Engaging Emerging Powers: Africa’s Search for a ‘Common Position’

FRANCIS A. KORNEGAY* AND CHRIS LANDSBERG**

ABSTRACT Africa, viewed here as the world’s ‘swing continent’, has in the past decade started to interact with emerging market economies in more intense fashion. This represents an advancing of the continent’s integration into the global economy on terms more beneficial to the continent’s development. However, this phenomenon also represents one of Africa’s central strategic challenges; one located within what is widely considered a new ‘scramble for Africa’. In emphasising South–South cooperation and linkages of interdependence between Africa, Asia and the Americas, who is managing whom? Is Africa effectively guiding these new partnering relationships? Or is the continent, in its fragmented disunity, being strategically manipulated by emerging powers, which have well thought-through national interest agendas as they build on their unique comparative advantages in facilitating access to Africa’s resources? In answering these questions, emphasis is placed more on challenges than opportunities since the manner in which Africa comes to grips with the challenges will, in many respects, determine and define the opportunities. The problem of Africa arriving at a disciplined and consistent ‘common position’ strategy is not simply one of colonially inherited fragmentation. It is also a problem of how the strategic space of other continents interacts with that fragmentation in a manner that intrudes on Africa’s geopolitical and strategic integrity.

Introduction

In many ways, Africa might be viewed as the world’s ‘swing continent.’ Representing a vast landscape situated literally at the centre of the globe, the continent could be considered geologically part and parcel of an Afro-Eurasian configuration. It is a continent caught up in a fluid period of transition in the global balance of power and an international state system characterised by traditional and emerging powers. At the current juncture, the continent is confronting the geo-political and geo-economic trade winds between traditional centres of power comprising the Euro-American transatlantic North on the one hand, and the newer power centres emerging on the scene in the global South. These are predominantly Asian powers, led by China and India, but also include a mix of...
other regional powers such as Brazil and Venezuela in South America, and Turkey at the periphery of the European Union (EU), together with Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Persian Gulf. African regional powers exercising continental leadership, such as South Africa and Nigeria, also belong to this new spectrum as they attempt to influence and shape how the inter-African system manages its engagement with traditional and emerging non-African powers alike.

Most of Africa, however, falls outside the ‘emerging powers’ or ‘emerging markets’ category within the class system of state power in international politics. Many, if not most, fall in the ‘least development countries’ (LDCs) category. This paper grapples with the question: why has Africa, the poorest and least developed of the world’s continental regions, become such a competitive arena of geopolitical and geo-economic manoeuvring in this period of global transition? More importantly, how is the continent navigating this renewed and intensified attention by external actors?

We are mainly concerned in this essay with questions having to do with the extent to which the continent’s interactions represent an advancement of Africa’s integration into the global economy on terms more beneficial to Africa’s development. We further locate this strategic challenge within the context of what is widely considered a new ‘scramble for Africa’. In emphasising South–South cooperation and economic linkages of interdependence between Africa, Asia and the Americas, we ask: who is managing whom? Is Africa effectively guiding these new partnering relationships? Or is the continent, in all its fragmented disunity, being strategically manipulated by emerging powers which have well thought-through and coherently formulated national interest agendas, as they build on what they perceive as their unique comparative advantages in facilitating their access to Africa’s resources? In an attempt to answer these questions, emphasis will be placed more on challenges than opportunities since how Africa comes to grips with the challenges will, in many respects, determine and define the opportunities.

Why Africa matters to emerging powers

The answer to the question why Africa has become of great geo-political and geo-economic interest to old and emerging powers alike has much to do with what this systemic transition is all about: the transformation of the global economy out of its Euro-American Western confines into a terrain of accelerated economic growth, which has generated an unprecedented demand for mineral and energy resources. In this geo-political terrain, Africa, along with Central Asia, is considered by outside powers as one of the last frontiers for exploitation.

The global systemic transformation that is unfolding is essentially a post-Western phenomenon. It is driven by what might be termed the BRIC-vanguard mega-state economies of Brazil-Russia-India-China. At this point, African countries aspiring to BRIC status occupy the periphery of this vanguard although South Africa, by virtue of its status as Africa’s economic powerhouse, is
occasionally tacked onto this acronym as a country politically reinforcing the global South and the non-Western character of the emerging economies. However, John Hawksworth and Gordon Cookson (2008, p. 34) projected that by 2050, Nigeria will have eclipsed both Egypt as well as South Africa as a mega-state entrant into the ranks of BRIC in a way that South Africa fails to measure up to today, barring perhaps, South Africa’s continuing role in helping to construct a strong southern African ‘regional integration community’. Such a regional assemblage could encompass, at a minimum, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) if not an increasing incorporation of members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The recent move toward tripartite cooperation between SADC, the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC) adds a further dimension to this potential. Otherwise, Africa’s peripheral status vis-à-vis the BRIC and other emerging state actors begs a number of critical questions. These pertain to how, and on what terms, the continent engages these new actors given Africa’s endemic weaknesses embedded in its atomising fragmentation into 53 nominally sovereign nation-states. This is a predicament that could rob the continent of the kind of mega-state autonomy as an actor in the international system that would be on par with the powerful emerging state actors which seek to engage Africa in fulfilment of their own, not Africa’s, economic and developmental interests. Despite the nominal leadership provided by a fledgling African Union (AU), and in spite of a growing political consensus concerning the need to quicken the pace of the AU’s transformation, Africa seriously lacks continental sovereignty (Kornegay, 2007a, p. 8). What is more, African engagement with the emerging powers takes place on essentially unequal terms, and in the absence of coherent leadership and unity of vision and purpose. Leadership, such as that provided by South Africa, to a lesser extent Nigeria or disjointedly via the collective of countries underwriting much of the continent’s activities—Algeria and Libya as well as South Africa and Nigeria—is more by default than by the active acclaim of other AU member states; hence, the notion of South Africa as effectively the default leader of Africa, and this despite its shunning the role of continental or regional hegemon. This is not to deny the unmistakable political benefits for Africa in being courted by a growing number of emerging powers in its efforts to offset Western complacency in failing to make good on promises after promises that have emanated from G8 summits regarding aid, trade, market access, debt eradication and investment in Africa’s development. Within the context of a ‘global resource war’, there is, however, growing concern within the AU community and among some quarters of African leadership about the scramble of outside powers to carve out relationships with the AU that will facilitate external national interest agendas; this is reinforced by the absence of a coherent AU strategy for managing such multi-bilateral relationships with the continent (Adebajo and Landsberg, 2000). This concern reflects a growing preoccupation with the (lack of) effectiveness on the part of the fledgling AU system. This emerging system is marked by fragile institutions seeking to advance continental and regional governance. Managing relationships with a growing number of
external actors, in addition to the continent’s traditional relationships, falls squarely within the purview of an inter-African system that has yet to divest itself of the highly politicised trans-nationalism and neo-patrimonialism that characterised the institutional culture of the AU’s precursor, the Organisation of African Union (OAU) (African Union Commission, 2004). This context provides the backdrop for exploring some of the dimensions of opportunities and challenges attending Africa’s engagement with external emerging powers.

