Towards Concert in Africa: Seeking Progress and Power through Cohesion and Unity

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Abstract: Economic development, power distribution, and security consolidation can be promoted collectively by states. Collective actions are predicated on acquiring strength through unity. A number of formal and informal institutional arrangements exist to advance broad and narrow goals. One of these is concert. The classical notion of concert is related to the balance of power that existed in Europe from the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. A more contemporary notion of concert goes beyond power balancing, as it seeks to address economic, environmental, legal, military, political, trade, and socio-cultural issues. The African continent is not seeking an ideal form of multi-polar balance of power but rather is aiming to join forces to tackle the most pressing concerns of its societies: conflict, dictatorship, hunger, illiteracy, integration, poverty, public health, resource extraction, and water scarcity. The heterogeneous landscape of influence and power within the African Union creates two sets of states: core and peripheral. The most dominant states in the core advance progressive policy initiatives that uphold their national interests, while the remaining periphery follows as they stand to benefit from the spillover effects generated. Concert provides an effective platform for African states to assess, agree, and adopt coordinated positions on matters of common interests that can have national, regional, and international impacts. This essay argues that cohesive agreements on adjustments, designs, and implementations of tactics, plans, and strategies are strengthened by multilateral communication of opinions, proposals, and views under concert.

Introduction

Africa is becoming steadily more central to America, Asia, and Europe, as well as to the rest of the world. The African continent is now playing an increasingly significant role in supplying energy (coal, gas, and oil), preventing the spread of religious radicalism and terrorism, hosting an impressive wave of democratization, inserting its commodity products more successfully in the world economy, and halting the devastation of HIV/AIDS. The most visible indication of Africa's growing importance in global affairs is reflected in the intensifying competition for resources. This competition is among China, Europe, Russia, the United States, and other emerging powers.[1] They aim to secure unimpeded access to African natural resources and influence in a region that is beaming with latent potential.

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http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v12/v12i4a4.pdf

ISSN: 2152-2448

Today, Africa's environment is more competitive. The presence of new and more assertive players is indicating a rapid escalation in economic engagements. The quest for Africa's energy and other natural resources is driving some of the most salient features of energy and foreign policies of emerging market economies.[2] These new realities are challenging classical paradigms of economic development and the resulting policy designs. Africa stands to benefit from this sudden attention by investing capital inflows in its future. Development experts note that one prerequisite to Africa's successful leap into the world economy is the improvement of its agricultural and commercial infrastructure. This includes irrigation, rural electrification, telecommunications, and most important of all, roads. Primary and secondary roads are needed to interconnect rural, suburban, and urban areas.[3]

As Africa becomes an important destination for great-power aid and investments, the continent warrants a number of adjustments to cope with these accretive bids. While it is urgent to pay attention to states in desperate need of help, a more comprehensive, organized approach seems the most beneficial and cost-effective. What this means is that economic development, power distribution, and security consolidation can be promoted collectively by states. These collective actions are predicated on acquiring more strength through unity.

There is indeed an urgent need to explore in detail the contemporary conditions under which states try to gain economic, continental, political, and social security through collaborative efforts. But collaborations between nation-states often carry power-wielding implications. Small and poor states fear that big and rich states will take advantage of them. In fact, according to Barnett and Duvall, two core dimensions—the kinds of social relation through which power works and the specificity of the social relation through which power's effects are produced—generate a fourfold taxonomy of power: compulsory, institutional, productive, and structural.[4] All these power categories seem to be at play in African affairs.

The search for power is the force that moves countries from rhetoric to action, that is, from strategies to tangible activities. When power is aggregated it can be used as a tool to bargain productively in the international arena. In the G7 and G20 summits, power wielded individually (by the US) or collectively (by the EU member states) sets the agenda on core and peripheral issues that are addressed as priority.[5] For instance, for decades after the Second World War issues of human rights, women's rights, and children's rights never made it on the UN agenda and thus were never discussed or even deemed worthy of any sort of governance notions. Social forces in rich countries facilitated their inclusion. Agendas enable some actors to further their interests and ideals, to exercise control over others, and to limit the abilities of actors to engage in effective collective actions.

