

*Fractured continentally, undermined abroad: African
Agency in world affairs*

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Abstract

The ‘golden decade’ of African diplomacy, 1998-2008, passed by with hardly a whimper in the mainstream IR literature. This decade saw a number of states, including South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Senegal, Mozambique, Tanzania and Ghana, organize themselves to play innovative policy roles on the continent. These states sought to put in place the building blocks of continental order, while articulating a clear African outlook for continental political, economic, social and developmental renewal, yet still in favour of partnership, not paternalistic and patronizing neo-colonialism with the outside world, the industrialised powers in particular. This period saw the creation of a number of key African initiatives, including the African Union, NEPAD and the elevation of the Regional Economic Communities to ‘building blocks’ of a continental union. The departure from office of most of the leaders who spearheaded these initiatives between 2006 and 2008, however, has left a void in leadership and implementation of the so-called African Agenda. This void has left a vacuum that has coincided with the return of external powers to the African scene. Africa’s weakness at home is being exploited by great and emerging powers abroad.

This paper seeks to explore the challenges faced by Africans as they struggle to restore the continent’s agency and leadership in world affairs. It will focus on both inter- and intra-African challenges which makes for undermining this leadership, as well as external factors which continues to reinforce African marginalization from the outside world.

Introduction

The 'golden decade' of African diplomacy, 1998-2008, passed with hardly a whimper in the mainstream International Relations literature or even diplomatic practice. This decade saw a number of African states, including South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Senegal, Mozambique, Tanzania, Ghana, and others, organize themselves to play innovative policy roles on the continent as they sought to put in place the ingredients that makes for an African "community of states". These states sought to put in place the building blocks of continental order, while articulating a clear African outlook for continental political, economic, social and developmental renewal, yet still in favour of partnership, not paternalistic and patronizing neo-colonialism with the outside world, the industrialised powers in particular. This period saw the creation of a number of key African initiatives, including the African Union, the New partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the elevation of the Regional Economic Communities to 'building blocks' of a continental union, and the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism as the continent's most innovative governance promotion tool.

The departure from office of most of the leaders who spearheaded these initiatives between 2006 and 2008, Thabo Mbeki, Olesgun Obasanjo, John Kuofor, Joachim Chissano, Benjamin Mkapa, Meles Zenawi, and others, had left a void in leadership and implementation of what came to be known as the African Agenda. Their departure also showed that individual leaders matter in African agency and international relations. This void has not been filled by the new crop of leaders in Africa, and not even pivotal states like South Africa and Nigeria have stepped up to show the necessary continental leadership. The vacuum has been filled by the return of external powers, notably but not exclusively Western, to the African scene, resorting to typical realist power political, and Marxian exploitative tactics as they seek to reassert themselves in international affairs by using the African political theatre to fulfil their latest ambition. New kids on the capitalist block, China, Russia, India, Brazil and others, are now courting Africa, but nor is this merely for altruism and friendship; they too have huge appetites for the continent's vast mineral resources, and unless Africans organise themselves better as a community of states, able to speak with a common voice and to engage external powers with a greater degree of cohesion, we could once more see the continent becoming a battleground for new and different types of imperialism.

This paper seeks to explore the challenges faced by Africans as they struggle to restore the continent's agency and leadership in world affairs. It will focus on both inter- and intra-African challenges which make for undermining this leadership, as well as external factors which continue to reinforce African marginalization from the outside world.

Africa in the global context

The African inter-state system is an evolving one, the past decade and a half or so having seen African states painstakingly invest in inter-state political processes and engage in diplomacy in an effort to construct a continental order that will take decades to consolidate. Since the end of formal apartheid in 1994, and especially since the assumption to power of Olesegun Obsanjo in Nigeria and Thabo Mbeki in South Africa in 1999, some African states had been at the forefront of African politics and diplomacy, and have played pivotal roles in mediating and constructing a new post-apartheid, post-Cold War continental order, a global order in which Western triumphalism reigns supreme, and new powers like China and Russia are emerging. Indeed, during the apartheid and post-colonial decades, the major preoccupation of African states was to rid the continent of apartheid, colonial rule and white minority domination. It is only in the post-Cold War, post-apartheid era that the continent's states and leaders could give their attention to the question of building a community or society by which the continent's 54 states could negotiate common institutions, norms, principles and policies on which they could agree to subject themselves to and live by. Their project, however, is often undermined by the tardiness and political gimmickry of some states within their own ranks, and by the overt and covert efforts of external powers who would like to see this project fail.

