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*I dedicate this work to Philip Nel, a mentor, a teacher and scholar of
International Relations.*

PREFACE

This book is a product of years of reflection on the African continent's place in a changing global environment. In the early years of my academic career, I often found myself torn between studying the African continent from an area studies perspective or to view the continent through the lens of critical political economy, which would afford me intellectual latitude to look at power relations, ideas, and a broad array of contending actors. I have always found the politics of the continent fluid and complex and constantly evolving. Because of this, in my early academic career I tried to avoid any study of the specific challenges of the African continent, for example conflicts or political traditions, but instead set myself a task to grapple with broader questions pertaining to the structure of power in international relations, and drawn to themes such as international trade, finance, and production.

In the last decade, my interest shifted considerably. I became more curious about the continent's political, social, and economic struggles through the lens of history and the present, and to think about what Africa's futures look like. Importantly, I am interested in the inter-relationship between global power structures and dominant ideas, on the one hand, and Africa's development on the other. While I consider critical International Political Economy perspective as offering a solid conceptual lens to study interplays of power, I place Africa at the center of my analysis of power dynamics. In this book I take a historical perspective of Africa's changing place in the global order, assess the geopolitical tensions that

have been occasioned by China's rise, and offer perspectives on the future pathways for reinforcing Africa's agency.

This book draws heavily from Pan African ideas and critical International Political Economy perspectives. I have deliberately avoided applying these conceptual frames in a formulaic manner in order to give myself more room to think outside of the disciplinary and ideological strictures, and to allow my voice a free flow. I use these ideas as a map to help me understand the broader terrain of Africa's development in a changing global environment rather than as a True North that I behold I unflinchingly.

The African continent is an integral part of the global system, and must realize its own agency in a world in which the economic interests of major powers are still preponderant. This book is about the making of the postwar order and its deficiencies, and the emerging geopolitical tensions between China and the United States and how these may likely impact the African continent. Importantly, this work is about Africa's future. It is dim in its assessment of the liberal internationalist order and hopeful about Africa's agency and the continent's future.

In this book, I grapple with, among other themes, the role that transnational race politics played in undermining America's expression of positive hegemony and how *realpolitik* became the dominant practice in America's foreign policy. I also discuss ways in which the African continent has been on the margins of the global economic system because of the actions of major powers and Africa's own leaders.

This book places the African story both in history and against the backdrop of the present geopolitical tensions, and it privileges Africa's agency and the need for the continent to chart alternative development pathways. In this respect, it diverges from perspectives that only blame outsiders for all Africa's woes; it is not in search of scapegoats in the West. Western powers should bear responsibility for these problems, no doubt. However, Africa's elites have as much responsibility, if not more, for Africa's underdevelopment, and even greater burden to shape Africa's destiny on better terms.

Even though Africa suffered neglect under America's hegemony—with America at various points actively destabilizing African countries and influencing political developments in the continent—African leaders and citizens must define better development pathways for the continent through insisting on ethical and transformation leadership as well as building credible institutions that are inclusive. Further, the book makes

a strong case for structural transformation that is innovation-led and rides the wave of digital changes that are occurring in the world while also adopting smart geo-economic strategies that leverage the tensions between the United States and China for Africa's own development interests.

The first part of the book looks at the evolution of the liberal internationalist order, and here I critique what I refer to as the normative dissonance of the United States as a hegemon in the postwar years. This conflictual quality of America's identity abroad is, in part, a product of the failure of various US administrations to resolve race tensions domestically and government's inability to reconcile this normative failure with a claim to global leadership based on values of freedom and international cooperation.

America's lack of congruence between its professed values and realist practices abroad reflects the fluid and complex nature of the Cold War that lasted over four decades since the end of the Second World War. In this section, I also examine themes related to hegemonic stability theory, the role of developing countries, and how major powers failed the African continent. This discussion lays the context for later sections that explore new directions toward promoting Africa's economic development and the continent's beneficial integration into the global economy.

In the second part, I look at how the African continent became a theater of contestation between great powers and why African countries should avoid the same pitfall in the ongoing US–China geopolitical rivalries. Importantly, this section wrestles with questions about the precise strategies Africans should adopt to realize positive agency in a world that is increasingly becoming uncertain, fluid, and fractious. The tensions between the United States and China come under close examination in this section. I mainly focus on how these major powers shape Africa's development patterns in a self-serving way and in ways that deliver limited gains for the continent. In discussing the relationship between the United States and China, I draw on both history and the present. I place Africa's agency at the center and explore different modes of thinking about Africa's agency.

