Post-Cold War International Relations and Foreign Policies in Africa: New Issues and New Challenges

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Abstract

This paper argues that international relations in Africa have changed especially in content since the abatement of the Cold War. These changes have been accelerated by the pressures unleashed by the international environment, including the reality of Africa's marginalisation and the forces of globalisation. These, along with domestic factors, including debt, internal conflicts, the impact of the ubiquitous structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), HIV/AIDS and human insecurity in general have combined to underscore foreign aid and economic assistance as key driving forces of the continent's foreign policies and diplomacy towards the North. Yet, the new thrust of foreign policies, informed by the need for foreign aid, has not occurred without a price. Among other things it has elevated technocrats in central or reserve banks and finance ministries to positions of prominence vis-à-vis officials from foreign ministries and in the process introduced extra-African actors into the foreign policy making process of the continent. This in turn has undermined Africa's increasingly tenuous economic sovereignty. But above all, it has led to the strengthening of ties with the North and international creditors in particular at the cost of intra-African relations. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU) recently inaugurated, promise to open a new chapter in Africa's international relations. It is argued, however, that against a background of a confluence of factors, these new continental projects will make only a minimal impact in terms of mitigating the consequences of the aid-driven foreign policies and thus altering the donor-oriented postures of African states.

Introduction

Africa's international relations in general and foreign policies in particular have taken a new dimension since the abatement of the

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Cold War. In contrast to the situation under bipolar politics, which provided African states with the leverage to play one superpower against the other in a bid to extract concessions, the continent's post-cold war foreign policies have become circumscribed and relatively predictable. Besides, the abatement of the Cold War has generated new anxieties and challenges for the foreign policies of African states. The combined forces of globalisation and marginalisation, along with internal factors, including debt, conflicts, the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and general human insecurity have not only become new sources of challenges, but also forces that inform the international relations and foreign policies of African states. This paper attempts to place these interrelated issues in context and argues that the combined effect of these forces has helped to elevate economic issues and the need for aid as key foreign policy objectives. It argues, moreover, that the extent to which the New partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the new continental union, the African Union (AU), make an impact in re-reordering the foreign relations of the continent depends to a large extent on the degree to which these new initiatives can assure economic security. In placing these issues in perspective, the first section of the paper elucidates on some of the key theoretical concepts in international relations, particularly the interrelated notions of foreign policy and diplomacy. The second section analyses some of the contemporary factors underscoring the importance of aid in the continent's foreign policies; the third highlights the consequences of aid-driven foreign policies; the fourth evaluates the efficacy of NEPAD and the African Union (AU) in spawning new directions in the continent's international relations; while the conclusion recapitulates the main arguments in the paper.

Foreign policy and diplomacy as elements in international relations

Foreign policy and diplomacy are as old as the state. Since the emergence of the modern state, generally traceable to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, governments and statesmen have orchestrated relations between their states and others. The list of foreign entities affecting the foreign policy calculations of states increased with

the growing importance of non-state actors, including international financial Institutions (IFIs), multi-national corporations (MNCs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other inter-governmental bodies within the international system. The features of such non-state and sometimes supranational actors have challenged some of the central assumptions of classical realism, which projects states not only as unitary actors and the dominant players in international relations, but also among whom diplomacy is conducted, and whose conduct of foreign policy is geared towards the maximisation of power (Morgenthau 1967). Today, a myriad of non-state actors has come to affect the foreign policies of states. In Africa, the list of such non-state actors has become even longer given the emergence of new and hitherto unrecognised agents on the domestic scene, including rebel movements, warlords, mercenaries, local and international NGOs, to mention just a few. Although they operate mainly at the national level, the presence and pressures of these entities have often influenced both the content and direction of the foreign policies and diplomacy of national governments.

