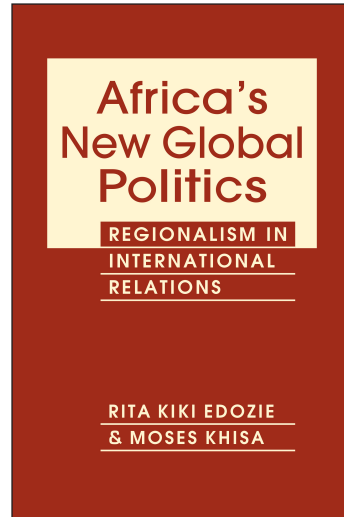


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Africa's New
Global Politics:
Regionalism in
International Relations

Rita Kiki Edozie and
Moses Khisa

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1

African Regionalism in a Plural World

Withdrawal from a treaty can give a denouncing state additional voice either by increasing its leverage to reshape the treaty to more accurately reflect its interests or those of its domestic constituencies, or by establishing rival legal norms or institutions together with other like-minded states.

—African Union ICC Withdrawal Strategy Document,
December 1, 2017

The African Union (AU) withdrawal strategy document conveys a set of policy guidelines for African states to justify leaving the International Criminal Court's (ICC)'s Rome Statute. The communiqué was adopted as a resolution by the AU member states at the organization's biannual summit held in Addis Ababa in January 2017. While the decision did not result in the mass African exodus from the ICC that African states had initially threatened, the document nevertheless relayed important new terms for how a united Africa would engage with the world. Using the AU as a collective political action platform from which to conduct the continent's international relations, African states would take a united foreign policy stance to exert the continent's global leverage.

In the name of "Africa," the African Union navigates geopolitics (e.g., lobbies ICC actors) and develops the continent's own legal jurisprudence, including amendments to the Rome Statute, UN Security Council reform, recruitment of African staff to the ICC, and ratification of an African criminal court through the Malabo Protocol. As well, African states use the AU platform to engage other global issues from African perspectives. Through the withdrawal strategy, for example, African states proclaimed *inter alia*

that they would repurpose global governance to preserve the dignity, sovereignty, and integrity of AU member states on their own terms (AU 2017).

Following this trend of the African Union, in referencing the notion of “Africa,” we broach something of a paradox for this book. When Africanist scholars engage the whole continent like we do as a subject of analysis, critics often complain, “Africa is not a country!” Indeed, how can this book talk about “African” global politics when we know that the region is a continent with fifty-five independent sovereign nation-states, each with its own unique foreign policy and state-led international relations? Why even bother to tackle a topic that totalizes and generalizes the whole of Africa as if the continent is monolithic?

However, as a matter of course, given its unique history, a continent-wide approach to Africa’s international relations is not uncommon. Like others who have done so, we attempt to understand the collective experience of African states, particularly in the context of the hyperglobalized twenty-first century. “Africa” for us refers to the African world region, which we characterize as a political project aimed at increasing and deepening regional cooperation and integration among African states. Drawing on existing practices of African regional and international encounters, we attempt to formulate a theory about Africa’s new role in global politics and international relations.

We support our thesis of Africa’s emerging ascendancy by analyzing select historical and contemporary global encounters and structures: racial colonialism/neocolonialism, global governance, international security, international political economy, transnational justice, and China-Africa relations. These encounters illustrate the many regional initiatives taken by African states during a period of twenty-first-century globalization (Pieterse 2017) and reveal how African states’ global policy actions have collectively projected their reposturing of power and self-help in current geopolitical international engagements. We theorize that African states’ changing capacity to exercise power within the global system is a result of the emergence of the continent’s representative and foremost regional actor, the African Union.

Too few books on international relations contribute to the African international relations literature in the way we seek to achieve here. As such, with this book, we attempt to capture an important shift and expansion in Africa’s contemporary international relations manifest through the politics of the AU. We are motivated by a 2016 UK conference convened by Africanist scholar William Brown titled “Time to Rethink Africa’s Role in International Relations.” In his mission statement, Brown noted that it is no longer realistic to view the African region as having a peripheral role in international relations given the continent’s marked global transformations since the millennium. Evidence of these transformations, Brown

argues, would include Africa's role in the UN, the establishment of the African Union, and the ways that African states have begun to interact with outside powers (Brown 2016).

Leveraging Brown's thesis, Paul-Henri Bischoff, Kwesi Aning, and Amitav Acharya's *Africa in Global International Relations: Emerging Approaches to Theory and Practice* (2015) similarly presents the continent as a unique case study of global relations. The editors call for a new paradigm for international relations theory that is more global, open, inclusive, and able to capture the voices and experiences of both Western and non-Western world regions. Setting the path for our own approach to the study of African international relations, Bischoff and colleagues' study is historically steeped in the African context and thus offers a uniquely African perspective.

Subsequent and exciting additions to the literature have begun to position the African region as a global actor in international relations. Adom Getachew's *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (2019) is one such study. Getachew characterizes the continent's historical anticolonial nationalism and postcolonial nation-building as African contributions to *world-making* in the post-World War II era. We also examine the African region's participation in contemporary world-making by building upon the historical structuralist theories of African internationalism and applying new constructivist theories that reveal African agency and global actorness in an increasingly complex world of multiple actors ascendant from the global South.

To this end, Ronald Chipaike and Matarutse H. Knowledge (2018) further ground our view of African international relations by underscoring African states' increasing autonomy and capacity to enact complex foreign policy negotiations and dirigisme bargains with external actors. We will see how theories of agency and actorness reveal African states' collective global engagement and geopolitical action to negotiate and bargain with external actors. In the following pages we will analyze what we refer to as the regional internationalism of the collective politics of African states, showing how they are increasingly engaging a global terrain of a deeply contested and embedded pluralist world order.

A Thesis: Africa's Regional Internationalism

Africa's current practice of international relations must be understood as a distinctive internationalist movement exacted collectively by the continent's states on behalf of its populaces in the context of a historically evolving African world region. Presented as regional political action

advanced by African nation-states convened through the institutionalism of the AU, we will demonstrate how African foreign policy is historically rooted in a collective identity, sustained solidarity politics, resurgent activism, and an agent-centric global policy orientation.

