

Workshop 'Non-Western Actors in Africa: Interests, Conflicts and Agency'

Organized by the Collaborative Research Group (CRG) African Politics and International Relations

Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies

21-22 January 2021 – Online via Zoom

In order to register as an external attendant, please go to the EventBrite page of the event:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/workshop-non-western-actors-in-africa-interests-conflicts-and-agency-tickets-136197182439>.

Thursday, 21 January 2021

9:30 – 9:45 (GMT) - Welcome and introduction from the convenors of the AEGIS CRG (Charlotte Heyl, GIGA – German Institute of Global and Area Studies; Giulia Piccolino, Loughborough University; Jorg Wiegatz, University of Leeds)

9:45-11:15 - Panel 1: Africa and the Middle East: involvement and security implications

Chair: Jorg Wiegatz

Discussant: Yolanda Spies

The Horn of Africa and the changing international order

Alexandra Magnólia Dias, Universidad Nova De Lisboa

External interference in the Horn of Africa has been recurrent since independence. However, due to the region's particular trajectory and Ethiopia's experience of not being under European colonialism this region has tended to 'play to its own drum' throughout different eras of international relations. Is this still the case? At the current juncture, the Horn of Africa is at the epicenter of global economic shifts with significant strategic and political implications for the region. Indeed, due to its geo-strategical location the Horn of Africa was defined as an Arc of Crisis during the Cold War and in the post-9/11 era of international relations as a front line in the so-called "War on Terror". This paper analyses great power rivalries and non-western actors' interference in the region since two recent developments: the Belt and Road Initiative and its implications for the region and the Gulf Monarchies' rivalries. The paper key questions are: To what extent the pattern of power which has characterized the Horn of Africa's security dynamics is being subordinated to external actors' rivalry in the region? Or are the Horn of Africa's actors trying to manipulate and take advantage of the

current conflicting agendas of non-Western external actors in the region? This paper aims to understanding the global transformation of the international order from the standpoint of the region's security dynamics.

Security Implications of Gulf States Activities in the Horn of Africa

Tabitha W. Mwangi, King's College London

This paper examines the implications of the activities of Gulf states on the peace, security and development of the Horn of Africa. Political instability of both the Horn of Africa states (Horn states) and Arab states of the Persian Gulf (Gulf states) has grave implications for international peace, security and development. What is the history and nature of the relations between Gulf and Horn states? Why is there renewed interest amongst Gulf states in Horn states? How do the activities of Gulf states contribute to peace, security and development (or lack thereof) in the Horn of Africa given the politically volatile nature of both regions? What is the nexus between the Gulf, Horn and international terrorist networks? What strategies have Gulf states used to exploit Horn states? This paper argues that recent interest in creating spheres of influence in the Horn by Gulf states as they compete to establish who amongst them is the regional hegemony has implications of regional and international security. It asserts that Horn states must find innovative ways of benefitting from relations with Gulf states that involve effective management of natural resources such as oil and water, climate proofing to minimize negative effects of climate change, ensure food security and conflict transformation. Finally, it looks at the role that regional organizations and neighbouring African states can play in ensuring sustainable peace, security and development that is founded on African-led ideas of change and African agency.

A Vital or Superficial Ally? Interrogating Israel's New Engagement with African Countries

Adedeji Ademola, Obafemi Awolowo University

Israel-Africa relation has gone in an upward trajectory since the end of the Cold War. At independence, some African countries relied on development support provided by Israel as vital to their ascendancy to rapid political and economic development just as Africa relied on various world powers for support. The political implications arising from the Yom Kippur War of 1973 however cast aside the relations Africa had with Israel until the 1990s and in recent years when Israel made inroads once again into Sub-Saharan Africa. Extant literature have suggested that Israel desire to survive in a hostile region and gain more international support motivated her new engagement with Africa as against altruistic considerations suggested by Israel for her policy towards Africa. Drawing on oral interviews, academic and policy literatures, and employing historical analysis as well as using Kenya and Nigeria as case studies, this paper traces the evolution of Israel-Africa relations, examines the era of frosty relationship and its attendant consequences and interrogates Israel foreign policy which underpins her recent engagement with Africa, especially during the incumbent Netanyahu's reign. It also assesses Africa's challenges that make Israel's offers attractive to her and the implications of these relations to international politics and especially Arab-Africa relations and Africa's influence on the world stage. Keywords: Israel-Africa relations, international politics, Development, international politics.

