

# Horror, hubris and humanity: the international engagement with Africa, 1914–2014

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## ***Africa and International Affairs***

This article was commissioned as a contribution to the 90th anniversary issue of *International Affairs*, and it seems appropriate to note at the outset the prominent place that Africa has occupied in the pages of the journal since the 1920s. Indeed, a list of authors who have written for it reads as a roll-call of modern African history, in terms of both protagonists and analysts, and I doubt whether any specialist Africanist journal can boast a comparable line-up. A handful of examples may suffice. From the era of European colonial rule, Frederick, Lord Lugard, wrote in 1927 on the putative challenges confronting colonial administrators of 'equatorial' Africa, and Lord Hailey, in 1947, on the issues involved in 'native administration' more broadly; notably, the African perspective on these questions was provided in a piece in 1951 by the eminent Tswana political figure of the early and middle twentieth century, Tshekedi Khama.<sup>1</sup> Former colonial governor Sir Andrew Cohen assessed the place of the new African nations within the UN in a 1960 article.<sup>2</sup> A later generation of African nationalist leaders, the founders and shapers of the continent in its first flush of independence, is also represented: of particular note are pieces on the prospects for the continent by the Tunisian leader Habib Bourguiba and by the Senegalese poet and politician Leopold Senghor, in 1961 and 1962 respectively.<sup>3</sup> And then there are the analysts and commentators, some of whom have become the stuff of legend for the author's own generation: Lucy Mair, Ali Mazrui and Colin Legum, to name but three.<sup>4</sup>

More recently, *International Affairs* has hosted a wealth of analysis and comment on Africa both north and south of the Sahara. The special place Africa has held in this journal will be evident from some of the references underpinning the discussion which follows, and on a markedly diverse range of issues: security and

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Lugard, 'Problems of Equatorial Africa', *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* (later known simply as *International Affairs*) 6: 4, 1927, pp. 214–32; Lord Hailey, 'Native administration in Africa', *International Affairs* 23: 3, 1947, pp. 336–42; Tshekedi Khama, 'The principles of African tribal administration', *International Affairs* 27: 4, 1951, pp. 451–6.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Cohen, 'The new Africa and the United Nations', *International Affairs* 36: 4, 1960, pp. 476–88.

<sup>3</sup> Habib Bourguiba, 'The outlook for Africa', *International Affairs* 37: 4, 1961, pp. 425–31; Leopold Senghor, 'Some thoughts on Africa: a continent in development', *International Affairs* 38: 2, 1962, pp. 189–95.

<sup>4</sup> L. P. Mair, 'Social change in Africa', *International Affairs* 36: 4, 1960, pp. 447–56; Ali Mazrui, 'African attitudes to the European Economic Community', *International Affairs* 39: 1, 1963, pp. 24–36; Colin Legum, 'The Organisation of African Unity—success or failure?', *International Affairs* 51: 2, 1975, pp. 208–19.

conflict, economics, political shifts across the continent, external powers' Africa strategies. As the presence of this modest offering to the 90th anniversary volume suggests, the continent will continue to loom large in the pages of *International Affairs* in the years to come, with, one hopes, due recognition of the critical role of the past in shaping Africa's place in a world which sometimes seems to change rapidly, but at other times seems not to change very much at all. Even a cursory glance at the pages of *International Affairs* over the last 90 years suggests both.

### Livingstone, Lugard, Bono and Blair: projecting paradigms

At the Labour Party's annual conference in October 2001, British Prime Minister Tony Blair declared that poverty in Africa was a 'scar on the world's conscience'.<sup>5</sup> A few months later, he was off to Nigeria to launch his mission, as the UK's *Guardian* newspaper put it, 'to save Africa'.<sup>6</sup> For Blair, who was by now carving a role for himself as a global crusader, it was about Africa's catastrophically impoverished state. For others, the key issue might be famine—in the case of self-made Africa-saviour Bob Geldof—or the burden of debt, which was rock star Bono's cause of choice, again with a view to combating AIDS and poverty. Whether consciously or not, these men were part of a long tradition stretching back several decades. That tradition involved the continual objectification of 'Africa' as a place where horrendous things happened to benighted people, and where the West could display its full panoply of moral and material powers to positive ends. Blair could certainly trace a direct line to the celebrated missionary David Livingstone, who in the mid-nineteenth century dedicated himself to the ending of the Central African slave trade which he described, using imagery later borrowed by Blair, as 'the open sore of the world'.<sup>7</sup> Half a century later, when most of the continent had come under European colonial rule, Frederick Lugard, key architect of the British imperial order in Africa, would extol the virtues of the civilizing mission, which he conceptualized as a 'dual mandate': to help Africa emerge from a condition of brutality and ignorance, and to derive commercial advantage for Britain in so doing.<sup>8</sup> The missionary lobby in the nineteenth century had argued for much the same thing, proposing that the promotion of the three Cs—Christianity, commerce and civilization—would be to the benefit of all parties.

There is, therefore, a marked degree of continuity from the nineteenth century to the early twenty-first, in terms of both conceptualization of Africa and international engagement with it. Africa has long been assisted, encouraged and cajoled, with a view to rescuing the continent from poverty, violence and disease; its particular problems have been wrestled with by governments and non-governmental activists alike, and solutions have been offered with rhythmical regularity. Africa is seen as a place of terrible suffering which only well-meaning

<sup>5</sup> 'Blair promises to stand by Africa', BBC News, 2 Oct. 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Chris McGreal, 'Blair confronts "scar on the world's conscience"', *Guardian*, 7 Feb. 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Roland Oliver, *The missionary factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> F. D. Lugard, *The dual mandate in British tropical Africa* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1923).

foreigners can alleviate; and as a place where westerners can always find the upbeat resilience of the human spirit that they apparently cannot find in their nearest post-industrial slum. The developmental agendas that have predominated over the last two decades may have a distinctly modern hue, but in fact little of substance has changed since the nineteenth century, when the argument that Africa needed to be ‘opened up’ to free trade—by force if necessary—first gained momentum.

And yet much has happened along the way. In 1914, the nominal starting point for the discussion which follows, the colonial order across the continent was entering a period of consolidation following three decades of violence and tumult. Yet within a generation there was disillusion with the ‘civilizing mission’, among both Africans and Europeans, for it seemed after all that while Europe might be reasonably effective at economic exploitation, it was noticeably impotent when it came to imposing itself on other aspects of African life—even had it been serious about doing so, which many doubted. A further generation on, the euphoria which attended African liberation in the 1950s and 1960s swiftly deflated in the face of economic collapse and profound political instability, though in fact the signposts had pointed in this direction for several decades. Such instability severely compromised the sovereignty so recently won by so many African states, and rendered the continent peculiarly vulnerable to the machinations of the Cold War. Between the 1960s and the 1980s international engagement with Africa was driven almost exclusively by strategic and ideological considerations, and the outcome was disastrous for a generation of Africans, with an array of odious regimes propped up by allies on one side or the other of the Cold War divide.

African states and societies, meanwhile, had themselves experienced dramatic transformation. Colonial-era identities, at least some of which were rooted in the nineteenth century or earlier, had coalesced around anti-colonial protest, of course, but they had also been forged in the crucible of internal conflict and competition. This was certainly true of the late colonial period, the 1940s and 1950s, when African political culture was characterized as much by fierce struggles over the internal balance of power *after* decolonization as it was by the dismantling of colonial regimes themselves. In independent African states, power was invariably monopolized by narrowly defined groupings, and this meant that legitimacy in many respects came not from *within*—as large swathes of the population swiftly became disillusioned and disfranchised—but from *without*: in other words, it was through external relationships that the sovereign legality of many post-colonial regimes was recognized. The focus of this article, as will become clear, is on international engagement with Africa rather than Africa’s engagement with the international environment, and our concern is with external rather than internal change and continuity. Nonetheless it is important to keep in mind from the outset the extent to which post-colonial elites sought to manipulate external relationships for their own purposes, as indeed African political elites had long sought to do.<sup>9</sup> Those elites did so with a view to accessing the material and political resources

<sup>9</sup> Jean-François Bayart, *The state in Africa: the politics of the belly* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009); see also Bayart, ‘Africa in the world: a history of extraversion’, *African Affairs* 99: 395, 2000, pp. 217–67.

on offer through such relationships, and in that sense the internal and external functions of the African state were inextricably linked.