We rely on several premises about African regionalism to pose questions about the implications of Africa's contemporary global politics. How is the African region reshaping the continent's identity as an integrated international and regional actor? What role does regionalism play in shaping the continent's new global politics? What events are driving the continent's new genre of international relations and global engagement? What do these events tell us about how Africans exercise power in an international system that is historically structured unevenly to the continent's disadvantage? In what ways are African states creating alternative global norms, values, and rules of sovereignty, and what effect are these contributions having on the region's place in the world and on contemporary international relations writ large?

In responding to these questions, we hope to tell a story about a new genre of African global politics and international engagement—an African brand of international relations that is being expressed within the changing structures of the contemporary global environment. Our narrative will unravel and analyze the argument that, in the new millennium, Africa's regionalism is producing and performing for its states and peoples a distinct internationalism through the actions and behavior of the AU. On behalf of the continent's fifty-five nation-states, the AU represents Africa as a developing-world, global regional actor exercising alternative agency, norm resistance and formation, and international engagement in order to effect African continental reconstructions of the global order.

To support our thesis, we examine select global issues and encounters of African affairs that reveal Africa's historical resistance to colonialism. We examine African states' bloc engagement with postcolonial global governance reform. We analyze the continent's security regionalism, developmental and economic regionalism, encounters with transnational justice, and relations with China. Each encounter demonstrates African states' growing assertion of their collective power and place in the world. We will show, on the one hand, how these global encounters reveal African states' criticisms of the international system, including the continent's grievances against global inequality and its resistance to the lingering racial disdain for Africans that mitigates the region's freedom to navigate and gain opportunity internationally. On the other hand, we will demonstrate how the continent's post-Cold War global interactions are fostering renewed, dynamic, global political activism and proactive collective action among African states and peoples. Not without challenges, we will thus demonstrate how these engagements are producing a new genre of African politics.

The continent's regional internationalism is crafting the AU's evolving infrastructural capacity and creating alternative global norms while also establishing new rules to self-govern Africa in the world. Significantly as well, these encounters exhibit the strategic articulation of African voice, agency, values, and imaginaries in the international arena and the impact that this genre of internationalism has on global transformation and development. This theoretical and empirical background informs the framework for our presentation of Africa's new global politics.

We position Africa as a dynamic world region that at once shapes and is shaped by global trends and transformations. We characterize these developments and actions as the new African internationalism situated in a complex and deeply plural world order. The foregrounding discussion presented in the introduction is elaborated in a subsequent, more detailed presentation of four themes: African regionalism in global politics; Africa and the plural world order; internationalism, multilateralism, and plurilateralism; and African actor agency, the Pan-African identity, and AU institutionalism. We will now turn to engage each theme theoretically to further foreground the book's thesis, premises, and objectives.

African Regionalism in Global Politics

In tying together the book's key themes—internationalism, multilateralism, new regionalism, agency, and pluralism—we establish our core agenda. Our starting point is to examine Africa as an evolving world region that attempts to transform itself while simultaneously transforming the world. As a world region, the African continent was considered by European colonizers to be an area of global transactional and extractive activities including slavery, racial colonialism, and neocolonialism. Whether through states, acephalous communities, or empires, Africans have historically contested these international transactions and impositions of it while also engaging the world globally for centuries even if such engagement has not been adequately documented in disciplinary international relations studies. In presenting Africa as an international region, we will demonstrate how contemporary regional politics in the continent has been informed by the reactive legacies of the colonial and decolonization eras and the post-Cold War era.

Karoline Postel-Vinay (2007) argues that for much of its regional existence in the modern world order, global orders (transatlantic slavery, Pax Britannica racial colonialism, World Wars I and II, the Cold War, neoliberal globalization) have been imposed on the developing world, including on the African region. In the past, Africa's "world region" status has been uniquely linked to processes of negotiating exogenous world orders that

have been imposed on it through brutal or more benign forms of power politics (Postel-Vinay 2007). In a world of deepening and complexifying globalization, rather than accepting the status of being simply a territory upon which imperial global transactions were made, Africans are using regionalism as a significant driver of global transformation.

In the post–Cold War era, regionalism is being redefined. The late 1980s began to see the reemergence, revitalization, and expansion of regional projects and organizations such as the AU (Söderbaum 2003). During this era, regionalism began to take shape in a multipolar world order as globalization expanded. Whereas the old-order international regimes were imposed “from above,” especially from the West onto the developing world, new regionalism in a new world order came about in a less coercive manner. Regionalism in new world order regimes involved more voluntary processes from within the emerging regions, where the constituent states and other actors experienced the imperative of cooperation, an “urge to merge,” or the pooling of sovereignty in order to tackle new global challenges (Hettne 2005). To this effect, new regionalism has been described as compatible with an interdependent world economy, and the constructivist concepts of actorness and agency are important dimensions of this theory. This is because while old international regions were acted upon, new regionalisms exercise actorness as defined by their larger scope of action and room to maneuver in the world beyond their regions. Actorness defines states’—and now organized regions’—capability to influence the external environment.

New regionalism thrives in a space of waning global hegemony occurring after the global financial crisis of 2008. Since then, globalization has begun to decentralize great power polarity and is promoting the creation of a plural world order beyond superpower states and states in general. In this context, through the AU, African regionalism has emerged as a phenomenon that is fostering a new form of African global politics and engagement in the contemporary world. This book is about the way that Africa’s manifestation of a new regionalism is shaping the continent’s global politics and internationalism, thereby making and remaking the continent as a world region. To this end, we position Africa’s upsurge in global engagement within the context of a simultaneous and causative double movement that is explained by this new regionalism and examine this phenomenon in relation to the multilateral action and institutionalism of the AU since its establishment in 2002.

