

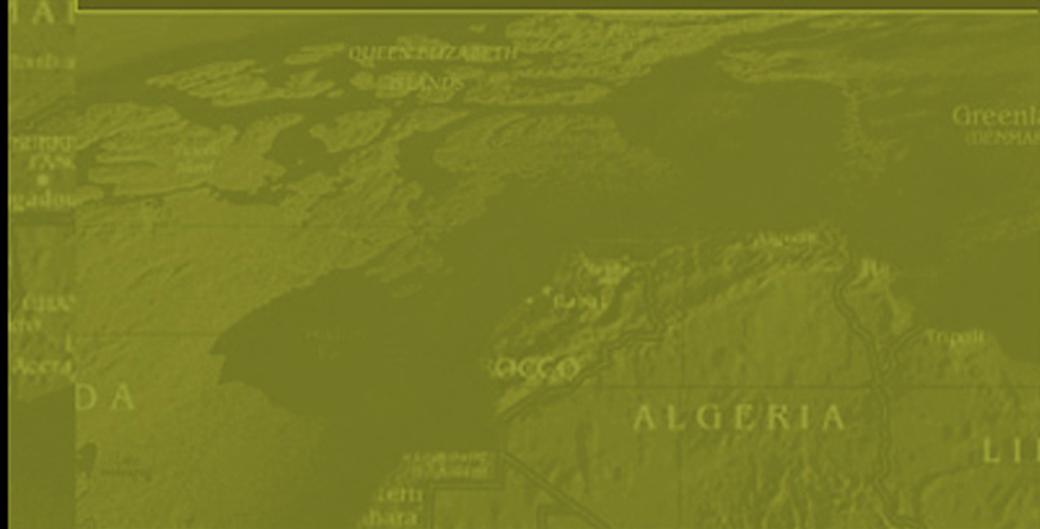


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Between globalization and marginalization

*Edited by Ulf Engel and Gorm Rye Olsen*

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**Ulf Engel and Gorm Rye Olsen**



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## Series editor's preface

In International Relations (IR) theory, as in many other aspects of modern life, Africa (meaning sub-Saharan Africa) is the exception. It is the place where ideas and theories from the social sciences that seem to give some purchase on the human condition elsewhere either work badly or do not work at all. The most obvious problem for IR theory in Africa arises from the limited success, or in several cases outright failure, of the attempt to transplant a Westphalian system of states in Africa. During its imperial phase, Europe managed to impose its political form more or less successfully on the rest of the world. Sometimes this was done by imposition, as in much of Africa and Asia. Sometimes it was done by rebellion, as in most of the Americas. And occasionally it was done by adaptive copying, most successfully in Japan, but also up to a point in Thailand, China and Ethiopia. In retrospect, the process of colonization and decolonization can be understood as a political makeover in which adoption of the Westphalian form was the price of political independence and acceptance into international society. Given the scale of the enterprise and the diversity of human conditions in which it was carried out, it has been remarkably successful. Most of the successor states left behind by European imperial era have taken root and made the institutions of sovereignty, territoriality and the right of national self-determination their own. In so doing, and with all their variations in (in)efficiency and (in)justice, they have reproduced and expanded the inside/ outside framework of the European political model. This, in turn, allowed IR theories that were essentially rooted in European history to be, with some justification, applied on a global scale.

The widespread failure of this transplant in Africa explains much of the difficulty in applying IR theory there. With the conspicuous exception of South Africa, Africa is largely composed of weak and failed states. As Robert Jackson so rightly pointed out many years ago, the African states have full juridical sovereignty (external recognition within international society), but much less in the way of empirical sovereignty (the ability to exert legitimate and effective government throughout their territory). In much of Africa borders are just lines on a map rather than effective demarcations of authority. Governments may control only part of the national territory (usually the capital), and be little more than the currently most successful of various warlords and usurpers who seek to capture the juridical assets of the state for their own advantage. Within this weak political structure all sorts of actors with territorial, political, military, economic, and societal standing exist alongside, and often in competition with, the state. Warlords and insurgency movements can, if they succeed in capturing a fungible resource, use the global economy to sustain themselves. Outside actors active in Africa range from criminal mafias and terrorists, through Western NGOs, transnational corporations and private military companies, to regional or international peacekeeping operations and economic missions from the IMF and the World Bank. All have opportunities to carve out space for themselves, whether with or against the local government, within the fragmented and weakly held terrain of African politics. As decolonization recedes into history, it becomes apparent that this condition is quite

durable. It seems decreasingly likely that the African state is suddenly going to become successful, and therefore we need to come to terms with the nature of African politics as it actually exists.

