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Book Review: *Africa in the New World Order* by Michael O. Anda, editor

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*Africa in the New World Order*

Michael O. Anda, ed.

**AFRICA IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER**

Little Rock, AR: DCI Publishing, 1996

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The collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe marked the end of the Cold War. It also signaled the emergence of a much talked about "new world order." In March of 1994, a group of experts on Africa (among them diplomats), attended a conference held at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to examine Africa's role in this new world order. Many papers were presented at the conference, a select seven of which have been picked and published under the edited title here under review. Of the seven essays, six were written by scholars (three of them historians and the other three political scientists) and one by a diplomat.

The book's main argument, presented in the essay in chapter 1, authored by Ambassador Adoga Onah, is that a new global order acceptable to Africa is one where "every region shall be empowered to develop its potentials and play a complementary role in sustaining world peace, security[,] and prosperity";<sup>1</sup> and there is "a collective commitment to global interdependence" based on "partnership, not domination."<sup>2</sup> Specifically:

- \* that new world order "must be collectively defined, collectively designed and collectively defended[,]"<sup>3</sup> based on key fundamental principles, such as: restoring primacy, integrity, and credibility to the United Nations; enthroning genuine international democracy in global organizations like the U.N. Security Council; promoting genuinely free and fair international trade; making the economic and industrial development of every world region the concern of the entire international community; and ensuring free and fair flow of information and data.
- \* Africa should participate in defining, designing, and defending this new world order.
- \* Africa has contributed more than its fair share, in human and material terms, toward the foundation of world economic development and has the potentials, given the necessary empowerment, to contribute tremendously more in global affairs. Limiting the continent to its present low status in world affairs ill serves the new order.
- \* As much as East-West tension was a known major factor, the dysfunction of the old world order arose largely from the inequities inherent in that order. For the new world order to succeed, therefore, all those inequities need to be redressed. Otherwise, this new order will amount to nothing more than mere slogan.<sup>4</sup>

The remainder of the essays explored African studies in the changing world order (Ch. 2); democracy and the emergent present in Africa (Ch. 3); and France's relations with

Africa (Ch. 4). Other topics covered include Soviet relations with Africa (Ch. 5); regional foreign policy behaviors among West African states (Ch. 6); and the prospects and problems of peacekeeping in war-torn Liberia (Ch. 7).

The significance of the book (and what makes it unique) is its appeal for a collective definition of the new world order and its advocacy for Africa (along with other world regions) of a new role in the new world order based, not as in the past, on domination, but rather on complementarity, shared responsibility, and full partnership. Under such a new global scheme, argues the book, "Africa will undoubtedly justify its presence ...."<sup>5</sup> The book's position on constituent fundamental principles for the new order are also sound and on point. Preservation of the environment has today become a responsibility the world shares collectively. Problems of hunger and communicable diseases are also issues that states must work together to combat and eradicate. And it is increasingly being realized that like global security, global prosperity, is indivisible: the development of every region of the world should be of concern to the entire international community, including the industrialized members. Also, as Ambassador Onah contends, underdevelopment in any part of the world threatens democracy and global peace/security, and therefore undermines the new world order.<sup>6</sup> One of the more interesting and one of the most instructive aspects of the book concerned enthroning genuine international democracy. Finally on point and most instructive is the aspect of the principles about enthroning genuine international democracy. Talks about global promotion of democracy will remain mere talks if the practice of democracy is confined only to the domestic arena and excludes international organizations. Western countries cannot impose democratization on developing countries as condition for the grant of economic assistance and at the same time oppose democratization of multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Security Council. Such is the kind of double standard that makes its perpetrators a target, not unfairly, of the charge of hypocrisy. For democracy cannot be good and acceptable for developing countries and be at the same time bad and unacceptable for international organizations. Rather what is good and acceptable at one level should also be good and acceptable at the other.

