Contemporary Voices

A contemporary voice that won't fade easily: The legacy of Professor Ian Taylor

Edited by
Tim Zajontz, Faye Donnelly and Gillian Brunton

A contemporary voice that won't fade easily: The legacy of Professor Ian Taylor

The life and work of Professor Ian Taylor: introduction to a "special" special issue

Author: Tim Zajontz

Biography

Tim Zajontz is Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Freiburg, and Research Fellow in the Centre for International and Comparative Politics at Stellenbosch University. He earned his PhD from the School of International Relations at the University of St Andrews, where he worked under the supervision of the late Professor Ian Taylor on the political economy and governance of Chinese-financed infrastructure projects in Africa.

Abstract

This article serves as the introduction to a special issue which undertakes a modest attempt at mapping and honouring the life and work of the late Professor Ian Taylor. It sketches Ian Taylor's personal and professional milestones and outlines some of his main scholarly contributions, before outlining the structure and content of this special issue. With this "special" special issue, we chose to place emphasis not only on Ian's lasting scholarly legacy but also on the impact he had on his students. The special issue fosters conversation about Ian's work among some of his former PhD students and leading scholars in the research domains Ian was involved in. We hope to trigger further debate about an inspiring and influential intellectual, scholar and educator.

Keywords: Ian Taylor, Stellenbosch University, University of St Andrews, African Studies, China-Africa Studies, African Political Economy

---

Introduction

In February 2021, Professor Ian Taylor passed away after a short struggle with cancer. Ian was professor in International Relations and African Political Economy in the School of International Relations at the University of St Andrews. He also held extraordinary and visiting professorships at Renmin University, China, at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, and at Zhejiang Normal University, China. He had established himself as a world-renowned scholar in the fields of African Studies, International Relations and Global Political Economy.

Besides his remarkable academic achievements, Ian was an extremely passionate educator, as well as a kind, humorous and supportive colleague and friend to many people around the

world. Ian's untimely death caused much grief, not least among his colleagues and students at the University of St Andrews, where he had worked since 2004. Some time after his death, Gillian Brunton and Faye Donnelly, and I discussed the idea to compile a special issue on the work of Ian Taylor, who was clearly one of St Andrews' most eminent "contemporary voices" on International Relations.

As editorial team, we quickly agreed that, in order to honour not only the scholarly impact of Ian's work but also his lasting legacy on the life and work of his students, this special issue should not follow the ordinary style and conventions of a special issue. Instead, we decided to compile a rather "special" special issue, which would foster conversation about Ian's work among some of his former PhD students and leading scholars in the research domains with which Ian was concerned. The result is a collection of short essays on a small selection of Ian's numerous publications. Prior to elaborating on the structure and content of this special issue, I outline some of Ian's personal and professional milestones, in order to pay tribute to an inspiring intellectual, educator and scholar with a clear moral compass.

Ian Taylor's journey

Together with his twin brother Eric, Ian grew up on the Isle of Man, before the family relocated to West London, where he spent his teens and would become a die-hard Brentford FC supporter – in his words a '100% local club'. He would have certainly rejoiced to see his team fretting the big Premier League clubs from the 2021/22 season onwards. Whilst there were few points of contact with Africa on the small Crown dependency in the Irish Sea, Ian, early on, developed a keen interest in Africa, as he heard stories from his grandmother, whose parents had lived in South Africa and where a large network of relatives still lives.

Ian first read History and Politics at what was then the Leicester Polytechnic. Supervised by Gurharpal Singh, Ian concluded his Bachelor's with a thesis on Albania, which was inspired by a trip he had undertaken in 1986 when he was only 17. Following his undergraduate studies, Ian used a gap year in 1991/92 for his first travel to southern Africa – obviously at quite a formative time for the region. This trip clearly left a firm impression on him, as he would continuously return to the region throughout his life. First, however, he joined his wife Joanne, whom he met in South Africa, when she took up PhD studies at the University of Hong Kong in 1994. Ian enrolled himself for a Master's there. His 368-page MPhil thesis on China's foreign policy *vis-à-vis* Africa, which was supervised by James Tang, laid the cornerstone for one of his research specialisations and arguably also for a new sub-discipline, China–Africa studies.