This section sets the stage for the final section, where I consider Africa's development prospects. I explore some of the approaches that have been proposed by various scholars regarding the need for structural diversification or simply accelerated industrialization in Africa. I critique the linearity of some of these views and present a different perspective

through which we should understand structural diversification. Building on this, I consider various options for Africa's participation in the digital economy. Finally, I discuss the role of political leadership and institutions in shaping a more progressive trajectory for the continent.

Johannesburg, South Africa

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In writing this book I incurred many debts along the way. While I started this project in the middle of 2019, the bulk of my writing happened in the course of 2020 during the tough conditions of lockdown occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic. This also coincided with my transition to an administrative role at the Wits School of Governance where I was to assume a new role as head of school. What gave me great ease and confidence in continuing the journey of writing this book was having a supportive Dean, Imraan Valodia. He ensured that I had a soft landing in my new role. Without his support I would have postponed the writing process indefinitely.

This book drew heavily from the analytic training I received from my earlier mentors on critical International Political Economy. I owe a debt of gratitude to Philip Nel, Shaun Breslin, and Timothy (Tim) Shaw for helping to set my conceptual foundations as a scholar of International Political Economy. At the tail end of my doctoral research in 2005, Shaun pressed me to think of myself not as an area-study specialist but a scholar who constantly improves his analytic craft using the lens of critical International Political Economy whatever the subject matter I choose to examine at a particular point in time. I've always kept this counsel.

Tim, who is International Political Economy Series editor at Palgrave Macmillan, encouraged me to persevere when I wanted to throw in the towel and exit the writing process half-way through. He was the first to

encourage me to tackle the topic of US–China relations and its implications for Africa. He pushed me to analyze the new technology trends and their implications for international relations. I value his support and counsel during the writing process.

My general editor at Palgrave Macmillan, Anca Pusca patiently answered all my queries and guided me through the technical processes required to turn stand-alone chapters into a complete and coherent manuscript. Norman Mailer was very helpful in editing the earlier draft of this manuscript. He kept me alert on developments in US politics at the twilight of Trump years.

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Apart from the editorial suggestions on Chapter 8, Halfdan raised important points about data markets and pushed me to think about the association between digital transformation and GDP growth in a more critical way rather than assume it as a given. Rendani generously shared some of his work on innovation and digital transformation, and pointed to some conceptual errors on understanding innovation on the African context. He also provided useful inputs on innovation as something that is also about learning and interacting than a big bang shift.

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John Stremalu at the Carter Center and Ambassador Michelle Gavin at the US Council on Foreign Relations were kind enough to participate as discussants at a webinar we hosted at the Wits School of Governance where I was presenting some of the ideas in this book. John and Michelle generously shared insights on their understanding of US foreign policy broadly, its bipartisan thrust, and reflected on the challenges that lie ahead for US–China relations. I would later benefit enormously from another webinar discussion with Ambassador Gavin, hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations, on her paper on Major Power Rivalry for which I was a discussant. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Matlala Setlhalogile for his research support. Matlala is very dependable and with a mind that frames the bigger picture. I would also like to thank the two anonymous referees who reviewed the manuscript and offered critical but useful comments.

I wrote the bulk of this work in the late hours of the night and early hours of the morning, which ate into precious family time. My family has been a great source of inspiration and pillar of support throughout this journey. Without a loving and caring home environment, I doubt I would have had the emotional capacity and mental strength to pull through this work. For that I would like to thank my wife, Khanyisa. I am happy that my children Nqobile, Okuhle, and Lumko afforded me the space to see this manuscript to completion. I will always treasure their support and encouragement.

CONTENTS

Part I Imperfections of the International Liberal Order and Africa's Plight

1	The Liberal Internationalist Order and Its Discontents	3
	<i>The Character of the Liberal Internationalist Order and US</i>	
	<i>Normative Dissonance</i>	6
	<i>Realism in International Relations</i>	10
	<i>The Balance Sheet of US Leadership Since Bretton Woods</i>	14
	<i>China's Challenge to the Liberal Internationalism?</i>	15
	<i>Hegemony and Global Stability in History</i>	16
	<i>Developing Countries and the Leadership of Multilateral</i>	
	<i>Institutions</i>	18
	<i>Developing Countries at the Bretton Woods Conference</i>	20
	<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	25
	<i>References</i>	26
2	Africa and Defective Multilateralism	29
	<i>Multilateralism and Its Defects</i>	31
	<i>Development Weaknesses in the International Monetary</i>	
	<i>System</i>	33
	<i>Failure to Address Developmental Concerns of Developing</i>	
	<i>Countries</i>	37
	<i>Counter-Movement by Developing and African Countries</i>	38
	<i>Failures of Postcolonial Elites and External Dependence</i>	41