Revisiting a conundrum: ‘the one and the many’

In light of the African Union Audit Report issued earlier in 2008, it is worth revisiting the issue of Africa’s asymmetric multi-bilateralism raised in an earlier essay within the collection of Centre for Chinese Studies essays comprising its 2007 Africa Day Publication on China and Africa:

No matter Beijing’s rhetoric regarding the Sino-African relationship being one based on ‘equality’ and the sincerity, Africa is at a strategic comparative disadvantage in its relations with China. Africa’s structural weakness in the Sino-African relationship is embedded in the continent’s post-colonial fragmentation into 53 odd sovereign states, most of which are poor, underdeveloped and institutionally weak in governance terms. This asymmetry, based on Africa’s structural weaknesses, is not unique to the Sino-African relationship. The weakness replicates itself across the entire panoply of Africa’s international relations. The colonial partitioning of the continent and the post-colonial ratification of this fragmentation in the inter-state system ushered in by the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, carrying over into the successor African Union (AU), robbed Africa of its ‘continental sovereignty’. In its fragmented state, Africa lost some comparable consolidation of geopolitical-economic power residing in a mega-state such as the US, the European Union (EU), Russia, India, Brazil—or China (as well as smaller but former colonial powers such as Britain, France and Germany).

In the absence of a consolidated continental sovereignty that has begun to preoccupy many African heads-of-state in their search of a ‘US of Africa’, Africa’s relations with major state actors takes place within a framework of what might be termed ‘the one and the many’. In this view, call it ‘bi-multilateralism’, one major non-African power (Western or non-Western) interacts with a multiplicity of African states. Further, the competitive nature of African state sovereignty accentuates Africa’s divisions, rather than any sense of strategic unity and unity of purpose in dealing with external actors. This competitive nature is reflected in the manner in which many African states relate to one another and in the suspicions and tensions that obtain between the continent’s smaller states and larger actors such as Nigeria, Egypt and especially South Africa—the continent’s economic giant. This asymmetry and the inherent neo-colonial imperialist nature embedded in the donor dependency of so many African states might challenge policy goals and objectives of external actors on the continent, including African multilateral institutions. Hence, external actors risk reinforcing destructive patterns of domination even if they have no ambition of domination or ‘recolonisation’ of the African continent’ (Kornegay, 2008, p. 5, authors emphasis).

In the wide ranging critique of the AU, the Audit Report devotes an entire section to how Africa’s asymmetry in relation, not just to China but to emerging powers in general, undermines attempts at constructing and upholding what it terms ‘African
common positions’ on how to manage its international relations as a coherent
guide to the foreign policy strategies of its member states. It is indeed instructive
to refer here to the findings arrived at by High Level Panel under Prof. Adebayo
Adedeji. In reviewing what it termed the ‘Impact of the Commission on Africa’s
Global Visibility and Assertiveness’, the Audit Report acknowledges that ‘signs
have emerged of a growing ambition by Africa under the leadership of the Com-
misson to reverse the marginalisation of a unified Africa in key global policy
negotiations’ (AU High-level Panel, 2007, p. 75). The Audit Report continued
to argue that ‘the presence of world leaders at Summits and in Addis Ababa,
the appointment of Special Representatives of the United States of America and
the European Union to the African Union, the assertiveness of Africa in the
World Trade Organisation Inter-ministerial Conferences and Africa’s assertion
of its leadership in peace-keeping are indicators of a growing profile’ (AU
High-level Panel, 2007, p. 76). It goes on to note how the African Union Commiss-
ion (AUC) has given impetus to common African positions that have benefited
Africa in such instances as the Africa Health Strategy that became the point of
reference for the World Health Organisation and the newly announced Inter-
national Partnership Fund for Health.

Africa’s elusive ‘common position’

The Audit Report reminds us that, the ‘common position by African Ministers on
migration was accepted by the European Union as the working document on this
issue in preparation for the Lisbon Heads of State and Government EU-Africa
Nevertheless, this new visibility and assertiveness on Africa’s part in negotiating
more forcefully ‘in the collective interest is, however, undermined by the failure
of Member States to uphold African common positions’, and the High-level
Panel cited the ‘divide and rule’ experience of the EU’s Economic Partnership
Agreements (EPAs) as the signature example of how the ‘African Common
Position’ can deteriorate into ‘the one and the many’ to the detriment of the con-
tinent’s collective interest in its relations with external powers (AU High-level
Panel, 2007, p. 76). Thus, said the AU High-level Panel:

In 2006, Member States and the recognised Regional Economic Communities abandoned a
common African position on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Despite wide-
spread analysis and public perception that the EPAs offer less than the previous Cotonou
Agreement and are potentially disastrous for Africa’s fledgling industries, domestic public
revenue base and agriculture, Africa has faced the European Commission with contradictory
and divided configurations. (2007, p. 76)

With specific reference to China (and France), the Audit Report (2007, pp. 76–77)
critiqued the AU’s lack of a strategic approach to the emerging as well as
traditional powers:

Africa has also missed opportunities to uphold a more unified stance towards global powers.
Despite a bold decision by the Assembly at the Khartoum Summit, in January 2006, for
Member States not to collectively hold summits with individual States, this happened on at least two occasions, namely the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in November 2006 and the France-Afrique Summit in 2007. These two moments showed Africa at its weakest. In the case of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), all references to the Constitutive Act of the African Union were removed to placate the presence of an African non-Member State, thus undermining African solidarity. The African Union Commission has been further excluded by the coordinating Member State. (authors emphasis)

So the AU actually has an articulated principle-cum-policy position discouraging multi-bilaterals between member states of the AU and individual powers, emerging and traditional alike. The fact that this policy-principle is honoured in the breach and that this breach has the actual politico-diplomatic effect of marginalising the AU while, in the process, benefiting ‘the presence of an African non-Member State’ (as well as the single non-African traditional or emerging power) speaks volumes on how Africa’s endemic fragmentation (into post-colonial ‘nation’-states) tends to assert itself at the expense of a ‘common African position’ on the critical question of how Africa, as a continent, relates to single external powers. In the process, the continent’s sovereign autonomy in the international system is undermined. Further, the fact that this ‘African non-Member State’ is the Franco-American-aligned Kingdom of Morocco, locked in stalemated conflict over the status of the Western Sahara that has undermined the functionality of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) as the AU’s regional economic pillar in northern Africa, is indicative. It demonstrates the cascading effect of this long-running dispute on the continent’s integrity as a collective multi-state actor in its relations with other powers, single states and/or other multi-state regional actors (like the EU) alike.

