

while also offering a new framework for the conceptualization of these efforts. Its scope and depth, the compelling archival evidence, the many footnotes, and the extensive bibliography make the volume a very valuable contribution to the field. The book is well written, with a structure that is logically organized and an argumentation that is easy to follow. Reiterating the opinions of many earlier reviewers, *Global Development* is a thorough and accessible account of a very complex and important topic. It is an essential reading that deserves a wide (both scholarly and general) readership and that should be on the shelves of everyone interested in the topic of international development specifically and of the Cold War more generally. Regarding the format of the book, there is perhaps one little annoyance: it is not very clear why only three illustrations were included in the book and what might be the rationale behind the selection. In my view, it would have been a better idea to either choose multiple images for each of the chapters or completely omit them.

#### Notes

- 1 See, e.g., D. C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India*, Cambridge, MA 2018; C. R. Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History*, London 2018; S. J. Macekura/E. Manela (eds.), *The Development Century: A Global History*, Cambridge 2018; A. C. Offner, *Sorting out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Development States in the Americas*, Princeton 2019.
- 2 D. C. Engerman, *Development Politics and the Cold War*, in: *Diplomatic History* 41 (2017) 1, p. 19.
- 3 About the end of development prophecy, see W. Sachs, Introduction, in: *ibid.* (ed.), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London 1992, p. 1.

Elijah Nyaga Munyi / David Mwambari /  
Aleksi Ylönen (eds.): *Beyond History. African Agency in Development, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, 243 pp.

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Here is an interesting contribution to the burgeoning literature on African agency – although the topic itself, of course, is anything but new (think of the debates in the late 1960s on how independent African states made their imprint in the UN General Assembly or the British Commonwealth), the more recent debate only started a few years ago with a collection on African Agency in International Politics, edited by William Brown and Sophie Harman.<sup>1</sup> In their edited volume *Beyond History. African Agency in Development, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution*, Elijah Nyaga Munyi, David Mwambari and Aleksi Ylönen offer a refreshing assemblage of thirteen chapters which look at “state agency” and “non-state agency” of African actors in global affairs – thereby also trying to go beyond the state-centric perspective which thus far has dominated the debate. This has to be read against recent important contributions to the debate, including Paul Bischoff’s *African Foreign Policies: Selecting Signifiers to Explain Agency*, Abiodun Alo’s *A New Narrative for Africa: Voice and Agency* or Katharina P. Coleman and Thomas Kwasi Tieku’s *African Actors*

*in International Security: Shaping Contemporary Norms.*<sup>2</sup>

The chapters of *Beyond History* go back to papers presented in 2018 at the 8th Toyin Falola Annual International Conference on Africa and the African Diaspora held at the United States International University – Africa (USIU-A) which started operating in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1977. Munyi holds a PhD from Aalborg University, Denmark (2013), and is currently assistant professor of International Relations at USIU-A; Mwambari is a lecturer in African Security and Leadership Studies at the African Leadership Centre, London, and previously has been at USIU-A; and Ylönen received his PhD from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain (2011). He is an associate professor of International Relations at USIU-A. For Munyi and Mwambari, this is the first major publication with a reputed publisher; Ylönen has a publishing record on the Horn of Africa, among others as author of *On State, Marginalization, and Origins of Rebellion: The Formation of Insurgencies in Southern Sudan.*<sup>3</sup>

In the foreword to this volume, the Malawian historian and pan-Africanist Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, now Vice-Chancellor of USIU-A, situates this edited volume at a historic juncture which, according to his reading, is characterized by the decline of the West's "half millennium hegemony" on the one hand and the "rise of the rest", in especially Asia and in particular China (p. vii), on the other. The volume's first part on "state agency" comprises the bulk of the edited volume, nine out of 13 chapters. In their introduction (chap. 1), Munyi, Mwambari and Ylönen conceptualize African agency and "influence in African

international relations" in three principal ways (p. 6): (1) as "institutionalization or deepening of identity and 'actorness'", (2) as "creativity and initiative in international behaviour and norm development", and (3) as "influence". Reducing Brown and Harman's book to a "functionalist" reading of African agency, the editors claim that they are looking at African agency "as a process of production and reproduction of actorness"; agency is considered to be both performative and relational (p. 5).

In chapter 2 on "Appropriating African Agency in International Relations", Funmi Olofinakin and Moses Tofa (both from African Leadership Centre at King's College, London) claim that traditional IR has rendered African agency invisible. This chapter sets the tone for many of the other contributions: The epistemic claim serves to bring Africa into global affairs politically, too. In chapter 3 Torque Mude (Midlands State University, Gweru) discusses the alleged double standard in international criminal justice" applied by the International Criminal Court. Elijah Munyi then argues that African states increasingly are embracing external summit diplomacy (chap. 4) – from the Chinese FOCAC to the European Union. Aleksis Ylönen's chapter is on transregional relations between African states situated in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf countries and the increasing importance for Africa of the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran (chap. 5). The following chapter 6 by Tinashe Sithole and Timi Legend Asuelime (both University of Johannesburg) is on the African Union's response to the electoral crisis and the subsequent recrudescence of the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010. The authors argue that the AU is soft

on incumbents – whether the case study supports this statement can at least be questioned.<sup>4</sup> Another conflict case is addressed in chapter 7 where Muema Wambua (an IR PhD candidate at USIU-A) looks at the role of one of Africa's regional economic communities (RECs), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in the 2015 peace agreement on South Sudan. David Mwambari then takes the example of the way that Rwanda is using the memorialization of the 1994 genocide in international as an example of a small country punching above its weight (chap. 8). The final chapter in this part of the book by Fridon Lala (head of development at the Kosova Centre for Distance Education) is on how South Africa is trying to exert influence within the groups of emerging states such as the BRICS and BASIC.