11:15-11:45 GMT break

11:45-13:15 GMT - Panel 2: China's involvement in Southern Africa

Chair: Charlotte Heyl, GIGA

Discussant: Mandira Bagwandeen, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS)

Property Institutions, Politics, and Foreign Investments in Africa

Yuezhou Yang, London School of Economics

In the field of international land-based investments, the dominant narrative is that powerful countries just enter into Africa and 'grab' the African land they want. Especially in the literature of China in Africa, the overarching theories portray China as a homogenous entity, and see Chinese overseas land-based investments as China's economic statecraft. However, there is accumulating evidence that shows great variation across and within African countries regarding foreign, including Chinese, land investment patterns. This suggests that African agency has played a pivotal role in defining variation patterns of foreign investment in land, and that, there are subtle and often decisive local constraints that shape investors' strategies. To fill in the gap in scholarship on property rights in land and international investments, this thesis takes Chinese agricultural investments in Tanzania and Zambia as case studies. This thesis asks, What explains Chinese investment in Agriculture in African countries? It uses Tanzania and Zambia as comparative case studies to investigate What are the determinants of (1) timing, (2) locations, and (3) forms of Chinese agricultural investments in these two countries? This thesis argues, firstly, majority of Chinese agricultural investments are conducted by private actors and are closely in line with their own commercial rationale. Secondly, African states have played an important role in defining Chinese investment patterns in their land. This thesis will use detailed case studies to show how Chinese investors' choices around the nature and locations of their agricultural investment projects are shaped by the national governing strategies of African countries, which vary both cross-nationally and across subnational political-economic contexts. The case studies will be based on over 150 interviews that I have collected during my 8-month fieldwork in Tanzania and Zambia.

The Chinese infrastructural fix in Africa: Lessons from the Sino-Zambian 'road bonanza'

Tim Zajontz, University of St Andrews

This article scrutinises the surge in Chinese funded road development in Zambia with the help of David Harvey's theory of spatio-temporal fixes. The 'moving out' of Chinese surplus capital and material to Africa has been facilitated by an extensive disbursement of loans and export credits for infrastructure projects. Transcending Harvey's analytical 'imperio-centrism', the article shows that the actualisation of the Chinese infrastructural fix has been contingent upon Zambia's ambitious, debt-financed infrastructure development agenda. Particularities of Chinese loan financing have thereby fostered 'not so public' procurement processes and accelerated Zambia's rapid debt

accumulation. As rising debt has imposed structural constraints, the recent shift in the financial governance of road development towards private project finance is analysed with reference to the Lusaka-Ndola dual carriageway. The renaissance of public-private partnerships and the gradual privatisation of Zambian roads signify new rounds of accumulation by dispossession, as the Chinese infrastructural fix enters its next stage.