World leaders must now pause and reflect on how Africa has become a region of growing vital importance to various national interests. As competition turns aggressive and bitter among great-powers vying for control of Africa's wealth, the international community will see African issues more prominently displayed in agendas under global governance. Sadly, while it is true that Africa for long has been the object of humanitarian concerns, hunger stories, or a charity cause, it is counterproductive to assume that Africa is simply a basket of problems. Because Africa is the continent with the most space to catch up with other countries of the world, it emerges as the most ideal place to obtain impressive gains in economic, social, and technological spheres. The special relationships between European states and some of their former colonies with respect to international trade regime provisions will soon come under scrutiny. The nature of these relationships are intimately related to economic and political domains, whose function is anchored in granting rights and privileges to European citizens and firms. Interestingly, the most fervent globalization

advocates are looking into the institutional reforms needed at home and abroad to render further market openings for all countries a politically acceptable and sustainable alternative.

In this essay I present a forward-looking evaluation of Africa's challenges and opportunities as it inserts itself into the world economy. This, of course, will require the continent to come together as a whole so that it can be more effective and productive in its dealings with classical hegemonic powers and vibrant emerging market economies. Because lack of openness to markets is no longer a binding constraint for the global economy, it is in my opinion the lack of "policy space" that is the real obstacle for fuller world economic integration. There is no doubt that where legitimate economic and social ends are concerned, both poor and rich countries find themselves at odds with contemporary views of what is good and what is not. Africa, if it acts in concert, that is, under a coherent and coordinated approach, can boost its privileged position and comparative advantages to achieve order, peace, prosperity, security, and wellbeing for its people.

First, this essay briefly examines the origins and uses of concert. Second, it presents new approaches to concert in Africa, based on contemporary notions of collaboration. Third, it looks at the African Union, its strengths, and its weaknesses, followed by a delineation of the most salient challenges and opportunities for Africa. Lastly, reflections offer summary findings, some thoughts on the way forward, and the alternatives to bring about change.

Concert: Origins and Uses

A number of formal and informal institutional arrangements exist to advance broad and narrow goals. One of these is concert. The classical notion of concert is related to the balance of power that existed in Europe from the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Concerts, a type of institutional construct or formulation, rely on looser and more informal regulation of balancing forces among states. These arrangements, whether formal or informal, constitute a form of collective security.[6] Robert Jervis notes that concert systems have occurred three times in modern history: from 1815 to 1854, from 1919 to 1920, and from 1945 to 1946. To be sure, the last two concert instances were brief, and it has been argued that they did not become truly functional.[7] Granted, there are different conceptualizations of concert systems, some extending for shorter or longer periods according to the defining features considered by authors in their writings.

To be sure, there is an overarching feature that guides concert-type arrangements: a most basic compatibility among nation-states in a concert system is foremost among the conditions necessary for the effective and successful operation of coherent collective actions; a compatibility that is a function of the underlying interests and intentions of nation-states. It is important to underscore that concerts are hinged on the advancement of specific goals and objectives to secure strategic interests. In the past, given the multiplicity of states in the European hinterland and the recurrence of territorial contestations, concerts gained validity as tools to suppress state self-aggrandizement, advance religious beliefs (Christianity generally or more specifically Protestantism), secure entitlements on conquered lands, promote ideologies and peace, consolidate power, diversify sources of inputs, and divide territory equitably.

To this end, Charles and Clifford Kupchan, commenting on John J. Mearsheimer's critique of collective security, note that concerts are grounded on notions of "competitive, self-help balancing," while they function in a "regulated, norm-governed environment" that is based on the logic of "all against one, not each for his own." In this sense, any institutional

arrangement that is guided by the principles of regulated balancing and all against one can be categorized into the family of collective security.[8] After 1950, as economic forces started to shape political outcomes, it became evident that the international institutions that resulted from the heavily-consulted accords hammered after the Second World War were established as mechanisms to correct the mistakes of the past but not to account for the challenges and opportunities of the future. For instance, the League Covenant and the United Nations Charter do not entail automatic and binding commitments to respond to aggression with force. So, in a way, they resemble "concerts" more than collective security organizations.

Richard Rosecrance claims that under the prevailing anarchical state in which the world exists, there are merely three methods to regulate the international system or to prevent it from lapsing into chaos: (1) rule by a central coalition, (2) nuclear deterrence, and (3) the traditional balance of power. Over the last two centuries, these systems have been employed at different times to manage a growing system of states. While it is true that the classic notion of balance of power played a predominant role during most of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, it did not manage to fully bring under control the aggressive policies of great powers; it merely restrained conflicts.[9] For the most part, Western commentators have argued that concerts are "particularly well suited to orchestrating pre-aggression deterrence and the early formation of a preponderant blocking coalition" in the international system, but they also provide a readily usable platform to coordinate collective action.[10] It is quite clear from the literature that emerged during and after the Cold War that much of the discourse surrounding concerts and collective security organizations rested on the threats of nuclear wars in a bipolar world.

