines, to serve national interests, creating a “splinternet” that not only confers immense advantages on first-mover states but also creates, in effect, huge protected markets with ample barriers to new entrants.⁸⁴ If you consider that Europe, with every conceivable advantage, and Russia, with a very deep academic-military-industrial base, have struggled over the past two-plus decades to create more than a handful of Internet-related, or indeed consumer-electronic,

companies that compete on a global scale, you can see that the African tech sector faces considerable competitive challenges.

But Africa does have an opportunity to convert some of its traditional disadvantages into advantages. The continent’s extreme linguistic diversity means that tech firms that have the ability to enter those language markets – which means, pretty much exclusively, African tech firms – can exploit their advantage. Africa’s poverty and its welter of state governments that do not hesitate to interfere in economic regulation also confer certain potential advantages: like linguistic diversity, they constitute barriers that have kept the large tech multinationals from vigorously entering the African market. Data is not actually the new oil (or gold, or even diamonds), because data, unlike oil, is generated by people. Its social contextualization is part of its value, and it does not necessarily require an Exxon or Total to extract it, refine it, or monetize it.⁸⁵ For all these reasons and several more, data-based tech multinationals have been hesitant about Africa. As data-based spheres of influence solidify globally, tech multinationals, perhaps for political reasons, might well turn their attentions more to Africa. But even this would at least present some opportunities to African states and companies for what might be called great-power arbitrage.

Nonetheless, as long as African states continue to pursue tech advantages along more or less national lines – favoring certain telecoms providers or ISPs over others, for example, or passing regulations that privilege state control over data – many of these opportunities will be missed and Africans will conspire at their own under-development in the face of the data-driven Fourth Industrial Revolution. Kenya, for example, having publicly embraced “open data” several years ago, is now moving in the opposite direction, toward greater data control.⁸⁶ The motive is political but it has economic effects.⁸⁷

Or consider additive manufacturing (“3-D printing” and related technologies). In one sense, additive manufacturing should help address the reality that sub-Saharan manufacturing capacity, according to some measures, has actually gone down in recent years, even as governments have insisted that increasing manufacturing industry is a high priority (as it has been since the 1960s). The means of additive manufacturing themselves are not the problem in Africa so much as the tariff and other regulatory barriers that make it so difficult to build manufacturing enterprises, in particular enterprises that do not attempt to compete directly with vertically integrated international manufacturing companies but rather try to carve out small niches within global supply chains.

Regional economic groupings need to identify and eliminate the many barriers to tech entrepreneurship. Individual states can only do so much and in any case are conflicted: as Africans conduct more of their lives online, states will be extremely tempted to place themselves into their citizens’ data streams in order to collect whatever rents might present themselves (perhaps with the help of foreign companies). Regionalization of technology markets will enable African tech entrepreneurs to achieve reasonable technologies of scale and evade state capture. Perhaps most importantly, regionalization of technology markets could offer, finally, a way for smaller countries that do not have petroleum or similar resources to build modern economies, including in manufacturing.

Conclusion

What these trends suggest is that African states, unlike their counterparts in much of the West and Asia, will not experience a rise in nationalism or an ethnicization of the nation-state. On the contrary, all these trends point toward a

managed reduction in state sovereignty in exchange for an increase in political and economic viability.

In this scenario, the historic weakness of the African state relative to the real or imagined strength of states outside the continent is not a disadvantage. On the contrary, it can be considered, in the tech phrase, a feature rather than a bug. The managed devolution of state power to kinship and other groups, the encouragement of physical and capital mobility across state (and international) lines, and the regionalization of economies and security complexes are all rooted in deep African historical experience. They can be read as part of an ongoing, positive “indigenization” of the African state form that could enable the continent to survive, and even thrive, in the absence of the liberal internationalist order currently being dismantled – for reasons that have little to do with Africa – by its authors. Africa would then be able to redefine internationalism for itself and perhaps set an example to others as they struggle with their own, very different nation-state legacies.

About the Author

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End Notes

¹ “Liberal internationalism”, much like “the international community”, is a vague and easily disputed term. See, e.g., Patrick Porter, “A World Imagined: Nostalgia and Liberal Order”, Cato Institute, Policy Analysis No. 843, June 5, 2018. <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/world-imagined-nostalgia-liberal-order>. Both the *New York Times* and the Council on Foreign Relations, for example, strongly discourage writers from even using the term “international community” as it is considered so vague as to be evasive. Both terms are used here, if gingerly and with this qualification, as necessary terms of art. The literature on the end of liberal internationalism has become considerable since the election of Donald Trump. For a useful sampling see the special issue “Which World Are We Living In?” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.