	<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	45
	<i>References</i>	47
3	Africa in the Multilateral Trading System	49
	<i>The Evolution of the Multilateral Trading System</i>	53
	<i>The Uses and Abuses of Multilateral Trade by Advanced Economies</i>	54
	<i>Africa on the Margins of Global Trade</i>	58
	<i>Imbalances at the Uruguay Round and Agriculture Liberalization</i>	60
	<i>African Countries and Power Asymmetries in the Multilateral Trading System</i>	62
	<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	63
	<i>References</i>	65
 Part II Africa as a Theatre for Major Power Rivalries		
4	Implications of China–US Rivalry on Africa	69
	<i>China’s Quest for Global Supremacy</i>	71
	<i>Africa’s Geopolitical Positioning and Economic Diplomacy</i>	73
	<i>From Hegemonic Incorporation to Strategic Rivalry</i>	76
	<i>Instruments of Hegemonic Incorporation: The Strategic Economic Dialogue</i>	78
	<i>China–Africa’s Relations and Its Discontents</i>	80
	<i>The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation</i>	85
	<i>The Future of China’s Engagement in Africa</i>	87
	<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	89
	<i>References</i>	90
5	The Evolution of US–Africa Relations: From Idealism to <i>Realpolitik</i>	93
	<i>Growing US Interest in Africa During the Cold War</i>	96
	<i>Race Relations in Historical Perspective and Influence on US Foreign Policy</i>	100
	<i>The Shift in America’s Tone and Early Signs of US–Africa Engagement</i>	103
	<i>US Foreign Policy Engagement Under Nixon</i>	105
	<i>US Foreign Policy and Political Tensions in Southern Africa</i>	
	<i>Beyond Nixon</i>	109

	<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	110
	<i>References</i>	110
6	US–Africa’s Engagement from Clinton to Trump	113
	<i>Clinton and the Era of US Commercial Diplomacy</i>	115
	<i>Clinton and the Changing Character of US–Africa Policy</i>	118
	<i>The Political Uses of Trade</i>	120
	<i>US–South Africa Tensions Over Poultry and AGOA</i>	122
	<i>US Foreign Policy Priorities in Africa Under Bush</i>	123
	<i>Obama’s Tentative Foray in Africa</i>	127
	<i>Trump and Africa: An Absent Foreign Policy</i>	131
	<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	132
	<i>References</i>	133
 Part III Digital Futures and African Agency		
7	Paradigms, Inclusive Institutions, and Structural Transformation	137
	<i>Paradigms of Development</i>	138
	<i>Looking Beyond Structural Transformation</i>	142
	<i>Is Africa Rising or Varied Development Paths?</i>	143
	<i>Possibilities That Lie in Structural Diversification</i>	145
	<i>Africa’s Structural Transformation and Global Value Chains</i>	146
	<i>The Role of Institutions in Africa’s Development</i>	148
	<i>Toward Variable Geometry in Development Paths</i>	150
	<i>Nigeria</i>	151
	<i>Kenya</i>	153
	<i>Ethiopia</i>	154
	<i>Mozambique</i>	155
	<i>Rwanda</i>	157
	<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	158
	<i>References</i>	159
8	Africa’s Digital Futures	163
	<i>The Outlines of a Digital Economy in Africa</i>	165
	<i>Digital Economy as a Catalyst for Africa’s Development</i>	166
	<i>The New Era of Africa’s Tech Entrepreneurs</i>	169
	<i>Digital Transformation and Regional Integration Efforts</i>	174
	<i>Constraints to Africa’s Digital Transformation</i>	176

<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	180
<i>References</i>	181
9 US–China Tech Wars: Shaping Africa’s Agency	183
<i>The Character of the Tech Wars</i>	184
<i>Tensions in Commercial and Regulatory Systems</i>	186
<i>Chinese Measures Against the United States</i>	188
<i>Competition Over 5G</i>	189
<i>5G and Africa</i>	189
<i>Cybersecurity and Regulation in the Era of AI</i>	192
<i>Cybersecurity Implications for Africa</i>	196
<i>Concluding Reflections</i>	200
<i>References</i>	202
Epilogue	205
Bibliography	209
Index	227