To rectify this situation, the AU Audit report (2007, p. 77) recommends that:

The Commission, after consulting appropriately, should fully exercise its mandate contained in its Statutes to play a more assertive coordinating and representational role in the global policy arena; and

Member States who are leading the African group at international negotiations should work within the Decisions of the Assembly and thereby promote and uphold the collective interest of Africa.

Based on reviews and reflections on the Audit, this may be easier said than done. In the wake of China’s FOCAC and the India-Africa Summit, the Executive Council of the AU is reported to have wanted to hold off on a Turkey–Africa summit which is reportedly going ahead in spite of the Executive Council’s decision. Clearly, in spite of a report in 2007 that a trade and industry unit within the AU Commission was deliberating on an emerging powers strategy, this unit and its strategy remain a work in progress (East African, Nairobi, 26 June 2007). Meanwhile, there is a growing sense of urgency about the AU needing a mechanism to deal with ‘international cooperating partners’, accompanied by a dim view of such partners being in the habit of drafting documents for Africans to sign without any substantive African input into their drafting. The India–Africa summit appeared to be driven by Sino-Indian emerging power rivalry in light of rapid inroads China has been making
in the continent in buying up resources at their source origin, a concern also reflected in much of the West. Questions have been raised about how much preparation actually went into the Indo-Africa summit, although this event was preceded by a more targeted India-Africa energy summit in 2007.

In India’s wake looms Turkey and possibly Iran (which assumes chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement in 2009), raising concerns about the fact that there have been no guidelines forthcoming from the AU to deal with what clearly is a scramble for minerals and energy access by external actors. At the heart of sorting out such bi-multilateral relationships is the question of the sovereignty of AU member states in relationship to the AU Commission and the question of how to manage Africa’s ‘international cooperating partner’ relationships at the three-tiered level of the AU, the RECs and member states of the AU and the regional economic communities (RECs) (Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2006). The fact that the impetus for this scramble emanates from Greater Asia with China and India in the vanguard, along with 2008 G8 host Japan and other actors lining up, begs a number of questions. These go beyond interrogating how these Asian powers singularly relate to Africa in terms of their own interests and bring in a more important overarching concern about the so-called New Asia Africa Strategic Partnership (NAASP) launched at the Bandung revival and fiftieth anniversary commemoration in April 2005 co-hosted by South Africa and Indonesia (DFA, 2006, pp. 70–71). Such a comprehensive strategic focus becomes ever more compelling as Africa’s trajectory is being reconceptualised within the even more expansive Afroasiatic CHIMEA (China-India-Middle East-Africa) geo-economic configuration (Walker, 2008, pp. 21–28). However, before exploring the implications of what might be billed as NAASP/CHIMEA, for these individual emerging Asian power relationships with Africa, it is important to attempt an understanding of the strategic spatial interdependencies impinging on Africa’s continental cohesion. This is a phenomenon linked to the unfolding geopolitics of energy security that are redefining a changing world order in terms of how these new dynamics relate to Africa. Such a conceptual analysis should assist in gaining an appreciation of the heightened stakes involved in this ‘new scramble’ for Africa.

**Africa’s strategic spatial vulnerabilities**

The problem of Africa arriving at a ‘common position’ strategy in its international relations with other continental regions and great powers is not simply one of colonially inherited fragmentation into a multiplicity of states with doubtful national identity cohesion. It is also a problem of how the strategic space of other continental regions interacts with that fragmentation in a manner that intrudes on Africa’s geopolitical and strategic integrity. As a geological extension of ‘Afro-Eurasia’, Africa’s continental integrity is impinged upon from at least three or four extra-African inter-regional geopolitical, geo-cultural and geo-strategic influences: the Mediterranean-Maghreb-Levantine complex; the ‘Afrabrian’-Afro-Asian Red Sea/Indian Ocean sphere; and the Afro-Latin South Atlantic. Africa, in short, is geo-strategically and
geo-culturally encircled by the Euro-Arab trans-Mediterranean, the compromising impact on the AU of which is clearly evident in the unresolved Western Sahara stalemate reinforced by North Africa’s ambivalent position between the EU on the one hand and the Maghreb’s member state affiliations (except for Morocco) in the AU on the other. This is a regional ambivalence all the more reinforced by France’s expansive Mediterranean Union project incorporating North Africa, the EU (with particular focus on southern Europe) and the Middle East into a new geopolitical-economic community accompanied by an ill-defined ‘Eurafrique’ concept of a Franco-African-driven interregional cooperation framework between Africa and Europe (Bach, 2008, pp. 335–370).

Clearly, in terms of France and the EU’s geo-economic interests, the southern Mediterranean sphere of North African energy resources gains priority over the rest of Africa at a time when Russia is also focusing its attention on this region as it accelerates its geopolitical push to tie up all energy access routes in an effort to consolidate Western dependence on a Moscow-led energy security command and control network (Asia Times Online, 18 July 2008). Hence, the Maghreb’s dysfunction within the AU regional pillars framework for evolving an eventual African Economic Community (AEC) linked to an African Union Government. This is reinforced by the geo-political instabilities of the Sudano-Sahelian belt of conflict engulfing Chad and Sudan, which, in turn, introduces the political and geo-cultural agendas of the Arab League into a sub-region extending into the Greater Horn of Africa. Implicated in Somalia’s disarray are the Gulf Arab interests of the states of the GCC led by Saudi Arabia. The overarching question posed by this complicated Eurafro-Afrabrian conundrum is this: who is going to bring order to this strategic spatial disarray bedevilling Africa’s efforts at gaining control over its continental destiny? The same could be asked in relation to the Indian Ocean region. This interregional zone has always been a cockpit of geo-strategic competition between great powers, East and West, with an added new wrinkle of geo-political competitiveness between India and China extending into Africa. All of this comes against a backdrop of the US and NATO’s military campaigning in Iraq and Afghanistan, amid the regional Persian Gulf ascendancy of Iran.