How, then, do we explain foreign policy and diplomacy? It is tempting to conflate foreign policy and diplomacy since both involve elements of interaction between entities in international relations (Sharp 1999: 37). The two processes are often confused with each other, moreover, because there cannot be diplomacy without foreign policy. Yet although intertwined, the two concepts are theoretically distinct; the former being a logical consequence of the latter. The connection between foreign policy and diplomacy has led one observer to contend that "foreign policy is what you do; diplomacy is how you do it" (Gore-Brooth 1994: 15). However, what is done and how it is done are discrete. Accordingly, it is useful to explain the concepts separately. Foreign policy has elicited almost as many definitions, as there are authors. Cohen and Harris have warned that no two people define foreign policy in the same way mainly because of the varying approaches and methodologies used (Cohen and Harris 1975: 318). Thus David Vital (1991: 34), for example, conceives of foreign policy as "the course of action adopted by a state consequent upon decisions taken by those who have the authority to commit a significant proportion of the nation's resources to that end". Others see it as the interplay of domestic and external

forces, (Rose 1998: 15) or simply the projection abroad of domestic politics (Pym 1982: 1-2). More generally, and for the purpose of this discussion, we adopt Holsti's (1995: 83) definition, which takes foreign policy as "ideas or actions designed by policy makers to solve a problem or promote some change in the policies, attitudes or actions of other states or states, in non-state actors (e.g. terrorist groups), in the international economy or in the physical environment of the world". The place of a state in the international system and its material power capabilities tends to inform its foreign policies (Rose 1998: 146). Conventionally foreign policy aims at achieving a specific objective or a set of objectives consistent with the interest of the state undertaking the foreign policy mission. However, foreign policies are not always successful in achieving original goals and governments are often compelled by expediency or exigency to either modify or totally reverse them (Hermann 1990: 3-20).

A further conceptual dimension in the foreign policy discourse relates to its formulation. Various approaches to foreign policy making are discernible. The pluralist conception, which gained currency with the publication of Allison's *Essence of Decision* in 1971, subsumes a wide range of versions (Carlsnaes 2002: 331-349). Generally, these approaches focus on the role of decision-making units, particularly small groups, in foreign policy making. For this perspective, foreign policy is the culmination of inputs from various units in society (Beasley 1998; Hart *et al* 1997; Ripley 1995) and is neither the preserve of the executive wing of government nor the brainchild of any particular constituency in the state. Elite theorists, however, see foreign policy not as a compromise among competing views but rather reflecting the preferences of the dominant elite in society. These elites, who are either the top echelons of the party hierarchy or the political leaders, constitute the ruling aristocracy. These, along with their financiers are, according to this perspective, the key originators and directors of foreign policy (Pareto 1935; Mosca 1939; Michels 1935). For the elite perspective, political parties, the media and other civil society organisations (CSOs), which are critical in the articulation of interests in the pluralist cosmology, are simply peripheral to the foreign policy making process. Another perspective worthy of note is the Marxist approach, which sees foreign policy as the preferences of the economically dominant class

in society. Following from the assumptions of classical Marxism, the radical perspective interprets the foreign policy of a country as necessarily reflecting the orientation of the powerful economic class. This postulation is reflected in the popular Marxist aphorism, which depicts the state and the economically dominant class as one and the same thing, the former being "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx and Engels 1974: 82). For the radical perspective, the critical issue in the making or pursuit of foreign policy is not the interest of the masses, but rather what the economically dominant class sees as promoting its interests, which is often the protection of capital and the maximisation of profits. Although none of the above perspectives accurately captures Africa's foreign policy dynamic, we will surmise that the elite approach seems closely apt, although it will be noted that key foreign policies relating to economic and aid issues are increasingly drifting out of the control of the political elite.

Diplomacy on the other hand involves the methods and mechanisms employed in the pursuit of foreign policy goals. Diplomacy, therefore, has no ontological status; its existence is contingent on, or is a consequence of foreign policy. The varying, often conflicting, interests of actors in the international arena underscore the importance of diplomacy. The conflicting interests of these actors necessitate the pursuit of foreign policy in a way that lessens the harm it does to other actors while simultaneously maximising its benefits. Thus, in another sense, diplomacy involves the conduct of foreign relations in a manner that is acceptable to both the initiator and the target of foreign policy. Against this background, diplomacy has been defined as 'an instrument of foreign policy for the establishment and development of peaceful contacts between the governments of different states, through the use of intermediaries mutually recognised by the respective parties' (Magalhaes, 1988: 59). However, this perception has been viewed with considerable scepticism because of its realist connotations and its failure to recognise non-state actors in diplomacy. Although by no means sacrosanct, the conceptualisation of Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 1) is a better working definition for the present analysis because of the lesser emphasis on the state. They note that diplomacy is "the peaceful conduct of relations among entities, their principals and accredited agents".