After the Cold War, and with few exceptions for the first time since the 1950s, there was a renewed emphasis on democracy, or at least on somewhat more broadly defined ‘good governance’, and on economic and social ‘development’. These have remained the cornerstones of external engagement with Africa over the past 20 years, although security agendas have long been significant as the United States and the EU countries in particular seek regional ‘partners’ in the struggle to contain Islamic extremism. In recent years, meanwhile, there has been much talk of a ‘new scramble for Africa’ as China seeks raw materials and markets, and competes with the West in terms of investment and influence. In truth, there has never really *not* been a ‘scramble’ for Africa in some shape or form since the end of the nineteenth century, such are the economic opportunities which the continent has long offered. Above all, it is clear enough that over the last century or so Africa has been a fertile field for the production of paradigms, archetypes which have come not only to essentialize much of Africa, but also to reflect how much of the rest of the world thinks about itself. Again, however, this is not solely a matter of misrepresentation and victimization: in recent years, as in earlier periods, a range of African political and economic actors have sought to co-opt external interests across the continent in pursuit of their own.

## The ‘civilizing’ age: mandates and markets

Several objectives underpinned European colonial rule in Africa. These included the need to make colonial territories economically viable through the extraction of raw materials and the production of cash crops for export. For this to be achieved, Africans had to be encouraged (or coerced) into systems of wage labour or commercial agriculture: which system was introduced depended on the presence or absence of white settlers, and on the predominant economic asset, in particular territories. Under this scheme Africans would also pay taxes, thus essentially paying for their own control. In political terms, Africans were to be governed as much as possible through ‘traditional’ authorities representing ‘tribal’ units of organization, which was both financially expedient and supposedly culturally legitimate, for Africans would thus be protected from bewildering modernity. The imperial mission sought to ‘modernize’ and ‘civilize’ in a piecemeal manner and on the cheap, while connecting millions of Africans to a global economy over which, however, they had little direct control<sup>10</sup>— although, as we shall see below, Africans increasingly identified ways in which they could exercise influence over that system, and reap benefits from it.

To a very real degree, then, the ‘colonial moment’ was a global one, and the First World War was something of a watershed, for Africa as elsewhere. It witnessed,

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Ralph Austen, *African economic history* (London: Heinemann, 1987), pp. 122–96; A. G. Hopkins, *An economic history of West Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1973), pp. 167–86; and, for a wider perspective, D. K. Fieldhouse, *The West and the Third World* (Oxford: Wiley, 1999), pp. 127–222.

in many ways, the completion of the era of imperial partition begun a generation earlier: Allied campaigns against German forces in eastern and southern Africa, and French recruitment drives across the Sahel, carried an armed European presence into previously distant corners of newly acquired territories, and in many areas ended the resistance which had been rumbling on over many years. Thus by 1918 the European scramble for Africa was over, by and large, and an era of consolidation was ushered in; an era in which the overt militarism of colonial rule would recede—in all but the most troublesome of frontier zones—and strategies for economic expansion would be implemented. Yet the global context within which the European empires held their colonial possessions had also begun to change. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles saw Germany stripped of its African holdings—Togo, Cameroon, German East Africa (Tanganyika), Ruanda-Urundi and German West Africa—which were now to be transferred to the victorious allies, Britain, France and Belgium.<sup>11</sup> But these territories were not simply to be parcelled out along the lines of the avaricious land-grabbing of the 1880s and 1890s—at least, not according to the rhetoric. The former German colonies were to be League of Nations mandates. The League would oversee the transfer of these ‘mandated territories’ and would closely monitor the efforts made by the British and French to raise up their benighted inhabitants and prepare them for an admittedly distant future in which they would take responsibility for their own affairs. This was, in other words, imperialism along the lines of kindly guardianship. True, Britain and France were themselves the two dominant powers in the League of Nations. True, too, that although every year a team from Geneva might visit Tanganyika, for example, to ensure that Britain was fulfilling its mandate, the reality was that Tanganyika was governed in much the same way as any other colonial territory of its type. Nonetheless the difference in tone, in political discourse at least, was subtle but significant, with the emphasis now on *obligation* towards subject Africans in terms of their material and social well-being. In many respects this was the first modern turn towards the notion of *development*. The sense lingered in Germany into the 1920s and indeed beyond that this was an outrageous injustice, and that Germany’s colonialism, contrary to the lies perpetuated at Versailles, had in fact been the most progressive and ‘developmental’ of any European nation.<sup>12</sup> It seems safe to suggest that each European nation held the same view of itself.

Be that as it may, for much of the colonial era the international engagement with Africa was primarily economic in nature. Africa’s major global contribution was believed to be its raw materials and agricultural produce, whether generated by the cultivation of cash crops—palm oil, tea, cocoa, cotton—or the extraction of minerals—gold and diamonds, most obviously, but later bauxite and uranium, and later still oil. Colonial states were the gatekeepers of this commerce, whether directly or indirectly, and facilitated overseas’ companies engagement with sellers and producers, both white settlers and indigenous farmers. The fact that colonial

<sup>11</sup> Edward Paice, *Tip and run: the untold tragedy of the Great War in Africa* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), pp. 399–400.

<sup>12</sup> Sebastian Conrad, *German colonialism: a short history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 7.

economies were rooted in extraction and export, with internal infrastructures designed solely for these purposes, rendered the continent deeply vulnerable to the vagaries of the global economy. This was first demonstrated during the global depression of the 1930s, during which African farmers found that the prices they were paid for their exports declined sharply, while the prices they had to pay for imported commodities rose. During the 1920s, in urban centres on the Atlantic coast, notably in British and French West Africa, a prosperous merchant class had emerged which both profited from international trade and was increasingly politically active;<sup>13</sup> but the 1930s were difficult times for most African producers, who began to organize various forms of protest as a result. In West Africa, there were farmers' associations and, in the case of the Gold Coast, 'cocoa hold-ups' in which farmers refused to sell their produce until a better price was offered.<sup>14</sup> Large western companies, however, were able simply to bypass such protest by taking their business to those who needed to sell—as, in the end, all farmers did. In southern Africa, mining companies worked with political administrations to control wage labour, and used short-term recruitment strategies and compounds run along military lines to limit the organizational power of mineworkers.<sup>15</sup> In the longer term, however, African labour organized itself with increasing efficacy, and even if formal unionization was slow to emerge, workers found ways of coalescing and, ultimately, of developing strategies of their own for harnessing the needs of industrial capital for their own ends and limiting the power of the system from within. In the process new identities, communities and ways of being were forged in the crucible of supposed colonial economic modernity.<sup>16</sup>

During the period between the two world wars, millions of Africans became aware of the myriad ways in which they were part of a global network of exchange and interaction: political elites owed allegiance (however loosely defined) to aloof European monarchs and were part of long-distance, elaborate systems of deference and hierarchy; waged labourers served capital raised thousands of miles from the mines they worked; peasant farmers cultivated crops for sale to companies with far-flung concerns.<sup>17</sup> Yet all the time political elites sought to mobilize external resources in pursuit of internal legitimacy, while African workers—whether urban or rural—were concerned to understand complex global economic systems

<sup>13</sup> A. G. Hopkins, 'Economic aspects of political movements in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, 1918–1939', *Journal of African History* 7: 1, 1966, pp. 133–52; Anthony I. Nwabughuogu, 'From wealthy entrepreneurs to petty traders: the decline of African middlemen in Eastern Nigeria, 1900–1950', *Journal of African History* 23: 3, 1982, pp. 365–79; Gareth Austin, 'The emergence of capitalist relations in south Asante cocoa-farming, c.1916–1933', *Journal of African History* 28: 2, 1987, pp. 259–79.

<sup>14</sup> Josephine Milburn, 'The 1938 Gold Coast cocoa crisis', *African Historical Studies* 3: 1, 1970, pp. 57–74.

