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Tom Young, ed.. *Readings in the International Relations of Africa.* Readings in African Studies Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. 384 pp. $50.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-253-01888-5.

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How has the study of Africa fared in international relations (IR) literature so far? Do IR theories as we know them adequately capture the study of Africa and its position in the international order? These questions are the focus of the analysis in the edited volume *Readings in the International Relations of Africa*.

The volume starts from the general observations that most mainstream IR theories have marginalized the study of Africa. In editor Tom Young's analysis, some of the reasons that have led to this inadequate account of Africa in IR include the fact that much of IR literature takes states to be the main unit of analysis, many mainstream IR theories consider not all states as important but focus on Great Powers mainly, and many African countries have weak state capacity and conduct governance through other polities than the state. Yet Young and other scholars point out that lamenting the absence of Africa in IR theories should not mean that the dialogue between African studies and IR should end. On the contrary, this volume of twenty-seven chapters explores different angles of these questions and offers innovative ways of looking at the varying degrees of agency of African states and their role in global politics.

Speaking to Young's contention that IR's inadequacy to capture Africa stems in part from the fact that states operate in different ways in Africa from the way they do in the West, the first part of the book contests such concepts as the "state" and "sovereignty." We are reminded, by Siba Grovogui, that sovereignty and the Westphalian state carry many assumptions in them about the state being the central actor in politics at the expense of other entities, such as villages, federations, and dynasties. Grovogui observes that the norm of sovereignty only applied to European powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These powers restricted African sovereignty as colonial powers beginning in the nineteenth century and persisted into the post-independence era. He asserts that while the norm of sovereignty was respected and reiterated in the context of intra-European relations, European powers did not shy away from intervening in the Congo to depose Patrice Lumumba in favor of Joseph Mobutu and in many other instances. To highlight the double standards of the centrality of "statehood" and "sovereignty" in IR literature, Grovogui contends that "there has never been a uniform international system of sovereignty across space and time" (p. 33). For him, a better conceptualization of sovereignty should move beyond "the state" to encompass complex and multiple institutions, formal and non-formal authority practices, and non-state actors. Therefore, Grovogui's intervention is

a reflecting mirror that probes not the African state but the IR literature and its theorization of African states. In a way, scholarship would be better served by changing the perspective of African states as "failed" to examining ways to broaden the conceptualization of the state to better understand its role.

Besides questions of statehood and sovereignty, another salient theme across the volume deals with issues of development and foreign assistance in Africa. For example, while Tony Killick's chapter traces British aid to Africa and examines what external and internal factors influenced the shift in UK's aid policies, Young's chapter examines the specific case of Mozambique's shift from Marxist order to a more liberal-oriented constitution. Young observes that adopting this "new order" did not really change much on the ground. Instead he argues that "despite equipping itself with all the trappings of a democratic state, the sheer leverage of outside powers and in particular the coordinating role of the IMF [International Monetary Fund]/World Bank, with the full support of the Great Powers, has subjected Mozambique to an extraordinary degree of foreign tutelage, indeed made it a virtual laboratory for new forms of Western domination" (p. 226).

The nexus between power, development, and governance is extremely important to examine both in the historical context of post-independence Africa and its regional institutions, and in the context of new encounters between African states and emerging powers. In chapter 24, Rita Abrahamsen examines this nexus and probes the shift in the discourse on development in Africa across the years. She observes that international institutions recently began to speak about "partnerships" with African states. Abrahamsen offers a critical appraisal of the concept of partnership, explaining how it is supposed to return power to developing countries and to connote horizontal relations among partners rather than hierarchical relations between donor and recipient. Yet, Abrahamsen observes, in reality power permeates cooperation and partnership just as much as it permeates relations between donor and recipient.

Abrahamsen writes that "by the late 1990s, there was also a growing recognition among the donor community that conditionality-based lending has failed to generate the desired results in terms of economic growth and good governance and 'ownership' emerged as a key term in development discourse" (p. 298). In many ways, the failures of conditionality-based development aid and governance efforts in Africa are indicative of Africa's place in theories and conceptualizations of the (West-centric) international order and IR theories. Failures of understanding how states in Africa govern, what the main units of analysis are, and what the priorities and aspirations of the populations in these states are point us at weaknesses in general theories of IR to capture the context of Africa.

Much like this chapter asks whether the discourse of "partnerships" is mere rhetoric and rebranding of old practices in new concepts, one could legitimately ask whether the new actors and rising powers' activities in Africa are truly changing the continent's place in the international order or whether they are a replay of old episodes of domination and exploitation with new actors. With regard to China's expansive involvement in the continent, Marcus Power and Giles Mohan identify yet another gap in the IR literature, which is its lack of theorizing the IR of the Global South. Yet, despite their general sentiment about this gap, they do come to the conclusion that "perhaps this is not a new form of South-South development cooperation, but rather something quite similar to what other countries have done with respect to Africa" (p. 331). They seem to advocate that even though the end goal may be similar, the processes by which China carries its influence and builds its power are different from Western powers.

To be sure, China's foreign assistance to African states is different quantitatively and qualitatively from that of traditional European powers, the United States, and aid agencies. China's model, which is often referred to as the Beijing Consensus, is characterized by absence of governance-related conditionality. To argue that China is behaving in Africa in the same way other powers have in the past does not mean that one should give up on closely examining Chinese foreign policy in Africa and just assume a replication of great power behavior.

The chapter by Power and Mohan not only answers the important question of how to theorize China-Africa relations from IR and development studies literatures but also speaks to the broad concern of how to conceptualize these non-Western actors in terms of theories that are primarily European or Western-centric. In other words, when making sense of China's foreign policy in Africa, should we use theories of foreign policy and IR that are already there and conceived to capture an international order where the Global South is dependent on knowledge production of the Global North? The authors argue in favor of hybrid theories in order to correct for the inadequacy of many IR and development studies scholarships to capture China's involvement in Africa. The authors take issue with the binary of Western and non-Western approaches to development and to global politics on the ground that what might be classified as non-Western theories could well be suffused with Western "knowledge" and vice versa. Therefore, for them the best way to account for and make sense of China and other emerging powers' foreign policy conduct in Africa is to celebrate hybrid theories.

Overall, the general sentiment expressed by the authors across this volume is that IR theories can benefit a lot from incorporating perspectives from African states and African contexts. There is a call in this volume to expand our understanding of such concepts as statehood, development, power, and sovereignty and to allow for complex conceptualizations to enrich our understanding of the current international order as well as its future. The questions and concerns explored throughout the volume are extremely well summarized in Young's introductory chapter, which draws a clear and sharp picture of the state of IR literature; its approaches to the international order; and Africa's positionality with regard to old powers, new powers, and a globalized world. This volume, therefore, offers a very important set of readings that examine concepts ranging from statehood, sovereignty, and cooperation in the context of Africa's colonial past as well as its current affairs. The volume unfortunately lacks a concluding chapter, which would have tied everything back together, and it does not have a list of cited references, which would be extremely helpful to guide scholars in tackling the questions asked and pursuing future research.

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