The key ingredients of diplomacy include negotiations, bargaining, persuasion (the use of 'carrots') and deterrence (the use of 'sticks'). Essentially diplomacy requires methods short of aggression to achieve foreign policy goals, although some see war as a continuation of diplomacy (Clausewitz 1976: 87). The objectives of diplomacy are diverse, however. One observer has identified five of its 'substantive' functions namely:

• Conflict management;
• Solving problems facing two or more governments;
• Increasing and facilitating cross-cultural communication on a wide range of issues involving the countries;
• Negotiation and bargaining on specific issues, treaties and agreements; and
• General programme management of the foreign policy decisions of one towards another (Poullada 1974: 202).

However, for much of the developing world, diplomacy has focussed largely on managing foreign policies in a manner that ingratiates them to the more economically powerful and influential actors within the international system. We surmise that Africa's foreign policies and diplomacy particularly towards the north have been consistent with this objective.

Contemporary issues shaping Africa's foreign policies

Although the objectives of foreign policy change over time, there are certain goals that remain fairly constant for states. Holsti (1995: 84) notes that these relatively constant objectives include security, autonomy, welfare, status and prestige, although the premium placed on these concerns varies from state to state. However, for Africa, a typically peripheral continent and grappling with the challenges of development, its foreign policies and diplomacy especially towards northern governments have been geared towards securing economic assistance and foreign aid in general. As Agyeman-Duah and Daddieh (1994:44) have correctly argued,

> a prime purpose of foreign policy for most developing nations has been to secure economic assistance for development efforts. The continued stagnation, even decline, in African economies therefore suggests that economic considerations will remain a driving force in the making of foreign policies.

A plethora of factors explains the salience of aid in Africa's post cold war foreign policies. The first and perhaps the most glaring is the continent's increasing marginalisation in the global economy. In perspective, the literature on Africa's marginalisation is profuse (Callaghy 1991; Awoonor 1994; Kraus 1994). Marginalisation describes the continent's increasing peripheral role in the global economy, a fact dramatised in two main areas – the continent's declining official development assistance (ODA), and its shrinking share of foreign direct investment (FDI). That ODA to Africa is in steady decline is no longer polemical. For example, although new loan commitments by international banks to developing countries increased from $20 billion in 1990 to $28 billion in 1991, the proportion destined for Africa declined from $0.6 billion to $0.4 billion (IMF 1992: 77). Also, between 1983 and 1990 development aid to Africa shrank from more than $8 billion to just $1 billion. In 1991 aid (bilateral and multilateral) to Africa totalled $25.2 billion, this declined to $17.6 billion in 1998 and further down to $15.7 billion in 2000 (Africa Recovery 16(2-3), 2002: 31). Just as ODA is declining, so is FDI to Africa dwindling. For example, in 1997 total FDI to sub-Saharan Africa valued at $8.6 billion but this declined to $6.5 billion in 2000 (Africa Recovery 15(3) 2001: 28).

The underlying factors accounting for Africa's marginalisation are varied. However, the most popular reasons relate to the discovery of new investment opportunities in Eastern Europe following the liberation of the region's economies from communism (Callaghy 1994), along with the intractable conflicts, bad governance, which together undercut Africa's attractiveness as a region for investments (Strange 1991). The only country enjoying some exception to the general trend of declining ODA and FDI is South Africa which, by reason of its huge industrial development, is able to attract FDI. For example, in 1997, South Africa received a net FDI of $1705 million, representing 54 percent of total FDI to Eastern and Southern Africa (UNDP 1999: 45). This is no accident of history; South Africa alone generates over 71 percent of the GNP of the entire Southern African Development Community (SADC) region (Lee 2000). Besides, South Africa is among the few African countries investing abroad. Of the $1.3 billion invested outside their own countries by African corporations in 2000, for example, South Africa accounted for