<sup>15</sup> Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, 'The politics of race, class and nationalism', in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, eds, *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa* (London and New York: Longman, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> A. P. Cheater, 'Contradictions in "modelling" consciousness: Zimbabwean proletarians in the making', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14: 2, 1988, pp. 291–303; Robin Palmer, 'Working conditions and worker responses on Nyasaland tea estates, 1930–1953', *Journal of African History* 27: 1, 1986, pp. 105–126; Terence Ranger, *Dance and society in eastern Africa, 1890–1970* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975).

<sup>17</sup> See John M. Lonsdale, 'Globalization, ethnicity and democracy: a view from "the hopeless continent"', in A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in world history* (London: Pimlico, 2002), for a stimulating discussion of 'global Africa' from a long-term perspective.

and to use that knowledge against those systems, or to mitigate their harsher aspects, while forging new networks of belonging in the process. Throughout the twentieth century and beyond, indeed, economic grievance and self-awareness drove political change across Africa.

If the Great Depression of the 1930s was a traumatic period for Africans, increasingly disillusioned with the colonial order and increasingly capable of cogent protest, then it was an unsettling time, too, for the colonial order itself. A belief in the inherent progressiveness and essential benevolence of the European mission in Africa had been undermined, even among many colonial officials, who feared above all that African society might be rent asunder by capricious commercial forces, resulting in disorder. There was now a conviction that Africans needed to be protected from the global market, and by the end of the 1930s a more interventionist colonial state had begun to emerge, placing a much greater emphasis on planning and management than had previously been the case.<sup>18</sup> This was manifest in environmental policy, for example—reflecting a concern for the more careful management of the African landscape, and for improving the efficiency of Africans’ farming techniques;<sup>19</sup> and it was manifest, too, in the creation of state-run marketing boards, which were established across the continent to pay fixed prices to farmers for their export produce, whatever the actual market price, in order to shield them from price collapses in bad years while saving the surplus in good years.<sup>20</sup> The fixed price, however, was generally so low that these boards began to accumulate substantial funds, which were supposed to be used for the development of the territory but in reality were siphoned off into other projects. Nonetheless, certainly by the time of the Second World War, a much greater concern for the ‘development’ of African colonies was evident at least in the rhetoric of government.

There were other arenas in which a global interaction with Africa was unfolding, not least among African Americans. When the pan-African movement emerged in the 1900s, it was rooted largely in the Americas, both in the Caribbean and the eastern United States, but by the 1920s and 1930s linkages were beginning to flow both ways across the Atlantic. African Americans sought to reconnect with an imagined ‘motherland’, while the experience of colonial rule led to a heightened global political consciousness among a small but increasingly vocal class of educated Africans—many of whom were beginning to travel to both the United States and Europe.<sup>21</sup> African identity—*Africanity* or, in Francophone Africa, *négritude*—was increasingly fostered through a pan-Africanism rooted in a global sense of injustice at the hands of white oppressors, whether through the experience of slavery in the Americas or now of colonialism in Africa itself. In

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. John Iliffe, *A modern history of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 342–80.

<sup>19</sup> David M. Anderson, *Eroding the commons: the politics of ecology in Baringo, Kenya, 1890–1963* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> David Meredith, ‘The Colonial Office, British business interests and the reform of cocoa marketing in West Africa, 1937–1945’, *Journal of African History* 29: 2, 1988, pp. 285–300.

<sup>21</sup> For an accessible survey, see Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African history: political figures from Africa and the diaspora since 1787* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); and see e.g. John Henrik Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the vision of Africa* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

time, this would intersect with, and indeed feed into, emergent African nationalism across the continent.

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia constitutes a key ‘moment’ in terms of international engagement with Africa, revealing subtle shifts in attitudes towards the continent in the West, as well as an expanding African consciousness overseas. When Mussolini attacked Haile Selassie’s empire from Somalia and Eritrea in 1935, the international response was muted: after all, independent Ethiopia was an odd anomaly in a colonial world, a supposedly despotic indigenous regime whose capacity for modernity was doubtful and in which slavery persisted. Certainly the Italians argued as much, depicting Ethiopia as an affront to the civilized world. The British and French governments, although implementing some fairly light sanctions against Italy, were broadly in agreement, and had secretly accepted that Ethiopia would indeed fall under Italian rule; yet there was mild discomfort with the language coming out of Rome, which belonged to the late nineteenth century and seemed oddly anachronistic in the 1930s.<sup>22</sup> While such illustrious observers as Evelyn Waugh might broadly condone the Italian conquest of Ethiopia,<sup>23</sup> others took a very different view, among them Sylvia Pankhurst, who provided succour to Haile Selassie in exile and who organized an extremely vocal pro-Ethiopia lobby—although to little avail, at least in the short term.<sup>24</sup> The violation of Ethiopia was a *cause célèbre* in other quarters, too: for the nascent Rastafarian movement in the Caribbean, whose members (taking their appellation from Haile Selassie’s pre-coronation name, Ras Tafari) deified the emperor in idiosyncratic ways;<sup>25</sup> and more broadly for the increasingly global pan-African movement, which regarded the invasion and occupation of this most romanticized and ancient of African empires as an unbearable tragedy. Ethiopia, in sum, became an international symbol of both emergent African consciousness and the unacceptable face of European imperialist brutality.

The Second World War ‘proper’ brought a new tone to the colonial project, for the British and the French in particular were keenly aware of their empires’ vulnerability at a time of global crisis. In stark contrast to the 1914–18 war, which had involved naked force, conscription and requisitioning, the 1939–45 war (which did indeed at times involve all these things) nevertheless saw the British and the French in an altogether frailer position. Africans were now *encouraged* to join up, or lend their service in various ways, in the great struggle against fascism; the war was explained to them, through various media, and colonial authorities felt it necessary to persuade ‘the natives’ that their lot was better under this kind of European rule than any other.<sup>26</sup> When in 1915 John Chilembwe in Nyasaland (modern

<sup>22</sup> Assessments of these developments appeared at the time in *International Affairs*: see John Melly, ‘Ethiopia and the war from the Ethiopian point of view’, *International Affairs* 15: 1, 1936, pp. 103–121; D. A. Sandford, ‘Ethiopia: reforms from within versus foreign control’, *International Affairs* 15: 2, 1936, pp. 183–201.

<sup>23</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh in Abyssinia* (London: Longmans, 1936).

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. W. B. Carnochan, *Golden legends: images of Abyssinia, Samuel Johnson to Bob Marley* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 85–95.

<sup>25</sup> Peter B. Clarke, *Black paradise: the Rastafarian movement* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1986).

<sup>26</sup> Wendell P. Holbrook, ‘British propaganda and the mobilisation of the Gold Coast war effort, 1939–1945’, *Journal of African History* 26: 4, 1985, pp. 347–61.



Malawi) had rebelled, in part because of the extractive and brutal nature of the colonial state at war, he was killed and his insurgency swiftly quelled.<sup>27</sup> In 1940, when the copper miners of Northern Rhodesia went on strike for better pay and conditions—at the moment when Britain was waging a war for survival against a rampant Nazi Germany—they were granted concessions.<sup>28</sup> Britain needed its African territories quiescent and loyal; ever larger numbers of Africans across various social sectors realized this, and although many were indeed both relatively ‘quiescent’ and generally ‘loyal’ (from the perspective of the colonial metropole, at least), this was increasingly contingent upon the granting—or, to begin with, the promise—of social, political and material improvement. Throughout the war, Britain relied on African labour and produce, while by 1945 more than 370,000 Africans were serving in the British armed forces—and many saw action in South-East Asia and Italy.<sup>29</sup>

When the bulk of France’s colonies fell under the loose control of Vichy in mid-1940, de Gaulle’s Free French movement sought to persuade colonial and ‘native’ alike of the need to join its cause, which most did over the next few months. This process culminated in the Brazzaville ‘agreement’ of 1944 in which de Gaulle promised postwar political reform—although when French African troops mutinied in the same year over pay, they were harshly dealt with.<sup>30</sup> For the British, too, it was a time for strengthening the African empire through reform and development: the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act released funds for spending on sanitation, education, housing, infrastructure and a range of other social projects designed to both raise living standards and produce a more pacified, more efficient and healthier labour force.<sup>31</sup> In France, the postwar equivalent was the creation of the Investment Fund for Economic and Social Development in 1946.<sup>32</sup>

This was not about decolonization, or anything like it, as far as Britain and France were concerned; it was, rather, about stabilization and securing the future. In Britain, Winston Churchill, a man whose formative years had coincided with the age of high imperialism, was quite unambiguous about this: ‘I have not become the King’s First Minister’, he famously growled in 1942, ‘in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.’<sup>33</sup> Yet forces were emerging over which even Churchill had little control. The previous year, in August 1941, the Atlantic Charter agreed by Churchill and Roosevelt—which enshrined the principle

<sup>27</sup> G. Shepperson and T. Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Nyasaland native rising* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1958).

