
African Foreign Policies

POWER AND PROCESS

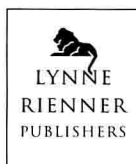
edited by
Gilbert M. Khadiagala and Terrence Lyons

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BOULDER
LONDON

Published in the United States of America in 2001 by
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
1800 30th Street, Boulder, Colorado 80301
www.rienner.com

and in the United Kingdom by
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

African foreign policies : power and process / edited by Gilbert M. Khadiagala
and Terrence Lyons.

p. cm. — (SAIS African studies library)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-55587-990-X (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN 1-55587-966-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Africa—Foreign relations—1960— 2. Geopolitics—Africa. 3. Africa—
Strategic aspects. I. Khadiagala, Gilbert M. II. Lyons, Terrence. III. SAIS
African studies library (Boulder, Colo.)

DT30.5.A35587 2001

327.6—dc21

2001019071

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book
is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the United States of America

Ⓢ The paper used in this publication meets the requirements
of the American National Standard for Permanence of
Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984.

5 4 3 2 1

AFRICAN
FOREIGN POLICIES

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I. William Zartman, General Editor

Acknowledgments

This book grew out of a SAIS African Studies Conference, an annual event that brings together scholars and policymakers from Africa, Europe, and North America to debate significant African issues. As these conferences have become one of the key sources in the production and collation of knowledge about Africa, they have benefited immensely from the contributions and critiques of many people who take their time to attend every year. We wish to thank the participants and look forward to their continued support. We also want to thank our students at SAIS who generously make the effort to ensure the success of the conferences.

A number of scholars who participated in the conference on which this book is based are not included in the book. We particularly want to acknowledge the contributions of Korwa Adar, Ibrahim Gambari, Okechukwu Iheduru, Makumi Mwangi, and Thandika Nkiwane. Julius Mutwol kindly agreed to work on the index. Finally, we are indebted to Theresa Simmons for her organizational skills that brought the conference and the book to fruition.

—*G. M. K.*

—*T. L.*

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Foreign Policy Making in Africa: An Introduction

Gilbert M. Khadiagala & Terrence Lyons

Studies of African foreign policy seek to shed light on actors, contexts, and outcomes. Foreign policy makers attempt to reconcile domestic interests with external circumstances, taking account of the available means, resources, and institutions for doing so. Important to understanding foreign policy are specific domestic and external contexts and the interaction between these two environments. As major players in foreign policy, elites operate within institutions that continually constrain them, but oftentimes, these policymakers can work around such limits and manage the tensions between domestic and international society. Outcomes are interesting because they answer far-reaching questions about how elites achieve their foreign policy goals, specifically how they balance means and objectives. Despite the postcolonial conundrum of multiple motives and meager means, African elites have treated foreign policy as a way for nation-states to become effective participants and claimants in the international arena.

The focus on actors and contexts, on the sources and sites of policy formulation and implementation, reveals the institutional bases of actors and their links to each other and society as a whole. In studies of decisionmaking in Africa, most scholars have concentrated on the cultural and organizational contexts of conception and execution of policy in light of domestic and international resources. These studies have highlighted that decisions are outcomes of a wide array of variables ranging

from the nature of leadership, ideology, modes of domestic mobilization, organizational resources, and the impediments and opportunities that emanate from the external environment.

African foreign policy has been essentially a matter of deliberate actions by elites. Limited by a dearth of resources and competing domestic concerns of nation and state building, African elites, for the most part, have chosen to participate in external realms. After independence, foreign policy makers sought to resolve the choice (and oftentimes trade-offs) between national and continental identity, sovereignty and supranationalism, and differentiation and integration. Continental identity, supranationalism, and integration in various forms proceeded from the desire to unite disparate geographic units, to pool resources in concerted action, and to increase the leverage of the continent as a whole in the global and regional affairs of new African states. In contrast, through sovereignty, national identity, and differentiation, African states sought to maximize individual political autonomy, strengthen territorial borders, and guarantee unilateral advantages from privileged relations with external actors. Thus the competing choices and practices of nationalism and Pan-Africanism have coexisted, though uneasily, in African foreign policy, a testimony to the success of elites in straddling these broad concerns.

In this book we explore contemporary trajectories in African foreign policy, building on new and old themes. We are interested in explaining the impact of the seismic changes of the 1990s on foreign policy actions in Africa's major regions. A diverse body of work has over the years analyzed the consequences of the post-Cold War global order on African domestic political and economic structures. Our authors broaden this research by focusing on some of the salient actors and issues that animate foreign policy. A focus on the intersection of African domestic and international politics provides insight into the challenges and uncertainties of the 1990s and beyond. We analyze decisionmakers, their capabilities and goals, in an effort to understand the continuities and transformations in foreign policy behavioral and structural contexts.