Even during the Cold War, which saw superpowers and their agents playing out proxy battles in Africa, African leaders and liberation movements engaged in Pan-Africanism from about 1900 to 1989, "a new consciousness" among Africans and people of African descent. The first generation of African leaders showed leadership as they focused on political liberation from colonial and white minority rule and tried to grapple with the question "who should govern over Africans?" They were determined to cast relations "between Africans and non-Africans on a footing of mutual respect" (Kondlo 2009:50).

By the late 1990s, a crop of ‘progressive’ African leaders, the second generation of post-independence leaders, including South Africa’s Thabo Mbeki, Olesgun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Abdel Aziz Bouteflika of Algeria, Abulaye Wade of Senegal, John Kuofor of Ghana, and Joachim Chissano of Mozambique, Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, and others, pursued a unique variant of Pan-Africanism, what could be labelled here as a strategy and goal of African continentalism. The question they pursued was not so much “who should govern over Africans?”, but “how do Africans wish to be governed?” in their quest for economic emancipation.

As a theoretical devise, Continentalism is not known to have been applied to African affairs. Rather, it is a process of bringing order to, and stability amongst a divergent grouping of states by getting them to commit to live by shared norms and values. Continentalism thus describes the theory of closer ties (for example, in the form of closer trade links, energy sharing, closer political association or common policies, and building common institutions, rules and norms). Continentalism is not the process by which states seek to build a supra-national high command, but rather to build a continental society amongst the member states, by which they live according to common rules, build common institutions, and articulate common norms. Continentalism is thus the growth of a special relationship that challenges the theory of national independence. It is a variant of the international society school as it advocates strict regulation of the conduct and behaviour of independent states, and uses functionalist instruments to respond to the condition of 'anarchy' – literally meaning the lack of a ruler or world a continental state – and promote the establishment of common institutions. Today, the question to be pursued is clear: how should Africa be governed, make and keep the peace, develop, and co-operate.

The African Renaissance: The philosophical underpinnings of African Agency

Thabo Mbeki and Olesgun Obasanjo in particular, other continental strategic partners in general, showed a great deal of ideational leadership – the power of ideas – and demonstrated that with their brand of soft power and African diplomacy, under the banner of “African solutions for African problems”, they could help to influence international relations thinking. It was Thabo Mbeki who was instrumental in articulating a vision for the

continent, in essence an attempt to put on the agenda a vision of African political, economic, social and cultural rejuvenation. Obasanjo in turn crafted the idea of the Conference for Stability, Security, Development, and Co-operation (CSSDCA) in Africa, based on a belief that Africa needed its own variant of the Helsinki Initiative.

The doctrine spelled out an ambition for reintegration into the global economy on the continent's own self-determined terms. Mbeki was determined to see the status of African people reaffirmed when he stated that "at the end, we must overcome the heritage of a millennium which has defined Africans as the despised among the peoples of the world" (*ANC Today*, December 2004). The vision of an *African Renaissance* sought to bring into focus the various aspirations of Mbeki. Whilst encouraging order, through "peaceful negotiations as regards political and social conflicts in the Southern African region" (*ANC Today*, December 2004), he sought to broaden the responsibility for this goal to the people themselves: "the region [needs] a radical expansion of the frontiers of democratic participation if it is to tap the initiative and intellect of its citizens, limit any tendency towards arbitrary rule and accelerate the integration of their regional economy into the economy of the world" (*ANC Today*, December 2004).

It was in April 1997, during his now celebrated address "Africa's time has come" to the Corporate Council on Africa in the US, that Mbeki started to make explicit his vision of an African Renaissance: "... outside our continent, the perception persists that Africa remains, as of old, torn by interminable conflict, unable to solve its problems, condemned to the netherworld" (*ANC Today*, December 2004). The importance of African solutions for African problems would result from "determined efforts" by Africans "to take charge of our lives so that life for every citizen becomes better" (Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, 13 August 1998). He campaigned for "a new indigenous and energised African movement for the liberation of the continent", and stressed the importance of a new wave of co-operation between African states: "[i]n the political sphere the African Renaissance is inspired both by our painful history of recent decades and the recognition of the fact that none of our countries is an island which can isolate itself from the rest and that none of us can truly succeed if the rest fail" (Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, 13 August 1998).