43 percent (*Africa Recovery* 15(3) 2001: 28). The assertion about Africa's marginalisation in the global economy is thus increasingly becoming contentious. It is clear that by its heavy dependence on external aid and the dominant international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF, the continent is being tightly incorporated into the global economy. In the same way, by adopting the preponderant structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), which epitomise the economic dogma of neoliberalism, Africa is being grafted into the global political economy. This phenomenon of simultaneous marginalisation and incorporation underscores Africa's ambivalent, if not uncertain, posture in the global economy. The contradictory posture of Africa in the global economy is being aggravated by globalisation. Characterised by liberalisation, competition and free market policies, globalisation undermines Africa's fragile economies and creates phenomenal developmental challenges for the continent (Akokpari 2001a). The combined effects of globalisation and liberalisation have thus intensified Africa's need for external aid and development assistance, making them dominant driving forces of the continent's international relations with the north.

Complementing the external forces are compelling internal pressures, which redirect the attention of foreign policy makers on external aid. Notable among these is the continent's escalating debt, which by 1998 stood at a staggering $345.2 billion up from $294.3 billion in 1990 (*Africa Recovery* 14(1), 2000: 7). Although the causes of the debt remain a source of debate (Akokpari 2001b), it is clear that the debt debacle vitiates the continent's ability to deliver social services. This fact is partly responsible for the institution of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPCs) in 1996 by the major international creditors through which to write-off the debts of poor countries. Africa's inability to deliver services under the weight of debt results from the large percentages of national budgets devoted to servicing existing debts. During the 1990s, debt service ranged from 5 to 112 percent of export earning in Africa (*West Africa*, 16-22 August 1993: 1459). Devoting such percentages of national budgets to service debt leaves little to meet the competing demands on the state. For example, Tanzania's debt payments were four times what it spent on primary education and nine times what it spent on basic health during the 1996/97 fiscal year. Similarly,

during the same fiscal year Cameroon spent 36 percent of its national budget on debt service compared to only four percent on basic social services (*Africa Recovery,* 13(4), 1999: 3). Zimbabwe's case is equally telling. At its independence in 1980, it spent 1.2 percent of its GNP on debt service compared to 1.9 percent on education. By 1995, debt servicing was taking 10.3 percent of GNP compared to 8.5 percent and 3.5 percent on education and health respectively (*Africa Recovery*, 15(3), 2001: 28). Aggravating the debt is the process of rescheduling which, although it provides some temporary relief, leaves the interest on the original capital growing. Between 1986 and 1990, for example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) extracted over $3 billion more than it gave to low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of rescheduling (*New African*, October 1991: 32). Rescheduling has thus been partly responsible for the escalation of sub-Saharan Africa's debt and in turn augmenting the need for foreign aid.

Related to debt are the ubiquitous SAPs being implemented by nearly all sub-Saharan African countries. Established as conditions for western credit and investments, SAPs call for the de-subsidisation of services, floating of national currencies in the market (often resulting to devaluation), and the deregulation and decontrolling of economic activities. In essence SAPs involve the liberalisation of the national economy. The overall impact of SAPs have been mixed and remain controversial. However, the dominant perception that has emerged over the last two decades depicts the programmes as counterproductive (ECA 1989; World Bank 1994:1). Among other effects, they have compounded rather than ameliorated the deleterious conditions they were originally meant to alleviate. Consequent on their emphasis on the liberalisation of economies, for example, local industries have collapsed causing an escalation in unemployment. With their devastating impact on women and the vulnerable sections in society, SAPs have been blamed for the deepening of poverty in much of Africa (Stewart 1991), and partly for the growing indebtedness of the region (Akokpari 2001b). But more relevant for this discussion, adjustment programmes have deepened the dependence of implementing countries not only on imports but also on international creditors. The latter scenario has led to the strengthening of the international economic relations between

adjusting African states and the supplier countries of their imports.

