
Pan-Africanism in negotiating Global Governance: Some aspects of South Africa's Foreign Policy on the civil wars in Côte D'Ivoire, Libya, and Mali

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ABSTRACT

During the 1960s, intervention in Africa by both the UNO and former colonial powers such as France was imposed on Africans. After half a century, Pan-Africanists have started to challenge, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully, the dominant powers in global governance.

Pan-Africanism has been the political driver for these counter-hegemonic attempts. Today African agency seeks to negotiate interventions in Africa to ensure they are at least partly by Africans and with Africans instead of external intervention in Africa.

There was complex dynamics between the AU, ECOWAS, NATO, the Arab League, and France during interventions in the civil wars in Côte D'Ivoire, Libya, and Mali. This paper argues that when the Pan-African agenda diverged from NATO preferences, South Africa and other African Union members faced major challenges in asserting African agency. When there was consensus between western and Pan-African actors, the African Union took the leading role.

INTRODUCTION

The mainstream literature conventionally treats Africa as a problem to be solved, rather than analysing Pan-African agency as a peer participant in global governance. A forthcoming book (Edozie & Gottschalk, 2014) will be the first substantive scholarly work to present a counter-hegemonic perspective on this topic in international relations.

This paper examines three case studies highlighting pan-African contestation with global powers in three case studies: the Côte d'Ivoire in 2010; Libya in 2011, and Mali in 2012.

PAN-AFRICANISM IN NEGOTIATING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The OAU started to set up an embryonic diplomatic corps with missions to represent it at the UNO (NY & Geneva), World Bank and IMF (Washington DC), EU (Brussels) and Arab League (Cairo). The increased stature of the AU saw a significant reciprocal development in 2006, when the USA became the first of over fifty-five states to accredit ambassadors to the AU, as did also several regional organizations.

Part of the functions of the AU diplomatic mission in NY was to seek to coordinate as much as possible a voting bloc by the AU states in the UN General Assembly. The AU and its Peace and Security Council (PSC) has also held regular consultations with the UN Security Council to influence UN peace-keeping and other interventions in Africa. The AU purpose is to assert African agency as a partner in global governance, and oppose the 1960s situation where Africa was merely the recipient of UN operations.

Both ECOWAS and the AU have established substantial peacekeeping architecture, with the AU adapting from the ECOWAS precedent. Operationally, both ECOWAS and the AU have escalated from conventional peacekeeping to “peacemaking” or “peace enforcement” which are diplomatic euphemisms for full-scale war fighting up to brigades and divisions on battlefields ranging from Somalia to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Adebajo’s words, the complexity in both Darfur, Sudan, and the DRC includes fighting in civil wars “with multiple factions that are often mutating”. (Adebajo:2011: 242) Nothing like this has been even attempted by the Arab League, OAS, and ASEAN, and would not even be contemplated by NAFTA or MERCOSUR. This is an interesting African case study where, for once, reality has raced ahead of rhetoric. The African Standby Force was supposed to be officially launched in 2010, with the formalities then postponed to 2015. But AU and ECOWAS peacekeeping armies have *continuously* had boots on the ground for two decades. *De facto*, the African Standby Force has evolved towards Nkrumah’s African **Standing** Force, even before its formal inauguration.

**TABLE 1:
ECOWAS & AU PEACE-KEEPING ARCHITECTURE**

ECOWAS post-1993	AU post-2004
Mediation & Security Council	Peace & Security Council
Ecowarn	Continental Early Warning System
Council of Elders	Panel of the Wise
ECOMOG, later ESF	ASF
Defence Council, & Defence Commission	Military Staff Committee
decisions by two-thirds majority	decisions by two-thirds majority

SOUTH AFRICA’S FOREIGN POLICY ON THE CIVIL WARS IN CÔTE D’IVOIRE, LIBYA, AND MALI

CÔTE D’IVOIRE

Lack of inclusivity has been a major factor precipitating many civil wars. The start of the twenty-first century saw the rise of the chauvinist *Ivoirité* ideology leading to a law disqualifying as presidential candidates any Ivorian citizen not born in the country, plus Ivorian citizens born in the country who had either a father or mother that was a foreigner. This disqualifying of Alassane Ouattara, to ensure that Laurent Gbagbo won the presidential election, led to the 2002 rebellion, resulting in the Côte d’Ivoire being partitioned between north and south, with each having its own army and administration.

South African President Thabo Mbeki, who had known Laurent Gbagbo when they were students, was appointed by the African Union as mediator between the two rivals for the period November 2004 – October 2006. Mbeki noted the conflict was over “Ivorian ethnic and religious antagonisms, sharing of political power, and access to economic and social power and opportunities.” (Mbeki: 2011) He noted the peace agreements called for the Côte d’Ivoire to be re-united, and the rebels disarmed, before new elections, to avoid the victory of one side causing a polarizing backlash from the other.