We argue that there is a paradoxical effect to the way regionalism fosters and expands a unique genre of African internationalism. In Africa, old regionalism and new regionalism come together in contemporary processes of global transformation in ways that shape a distinctive brand of African politics and foreign policy. This thesis has several layers that we unravel throughout the book. First, we show how African regionalism is newly

expressed given that it is intricately connected to the waning project of globalization. Second, it is expressed through the regional institutionalism of the AU, which provides African member states with a coordinating platform for collective foreign policy and global political action. Third, it exhibits the characteristics and dialectics of a regional internationalism that on the one hand advocates for an open regionalism that strategically has a global focus while on the other hand simultaneously directs inward-oriented, regional integration goals for the continent.

Fourth, African regionalism is uniquely actor-centric and agent-centric, embodying a historicity of African racial identity as well as a more contemporary assertion of African leadership activism to combat global inequality and African marginalization. Fifth, it is institutionalist and normative seeking to position Africa's shifting status and ranking in global politics.

Drawing from real-world events, these five premises of regionalism are used throughout the book to reveal how African states are becoming a more assertive, visible, multilateral, and action-oriented—albeit an aggregate and collective—singular global actor in international relations despite the reality that the continent remains the least economically viable region in the world.

Africa and the Plural World Order

New regionalism and today's plural world order go hand in hand. International relations scholars have designed varying labels to explain the contemporary world order, including plurilateral (Axtmann 1996; Cerny 1993; Pieterse 1994), heteropolarity (Der Derian 2003), no one's world (Kupchan 2012), multimodal or multiplex world (Acharya 2018), decentered globalism (Buzan 2011), polymorphic globalism (Katzenstein 2012), and multi-order world (Flockhart 2016, cited in Acharya and Buzan 2019). To understand this situation from a developing-world standpoint, global South scholar Amitav Acharya brought a different perspective to bear on this debate.

He describes the contemporary world as deeply plural, characterized by organizational and political pluralism that gives its audience a choice of various movies, actors, directors, and plots all under the same roof (Acharya 2018). It is a world of multiple modernities, where Western liberal modernity is only a part of what is on offer. The deeply plural world order according to Acharya is devoid of a global hegemony and features different economic and political ideologies and systems. However, this genre of global regime includes the remnants of a liberal order that appears to be imploding and is being challenged from within after having become increasingly decentered, plural, and amenable to the counter and alternative agencies of less-powerful global actors (Acharya 2018).

Acharya and Buzan (2019) contend that power in an increasingly pluralized international system/society is becoming more diffuse. Superpowers are waning and regional powers are ascending. The world order is becoming politically decentered in terms of power and authority. The old centers of power are losing relative strength while decentralization is empowering nonstate actors against their states, transnationally, and against other states. Where states align with nonstate actors for a range of purposes from aid and development to subversion and destabilization of other states, regimes, and nonstate actors, there exists a layered view of global power, captured by the notion of plurilateralism (Acharya and Buzan 2019).

Three interrelated concepts deepen our understanding of Acharya and Buzan's (2019) description of world order pluralism: deep pluralism, contested pluralism, and embedded pluralism. *Deep pluralism*, for Acharya and Buzan is "a diffuse distribution of power, wealth, and cultural authority that is set within a strongly integrated and interdependent system in which both states and nonstate actors play substantial roles" (2019, 265). *Contested pluralism* describes a world where there is substantial resistance to the material and ideational reality of deep pluralism. *Embedded pluralism* describes the existing world order where main players in global international society not only tolerate the material, cultural, ideological, and actor-type differences of deep pluralism but also respect and even value them as foundational for coexistence (Acharya and Buzan 2019).

We leverage Acharya and Buzan's theorization about a deeply plural world, presenting it as they do as a new theory of international relations in a postliberal, hyperglobal era. That is to say, we contend that seeing the world as a plural arena draws attention to some of the absences and erasures in the mainstream international relations narrative that persist despite decades of decolonial scholarship and postcolonial theorizing (Acharya and Buzan 2019). By revealing ways that colonialism shapes and structures the infrastructure of world politics and the international system (Biswas 2013), postcolonial international relations narratives such as theirs pay attention to the hierarchies, hidden interests, political alignments, and power-knowledge nexuses embedded in international relations (Rukmini 2018). The need for postcolonial international relations theses is evident when one observes how the contemporary global order is dominated by debates over the strength or weakness of the global economy and the hegemony, multipolarity, or decline of the United States and the G7, while having little to say about the poorest regions of the world, including Africa.

To this end, we apply a postcolonial international relations (IR) methodology to craft an understanding of African global politics. Postcolonial IR is a genre of politics that sees the international system as being composed of multiple and overlapping worlds nested in complex interdependence through which there is a co-constitution of the modern world (Krishna 2001). This

framework informs our study of regionalisms and regional international orders beyond Eurocentric models as we strive to build synergies between disciplinary (IR) and area studies (African Studies) approaches to global studies. The approach is valuable to international relations studies as it both considers the two-way (global North and global South) international diffusion of ideas and norms and investigates the multiple and diverse ways in which civilizations around the world encounter each other.

As such, our book combines innovative historical narration with contemporary political studies about Africa's transformative role in the world, as one of few new monographs on the topic of African international relations. We build upon the historical structuralist theories of African internationalism while also applying newer constructivist theories to our content to capture African agency and actorness in an increasingly complex world of multiple actors ascendant from the periphery. We will see how these actors are navigating and transforming asymmetrical global power relations. Doing so offers an intriguing way to explain the emergence of the continent's dynamic international performance manifest in forms of renewed expressions of African actor agency, global norm creation, strengthened international institution building, postcolonial international relations, and socially constructivist regional internationalism.

Internationalism, Multilateralism, and Plurilateralism

Our usage of Acharya's plural world framework relies upon traditional international relations concepts, including internationalism, multilateralism, regionalism, and newer constructivist ones such as plurilateralism. These concepts reinforce the thesis about the continent's new global actorness and engagement in relation to five premises that further articulate a conceptual mapping for the current book. First, we examine internationalism *inter alia* with global politics in the context of a contemporary era of globalization where nations recognize that they cannot act alone to solve the multiple problems they face. With this premise, we will see how nation-states recognize that the problems they face are increasingly transnational and thereby necessitate multilateral approaches that employ an international perspective. Internationalism is based on the premise that nations work together to find common ground and build a safer and more stable world. When it is expressed as a movement, nations or politicians seek to generate a belief in a single cosmopolitan community that emphasizes the need to think beyond national borders, reach out to others, and accept a sense of duty toward fellow humans regardless of their nationality.