It would be a mistake to limit the functions of concert to threat mitigation and war dissuasion. In the 1880s, European statesmen and military leaders utilized concert to advance far more utilitarian deeds. As the wave of colonization by Europe's great powers peaked, allocations and distributions of conquered lands became a topic of heated, internecine debate. Hans Morgenthau (1973) noted, for example, that Africa was "the object of numerous treaties delimiting spheres of influence for the major colonial powers."[11] He also observed that because there was so much empty space there was always the possibility of compromise without compromising vital colonial interests.[12] Europeans managed to divide Africa by acting in concert. Fourteen European states met at the Berlin conference of 1884-1885 to start a process that was to reduce almost all of Africa to colonial status. By 1914, through a complex process of give and take, Africa had been divided arbitrarily among the European states into fifty distinct territories.[13]

This process of territorial division without the representation of affected stakeholders created an environment of doubt and mistrust in bilateral deals, as Africans were perceived as junior actors by their so-called senior and more powerful colonizers. As Uzoigwe (1988) rightly notes, for the first time in history "a concert of one continent gathered together to plan how to share out another continent without the knowledge of the latter's leaders."[14] But a much deeper goal had been planned and was being pursued. Wesserling (1988) adds that "politically speaking, the role of the Berlin Conference was not to do the partitioning itself, but to draw the attention of the world to this process and legitimize it."[15] In doing so, violent conquests and colonization, resource extraction, slavery, exploitative trade, and territorial division were channeled tactfully into mainstream affairs as natural outgrowths of acquiring power in world affairs and that responsible statesmanship was to be seen as an option, not as an obligation. In fact, in view of a practice that was "organically connected with the

balance of power," countries as different as Ethiopia and Persia were effectively and peacefully partitioned by the European great powers.[16]

All in all, the objective context-specific circumstances of the time (from 1815 to 1914) gave rise to the utilitarian and expedient outcomes of "concert designs." Then, as now, the priorities of states were different and their goals shaped the policies and instruments to attain maximum results. What the classical notion of concert tells us is that it was employed as a tool to regulate the increasingly balancing forces among powerful states that were vying for control of a vast world they saw as naive, open, rich, unconquered, and up for grabs.

New Approaches to Concert in Africa

A more contemporary notion of concert goes beyond power balancing, as it seeks to address economic, environmental, legal, military, political, trade, and socio-cultural issues. The argument presented in this essay is that the African continent is not seeking an ideal form of multi-polar balance of power but instead is aiming to join forces to tackle the most pressing concerns of its societies: conflict, dictatorship, hunger, illiteracy, integration, poverty, public health, resource extraction, and water scarcity, among others. It is widely recognized throughout the world that poor and stagnant Africa is largely dependent on primary commodity exports that, in combination with manacling traps such as excessive dependence on economic assistance, limited access to credit and capital markets, extreme environmental degradation, widespread corruption, poor governance, capital flight, poor education systems, disadvantageous disease ecology, lack of public health care, wars, and poor primary and secondary infrastructures keep African states stuck at the bottom of the development spectrum. But, to be clear, not all African nations are lagging behind. Rich countries argue that an increasingly impoverished African block of about seven hundred million people will be increasingly difficult for affluent yet sensitive societies to tolerate.[17]

For Africa to rise out of poverty and stagnation it must work very hard at economic, legal, and political integration. Dani Rodrik(2007) noted that "in the absence of legal and political integration" that is similar in many ways to the ones achieved by the US and currently being constructed by the EU, "transaction costs condemn the global economy to a patchwork of national economies."[18] In terms of Africa, these poorly integrated national economies turn out to be fragile, weak, and unable to compete successfully in regional and international markets because they are missing fundamental drivers and underpinnings. The low incomes and slow growth that the African continent continues to experience is understood by many locals as more poverty and hopelessness. If this situation proceeds unchecked, it is to be expected that the poorest African countries will form an assemblage of discontent, misery, and hunger. The longer the problems of Africa are left unaddressed, the worse they will become. Admittedly, Africans are well-known for their enterprising resilience, and one could say that they have grown accustomed to conflict, isolation, and poverty, but this is no good reason to dismiss the opportunities at hand to lay a better path.[19]