Understanding the phenomenon of Chinese Funded Parliament buildings in Africa

Innocent Batsani Ncube, School of Oriental and African Studies

In the past two decades, a particular focus by China (PRC) has been the financing and building of new parliaments for African countries. The involvement of the PRC and Chinese construction firms in these parliament buildings include design, construction, furnishing and maintenance. In other words, China is engaged in an enterprise of donating complete parliament buildings to African countries. Upon completion, the PRC sends a senior official to symbolically handover the building to the beneficiary government. This marked interest by China in African Parliaments read together with recipient states' acquiescence to receiving as gifts such symbolic buildings that are ultimately tied to national identity raises new questions critical in understanding contemporary China-Africa relations. In this paper, I leverage the phenomenon of China funded parliament buildings in Africa as a site of politics to explore the manifestation and the extent of African agency in China- Africa relations. Concurrently, I also discuss the motivations for China's unusual interest Africa's legislative political institutions and how this is shaping elite and popular perceptions on China's long range foreign policy strategy in Africa. I do so through an ethnographic study of three Chinese funded parliamentary buildings in Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe. I use data collected through elite interviews, focus groups, document review, non-participant observation and photography. Key words; China-Africa, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Parliament Building, African Agency

Friday, 22 January 2021

9:30 – 11:00 Panel 3: China and India: South South cooperation, rivalry and African agency

Chair: Giulia Piccolino, Loughborough University

Discussant: Pedro Seabra, University of Lisbon

India-China Competition in Africa and the Indian Ocean: The Case of Seychelles

Jean-Pierre Cabestan, Hong Kong Baptist University:

Among the non-Western actors expanding their engagement in Africa, China looms large. But India is another emerging economy and power showing growing ambitions in Africa. Both Asian powers tend to compete more than cooperate on this continent as in other parts of the world. In the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), this competition has been even more visible. In this paper, I will look at the specific case of Seychelles, a small but strategically situated archipelagic state, 1,600 kilometres east

of Kenya where I conducted fieldwork in January 2020. For geographic, historical and security reasons, India still exerts today a strong influence in this country, providing for a long time economic and military assistance. Nonetheless, since the late 2000s, China has started to demonstrate an increasing interest in this country, offering not only generous grants to build infrastructures but also equipment to its armed forces. This Chinese offensive has compelled India to wake up and do more for a partner that it sees a “special”. Reacting to Beijing’s growing presence in the IOR and decisions made in 2013 to launch its Belt and Road Initiative and open a naval “logistic facility” in Djibouti, Delhi has increased its own aid and infrastructure projects. It has also tried but failed to date to set up its own naval base in Assumption, a southern island of Seychelles. This paper will focus on the Seychelles “agency” in this competition. It will show that, in spite of Beijing’s growing activism and Delhi’s own adjustment, Victoria has been able to lever its location as well as non-aligned diplomacy to keep a beneficial balance between the two Asian giants.

Exporting women empowerment from India to Africa? Reflections based on the case study of the African expansion of Indian NGO Barefoot College

Elisabeth Hofmann, University Bordeaux Montaigne, Kamala Marius, University Bordeaux Montaigne and Valentin Karm, Barefoot College

The Barefoot College is an Indian NGO that has its origins almost 50 years back in Rajasthan. Since 1997, it trains poor rural women to become « Solar Engineers » capable of electrifying their villages with the knowledge acquired and the solar material provided to them. Since 2006, a « grand experiment of expansion » started in Niger, followed by invitations of rural African women to come to India for the 6 months Solar Engineer Training. Since 2013, the Indian government funded the building of 5 regional training centres in Sub-Saharan Africa. This expansion to Africa is seen as a typical example for South-South cooperation, involving both civil society and governments. This case will be analysed in the larger frame of Indian-African relations, questioning the driving forces and interests for the different stakeholders - amongst them, the Indian government - in the larger context of Asian-African relations. Particular attention will be paid to the way the gender strategy - developed through decades of experiences in rural India - is applied and received in rural African contexts. The type of reluctance or resistance encountered by the Barefoot College in the different African countries will be analysed, also in the light of the usual cultural and religious arguments that are commonly put forward to question gender equality objectives in the context of North-South cooperation. Last but not least, this case study will allow us to question the role of « Northern » actors play in this African-Asian exchange and how this African engagement relates to India’s positioning towards China (where Barefoot College has never worked...).

11:00 – 11:15 Break

11:15-12:15 Final discussion, AEGIS CRG business and goodbye.