Second, our theory of multilateralism stems from the reality that internationalism requires forums, platforms, and other institutional organizations

where nations may cooperate. International organizations have been established to achieve internationalism through multilateralism by bringing nations together to advance shared goals and common interests. Multilateralism, an institutional form that coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of “generalized” principles of conduct, fuels internationalism. Multilateralism may involve several nations acting together through international organizations, as in the UN; or it may involve regional groupings, such as the African Union. Mylonas and Yorulmazlar (2012) propose regional multilateralism to suggest that “contemporary problems can be better solved at the regional rather than the bilateral or global levels,” and that bringing together the concept of regional integration with that of multilateralism is necessary in today’s world. Using African regional internationalism as a case study, we will show how the continent’s multilateral actions feed into the regional, which in turn shapes the continent’s internationalism.

Third, as a form of multilateral internationalism, regionalism is understood for its role in driving global transformation and development, especially by its inclination to paradoxically tame globalization rather than lead to greater global integration. Examined this way, regional internationalism is best understood as “the degree to which a group of actors inhabiting a contiguous space act and represent themselves as a group” (Ghica 2013, 733). As globalization fostered demands for more innovative forms of internationalism, especially in global governance, regional dimensions of internationalism bring back elements of locality, territory, and geography as the site for governance beyond a nation’s borders. To this end, we see how regionalism, internationalism, and multilateralism operate in the context of globalization and how each reveals elements of territory and geography to reconfigure global governance. For example, the global focus on a narrower construct of region over universe allows national governments back into policy at odds with global governance policies. This way, regional governance encourages a degree of intergovernmental- and/or societal-level collaboration and negotiation that provide greater regulatory authority and capacity by nations and localities over the global policy agenda.

A fourth premise relates to our approach to regionalism as a new international relations disciplinary study. We examine regions using a social constructivist framework to focus our analyses of the interrelatedness of structure and agency, to focus on local context as the realm within which people experience, interpret, and gradually reconstitute social structures and create meaning in real-world sites of interaction. For example, we frame the term *region* “as an institutional construction reflecting the collective history of an area and infusing the everyday lives of its inhabitants” (Murphy 1991, 23). In this context, we expose the ways that the African region has maintained—and progressively evolved—an active participation in global affairs to

impact the continent's self-determined global transformation. In this respect, in place of the concept of extraversion used exclusively to privilege a pathological internationalist analysis of African affairs (Bayart and Ellis 2000), we employ internationalism, multilateralism, and regionalism to underscore that positivist and normative theories and concepts can successfully be used to understand and analyze Africa's global affairs.

To this end, a fifth and final assumption of our book anchors our study of African internationalist regionalism to a re-envisioned disciplinary study of international relations captured by the concept of plurilateralism. Originally borrowed from the international political economy of world trade literature, plurilateralism is seen to fall between regionalism and multilateralism, referring to any kind of institutionalized cross-continental arrangement between at least three countries. Different from bilateralism (country to country) and multilateralism (inter-country cooperation and with international organizations), plurilateralism reflects the reality that one of the parties in negotiation is a regional trade arrangement (RTA) and another is a country or a region, or when negotiations are between several countries or a series of connected bilateral relationships from different continents (Ndayi 2009).

We use plurilateralism in a deeper and broader sense to refer to the decentered, deeply pluralized state of the global system and world society. For Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1994), a plurilateral world refers to an arena where increasing pluralization of power is occurring among political, economic, cultural, and social actors, groups, and communities within states, between states, and across states. Plurilateralism can be identified as "the increase in the available modes of global organization, including transnational, international, macro-regional, national, micro-regional, municipal, and local actors" (Pieterse 2018, 45). Functional networks of corporations, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, social movements, and professionals and computer users crisscross these organizational levels.

According to Roland Axtmann (1996), those individuals, groups, and communities partaking in the creation of these networks and affected by them will become empowered and constrained by them in ways quite different from the past when it was the nation-state that determined their political liberty and identity and mediated the effects of the outside world. In this plurilateral world, the idea of an authority that resides in the state, as that institutional arrangement empowered to make, and enforce, collectively binding decisions, has lost its justification (Axtmann 1996). Additionally, in such a plurilateral world order, there exists an increasing desire among states and peoples for more political, cultural, and economic differentiation pushing toward more regionalized and culturally and politically differentiated international societies. This process fosters a greater scope for agency for states and nonstate actors.

Plurilateralism reveals structures of a more layered international society with regional and/or subregional differentiation, and lesser powers and nonstate actors play significant roles in global norm and institution building. In a plurilateral world, “neither great power management nor global governance will be sufficient in themselves to support the degree of order and management necessary to deal with shared global fates and critical global issues” (Axtmann 1996).

Actor Agency, the Pan-African Identity, and AU Institutionalism

Regional internationalism, a plural world order, and the expansion of multilateral global governance to plurilateralism envelop a fourth book theme to underscore our thesis about Africa’s new global politics. To this end, the concepts of actor agency, Pan-African identity, solidarity politics, and African Union liberal institutionalism inform the last set of thematic concepts that help shape the book’s theoretical framework. Too often Africa is still framed and represented as a nonparticipant in international politics: the recipient of aid, the victim of wars and structural adjustment, and a continent pervaded with ethnic conflicts and corruption. These descriptions tend to dismiss the degree to which African individuals, states, and institutions contribute to global development and engage proactively and dynamically in international politics. To this extent, mainstream tropes examining African affairs in international relations deny African agency in global transformation.

In a deeply plural world, agency is described as the capacity, condition, or state of acting or exerting *state* power. As individual, relatively weak states in the global system, African states have limited power. Nevertheless, in a deeply plural world order, we engage a multilayered view of agency that goes beyond state action. Agency includes “the social actor” agent who may be a nonstate actor but who also could foster global change (Wright 2006). We also employ a pluralized notion of agency that goes beyond recognizing the military and economic power of top-tier security states. Agents in this new constructivist world may be transnational norm entrepreneurs, who project narratives of resistance and rejection of global norms.