African ownership of its development agenda, and its policy autonomy, while challenging Western hegemony on the continent, were vital motivations in Mbeki's Renaissance project. For example, he stated that it was critical "to emphasise the point that necessarily the African Renaissance, in all its parts, can only succeed if its aims and objectives are defined by Africans themselves, if its programmes are designed by ourselves and if we take responsibility for the success or failures of our policies" (Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, 13 August 1998). In short, the African Renaissance was more than just a vision; it contained core priorities, as well as plans of action.

But what of the vision following Mbeki's ousting at the so-called Polokwane coup? Instead of an African Renaissance we now have what the Zuma government speaks of as "African Advancement" (Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation 2011, p). This rather bold-sounding agenda places an emphasis on deepening the Republic of South Africa's contribution to regional and continental security, stability and sustainable development; strengthening its contribution in peace missions and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD); technical and development co-operation; and deepening bilateral relations. The problem to date is that the Zuma government's notion has not been backed up by strategic leadership in practice. While South Africa and Nigeria are physically present in African continental institutions, their presence does not translate into strategic leadership. There has also been a cooling off in the relationship between Africa's two giants, the continent's pivotal states, since the time Zuma openly embraced Angola as its preferred strategic partner in Africa. The problem is that this new bilateral brotherhood between Pretoria and Luanda is not anchored in some continental political and developmental agenda, but rather it appears to be driven by a sense of utilitarian, gain-seeking goals. In short, if the Pretoria-Abuja axis is weak, continental politics appear to be suffering.

African internationalism through partnership, not neo-paternalism

The second generation of Africans wanted to end centuries of humiliation and colonial domination, in which they were treated as second class citizens; they wanted a relationship with former colonial masters and outside powers, not of paternalism, arrogance and neo-

colonialism, but of genuine partnership. At least since 1998, African states, spearheaded by Mbeki, engaged the G8 and other international actors in favour of a new paradigm and relationship, namely strategic partnership. Indeed, in 2000, during the annual G8 summit in Okinawa, Japan, history was made when African leaders first engaged the G8 leaders in search of this new post-Cold War development model. They showed real leadership when they proposed a move away from an historical paternalistic and dependency relationship to one of genuine partnership, based on the principles of mutual respect, equality, responsibility and accountability, responsiveness and an equitable world order, advocated under the AU/NEPAD framework. Accordingly, African expectations were that the new partnership would be, in the true sense of the word, a relationship based on equality, with both sides (Africa and the rest) having something to contribute, not a one-sided donor-recipient relationship that had characterized past interactions. No longer could agendas be imposed on Africa, but rather its own identified needs and priorities would be addressed.

The new partnership framework was supposed to draw on existing arrangements, while bringing strategic consolidation, coherence, expansion and result-oriented focus to the new architecture. It would, thus, need to forge relationships with strategic partners willing to engage in its development agenda. Imbibing the core partnership principles was considered vital as a result of a growing sense of realism amongst a new generation of Africans that development partners had to adhere to such evolving norms and standards, to redress the injustices of the past. In particular, given the need to underpin African ownership and leadership of Africa's development agenda and process, the G8 offered the possibility of establishing a political process that could translate political will into mutual accountability, as well as an effective monitoring of commitments, vital to translating them into effective strategy and policy.

This new partnership model was based on the theoretical framework of internationalism – African internationalism if you like – with the wish on the part of these African states to play a role, on behalf of the continent, to negotiate international power redistribution models and extract commitments from industrialised and former colonial powers in areas ranging from aid to market access. South Africa and other continental powers, like Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria, Ghana, and the African Union Commission, have been key voices in

favour of new modalities for resource mobilisation, such as better and more effective levels of aid to be channelled to it. These states appropriated for themselves the role of partnership negotiator with the Western powers, notably the G8 countries and European Union countries, and together with other African partners specifically campaigned for international support in five areas: more accelerated and predictable levels of aid; market access for African goods; debt relief; a free and fair global trade regime that would benefit Africa and the outside world; and resources to enhance the continent's peace support operations capabilities (Department of Foreign Affairs 2007a:7).

Where do we currently stand with this partnership model? There is a palpable sense in which African agency and leadership has been weakened since 2008. There is currently a real leadership vacuum playing itself out in the continent, and one demonstration of this lacuna is that they have failed to embrace the partnership paradigm as espoused by their predecessors. African politics are highly personality-driven affairs, and because the African Agenda of 1998-2008 was so closely associated with the personalities of Mbeki, Obasanjo, Wade, Chissano, Mkapa, Kufor, and others, their successors felt the need to distance themselves from these projects. The end-result was lack of ownership, and this gaping diplomatic lacuna. The Zuma government and its new African allies have allowed the important issue of Africa speaking with one voice to drift, and have not banded together with other pivotal African states, like Nigeria and Senegal. At present, there appear to be few signs of an African "concert of powers", through which key states come together and co-ordinate their efforts in favour of a single African voice and continental interests.