But, as is sometimes the case with edited volumes, the book has its weaknesses, some of them serious. One such serious weakness is the failure of some of the papers to build their topics strongly into the message of a new role for Africa in the new world order. This was the underlying theme of the conference and book. The only other essay, careful to tie its discussion into the theme of the book was Chapter 6 which revisited Soviet-African relations. The lesson Africa needs to draw from those relations, according to this thoughtful essay, is to strive at all times to let its interest, not those of the major power it is dealing with, be at the core of those relations. Specifically, it is important for Africa "to acknowledge that the Soviet Union, like other great powers, was in Africa primarily as an extension of her national interest[.]" which interest "may not include a genuine aspiration for the economic development, social equity[,] and political stability of" African countries. Nor does that interest necessarily "coincide with the aspirations of the African peoples concerned."<sup>7</sup>

Many of the essays do not seem to fit the theme of the book. Others tie into that theme in some way but without any attempt to demonstrate the linkage. Essays in this category include Chapter 4 with its argument of continuity and change in France's African relations; and Chapter 7 assessing the ECOWAS<sup>8</sup> peacekeeping experience in Liberia. The important lesson Africa needs to draw from its relations with France should

be the same one Chapter 6 underlined with respect to the Soviet Union (Africa's interest, not that of the major power, should be the centerpiece of those ties), but that lesson is nowhere made explicit in the essay.<sup>9</sup> Chapter 7 is linked to the theme of the book if one uses the successful African peacekeeping effort in Liberia as among the justification for the continent's advocacy for an increased role in the new world order. In fact, Chapter 1 makes precisely that argument. But there was no effort anywhere in the essay in Chapter 7 to explicitly demonstrate that connection. Finally, some essays have their topics tied to the book's theme, but arguably in a confusing manner. For example, the essay in Chapter 2 shows how the marginalization of Africa has negatively affected (by contracting) the growth of African studies. But the question begging to be answered is what this has to do with a new role for Africa in the new world order. That connection still has to be made but was not. Chapter 3 dealing with democracy and the emergent present in Africa seems, in my view, designed to challenge the contention made by some regarding the existence of a residual democracy from precolonial Africa. Again here, as in the others above, the salience of this issue to a new role for Africa in the new world order is not made clear.

An easy way to prevent the shortcoming mentioned above would have been to provide clear guidelines for presentations ahead of time to participants submitting papers. In the alternative, an edited volume contains an effective introduction previewing the work and presenting its principal arguments. In some volumes, a conclusion is also included recapitulating or tying together for the reader the pieces of the arguments in the book. Some works embody all of these three features. Unfortunately, the book under review contains none of these characteristics.

A minor weakness in the book relates to references in some of the chapters. The "endnotes" listed for Chapter 3 are actually a bibliography. There is also missing in that bibliography the important work by Harries cited on pp. 39-40. The endnotes accompanying Chapter 4 on p. 63 in fns. no. 4 and 5 list a source by a McNamara referenced *op. cit.* even though the work had not been cited before in the prior notes.

The merits of the work here under review are substantial and should outweigh its few weaknesses. The book presents the African position on the new world order together with an impassioned case for an enlarged role for the continent in that new order. Experts and recreational readers seeking a balanced view of the new world order and the role Africa should play in that order should read this book side by side with other works on the subject.

### Notes

1. Book under review, p. 5.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 2; quoting President Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, then OAU Chairman, in his address to the 46th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1991.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-5.

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5. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.

8. ECOWAS, or the Economic Community of West African States, a 16-member economic integration organization, created in 1975 by the Treaty of Lagos signed by 15 states in West Africa. The organization was designed to promote trade, cooperation, and self-reliance in West Africa. ECOWAS attempts to maintain peace in Liberia through its peacekeeping force, ECOWAS Monitoring Group, known for short as ECOMOG.

9. This same essay, with little changes, is among the contributions in a book on Africa in the post-Cold War period published one year before the appearance of the title under review. See *Africa in World Politics: Post-Cold War Challenges*, ed. John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), ch. 8.