Our primary focus is on foreign policy making in regional contexts, since they are arenas for dense patterns of common and conflicting interests with wider implications for multiple actors. For a majority of weak African states, regions are sources of authoritative foreign policies, places where power is displayed and exerted. They are also the closest and generally most salient threat to regime survival,

thereby warranting particular attention. Through regional prisms we are able to illuminate the persistence of policy preoccupations such as economic integration and the emergence of such new ones as intervention and peacebuilding.

■ PAST THEMES IN AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY

The dominant approaches to analyzing African foreign policy proceed from recognition of the severe constraints on the freedom of actors. In the 1960s, analysts emphasized that African decisionmakers were constrained by the need to consolidate power and meet socioeconomic demands at home. In addition to the fact that African elites had only tenuous control over the postcolonial states, external actors, particularly the former colonial powers, retained considerable influence over most facets of African life. This influence was partly why anticolonialism and the opposition to external intrusion formed significant aspects of Africa's foreign policy behavior. As discussed by P. B. Harris, African foreign policy in the formative decade was a product of distinct fears of exploitation from both the West and East and the need to reduce the penetration of the Cold War into emergent Africa.¹ The goals of preempting intrusive outsiders and solidifying Africa's identity led to the construction of norms of diplomatic behavior and regional institutions.

In subsequent decades, African elites continued to labor under what Clapham aptly described as the constraints of "poverty, disunity, domestic expectations and external penetration."² Political economy analyses in the 1970s and 1980s proposed a structural perspective on African elite constraints that concentrated on the pervasive influence of global economic and military asymmetries. These analyses identified structures of dependence, penetration, and subordination that influenced African foreign policy making. As McGowan and Gottwald pointed out: "Within a context of powerlessness and dependence, character and ideas alone cannot overcome a passive-subordinate role in international affairs."³

Constraints defined national interests and how elites articulated them in the external world. Limited resources confined African foreign policy largely to regional and continental contexts, the spheres of the most intense diplomatic efforts and institution building. When elites articulated national interests beyond the continent, they did so

to win prestige, establish a presence in the proliferating international institutions, and forge strategic alliances with other global underdogs in an effort to extract resources from dominant power blocs. International institutions, in turn, reinforced the norms of noninterference in the domestic affairs of African states and support for juridical sovereignty.⁴ In addition, some African leaders, such as Haile Selassie and Kwame Nkrumah, tried to translate an international profile into political or economic resources that would serve domestic purposes.

To overcome their inherent weaknesses, African states also constructed their own continental and regional institutions. Building alliances is a well-tested strategy for weak states in search of security; hence African states banded together into blocs that would enhance their leverage in world affairs. These institutions also became vital in solving problems collectively and in the quest for economic integration. As the most important institution, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established to give meaning to Africa's collective action in matters of internal economic development and liberation from colonial regimes in southern Africa. Over time, as some states strove for preeminence in intra-African relations, the OAU emerged as a forum for leadership competition.

Contests for leadership at regional and continental levels were inextricably tied to variations in national capabilities and ideological resources. Despite Africa's weak global position, internal differences in resources engendered variations in the degree of independent foreign policy action. Nigeria's role in the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 demonstrated the links between economic capabilities and leadership, a trend that has remained constant despite dramatic shifts in Nigeria's political landscape. The collapse of the East African Community in the 1970s was in part due to unresolved competition for leadership among three more equally matched states—Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Elites also tried to mobilize ideas and symbols to compensate for economic weaknesses. Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere are examples, particularly in their ability to usurp ideological resources for purposes of African integration and unity. Under Nkrumah, Ghana assumed the leadership in continental institution building in the 1960s. Nyerere demonstrated similar organizational skills by spearheading Tanzania's leadership of southern African liberation in the 1970s and 1980s. Unlike economic leadership, as in the case of Nigeria and its enduring role as a regional hegemon, ideological leadership adhered to specific personalities.