The second part of the volume is devoted to illustrations of “non-state agency”. Recent dynamics in Sudan serve as a case study for Fatuma Ahmed Ali (USIU-A, Nairobi) and Stephen Amin Arno (a State Minister for Labour and Social Development in the Sudanese government) to discuss the role of women's agency in popular uprisings (chap. 10). This is followed by Agnes Wanjiru Behr (USIU-A, Nairobi) debating the role of elders in managing boundary disputes and identities in the Horn of Africa (chap. 11). Rachel Diang'a (USIU-A) dissects the role of African movies in international relations, arguing that the increasing number of international film festivals is used as a means of soft diplomacy (chap. 12). And in the final chapter of this collection Michael Kanyange Macharia (who did his master's at the University of Nairobi, Kenya) develops an argument on the

possible place of African philosophy in the debate in African agency in global politics (chap. 13).

All in all, the editors have brought together an impressive range of fascinating examples of African agency. Importantly, they have also tried to enlarge the notion of agency beyond state-centric perspectives (although chapter 10 does not really speak to the issue of international agency, but rather is confined to a national arena). Recognising that African actors exercise agency and establishing that it plays a significant role both in real life global politics and in constituting African identities is highly important. And in this sense, this edited collection by a group of mainly early career African scholars is a huge contribution to reclaiming epistemological sovereignty. However, this should not be the end of the debate: For the most part the discussion of African agency is still a post-colonial reflex on the imbalances in global power and contemporary shifts in international hegemony. At the same time, it runs the risk of essentialising the “African” at the expense of providing detailed analysis of the various competing and contradictory interest of various African actors in global politics. A simple analysis of voting patterns of African states in the UN General Assembly would illustrate this point. They are not speaking with one voice – more often than not they don't share a common interest. In which cases and for what reasons this is case, remains to be thoroughly researched in future. When it comes to global questions, the concrete interests and identities of most African states are still an enigma. Along the same line of reasoning, it would be important to bring in other non-state actors into the analysis,

such as civil society organisations, parliaments, or private companies with a view to discuss their roles as norm entrepreneurs and contributors to international problem solving. The debate has just begun.

At the very end just a few technical observations on the editing of this volume: Unfortunately, no background information on the authors is provided. And sometimes more attention to detail should have been given: The *Constitutive Act of the African Union* was adopted in 2000 (and not in 2001, back page), the presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire were held in October and November 2010 (and not in 2011, p. 8), to give but two examples.

#### Notes

- 1 W. Brown/S. Harman (eds.), *African Agency in International Politics*, London 2013.
- 2 P. Bischoff, *African Foreign Policies: Selecting Signifiers to Explain Agency*, London 2020; A. Aloa, *A New Narrative for Africa: Voice and Agency*, London 2020; K. P. Coleman/T. K. Tiekou, *African Actors in International Security: Shaping Contemporary Norms*, Boulder CO 2018.
- 3 A. Ylönen, *On State, Marginalization, and Origins of Rebellion: The Formation of Insurgencies in Southern Sudan*, Trenton NJ 2016.
- 4 At least in this case, this is quite far from the dynamics unfolding after Laurent Gbagbo tried to clinch to power: The AU engaged in preventive diplomacy early on and the AU Peace and Security Council got seized with the matter far earlier than implied in this chapter. The authors' understanding of the operations of the Continental Early Warning Systems is fairly limited, to put it mildly. The important study commissioned by the AU Panel of the Wise on electoral violence (2010) is not referenced. Some of the other references are incomplete or simply wrong. Many of the relevant sources have not been consulted.

**Paul J. Kohlenberg / Nadine Godehardt (eds.): *The Multidimensionality of Regions in World Politics* (= Routledge Series on Global Order Studies), London/New York: Routledge, 2021, xii + 228 pp.**

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Since the end of the Cold War, the role of regions in global politics has been significantly changing. For many nation-state actors in the Global South, regions promised to be a sovereignty-boosting device that would help deal with accelerated globalisation processes, while at the same time emerging global players such as China, but also the recovering Russian Federation, pursue regional projects to create new meta-geographies. Regions are not a given, and they take multiple forms. This is the general theme of a timely edited collection on *The Multidimensionality of Regions in World Politics*. The volume is published in the Routledge Series on Global Order Studies which, so far, has focused much on Europe only. Clearly, this collection literally extends the boundaries of this series. It is located at the intersection of what the editors perceive as “political geography” and “critical” international relations.

The two editors bring an interesting set of perspectives to the table. Nadine Godehardt is a research fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (or Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP), a Berlin-based think tank which is funded by the Federal Chancellery.