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
ACRI	African Crisis Response Initiative
AFCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIIB	Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank
BOP	Balance of Payments
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
DDoS	Distributed Denial of Service
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GSP	Generalised System of Preferences
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOS	iPhone Operating System
IT	Information Technology
LDC	Least-Developed Country
MFN	Most-Favoured Nation
NATO	North American Treaty Organisation
NCPF	National Cybersecurity Policy Framework
NFIDC	Net Food Importing Developing Countries
NIEO	New International Economic Order

OPIC	Overseas Private Investment Corporation
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Programme for Aids Relief
R&D	Research and Development
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
TPRM	Trade Policy Review Mechanism
TRIMS	Trade Related Investment Measures
TRIPS	Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

PART I

Imperfections of the International Liberal
Order and Africa's Plight



The Liberal Internationalist Order and Its Discontents

It is often taken for granted that the liberal internationalist order represents the best of America's postwar legacy. This order has never been perfect, and its ideals remain elusive. I characterize it as truncated as it goes half-way—rich in idealistic pronouncements and deficient in effecting concrete actions to shape the world in alignment with its ideals. Since the creation of the key multilateral institutions in the 1940s, the United States has been an inconsistent hegemon. The institutional mechanism that was created under its leadership excluded the bulk of the developing countries and Africa from meaningful participation. Although many developing countries were present at the Bretton Woods conference in Hampshire, 1944, they were largely confined to the margins to marvel at a show that was largely run by John Maynard Keynes and Harry Dexter White, representing the British and American interests, respectively. Eduardo Suarez, the Mexican finance minister who chaired one of the working group did not have much of an effect on the overall shape of the Bretton Woods agenda. The assignment of his working group, “other means of international cooperation,” was vague to have any meaningful impact on the substance of the global order that emerged in the wake of this conference.

The creation of the international order reflected the interests of the victors from World War Two. It was an affair driven largely by America,

Britain, European countries such as France and Italy, and Japan. In the case of Japan, it had suffered defeat, but the United States was keen on ensuring its rapid socialization into the liberal order, in part to infuse it with pacifist character and in part to make it a key ally in Asia Pacific. Latin America had historically enjoyed a close relationship with the United States, and these bonds were deepened through President Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy (Helleiner 2014; Anderson 2015). Africa, however, remained marginalized, and the continent's subordinated position was a function of a racialized global hierarchy of power, which was also mirrored in the race hierarchy within the United States.

At the end of the Second World War, many African countries were still under colonial rule. The relationship between Africa and Europe was that of subjugation and was marked by conquest and plunder. America was happy to turn a blind eye to these excesses and overlook this racialized hierarchy of power even if it went against the ideals it professed. By privileging the *realpolitik* of alliances above principles, America was complicit to the colonial enterprise, which was by all accounts illiberal. As I show in Chapters 4 and 5, the United States has also actively destabilized African countries and taken sides with the white minority regimes that had European heritage. Thus, America's moral claim to hegemony, and that somehow it championed the liberal internationalist order, is questionable.

When the multilateral order was created in Bretton Woods, its architects did not have in mind the future role of those regions or parts of the world that were conquered, subjugated, and plundered by Europe. As a putative hegemon, America had not moral unction to rebuke its European allies for holding onto colonies until much later when the Atlantic Charter transpired. The United States too had multitude of sins of commission along the same lines: it had a history of colonialism in the Philippines and also experienced deep-seated racial tensions domestically. As such, the United States could not fully play a hegemonic role that shone positive values, except in name only. Further, during the Wilson era, America directly intervened in the Mexican revolution in 1914 and 1916, and occupied Haiti in 1915—actions that lent the United States the character of an imperial power in the making. As a priest of high ideals of liberal internationalism, its underbelly was exposed. In this compromised position, America had no mettle to take up the cudgels of decolonization authentically. In the postwar order, America would continue to walk gingerly on the colonial question.

In his work, *The Cold War and the Colour*, the historian Borstelmann points out that the sluggish economic revival in Western Europe and anxieties about the spread of communism in 1946 and 1947 softened Truman's moral qualms about decolonization. Instead, the United States preferred to embrace colonial regimes in London, Paris, Brussels, and Lisbon (Borstelmann 2003). The Marshall Plan and NATO, as Borstelmann argues, "aimed to bolster the economies and military forces of the metropolitan governments but also served to strengthen them in their quest to retain control of valuable colonies abroad" (Borstelmann 2003, Kindle Location 990).

The United States actively promoted Europe's recovery after the Second World War. Yet it had all but ignored Africa at the end of colonialism. Africa's heavy dependence on commodities and reliance on the European market stunted its development (Rodney, p. 192). This heavy reliance on commodities, which was further reinforced by neocolonial relations with the West—and later China—accentuated Africa's economic vulnerabilities and dependence on external powers. As Hardt and Negri (2000, p. 43) have pointed out, "The geographical and racial lines of oppression and exploitation that were established during the era of colonialism and imperialism have in many respects not declined but instead increased exponentially."