The 2010 elections were held before these conditions were met. The Ivorian Electoral Commission announced the provisional results as Ouattara winning with 54.1% of the votes. The Constitutional Council, which by law adjudicates the final results, disqualified votes in some northern districts, resulting in Gbagbo being pronounced the winner. Mbeki, by that time a retired President, noted that an NGO, the Coordination of African Electoral Experts (CAEE), had reported in northern districts “stealing of ballot boxes, arresting of candidates representatives, multiple

voting, refusal to admit international observers to witness counting of ballots, and the murder of representatives of candidates.” (ibid).

The UN Mission in the Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) and French forces reinforced Ouattara’s militia in arresting Gbagbo, who was sent to the International Criminal Court in the Hague. The ECOWAS Election observer mission did not issue a report on this disputed election. Mbeki forcefully argued that this case study confirmed the marginalization of the AU by the major powers acting both directly and through the UNO:

“the events in Côte d’Ivoire could serve as a defining moment in terms of the urgent need to reengineer the system of international relations [.....] How many blatant abuses of power will Africa and the rest of the developing world experience before the vision of a democratic system of global governance is realised?” (ibid)

In this case, both the AU and ECOWAS, like the NATO powers, supported Ouattara’s accession to office. The South African Government’s stance became a minority position .

LIBYA

Prior to the Arab Spring, Gaddafi had profoundly outraged a number of important African governments. He had advocated that Nigeria be dismembered into several countries; supported the Eritrean president against Ethiopia, occupied the Aouzou strip of Chad between 1972-87, and financed and armed JEM, the largest Darfur rebel organisation, against the Sudanese Government. (De Waal: 2013:366). These four chickens all came home to roost in 2011.

The AU’s Peace and Security Council (PSC) in its 23 February 2011 meeting condemned the repression of the pro-democracy uprisings in Benghazi and Misrata. They brought the issue before the African Court of Human and Peoples’ Rights, with its seat in Arusha, which ordered the Libyan Government to cease attacks on civilians, in *the Matter of the African Commission of Human and Peoples’ Rights v. the Great Socialist Libyan People’s Arab Jamahiriya Order 004/2011*.

South Africa led the three African members of the UNSC to vote for resolution 1973 in March 2011, authorizing “all measures necessary” to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas from attack, although Zuma had been advised by his ministry of Foreign Affairs that this phrasing could be ruthlessly exploited.

By contrast, the Arab League called for intervention and supported the overthrow of Gaddafi, recognizing the National Transitional Council in Benghazi. (ibid., 368-369). French President Sarkozy held a 19 March summit to support the Libyan people. This was attended by Amr Mouki, Secretary-General of the Arab

League, but boycotted by Jean Ping, Chair of the AU Commission. NATO, the EU, the Arab League, Islamic Conference, and the UNO set up a Libyan Contact Group to liaise with the rebels.

At its 10 March meeting, the PSC proposed a “roadmap” comprising a ceasefire, an inclusive peace agreement, and a democratic transition including free and fair elections. The PSC set up a High-Level mediation committee comprising the presidents of Congo, Mali, Mauretania, South Africa and Uganda. The US Government imposed a no fly zone and warned them that it could not guarantee their safety if they flew to Tripoli to negotiate with Gaddafi. The AU failed to set up public diplomacy and seek media coverage for their roadmap, leaving the NATO or P3 (the NATO permanent members of the UNSC) narrative dominant. This was in contrast to previous occasions where “in other conflicts the AU had worked well with P3 diplomats on comparable proposals, jointly providing credibility and operational modalities.” (De Waal: 2013: 372) The Sudanese Government from the start provided major military support to the Benghazi rebels, with Ethiopia and Nigeria recognizing the NTC as the provisional government immediately they liberated Tripoli from Gaddafi’s forces.

Africa was divided, with Mugabe supporting Gaddafi. After Zuma’s protests met western media derision that this was due to Gaddafi donations to the ANC. Mbeki put on record that SA opposition to NATO policy on was not due to that. Gaddafi gave zero support to the ANC during the anti-apartheid struggle decades, because one ANC and SACP leader Joe Slovo was Jewish, so Gaddafi considered the ANC to be Zionist. Only after 1990 did Gaddafi give aid to the ANC. Gaddafi (Sunday Times 6 November 2011)

An example of how foreign donors dictated to the AU: during 2011 the AU Commissioner for Peace & Security wanted to go to Libya for negotiations with everyone. Donors said their funds were not for discussions with Gaddafi. (City Press: 2012) The South African Government ultimately too had to recognise the NTC as the legitimate government of Libya.