<sup>28</sup> Ian Henderson, ‘Early African leadership: the Copperbelt disturbances of 1935 and 1940’, *Journal of Southern African History* 2, 1975, pp. 83–97.

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Richard Rathbone and David Killingray, eds, *Africa and the Second World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986); David Killingray, *Fighting for Britain: African soldiers in the Second World War* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> The best account is contained in Myron Echenberg, *Colonial conscripts: the tirailleurs sénégalais in French West Africa 1857–1960* (London: Heinemann, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> For near-contemporary assessment in detail, see Lord Hailey, *An African survey: a study of problems arising in Africa south of the Sahara* (London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1957); see also R. D. Pearce, *The turning point in Africa: British colonial policy, 1938–48* (London: Frank Cass, 1982).

<sup>32</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: the past of the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: a life* (London: Heinemann, 1991), p. 734.

of self-determination for all peoples—caused considerable excitement among educated Africans everywhere, although Churchill was swift to make clear that it did not apply to those under the benevolent rule of the British. But Churchill himself was also coming under rather more troublesome pressure from the Americans: President Roosevelt and many in his administration were antagonistic to the old European empires as a matter of political principle, and Roosevelt used his influence over the UK government to press for imperial reform, if not outright decolonization once the war was won. It was an early indication that the global context was changing, although Africa's eventual decolonization was not, in the end, the outcome of US pressure.

Meanwhile, African political consciousness had been greatly heightened by the accumulated experiences of the 1930s and the Second World War, whether through active service, or wartime hardship at home, or exposure to European propaganda, or education in Europe or the United States.<sup>34</sup> Protest was becoming ever more coherent, goals more clearly defined, and an awareness of Africa's global position ever sharper. This process was epitomized by the fifth Pan African Congress, held in the UK in 1945, which was attended by an array of African activists, many of whom had spent time in Europe or North America, often in education. Despite a wide diversity of experience, background and political inclination, there were now networks of consciousness and thought through which Africans connected with one another, and they beheld a very different future from that envisaged by their colonial rulers. The Congress ended with a call for the unconditional dissolution of the colonial order in Africa—a decisive and radical shift, when just a few years earlier the aspiration had been reform and representation *within* European empires.<sup>35</sup>

The practical realization of that goal, however, was an altogether different affair. After 1945, Europe was devastated economically, heavily indebted to the United States and greatly weakened in political terms; the international arena was now characterized by bipolarity, as broad blocs dominated by Washington and Moscow respectively overshadowed the old European order. Yet for a number of years this new configuration rendered empire even more important to London, Paris, Brussels and Lisbon, and gave rise to a renewed determination on the part of European colonial powers to maximize the benefits they might accrue from their African possessions, through state intervention and development programmes.<sup>36</sup> The interventionist economic management which had begun to take shape in the 1930s proceeded apace after 1945, as Britain, France and Belgium sought to invest in and expand production in their supposedly under-utilized African territories—of groundnuts in Tanganyika, cotton in Niger, copper, gold and uranium in the

<sup>34</sup> These are among the themes explored in Heike Liebau, Katrin Bromber, Katharina Lange, Dyala Hamzah and Ravi Ahuja, eds, *The world in world wars: experiences, perceptions and perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Hakim Adi, Marika Sherwood and George Padmore, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress revisited* (London: New Beacon Books, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> This has been described as amounting to something of a 'second colonial occupation'. In the East African context, see e.g. D. A. Low and John M. Lonsdale, 'Introduction: towards the new order, 1945–1963', in D. A. Low and Alison Smith, eds, *History of East Africa*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 12–16.

Belgian Congo.<sup>37</sup> Portugal, too, saw its colonies as sources of raw materials, markets for Portuguese produce and outlets for surplus (and impoverished) population. In some areas there was something of an economic boom, in others—notably in the case of the British groundnut and French cotton schemes—expensive failure.<sup>38</sup> But everywhere European colonial states sought to escape dollar hegemony and expand African markets and areas of production. Marketing boards were further developed to fix prices paid to peasant farmers and channel profits into capital-intensive projects. In political terms, too, there was careful management:<sup>39</sup> most territories, albeit to varying degrees, saw moves towards a limited extension of the electoral franchise, the organization of elections to be contested by carefully vetted parties, and the incorporation of educated Africans into the lower rungs of administration. All of this was aimed at stabilizing African colonies, not at surrendering them. Yet the force of African nationalism and demands for independence would push the British, French and Belgians—if not yet the Portuguese—directly towards the latter. The postwar period signalled a decisive shift in the international engagement with Africa.

## **The cynical age: liberation and collaboration**

Decolonization—unthinkable in 1945—came about with remarkable speed, in the end: within two decades of the end of the Second World War, Britain and France had shed their empires, although Portugal resisted rather longer, as did white settler regimes in southern Africa. The shift from colonial mandate to legal sovereignty was, by definition, a profound one in terms of the international engagement with Africa. A tranche of African nations now emerged into the modern world, taking up seats at the UN, and anticipating international relations based on equality and mutual respect. The reality, as always, was rapidly to become a little more complex. A range of external actors sought to massage and manipulate African sovereignty from the outset—even, indeed, before it actually came into being. At the same time, emergent African elites sought to legitimize the new-found sovereignty of their estates through external partnerships, in so doing creating what have become termed ‘gatekeeper states’—that is to say, state structures which sought to control access to the political and material largess available from interaction with the outside world.<sup>40</sup>

In the course of the 1950s, Britain and France, in their different ways, came to the view that some form of African independence was acceptable, even beneficial, as long as it was properly managed. The aim was constitutional transfers of power to ideologically friendly, moderate political parties which would broadly align themselves with the interests of the former colonial power; only in territories

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. Great Britain Ministry of Food, *A plan for the mechanised production of groundnuts in East and Central Africa* (London: HMSO, 1947).

<sup>38</sup> Alan Wood, *The groundnut affair* (London: Bodley Head, 1950).

<sup>39</sup> For useful, and provocative, assessments, see Crawford Young, *The African colonial state in comparative perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and subject: contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>40</sup> Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, pp. 156–7.

of white settlement—Kenya, Southern Rhodesia, Algeria—was this not acceptable, or at least not for now.<sup>41</sup> For London and Paris, relative economic recovery in the 1950s led to increasing confidence that they could continue to influence former colonies without the burden of direct political administration, and in a sense this meant a reversion to nineteenth-century forms of engagement with African states and societies. In Britain, the Commonwealth was extended to include the new nations—not without resistance from certain parts of the British political establishment.<sup>42</sup> The French envisaged something similar, a community of former colonies, although with much stronger links between the metropole and its ‘clients’.<sup>43</sup> Portugal, however—economically weak and with a morbid fear of its own international eclipse—could conceive of no such transfer of power, and remained determined to cling to its African possessions as a means of shoring up its diminished status.<sup>44</sup> By the early 1960s, Lisbon was faced with violent insurgency in Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea; but the British and French were also faced with armed rebellion in Kenya and Algeria respectively, both of which were granted independence either directly or indirectly as a result of violence. In the end—which came swiftly enough, except in Rhodesia and South Africa, where the British had rather less control—it was decided that even in territories of white settlement the future was best secured through ‘friendly’ majority-rule regimes which would guarantee property rights (hence protecting settlers who chose to remain). Across the continent between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s, the decade during which the bulk of decolonization occurred, African nationalists proclaimed victory, naturally enough, and sought to carve out spaces for themselves in the new world order; but soon, more cynical observers would conclude that decolonization was really little more than a reinvention of indirect rule—clientship masquerading as rediscovered sovereignty.