By taking advantage of the privileged position Africa has right now as the preferred destination for international investors (i.e. foreign gas, oil, and mineral companies) and foreign countries (i.e. China, India, Russia, and others), as well as the increased attention it is getting from the international community as it gets its voice heard on the global stage (i.e. seeking aid in mid-2011 to combat a severe drought causing famine in the Horn of Africa), it can collectively achieve order, peace, prosperity, security, and wellbeing. These collective actions need to be initiated by actors with enough influence and power. In this regard, the

heterogeneous landscape of influence and power within the African continent creates two sets of states: core and peripheral. The most dominant states in the core advance progressive policy initiatives that uphold their national interests, while the remaining periphery follows as they stands to benefit from the spillover effects generated.

How does this interstate dynamic work out? If preponderant African powers adopt a benevolent, comprehensive strategy and create a sort of negotiated regional order based on legitimate influence and management, the remaining lesser states will follow the leaders rather than balance against them. Moreover, the most dominant states in the core need to fully acknowledge that successful growth strategies are based on making the best of what they have, not on wishing they had what they lack. African leaders must be made aware that the jurisdictional discontinuities implicit in tightfisted sovereignties impose high transaction costs on sub-regional, regional, and international commerce and trade that remain in place long after conventional barriers in the form of import duties are removed. I thereby argue that new approaches to concert in Africa provides an effective platform for African states to assess, agree, and adopt coordinated positions on matters of common interests that can have local, national, regional, and international impacts. To achieve this end, international organizations have a very important role to play. They are able to use their expert, moral, delegated, and rational-legal authority as a resource to compel states and non-state actors to modulate their behaviors.[20] With foreign assistance and coherent advice, American, Asian, and European senior government officials could start meeting with top African politicians to start marshalling changes in aid and trade policy, transparency, military interventions, good governance, rapid integration, and international coordination.

International coordination is a key factor to get right from the very start of the process given that international institutions, formal and informal, are often understood to be at the heart of global governance. Relations of cooperation and coordination, practices of international law, and the processes of collective action that they entail are effected in and through established and recognized institutions. The involvement of international and continental institutions in the coordinative processes of development and growth ensure that it is one characterized by a certain (variable) degree of fairness and justice. This is especially the case where there are substantial economic resources at stake that create powerful incentives for despotic control. This search for distributive equitability of benefits seems to predominate when states and institutions interact within a framework of checks and balances. This is desirable so that no single actor, or elite group, profits at the expense of others. Edward Carr argues that rare is the institution that is completely dominated by one actor. Instead, it is much more likely that institutions have some independence from specific resource-laden actors.[21]

In the presence of more than fifty states, the African continent is presented with the monumental task of individual coordination with countries and collective coordination with international institutions and foreign countries. At a continental level, Africa's best shot at devising sustainable and workable solutions through interstate intercourse is to tactically leverage the naturally-occurring distribution between core and peripheral states through strategic alliances or partnerships. Richard Little (2007) argued that states are seen to be participating in a "game" where the goal is to maintain equilibrium with an even distribution of power between two competing sets of alliances.[22] In fact, even Hans Morgenthau reduces interstate balance of power to a tip-toed game of alliances and partnerships.[23] In this regard, Jeremy Black (1990) also argued that alliances were the most common way that rulers sought to achieve their economic, political, and social goals.[24]

In the end, the heads of African states either individually or collectively will have to identify the set of conditions that create the policy space for countries or groups of countries to handle the most pressing problems that afflict their societies. For instance, some of the less poverty-stricken states may find themselves in creative struggles of fine-tuning economic restructuring and diversification to make the best of globalization forces, whereas others may spend the majority of time dealing with water scarcity, resource extractions, or domestic rebellions. The most disadvantaged countries (e.g. Chad, Congo, Somalia, etc.) may in fact require binding, long-term assistance commitments by international and continental bodies to progressively deal with hunger, poverty, health, illiteracy, dictatorships, and conflicts.