MALI

Units of the Mali army staged a *coup* on 22 March 2012, weeks before a presidential election was due. After the *coup* ECOWAS immediately imposed financial and diplomatic sanctions on Mali. (www.voanews.com) This was followed by the MNLA rebels proclaiming in Timbuktu on 6 April 2012 a Republic of Azawaad, comprising a secession of over half of Mali. The MNLA was in weeks in turn overthrown by Ansar Dine and MUJAO with theological extremist policies. (WING: 2013)

France sent 3 500 troops plus its air force to drive the rebels out of all towns and suppress the secession, after which they was replaced by 8000 troops of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). AFISMA broke new ground in that it comprised both ECOWAS armies plus those of Chad and Gabon from other regional communities. The US Assistant Secretary of Defence for Special Operations was of the opinion that AFISMA was “completely incapable” of replacing French forces. (www.France24.com)

ECOWAS set up a working group to implement UNSC resolution 2085 on Mali for a UN force. (ECOWAS 002/2013) The ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council (MSC) appointed as mediators two sitting presidents, Blaise Compaore and Goodluck Jonathan. It welcomed UN funding to convert AFISMA into MINUSMA. (ECOWAS 208/2013) Mali set up a Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission. A critical Mbeki observed that “Africa is failing to set its own terms for tackling security challenges on the continent.” (www.bdlive.co.za)

The AU’s lack of budgetary and logistical capacity to send its own force in resulted in its support for the French, then ECOWAS, then UN intervention forces. The South African Government was mute on the Malian civil war, probably being too overstretched militarily and financially to propose more AU-led options. Nonetheless, Edozie argues:

the promise of Africa’s African Union rests in the institution’s sustained agency and voice, its Pan-Africanist resilience, consciousness of, and commitment to African solidarity, and its institutional *dirigisme* that allows the institution to innovate while evolving and lead Africans in global partnerships.

All these elements were evidenced in the AU’s Mali Donor Conference, held in Addis Ababa on January 28th, 2013. In an historic first action (where the AU would spend a majority of its budget on a peacekeeping operation), the Union pledged a total of \$50 million to help fund the military intervention in Mali, as well as drum up support for the African-led mission in Mali, or AFISMA. The AU-led donors’ conference on Mali galvanized and solicited African and international matching fund for the operation that it budgeted at an estimated cost of \$460 million. Algerian, Ramtane Lamamra, the AU's Peace and Security Commissioner told reporters: "For the first time in the history of the African Union, the budget will be used to support a peace operation. It represents around ten percent of the overall budget of AFISMA. This is unprecedented." (Edozie & Gottschalk: forthcoming 2014)

CONCLUSIONS

First, NATO powers were adroit at exploiting divisions between AU and Arab League policy positions, and between individual African governments such as Sudan and South Africa. For the AU to take policy means consensus or compromise between at least a majority of 54 governments, which is a far higher number than

members of any other regional organization, such as the EU, OAS, ASEAN, or Arab League. It is a correspondingly remarkable achievement that the AU has nonetheless been able to take policy on so many conflicts.

Second, where there was consensus between ECOWAS and the French Government, as over the Côte D'ivoire and Mali, military intervention occurred successfully. Where much of the AU disagreed with NATO stances, as in the Libyan civil war, donor dependency, and lack of budgetary and financial capacity, meant that NATO powers got their way.

Third, the AU preference for a negotiated end to the Libyan civil war was confirmed as the protracted consequences of the muscular NATO actions persisted throughout 2012 and 2013. The Tripoli Government appears to have a Weberian monopoly of violence over less than half the country, and still lacks the capacity to overwhelm large numbers of local militia who run their own jails, and torture detainees just as Gaddafi's regime did before them.

Fourth, the consequences of the Libyan civil war included what US securocrat jargon terms blowback: it spilled over in 2012 into Mali, as defeated Gaddafi mercenaries retreated with their arms, precipitated a coup, then led to a rebellion of secession, which in turn was overwhelmed by a second wave of hard-line rebels.

Fifth, the South African Government's effectiveness within the AU heavily depends on it persuading allies, and harmonizing and coordinating its foreign policies with those of Nigeria, Ethiopia, and other major continental players.

Sixth, the AU and ECOWAS both persisted in trying to negotiate the terms of engagement with the dominant powers in global governance. Sometimes they lost, sometimes they won. But they demonstrated markedly more pan-African agency than was present in the 1960s.

The challenge for the AU and ECOWAS will be to increase their budgets so as to reduce their donor dependency over the next decade or two. The AU's Peace and Security Council has met more than 333 times since its inauguration in 2004: twentyfold the average number of meetings of any other AU organ. This shows a continuing commitment to build up the African peace and security architecture towards the AU's *longue durée* vision for 2063.

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