That is the task of this book. Much of the literature on Africa focuses on the dilemma of the African state and what to do about it. This book approaches the subject through the foreign policies of the major powers and some of their international institutions. Blending comparative foreign policy analysis and international relations theory, it explores how the major powers deal with Africa: how the Westphalian and post-Westphalian core of international society deals with a non- or pre-Westphalian part of its periphery. The subject is not African international relations, but Africa in international relations, and the key themes are globalization (mainly economic penetration) and marginalization (the waxing and waning of security interest in Africa). One contribution of this book is that it sets out a well-supported perspective on Africa's position in international society. Another is that it challenges IR theorists to take the African condition seriously. How can a whole continent that largely falls outside the strict inside/outside, domestic/international distinctions, be brought into the conceptual debates about how to understand the international system?

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# Global politics and Africa – and Africa in international relations theory

*Ulf Engel and Gorm Rye Olsen*

Sub-Saharan Africa has been on the margins of the international system for many years, and yet the continent has been deeply and inherently engaged in the global trade system since the beginning of the nineteenth century. This striking duality between marginalization and ‘globalization’ has had a significant impact on the academic studies on Africa’s place in international politics. Only to a very limited extent have such studies been inspired by theoretical thinking or by the theoretical debates that have taken place within the study of international relations (IR). Also, the duality between marginalization and globalization has had far-reaching consequences for how the region has been treated in international relations theory.

The lack of theoretical interest in Africa and its place in global politics has been the core inspiration for this book. First, according to Stuart Croft, it is striking ‘that the IR literature on Africa is incredibly sparse.... Second, much of what does exist on Africa and IR is not, in actuality, about African and international relations. Rather it is about Africa’s role in *North–South* relations, and here the emphasis is on the North. Third, Africa’s intellectual exclusion from the IR mainstream debates has meant that little of the literature on African IR has had any explicit theoretical content’ (Croft 1997: 609). Going back to the classical realists, it may be illustrative to refer to Hans Morgenthau and his observations on Africa. In his textbook *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau states that Africa did not have a history before the First World War – ‘it was a politically empty space’ (Morgenthau 1985: 369). A similar conception is espoused by the founding figure of neo-realism, Kenneth Waltz, who in this main work on neo-realism states that ‘it would be... ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics on Malaysia and Costa Rica.... A general theory of international politics is necessarily based on the great powers’ (Waltz 1979: 72–3).

Kenneth Waltz may be right that a general theory of international politics has to be based on the great powers. Nevertheless, it represents an obvious problem that certain parts of the world, such as Africa, are simply left out of the theoretical debates in IR. For an immediate consideration, there are at least two starting points for reflecting on how and where Africa can be brought into the general theoretical debates on international politics. The reflections can either start with the African states and with Africa’s relations to the outside or, alternatively, they can start with an analysis of the Africa policies of a number of the most important international actors. This book takes the second approach in its empirical analyses. However, it does not mean that theoretical reflections on the African states including their foreign policies are not both relevant and important for realizing the theoretical ambitions of this book. We have made the choice to restrict ourselves to presenting empirical analyses of the Africa policies of the big players and then combining these analyses with the recent debates on the African state and its external relations.

By choosing the second approach, the book bases itself on two fundamental assumptions. The first is that, by means of thorough empirical analyses of the Africa policy of a number of big international players, states and international organizations, it is possible to get an idea of Africa’s place in global politics both in

the Cold War period and in the post Cold War era of the 1990s, as well as in the current post September 11 world.

The second assumption is that the analyses of the more or less coherent Africa policy of the great international players make it possible to make some theoretical reflections on Africa's place in global politics, including its place in the crucial period following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Thus empirical studies of the most-important international actors, informed by a methodologically inspired research design reflecting the state of the art in IR theory, are considered as an adequate starting point for reflections on Africa's role in international relations. It is important to stress that such a research design does not prescribe a particular approach for the empirical studies.

Because of the theoretical ambition of the book, we have asked the authors of the individual chapters to address a number of core issues. We have asked them to look at the 'national' interest of the individual players and the corresponding 'interest' of a number of non-state actors in Africa. Also, the authors have been asked to discuss policy continuity and changes in the Africa policies of the external actors, where it has been important to address issues such as decision-making processes and decisions in crises. In relation to decision-making, it is considered important to identify which actors, institutions, individuals, and lobby groups, etc. have taken part in policy formulations and decisions on Africa. It is also considered relevant to seek to identify underlying notions, ideas or common cultures that may have contributed to structure the interpretation of the problems in Africa, and also if such notions have influenced the policy initiatives of the outside actors.