The African Union: Strengths and Weaknesses

Established on 9 July 2002, the African Union (AU) consists of fifty-three sovereign African nation-states, with a view, among others, to accelerating the process of integration in the continent to enable it to play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic, and political problems.[25] The AU is headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital. It is currently headed by Jean Ping, former foreign minister of Gabon.[26] Every year the AU holds a summit. In this gathering the leaders of African countries set out an "African Agenda" for the year ahead. Much of the recent work has been geared toward two aims. The first is to integrate Africa into the world economy. The second is to strengthen its voice on the global stage. The discourse among African states focuses on conflict resolution, disease eradication, economic integration, and democratization.

Unlike its much-criticized predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU)—which generally turned a blind eye to dictatorship, genocide, and tyranny—the AU is a more assertive, accountable, confident, and rigorous body. In its public statements it says it is determined to promote democracy, integration, transformation, transparency, and openness. Overall, the AU's main mission as a member-based body is to attain three essential ends: economic growth, power consolidation, and peaceful security. These ends coincide with economic, political, and social spheres.

In the economic sphere, the AU is seeking to achieve progress towards creating customs unions, regional development action plans, and in persuading businesspeople to assist in the design of coherent policies. The AU, through its merits, has won a stronger voice at meetings of the G20. Also, it has established more disciplined rapprochement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), so that these bodies take Africa's concerns and issues much more seriously.[27] In terms of attracting attention and interest of foreign countries and international investors it is worth noting that in 2009, the AU, as a sum of its member states, had a gross domestic product (GDP) at purchasing power parity (PPP) of US$2.2 trillion, up from US$1.5 trillion in 2003. These figures demonstrate that the potential for development, growth, and progress in Africa is tremendous, and bidders know this.

In relation to power consolidation, the AU has exerted significant political pressures to overturn coups in Mauritania and Togo. Additionally, it played a decisive role in suspending Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, and Niger for undemocratic behavior. The AU is also "trying" to set a regional and international precedent for responsible statesmanship. For some time now it has been attempting legally to prosecute Hissène Habré, a former Chadian dictator, for mass murder. The AU is working closely with the International Court of Justice.

With regard to peace and security, the AU oversees 16,000 troops that are partitioned into two major tasks. The first 8,000 are fighting the opposition Islamic Courts Union forces in Somalia. And the other 8,000 are serving in a joint AU-UN force in Sudan's western region of Darfur. In the past, AU forces have militarily intervened to impose order in Burundi and reverse a coup in the Comoro Islands. These actions have added clout to the AU as a responsible body that delivers on its promises. This is a good start, but much more needs to be done.

All the above looks and sounds good. However, for all the accomplishments it has so far attained, the AU still presents a number of glaring inconsistencies. For instance, its planned parliament, banks, and judiciary hardly exist, an oversight mechanism designed to improve governance among African states has lost interest and momentum, and in some instances it takes lukewarm approaches rather than bold actions to resolve issues. To add insult to injury, the AU's formally submitted demand for US$70 billion in cash compensation from high-income Western countries for the ravages of climate change has yet to materialize. These loose ends continue to attract criticism in relation to poor governance. In other quarters there are rising concerns that the more affluent African states may sequester the AU to advance their (or others) specific interests at the expense of the more disadvantaged, conflict-afflicted countries. Those examining concrete institutions have shown how evolving rules and decision-making procedures can shape outcomes in ways that favor some groups over others. These effects can operate over time and at a distance, and often in ways that were not intended or anticipated by the architects of the institutions.[28]

For instance, and on an admittedly broader outlook, John Boli and George Thomas argue that there are regional and world authority structures, with sets of fundamental principles that constitute who are the actors of regional and world politics. These authority structures determine their identities, their expressive purposes, and their differential capacities. As a consequence, they posit that the institutionalization of regional and world authority structures that are organized around rational-legal values increasingly privileges the voices of international organizations.[29] If agreed, the strength of concert in Africa as a regional authority could counterweigh this structural arrangement of world authority. So, which weakness is at the heart of AU problems? Simply put, the biggest problem of the AU is a common one for the majority of poverty-laden regions: money. The AU budget for 2011 is US$260 million. This is minuscule compared to the US$1.8 billion the UN spends just on its contribution to the Darfur peacekeeping mission.[30] In fact, about 40 percent of the total AU budget is paid by African countries, with the remaining 60 percent contributed by the People's Republic of China, the European Union, and the United States of America.