For their part, many of the new generation of African leaders believed that only through some degree of African unification could the continent engage robustly with the wider world. Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba, even the somewhat aloof Haile Selassie, were all to varying degrees pan-Africanists by instinct and conviction, and the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa in 1963 was supposedly their crowning achievement.<sup>45</sup> Yet African unity was never anything other than a mirage. The OAU’s members might unite around anti-colonialism and anti-racialism—primarily directed towards settler regimes in southern Africa—but they could agree on very little else in practical terms, and certainly individual states now had their own foreign policies

<sup>41</sup> See selected essays in Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen, eds, *Settler colonialism in the twentieth century: projects, practices, legacies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> W. David McIntyre, ‘Commonwealth legacy’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm Roger Louis, eds, *The Oxford history of the British empire*, vol. 4: *The twentieth century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> A notable piece of contemporary analysis in this journal is Rene Massigli, ‘New conceptions of French policy in tropical Africa’, *International Affairs* 33: 4, 1957, pp. 403–15; see also Patrick Manning, *Francophone sub-Saharan Africa 1880–1995* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 146, 156.

<sup>44</sup> Basil Davidson, ‘Portuguese-speaking Africa’, in Michael Crowder, ed., *The Cambridge history of Africa*, vol. 8: *From c.1940 to c.1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 762.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the international system: the politics of state survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 110ff.

and linkages with the wider world. This included membership of *la communauté* of former French colonies or of the British Commonwealth, both of which in different ways offered scope for the pursuit of political and military leverage, and economic opportunities; but more broadly it was increasingly played out within the context of the Cold War.

It is a fundamental mistake, routinely committed by occidental commentators, to see Africa *merely* as a Cold War proxy battleground, and Africans as subservient pawns in a great diplomatic game directed by Washington and Moscow. ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ blocs might wish they had so much power; they did not, any more than colonial administrators had had. Africans fought their own wars, on very much their own terms, pursued their own interests (ethnic, national, economic), and co-opted the interventionist tendencies of the superpowers in the process. As noted above, this had long been the case. Nonetheless, it is clear enough that Africa was indeed embroiled in the Cold War, and that the international engagement with the continent between around 1960 and around 1990 was played out according to the exigencies of global geopolitical strategy.<sup>46</sup> The conceptualization of empire in the immediate postwar years as a bulwark against global communism was displaced by the notion that decolonization (once the latter became inevitable) could be managed to ensure the installation of malleable and reconciled regimes across the so-called ‘Third World’. The importance of doing so was increasingly obvious as the Soviet Union, emerging from the Stalinist fixation with its western border, became ever keener to involve itself in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Some African leaders sought balance: in Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah opened relations with Moscow, while also joining the British Commonwealth.<sup>47</sup> Others, such as Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, espoused idiosyncratic forms of ‘Afro-communism’ and preached against ‘neo-colonialism’—although he cultivated relations with China, which invested in the great railway running from Zambia to the Tanzanian coast.<sup>48</sup> But across the continent, regimes and regions were caught up in Cold War struggles, and governments and guerrillas alike identified with one side or the other.

In some areas, Cold War intrusions inflamed already volatile and violent situations. When the Belgians abandoned the Congo, the territory swiftly became an ideological battleground as various parties—Americans, Russians and Chinese among them—sought to protect their interests amid the chaos; leftist premier Patrice Lumumba was murdered, and the UN—on its first African mission—proved woefully ill equipped. Indeed, its Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, was killed in an air crash while shuttling across the region in search of a solution.<sup>49</sup> By the time a western-backed army commander, Joseph Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko), managed to impose a brutal order in the mid-1960s, Washington had

<sup>46</sup> Arthur L. Gavshon, *Crisis in Africa: battleground of East and West* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981); Harry Brind, ‘Soviet policy in the Horn of Africa’, *International Affairs* 60: 1, 1983–4, pp. 75–95.

<sup>47</sup> Martin Meredith, *The state of Africa: a history of fifty years of independence* (London: Free Press, 2005), p. 26.

<sup>48</sup> For a contemporary assessment, see L. Cliffe, ‘From independence to self-reliance’, in I. N. Kimambo and A. J. Temu, eds, *A history of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969).

<sup>49</sup> Susan Williams, *Who killed Dag Hammarskjöld? The UN, the Cold War and white supremacy in Africa* (London: Hurst, 2011).

one of its first (and in many ways archetypal) Cold Warriors in Africa—a kleptomaniac strongman whose ineptitude and tyranny were proverbial but whose hostility to communism rendered him invaluable to the West for the next quarter-century.<sup>50</sup> Matters were even messier further south, in Angola, where ‘international engagement’ from the early 1960s onwards amounted to the military backing of one or other of the armed groups competing for the overthrow of the Portuguese regime. Once the Moscow-backed MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) had seized power in 1974–5, it continued to be challenged by the rebels of UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola), supported by the United States and South Africa.<sup>51</sup> In the Horn of Africa, the Soviet Union switched its support from Somalia to newly Marxist Ethiopia in the mid-1970s and injected hardware, personnel and organizational vigour into the Ethiopian armed forces, prolonging and arguably intensifying an already brutal series of conflicts across the region.<sup>52</sup>

Across Africa, a network of economic and military alliances linked African states to one or the other ideological bloc. At various moments between the 1960s and 1980s, the Soviet Union was giving assistance to Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Somalia (until the mid-1970s), Mali, Nigeria, Uganda and Guinea, while China had military aid treaties with Tanzania, Mali, Guinea and Cameroon. Washington’s ‘allies’ included Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Liberia, Senegal, Ghana, Kenya and (until the mid-1970s) Ethiopia. The British and French had agreements with most of their former colonies, and Paris in particular ran a well-organized and stealthy network of clients—known as *Francafrique*—with some of the more unpleasant regimes on the continent, including that of Jean-Bedel Bokassa in the Central African Empire (formerly Republic), who had a close personal relationship with French President Giscard d’Estaing.<sup>53</sup>

Thus global geopolitical exigencies, as well as economic opportunism, drove external interests in Africa. On the African side, these relationships awarded states—often manifested as ‘Big Man’ systems of governance—legitimacy and largess, and political cliques utilized the external resources on offer to consolidate their positions at home, whether through control of economic assistance and its distribution, or through the accumulation of military hardware and the creation of robust security apparatuses which were critical to the functioning, indeed the very survival, of the regimes themselves. Again, internal control and external linkages were inexorably entwined. Individual regimes in the 1970s may have had more or less genuine commitment to a particular global ideology: for example, Kenya, the putative exemplar of free-marketism, stood in contrast to Tanzania and Nyerere’s earnest espousal of Afro-socialism. But in many respects it was the real business of internal management—holding the state together, suppressing

<sup>50</sup> Michela Wrong, *In the footsteps of Mr Kurtz: living on the brink of disaster in Mobutu’s Congo* (New York: Fourth Estate, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Stephen L. Weigert, *Angola: a modern military history, 1961–2002* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian revolution: war in the Horn of Africa* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2009); Richard J. Reid, *Frontiers of violence in northeast Africa: genealogies of conflict since c.1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> For useful detail, see Gavshon, *Crisis in Africa*.

dissidence, rewarding loyal or natural constituencies—which mattered above all, and thus external partnerships were selected and nurtured which best suited internal needs.