But if SAPs have been responsible for the strengthening of economic ties with the north, creditors and donors in general, the HIV/AIDS scourge, which is assuming crisis proportions on the continent and especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is helping to forge new partnership with countries in the north to help fight it. Although the distribution of the incidence of AIDS on the continent varies considerably – with a high prevalence rate in Southern and Eastern Africa – Africa is generally known to be the current global epicentre of the epidemic. Of the 36 million affected across the world, 16 million, roughly 70 percent, are in sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, of the nearly 22 million AIDS deaths worldwide, 16 million were Africans (*Africa Recovery*, 14(4), 2001: 1) while the continent accounts for 12 million of the 13 million aids orphans in the world (*Africa Recovery*, 15(3), 2001: 1&18). Disturbing as these statistics are, they have raised the profile of HIV/AIDS on the foreign policy agenda of African states. The thrust of foreign policy in this regard is soliciting international support in the form of aid to combat the epidemic.

The partnership between Africa and the international community to fight the epidemic was underscored by the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Kofi Annan, in an address to African leaders and policy makers in Abuja, Nigeria, in May 2001. Annan warned: "AIDS is not an African problem alone, AIDS is a global problem. But if we do not win [the fight against AIDS] in Africa, we are not going to win elsewhere" (*Africa Recovery*, 15(2), 2001:1). Annan's warning might have had some impact. In one of his weekly radio addresses in early 2003, the US president, George W. Bush, announced a $15 billion aid package to developing countries to fight HIV/AIDS. Encouraged by this gesture, albeit small, the South African president, Thabo Mbeki, attending the G-8 summit at the French resort town of Evian, urged European leaders not only to emulate America's example, but also to fulfil earlier aid pledges to Africa (BBC, 2003). The gravity of the AIDS problem and the reality that Africa cannot single-handedly score any measure of success in fighting it, is increasingly making the phenomenon an important driving force in the continent's foreign policies. African leaders who visit western capitals in search of economic assistance now have the task of not only soliciting for economic aid, but also aid to fight AIDS.

The need for foreign aid has been exacerbated by the incessant political conflicts, which remain a nightmare for the continent. Although conflicts are not new in African politics, they have become so widespread in the last two decades that only few countries can guarantee political stability for a considerable length of time, notwithstanding the adoption of democratic governance. The list of countries currently at war is endless – Sudan, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the DRC, to name just a few. Previously serene countries such as Zimbabwe and the Ivory Coast are now among the warring states on the continent. For these warring countries, foreign policies have focussed on increasing defence budgets and the concomitant procurement of sophisticated military hardware. During the Cold War these countries would quickly have requested military assistance from their ideological patrons as did Angola, Somalia and Ethiopia in the 1980s (Copson 1994). Nevertheless, conflicts seem to strengthen the international relations of especially Francophone African countries with Paris even in the aftermath of formal colonialism. The ongoing conflict between rebels and the government of Ivory Coast in which France has successfully negotiated a cease-fire between the protagonists, shows that Paris still wields considerable influence over its former colonies, decades after the latter's political independence. At the continental level, conflicts also help forge stronger alliances between beleaguered regimes on the one hand and allies on the other. This became apparent in the DRC conflict when the government of Laurent Kabila solicited military assistance from friendly regimes such as Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. By spawning the need for external assistance, internal conflicts shape the foreign policies and international diplomacy of states.

Linked to HIV/AIDS and conflict is the growing elusiveness of human security on the continent. In retrospect the meaning of security has remained in flux since the end of the Cold War. At the height of bipolar politics, security was generally conceived in terms of external military threats. Concepts such as power and deterrence influenced the calculations of statesmen and foreign policy makers. The instrumentality for acquiring power and deterring external aggression was the acquisition of sophisticated military hardware (Akokpari 1999). In the post-Cold War era, however, this purely realist thinking, premised on power and state survival, increasingly

became obsolete with the emergence of new security threats, both internal and external, posed by such conjectural factors as sectarian violence, economic adversities and terrorism. The new security paradigm argues for the linkage of security to life experiences and the survival of people who live within the territorial boundaries of the state (Buzan 1983). Thus, rather than proceeding from the state, the new paradigm focuses on the peace and security of people. The key point of departure of the new in contrast to the old concept of security is the emphasis on the people rather than the state precisely because threats to human security are largely non-military and therefore require non-military responses. Thus, according to the UNDP (1994), human security prevails when people are safe from acute instability in their social and political environment, which in turn disrupts their well-being. Human security is people-centred and as such transcends the conventional state-centric conception of security. For Africa, human security means addressing the chronic and crippling problems of hunger, disease, poverty, unemployment and all forms of oppression and repression. In other words, human security refers to the "protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life" (Moyo and Tevera, 2000: 5). The fragile economies across the continent have demonstrated that human security is nearly unachievable without foreign assistance. The drought and the attendant famine that hit Southern Africa in 1992 and the prompt response of the international community with food aid and other humanitarian assistance to the affected populations, especially in Zambia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, confirm further that, not just food, but human security in general, is unattainable without international assistance. The need for human security thus highlights the prominence of aid in the foreign policies of the continent. However, the practice of foreign policies being informed largely by the need for aid is not without a price.