In summary, there is both a theoretical and an empirical aim of this book. The theoretical aim is to contribute to the understanding of Africa in global politics. The empirical aim is to obtain a thorough understanding of the Africa policies of a number of the most important actors determining the international framework for the region's development. As indicated above, it is the assumption of this exercise that empirical analysis of the Africa policy *of* the big international actors allows us to discuss and theorize on Africa in global politics.

The chapter is organized as follows. First, a brief overview is given over how Africa was treated in IR theory in the Cold War period. It is shown that the studies of Africa in global politics were inspired by the theoretical debates in IR to a limited extent only. The consequences for academic studies of Africa in the post Cold War era are discussed in two sections. One section deals with the consequences of the end of bipolarity for Africa and for the studies on Africa in global politics. It concludes that the majority of contributions on Africa continue to be descriptive and in general to be little informed by IR theory debates. The other section addresses the issue of how the international relations of African states and African statehood are currently changing quite significantly. It concludes that these changes question if it is still analytically fruitful to refer to 'African states' and 'African foreign policy'. The answer is 'yes' but with reservations. The last part of the chapter briefly discusses the results of the empirical analyses and, in particular, addresses the question of how the results can be used to promote the integration of Africa into the theoretical debates within IR.

### **Africa in IR theory 1960–90**

The colonial period – which for most colonies lasted no more than 60 years – did not change the peripheral position that Africa had in the international system. However, colonialism strengthened Africa's integration into the global system in economic, political, and ideological/cultural respects. This operated most clearly through the colonial system that connected the African territories to an emerging global economy as sub-suppliers to the European economies.

In spite of high hopes and great expectations, the formal de-colonization process did not fundamentally alter the peripheral position of Africa. The continent remained on the fringes of the international system, in political as well as economic terms. This was obviously related to the fact that, when the African colonies began to achieve their independence, the Cold War was at its height. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the political and military attention of Europe and the US, but also of the Soviet Union and the PR China, was directed towards the confrontation between ‘capitalism’ and ‘communism’. Therefore, the so-called First and Second World were interested only to a very limited extent in Africa and the immense challenges the new Africans leaders faced on the eve of independence. The United Nations and France were probably some of the very few exceptions from the pattern of widespread neglect and general lack of substantial interest in Africa around the time of de-colonization.

The understanding of Africa as being only of minor importance to the overarching bipolar confrontation between the East and the West was clearly reflected in the academic literature on the international politics of the Cold War and in IR theory (Croft 1997; Mark 1994; McKay 1963 and 1966; Thiam 1963; Zartman 1966). The undisputed predominance of national security concerns, power politics and mutual deterrence was reflected strongly in the theoretical debates on international relations. The international system was interpreted in terms of the anarchy among sovereign nation states, and a narrow understanding of what constituted ‘national interest’ prevailed. The distribution of power among states strongly preoccupied with their own national security was a core element in the interpretation that governed the understanding of global politics during the Cold War. The fact that the study of IR was an emerging discipline in the US may explain why the focus of IR in international relations was almost exclusively on the ‘big players’ and not on ‘less important’ actors such as the new African states. Most of the classical realists did not even think that there was a need to deal theoretically with Africa and the international position of the continent, as the earlier quotation from Hans Morgenthau’s textbook clearly indicates.

However, there was also a small coterie in academia which, starting from realist assumptions, was interested in Africa’s responses to the bipolar international system that developed from the late 1940s. This limited group of researchers was mainly preoccupied with the prospects of pan-Africanism and the policies of the non-aligned movement (Legum 1962; Ajala 1973; McGowan 1968). It is worth noting that such studies on the foreign policy of African states during the Cold War actually became the forerunner of the debate on the ‘weak states’ in the later IR discussions (see Handel 1981).

The end of the Bretton Woods system in 1971–3 and the first oil-price shock in 1973 led to a global decline of US hegemony. As a consequence, a crisis in classical realism followed (Menzel 2001: 141 ff). Subsequently, two broad strands of neorealist IR theory developed. One was inspired by the works of Kenneth Waltz and his ‘structural realism’. The other trend was based on Robert G. Gilpin and his ‘economic realism’. In spite of this change in the general debate on IR theory, it hardly affected the discipline’s view of Africa as indicated by the earlier quotation from Kenneth Waltz’s principal work. International relations and the Africa policies of the big powers largely continued to be viewed from a geo-strategic, i.e. US–Soviet conflict, perspective.