The fact that India has extended its geo-strategic presence to an outpost in a SADC member, Madagascar, alongside its preferential trading relationship with Mauritius (also a member of SADC), underlines the strategic spatial interdependencies between South Asia and the Indian Ocean eastern African coastal littoral (Kornegay, 2007b). This zone extends as far south as Mozambique and South Africa where New Delhi is linked in a trilateral relationship with South Africa that also includes Brazil. Moreover, the reported prospect that the US and NATO were considering a more formalised strategic cooperative relationship with India in the Indian Ocean to counteract China’s growing influence highlights another dimension to concerns that many African states harbour about the proposed United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). But apart from China, the pirate-infested western Indian Ocean off the Somali coast and Yemen underlines a growing need for African governments to develop maritime security capacity. In
the 19 July 2008 edition of *The Economist*, an article observed that ‘Africa may have to look to South Africa, the continent’s sole coastal country between the Red Sea and the Cape with a proper navy’. Here again, India enters the picture.

To a certain extent, the fact that South Africa, India and Brazil held, in May 2008, their first of a periodic series of trilateral naval exercises under the banner of India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Trilateral Dialogue Forum maritime cooperation—IBSAMAR—lends an important degree of strategically African informed definition into a potential multilateral security framework for the Indian Ocean; one of leading global South emerging powers, including two non-African state actors with major African agendas.

4 Could an Indo-South African wing of IBSAMAR in cooperation with the East African Community (EAC) address coastal piracy and the potential for this threat to mutate into or interact increasingly with jihadist terror tendencies? In a sense, an IBSA maritime/naval security arrangement has the potential to define a ‘southern axis’ of oceanic oversight bridging the South Atlantic as well as the Indian Ocean, although on the South Atlantic side, there is more South American emphasis on defining its own southern hemispheric strategic sphere of influence as a means of defining South America’s strategic autonomy vis-à-vis the US.

This has taken the form of the recent establishment of a Brazilian-led (and Venezuelan-supported) advisory South American Defence Council component of the new Union of South American States (UNASUR) (Ritvo, 2008). There is, nevertheless, the potential for South American security cooperation expanding into an interregional South Atlantic arrangement building on South African-Brazilian maritime cooperation within an IBSAMAR framework and extending to include such major littoral African states as Angola and Nigeria. The fact of the matter is that the AU, in the process of having to develop a mechanism and the means to manage its relationships with various and sundry external cooperating partners, needs to conceptually develop a geo-strategic definition of its own continental identity. This could serve as a guide to devising a coherent strategy at regional as well as continental level in interacting with other non-African state actors that are accelerating their own national interest agendas in engaging Africa. For Africa constitutes one of two critically geo-strategic targets of opportunity—the other being Central Asia—in the global scramble for energy security that, in many ways, has taken on attributes of yet another East–West cold war. This contestation has already spilled over into the geopolitical calculus of minerals and energy access surrounding such African conflict zones involving Chad, Sudan and the Somali region as well as the international relations pertaining to Zimbabwe’s political crisis.

**Africa and the global geo-politics of energy security**

The residual cold war dimension of energy geo-politics is crucial here. As the global scramble for energy has accelerated, the rising price of commodities has swelled the coffers of the emerging ‘non-West’ to a point where the Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) phenomenon has begun to challenge the hegemony of the
Bretton Woods financial institutional system of US-led Euro-American control of the global economy. Hence, the notion of a post-Western power shift underway that is putting pressure on the Western-dominated international system of global governance to undergo major reforms to open up to new centres of power. The global power stakes involved are underlined by the extent of Russia’s recent gains in incorporating such key African energy producers as Nigeria and Libya as well as Algeria into its growing energy alliance, alongside China’s inroads in Angola (a recent entrant into OPEC), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan among other resource-rich African states including Zimbabwe. While Russia has not been as prominent an actor on the continent as other emerging powers, especially those within the BRIC quartet, and is not clamouring for an African forum of its own, it has nevertheless emerged as the world’s energy ‘superpower’ in shaping the geo-political-economic terrain defining the global scramble for hydrocarbon resources.

The Russian goal, well advanced, is to knit together an East–West energy grid of Moscow-dominated pipeline routes in a cooperative network of strategic nodal points involving other producers, such as Iran in Central Eurasia and Algeria and Libya along the southern Mediterranean, in order to consolidate an encircling dependency of the European market on the one hand and the emerging Asian markets on the other. A prospective Nigerian connection would extend this strategy into, perhaps, the most strategic sub-Saharan petroleum production zone linked to trans-Atlantic access into the American market. In terms of Russia’s Mediterranean energy sphere of influence, Gazprom, the largest extractor of gas in the world, has announced plans to build a pipeline across the Mediterranean to pump Libyan gas to Europe, marking what is seen as the final lap of a Kremlin strategy that involves the energy giant’s handling the entire output of Libya’s gas, oil and LNG (Asia Times Online, 18 July 2008, p. 1). Notably, Libyan ‘Brotherly Leader’, Muammar Gaddafi has opted out of Sarkozy’s Mediterranean Union. Algeria, with which Moscow has already forged an energy alliance, has opted in. Algeria is key to a linkage that Gazprom wants to forge with Nigeria where it is seeking to buy exploration licenses in order to build a trans-Saharan pipeline between Nigeria and Algeria for European consumption (Asia Times Online, 18 July 2008, p. 1). According to senior Indian analyst, M.K. Bhadrakumar, ‘US officials have gone ballistic’. ‘The monopolistic Gazprom is behaving like a monopolist does. It tries to gain control of the market as much as possible to stifle competition. And that’s clearly what is going on,’ thundered Matthew Bryza, US deputy assistant secretary of state for Eurasian affairs in the Bush administration. ‘The Kremlin wants Gazprom to be a dominant force in global energy and the dominant force in global gas. Tying up gas resources in Central Asia and Africa is part of that,’ he added (Asia Times Online, 18 July 2008, p. 1).

This reported US reaction underlines the neo-cold war character of energy geopolitics; one that is in part a reaction to the reported Russo-Iranian plans to form a gas equivalent of OPEC, and in part a sign of the West’s apprehension about China’s economic inroads into Africa alongside growing concerns over Russia’s geo-politics of energy security hegemony which has also extended over into
Africa in a manner that could further constrain Europe’s energy import options. The obvious opportunity that presents itself to Africa is that this growing external competitiveness targeting the continent emerges at a time of marked Western vulnerability in how the developed world has failed to live up to their side of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) bargain underpinning the G-8 Africa Action Plan and its 2005 Gleneagles recommitment (Adedeji, 2002).