African foreign policy decisionmaking has always been the province of leading personalities. Foreign policy as the prerogative of presidents and prime ministers dovetailed with the postcolonial patterns of domestic power consolidation. In environments where the structures of participation and contestation, particularly political parties and legislatures, declined appreciably, the charismatic leader became the source, site, and embodiment of foreign policy. Weak and manipulatable bureaucratic structures compounded the lack of effective representative institutions, affording ample opportunities for individual leaders to dabble in their countries' external affairs. Power centralization coincided with the pervasive belief that controlling the complexities of the external arena entailed unanimity of purpose, which could be guaranteed only by strong executives. From this exalted vantage point, foreign policy making emerged as a tool for leaders to both disarm their domestic opponents and compensate for unpopular domestic policies.

The behavioral patterns in inter-African relations and organizations reinforced the predominance of presidents as foreign policy makers. Through summits and other high-level meetings, continental and regional organizations nurtured the perception of foreign policy as a conclave of the mighty. The tendency of leaders to dominate decisions on momentous issues such as economic cooperation and mediation of conflicts limited the roles of opposing institutions. As Zartman observed:

Specific, even minute, decisions may be made by the president whose prestige in Africa and experience in dealing with other leaders gives him a special competence in inter-African relations. His anger and his ardor, his whims and his convictions, may become the mood of his country's policy, and his friendships and acquaintances mark its limits. . . . Within this pattern of relations and decisions, the role and influence of all other groups and institutions work through the president and must be seen as modifications of the rule of centralized personalized power.⁵

Throughout the formative decades of African independence, the relative security of states and measurable levels of economic prosperity formed the most tangible outcomes of foreign policy. Before the lost economic decade of the 1980s, for instance, there was a meaningful and reciprocal engagement between Africa and international economic institutions that jump-started development efforts. The benefits of economic prosperity justified Africa's participation

in a wide array of regional and international institutions and blunted some of the edges of powerlessness. Furthermore, broad-based African diplomatic practices fostered the evolution of institutions for capacity building and identity formation in political and security areas.

■ NEW TRENDS IN AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Africa underwent a far-reaching transformation in the 1990s. As Clapham stated, “The post-colonial era in Africa is now, and only now, coming to an end; and the problem confronting the continent, and those who seek to understand it, is to discern what is taking place.”⁶ The Cold War and apartheid ended, and with their departure two issues that shaped much of African foreign policy were removed. Domestically, continued economic crisis and the collapse of the neopatrimonial postcolonial state—and, in response, a surge in pressures for reform—shifted political calculations. These international and domestic transformations altered the topography of power and institutional arrangements across the continent and, hence, the context in which foreign policy decisions were made. In some cases, African leaders responded with strained and fragile efforts to reform their economies and political systems; in others, the pressures led to state collapse. Many states fall somewhere between these two extremes with the future still in the balance.

The Cold War never explained the sources of foreign policy on the continent, but the willingness of the two superpowers to provide assistance to states regarded as important to their global strategies allowed a number of African leaders to hold on to power. International financial institutions similarly bolstered the prospects of many neopatrimonial regimes on the continent. In some cases, client regimes fell soon after Cold War patronage stopped. It is notable, for example, that among the six top recipients of U.S. aid during the Cold War, five (Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, and Zaire) suffered from severe conflict during the 1990s; the sixth (Kenya) faced increasing domestic pressures for political liberalization.⁷ The loss of patronage and diplomatic support from the Soviet Union altered the prospects for governments in Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique and the strategies of liberation forces in Namibia and South Africa. At the same time the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank imposed structural adjustment policies on African states weakened by debt, economic decay, and corruption.

In part in response to the demonstrated inability of the state to respond to the economic crisis and in part the result of international pressures, a number of African states held elections in a bid to construct new domestic and international sources of legitimacy. In some cases (Kenya, Cameroon, Gabon, Togo) these elections were manipulated to keep incumbents in power, but in others (Benin, Mali, Namibia, Malawi, and most notably South Africa) leadership changed as a result of popular participation.⁸ These experiments with democracy have created a new set of institutions such as political parties, legislatures, and increasingly independent press and advocacy groups that have the potential to alter the ways by which African foreign policies are made and implemented.

Whereas some states faced the new challenges resulting from reform or other processes, others collapsed when confronted with the stark choices forced upon them from both above and below.⁹ The UN, the major powers, and African states have struggled to develop effective mechanisms to respond to change. The early promise of multilateral intervention that convinced the United States and the UN to send troops to Somalia faded in the face of local opposition. The international community disengaged from Rwanda once genocide began and left the difficult tasks of developing effective peace processes in places like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Lesotho, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burundi to weak African regional organizations. More ominously for vulnerable African states, the norm of noninterference in a sovereign state's internal affairs—one of the signature elements of the African regional order—lost its credibility as neighbors in much of central and West Africa broke away from that norm.