² The OAU declaration of 1990, considering the “rapid changes taking place in the world and their impact on Africa,” notes “the changing East-West relations from confrontation to cooperation, the socio-economic and political changes in Eastern Europe, the steady move towards political and monetary union of Western Europe, the increasing global tendency towards regional integration and the establishment of trading and economic blocs as well as the advances in science and technology... constitute major factors which should guide Africa’s collective thinking about the challenges and options before her in the 1990s and beyond in view of the real threat of marginalisation of our Continent”. Quoted in P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1994, 2nd edition), 259. In short, progress, consolidation and peace elsewhere seemed to imply abandonment and even decline at home, to which a revived pan-Africanism was the response. A decade later, Achille Mbembe continued to write of Africa being “demoted’ internationally” with “the Cold War no longer structuring relations of force worldwide”. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 88. See also Solomon A. Dersso, “The quest for *Pax Africana*: The Case of the African Union’s peace and security regime”, *African Journal for Conflict Resolution* vol. 12, no. 2 (2012) 13-15.

³ For example, a recent unclassified report by the U.S. National Intelligence Council predicted a rise in democratic activism in Africa but did not necessarily see that as positive: “An expanding democratic presence on the continent would almost certainly complicate Washington’s efforts to advance its policy priorities...Washington and other foreign capitals will find new democracies in many cases more difficult to engage with than their authoritarian predecessors.” This led the NIC to highlight the increased positive political role in Africa of Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia, Brazil and Chile. *Sub-Saharan Africa: Pitched Contests for Democratization through 2022* (Washington, D.C.: National Intelligence Council, Feb. 2018, 8, 16

⁴ Research for this article was greatly informed by conversations held under the auspices of Carnegie Corporation of New York and conducted together with Aaron Stanley of the Corporation’s International Peace and Security program. The author wishes to thank the participants: Alagaw Ababu Kifle, Rashid Abdi, Sagal Abshir, Obi Anyadike, Severine Autesserre, Solomon Dersso, Comfort Ero, George Gathigi, Elissa Jobson, Jok Madut Jok, Pamela Mbabazi, Nicodemus Minde, Wilfred Muliro, Caroline Njuki, Nanjala Nyabola, Sharon Anyango Odhiambo, Funmi Olonisakin, Susan Woodward, and Getachew Zeru. Podcasts based on these conversations can be found at AIIAfrica.com.

⁵ Scott Malcomson, “European Nationalism Goes Mainstream”, *Huffington Post* Oct. 10, 2016.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/european-nationalism-goes-mainstream_us_57fbc24be4b0b665ad8186da; Jens-Uwe Underlich, *Regionalism, Globalisation, and International Order: Europe and Southeast Asia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) 123-128; Andrew Sheng, *From Asian to Global Financial Crisis: An Asian Regulator’s View of Unfettered Finance in the 1990s and 2000s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2009), 4-15. Sheng writes (4): “Almost everyone saw large capital inflows and low-risk premiums as votes of confidence, rather than harbingers of disaster.”

⁶ See my “The Nationalist International”, *Huffington Post*, Jan. 23, 2017 https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-nationalist-international_us_58862761e4b0111ea60b9885; and “The Authoritarianism of Donald Trump”, *Seminar* No. 693 (May 2017), http://www.india-seminar.com/2017/693/693_scott_l_malcomson.htm

⁷ The classic references are Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*; and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. See also Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992* (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). On Africa specifically, see for example Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa” <http://ojs.ruc.dk/index.php/ocpa/article/view/3604/1786> and Leroy Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), chapter 1; Roland Oliver, *The African Experience: Major Themes in African History from Earliest Times to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1993), chapter 10; Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, 2nd edition), chapter 2.

⁹ From a very large literature, see Mahmood Mamdani’s essay “What is a tribe?”, *London Review of Books* v. 34 no. 17, 13 Sept 2012, 20-22.

¹⁰ Oliver, *African Experience*, 125-129; Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 15-19.

¹¹ Frederick Cooper, “The Problem of Slavery in African Studies”, *Journal of African History* Vol. 20, No. 1 (1979), 112-115. Non-colonial 19th century polities like the Sokoto state in West Africa or Zanzibar on the east coast used African slaves to work plantations. Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Adell Patton Jr., “Ningi

Raids and Slavery in the Nineteenth Century Sokoto Caliphate”, *Slavery and Abolition* vol. 2, no 2, September 1981; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2001; second edition), 92-95. See also the recent article by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, “My Great-Grandfather, the Nigerian Slave-Trader”, *The New Yorker* July 15, 2018. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/personal-history/my-great-grandfather-the-nigerian-slave-trader>

¹² Jok Madut Jok, *War and Slavery in Sudan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) chapter 4.

¹³ The racialization of slavery was always provisional. The main sources of slaves for the Ottoman empire in the 19th century, for example, were East Africa and the Caucasus. Ehud R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 8-19.

¹⁴ Herbst, *States and Power*, chapter 3.

¹⁵ Stephen Kotkin, “Russia’s Perpetual Geopolitics: Putin Returns to the Historical Pattern”, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/russias-perpetual-geopolitics>. Also my *Bordelands: Nation and Empire* (Boston and London: Faber and Faber, 1994), 169-175.

¹⁶ Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 192-195.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁸ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 69, 79-80: “Quite conscious that they had few means to meet the many aspirations of the citizen mobilization that had brought African political parties to power, the first generation of rulers of newly independent states by and large tried to use the most important resource they had — sovereignty.”

¹⁹ William H. Friedland, “African Trade Unions Studies: Analysis of Two Decades”, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* vol. 55 (1974), 575-589.