China, India and Africa’s Asian ascendancy

The Western tendency to place Africa on the proverbial ‘back burner’ within the context of a global trading system rigged in favour of the developed world has provided a strategic opening for both Africa and the emerging powers—mainly Asian—of the global South to forge a new dimension to global economic integration. Hence, as the global economy and its Western-dominated governing institutions must make way for the rise of Asia, Africa’s development opportunity is unfolding as a function of Asia’s developing linkages to the continent’s mineral and energy resources and market opportunities. This is where the entry of China and India into the African economic developmental equation once dominated by the West is bound to make a difference. Thus, the more general post-Western trend toward an ever more integrated world economy at the global level has its African reflection as pointed out in a recent Foreign Affairs article by Harry G. Boardman. According to Boardman, ‘since 1990, both Africa’s exports to Asia and its imports from Asia have grown more rapidly than either exports to or its imports from any other region of the world. Exports grew by 15% annually between 1990 and 1995 and by 20% between 2000 and 2005; imports grew by 13% annually between 1990 and 1995 and by 18% between 2000 and 2005’ (2008, p. 97). By comparison, between 2000 and 2005, the EU’s share of exports from Africa dropped by half so that ‘Asia now buys about the same size share of Africa’s exports as does the United States or the EU, Africa’s traditional trading partners’. This trend, according to Boardman, reflects the ‘sharp upturn in the appetite of Asia’s emerging economic giants, China and India, for African products—the result, in turn, of those two countries’ booming economies’ (p. 97).

China and India are beginning to import from Africa far more than fuels, minerals and metal products. Imports now include commodities such as cotton or food products that have undergone some labour-intensive processing in Africa for further processing in Asia in preparation for industrial or consumer use (Boardman, 2008, p. 97). A further reinforcement in Sino-Indian-led Afro-Asian economic interaction is the fact that the commercial activity of Chinese and Indian companies in Africa has been significantly aided by Beijing and New Delhi’s public programmes for trade and investment finance. This has enabled Chinese and Indian firms to be in the vanguard of the integration of Africa’s economies and, in the process, generate major development opportunities on the continent (Boardman, 2008, p. 100). On top of this, especially in the case of China, is investment in the development of Africa’s infrastructural advancement, a
major NEPAD priority in advancing the continent’s economic integration agenda. For Asian powers, infrastructural development serves as the preferred basis for a strategic partnership between Africa and Asia’s emerging economies.

But China and India are not alone among Asian powers driving an African agenda. Japan, though a member of the G8, has to be factored into this context as well. In fact, well before China’s FOCAC and Indo-African summitry, in 1993, Japan introduced the first Afro-Asian dialogue format in the process known as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), the fourth, having taken place in May 2008 in Yokohama—TICAD IV (TICADs are convened every four years). Indeed, a careful study of the TICAD format could be considered a forerunner of the ‘New Asia Africa Strategic Partnership’ launched in 2005 in Bandung. Nevertheless, 2008 was seen as year of heightened Japanese interest in Africa, with Tokyo having made Africa one of the focal point areas of consultation at the G8 summit it hosted in Hokkaido. Hence, the question posed by Financial Times columnist David Pilling as to ‘why all the sudden interest in Africa?’ was answered in terms of his highlighting the background of Japan’s ambassador to Botswana, Ryoichi Matsuyama, who opened one of three new embassies in Africa (the other two being in Mali and Malawi) (Financial Times, 22 May 2008).

Like India, Japan’s resource quest in Africa is placed in the context of inter-Asian great power rivalry. ‘The hunt for rare metals—not forgetting United Nations votes and oil, which Japanese power companies have quietly started buying from Sudan—has become more urgent for one big reason: China’. Pilling notes that ‘Tokyo has watched aghast as China’s top leaders have criss-crossed the continent, cutting deals for oil from Sudan to Angola and courting banks in Nigeria and South Africa’. Indeed, China’s FOCAC, 18 months ago and India’s summit with eight African leaders in New Delhi earlier in 2008, are depicted as Sino-Indian attempts to pre-empt Japan in its African economic diplomacy even as China and India are seen as competing with one another on the continent (Financial Times, 22 May 2008).

Pilling stresses, however, that Japan likes to see itself as ‘offering a mid-course in Africa, between what some officials regard as the cynical Chinese and the stars-in-their-eyes Europeans’, though, very much like China, infrastructure appears to feature heavily as Tokyo is seen as wanting to ‘replicate Asian-style development as the best way out of poverty’ in terms of putting money into roads, ports, wells and irrigation. At the same time, efforts are being made in emergency relief, including traditional drives to eradicate infectious diseases. However, the Japanese—unlike their other G8 partners—are not seen as being ‘too finicky about what the Europeans call good governance’ (Financial Times, 22 May 2008). As with India and China, what emerges from Japan’s stake in Africa is the one-sidedness of what Japan, along with China, India and other Asian actors, seeks to get —and is getting—out of Africa as opposed to what Africa seeks to get (apart from what it is getting) out of these Asian great powers. To be sure, what is called ‘the Asian ascendancy’ clearly benefits Africa in accelerating its integration into the world economy even as Asia’s dynamism contributes to an
intensifying scramble for the continent’s resources. Yet, apart from this overall
generalised benefit as a by-product of Asian economic momentum, there is little
sense of a pro-active African agenda toward Asia’s growing presence in and
engagement on the continent. Asia’s engagement with Africa is a single-state
(Asian) phenomenon in search of bilateral partnerships on the continent, seemingly
oblivious that there is something called the NAASP, which aims to introduce a
‘strategic’ element into this one-sided Afro-Asian geo-economic equation.

NAASP: quo vadis?

Despite its low profile, the NAASP has the potential to bring some coherence to the
Asian panorama of Africa’s engagement with the emerging power spectrum of the
continent’s international relations. For this to happen, however, the AU would
have to be factored into more of a strategic role in terms of the African side of
the partnership. How this might be structured is not clear since the NAASP,
from its inception in 2005, has been run as an Afro-Asian co-chairing of the part-
nership, starting with South Africa and Indonesia, accompanied by provision for a
rotational successorship whereby these two countries are to be succeeded by
another Asian and African country. Further complicating matters from the AU
vantage point is the absence of an overarching counterpart continental cooperation
mechanism on the Asian side. There is no Asian counterpart to the AU apart from
such subregionals as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
(SAARC) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

There is the incipient East Asian Summit, which is seen as having the potential to
evolve into an EU-type (or AU-type?) Asian multi-regional mechanism. Otherwise,
there is considerable fluidity as to the geographical boundaries of such institutions in
terms of where they begin and end. This confusion stems from the geopolitics of
inter-Asian hegemonic and counter-hegemonic competition. Thus, the SAARC’s
smaller member states have been keen for East Asian regional hegemon China to
be included into SAARC’s membership as an offset to India’s overwhelming dom-
ninance of South Asia. Indeed, China has achieved observer status in SAARC
whereas India has been accepted into East Asian Summit membership, apparently
under ASEAN motivation to similarly offset China and perhaps Japan as well,
given the historical wariness of much of Asia—including China—about Japan
based on its past history in the build-up to and during World War II. (Also, the
fact that the US identifies itself as legitimately claiming a role in Asia or at least
in the Asia-Pacific further muddles the picture.) Nevertheless, the Asian muddle
need not immobilise a more coherent African strategy.