To understand the current global order, we should seek to understand how a genre of global social actors (state and non-state) from the South, “through their material, ideational, and interaction capabilities, construct, reject, reconstitute, and transform global and regional orders” (Acharya 2014, 651). This way of examining non-Western actor agency speaks more intentionally to the instances of collective assertion by African states to exhibit influence in the international arena that are the subject of the current book. We show how it is that “agency is not merely a prerogative of

the strong; it can manifest as the weapon of the weak that can be exercised in global transnational space as well as at regional and local levels” within alternative cultural contexts. Agency in this instance, as Acharya indicates, “means constructing new rules and institutions at the local level to support and strengthen global order against great power hypocrisy and dominance” (Acharya 2014, 652).

Agency is an important framework that we use to examine the core phenomenon of African internationalism. International relations theories have traditionally focused upon the absence of African actors, and doing so has led to silencing of narratives about African action and contributions to global development. Yet, agency is a critical prism through which to examine African world experiences and affairs, positioning Africans as centered subjects of history and circumstance who are crafting and building new approaches to development, security, and justice (Acharya 2011). African agency can be further taken to be seen as the way that self-developed African initiatives improve the socioeconomic well-being of African peoples while projecting a posture of power and self-help in international engagements. Agency reveals the degree to which African political actors have room to maneuver within the international system and exert influence internationally.

International relations scholars and practitioners have only recently begun to examine Africa’s international relations from a perspective that uses agency (Brown and Harman 2013). There is only now a move away from international development discourses about the African region that focus on the ways that external actors determine African realities. The change in scholarship has occurred because studies in African agency have opened up new dimensions of African international study that focus on how far and in what ways African political actors impact and influence the international system. As such, agency now even speaks to the discursive dimensions of “Africa” as a category used by Africans to construct forms of international political action while also pushing back against external usages of “Africa” as a symbolic racialized category for international intervention. Brown and Harman (2013) ask important research questions about this intellectual shift. Who are Africa’s change agent actors? What are the key sites and sources of agency within Africa? What does their agency look like and how can it be understood?

Similar questions drive our thesis about Africa’s agency and new internationalism. The African Union is presented as a global social actor emerging from the periphery that is exercising Africa’s agency in advancing and facilitating a new internationalism for the continent. Defining and presenting this phenomenon as “African Unionism,” we refer to the organization’s construction of a genre of internationalism that seeks to reposition the continent in its global standing. Through the African Union and African states’

collective action, our theory of agency describes and explains Africans' self-manuevered and negotiated interactions, relationships, and norm building in the global engagement of international relations. Ronald Chipaike and Matarutse H. Knowledge conceptualize "African agency in international relations this way as African political actors' ability to negotiate and bargain with external actors in a manner that benefits Africans themselves." African agency can be further taken to mean what Chipaike and Knowledge see as "the initiatives developed and enacted by Africans to improve their socio-economic well-being" and their "posture of power and self-help in international engagements" (Chipaike and Knowledge 2018, 1).

In developing their own now classic thesis on African international relations, a theory of extraversion, Jean-François Bayart and Stephen Ellis (2000) imply that Africa has indeed had a dynamic and active relationship with the world despite racial slavery and colonialism. In doing so, the authors argue that African states have shown considerable autonomy in their exercise of postcolonial sovereignty. The theory rightly explains how Africa's international relations are about individuals, states, and groups who maintain autonomy through the strategies of international engagement; however, in characterizing these strategies as international acts of coercion, trickery, flight, mediation, appropriation, and rejection to control and manipulate resources (internal and external) for their own selfish interests (Bayart and Ellis 2000), the theory of African extraversion presents a pathological, cynical, and even sadistic analysis of Africa's contribution to world affairs.

We reject and further revise a critical salvaging of aspects of Bayart and Ellis's (2000) theory about Africa's international relations with the world, using it in reverse to demonstrate African agency and interactionism with the West in more balanced, push-shove contexts. Agency and autonomy among Africans need not be to create disorder and failure as the authors contend. Rather, we argue that the story of Africa's evolving international relations, while recognizing the agency of Africans, must also be understood in the context of structural inhibitions caused by centuries of racial slave trading and colonialism that Bayart and Ellis do not address at all. African agency in international relations is exercised through complex, asymmetrical multilateral actions and interactions with international actors whose historical intent has been—at least—to exploit and control the continent. The theorists of African extroversion do not present these important normative aspects of African internationalism in a changing world either.

To support our thesis, using theories of African agency, African internationalism, and critical geopolitics in a deeply plural world, we highlight African agency and expose the silences that have heretofore disguised the dynamism and critical implications of African action in contemporary international relations. For Africans, today's global order is an arena in which non-Western actors challenge the once-presumed universality of the core

tenets of international relations—sovereignty and security. African actors such as the African Union are putting forward alternative, localized ideas and institutions that challenge and construct global development differently from what is the norm.

Agency and actorness are threads that hold together our thesis about regional internationalism. We show how the current genre of Africa's international relations has evolved from and is still deeply connected to the history of racial capitalism, slavery, and colonialism. However, the constructivist framework that grounds our theoretical and historical formulation about Africa in the world additionally shows Africans actively transforming this history in ways that have resulted in progressive, critical shifts in African states' engagement in contemporary geopolitics. The shift began in 2000, in Lomé, Togo, inspired by a changing world that African leaders navigated based on the ideals of an African Renaissance. African countries would reinvent themselves with the formation of the AU by restructuring the now defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Unlike the OAU, the new AU would be more ambitious and internationalist in scope and establish for the continent a law of the land—the Constitutive Act of the African Union—to guide Africans toward a radically new vision and mission for the continent's development through global engagement. The reconfigured Pan-African organization would set off clearly defined objectives and responsibilities that would accelerate the integration of the continent and defend its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of member states to achieve autonomy from Western dependency and hegemony, while also asserting African engagement and influence in global power relations in self-determined, agent-centric terms.