Consequences of the new orientation of Africa's foreign policies

The new aid-driven foreign policy thrust produces severe consequences for the foreign policy making and international diplomacy of African states. The emergence of aid and economic issues has eclipsed non-

economic concerns in foreign policy and relegated the latter to the margins. This in turn has spawned new, and relatively predictable, changes in the dynamics of foreign policy making and the general conduct of traditional international affairs. Foreign ministries, which have traditionally been in charge of the foreign policies and the link between external environments and their respective countries, are increasingly losing this function to central Banks and finance ministries, which are better placed to interact with external creditors. Indeed, not even trade ministries, which by the logic of the prevailing global free trade paradigm are expected to play a central role in shaping foreign economic relations, can be said to be in the mainstream of foreign policy. The new concern for foreign aid has put the spotlight on bureaucrats and technocrats in the central banks and finance ministries. Thus, if in the immediate post-independence era foreign ministries were perceived as emissaries of presidents (Aluko 1977, Clapham 1977), today these ministries have lost even this emissary role, remaining largely peripheral in the making and implementation of foreign policies targeting external assistance.

The diminishing importance of foreign ministries in foreign policy making and control is occurring in tandem with the growing prominence of technocrats in the central Bank and the Finance Ministry, but also of new extra-African actors. The World Bank, the IMF and the accredited representatives of the London and Paris Clubs to whom the continent seeks to ingratiate itself in order to receive economic assistance, have become key players in, if not the ultimate masters of, foreign policy making. Although the involvement of these extra-African actors has been covert and indirect as their policy preferences are transmitted to the continent in the form of aid conditionalities, it has on some few occasions been very overt where representatives of these institutions actually dictate policy (Ankomah 1992: 14). Nothing could be more overtly intrusive than international creditors dictating what proportion of the assistance they offer should go into education, health or agriculture or which goods and public services are to be de-subsidised. The involvement of these agencies, moreover, has actively crushed any hopes of a democratic process of foreign policy making, especially in a continent notorious for disregarding public opinion despite the institution of democratic politics.

A corollary to the growing loss of control over policies relating to key economic issues is the menacing threat posed to Africa's already tenuous sovereignty. Although it is a known fact that absolute sovereignty is inconceivable in the current global economic arrangement characterised by complex interdependence (Keohane and Nye 1977: 3-35), countries nonetheless try to maintain a degree of autonomy in terms of their ability to determine policy choices. However, with aid as a key driving force in foreign policy, the ceding of the continent's sovereignty to international creditors is becoming palpable. The adoption of SAPs and their vast panoply of conditionalities – most of them unpalatable – is not only evidence of the creditor community's control over adjusting countries, but also the extent to which the latter have ceded their sovereignty. The aphorism that the feeder controls the thoughts of the fed could not be more true, particularly within the context of Africa's relations with its creditors. As part of the aid conditionalities, moreover, international creditors have successfully implanted a largely top-down democracy with which countries are grappling in various parts of the continent. The illusions about Africa's economic sovereignty are thus becoming more manifest in the post-Cold War period than ever before.