Even when the Cold War turned warm in Africa, it had remarkably limited impact on the general debates within IR. When the Portuguese withdrew from Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau in 1974–5 and socialist-inspired liberation movements came to power, the level of analysis actually changed, even though the units of analysis remained the same. Thus, states or the ‘agents’ and the understanding of their national interests remained the core units of the system, while the ‘structures’, i.e. superpower rivalry, interdependence, etc., were ascribed an increasingly important role. This was particularly obvious in the case of Southern Africa, and the Horn of Africa after the 1974 *coup d’état* and the ‘national democratic revolution’ of 1977–8 in Ethiopia, which led to the deployment of Soviet and Cuban troops on African soil

(Bowman 1968; Grundy 1973; Zartman 1970; Rotberg 1985; Butts and Thomas 1986; Johns 1986; also Southall 1982). Basically, not even the establishment of socialist governments in Africa and the deployment of troops from communist states resulted in studies on the motives and the nature of the local forces behind these dramatic events. To a very large extent, the policy changes were seen only through the mirror of the superpower competition for global influence.

As indicated, the rise of neo-realism in the late 1970s did not lead to new or intensified research on Africa's global position, or on the foreign policy of the African countries, for that matter. Nevertheless, the development of neo-realist theory, as promoted by Barry Buzan, did open the way for more thorough theoretical reflections on the character of the African states in international relations, including the possibility that their foreign policy might actually reflect the actions of local forces and genuine domestic interests. Buzan's reflections on the idea of the state, its physical base, the institutional expression of the state as well as its socio-political foundation, etc. definitely provided helpful instruments for analysing the African state. Also, Buzan's version of neo-realism could explain the obvious limitations on the international behaviour and foreign policies of the African states (Buzan 1991). It is hardly a coincidence that one of the very few books addressing the question of Africa in international affairs, Christopher Clapham's *Africa and the International System. The Politics of Survival*, published in 1996, was inspired by a number of Buzan's ideas (Clapham 1996).

Parallel to the strong presence of realist and neo-realist thinking, a number of critical theories appeared, during the 1970s in particular. In order to understand the continuing economic dependence of the newly independent African states, the so-called dependencia theory, Marxist-inspired theories of anti-imperialism and world system theory or International Political Economy (IPE) approaches were used by Africans and critical academics in the North to explain Africa's peripheral position in global politics (Rodney 1972; Amin 1972; Amin 1976; Mazrui 1977). The analyses carried out within this framework stressed the structural limitations on the poor countries seeking to start their own so-called self-centred or self-reliant economic development. An almost circular explanation maintained that Africa and other developing countries remain in the periphery of the world capitalist system because they are in the periphery of this system. They cannot change their global position because of structural factors in world capitalism.

These radical contributions remained more or less isolated from the general debates between the other IR schools. In the years following the Cold War, it seems as if the radical writers have only to a limited extent continued to produce analyses of Africa and other developing regions. On the other hand, the IPE approach with its systemic view has made some impact on African studies and, to a large extent, it has replaced the older dependencia approach (Shaw and Heard 1979; Shaw and Newburry 1979; Nweke 1980; Shaw and Aluko 1984; Shaw 1987). The IPE approach sees the foreign policies of the African states as being strongly influenced by the global political economy, meaning that their external policies tend to follow the political and economic interests of the developed countries. The limited room for manoeuvre is generally explained by an assumed identity between the interests of the elites in the North and the elites in the South. On this type of interpretation, it becomes more or less impossible for the poor countries to develop their own foreign policies or to define 'national interests' that are not externally determined.

While the critical theories enjoyed a fairly dominant position during the 1970s in the debate on Africa's international position, liberal and neo-liberal theories under the rubric of the interdependency approach gained ground. It is quite surprising that the introduction of interdependency approaches in the mid 1970s did not give a boost to studies of Africa's international relations and attempts to theorize about Africa and its place in the international system. First, it is striking because interdependency theories specifically criticised the neo-realists for their all too narrow focus on the great powers and their preoccupation with the international power struggle when theorizing on international relations. Second, it could be expected that the idea of

multiple relations tying together countries in a complex system of interdependency, and in particular the argument that states are not the only important actors, would lead to a greater interest in the poor and peripheral areas of the world. However, this did not happen. If the liberal and neoliberal theories had any impact on theorizing on Africa, it has been through their inspiration of theories of development and not in relation to Africa in IR (Dickson 1997).

In summary, the theoretical debates within IR during the 1960s and throughout most of the 1980s included Africa and African approaches in their reflections only to a very limited extent. Though the general theoretical paradigms changed quite significantly in this period, and though the theoretical debates between the different theoretical schools were often quite fierce, there was a striking consensus among scholars working within IR that Africa was of only limited interest for the theoretical debates (Clapham 1987: 575, 582). Given this, it is quite obvious that Africa, its development and its special problems have had strikingly little impact on IR theory. By and large, empirical research on Africa, within either IR or comparative politics, has dealt with specific problems – not general theories.