It is in this context that the AU is currently convened as a regional organization conducting the international relations of the African region on behalf of African states. Yet, like other regions of the world in an era of globalization, African regionalization would assume a dialectical trend as it increasingly both became a manifestation of globalization and exhibited an opposite trend. In this regard, globalization accompanied the regionalization of international relations as the public functions of national states were increasingly transferred to both regional and international levels. As in many developing countries, African countries used regionalization to confront global political and economic competition by facilitating gradual global economic integration, combining openness to the outside world with the protection of national interests via a dirigisme engagement in global governance and public affairs (Jilberto and Mommen 2017).

The AU embodied this genre of regional internationalism by revitalizing African states' long-standing struggle to formulate African norms in international relations that would self-determinedly reposition the continent away from its small-states, bottom-tier status of marginalized, peripheral actors.

As a strengthened, collective entity, African states would begin to demand equal global citizenship and partnered global governance as a united, empowered global actor (Edozie with Gottschalk 2014). This would be Kwame Nkrumah's dream of a United States of Africa. Such an analysis of the African Union, as an African global actor exercising African agency driving the continent's new internationalism, aims to understand how African-constructed internationalist ideas affect the ways that the continent is self-determinedly processing its own notions of place and politics in the contemporary global world. It is in this context that we characterize African internationalism as African Unionism—a phenomenon that we will argue illustrates and explains not only African states' growing autonomy from Western dependency but also the ways in which Africa is increasingly shaping the world.

The phenomenon of African Unionism captures the continent's increasing assertiveness in its engagement and influence in global power relations and its capacity to define Africa's global politics on African terms. Engaging racial identity counternarratives, relentlessly building an authoritative institutional and jurisdictional infrastructure to be used by its members, and dexterously navigating and articulating a sophisticated and united multilateral political narrative and worldview to persuade its case all contributed to Africa's twenty-first-century development of global norms in international relations.

Our portrayal of African internationalism through the AU's current actions seeks to reveal the dynamic ways that African states collectively, increasingly challenge Western power dominance. In doing so, we reveal how the continent attempts to recreate and reimagine global and regional order through a reinterpretation of the global norms of sovereignty, global governance, international security, transnational justice, and the international economy. These and other themes are addressed in detail in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter 2 we offer the African version of Acharya and Buzan's (2019) thesis in *The Making of Global International Relations* by exploring how African international relations have been made and remade. We trace the history of Africa's place *in* the world and *of* the world while engaging the topic of the continent's evolving practice of internationalism.

We use two conceptual arguments about the way that African international relations have developed and are constituted in the present. First is the reality that the international relations of the African region have developed as a collective political action among sometimes loosely and other times disparate African sub-regions, communities, and nation-states con-

ected by shared Pan-African histories, ideas, and identities. A second argument articulates the way that international norms have driven Africa's collective encounters with the world over time. To this end, in Chapter 2 we provide the overarching historical background to reveal how international relations have been formed in the continent and by African states. We examine epochs in world history and begin with the pre-World War II era to present the symbolic cases of Africa's League of Nations members, Ethiopia and Liberia, and reveal their role in grounding a formative practice for African international relations.

Next, we present the pre-World War II development of global diasporic, Pan-African internationalism as it was shaped by a series of Pan-African Congresses throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During this period, the norms of self-determination and anti-racialism were prominent in developing and shaping Africa's relations with the world. African nationalism and pan-nationalism leading up to independence after World War II into the Cold War applied the norms of unity, continental regionalism, and noninterference and nonintervention, paradoxically as African states consolidated their foreign policies into the OAU. By the end of the Cold War, in an era of globalization, international global shifts occurred again as African states employed norms of non-indifference, responsible sovereignty, and humanitarian intervention and a new genre of solidarity regionalism that is manifest in the African Renaissance and institutionally represented by the AU.

In Chapter 3 we examine the continent's early efforts to build a practice of internationalism through a decentralized form of multilateralism within the world's most significant international organizations. By coordinating common African positions (CAPs), African states attempted to collectively reaffirm the continent's leading place in the world. African states would pool their foreign policies together through multilateral international organizations like the UN and the World Trade Organization to find cooperative approaches to African states' most pressing concerns—human security and peace, food security, and the eradication of poverty and disease. African governments have adopted a number of common positions on issues of global concern, dating back to 1987's African Common Position on Africa's External Debt Crisis, to the 2015 African Strategy on Climate Change. We examine one of the continent's most impactful common positions—the Ezulwini Consensus—as it became one of the foremost international relations standpoints from a region on United Nations reform and a more representative and democratic Security Council.

By 2015, in rolling out Agenda 2063, African states pooled their common positions into a blueprint of goals and aspirations that resolved that the continent would be a major social, political, and economic force in the world (*Agenda 2063*). In Chapter 3 we capture these nascent and more

recent efforts by the continent to achieve its own distinctive genre of regional-international relations. By pooling their foreign policy common positions into a single institutional platform in Agenda 2063, we will see how African states and peoples (including the diaspora) build a collective foreign policy and agenda for global politics and global governance.

In *Regions and Powers*, Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (2003) describe the AU-UN relationship as a manifestation of the regional security complex theory that explains post-Cold War security relations and interactions between regions, as well as their interplay between global and regional structures. They argue that regional security complexes may well be extensively penetrated by global powers while their regional dynamics nonetheless have a substantial degree of autonomy from the patterns set by the global powers. The resuscitation of Kwame Nkrumah's Pax Africana norm by the AU in 2002 produced Africa's twenty-first-century regime for security regionalism. The AU's Pax Africana security regime provides an African-led path to self-determined international security and conflict management for the continent.

To this end, in Chapter 4 we explain the ways that African states have introduced an array of new norms, institutions, and policies that direct the region toward a security community complex characterized by cooperative intraregional and external relations. We argue that Pax Africana marks a progressive step in the advancement of a new global geopolitics of international security for Africa. The way that the continent is reshaping global security relations is reflected in the following statement by a UN special representative to the African Union: "The African Union is the most important strategic partner between the United Nations and a regional organization in peace and security, development and human rights" (United Nations 2018).