Challenges and Opportunities in Africa

As with any other continent, Africa is vulnerable to challenges and welcoming to opportunities. Yet, unlike any other continent, because of its position in the far back of the development spectrum, it is especially susceptible to market shocks. For instance, in 2008, the continent experienced three major global shocks: a financial meltdown and the resulting worldwide recession, a surge in world oil prices, and a steep increase in food prices. Faced with this scenario, Africa was expected to have serious difficulties coping. However, timely foreign assistance and the combination of coherent domestic policies enabled most countries to withstand these shocks and to return slowly to a path of self-sustaining growth.[31] As Africa copes with its own socioeconomic and political problems it is also having to

acknowledge that the global challenges of climatic change, energy and food insecurity, weapons proliferation, hegemonic contestation, deepening regionalism, international terrorism, religious radicalism, and novel transboundary diseases can and do have direct and indirect effects on the operationalization of its short, medium, and long-term plans.

Before proceeding any further, it is critical to examine one factor that emerges as the most challenging one in the African continent: war. Africa has been one of the most violent parts of the world since 1989.[32] In part, as with the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and the Rwandan invasion of Congo, there has been an interstate nature for these conflicts, but also much of it was within states. Oftentimes, combatants were not states but ethnic groups.[33] In relation to ethnic groups, Charles Onyango-Obbo (2010) claims that tribalism is good for democracy because it ensures that no single group can take over the entire political decision-making process. He finds that it is a kind of "naturally occurring mechanism of checks and balances on excessive power." The problem, however, is that tribalism can make for violent elections as members of ethnic groups fight one another ahead of voting, leaving people either dead or injured, just as it occurred in Guinea's 2010 presidential election.[34]

The multiple influences of ethnic groups on wars or the importance of tribalism in democratization falls outside the scope of this essay. What really does matter about armed conflicts is that they are disruptive to numerous societies and states. The totality of war in Africa is underlined by the large-scale use of child soldiers, for example by insurrectionary movements in Sudan and Uganda or by warlords in Liberia. The ripple effects of wars are not only profound but also long-term, usually cutting across numerous aspects of social and institutional realms, from education to public health, and also from growth to development.

Through this prism, scholars and experts have tried to identify which are the most significant drivers of armed conflict in Africa in the hope that these drivers could be more pointedly addressed by statesmen. One of the most important findings is that resource rents promote wars.[35] Key funding of guerrilla operations and rebellious uprisings are frequently supplied by the sale of precious raw materials that have high value in international markets (e.g. diamonds). In the 1990s, the Angolan civil war was largely supported on the government side by the sale of oil and mining rights. The sale of diamonds was also important in the armed conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa in the 2000s.[36]

Aside from wars, there is also poverty and hunger. But for the West, right next to deleterious wars come terrorist threats. For instance, on August 7, 1998, two massive bombs exploded outside of the US embassies in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, killing 224 people.[37] More recently, on July 2010 in Kampala, Uganda, several suicide bombings were carried out around crowds watching the World Cup. These attacks, usually directed against Americans and Europeans, have promoted Africa's image as a cradle for terror and chaos. In response, both the Bush and Obama administrations designated the greater Horn of Africa and selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa as front-line spots in US global war against terrorism. Similarly, much effort and resources have been allocated to dismantling al-Qaeda infrastructures and its budding recruiting programs.

To some degree, poverty and lack of labor opportunities facilitate radicalization of youths, or, less dramatically, their departure to the population hubs were opportunities are more abundant (e.g. Central Americans to the US or Africans to the EU). For instance, Jeremy Black (2008) noted that the sight of Africans in dingy boats in the open sea being intercepted by the Spanish or French Navy in an attempt to keep them away from accessing the EU economy invites attention to the varied relationships between globalization, attractive living standards, and movement of illegal immigrant workers.[38] These waves of

illegal immigrants prompt special interest groups (i.e. some churches and conservative civil society organizations) to put heavier political pressures on their representatives and legislatures to protect citizenries from what these groups perceive as "imminent threats."