Thus, an overview of 30 years of the development in IR theory seems to confirm the argument of the chapter. The duality between marginalization and globalization meant that empirical studies of Africa in global politics were inspired by theory only to a limited extent and, most importantly, the region was hardly reflected upon in theoretical debates on IR. This overview also called attention to another interesting observation: the lack of an even weak relationship between theory and empirical changes in Africa.

### **The ending of the Cold War: new challenges**

Although the development of IR theory has moved onto new ground with the new debate on post-realism versus social constructivism that unfolded in the 1990s, it seems as if the debate on Africa in international relations has continued its preoccupation with phenomenological aspects. Two broad themes are relevant for the discussion of the interplay between IR theory and empirical developments in the post Cold War era: first, the continued reassessment of Africa's economic and/or strategic role from the point of view of the OECD countries; second, the changing nature of the African state. It is the argument in this section that not only have the empirical developments in the post Cold War period been unique but that fact necessarily has consequences for a theory of IR that takes Africa in global politics into account. Not only has the international system changed dramatically; so too has the African state. Therefore, both themes will be touched upon briefly, which means that the following discussion will involve the recent theoretical debate on the changing nature of the African state.

### ***The changing nature of the international system***

The end of the Cold War made it absolutely clear that the African continent had very limited political and security importance to the OECD states of the North. The disappearance of the bipolar contest for power and influence on the continent meant that Africa more or less lost what was left of its limited importance to global security. Moreover, Africa's share of global trade continued to decline, despite some well-published efforts such as the US trade-for-aid initiative. The shrinking trade figures and the fact that 'Africa's average output per capita in constant prices was lower at the end of the 1990s than it was 30 years before' (World Bank 2000: 8) meant that perceptions of the economic potential of the continent only became less and less optimistic during the 1990s. At the start of the current decade, Africa's share of world trade accounted for less than 2 per cent of it (World Bank 2000: 8). Public images of Africa as the 'lost continent' seemed to prevail and fuelled a debate that questioned the effect of development assistance to Africa in particular

(Riddell 1999; van de Walle 1999). Seen in that perspective, it is not surprising that from 1992 onwards the aid flows to sub-Saharan Africa started to decline quite significantly from US \$17.7 billion in 1990–1 to US \$13.8 billion in 2001, measured in fixed prices and exchange rates (OECD 2003: 286–7).

While the volume of development aid declined through the 1990s, the conditions for receiving assistance from the OECD countries increased in number and became tougher for African governments to meet. From the early 1990s, democracy and respect for human rights were introduced as conditions for receiving bilateral development assistance (Crawford 2002; Stokke 1995). The more general quest for good governance represented very wide-ranging interventions in the domestic affairs of the African countries. Among other things, the interference manifested itself in the holding of elections in many countries and, in some cases, these elections even led to a change of government.

This lack of appreciable importance to the outside world and not least to the OECD countries clearly changed in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. It is possible to argue that Africa has gained increased significance in relation to the global war against terrorism since then. Under the impression of a global ‘terrorist onslaught’ and a global ‘war against terrorism’, foreign policy interests changed dramatically and the potential role of a number of African states was re-assessed. Islamic militants in African states or what the US and others described as ‘militants’, the close Bin Laden connections throughout Eastern Africa, numerous money/weapon/drug connections, etc. led to a re-evaluation of Africa in the global security framework. In particular, the Horn of Africa and the areas with a significant Muslim population have come into the focus of the American security concerns. Many OECD governments increased their security cooperation with Africa or supported the newly emerging African security architecture and its regional building blocks. Thus security concerns seemed to have become increasingly important in the Africa policies of a number of OECD countries. The policy framework under which the new security concerns were structured and negotiated was the New Partnership for African Development (NePAD). The G-8 group of the world’s leading industrial powers took the chance to demonstrate a ‘bright side of globalisation’ to their critical electorate, and responded to the introduction of NePAD at the G-8 summit in Kananaskis in 2002. The G-8 introduced its own ‘Africa Action Plan’, which highlighted cooperation on security issues, for instance on the establishment of an African crisis response force by the year 2009.

The increasing focus on security and security-related issues in Africa brings memories from the days of the Cold War when realist thinkers on IR emphasized that security was the core concern of states in international affairs. In relation to Africa specifically, the US, refers to the potential destabilizing consequences of a number of what is imagined as ‘weak’ states or ‘failed states’ and the porous borders that are assumed to give strategic advantages to terrorist groups, including possibilities for money laundering. Such observations make it worthwhile to reflect on whether the dynamics of international relations have returned to what they were like during the Cold War.