Chapter 4 further examines the continent's efforts to build its regional security architecture in order to manage its state of insecurity collectively on behalf of African states. The chapter chronicles the regime's admixture of rules, institutions, policies, and field operations that African states have established to enforce the continent's new security regime. In illustrating the contours of this regional security complex theory—particularly the regional-global interface of the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and the UN Security Council—we also demonstrate Africa's newly asserted agency and its contributions to advancing and transforming international security relations.

Additionally, we see how Africa's security functions regionally, as an interface between AU member states in conflict and the AU's strengthening regional institutions, and how it is also distinctively global, given its tendency to interface especially with international security organizations such as the UN Security Council. We show how African states use their emerging regional security complex to transcend their bottom-tier position in

global security structures and assert more power and freedom to navigate geopolitics in their collective interests. We conclude the chapter by revealing a new theory to explain the distinctiveness of Africa's new global security politics in a multipolar and plurilateral world.

The July 16, 2019, ICC acquittal of former Ivorian president, Laurent Gbagbo, and his minister of youth, Charles Blé Goudé, for war crimes was seen as vindication for African states who had starkly criticized what they had deemed the ICC's injustice toward Africa's leaders. Chapter 5 examines African states' variable roles in relation to the global governance of transnational justice from the contending liberal universalist versus constructivist perspectives. Using liberal lenses, we engage Kathryn Sikkink's justice cascade as a metaphor for the "dramatic new trend in world politics toward holding individual state officials, including heads of state, criminally accountable for human rights violations" (Sikkink 2011) and African leaders culpability. The justice cascade proposes that international criminal law and the establishment of the ICC punish those who mastermind atrocities and discourage others who are tempted to follow their example.

Alternatively, we use the chapter to introduce transnational justice approaches developed by more recent constructivist transnational justice scholars such as Kamari Clarke, who examines cascades of justice and international criminal law in Africa as negotiated assemblages of feelings about inequality and power. According to Clarke, these assemblages recognize how other narratives about the ICC in Africa reflect spheres of global power and ways that African feelings of justice and injustice are complex and emerge within an awareness of the continent's political and economic challenges (Clarke 2020).

To this end, in Chapter 5 while we examine the way that the transnational justice cascade movement is influencing Africa's new global politics, we also reveal how African states are collectively developing an alternative Afrocentric international criminal law. We present initiatives, interactions, and policies used by African states to collectively contest and establish alternative norms and institutions of transnational justice and post-atrocity international conflict resolution models to govern the continent. We analyze the counterinitiatives that the AU uses to promote African norms and models of justice for the region that explain the states' collective agency in opposing what is considered the ICC's interventionism: its politicization, its interventionism into African sovereignty, its presumed non-universality and proclaimed illegitimacy in promoting transnational justice norms that impact its ill suitability for prosecuting local crimes.

These contending liberalist and Africanist approaches to transnational justice are examined in relation to encounters between the AU and international organizations such as the ICC to reveal Africa's growing confidence as a global actor engaging a complex world order. One example is evident

by the comments of the late Ethiopian prime minister and former AU chair Hailemariam Desalegn, who controversially proclaimed that the ICC had degenerated to race hunting of African leaders in the continent (AFP 2013; Chadwick and Thieme 2016). Desalegn's accusation followed by the AU's threat to lead the mass withdrawal of its fifty-five members revealed that under the auspices of the AU, African states had become more confident in confronting what it had always perceived as Western-dominated international power (Chadwick and Thieme 2016, 342).

To this end, we begin Chapter 5 by positioning Africa theoretically within Sikkink's and Clarke's contending theories of cascades of justice. We then present empirical cases to show how African states have cooperated with cascades of transnational justice regimes and norms in modeling hybrid international courts such as special courts for Sierra Leone (Charles Taylor), Rwanda (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda), and Chad (Hissène Habré). Next, we present Africa's criticism of the norms of transnational justice, especially through its opposition to the ICC, focusing on the issues of serving-leader immunity in Sudan's Bashir case, post-atrocity prosecution for victims in the Ivory Coast's Gbagbo/Blé Goudé case, and sovereign responsibility in Kenya's Uhuru case. We demonstrate the fullest expression of African global actor agency by its development of a genre of Afrocentric international criminal law in the establishment of an African regional criminal court—the Malabo Protocol. By revealing Africa's attempts to achieve collective sovereign responsibility in transnational justice while nurturing the establishment of African universality and self-determined international post-atrocity norms, in a final discussion section we exposit the continent's contributions to transnational justice cascades and global development, presenting them as an important driver of the continent's new global politics.

If the ICC-Africa encounter reflected a high point for the advancement of an African genre of internationalism—seen as the continent's ability to successfully resist and force change and accommodation in the international system for African benefit—Africa's engagement with the international political economy remained a low point in the continent's global dirigisme despite African states' collective efforts. It is easier for African states to achieve political and cultural agency and ascendancy in a deeply plural world. However, achieving gains from the international political economy has been a more critical challenge despite the bolstered capacity of African Union institutionalism.

The post-neoliberal turn, where plurilateral trade and economic relationships replace multilateral and bilateral economic transactions, may have provided a turning point for African states that have begun to advance new, more equitable global economic partnerships. To address new political and economic challenges, African states have launched a continent-wide economic initiative and institution, the African Continental

Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). A new organ of the African Union, AfCFTA functions as an economic diplomacy and collective statecraft instrument used to achieve continental economic integration as well as global economic integration on African terms.

In Chapter 6 we analyze these trends and present Africa's economic indicators and trajectories in the context of "the rise of the rest" phenomenon, from "Africa Rising" to "Pan Africa Rising" (Edozie 2017). We examine the myriad ways that African states are fostering transformative change in the contemporary African international political economy and the challenges that they encounter. We focus on the mechanisms, strategies, initiatives, policies, and global engagement instruments that African states collectively use to achieve their global economic goals in the twenty-first century. We extend our thesis about Africa's new role in global politics to illustrate an argument about its new role in the international political economy.