Yet these were not solely tussles over ideological principle. If decolonization ultimately looked to some like indirect rule reborn, then in economic terms even less had changed, for Africa remained both a key destination for exports and a source of natural resources. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Africa's economic future seemed set fair, relatively speaking: prices for primary produce were generally high; industrialization, though late in most areas, was under way; the continent was possessed of some extremely desirable natural resources; and living standards, even among the poorer groups in society, were generally higher than, for example, in South Asia.<sup>54</sup> Yet the global economic crisis of the 1970s—especially its spiralling oil prices—hit the continent particularly hard, while a number of governments had already begun to borrow beyond their means in order to fund rapid economic growth. In the 1930s and 1940s colonial rule had at least sought to mitigate the brutal excesses of the market; but independent governments generally threw off such restraints in the quest for foreign currency, investment and speedy profit. International financial institutions lent money at high rates of interest and debts mounted accordingly, while foreign companies moved rapidly to do business in places considered risky but extremely profitable, coming to mutually lucrative arrangements with incumbent regimes in the process.<sup>55</sup> Many outsiders declared that African governments were squandering their resources; but the outside world was entirely complicit, and indeed the unfavourable global terms of trade dating back to the early twentieth century (and indeed earlier) made it almost impossible for African states to deal with outsiders on anything like an equal footing. The Cold War needs to be understood in this context. Western companies weathered numerous regime changes in Nigeria for the sake of oil;<sup>56</sup> Mobutu's Zaire offered diamonds and manganese ore to US and European patrons;<sup>57</sup> French diplomats might chuckle at the ludicrous extravagance of Bokassa's 'empire', but in the 1970s he provided easy access to uranium.<sup>58</sup> Francafrique perhaps best exemplifies the nefariousness of the era; but in South Africa, the enormous investments on the part of the British mining company Anglo American meant that the UK was comparatively impervious to liberal condemnation of apartheid until the late 1980s.<sup>59</sup>

This, then, was an age in which international engagement with Africa was shaped by both ideological and economic concerns in a manner which contributed to the continent's political and material crises in the first decades of independence. Spiralling debt, economic failure and political insecurity rendered Africa vulnerable to external predations of a character reminiscent of the late nineteenth

<sup>54</sup> John Iliffe, *Africans: the history of a continent*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 260.

<sup>55</sup> Austen, *African economic history*, pp. 224ff.

<sup>56</sup> Meredith, *State of Africa*, p. 284; see also Duncan Clarke, *Crude continent: the struggle for Africa's oil prize* (London: Profile Books, 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Wrong, *In the footsteps, passim*.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Nugent, *Africa since independence: a comparative history* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 226–7.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. Nelson Mandela, *Long walk to freedom* (London: Abacus, 1995), p. 424; Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 515–16, 518–19.

century, and fundamentally warped the continent's international relations to the relative advantage—at least in the short to medium term—of outsiders. Again, however, the degree to which the first generation of Africa's political leaders sought to manipulate foreign interests to best advantage must not be underestimated; indeed, some actively sought to take advantage of economic and political *disorder* in carving out garrison states which they sold to external partners as representing the surest route to future order and development. All told, the first generation of independence was an age of hope which swiftly turned to cynicism, and of naked *realpolitik*. Yet the 'problem' of Africa would soon come to be approached in putatively different ways.

### **The age of Mammon and moral missions: 'development' and 'democracy'**

In many ways, the period between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s represented the most significant watershed in the twentieth-century history of international engagement with Africa—more important, in its way, than even the decade of decolonization between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s. Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) were introduced, a reflection of the neo-liberal economics enshrined in the World Bank's Berg Report of 1981;<sup>60</sup> and in 1989–90 the end of the Cold War ushered in an era of somewhat altered global politics with significant implications for Africa. In truth, this putatively 'new' era witnessed a reversion to earlier twentieth-century, and indeed certain nineteenth-century, approaches to Africa on the part of the 'international community', but it needs to be regarded as comprising a distinct and momentous shift nonetheless.

The overt emphasis over the past 20 years or so has been on economic and political 'development'—an agenda shared by African and western governments alike. There are several strands to this. Since the 1980s, neo-liberal economic orthodoxy—as defined by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and individual donor countries<sup>61</sup>—has emphasized the primacy of the free market, or a statist version of it,<sup>62</sup> and has led to SAPs compelling the state to shrink itself and to privatize large sectors of economy and society. The effective implementation of SAPs, which proliferated in the 1990s and 2000s, became linked to direct foreign aid, and opened up African economies to large-scale foreign investment. The 'success' of neo-liberal economics is supposedly demonstrated by the dramatic upturn in many African annual GDP growth rates: whereas between 1980 and 2000 sub-Saharan Africa's average annual GDP growth rate was 2.4 per cent, from 2000 to 2010 it was 5.7 per cent.<sup>63</sup> The best-performing African economies have recently achieved between 6 and 8 per cent, and regularly feature in the global top ten: among these are Ethiopia, Angola, Nigeria, Chad, Mozambique,

<sup>60</sup> Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, 'Introduction: understanding Africa's place in world politics', in Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, eds, *Africa in international politics: external involvement on the continent* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 4–5.

<sup>61</sup> Caroline Thomas, 'The international financial institutions' relations with Africa: insights from the issue of representation and voice', in Taylor and Williams, eds, *Africa in international politics*.

<sup>62</sup> 'How state capitalism helps the super rich', *Africa Report*, March 2012.

<sup>63</sup> 'The lion kings?', *The Economist*, 6 Jan. 2011.



Rwanda, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana and Zambia. This trend looks set to continue, with various depictions of 'Africa in 2020' forecasting spiralling oil and other resource revenues and a dramatic expansion in middle-class consumerism, meaning opportunities for hungry multinationals.<sup>64</sup> Whatever the true meaning of these numbers—and too often numbers simplify extraordinarily complex situations on the ground—there can be little doubt that African society (if such a general term is viable) has undergone dramatic changes, in some respects, over the last two decades.

According to these readings, international engagement with Africa will continue to be, indeed will increasingly be, economic in essence. The idea that massive GDP growth is inherently 'good' prevails in the West's economic engagement with Africa, and looks set to endure for some time to come. In essence, it is a modern manifestation of the perception developed in the early nineteenth century that all the continent needed was to be 'opened up' to free trade in legitimate commodities—whether these were traded by states or by individuals—and Africa would find the peace, stability and prosperity it so badly lacked. At the same time, African governments—on the basis of better-performing economies and the lure of energy resources—have been able to manage external intrusions to greater internal advantage than at any time since independence. In some respects, African politicians have become much more adept at manipulating external partners in pursuit of their own interests.

Yet developmental agendas, of course—driven, again, by both African governments and their external partners—have focused on a broader range of issues than simply economic growth, however central this may be. The zeitgeist has been captured, self-evidently, in the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the UN in 2000, which focus on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the empowerment of women, the promotion of education and health care, the protection of the environment, and the strengthening of the African producer through 'fair trade'.<sup>65</sup> All member states, Africa's included, have signed up to these goals, and targets have been set for 2015; actual performance, inevitably, varies greatly. But the key point here is that 'development' has become a veritable industry, both at the state level—with most 'developed' nations ring-fencing a proportion of their national budgets for the purposes of aid to Africa and elsewhere—and in the realm of the non-governmental organization. Ironically, as neo-liberal economics has pushed back the range of activities formerly dominated by the state, the void has been swiftly (even seamlessly) filled by foreign aid programmes and NGOs, which have proliferated dramatically in the last 20 years.<sup>66</sup> For example, as African governments' spending on health and education has declined, international NGOs, sometimes working with local partners, have rushed to plug the gap. An enormous swathe of the engagement with Africa is therefore concerned with the distribution

<sup>64</sup> 'A sweet spot in global demand', *Africa Report*, Dec. 2012–Jan. 2012.

<sup>65</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2003: the Millennium Development Goals. A compact among nations to end human poverty* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> See e.g. Robert Pinkney, *NGOs, Africa and the global order* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

of aid and organizational assistance in various ways—whether through such ‘big beasts’ as UNICEF and UNHCR, Oxfam, *Médecins sans Frontières* and the Red Cross, or via a range of much smaller and local ‘grassroots’ organizations. The aid industry is in many respects the fulfilment of colonial visions articulated, but never implemented, several decades earlier. Yet there is plenty of African agency and opportunism in the operation of this vast industry. International NGOs use—indeed, often rely heavily on—local partners, and the rapid growth of the latter signifies the emergence of a much more robust civil society across the continent. At the same time, African governments use local and external NGOs alike to provide basic goods and services, freeing up the state’s resources for macroeconomic growth and related infrastructural projects.