²⁰ Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, former prime minister of Niger and CEO of the African Union’s NEPAD Agency, cited the film’s nonexistent nation of Wakanda in celebrating the enactment of the African Continental Free Trade Area in March 2018. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, “Moving African integration forward”, *New Times*, April 5, 2018 <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/opinions/cfta-moving-african-integration-further-forward>

²¹ Christopher Kayumba, “AU’s bid to self-finance a litmus test on spirit of pan-Africanism”, *The East African*, Feb. 4, 2018

<http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/rwanda/Opinion/AU-bid-to-self-finance-on-spirit-of-pan-Africanism/1433246-4289464-ojc0re/index.html>; Paul Kagame, “Unleashing Africa’s inner strengths” <https://www.brookings.edu/research/unleashing-africas-inner-strengths/>

²² Francis Mageni, “RECs Experience Provides Vital Lessons for Faster Implementation of the Continental FTA”, *East African Business Week*, 21 May 2016 <http://www.busiweek.com/opinion-regional-economic-communities-vital-lessons-for-continet/>

²³ Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly, *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change* (London: Zed Books, 2015), chaps. 3 and 4.

²⁴ Africa as a laboratory was a major trope well before 1945 and the birth of the postwar liberal internationalist institutions. See Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), especially chapter two, “A Development Laboratory”.

²⁵ “Global Aid Trends”, Development Initiatives, December 2014, chart 1. <http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Global-aid-trends-ODA1.pdf>

²⁶ Willem Fourie, “Why the world’s poorest countries don’t always get the foreign aid they need”, *The Conversation*, April 12, 2018. <https://theconversation.com/why-the-worlds-poorest-countries-dont-always-get-the-foreign-aid-they-need-94371>

²⁷ Aye Mengistu Alemu and Jin-Sang Lee, “Foreign aid on economic growth in Africa: A comparison of low and middle-income countries”, *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences* vol. 18 no. 4, Pretoria 2015

http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2222-34362015000400001; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, “The Least Developed Countries Report 2016: The path to graduation and beyond: Making the most of the process”, http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/Ldc2016_en.pdf

²⁸ Ama Lorenz and Bob Koigi, “African Union’s Somalia Mission Hit by Funding Cut”, euractiv.de, Feb.9, 2016

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/development-policy/news/african-union-s-somalia-mission-hit-by-eu-funding-cut/>

²⁹ Nils Gilman, “Human Rights and Neoliberalism”, *Los Angeles Review of Books* May 8, 2018

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/human-rights-and-neoliberalism/#>; Pankaj Mishra, “The Mask It Wears”, *London Review of Books* 21 June 2018. Both are reviewing Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018).

³⁰ See “National Security Strategy of the United States”, December 2017 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>. The Trump administration’s new emphasis on strategic competition comes,

to a significant degree, at the expense of counter-terrorism. See the US Department of Defense’s National Defense Strategy, which states: “Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security.”

<https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf> This could lead to the halving of core special-operations personnel levels in Africa. See Eric Schmitt and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “Pentagon May Cut Commando Forces in Africa in Major Military Review”, *New York Times* June 4, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/04/world/africa/commandos-africa-pivot-major-powers.html>

³¹ International Crisis Group, “Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations”, ICG Report No. 255, 17 Oct. 2017.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/255-time-reset-african-union-european-union-relations>

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institutions, a source of support likely to diminish in the absence of liberal internationalism. Africa's regional hegemony and the RECs will have to lead in addressing the migrant flows, instability and immediate suffering that will result.

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⁷⁵ Camilla Elowson and Justin MacDermott, "ECOWAS Capabilities in Peace and Security", Stockholm: Swedish Defense Research Agency, December 2010; Amanda Lucey and Moyosore Arewa, "Sustainable Peace: Driving the African Peace and Security Architecture through ECOWAS", Institute for Security Studies Paper 301, November 2016.

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⁸⁴ See my *Splinternet: How Geopolitics and Commerce Are Fragmenting the World Wide Web* (New York: OR Books, 2016).

⁸⁵ While existing large data-tech companies have obvious advantages in designing the plumbing of data technology as well as the technology stack above it, they would not necessarily be able to exploit even those advantages under local conditions. For example, the way in which Internet access evolves in Africa cannot be assumed to be a late-comer copy of how Internet access evolved elsewhere. Indeed, interaction with the Internet has gone through many and distinct evolutions across the developed markets and will continue to do so. The question of how much data technology is open-source is likewise relevant to Africa. See for example Tiernan Ray, "Nvidia's Chip Software Pushes Deeper into A.I. Market", *Barron's* March 29, 2018. <https://www.barrons.com/articles/nvidias-chip-software-pushes-deeper-into-a-i-market-1522342292> The first major move to open source was Google's release of Tensor Flow in 2015. Sophia Arakelyan, "Tech giants are using open source frameworks to dominate the AI community", *VentureBeat*, Nov. 29, 2017. <https://venturebeat.com/2017/11/29/tech-giants-are-using-open-source-frameworks-to-dominate-the-ai-community/>

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