In this chapter, we examine AfCFTA as a flagship initiative of the African Union, as an extension of the continent's renewed Pan-African economic agenda, and as an economic diplomacy tool to achieve Africa's global political-economic objectives. We will see how the AfCFTA is used by African states to make inroads into at least one aspect of the global economy, international trade. Through the AfCFTA, African states exercise agency and control by creating strategies to positively reverse the unequal terms of trade that have historically positioned the continent at the periphery of the global economy. We examine the implementation of AfCFTA in relation to the twenty-year-old African Economic Community regional integration initiative. We show how, through AfCFTA, African states delegate their international and intraregional trade facilitation policies with the continent's key global trading partners.

We also examine the challenges and opportunities that the AfCFTA experiences in exercising economic diplomacy with the World Trade Organization, the UN, the United States, the EU, and China. To do so, we engage several themes, including the challenges of navigating power differentials between Africa and more powerful international actors. Our final sections conclude with a theoretical discussion of how AfCFTA illustrates new trends in the international political economy of Africa in the twenty-first century, especially reaffirming the role of African Union institutionalism and economic diplomacy, African global actor agency, and regional integration in repositioning the continent to achieve global economic goods on its own terms.

An understanding of Africa's new global politics is incomplete without also understanding China's rise in the world. The China-Africa international relations agenda is pivotal to understanding Africa's new global politics, especially given the emerging power's hotly debated and controversial relations with the continent. Notwithstanding the now voluminous literature

on China's rise and China in Africa studies, the continent's perspective and standpoint on its China agenda is rarely told. Consistent with our thesis on African agency where agency means that a subject is acting rather than merely being acted upon, in Chapter 7 we argue that Africa's new role in global politics engages China as a way to assert the region's own independent authority in a new deeply plural global setting.

In this chapter, we examine China's deepening global involvement in Africa in the context of the continent's global actor agency and engagement in a world order where there are changing geographies of trade. To this end, we analyze the China-Africa relationship as one of asymmetrical power relations that jostles between partnership and patronship. On the one hand, China's increasing bilateral involvement with African countries beginning in the early millennium represents an opportunity for the rising power to extend its influence throughout the continent and establish itself as an envoy for African states' collective external relations. As the continent's patron, we will show how Africa represents a key diplomatic, strategic, and geopolitical platform upon which China can raise its own international influence to build a more just international order that advances peace, prosperity, and equality worldwide. In this respect, as a developmental state role model, China is also widely seen by African states as an indispensable partner in terms of capacitating the AU to carry out its responsibility. We will show how the China-Africa international relations agenda is pivotal to understanding Africa's new global politics.

On the other hand, our analysis of the relationship between China and Africa recognizes African agency and the continent's self-directed internationalism with China from an African perspective. We reveal how it is for African states that China's increasing bilateral involvement with them represents an opportunity for the AU to extend its own regional influence and establish itself as an envoy for the continent's external relations. Thus we examine the China-Africa relationship within the broader strategic interests of African states vis-à-vis their representation by the AU to reveal the continent's emergent, collective foreign policy with China.

In our final chapter, we revisit our opening thesis questions to reinforce our argument that Africa's new regional internationalism is shaped by increasing complexity in international politics that has emerged as a result of transformations toward deep global pluralism. By the end of the book, we observe a pattern about the historical and contemporary practice of African international relations to introduce a new theory about the African region's impact on global politics.

We conclude with the final arguments of our thesis that Africa's regional internationalism is both a product and a driver of transformative global politics in the twenty-first century. Our thesis replaces the extraversion theory of African international relations, which contends the continent's

elites have deliberately contributed to a relationship of self-interested, dependence in their relations with the rest of the world. In developing our own thesis on Africa's international relations, we center the continent as an international entity and world region that has experienced long-standing historical global junctures, encounters, and transformations achieved by a variegated assemblage of actors at the community, national, regional, and global levels. By our conclusion, we reveal African states' collective impact at the regional and global levels.

This chapter will confirm the reality that, historically, the continent has been a site of transnational activities and encounters for global actors, including imperialism, transatlantic slavery, racial colonialism, and contemporary neocolonialism. Our book reveals how these encounters have produced an Africa that is a historically situated geopolitical regional construct, forged by European geographers and used to designate groups of peoples who were not immediately aware of the new spatial category to which they were supposed to belong. To this end, we reveal how the idea of Africa has been invented and reinvented for centuries by Africans inside the continent as well as by international actors (Mazrui 2005). In the twenty-first century, Africa is being reinvented by the regional internationalism of African states constituted as the AU. The theory of Africa's international relations we present here positions the continent as a historical international region while leveraging the continent's new regional internationalism to reveal its expanded, evolving participation in collectively reversing the continent's marginal global position.

In this final chapter, we reaffirm our thesis, using it to probe the question of what Africa's new role in global politics means for the theory and practice of the international relations of Africa. To do so, we reexamine themes engaged throughout the book—global diversity and inclusion, regional-global governance, international conflict management, transnational justice, new China-Africa geographies of trade, and global economy—conclusively applying our theoretical constructs of agency, global South development, and global inequality to a discussion about Africa's new global politics.

Conclusion

In the millennium, African states have collectively begun to push back against their portrayal as victims of global exogenous forces and constraints to take on a more assertive, high-level diplomacy role to advance the continent's interests in the global international system (Brown and Harman 2013). In responding to this global visibility and collective action emerging from the continent, particularly expressed through the regional-internationalist AU,

international relations scholars and practitioners have begun to examine the continent's international relations from a perspective that reflects these changes.

We are motivated by these expansive theories of international relations scholarship that capture change in the study of African affairs, and draw from the important subject of how African states collectively deploy agency, through their material, ideational, and interaction capabilities, to construct, reject, reconstitute, and transform global and regional orders. We believe that this is an important intellectual intervention, because when international relations studies recognize multiple forms of agency beyond material power to include resistance, normative action, and local constructions of world order, the discipline becomes a truly global one representing an inclusive, pluralistic universalism and respect for diversity.