The G8-Africa Action plan, crafted from 1999 and coming to fruition in 2002, has been allowed to merely waver, and African states are currently doing little to hold the feet of the Western powers to the fire so as to ensure that they live up to commitments made to Africa. G8 powers made more than 120 commitments to Africa, and it is now up to them to try and ensure that these states live up to their side of the bargain in the areas of trade, aid, market access, debt relief, and resources for peace support operations. The G8 countries have conveniently pushed their Africa Action Plan off the table and onto the backburner; they would find all the excuses not to meet their obligations towards Africa, but would find the

resources and will to engage in an illegal war against Libya. At present, Western powers are in breach of the principle of *pacta sunt servanda vis-à-vis* their compact with Africa.

By the time of the 2008 Western-induced global financial crisis, talks had shifted to the idea that G8, which had hitherto constituted the epicentre of global financial power, had lost its legitimacy, and the locus of global financial and development decision-making had shifted to the G20. Even within the context of the G-20, where South Africa is currently Africa's own representative, it has not taken up the challenge of articulating this African Agenda, and another opportunity for African leadership and agency had been lost. South Africa has merely focussed on narrow issues of capital flows and fiscal issues. Expectations were now that South Africa, as the sole African representative of Africa on the G20, would ensure that African interests were well-represented, and that the G8-Africa Action Plan would be pushed by South Africa. To date, this has not happened and African development concerns enjoy little attention.

Even though South Africa sits on the Development Committee of the G-20, it has not played a role in ensuring that the G-20 articulates a Finance for Development Agenda that would serve Africa. Again, African agency was not being served by Africans in a frontal manner. For their part, Western powers represented on the G20 showed little sign of wishing to revive the African Agenda, or seeing to it that they met their commitments to Africa. They continued to ignore the African voice and agency – insofar as there was one to listen to. Many of these states pursued an agenda that focused on a conservative approach and on financial and fiscal stabilisation. So perhaps it is this lack of articulation that is the problem. At present, African states are not taking ownership of the international and partnership agenda, instead allowing it to drift and hover, thereby playing into the hands of Western powers that by nature and tradition show little interest in African issues beyond ensuring the continent can yield up its limitless resources. Any concerns Africa itself may have are pushed to the margins, where they will stay unless given clearly voiced.

Apart from the lack of leadership on the part of African states, the lack of fulfilment of commitments of G8, G20, and OECD countries to meet their commitments is at the core of the problems of the partnership. For the partnership and the compact to survive and endure,

these international entities should discharge their responsibilities towards Africa, just as much as African states should live up to their side of the partnership bargain by improving political governance, macro-economic stability, conflict resolution, and combating social deficiencies within African states.

Pivotal African states and the future of the African Union (AU)

Central to South Africa's African agenda and continentalist strategy was the idea that African states and continental institutions should not rush into a United States of Africa (USAf) project; instead, they would go about establishing order in a measured fashion by building and consolidating institutions on the basis of common norms and principles, cajoling states into living by commonly defined rules, and executing this project with the objective of "...strengthening of the AU and its structures" and "...in line with the Constitutive Act" (Department of Foreign Affairs 2007a: 4). South Africa's African Agenda thus subscribes to a functionalist approach to African political development, placing as it does emphasis on norms creation, institution building, and building a community of society of African states. Indeed, since 1999, South Africa has been a key player in establishing the AU, and in 2002 became the first African state to chair the AU, the successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The AU has made provision for the establishment of some 18 new organs entrusted with maintaining order in African politics. These key institutions include executive organs, accountability structures, and representative institutions. For Tshwane (formerly Pretoria), it is important to strengthen all these bodies (Landsberg & Mackay 2003). Tshwane places a huge emphasis on the need adequately to finance AU organs and institutions, and it supports the idea of the amendment of the Constitutive Act to achieve all the above reforms.