For developing countries and Africa, the postwar era represents a long period of marginalization and structural injustice. The liberal internationalist order is an order that not only benefitted Western Europe, Japan, and a handful of other countries that were America's client states but also actively excluded African countries from meaningful participation in various multilateral institutions, including those that established the norms for international monetary stability and reinforced the multilateral trading system. It was no accident that by the 1970s, the triad power that shaped global decision-making, for example on the international monetary system or the multilateral trade agenda, was constituted by America, Europe (West Germany), and Japan. In this book, I argue that this postwar order was never faithfully lived out; thus, we should not lament its demise.

The Marshall Plan in the 1950s represented a high watermark in the projection of US hegemony, as it allowed it to shape the future of Europe, and through the Dodge Plan, the United States was able to coax Japan into the liberal internationalist order. Both Europe and Japan would for

many decades enjoy preferential market access for their goods in a departure from the normal order of trade relations where reciprocity was the norm. Japan would use this leg up to accelerate market integration internally. Trade, strategic aid support, and other forms of technical assistance were key to catapulting these US allies to play a meaningful role in the international economic system. Both Japan and the European countries that found favor with the United States used America's largesse to drive their industrial development and create prosperity for their citizens. Thus, many European countries that were economically backward, buffeted by the Great Depression of the interwar years, and suffered war scars, could take a leap forward in their industrial development.

African countries, on the other hand, suffered neglect. Even the aid that was extended to them was tied to conditions that were not supportive of Africa's industrialization or the continent's meaningful integration into the global economic system. By the time African countries attained their independence, the patterns of resource extraction and political influence of colonial powers were deeply entrenched. The foundations of the postwar order were not kind to African countries as they affirmed the stratification of the world along core countries, semi-periphery, and periphery.

At the top of this hierarchy was the alliance of countries that furthered ideas of white supremacy, and countries with darker skin inhabitants were at the base. Three quarters of a century since the Bretton Woods conference, the global hierarchy of power has not changed much, except for the rise of China and the emergence of mid-ranking countries, sometimes referred to as emerging economies in Asia and Latin America. The major challenge for African countries is still that of realizing positive agency to shift the coordinates of global power in their favor.

THE CHARACTER OF THE LIBERAL INTERNATIONALIST ORDER AND US NORMATIVE DISSONANCE

The liberal internationalist order refers to the substance and functioning of global institutional mechanisms and the values that defined the postwar era. This order was created and led by America. Achieving peace, promoting commerce, and facilitating the recovery of war-torn countries of Europe and Japan were critical normative outlines of the multilateral institutions. The values and norms of the institutions created at the end of the Second World War, and the structure of the inter-state system,

primarily anchored on the alliance patterns between the United States and Europe (and later Japan), were cast on the ideals of freedom, democracy, and market economies. I argue that the United States and major powers failed to effectuate these values faithfully.

Such values had Wilsonian imprints, and these were articulated by the United States and its allies at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 that brought the First World War to an end. The Treaty of Versailles was an unfinished business, but it had laid seeds for institutionalist thinking in inter-state relations. That first attempt at Versailles had many defects: it did not obtain full support within the United States, the victors (especially the United Kingdom and France) insisted on onerous terms for Germany thereby creating a fertile ground for the rise of Adolf Hitler and the growing popularity of Nazism in Germany, dismissal of Japan's proposal on affirming the equality of races, and Wilson's failure to address China's legitimate territorial claim with respect to Shandong (Keynes 1919; Cooper 2009; Bickers 2018).

Learning from some of these failures, the victors would strive to promote institutionalism as a means to foster international cooperation and achieve stability in the post-World War Two. Still, the institutional innovation that emerged at the war's end did not go far to integrate African countries on equal terms with Western powers in multilateral institutions. America made no effort to accelerate decolonization on the African continent. Borstelmann (2003, Kindle Location 1003) argues that:

“The centrality of race in U.S. policy toward that continent was due partly to the European tendency to contrast “black” Africa with “white” Europe, which mirrored the bipolar racial thinking typical in the United States, and partly to Africa's status as the last major area of European overseas control.”

Even after decolonization in parts of the African continent, the US remained impervious to development concerns of African countries. Africa played a vital role in the economies of Western Europe, and America would extract strategic benefits in Uranium in Congo and South Africa. (Borstelmann 2003)