



SciencesPo
CENTRE DE RECHERCHES
INTERNATIONALES



REVISITING AFRICAN AGENCY IN GLOBAL POLITICS

Background

Since January 2016, the Centre for International Studies and Research at Sciences Po, the Department of International Relations of the LSE and the Department of Political Science at the University of Cape Town have initiated a collaborative three-year teaching and research project titled "Revisiting African Agency in Global Politics". This project aims to analyse the evolution of the repertoires of international action used by African actors in the international system. It intends to identify and locate agency in the diplomatic and foreign policy practices used by both state, sub-state, parastatal and transnational actors (civil society organizations, lobbyists, companies) in order to strengthen their integration in the international system.

Objectives

The project, understood as a platform for collaboration and exchange, is motivated by the need to share ongoing research on Africa in international relations and to strengthen dialogue and exchange between African and non-African institutions and academics in Africa. This collaboration will result in the creation of a global network of scholars-researchers and doctoral students working on these issues.

As such, the project is resolutely multidisciplinary and will explore these issues through three pillars:

- (1) International negotiations (comparative practices of economic diplomacy, multilateral negotiations and coalition-building, development cooperation/south-south and triangular cooperation),
- (2) Security and Conflict management (local and national resilience against security challenges, conflict management, regional architecture and institutional capacities)
- (3) Gender and International Relations.

Theoretical and analytical framing

Through the analysis of the concept of "agency" as implemented by these actors, the project is interested in the transformations and effects of the participation of these actors and their capacity to have an impact on global affairs. It thus intends to offer a new analytical and critical reading of Africa in international relations.

Agency addresses ways in which individuals, groups, or factions have interacted or currently interact with systems of power as well as how these relationships have been influenced by diverse historic processes. Discussions of power relations and their performance can encompass both institutionalized and individual-based forms of power as well as overt or covert representations of power. How have agents negotiated with or (re)defined institutions, persons, or entities? How do mechanisms of power impact relations between nation-states and citizens, "elites" and "commoners"? How do agents negotiate or utilize existing power structures to maintain or redefine political rules?

At each level, the project will investigate how agency lies at different levels and exerted by different actors and establish a typology of African agencies (individual agency; sub-state agency (e.g. cities), non-state/networks agency (e.g. NGOs); state agency (e.g. coalition-building)



Project implementation and dissemination of the Research results

The project is divided into Research and Teaching activities that have already taken place in 2016 by welcoming a visiting professor from the University of Cape Town (February-March) and a professor from the LSE (October-November) as well as the participation of Sciences Po teachers at the LSE-UCT summer school in Cape Town in July 2016 (course [LCS-IR201 "Africa and Global Transformation: The Rise of Emerging Powers and a New International Order"](#)).

The project also includes a **digital component** and accompanies the realization at Sciences Po of the MOOC Espace Mondial: Africa and Globalization - Cross-Perspectives through the participation of several of its scholar in the production of educational digital content.

The international colloquium '*Beyond the Periphery: Unpacking African Agency in Global Politics*', held on 10 October 2016 at CERI, brought together, in addition to the speakers from the three partner institutions, colleagues from several African universities (University of Nairobi, University of Ibadan, University of Khartoum, University of Ghana) and researchers from University of Oxford, Princeton, King's College and the University of Paris-Descartes and has set the basis for the establishment of a joint global network.

Timeline

The next steps on the research agenda include organizing a cycle of "mobile seminars" at partner universities, the next being scheduled at the LSE in **2018**, and at the University of Cape Town in **July 2017** on the sidelines of the LSE-UCT 2017 July school. The first conclusions of the international colloquium held at CERI in October 2016 will be the subject of a joint publication

Further outputs in **2018-2019** will include 1) mobile seminars in partner African universities, 2) joint publications among which an edited handbook on Africa In International relations and 3) the development of a joint-curricula on the study of Africa in International Relations.

Project Team

Dr Folashadé Soulé-Kohndou is a research associate at Sciences Po – Centre for International Studies (CERI) and a teaching fellow in International Relations at Sciences Po Paris. She obtained her PhD at Sciences Po Paris



(2014) and has held fellowships at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) (2010), the Research and Information System for developing countries (RIS) in New Delhi (2011), the Instituto Rio Branco (IRBr) in Brasilia (2011), the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) (2012) and the University of Oxford (2013). She was a post-doctoral researcher at the Department of International Relations of the London School of Economics in 2015. Her research thematics focus on African agency in global politics, the politics of south-south cooperation, and rising powers in global governance. She has published several articles in peer-reviewed journals such as *Foro Internacional*, *Cahiers des Amériques Latines*, *Global Governance* (upcoming), She is the author of the Book

“Puissances émergentes et multilatéralisme: le cas de l’Afrique du Sud » (L’Harmattan, 2010)

Pr. Frédéric Ramel is Professor of International Relations at Sciences Po, the scientific director of the International relations PhD programme at the Doctoral School of Sciences Po and Research Associate at the Sciences Po - Center for International Studies (CERI). In 2001, he joined the Jean Moulin (Lyon 3) University as lecturer in political science, where he remained until 2007. Further in his career, as tenured professor, he taught at the Jean Monnet Faculty of the Paris Sud 11 University and was affiliated with the Center for Studies and Research of the Military Academy in Paris. He participated in the establishment of the Institute for Strategic Research of the Military Academy (IRSEM), of which he has been the scientific director. Frédéric Ramel is the editor of the journal *Champs de Mars* and was elected member of the Executive





Committee of the Standing Group of International Relations of the European Consortium of Political Science (ECPR) in 2010.

Pr Chris Alden is Professor at the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science where he heads the Global South Unit. He has held fellowships at Cambridge University, Tokyo University, and Ecole Normale Supérieure as well as won grants from DFID, the Open Society Institute and the MacArthur Foundation. He is Senior Research Associate of the Global Powers Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), a research associate of the University of Pretoria, review editor of IISS and director of the LSE-IDEAS Africa Programme. Dr Alden taught at Wits University for ten years, where he co-founded the continent's first Asian studies research centre in 1992. Amongst his publications are Alden, Christopher and Schoeman, Maxi (2016)



Reconstructing South African identity through global summitry *Global Summitry*, 1 (2).; Alden, Christopher and Large, Dan (2015) *On becoming a norms maker: Chinese foreign policy, norms evolution and the challenges of security in Africa* *China Quarterly*, 221; *The South in World Politics* (Palgrave 2010); *China Returns to Africa* (Hurst 2008) and *China in Africa* (Zed 2007). He is currently involved in editing a book on BRICS and Africa and co-editing a set of country-specific monographs on China and Brazil in Southern Africa.

Dr. Karen Smith is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Cape Town. She holds a PhD in International Relations (IR) from the University of Stellenbosch, where she taught for ten years. She has published on the topics of African contributions to IR, international organisations, IR theory, and the role of soft power in India and South Africa's foreign policy. She is a research associate at the Institute of Global Dialogue, an associate editor of the journal *International Political Sociology*. Her recent publications include: (2016) "South Africa in Africa and the world: the foreign policy strategies of a global regional power" in Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner (ed.) *Diplomatic Strategies of Leading Nations in the Global South*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; (2016) "South Africa's past, present and future foreign human rights policy and diplomacy" in Doukje Lettinga (ed.) *Shifting Power and Human Rights Diplomacy: South Africa*. Amsterdam: Amnesty International and (2015) with J. van der Westhuizen. "Pragmatic internationalism: public opinion on South Africa's role in the world" in *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, vol. 33, no.3: 318-347



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