Notwithstanding the Zuma administration's stated goal of "strengthening of the AU and its structures", and a stated commitment by other African states that they remain committed to the AU, a real leadership vacuum prevails continentally, and the 'concert of African powers' which was at play during the decade 1998-2008 has waned during the course of the past three years. Pivotal states like Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, and South Africa, which have

all experienced changes in leadership on their home fronts, have shown less commitment to the Afro-continental project. So even when the new government states that it is “committed...to the mainstreaming of gender issues into all activities of the AU and particularly in conflict mediation, poverty mediation, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction and development” (Matkila, 2011: 4), there is doubt as to the political will to give practical expression to these promises on paper. In fact, the crisis in and fall-out from Libya have already seen growing tensions between South Africa and Nigeria, the one-time close strategic partners who were so instrumental in negotiating both the new continental peace, security, governance and development architecture, as well as co-operation regime with the outside world. These tensions do not bode well for the continent, which is in need of close co-operation and co-ordination between pivotal or leading states to help craft its agenda. The absence of close strategic partnerships means that any negotiations with the outside world will start from a position of weakness.

The AU as the premier continental integration institution, and embodiment of continentalism, faces major human and financial resource constraints as member states typically fail to meet their commitments to the body. At present, five member states are responsible for a whopping 75% of the budget of the AU, including South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Libya, and Algeria, who each pay 15% of its budget. In light of the serious effects of the so-called ‘Arab spring’, or ‘Arab revolutions’, and how they have weakened both Egypt and Libya, it is unclear whether these states will continue to meet their commitments to the continental body. 49 other African countries together account for only 25% of the AU’s budget; yet many of them are in arrears with their continental commitments.

Of all the problems faced by the African Union, it is the policy-to-implementation gap, what we could call here the P2I crisis, that is of real concern. Many states simply disregard the importance of continental policies, and do not live by them. There is a pervasive culture in our continent of countries negotiating and signing up to policies without any real commitment to operationalise or live by them. The lack of political will to comply with continental principles, norms, values and purposes is a real challenge to the continental union project.

RECs as the building blocks: the SADC case

Given its commitment to ending Africa's international marginalisation, the "African agenda" built on a strong policy in defence of step-by-step regional integration and development. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are regarded as the building blocks and implementing agents of the AU; thus, there can be no Union of African States, or African Community of States without strong sub-regional and regional integration blocks. Policy openly states sub-regional bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECASS), the Arab Maghreb Union and others should be strengthened to promote the goals of regional integration, democratisation, peace and security, and accelerated economic growth. As such, and as an REC, a commitment to achieve regional economic development, and to building the Southern African Development Community (SADC) form key pillars of South Africa's "African agenda". The 2007 strategic foreign policy document referred to above states that "South Africa will aim to mobilise support for the harmonisation and rationalisation of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as well as for the regional integration process" (Department of Foreign Affairs 2007a:4).

South Africa has long favoured a "cautious and step-by-step" approach towards regional development in southern Africa, and there is great stress placed on regional co-operation. Given the destructive and ruffian-like role South Africa used to play in the region during the apartheid years, post-1994 policy has become sensitive to regional anxieties, and today, it is based "on the principles of equity and mutual benefit", a denunciation of domineering and bossy postures towards the region and the belief that an emphasis on partnership and fairness would more effectively realise foreign policy goals. Over the past seven years, much effort and energy has gone into restructuring SADC (Bekoe, 2002), and Pretoria has pushed for the articulation of protocols, though also stressing the implementation and operationalisation of protocols, particularly those on free trade, Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation (Landsberg, 1998). South African regional strategies place major emphasis on "strengthening of governance and capacity in SADC, especially at the

Secretariat”, and commit to “drive the integration agenda in order to ensure that South Africa meets the SADC timeframes” (Department of Foreign Affairs 2007a:6).

A great deal of focus was also placed on boosting international investor confidence and attracting Foreign Direct Investment to the regional economy. This is in line with the commitment to creating a free trade area, and a customs union, and the aim of establishing a SADC common market. SADC’s timetable was to establish a Free Trade Area by 2008; sustained economic growth of about 5% across the board, and an increase in intra-SADC trade to at least 35% by 2008; negotiations for the completion of a SADC Customs Union by 2010; completion of a SADC Common Market by 2015; and an increase in manufacturing as a percentage of GDP to 25% by 2015. The chances of these targets being met were, and are, rather limited.

However, ambitious though this agenda appears to have been, the important point is that there was at least an agenda. African leaders showed a commitment, even at the rhetorical level, to regional integration and the strengthening of RECs. The problem lies in the serious challenges faced by the RECs, and by the idea of construction RECs as the anchors of an African union. First, the stated commitment to integration notwithstanding, there is a real problem in Africa with the pooling of sovereignty, and surrendering sovereignty for the sake of the regional good and regional integrating. There are also tensions between RECs and the AU, with many RECs believing that they should not be taking their cue from the AU as they are much older and more established than the supposed “mother” body. There is furthermore the problem of multiple and overlapping membership of many African states, with many belonging to several of these bodies at the same time. Just two of the adverse consequences of this overlapping membership problem are the drawing of scarce financial resources as well as often conflicting policies between RECs. Here should be added the lack of co-ordination and harmonisation of policies and processes amongst RECs.

