



# **THE DYNAMICS OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN AFRICA AND FOREIGN POWERS**

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**A Study in International Relations**

**Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo**



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# The Dynamics of Economic and Political Relations Between Africa and Foreign Powers

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To My Grand Parents,  
Maman Mana and Maman Wetshi, Papa Tukumbi and  
Papa Lumumba.

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# Preface

Relationships among nations and people are not ontologically static. They are always changing to satisfy some specific interests. In the 20th century, international relations have been shaped more by the dynamics of the global system than by local/national imperatives. Africa's international relations tend to respond more to the logic, needs and the demand of the global capitalism than to these of the African people, their conditions, and internal dynamics. That is to say, Africa's international relations can be studied as a set of subsystems of the global system. Why has it been this way? What has Africa collectively gained from the functioning of current international relations? What directions will international relations take in Africa in the 21st century and beyond? What are the dominant trends in relationships between Africa and foreign powers?

The politics of frontiers and the significance of geographical morphologies are weakened by marketing and production processes within multinationals, the strength of international cooperation, the movement of capital, and by the power of communication technologies. However, the contradictions of the global capitalism in terms of its processes of surplus accumulation, resource distribution, and re-allocation at the national level in the developing world, have forced some people and their groupings to re-define themselves in various cultural, psychological, and national forms. These forms reflect, for worse or better, the nature of multipolarity of the world system.



In terms of foreign investments, Africa as a continent has been marginalized from the dynamics of the global capitalism. At the same time, African states have been recommended to integrate (external integration) further the same world system through the backdoor, namely through the adoption of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the World Bank and the stability programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The relationships between marginalization and integration processes have created conflicts and confusions among African states in terms of policy formulation and choices. However, they also can create opportunities for developing new development paradigms.

In more than fifteen years of teaching international relations, political economy, and theory of politics, I have been intellectually dealing with the above issues, both in class room as well as in research, workshops, and conferences. However, it is only after I was involved in a research project on foreign powers in Africa in 1985 sponsored by the Council for Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA, in Dakar, Sénégal) that I became more motivated to pursue my work on this particular topic.

This book is a product of many efforts, namely teaching, research, consultancy, and conferences in Africa, Europe, and the USA. Each chapter in this book was presented or discussed in a seminar or a conference. Thus, I received invaluable critical comments and insight from many of my colleagues and students on various aspects of my view of the dynamics of world system and its implications in Africa. As the list can be too long to mention each person, I would like to thank all of them collectively for their input and assistance.

I sincerely thank each of my family members (the Lumumba-Kasongos) for a great support and constructive comments that I have enjoyed from each of them in the process of writing this book. Their patience and understanding gave me enough time to think and write. I thank Mana particularly for finding time to critically read the entire manuscript in April 1997 and make important suggestions, despite her own busy schedule. However, needless to emphasize that any shortcomings in this book and internal weaknesses of the arguments are my own responsibility.

# Abbreviations

ACS	American Colonization Society
AFDL	<i>Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo</i>
Bf	Belgian francs
CAR	Central African Republic
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CK	<i>Campagne du Katanga</i>
CSK	<i>Comité Spécial du Katanga</i>
ECC	European Common Currency
ECM	European Common Market
ECOMOG	Economic Community Peace Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEC	European Economic Community
ESF	Economic Support Fund
EU	European Union
FBCAG	<i>Fond Belgo-Congolais d'Amortissement et de Gestion</i>
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GECAMINES	<i>Société des Carrières et Mines du Congo</i>
GECOMINES	<i>Société Générale Congolaise de Minerais</i>
GDP	gross domestic product

GNP	gross national product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAP	Liberian Action Party
LPP	Liberian People's Party
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
MNC/L	<i>Mouvement National Congolais/Lumumba</i>
MOJA	Movement for Justice in Africa
MPLA	<i>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</i>
MPR	<i>Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution</i>
MRU	Mano River Union
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPL	National Democratic Party of Liberia
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAL	Progressive Alliance of Liberia
PPP	Progressive People's Party
PRC	The People's Redemption Council
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SG	<i>Société Générale</i>
SGM	<i>Société Générale de Minerais</i>
SOZACOM	<i>Société Zairoise du Commerce</i>
UMHK	<i>Union Minière du Haut Katanga</i>
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UPP	United People's Party
WHIG	With Hope in God

# The Dynamics of Political and Economic Relations

## INTRODUCTION

### **The General Problem**

What is the role of Africa in the existing orbits of powers? Where does Africa fit in the current dynamics of the world political economy? In terms of societal projects and human progress, what are the policy implications of this location for the majority of Africans and for African states at the national and regional level? After the end of the Cold War, it has become intellectually and philosophically more difficult, using the dominant paradigms in international relations, namely realism and idealism, to predict the behavior of actors and structures of actions in international relations. It is this way because those major paradigms were heavily influenced by the logic of polarity in world affairs. For more than sixty years, ideological and military struggles between the East and the West were the most important contributors to predictability and unpredictability of the behaviour of the actors in international relations. In most cases, the dominant paradigms were philosophically deterministic and tended to be ahistorical. However, it is usually more appropriate to contextualize and historicize the analysis of international relations as this process can help explain how and why the actors in world politics pursue their interests as they do based on the realities of their regions or subregions as reflected in the dynamics of the global puzzle (Mansbach, 1994).