The sequel to the loss of sovereignty is the related problem of consolidating the new and nascent regionalism in Africa. One of the daunting challenges unleashed by globalisation for developing countries is how to remain competitive in the hostile global economy. The need to maintain competitiveness is partly responsible for the creation of regional economic blocs by which member countries attempt to insulate their economies from the devastating consequences of global competition. The attempts across Africa to strengthen existing common markets such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the revived East African Common Market (EAC) or create new ones such as the African Union (AU) are policies designed to mitigate the effects of competition on African states. For Africa, regionalism has an additional advantage of providing alternative paths out of the continent's economic doldrums by creating a larger domestic market thereby attenuating its precarious reliance on the global market. However, the critical question is how the continent can simultaneously remain committed

to the seemingly contradictory terrains of creditor conditionalities on the one hand and the ideals of continental regionalism on the other. There is growing concern that the donor-oriented posture of African states may be incompatible with effective regionalism, particularly where the demands of creditors conflict with the dictates of continental union (Shaw 1989). This quandary will pose daunting questions for Africa's international relations. For a country like South Africa, which can find niches in the international market, this situation presents a perplexing dilemma. On the one hand South Africa can go it alone on account of its economic development and yet is obliged on the other hand by the paradigm of regionalism to work in concert with other African states. For South Africa, the likely scenario will be to sacrifice regionalism on the altar of its interest, a fact already evident in its single-handed dealings with the European Union (EU) without the involvement of SADC although its trade policies with the former will most likely impact on the southern Africa region as a whole (Lee 2000).

New directions for foreign policies?

The general economic despondency into which Africa has fallen and which has necessitated the heavy reliance on external aid and on the dominant international financial institutions (IFIs) has generally been seen as worrying. This, along with the ineffectiveness of externally formulated paradigms in addressing the continent's multiple problems, has led to new initiatives on the continent. Two of these and, indeed, the most notable and ambitious, are the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU), both of which were officially launched in July 2002. In many ways these new projects are certain to affect Africa's intra-regional and international foreign policies and diplomacy.

NEPAD, a new development programme, developed by African leaders, aims at tackling the continent's multi-faceted crisis, reflected in poor economic performance, bad governance, corruption and mismanagement, conflict and insecurity. More specifically NEPAD seeks to arrest and eradicate the deepening poverty on the continent; promote growth and sustainable development; halt and reverse the

trend of the continent's marginalisation; and restore peace, security and stability. These are to be achieved in partnership with the international community especially foreign donors. In addressing these issues, NEPAD identifies certain key areas whose tackling enhances the achievement of its overall aims. These include peace and security, economic and corporate governance, infrastructure, agriculture, and access to international markets (htt://www.nepadsn. org/nepad_presentation.html). The achievement of these objectives necessarily affects the continent's relations with the international community. In contrast to previous developmental paradigms, which required the bulk of the efforts from African states, NEPAD projects itself as a partnership between the continent and the international community to promote the development of the former. But, in seeking the partnership of the international community, NEPAD attempts to accelerate the integration of the increasingly marginalised African continent into the global economy (Ubomba-Jaswa 2002). And although the NEPAD project emphasises mutual partnership, Africa is heavily dependent on financial aid from the North.

Moreover, by relying on external funding, NEPAD is unlikely to change either the current configuration in Africa's international relations with the North or the contents of the former's foreign policies. On the contrary, the new development paradigm is not only certain to maintain Africa's weakness vis-à-vis the IFIs, but also deepen its dependence on international aid and thereby reinforce the centrality of aid in the continent's foreign policies. Globalisation has generally been seen as posing major challenges to the African continent and NEPAD's quest to conform with it (through the latter's call for increased foreign investments and the adoption of neoclassical economic policies), rather than offering theoretical challenges to it, is seen as a potential source of failure of the new project to offer real alternatives for Africa. Furthermore, strengthening the donor-oriented posture of African states, NEPAD is poised to weaken intra-African relations. Since no African state demonstrates a capacity to provide economic assistance to a fellow African state, NEPAD may become a blueprint document legitimising the outward-looking tendencies of African states.

If NEPAD shows weakened capacity to alter the content of Africa's foreign policies with the North, the AU may be equally

unlikely to strengthen intra-African relations and thus seriously alter the current direction and content of foreign policies. The AU was born out of the conviction among African leaders that its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), was considerably frail and demonstrated an inability to truly unite the continent. This fundamental weakness was reflected among other things in the inability of the OAU to effectively contain, manage or terminate conflicts on the continent or fashion a workable developmental paradigm. That the OAU was incapable of meeting the new challenges facing the continent is less surprising. The OAU was formed in 1963 at a time when the Cold War was gearing up. Nearly four decades now, new issues have emerged which challenge the efficacy of the OAU's institutions. The forces of globalisation; the dominance of neo-liberal doctrines; the phenomenon of rebel movements; national and international terrorism; and the threat of general human insecurity are among the many novel issues that challenge the largely anachronistic institutions of the OAU. The Cold War institutions of the OAU are seen as largely incompatible with post-cold war realities. It is against this backdrop that the AU was formed – to perform the tasks that are simply too modern for the OAU.