NEPAD as an African development blueprint

The African Agenda posited a pivotal role for South Africa in crafting a socio-economic development plan for the continent, and it was a particular developmental project at that: the modernisation of African states and regions. In 1999, South Africa, Nigeria and Algeria articulated the Millennium Development Recovery Programme (MAP), and later, together

with Senegal, these countries developed the New African Initiative (NAI). In 2001, these countries developed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). With MAP, NAI and NEPAD, South Africa and its continental partners have viewed themselves as interlocutors with the industrialised powers, and the Republic took the lead role in negotiating a new "strategic partnership" between Africa and the outside world. NEPAD hopes to spur Africa's development after decades of failures as a result of the legacies of colonialism, the Cold War, bad governance, unsound economic policies and management and destructive conflicts (Bekoe and Landsberg 2002).

In an effort to transform NEPAD into a truly developmental plan, South Africa and its partners worked hard to articulate NEPAD sectoral development programmes: agriculture; science and technology; industrialisation; transport; environment; and regional economic integration. While originally reluctant, by 2007 South Africa accepted that "the cleavage between NEPAD and the AU should be bridged in order for NEPAD to deliver on its assigned task of development and to the relevant process on the continent". The Mbeki government was convinced that NEPAD's delivery track-record needed to be enhanced.

At the present juncture, NEPAD's future is somewhat uncertain. While rhetorically the Zuma-led government has stated its commitment to NEPAD, in practice there has been little movement over NEPAD's direct commitment to NEPAD and the programme appears to be in limbo. The much vaunted "African concert of power", through which a few pivotal African states banded together and co-ordinated policies on governance, peace and security, development, and co-operation with the outside world, has started to fracture. These states even crafted common positions in relation to great powers and emerging powers, and how the AU and Africans should speak to them. Over the course of the past three years there is a palpable leadership crisis in Africa, one which is clearly being exploited not only by Western powers, but now other external powers, like China and India, as well as Russia and Brazil. The 'new' South African government is ambivalent vis-à-vis NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism and other continental initiatives and programmes, and few if any African states have shown signs of wanting to take leadership or ownership of them. The ambivalence and fiddling on the part of South Africa has been met by disengagement and uncertainty on the part of other African states, most notably Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Egypt, which has been severely derailed or distracted in the wake of the so-called "Arab Spring". Prevarication on the part of South Africa has thus coincided with

uncertainty on the part of other key African states, many of which, who had been founder members of NEPAD, have become lukewarm about NEPAD as a continental developmental body. The Western powers have been even more disinterested in NEPAD, and this has been met with already great international scepticism about the plan's future. Not only did many of these states show little interest in embracing NEPAD as the affirmed development blueprint of the continent, they have also revealed disinterest in coming up with an alternative development plan for the continent. Again, this confusion about NEPAD makes it easy for many donors to renege on their responsibilities towards the continent.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a governance model

The promotion of “good governance” occupied a central position in Mbeki's African Agenda, based on a view that there was need to develop “a common governance ethos within the AU” (Landsberg 2007:207). African Agenda policies promoted adherence to democratic benchmarks and governance indicators set up by Africans and for Africans in order to benefit from the renewed focus on African ownership. It had for example been instrumental in setting up an African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to promote democratic conduct in Africa (NEPAD 2002). Given its commitment to democratisation as part of its Africa policy strategies, South Africa and its NEPAD allies introduced the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (Landsberg 2008:220-222). Indeed, South Africa was instrumental in drafting both the APRM base documents, as well as the Political and Good Governance instruments (Landsberg 2007:207). The APRM is an instrument to which African member states sign up voluntarily and commit to comply with the principles, priorities and objectives of the AU Constitutive Act and other decisions of the AU and NEPAD. It is a mechanism for mutual learning and socialisation, and an attempt to ensure “the periodic democratic renewal of leadership, in line with the principle that leaders should be subjected to fixed terms in office” (Landsberg 2007:207). The APRM encourages African states to commit to “impartial, transparent and credible administration and oversight systems”, as well as “dedicated, honest and efficient civil service” and the establishment of “oversight institutions providing necessary surveillance and to ensure transparency and accountability by all layers of government” (NEPAD 2002). The APRM promotes democracy and good governance as “hot political issues”, and the APRM openly encourages adherence to these. South Africa is firm in the view that the APRM should make a link between governance, democracy, peace and security and development. During

the Mbeki years, government encouraged African member states to comply with the APRM's provisions, and all African states had ideally to sign up to the APRM.