Probably, there is one important difference as far as Africa in global politics is concerned if we compare the Cold War situation with the current phase of the international development. After September 11, it is possible to argue that sub-Saharan Africa is more important to global security than it was during the Cold War simply because the main threat to the US now comes from terrorists that hide in weak and failed states all over the world, including sub-Saharan Africa. During the Cold War, the main enemy to the ‘free world’ was clearly located geographically outside Africa. Compared with the 1990s, i.e. the post Cold War years when Africa was more or less insignificant in global security politics, today the region no doubt is much more important in security terms because it is important in the American strategy to fight terrorism globally. In such a perspective, the period from the late 1980s up till September 11, 2001 was an ‘exception’ from a pattern of international relations where security in general has been the overarching priority. The 1990s

were characterized by a state of flux where security as well as morality and ethics or even the so-called CNN effect could be the key factors for specific decisions that were taken in this period.

The factors that became decisive during the 1990s depended on the concrete situation, the specific circumstances and the precise time these factors came into the focus of the decision-makers. For example, it is possible to argue that the American/UN intervention in Somalia in 1992 was strongly influenced by moral concerns, whereas the lack of Western action in the case of the Rwandan genocide 1994 has to be explained by the fact that the Americans had learned the lessons from the Somali failure, which meant that moral arguments did not count as much as national and selfish arguments. An identical reasoning can be used to explain the dramatic reductions in aid transfers to Africa. At the same time, it is important to note that the aid transfers did not disappear entirely. Thus, the reductions can be explained by the lack of national interest in Africa among the OECD countries. On the other hand, the crucial factors influencing global politics, specifically the relationship between Africa and the OECD countries, cannot be reduced to narrow security and economic interests. Moral and ethics but also strong bureaucratic interests play a role, and this may explain not only the continued flow of aid to Africa. Moral concerns for Africa may also explain the constant flow of humanitarian emergency assistance to the forgotten crises of Africa (Olsen, Carstensen and Høyen 2003).

Now, how do these developments relate to current trends in IR theorybuilding in general and to IR theorizing on Africa in particular? As far as Africa is concerned, based on a review of a number of books published between 1984 and 1987 on African issues, Christopher Clapham has concluded ‘the pieces [of Africa in international relations], in short, are available: it is the overall picture that is missing’ (Clapham 1987: 575). This assessment of the state of the art in the mid 1980s still holds true. It implies that the majority of contributions on Africa in IR continue to be descriptive and research designs in general seem to be little informed by IR theory debates. Problems still trump theory (for overviews see Khadiagala and Lyons 2001; Keller and Rothchild 1996; Harbeson and Rothchild 2000; Wright 1999).

### *The changing nature of the African state*

Turning to the other component in the discussion, namely the African state, with de-colonization the international system granted statehood to Africa. In that sense, the African states and thus the African state system started its development from a totally different position from the European states. In Europe, the Westphalian peace meant the beginning of a process of state formation where the states first conquered and established control over territories, and later developed into nations. In Africa the process was totally different. Colonization began with the conquest of territories and later, with de-colonization, states were established (Clapham 1996). However, the new African states were not like their European counterparts. Whereas the European states were characterized by being positively sovereign, by contrast the African states were negatively sovereign because they lacked the attributes usually associated with positive sovereignty, such as the provision of external and internal security for the populations of a given territory and the deliverance of a minimum of public goods.

This lack of positive sovereignty is basically equivalent to saying that statehood in Africa was and still is an illusion. Nevertheless, it was maintained as long as the Cold War lasted (cf. Clapham 1996; Young 1998). It was international law that guaranteed the existence of the African ‘quasi-states’ that in fundamental respects lacked the empirical statehood that resembled the Westphalian state. The African quasi-states also lacked another fundamental attribute of empirical statehood, namely a minimum of popular support for and loyalty to the governing elites based in the state (cf. Jackson and Rosberg 1986; Jackson 1990, 1992). Therefore with the renewed crisis of neo-patrimonialism in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when increasing

economic hardships were accompanied by demonstration effects of successful regime transition, Africa's ruling elites faced a critical juncture (Villalón and Huxtable 1998).