A lack of good governance is an overarching issue arising from Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Libya, Togo, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe signaling a major problem throughout the African continent. But this is a broad issue that warrants deeper examination. The particular situations in these countries show a very specific type of governance problem: the inability and unwillingness to accommodate adequately the opinions and voices of their citizenries. At its core, the tenets of good governance include accountability, an effective judicial system and participatory oversight, respect of electoral processes, transparency, and upholding the rule of law. In terms of governance, there are two main challenges for African leaders individually and for the AU collectively. The first is to find ways to address the reluctance of statesmen to give up their posts after free and fair elections have taken place. The second is to conceive proactive ideas or policy instruments for improving governance monitors for Africa as it moves forward in a process of instilling responsible statesmanship.[39]

On behalf of the continent, the AU must find pressure points and ways to deal with autocratic leaders and dictatorial regimes. As the world has witnessed in the first quarter of 2011, national, regional, and international pressures are mounting for countries like Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya (until Gaddafi's overthrow and violent death in October 2011), Uganda, and Zimbabwe where longstanding leaders were or are refusing to retire from office. It is exactly for this reason that imposing limits on presidential terms and increasing accountability throughout the region is instrumental in fostering better governance, and also to highlight to the world Africa's inner capacity to solve its problems. A positive and uplifting signal was sent to the world by the AU when a delegation arrived in rebel stronghold of Benghazi (Libya) after talks with the Libyan leader in Tripoli. The AU delegation presented a road map which called for an end to hostilities, diligent conveying of humanitarian aid, and dialogue between the Libyan parties. The AU was trying to lift its profile as peace broker and ultimate mediator, but its radical decision of not giving support to the Libyan rebel administration left international observers doubtful of the AU's role. Its ambivalence was seen as proof of Gaddafi's lingering influence over the African Union.

In addition to ambivalence and disregard, the AU dragged its feet and came off as undecided and confused as to how best to address and mitigate the delicate situation that was evolving in Libya. All of this happened even when the AU benefitted from financial support from Gaddafi's government. At its apex, the AU was fully trapped in the situation and almost morbidly marginalized, which, regrettably, exposed its poverty of ideas when it comes to dispute and conflict resolution. All in all, the AU failed to act as a united force and lost a chance to speak with a unified voice. Most importantly, the AU failed to take collective action and collective responsibility in this regard. The AU should learn from these mistakes.

But not everything that takes place in Africa represents a challenge, as there are plenty of opportunities, best practices, and lessons learned to build on. In recent months, the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has successfully mediated governance problems throughout the continent. Moreover, if desired, these problems could be mitigated in the future by scaling up initiatives already in place. One of these is the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The APRM is currently designed to be a self-monitoring initiative to promote good governance through objective evaluation by other African nations. So far the APRM has done little to provide timely monitoring of the political temperatures of African civil societies. However, adjusting and improving this mechanism

as the continent goes forward could start regional policy dialogues on issues that African countries would not otherwise pursue themselves.

Because the stakes are high, Africa requires sustained assistance from donors and the international community. The AU could benefit from moral support from democratic, high-income countries by joining African calls condemning repressive regimes and to advocate for principles of accountability, democracy, and human rights. As a whole, the international community has the moral weight to criticize the AU for its reluctance to condemn Gaddafi. The AU's poor judgment was seemingly more than just anti-neocolonialism, since it showed that it was acting more like the old OAU instead of a modern and progressive African Union. In parallel, African governments must attempt to honestly evaluate their populations and understand their concerns, differences, and preoccupations so that appropriate institutions and policies are designed to empower their citizens to have a representative and inclusive voice in affairs that matter to them. Leaders are urged to search internally to find effective governance solutions that work for their people.

Last but not least, since 1997, policymakers in Washington have paid unprecedented attention to Africa and its continental rebirth. At that time President Clinton unveiled the "Partnership for Growth and Opportunity in Africa" to promote greater trade and investment in the region. But the initiatives to strengthen bilateral links with Africa fall short of what is truly required. What is needed is a more comprehensive approach that integrates policy in the areas of foreign assistance, trade and investment, and debt reduction. For this to happen, high-income countries in the West are required to promote economic relations more effectively, given the opportunities that Africa's renewal offers, not only to African nations and the United States, but also the larger global community as well.[40] Moreover, given that over 77 percent of Africa's remittances come from the United States and Western Europe, it seems prudent to push for modernization of financial services in African states so that the benefits accrued overseas can be more fully disseminated among local populations.[41]

Reflections

While it is true that moving from rhetoric to action requires patience and political will, there are some steps that could redirect the momentum into more solid grounding. For example, developed countries could pass legislation to increase African access to America, Asian, and European markets. As economic recovery brings more certainty to money markets and improves the balance sheets of powerful states, some thought could be given to the creation of enterprise funds to mobilize greater American, Asian, and European private sector investments in Africa. Also, Africa can borrow examples from other countries and regions that have successfully established economic forums or bilateral trade associations in American, Asian, and European cities. This could very well serve as an initial platform to start plans for free (liberal) trade agreements with African countries or groups of countries.