This book is a critical analysis of the relations between Africa and the dominant foreign powers in the global puzzle and the impact of those relations on the articulation of national policy. It is an effort to contextualize and historicize the analysis of international relations in Africa. It offers a structural explanation of the nature of Africa's relations with the industrial powers. It deals with two levels of analysis: (1) Continental Africa in the world system with its defined universalistic assumptions and, (2) Particularities of the continent as reflected in case studies. The dynamics between these two levels of analysis can help identify, classify, and illuminate the dominant trends in Africa's political economic relations in the twenty first century and beyond.

The major questions that guide the study include: Within the global change that is taking place in most parts of the world, how can we characterize the nature of economic and political relations between Africa and the foreign powers,<sup>1</sup> particularly the industrial countries before and after the end of Cold War? What is the significance of the global change at the local and regional levels as it is reflected in these relations?

The internal or nationalistic demand for global change in various regions and subregions of the world, including Africa, and the slow processes of global integration and transformation, are taking place simultaneously. This demand and the resulting global change are creating opportunities for some social groups, states, and countries and promoting new values in most parts of the world. However, at the same time, they are precipitating social conflicts elsewhere.

The demand for economic accommodation by the states in the South (the developing countries) and for political participation by their people, as well as the state's resistance to democratization and the dynamics of global change is likely to cause a paradigmatic shift in the social sciences. Countries in the South are not culturally, politically, and economically homogeneous. However, a random paradigmatic change without a sociophilosophical base can lead to unwarranted analytical discourse and the formulation and implementation of ahistorical based policies. The failure to ask historical questions and to contextualize the arguments of international relations or the social sciences at large may lead to "scientific-mysticism."

The first chapter of this book raises the issues related to the problematic issues related to the economic and political relations between Africa and the foreign powers within the context of global

change. The book's theoretical approach, which is essentially structuralist and historical, and its philosophical assumptions, will also be explained.

Although each African state has its own particular relations with specific industrial and European states, chapter 1 deals with Africa as both a regional political block and an economic entity. It discusses the major relations that have linked Africa and the world system. It also identifies the major trends that derive from those relations and their characteristics within the dynamic of the general paradigm of the world system. Some intelligent generalizations will also be considered.

The second and third chapters of the book examine two case studies: the relations between Liberia-United States and the relations between Congo-Zaire<sup>2</sup> and Belgium. The fourth chapter that deals with the prospects of the North-South relations after the end of the Cold War. These relations have had serious impact in Africa, for instance: they have qualitatively transformed lives, the cultures, traditions, values, and economies of African peoples. These relations are those of political economy. What benefits and/or losses (cost-benefit analysis) resulted from Africa's interactions with foreign powers? What has been gained or lost individually and collectively throughout the process of contemporary state formation? What are the prospects for the future?

Within the framework of global change, the renewal of popular and social movements in Africa, and the search for "sustainable development"<sup>3</sup> at the international and regional levels, the study of economic and political dynamics between African and the foreign powers is justifiable and urgent. The intensity of historical connections and the nature of the world system provide the context for understanding the external and internal constraints in search for new dynamic developmental paradigms.

The study of global change, either from the point of view of Immanuel Wallerstein's world system (1979) or from the dynamic subsystems approach,<sup>4</sup> leads to a cautious examination of the linkages between the elements of "systemness."<sup>5</sup> In general terms, Barrie Axford defines global "systemness" as a single place with its particular own contradictions. As he said:

The character of global systemness can be seen most clearly in the development of the world economy over the last few decades, which has seen a transformation from "organized" to disorganized capitalism on a global scale (Lash and Urry,

1987) and the emergence of what Carnoy et al. (1993) call "the new global information." (1995, 94)

The term "systemness" refers to the reproduction and transformation of a system through scions and routine practices. The global system should not be seen as an organic unity (1995). As further articulated in this book, this caution is warranted because the functioning of elements within the global system at the local or regional levels do not necessarily produce "global homogenization." This homogenization was perceived by modernization theorists in the past as an essential process of development. It should be noted however, that the elements of subsystems do have a certain level of autonomy in the way they function and reproduce themselves.

The world is presently in a complex and ambiguous transition. In the absence of a hegemonic or monopolistic power that can impose its order on other nations or states and teleologically shape the global events, it has become more difficult to accurately predict the behaviour of actors in the global system than it was forty years ago. The bipolar system of managing world affairs has collapsed. Multipolar discourses are likely to emerge in the twenty first century, especially in the subsystems of the global system. Many actors have started questioning their existing place and role in the global system; many are in the process of searching for themselves in cultural and developmental terms. The most important question therefore becomes: What will the philosophical basis of multipolar discourses be?

The effort to understand the dynamics of the transition to multipolarity and where this transition will lead depends on the individual's economic situation, ideology, and geographic location. It requires a critical understanding of the underlying principles embodied in the world system. Some of the general dynamics of this transition are characterized by the rise of primary nationalist movements, fascist and racist sentiments, the search for new cultural identities, the global liberalization of world trade, the globalization of market and productive forces, broad movements towards regional economic organizations, and the expansion of communication technologies. As Castells said:

The fact that new information technologies are available at the very moment when the organization of economic activity relies increasingly on the process of a vast amount of information, moreover, contributes to removing the fundamental obstacle to labor-productivity growth as economies evolve from