With the sudden loss of the structuring and to some extent stabilizing effects of superpower rivalry, the African rulers faced a new and potentially much more challenging situation in the post Cold War period. No doubt, additional insecurities introduced by the 'second wind of change' following the introduction of multi-party systems, and the quest for respect for human rights and good governance in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall represented a serious threat to the many neo-patrimonial weak states on the African continent. If African ruling elites did not start to change the way politics was organized, they would increasingly have to face violent struggles over shrinking neo-patrimonial rents. In the end such struggles could lead to the disintegration of states, which actually did happen in a number of instances. So-called 'new wars' erupted in a considerable number of countries. i.e. internal wars or civil wars typically involving several irregular groups and guerrilla fighters became the order of the day (Kaldor 1999; Duffield 2001). By the year 2000, about one-fifth of all Africans lived in countries severely disrupted by conflict. Leaving aside independence wars, nearly 20 African countries had experienced at least one period of civil strife since 1960 (World Bank 2000).

These new challenges to the central government authorities meant that they faced what Hedley Bull describes as 'competing and overlapping authorities' (Bull 1977/94). Some African regimes have experienced a loss of territorial control as a result of lack of internal legitimacy and thus popular backing (Ayoob 1995; Clapham 1996; Pinkney 2001). Due to the many civil wars and the general weakness of the African regimes, the 1990s witnessed a conspicuous trend to privatize the very essential functions of the state, namely defence and security. A considerable number of African governments hired mercenaries to buttress domestic security. Obviously 'hiring of mercenaries amounts to a "considerable erosion or a substantial diminution" of "political sovereignty"' (Francis 1999: 332; Reno 1988: 72). The privatization of security more than anything makes it pertinent to describe many African states as 'failed' (Clapham 1996: 6 ff, 39 ff; Lock 1998: 146 ff; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Hyden 1999). Peter Lock goes as far as to argue that in situations where there are a number of efficiently policed 'islands of security' within a formally sovereign state, 'there is hardly a role for the state, as autonomous security zones are a result of fragmentation' (Lock 1998: 148).

The weakening or direct disintegration of a number of African states means that the governments in question are often unable to control their borders adequately; because of that, smuggling and other types of illicit transactions have been facilitated (Allen 1999: 8; Harris-White 2002: 27). Judged by the estimated financial volume of illegal economic activities, it is quite evident that in many countries, the formal state authorities do not control the bulk of economic activities, including international economic transactions. Increasingly, the emergence of trans-national networks of illegal trade in diamonds, gold, timber, coltan, arms, or drugs has been observed involving fractions of what is sometimes conceptualized as 'the criminalized state' (Bayart *et al.* 1999). In a period when Africa becomes more and more marginalized in literally every export sector with the exception of oil, it is striking that the region is far from being disconnected from the international economy of crime as it is indicated by the size of the so-called gross criminal product (GCP) (Bayart *et al.* 1999: 3 f, 15 f, 25, 31). Experts estimate that the annual volume of the illegal economic transactions in Africa amounts to US \$1,000 billion, 40 per cent of which alone is ascribed to the drug sector. The mere size of the GCP surpasses the gross national product of sub-Saharan several times (Lock 1998: 145).

The close relationship between illegal trade in drugs, small arms and other forms of illegal transactions also has repercussions on trafficking in human beings. Because stricter control with immigration and admission procedures have been implemented during the 1990s in Europe, smuggling individuals and larger

groups into European countries have become a lucrative international business that also includes immigrants from countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Meiner and Münz 1997: 27; UNHCR 2000: 169). In short, during the 1990s, i.e. in the post Cold War period, there seems to have been a conspicuous growth in illegal economic transactions involving African countries. First of all, this stresses the significance of the distinction between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ activities in African countries. Second, the widespread crime clearly questions how much control the formal state apparatuses have and, moreover, it questions the value of the formal sovereignty of the African state.

The authority and sovereignty of the African states is not only undermined from within. Kevin Dunn thus emphasizes that the room for manoeuvre of African states is also constrained by the strong role played by the international financial institutions (IFIs), the IMF and the World Bank (Dunn 2001: 51). Because the two Washington institutions play such important roles as suppliers of funding for development, this means that a number of African states lose their sovereign decision-making power over a considerable number of domestic policy fields. However, it is not only the two Washington institutions that exert strong influence over the course of development on the continent; bilateral donor governments also interfere in domestic politics, which leads Kevin Dunn to argue that an increasing ‘re-colonization’ of many African states has taken place in recent years, i.e. after the end of the Cold War (Dunn 2001: 51 ff). On top of the economic and political conditionalities imposed by the donors, African states are faced with global regimes that structure many policy fields and discourses they hardly participate in. These may be in economics, such as the WTO rounds or EU negotiated post-Lomé Regional Economic Partnership Agreements. They may also be to do with environmental issues such as the debate on genetically manipulated food or access to affordable pharmaceuticals, or it may involve intellectual property rights, etc.