Under the type of concert advanced above, a number of cohesive agreements on adjustments, designs, and implementations of tactics, plans, and strategies are strengthened by the multilateral communication of opinions, proposals, and views. The AU is the perfect forum to bring about the impetus for radical change. However, the truth is that change in African societies must predominantly come from within. In terms of statecraft, a strong African foreign policy must be rooted in domestic reforms. Also, at the moment there is a growing capacity of African leaders and institutions working to improve economic

performance and governance, to promote democracy, and to resolve conflicts that for so long have manacled the continent to poverty and bloodshed. These initiatives need backing.

As a needed complement, it is believed that America, as well as Asia and Europe, are in need of broader policy frameworks to correct economic, diplomatic, and intelligence weaknesses in the African region. A holistic approach that goes beyond the classical remit of interstate rapprochement would bind the diverse and promising initiatives set forth by major states holding stakes in relation to counterterrorism, counter proliferation, emerging infectious diseases, democratic reforms, infrastructure development, good governance, and economic reforms.[42] Regrettably, today, some of these initiatives operate in relative isolation. In fact, there is no coherent and dynamic policy arrangement guiding a route to a certain future. This is a potential area of work between the AU, the EU, China, the US, and other regional economic bodies, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

These suggestions will not end poverty in Africa, but they will raise hope within the bounds of realism. South Africa, which is the only African state belonging to G20, could use its position to spread the plans of the continent and the AU to integrate Africa into the world economy and to strengthen its voice on the global stage. Additionally, it is through this elite forum that a multiplicity of actors and processes are partially responsible for attempting to bring processes, development, human rights, and the rule of law to the non-western world. This being the case, the AU along with South Africa could present high-income countries with sets of winnable proposals that entail mutual benefits. These proposals could cut across issues and tackle concerns that are priorities for developed states (e.g. governance). In sum, South Africa can push for a "Comprehensive African Agenda" that seeks to integrate the continent into the global economy. The fact that South Africa has not done so in the past is a reflection of the lack of policy coordination. This situation can be reversed within the AU. An African concert could very well seek agreements that would help transform oppressive governmental systems that are at the root of all armed conflicts in the continent into a more open, transparent, inclusive, and democratic one. However, caution must be had in making peace dependent solely on accords because the collapse of agreements would likely lead to full-scale war and uncountable deaths that could undermine the gains so far attained.

Notes

1 For China, see Burgos and Ear 2012.
2 Burgos and Ear 2011.
3 Burgos 2010.
4 Barnett and Duvall 2005.
5 The G7 is a group of finance ministers from seven industrialized nations: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States. The G20 is a group of finance ministers and central bank governors from twenty major economies: nineteen countries plus the European Union (EU), which is represented by the President of the European Council and by the European Central Bank.
6 Elrod 1976 and also Douglas 1997.
7 Jervis 1982 and 1985.
8 Kupchan and Kupchan 1995, p. 53.
9 Rosecrance 1992.
10 Kupchan and Kupchan 1995, p. 56.

11 Morgenthau 1973, p. 179.
12 Ibid, p. 349.
13 Little 2007, p. 163.
14 Uzoigwe 1988, p. 541.
15 Wesserling 1988, p. 533.
16 Morgenthau 1973, p. 180.
17 Burgos 2010.
18 Rodrik 2007, p. 12.
19 Burgos 2010.
20 Barnett and Finnemore 2004.
21 Carr 1964.
22 Little 2007, p. 105.
23 Morgenthau 1973.
24 Black 1990, p. 197.
25 For more information, see: African Union website at http://www.au.int/en/
26 A new AU headquarters is due to open in 2012 and it is being built by the Chinese.
27 *The Economist* 2011.
28 Pierson 2000.
29 Boli and Thomas 1999.
30 Today, Africa accounts for about 70 percent of the United Nations' peacekeeping operations in countries including Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
31 Okonjo-Iweala 2009.
32 Harkavy and Neuman 2001.
33 Negash and Tronvoll 2001.
34 Onyango-Obbo 2010, p. 18.
35 Collier 2008.
36 Chua 2004.
37 Lyman and Morrison 2004.
38 Black 2008, p. 229.
39 Asmah 2011.
40 Council on Foreign Relations 1998.
41 Okonjo-Iweala 2009, p. 184.
42 Council on Foreign Relations 2006.

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