African foreign policy at the beginning of the twenty-first century is still dominated by overarching constraints on the survival of weak states. The imperatives of state survival, Clapham notes, force elites to use foreign policy to garner political and economic resources from the external environment.¹⁰ Whether made singly or collectively, foreign policy reflects the continual attempts by elites to manage threats to domestic security and insulate their decision-making from untoward external manipulation. Contemporary African elites, like their predecessors, are preoccupied with political stability, legitimacy, and economic security, issues whose importance seems to increase rather than diminish.

Continuities in structural weaknesses, however, compete in importance with marked changes in actors, issues, institutions, and strategies

for African foreign policy. The bulk of the postcolonial independence leaders have exited the scene, and new actors have emerged, promising to handle old constraints differently, innovating where their predecessors stumbled, and learning to appreciate the limits of their capabilities. They are reshaping institutions and alliance patterns to meet new challenges in the face of remarkable changes in domestic and external contexts. In style and substance, new actors are trying to lend a different flavor to policymaking by mobilizing diverse constituencies and remaking rules.

The demise of apartheid, and the shift of South Africa from pariah to potential hegemon, has transformed regional relations in southern Africa, as detailed in Chapter 7 by Gilbert Khadiagala. In East and central Africa, leadership changes have occasioned what is billed as a “new generation of African leaders,” particularly Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea, and Paul Kagame of Rwanda. Seeking to inject a new pragmatism in decisionmaking, these leaders have had a major imprint on their domestic and regional environments. René Lemarchand shows in Chapter 5 that although the cohesion of the new leadership was always exaggerated, the core of this group is making considerable changes to international relations in the Great Lakes region. John Clark’s chapter (4) points to the pattern of personal alliances in the foreign policy of central Africa, which thrives on generational and family links. Ruth Iyob points out in Chapter 6 that contemporary leaders in the Horn of Africa operate in a context where the past, particularly as it shapes myths and traditions of statehood, continues to shape foreign policy outlooks. The allure of new leaders may be on the wane in light of the resurgence of previous behavioral patterns and practices, most notably the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, raising questions about the institutional sturdiness of the African renaissance.

No less important than individual policymakers is the reinvigoration of decisionmaking institutions. The wave of transitions to democracy in the 1990s has expanded the policy roles played by parliaments, interest groups, civic organizations, and the mass media. Peter Schraeder’s contribution (Chapter 3) details the multifaceted roles of these institutions in Francophone West Africa. Denis Venter, in Chapter 8, enumerates the many organizations coalescing about South Africa’s foreign policy. His analysis demonstrates the enormity of building a coherent foreign policy in a newly democratic state

amid conflicting interests and perspectives. In most of Africa, the leaderships face scrutiny from independent media, policy analysts, and advocacy groups in national and regional institutions. As it ceases to be the *domaine réservé* of the head of state, the domestic context of African foreign policy making takes on an increasingly complex character, increasingly determined by the interaction of a broad range of actors, institutions, and norms.

The interplay between economic functionalism and new sources of political disintegration at regional levels is a key issue in contemporary African foreign policy. Regional organizations in the 1990s increasingly assumed more assertive security roles to deal with the specter of civil conflicts. The decision to establish the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Management, Prevention, and Resolution in 1993 spawned diverse efforts by various states to preempt more virulent forms of nation-building and state-making conflicts. Clement Adibe's Chapter 2 on Anglophone West Africa, Khadiagala and Venter on southern Africa, and Iyob on the Horn demonstrate the role of regional hegemony Nigeria, South Africa, and (potentially) Ethiopia in steering ECOWAS, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) across the uncertain terrain of intervention, security coordination, and peacebuilding. These roles are new and largely untested, but they underscore an interesting trend of revising the practices of sovereign independence toward notions of collective responsibility.¹¹

African regions also have retained their infrastructural bases for experiments with economic coordination. The renewed emphasis on regional economic integration is part of a worldwide trend to promote trade and investments in geographical zones. Although economic integration slowed considerably in the 1980s, African states now see it as one antidote to global economic marginalization. Yet these efforts remain tentative, stymied like before by fragile political foundations, the tensions between differentiation and integration, and the inability of states to cede meaningful responsibility to regional organizations.

As foreign policy elites try to restructure institutions for conflict prevention and economic development, there are other threats lurking in regional environments that thus far defy Africa's limited resources. Ethnic and communal conflicts are boiling across the ever-porous African borders, spreading dangers of refugees, arms, disease, and environmental degradation. Although not entirely new, these threats