The presence of big trans-national companies (TNCs) represents yet another obvious threat to the freedom of action of African host governments. It is a fact that the economic capacity of TNCs is many times larger than that of any African state, including oil states like Nigeria. In some situations, the TNCs simply circumvent the local state and perform state functions, for example by building and expanding infrastructure installations such as roads, railways and harbours or providing their own security. In other instances, TNCs have entered into alliances with regional strongmen and thus undermined the authority of the host government (Reno 1998).

It may be controversial to claim that the actions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may have exactly the same consequences as those of the IFIs, the bilateral donors and the TNCs as far as they undermine the authority of the African states. The NGOs quite deliberately circumvent the states in Africa by performing a number of functions in social affairs, in health and in education that are usually considered a public responsibility. Christopher Clapham substantiates the role of Western NGOs by mentioning that they ‘created parallel governments with often vastly greater resources at their disposal than the state itself...’ (Clapham 1996: 256).

Against this background a new debate has unfolded, centred on perceptions of ‘failed states’ and different ‘degrees of statehood’ (Clapham 1998), where many African states are seen as failures. There is no doubt that developments during the last couple of decades have resulted in a general fragmentation of the African states, which means that we are dealing with under-institutionalized entities that neither control their territory nor manage to provide security for their citizens, not to mention the lack of delivery of even the most basic public goods. In others, the states have been unable to fulfil even minimalist expectations towards statehood. There are also examples where states have exercised their functions only over a limited territory or with regard to some but not all functions.

Based on this, it is pertinent to ask if it is possible to talk about the foreign policy of African states at all. John Clark argues that it is indeed feasible to talk about African states’ foreign policy (Clark 2001).

However, the determinants of the foreign policy of African states are very different from what determines the foreign policy of the OECD states. It is the main argument of Clark that the foreign policy of African states is mainly about regime security and thus the survival of either the regime or the ruler. The latter argument brings us close to the debate on personal rule in African politics, which has been strong in African studies for a number of years (Jackson 1982; Sandbrook 1986). This kind of African studies tends to equate the policy of the big men with the interests of the states. The national interest, if such a thing is identified, is simply the interest of the ruler. Accepting this point of view makes it difficult to talk about a national interest, and therefore one of the crucial variables of traditional IR theory is not relevant, according to John Clark (2001: 99 ff).

For obvious reasons, this situation does not correspond to the widespread assumptions in the West of a more or less universal trend in state-formation and nation-building. Moreover, it also seems clear that states in Africa are not 'like units' as is presupposed in realist thinking. The reason why African states cannot be considered as units of analysis is basically that the foreign policy actions of the African states are determined not by structural circumstances but by very narrow personal concerns. To put it simply: their policies are determined by the survival of the ruler. Moreover, empirical statehood has given way to different degrees of statehood, trans-regional and trans-national dynamics, and a multitude of different forms of governance beyond the states. Of course, it can be maintained that the state in OECD countries and the African states are 'like units' in that both types of state have survival as their ultimate goal, even though in the African case, the 'state' is identical with the ruler.

In summary, there is no doubt that the developments described question the usefulness of having the African state as the basic analytical unit in IR studies if the reference is to the state in the traditional Westphalian system. It is fairly obvious that Africa's external relations consist of a number of elements, and moreover that these elements involve a number of non-state actors pursuing their own more or less 'private foreign policy' (Clapham 1996). If it is accepted that this situation is similar to what Hedley Bull describes as 'neo-medieval' (Bull 1983), then it seems logical to argue that Africa represents a pre-Westphalian component in an international system that may contain post-Westphalian components such as the EU. (Maybe some of the OECD states can also be described as belonging to the post-Westphalian part of the current international system.)

### **Africa and the North**

Irrespective of the ongoing globalization processes, the empirical studies in this volume on the Africa policies of a number of important international actors point towards a conclusion that the OECD states continue to be major actors when it comes to Africa. Of course, it is possible to maintain that this particular answer is a result of the way the editors have asked the authors to structure their contributions. Moreover, it has to be admitted that the OECD states chosen for scrutiny in this volume are not selected at random. The cases are all chosen because they are assumed to be of particular importance both to Africa's position in international politics and to Africa's development as far as the external world is important in relation to this project. 'Importance' in this context refers first of all to economic circumstances, specifically trade volumes, aid volumes and the amount of foreign direct investments. Second, importance also refers to historical and not least colonial ties, OECD government initiatives related to security and political development, i.e. cooperation agreements, policy statements, informal and personal contacts that actually lead to policy changes. Finally, importance refers to direct and indirect pressure from the OECD states upon African governments, etc.