Modelled after the European Union (EU), the AU seeks, among other things, to promote unity on the continent; contain, terminate and prevent the occurrence of conflicts; create a larger African market to make the continent more competitive in the international economy; and to find innovative ways of addressing the continent's galaxy of problems, including the crisis of governance, debt, corruption and HIV/AIDS (Salim 2001). The achievement of these noble objectives requires the strengthening of intra-African ties and in a sense increase the self-sufficiency of the continent. However, although perceptive, the AU agenda is riddled with fundamental flaws, which may vitiate the organisation's effectiveness in altering the current nature of Africa's international relations. Among other things, the AU is appears too ambitious a project to achieve real continental unity within a short span of time. The EU after which it is modelled took over three decades to materialise and therefore attempting to achieve economic and political unity in months in a continent characterised by conflicts, mutual suspicion and economic decadence may be idealistic (Makgotho 2002: 1). Even granting the

exhibition of commitments by member states to unite, there still remain critical issues to be addressed. There are, for example, the vast disparities in economic performance and income levels among African states. Such differences are certain to trigger other auxiliary and indeed undesirable developments, including migration from weaker economies to the more affluent countries. Moreover, in the midst of troubling economies marked by escalating external debts, it is unclear how member states will meet their financial obligations to the AU. Similar questions also include the extent to which the AU will be able to prevent conflicts and promote good governance on the continent. These are compelling questions that may be sources of pessimism about the ability of the AU to chart a completely new direction from the OAU as far as the international relations of the African states are concerned. Against this background it may be surmised that the AU may make only minimal impact, if any, on the continent's foreign policies. Since the receipt of foreign aid remains a critical driving force of foreign policies, and since the AU may not be an alternative source of economic assistance for the continent, the former will be unlikely to reverse the current donor-oriented foreign policies of African states.

Conclusion

Clearly, the abatement of the Cold War has brought new anxieties for developing regions, including Africa. Developments in the wake of unipolarism, including economic crisis and the general developmental challenges, have elevated the search for foreign aid as a critical driving force in foreign policies. The paper notes that the dominant factors injecting high aid contents into the foreign policies of the continent are both external and internal. The external factors include marginalisation and globalisation, which are augmented by a myriad of internal factors such as debt, SAPs, HIV/AIDS, conflicts and the general human insecurity on the continent.

Nevertheless, the aid-driven foreign policies and donor-oriented posture of African states have spawned serious implications for the continent's foreign policies and international diplomacy in general. Among the many consequences, the high aid content in foreign policies has somewhat accelerated the marginalisation of foreign

ministries in foreign policy making and concomitantly brought
into centre-stage finance ministries and central or reserve banks. In
addition, the aid-driven thrust of foreign policy has introduced new
extra-African actors, namely the international financial institutions
(IFIs) into the foreign policy dynamic of the continent, in the process
not only undermining the economic sovereignty of the continent,
but also truncating Africa's efforts towards regionalism. So severe
are these consequences that neither NEPAD nor the AU, which are
expected to lead Africa out of its current quagmires, will be able
to immediately mitigate them. It has been argued that in the light
of a confluence of factors, these new continental projects will be
less able to catalyse fundamental changes in the content of Africa's
foreign policies with the North. Rather, NEPAD in particular will
predictably accentuate the continent's dependence on the North
for aid. Although theoretically a partnership project, NEPAD may
emphasise more partnerships with the North rather than intra-
African partnerships thereby undercutting the objectives of the AU.
But above all, such vertical rather than horizontal partnerships are
likely to be accelerated by NEPAD, and along with the slow recovery
of the continent will most likely ensure that the quest for aid as a
driving force in foreign policy remains unchanged.

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