There is no reason why the AU Commission could not adopt a cooperative
back-stopping role with the African co-chair of the NAASP, especially at the
level of Asian sub-regional economic communities such as the SAARC and
ASEAN as well as serve as an interface between such Asian formations and
African RECs within the AU/REC Coordination Committee framework. This
framework could additionally serve the purpose of managing Africa’s relations-
ships with Asian RECs within the ‘Asia Africa Sub-Regional Organisations

183
Conference’ (or AASROC) dimension of the NAASP (Kornegay, 2004, p. 73). Of course the efficacy of such an AU role would hinge on the nature of the relationship between the AU and the African co-chair of the NAASP in terms of how cooperative such a relationship would be, in ensuring AU/African NAASP co-chair synergy. But the activation and effective function of the AU/REC Coordination Committee would be crucial in this instance where the AU/REC nexus could be further enhanced by, in the first instance, a close working relationship with the African Development Bank (ADB) and other African developmental finance institutions such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) which, through its partnership division, serves as an effective interface between RECs and NEPAD in conjunction with ADB. The ADB and DBSA interface with the RECs and NEPAD in regard to implementing the latter’s Short-Term Infrastructure Action Plan is indicative of how such a coordinating framework can function—and how it might be further adapted for selected project implementation within the NAASP framework involving Asian development agencies and finance institutions.

More fundamentally, from the African vantage point, for such an architecture to function optimally, a high degree of political priority would have to be afforded the NAASP by the AU. But the crux of the matter, in an even more fundamental sense, is how Africa (i.e. the AU system) coordinates internally within itself where the sovereign ego of dubiously coherent ‘nation’-states tends to run amok to the detriment of the larger pan-African interest. African cannot manage its external engagements with traditional, let alone, emerging partners unless it can manage itself internally in terms of the entire pluralistic panoply of inter-African political, economic and institutional relationships. More often than not inter-African jealousies come into play to complicate matters. Thus, to the extent that the NAASP, from the African side, is perceived as a South African as opposed to an all-African initiative, this may not bode well for the NAASP as an African managing mechanism for engaging Asian actors. Hopefully, this is not the case and if so can be overcome since the NAASP, via what is described as a ‘Virtual Secretariat’, potentially provides a framework within which Africa can relate to China’s FOCAC, India’s Indo-Africa summit follow-up and Japan’s TICAD.5

Indeed, given the fact that NEPAD is a major driving force on the African side of NAASP, this should help to clarify a politico-diplomatic role for the AU in managing the NAASP. Comprised of five committees (focusing on three broad areas: political solidarity, economic cooperation, socio-cultural relations), including an economic committee, to explore avenues of cooperation, the NAASP provides for project partnerships. In preparation for the end-of-term South Africa—Indonesia co-chairmanship, a project matrix is being drawn up whereby countries—one Asian, one African—can voluntarily agree to drive given NAASP project initiatives. This should help, over time, to develop synergy between the different Asian single-country African initiatives such as FOCAC and TICAD and the NAASP project agenda and, in so doing, help the AU, the RECs and given African member states to better define relationships with given Asian emerging powers using the NAASP as a point of reference.
‘Eurafrique’ versus the new Club Med: in search of terms of engagement

French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s enunciation of a ‘Eurafrican’ agenda in Senegal in July 2007 (see below in reference to Cheikh Anta Diop University) is an excellent example of how external actors tend to take the initiative in defining—in this case, the conceptual or visionary—terms of engagement, leaving Africa little option but to react. What Sarkozy has managed to do is to launch a re-definitional updating of Paris’ traditional conception of its strategic spheres of influence and national security interests by coming up a dual agenda of ‘Eurafrique’ and a Union of Mediterranean States; almost, in a sense of attempting to ‘have his cake and eat it too’, on the question of which has priority in an ill-defined sense of how the one geopolitical agenda relates to the other. Sarkozy intones that his new Club Med concept should not be seen as an attempt to marginalise Africa since Eurafrique should be seen as the point of departure for his wider interregional union. To the extent that the Maghreb is integral to Eurafrique, there is something to be said for this contention. But this could also be purely politico-diplomatic sleight of hand. On the other hand, Sarkozy has provided enough of a rhetorical exposure to notions of ‘co-development’ between Europe and Africa that his African counterparts could go one better and counter with their own definition reflecting an African perspective on the optimum Afro-European relationship. Yet nothing has been forthcoming from the African side of francophonie to put an African stamp on the terms of interactive engagement of a Eurafrican-Mediterranean nexus.

In an earlier critique of Sarkozy’s Eurafrican and Mediterranean Union initiative by Francis Kornegay, the following thoughts were ventured on his Cheikh Anta Diop University address in Dakar, Senegal on 26 July 2007 (Kornegay, 2007b):

In concluding his speech, Sarkozy is at pains to stress: ‘To those in Africa who regard with suspicion the great project of the Mediterranean Union that France has proposed to all countries bordering the Mediterranean, I want to say that in France’s spirit it is not all about side-lining Africa ... On the contrary it is about making this Union the pivotal point of Eurafrique, the first stage of the greatest dream of peace and prosperity that Europeans and Africans are capable of conceiving together’ [italics added] How Sarkozy proposes to negotiate with Africa in this regard will tell much about his sincerity when he earlier stressed France’s wish to promote African unity since ‘African unity will return Africa to the Africans’. He hints at a series of joint endeavours between the two continents as expressions of ‘co-development’: ‘joint projects with Africa, joint centres of competitiveness, joint universities and joint laboratories’ as well as a ‘joint strategy within the globalisation process’ and a ‘jointly negotiated policy on immigration’.

In policy terms, given the fact that other southern European destinations of African migrants like Spain are also committed to ‘co-development,’ Sarkozy’s focus on a joint Afro-European agenda could form the basis for an EU–AU Permanent Joint Commission. If Sarkozy’s Mediterranean Union is to have credibility in Africa, it would have to be at least partially nested within the institutionalisation of the ‘Eurafrique’ concept as a vehicle for joint Afro-European initiatives and problem solving if it is to avoid being a replay of Paris’ traditional francophone
Afro-Arab geo-strategy. This would also imply a need for France to work with the AU and the UN in resolving the Moroccan-Sahawri stalemate which plays into Africa’s Maghreb/sub-Saharan divide in a manner that undercuts the unity of the AU based on its five region structural framework for sub-regional and continental integration. Morocco needs to re-join the AU. But this will not happen without a Western Sahara settlement. And, unless this happens, a major precondition for ‘Eurafrique’ will remain unfulfilled.