Meanwhile, in a global economy characterized by an insatiable demand for raw materials and energy sources, Africa is increasingly posited as a land of opportunity, a field ripe for investment—much as it was a century ago. This has given rise to the notion of a ‘new scramble’ for the continent, involving a number of comparatively recent entrants as players, including the Gulf states and India.<sup>67</sup> Leading the charge is China, whose increasingly aggressive economic engagement with Africa has led to some nervousness in the West. In Ethiopia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Zambia and elsewhere, Chinese consortia are investing in infrastructural, construction and mining projects,<sup>68</sup> while an interest in oil has—predictably enough—driven much recent Chinese diplomatic engagement with Africa.<sup>69</sup> In places this has led to tension between Chinese workers and local labour, as in Zambia for example;<sup>70</sup> but across the continent the Chinese presence increases year on year, in terms of a skilled workforce, materials and finance. Since the launch of the ‘Go Out’ strategy by Beijing in 1999, Chinese–African trade has increased by a multiple of 30.<sup>71</sup> Critics (mostly western) are keen to point out that, in contrast to the West’s broad concern for human rights and ‘good governance’, China attaches no such preconditions to its loans and investments, nor does the Chinese government take any special interest in the internal affairs of African states. On the whole, therefore, African states have welcomed this ‘new’ engagement; China’s demand for African mineral resources, in fact, has been the main reason for the continent’s impressive recent growth rates.

Yet internal affairs continue to be of especial interest to the West. The focus has been on ‘good governance’,<sup>72</sup> usually understood in terms of electoral politics—and to be sure, regular elections have proliferated across the continent in recent years. The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed moves towards political liberalization, even democratization, in Benin, Mali, Zambia and Ghana; Kenya and

<sup>67</sup> See e.g. Ian Taylor, ‘India’s rise in Africa’, *International Affairs* 88: 4, July 2012, pp. 779–98.

<sup>68</sup> There has been a flood of literature on the topic. A sample might include Ian Taylor, *China and Africa: engagement and compromise* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006); Chris Alden, *China in Africa* (London: Zed, 2007); Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *China into Africa: trade, aid and influence* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2008). See also ‘Africa’s emerging partners: for better or for worse’, *Africa Report*, June 2011; ‘China–Africa: getting to “win-win”’, *Africa Report*, Feb. 2012.

<sup>69</sup> Ian Taylor, ‘China’s oil diplomacy in Africa’, *International Affairs* 82: 5, Nov. 2006, pp. 937–59.

<sup>70</sup> See interview with President Michael Sata of Zambia in *Africa Report*, Dec. 2011–Jan. 2012.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Between extremes: China and Africa’, Africa Research Institute Briefing Note 1202, Oct. 2012.

<sup>72</sup> Taylor and Williams, ‘Introduction’, pp. 7–8.

Nigeria would follow suit, haltingly, a few years later. At the time of writing, almost (if not quite) every African state has held an election at some point in the last 20 years. Elections please international donors, as evidence of accountability and plurality, although they are often no such thing. Yet ‘good governance’ is a usefully vague phrase: in its more elastic sense, it also encompasses political transparency, a robust ‘civil society’—independent judiciary and media, most obviously—and an efficient and apolitical bureaucracy. Here again, African political and social landscapes have changed dramatically in recent years. External partners may often claim at least some of the credit for these transformations, but the reality is that such shifts have been driven from within, and outsiders must merely take account of them in developing their ‘Africa policies’.

Nevertheless, some of the key regime changes in recent years have come about not through voting but as a result of violence,<sup>73</sup> for example in Zaire/Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, Rwanda. In South Africa, and neighbouring Namibia, armed liberation movements overturned regimes which had long appeared immovable, and when the ANC and SWAPO respectively seized power through the ballot, in the end, they did so (as in Zimbabwe) only after many years of the bullet, or versions of it. And some of the supposed best practitioners of good governance have remained in power for lengthy periods of time: Kagame in Rwanda, Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia (until his death in 2012), Museveni in Uganda. From time to time they come in for international criticism—for example, of Meles’s clamp-down in the wake of the 2005 elections, and his improbably overwhelming victory in 2010—yet these leaders are seen as having provided stability, and as having laid the foundations for democracy and plurality. As had been the case a generation earlier—and, indeed, in the colonial era—local partners were sought in pursuit of international agendas. Strong leadership, combined with economic growth, development-centred agendas, and a supposedly cautious but steady approach to political liberalization, are seen by the international community as the essential elements of the ‘developmental state’. Such leadership, moreover, is seen as critical to the increasingly important security agendas according to which many foreign ministries in the West base their dealings with African states. Many of the leaders of the 1990s were seen as a ‘new breed’—Nelson Mandela, Meles Zenawi, Yoweri Museveni, Paul Kagame, Isaias Afewerki, Olusegun Obasanjo—men who were pragmatic, intelligent, tough, forthright; men with whom business could be done.<sup>74</sup> One of the ‘new’ group, Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President of South Africa, spoke in the most eloquent of terms through the 1990s about an ‘African renaissance’,<sup>75</sup> although in so doing he was in fact drawing inspiration from the noted Afrocentric scholar Cheikh Anta Diop several decades earlier.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> William Reno, *Warfare in independent Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 119ff.; Richard J. Reid, *Warfare in African history* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 158–69.

<sup>74</sup> For a contemporary assessment in the pages of this journal, see Christopher Clapham, ‘Discerning the new Africa’, *International Affairs* 74: 2, 1998, pp. 263–9.

<sup>75</sup> See e.g. ‘The African Renaissance statement of H. E. Thabo Mbeki, 13 August 1998’, <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/1998/mbeko813.htm>, accessed 20 Nov. 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop, *Towards the African Renaissance: essays in African culture and development, 1946–60* (London: The Estate of Cheikh Anta Diop and Karnak House, 1996).

US President Bill Clinton's tour of Africa in early 1998 was defined by a similar kind of optimism.

Western governments and institutions have frequently formed firm bonds with individual leaders on this basis. The UK government has long admired Kagame in Rwanda, despite occasional glitches arising from Kagame's growing authoritarianism and proclivity for regional adventures—witness the recent suspension of aid by several western countries over his alleged support for Congolese rebel groups. When Meles Zenawi died in August 2012, there was a remarkable outpouring of tributes from various quarters in the international community: former British premier Tony Blair, the Obama administration in the US, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.<sup>77</sup> Praise focused on Meles's skilful pragmatism and dedication to the Millennium Development Goals, revealing above all the degree to which he had come to be seen as representative of the international engagement with Africa as a whole. He was indeed Africa's spokesman at gatherings of the OECD countries, as well as sitting on Blair's Commission for Africa. He was the symbol of post-Cold War Africa's global agenda. Foreign admiration for Nelson Mandela, meanwhile, is all but obligatory: his passing—imminent at the time of writing—is likely to produce an even greater deluge of tribute and accolade.

Meanwhile, however, the age of the overthrow of apartheid and shifts towards good governance has also been that of catastrophe elsewhere on the continent. Somalia had collapsed into chaotic civil war by the early 1990s; there were civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, too, which became bywords for savage violence—savagery which persuaded some that Africa was beyond redemption, and that despite outward signs of progress swathes of the continent were only a few steps away from the abyss of primitive barbarity.<sup>78</sup> And then there was Rwanda, and the genocide of some 800,000 Tutsi and so-called 'moderate Hutu' in a few weeks in 1994. International responses to these crises oscillated between interventionism and inertia. In late 1992 and early 1993, the US launched the UN-mandated Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, which in terms of briefly protecting humanitarian aid was regarded as something of a success; but the UN mission which stayed over the ensuing few months was ground down by Somali clan warfare and eventually departed, unable to fulfil its mandate. Failure in Somalia left the United States in particular chary of boots-on-the-ground involvement in Africa, which went some way to explaining why, despite plenty of forewarning from the small UN mission there, the awful events in Rwanda were greeted with inaction.<sup>79</sup> Many regarded France, indeed, as having played an actively obstructive role, in that it had long bolstered the regime of Juvenal Habyarimana, whose assassination had prompted the genocide in the first place. As the scale of the genocide became clear in the weeks and months which followed the Rwandan Patriotic Front's seizure of Kigali in July 1994, there was much hand-wringing in the West, and in the UN

<sup>77</sup> 'World leaders mourn death of Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi', AFP, 21 Aug. 2012; 'Ethiopian PM Meles Zenawi's death sparks fears of turmoil', *Guardian*, 22 Aug. 2012.