Today, few African states, not even pivotal ones such as South Africa and Nigeria, take responsibility for the operationalisation and consolidation of the APRM and the programme is in real jeopardy. The APRM Secretariat in Midrand is weak; the High-level panel of Eminent Persons is not properly constituted. Plans of action as adopted by states that have undergone the APRM are not being properly integrated in the political and budgetary plans of states. All the weaknesses associated with the APRM came about in part because of a lack of leadership and ownership for what continues to be Africa's most innovative governance promotion instrument. It was thus discouraging when the new South African government, which assumed office in April 2009, failed to embrace the APRM and was reluctant to demonstrate the necessary political leadership that would see it strengthened and consolidated. South Africa, for example, is yet to embrace replace a former member serving on the High-level panel. Again, the onus should be on founding members like Nigeria and South Africa to lead by example. Their lack of leadership, coupled with scepticism on the part of donors, make the future of the APRM, and thus governance promotion, a highly uncertain proposition.

Pax Africana and peace diplomacy

The illegal war by NATO against the tyrannical Muammar Ghaddafi's Libya, and the vote in favour of United Nations Security Council 1773 on 17 March 2011 to impose a "no fly zone" over Libya in apparent isolation of the African Union's position of 1973 has huge implications for African agency in world affairs. It has shown total disregard for, and marginalisation of the African voice by Western powers, at a time when the talk is of an apparent "partnership" with Africa. Indeed, it was an unprecedented move on the part of the Security Council as their "regime change" agenda under the banner of a "no fly zone", "democracy" and "freedom" was tantamount to the UN declaring war on a sovereign member state. Whatever the minutiae of the arguments for or against intervention – and they are likely to revolve around semantics rather than substance - the choice of the UNSC to ignore and marginalise the African voice rendered a telling blow to African agency.

African and other developing countries, it should be remembered, place a high premium on multilateralism as a vehicle to address their concerns and interests.

This vote in favour of Resolution 1973 came in stark contradiction to the emerging continental doctrine of *Pax-Africana*, so circumspectly negotiated by African states during the course of the past decade-and-a-half. This *Pax Africana Agenda* adopted the mantra that “there can be no peace without development, and no development without peace” (Landsberg 2010:436-457). Many of these pivotal African states have for the past two decades of post-Cold War, post apartheid African rule supported ideas to bolster the peace-keeping and peace-support operational capacities of Africa at continental and sub-regional levels. The decision by South Africa, Nigeria, and Gabon on 17 March 2011 to vote in favour of UNSC Resolution 1973 to impose a “no-fly zone” over Libya, which resulted in the contracting out of this mission to NATO, and in isolation from the AU, contradicted the continental peace and security tenet that denounces military solutions to political problems, as well as the notion of ‘African solutions for African problems’. Thus, in terms of peace diplomacy as well, some contradictions have emerged in the Africa policies of key African states, and tensions amongst them also arose.

A key goal of the African Agenda during the period 1997-2008 was that of achieving “sustained and sustainable peace in the Continent”. South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana and others have therefore been active proponents of peaceful resolution of conflicts on the African continent and elsewhere. Tshwane has adopted the view that the Republic’s own experience of emerging from a seemingly intractable apartheid conflict, and out of that creating a progressive democratic state, makes it well placed to assist others in similar conflict situations; it has for some time been determined to apply the negotiation settlement solution as a means of addressing conflicts (Landsberg 2010:438).

It was a preferred strategy of African states to rule out the military option in international affairs and its preferred strategy continues to be that of brokering peace pacts amongst belligerents in conflict situations; military action is only to be taken under a multilateral umbrella, and only in very select instances, namely to engage in “responsibility to protect missions”, justified in instances of gross violations of human rights, genocide, instability in

African states which threatens broader regional stability, and unconstitutional changes of government (read: *coups d'état*) (Landsberg 2010:437-438).

One cannot understand *Pax Africana* unless one appreciates the stress on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), or more specifically State-building (Department of Foreign Affairs 2007a:7). In this post-conflict strategy, emphasis is particularly placed on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Burundi and the Comoros. State-building is in fact a key means of preventing deadly conflicts and war, and there exists a direct relationship between governance and state-building.