The AU and/or Africa’s political intelligentsia could very well take the initiative in proposing the establishment of an AU–EU permanent joint commission as an interregional institutional framework for implementing ‘co-development’ in the very areas enunciated by Sarkozy in undertaking joint initiative and, in addition, proposing areas of joint development reflecting Africa’s priorities. Indeed, a permanent joint commission between Africa and Europe would more sharply resolve the so-called ‘EU–African Strategic Partnership’ which, in terms of the sovereign equality of the two continents, out to be a partnership between the two unions—the AU and the EU. Institutionally defining Afro-European relations in this manner would foreclose the prospect of Africa’s marginalisation by the Mediterranean Union. In the absence of the elevation of relations between the EU and the AU to such an institutional level of interregionalism, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi’s charge of neo-imperialism is hard to dispute. And, indeed, Libya has opted out of a Mediterranean Union that has lessened Israel’s diplomatic isolation as a statement of one of Sarkozy’s priority agendas: interjecting Paris into the eastern Mediterranean diplomatic jockeying for a Mid-East peace centring on an Israeli-Syria-Lebanon entente.

Thus, does Eurafrique serve as a stepping-stone for a much broader French foreign policy agenda with geo-economic implications downgrading an African agenda? Countering the French calculus of Sarkozy, Africa’s agenda extends well beyond France. An AU–EU permanent joint commission would provide the continent a framework for engaging Turkey, which, while not a member of the EU (to which it is trying—with difficulty—to accede), is a member of NATO. Otherwise, the incipient Turkey–Africa initiative being lobbied for by Ankara falls outside of any compelling geopolitical-economic logic in terms of Africa’s agenda.

The existence of an AU–EU permanent joint commission would have introduced a considerably more robust African dynamic into the EU-promoted EPA negotiations which serve as a signature example of Africa’s ‘one and the many’ disadvantage in engaging external powers—emerging and traditional alike. This weakness was mirrored at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Round negotiations. Apart from South Africa’s default leadership of the continent which locates it among the larger emerging market economies, African delegations were largely marginalised from the inner circle of decision-making during the now collapsed, WTO talks. Meanwhile, the AU (unlike, obviously, the EU) has been invisible as a force at the WTO, as it apparently was at the regionalised EPA talks. The substantive cut-and-thrust of developed-developing world interactions are between the larger developing world ‘emerging power’ economies...
and the developed world, with Africa’s ‘least developed’ economies sidelined even as the emerging powers seek to gain a foothold on the continent. This was reflected in the North–South power structure of the Doha negotiations, which comprised a ‘group of seven’, including: Australia, Brazil, China, the EU, India, Japan and the US. Even South Africa was absent. Hence, within the global stratification of power, Africa faces its greatest challenge—as well as opportunity—in engaging the traditional power of former colonial metropole Europe and emerging Asia.

**Afro-South American engagement**

The strategic spatial interdependencies between Africa and South America are not burdened with the same degree of complications as exist in Africa’s trans-Mediterranean/European and Indian Ocean inter-regional relationships. Africa is not faced with a multiplicity of single state actors from Central and South America and Caribbean seeking special entry into the continent. Moreover, there are historically rooted cultural links between Africa and the Americas stemming from the transatlantic slave trade. This provides a basis for southerly transatlantic ties. In this regard, there is as much pro-active African outreach toward the Americas as there is emanating from the Americas toward Africa. The AU’s designation of the African diaspora as a ‘Sixth Region’ of the continent is indicative of such initiative as is the outreach of individual African powers such as South Africa, Nigeria and other states to forge cultural as well as economic linkages across the Atlantic. Although South Africa has fewer transatlantic historical ties to the Western Hemisphere than most of the littoral states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), it has been the most proactive in forging ties in the Caribbean, including the Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM) and with Cuba. It is a host to the exiled former president of Haiti, Father Jean Bertrand Aristide. And, more strategically significant from the vantage point of the South Atlantic, are the ties Tshwane-Pretoria has forged with Brazil, both in terms of Mercosur-Southern African Customs Union (SACU) trade links and in particular through its trilateral relationship with Brazil, in conjunction with India in IBSA.

The energy scramble in the Gulf of Guinea, however, including recent Ghanaian oil discoveries, has brought an added security dimension to the South Atlantic. To this should be added major offshore oil finds off the coast of Brazil. Nigeria, for example, was as resistant (reportedly until recently) to America’s AFRICOM initiative as was South Africa, though not as vocally. Though IBSA is the only formal transatlantic linkage existing between Africa and South America, the basis exists for a further elaborating of South Atlantic ties. Much may depend on the extent to which South Africa and Brazil want to expand upon their IBSA linkage to bring in other African and American states in fleshing out a South Atlantic community of nations. Certainly the establishment of UNASUR and a South American Defence Council provides an institutionalised South American basis for expanding ties across the Atlantic.
On the African side, the prospect of closer relations between South Africa and Angola—Angola having close ties to Brazil within the lusophone community of states—within SADC could motivate greater inter-regional dialogue and co-operation within the continent involving ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) toward forging transatlantic ties with a Brazilian-led UNASUR. The aim: building strategic autonomy in the South Atlantic vis-à-vis external powers. Here again, however, a key concern would be how proactive in a strategically visionary sense key African state actors, relevant regional economic communities and AU are likely to be in envisioning a South–South structuring of South Atlantic ties as opposed to simply reacting to external northern initiatives such as AFRICOM. This question, in turn, reinforces the larger concern about the existence of sufficient political will on the part of the AU and its member states to take control of Africa’s destiny in managing its engagements with emerging and traditional powers alike.

Conclusion

Africa is in a period of transition in the global balance of power in the international state system; it is caught up in a transition dominated by the traditional Western powers on the one hand, and the emerging powers from Asia and South America on the other. The Western powers, led by the US and EU, and the newer power centres emerging on the scene in the global South, led by China and India in Asia and Brazil and Venezuela in South America, are vying for African attention and mineral resources. In this geo-political terrain, Africa, along with Central Asia, is considered by outside powers as one of the last frontiers for exploitation. What is more, within the context of a ‘global resource war’, there is a growing concern within the AU community and among some quarters of African leadership about the scramble of outside powers to carve out relationships with the AU (or indeed, bypass it) that will facilitate external national interest agendas that are as much self-interested as in Africa’s interest and not necessarily entirely on African terms.