<sup>78</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, 'The coming anarchy', *Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1994.

<sup>79</sup> James J. Hentz, 'The contending currents in United States involvement in sub-Saharan Africa', in Taylor and Williams, eds, *Africa in international politics*, pp. 32–3.

more generally, and much insistence that such international inertia would never again be acceptable.<sup>80</sup>

Thus when Eritrea and Ethiopia returned to war in 1998—another indication of the fragility of Africa’s putative ‘renaissance’—the United States played an active role in attempting to broker a peace deal, although such a deal proved elusive.<sup>81</sup> The UK sent troops to help end the war in Sierra Leone, an operation widely hailed as a great success.<sup>82</sup> The UN was sometimes prepared to send its own peacekeepers—as in the eastern Congo—but material and financial assistance was increasingly transferred to the ever more assertive African Union, which replaced the OAU in 2002. Peace brokerage and peacekeeping had an increasingly pan-African and intra-African character in the 2000s—for example, in Sudan and later in Somalia. Even so, the AU’s vacillation over Libya in 2011 was in stark contrast to the European response, which was to bomb government positions and otherwise support the rebel movement, once it had begun to gather momentum.<sup>83</sup> The AU’s paralysis flowed in part from the fact that Gaddafi had bankrolled the organization for several years; the British and the French, by contrast, had few qualms (or none their leaders could admit to) about armed intervention, although there was no question of troops on the ground, and plenty of self-reassurance about Libya being more straightforward than Iraq or Afghanistan.

However, with occasional exceptions,<sup>84</sup> the military relationship between Africa and a range of external actors has become covert rather than overt. Since 9/11 Africa has been viewed very much in security terms, with specific reference to Islamic extremism.<sup>85</sup> Hence the revived concern for the situation in Somalia and the Horn of Africa more broadly;<sup>86</sup> and, more recently, anxieties over the Islamist insurgency in northern Mali—where in 2013 France led an international military intervention involving troops from a number of West African states—and over the shadowy Islamist movement in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram. Western governments may have been wrong-footed by the North African uprisings of 2011, when old allies were swept from power after decades of apparent permanence; but the fact remains that external actors seek local partners for their various projects in Africa, and are willing to deal with those most likely to deliver, often regardless of how they might actually be viewed in their own countries. The US has economic interests in Africa—mostly centred on oil—but Washington’s view of

<sup>80</sup> Hentz, ‘The contending currents’, p. 23; Linda Melvern and Paul Williams, ‘Britannia waived the rules: the Major government and the 1994 Rwandan genocide’, *African Affairs* 103: 410, 2004, pp. 1–22.

<sup>81</sup> John Prendergast and Philip Roessler, ‘The role of the US in resolving the conflict’, in Dominique Jacquin-Berdal and Martin Plaut, eds, *Unfinished business: Ethiopia and Eritrea at war* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2005).

<sup>82</sup> Adekeye Adebajo, ‘From Congo to Congo: United Nations peacekeeping in Africa after the Cold War’, in Taylor and Williams, eds, *Africa in international politics*, p. 205. For a broader analysis, see Tom Porteous, ‘British government policy in sub-Saharan Africa under New Labour’, *International Affairs* 81: 2, March 2005, pp. 281–97.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Libya and the African Union: right in principle, wrong in practice’, *Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 2011.

<sup>84</sup> ‘US forces join jungle search for Kony’, BBC News, 30 April 2012.

<sup>85</sup> ‘US expands military operations in Africa’, *Voice of America*, 3 Oct. 2012; Alex Vines, ‘Rhetoric from Brussels and reality on the ground: the EU and security in Africa’, *International Affairs* 86: 5, Sept. 2010, pp. 1091–108.

<sup>86</sup> e.g. Roland Marchal, ‘Warlordism and terrorism: how to obscure an already confusing crisis? The case of Somalia’, *International Affairs* 83: 6, Nov. 2007, pp. 1091–106.

the continent is often coloured by security concerns.<sup>87</sup> The worry that Somalia will become ‘another Afghanistan’, breeding terrorism which will eventually manifest itself on US soil, and more recent similar fears over militants linked to Al-Qaeda in Mali and Nigeria, defines American engagement with Africa. Yet African states continue to lobby for American diplomatic attention, and many aspire to close relations with Washington for the clout and stability this supposedly gives them. As in former decades, such external linkages serve to legitimize regimes—though arguably this has become less important than it was, say, during the Cold War—and lead to the provision of military assistance, in both hardware and training. Thus African political leaders often link their own domestic struggles—with a particular group of insurgents, for example—to larger global security agendas, and have proved adept at persuading Washington that they are the best guarantors of stability in their particular region, or can be relied upon to sign up to larger anti-terrorist projects. Uganda and Ethiopia are especially good examples; but of course this can be a double-edged sword, for association with the US may render countries more vulnerable than previously to outside attack (as has been the case in both Kampala and Addis Ababa), while among significant sections of the population such a problematic association likewise actually renders the government *less*, not more, legitimate. But the key point here, again, relates to *agency*: Africans participate as equal partners in, and indeed co-opt, these external linkages.

In Europe, meanwhile, the UK, France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Norway in particular remain major suppliers of aid, but are continually discommodulated by outbreaks of supposed ‘bad governance’. Britain and France, the two great former colonial powers, are undergoing some changes of their own. The old FrancAfrique network appears to have been dismantled, and with it the Cold War era system of clientage and political and economic intimacy between Paris and a range of Francophone governments.<sup>88</sup> The UK is in the process of closing a number of its embassies, instead focusing on minimally staffed ‘micro-embassies’ charged with overseeing ever larger areas, while David Cameron’s coalition government has placed ‘business relations’ with Africa much higher on the agenda.<sup>89</sup>

It is striking that our own age is one of such apparently stark contrasts in terms of the global engagement with Africa—it has become an ‘emerging market’, a source of violent threat, and a target of the moral crusade. At the outset of the great European imperial project in Africa a little over a century ago, the key concerns were, in essence, economic and military: economic, in that the continent was seen as a potentially rich source of crops, raw materials and consumers of European products; military, in that in order for the continent to make any kind of ‘progress’, as defined in Europe, there needed to be an end to the violent insta-

<sup>87</sup> Paul D. Williams, ‘Thinking about security in Africa’, *International Affairs* 83: 6, Nov. 2007, pp. 1021–38.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Francafrigue: le grand divorce?’, *Africa Report*, June 2012. For an earlier assessment of shifts in French policy, see Rachel Utley, “‘Not to do less but to do better ...’: French military policy in Africa”, *International Affairs* 78: 1, Jan. 2002, pp. 129–46.

<sup>89</sup> Tom Cargill, *More with less: trends in UK diplomatic engagement in sub-Saharan Africa*, Africa Programme Paper (London: Chatham House, May 2011).

bility which supposedly so blighted the African political and cultural landscape. It would be superfluous to labour the point that little has changed. Change within Africa, of course, has been seismic in some key respects, in many countries if by no means all: economies have opened up and expanded remarkably, social mobility has increased, and political systems have become ever more inclusive and the ballot ever more powerful as a means of effecting change or at least registering disaffection. Yet continuity can also be espied in the ways in which African political classes seek to utilize external linkages, and to co-opt ongoing foreign interventions, in pursuit of a range of internal projects—political, economic, social and cultural.

Of course, in addition to the hubris and the horror that have long defined the international engagement with Africa, there has been a comparatively novel sense of humanity, too—a concern for people's rights, well-being and 'development', demonstrable in Africa itself as well as the world beyond. Yet even this seems not quite so novel, if we consider it to have a direct genealogical link to the benign paternalism which Europeans believed lay at the heart of the imperial mission in 1914. In 2014 Africa still, it seems, has the power to horrify, but it also remains a place where material opportunities abound, and where benevolent foreigners can perform good deeds. Africans, meanwhile, remain able and willing to refract external concerns and images with their own interests very much to the fore.