Here too, African states are highly dependent on the resources of external powers to secure peace and security on the continent. Indeed, part of the G8-Africa partnership agreements negotiated during the decade 1998-2008 was to set aside significant resources for the continent's peace-support operations. To be sure, Africa is too heavily dependent on the largesse of external powers for the continent's own security. This not only compromises the continent's security, but it makes the continent vulnerable. African states need to become more serious in investing in the continent's own security architecture by providing the necessary resources so as to strengthen sub-regional and continental entities to make and keep peace.

Conclusion

At the present international juncture, as we enter the second decade of the 21st century, African agency and leadership in world affairs are being threatened by weaknesses and fractures continentally, and the marginalisation and disregard of Africa abroad. Before the turn of the Century, a crop of African leaders articulated a continentalist African strategy which was officially pursued under the banner of the African Agenda. These leaders represented essentially the second generation of post-independence African leaders, and were known for their strong, determined leadership by pursuing this strategy under the banner "there can be no peace without development, and no development without peace". These leaders showed ideational, political, diplomatic, organisational, and technical leadership. Their agency included policy content and policy processes; problem

identification and dissection; tactical and strategic manoeuvring; as well as inter-, intra-, extra-African dimensions. Policy has promoted the idea that international affairs has to seek in the main to help address pressing domestic challenges such as overcoming poverty and inequality and to place the African continent on an accelerated growth path. Policy emphasised the need to build order by emphasising the building of strong continental and regional institutions, negotiate norms and rules; to strive to get African states to live by such rules and norms; to promote a modernist development model for the continent; and to seek a strategic partnership between Africa and the industrialised states on the basis of mutual accountability and mutual responsibility. They were in favour not of paternalism but of genuine mutual respect and commitment towards Africa's agenda as determined by Africans, but supported and reinforced by international partnership.

Policy continued to support the view that African institutions had to be strengthened and a Union of States reinforced on the basis of common norms, values, and principles, as opposed to the continent rushing into a federalist arrangement in the form of the United States of Africa (USAf). Stress would be placed on the idea that it is vital that in this emerging continental institutional architecture the competencies and status of the AU and its institutions should be clarified vis-à-vis AU member states. Norms should be refined and consolidated, and where AU institutions have not yet been finalised, such as the establishment of the African Court of Justice, they should be. The legislative status of the PAP should be established, while the status of RECs as the building blocks of the AU should be recognised and duplication of the roles of over 40 institutions should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

In the first decade of the 21st Century, South Africa together with its other African partners like Nigeria, Mozambique, Ghana, Tanzania, Senegal, Algeria and others continued to prioritise consolidation of peace efforts, and would highlight work in the areas of post-conflict reconstruction and development in Burundi, the DRC and Sudan, notably South Sudan. South Africa and its continental partners would continue to closely observe events in other flash points, such as in Côte d'Ivoire in the aftermath of the controversial 2010 elections, Zimbabwe's ongoing efforts to find a lasting solution to the Zimbabwe crisis, and others. In seeking to ensure peace, stability and security on the Continent, South Africa

would continue to try and extract commitments from the continent's international partners, such as the EU, the US, and other G8 countries. South Africa would continue to insist that the United Nations, particularly the UN Security Council, should live up to its responsibilities towards Africa. It is likely to remind the UN that, nowhere in the UN Charter does it state that this global body has a responsibility to all regions except Africa.

South Africa and other African post-Cold War, post-apartheid rulers contemplated an active role in continental peace and security matters, and viewed this as an important way to realise Africa's political and socio-economic goals. However, during the past three years or so, we have seen a vacuum emerging in African leadership, and a lack of co-operation and strategising amongst African states appears palpable, to the extent that there is no real African concert of powers visible. Few African states embrace the African Union or its institutions, currently rendering the continental project weak and rudderless. Gaps in policy-making leadership, and poor policy management, typically result in poor policy outputs and outcomes. Lack of policy or bad policy makes for bad policy implementation. The absence of strategic leadership in African continental policy and ownership of policy is conspicuous. Whereas the breakthroughs of the early 1990s and first decade of the 21st Century came about in part because of leadership and a 'concert approach' to African diplomacy, the lack of co-operation and co-ordination amongst African states at the current juncture, and the sense of fragmentation amongst them, means that the African Agenda is in jeopardy and the continent is both neglected and being undermined from abroad.

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