Missing from this analysis is one dimension requiring treatment virtually on its own. This has to do with that aspect of the ‘post-Western’ transition grappling with the role of emerging power-based transnational corporations (TNCs) in the rise of the non-West as a new factor in Africa’s economic development. This is a complicated picture in as much as distinctions will have to be made between government and/or government-backed TNCs and such private sector giants like Indian giant, Mittal. To the extent that Western TNCs investing in emerging powers such as China represents a major portion of emerging power exports to Africa, this reflects continued dominance of Western capital using non-Western economies as a conduit for market expansion into Africa. It also reflects the essential economic interdependence of capital flows between traditional and emerging power TNCs in Africa’s growing economy. This also includes the emergence of an increasingly expansive African indigenous private sector a force for greater African integration. Perhaps a useful framework for analysing the role of
non-Western TNCs is a deeper look at the geo-economic dynamics of Martin Walker’s ‘CHIMEA’ nexus of trade and investment linkages between Africa, Asia and Middle East. But TNCs are not the whole story: the role of sovereign wealth funds has to be factored into the emerging new post-Western global political economy. The SWF emergence within CHIMEA will have to be factored into constructing the new global financial architecture, made all the more urgent by the global financial meltdown stemming from the Lehman Brothers collapse in October 2008, a development at least in part brought on by Lehman’s failure to attract Asian SWF funding. Apart from how this reflects the ascendancy of emerging power global economic clout, it is this clout that is also propelling emerging power expansion into Africa.

Yet, as Africa faces this growing trend of emerging as well as traditional power competition for resource market share, it is poorly prepared in self-managing the inter-African system in a way that maximises the continent’s interests in this new scramble. The AU, as the key body of the inter-African regime, lacks a coherent strategy for managing the proliferation of multi-bilateral relationships with the continent. The emerging inter-African system is marked by fragile institutions that struggle to advance continental and regional governance against traditional notions of state sovereignty; notions that reinforce Africa’s colonially inherited fragmentation and, as a result, vulnerability to more powerful external state and regional actors. Of course, this state of affairs benefits the parochial vested interests of predatory elite impunity under the guise of state sovereignty.

Even as Africa moves unevenly toward greater integration, it struggles to overcome this predicament. Thus, the AU is yet to overcome the highly politicised transnationalisation of cultures of neo-patrimonialism that had penetrated the institutional dynamics of its precursor, the OAU. Hence, the tendency of individual states to strike their own deals with external powers—traditional and emerging alike—as opposed to acting cooperatively with other states in the interest of advancing an African ‘common position’. It is therefore vital, we recommend, that the AU develop (as it is trying with difficulty to do) the mechanisms and the means to manage the continent’s relationships with various and sundry external partners. The AU needs to conceptually develop a geo-strategic definition of its own continental identity as an autonomous but interdependent actor in the unfolding post-Western world order. Such a coherent concept should form the basis, and serve as the guide for robust and complementary strategies at regional as well as continental levels for Africa to interact with non-African state actors on more equitable terms.

This means that a pluralistic architecture of coordinating mechanisms addressing Africa’s regionally based strategic spatial interdependencies will have to be fashioned within the framework of a centralised clearinghouse at continental level building synergies between the AU and the RECs (as regional pillars of the AU). Ultimately, the AU has to enhance its policy research, analysis and strategic planning capacity and/or networking with such relevant institutions as exist throughout the continent to more effectively address the challenge of engaging emerging and traditional power alike.

189
It is vital that the continent consolidates its own internal continental political and economic capacities in order to better manage relations with emerging and traditional powers. Only then can the continent hope to attain a measure of autonomy within the rapidly changing global environment. The Western powers have a tendency to place Africa on the proverbial ‘back burner’ within the context of the global trading system, and to rig that system in their favour, mainly due to the lack of a cohesive strategic response by the continent.

In terms of Asia’s ascendancy, we have argued that, while there are clear benefits to be had for the continent, notably in the realm of Africa’s accelerated integration into the world economy on more favourable terms, Asia’s dynamism does however contribute to an intensifying scramble for the continent’s resources. Yet, there is little sense of a pro-active African agenda toward Asia’s growing presence in and engagement on the continent, the NAASP notwithstanding. It is up to Africa, not the goodwill of external powers, to ensure that the continent’s interests are factored into more of a strategic role in terms of partnerships.

The stakes involved in the ‘new scramble’ for Africa are high. The problem of Africa arriving at a disciplined and consistent ‘common position’ strategy in its international relations with other continental regions and great powers is not simply one of colonially inherited fragmentation into a multiplicity of states with doubtful national identity cohesion. It is also a problem of how the strategic space of other continental regions interacts with that fragmentation in a manner that intrudes on Africa’s geo-political and strategic integrity. The onus for Africa to develop a ‘common position’ strategy is first and foremost on Africa; external powers are unlikely to be generous and help it to achieve this goal.

Notes

* Research Associate, Institute for Global Dialogue, Midrand, South Africa. Email: fkornegay@hotmail.com
** Head, Department of Politics, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Email: chrisl@uj.ac.za
1. This is an acronym coined by Goldman Sachs in ‘Building Better Global Economic BRICs’, Global Economics Paper, 30 November 2001, p. 19: The section ‘Extension of the analysis to other emerging economies’, contains the following projection on Nigeria: ‘[it] also stands out as having considerable growth potential, not far behind India in terms of projected annual growth, close to Turkey in terms of projected size by 2050 and overtaking Egypt (itself a strong performer in our growth rankings as can be seen from Table 5) and South Africa to become the largest African economy by that date according to these projections’.
2. For a review of South Africa’s leadership aspirations in the African continent, see Adebajo, Adedeji and Landsberg (2007). Nigeria’s leadership challenges are discussed in Adebajo and Mustapha (2008).
3. For ideas around Africa’s expectations of the industrialised powers, see Obasanjo (2003); also see Commission for Africa (CFA) (2004).
5. See the NAASP website (http://www.naasp.gov.za/aboutus.html) which describes NAASP’s scope of work and structure, including its history extending back to 1955 Bandung conference. The China, India and Japan initiatives, in fact, were represented at Bandung (the India presence being in the form of a India–NEPAD Fund).
6. Based on interview at the South African Department of Foreign Affairs in April 2008.

References


Obasanjo, O. (2003), ‘Statement by the Chairperson of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee’, G8 Summit, 1 June, Evian, France.