In 1996, Ian moved to South Africa (Jo followed several months later) to pursue PhD studies at Stellenbosch University under the supervision of Philip Nel (see Nel, this issue). With his PhD research, Ian delved deeply into South African foreign policy and into the neoliberalisation of the post-*apartheid* African National Congress and, by extension, the South African state

(Taylor, 2001). Ian rapidly became an important representative of the Stellenbosch School of critical global political economy (Vale, 2002). As Professor Extraordinary, he would return to his *alma mater* throughout his life and continue to inspire generations of students there and at other (African) institutions.

Tit-for-tat, after finishing his PhD, it was again Ian's turn to "follow" his wife. The two moved on to the University of Botswana, where Jo had been offered a teaching position and where their first child, Blythe, was born in 2004 (their second-born Archie would follow two years later). Ian took up a lectureship in Gaborone and was soon promoted to senior lecturer. Among his students was Kennedy Kamoli, who would, in 2014, stage a coup d'état in Lesotho – an occurrence that Ian, with his typical humour, often referred to as his only "claim to fame". It was during his time in Gaborone that Ian, together with his close friend Fredrik Söderbaum, launched a "second wave" of critical research on African regionalisms in the tradition of the New Regionalism Approach (see Taylor, 2003b; Taylor and Söderbaum, 2003; Whiteford, this issue; Söderbaum, this issue). Concurrently, Ian published a rigorous critique of the neoliberal underpinnings of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (see Taylor, 2002; 2005), as well as several influential contributions on Africa's international relations and conflict dynamics (see, for instance, Taylor and Williams, 2002; Taylor, 2003a).

In 2004, Ian was appointed to a faculty position in the School of International Relations at St Andrews where he, thanks to his enormous productivity, quickly climbed the tenure track to full professorship. Ian's office was legendary, among both students and faculty in St Andrews, for the colourful book walls he had erected around his desk. No doubt, his office hosted one of the biggest private Africana libraries in Scotland. There were also, however, thousands of books on China, political economy, history, political thought etc.

Ian was not only a prolific, highly respected scholar and passionate educator. I have been told by many of his colleagues (from several institutions at which Ian worked) that he was also the ideal colleague and co-worker. While his enthusiasm for institutional "house-keeping", as well as for the usual admin and politics that come with a university job, had definite limits, his colleagues commonly remember how genuinely interested and supportive he was of their work, sharing generously with them his contacts, knowledge and advice. Even more importantly, Ian never differentiated according to the "rank" of the people with whom he engaged. He treated everyone respectfully (usually combined with a good amount of humour) regardless of one's societal or professional role. He would remember the birthdays of co-workers and would happily join the Christmas functions of the administrative staff at the School of International Relations.

Once established, Ian published an immense body of works which includes, among others, monographs on China–Africa relations (Taylor, 2006; 2009; 2011), the United Nations

Conference on Trade and Development (Taylor and Smith, 2007) and the international relations of Africa (Taylor, 2010), as well as Oxford's *African politics: a very short introduction* (Taylor, 2018). He offered a much-needed discursive corrective to the overenthusiastic narrative about the transformative impact of so-called emerging powers in global governance (Taylor, 2017) and famously argued that the BRICS countries were diversifying Africa's dependency instead of diminishing it (Taylor, 2014a). Numerous critical interventions in article form, such as the ones on state capitalism and Africa's oil sector (Taylor, 2014b), the (neo-)coloniality of the *Communauté Financière Africaine* (Taylor, 2019) and China's Belt and Road Initiative in Africa (Carmody, Taylor and Zajontz, 2022), have attracted much attention in scholarly circles and beyond. Ian had become 'one of the most authoritative academics' on sub-Saharan Africa international relations, as he was once called in the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (Anesi, 2012, p. 171).

Throughout his career, Ian remained steadfast and loyal to his political ideals of a more equitable and just world. He was a radical, a very gentle radical. He never compromised on his convictions of what is right and what is wrong. What he most certainly considered wrong was the enduring systematic exploitation of Africa by external actors and economic interests. At the same time, he would never let African political and economic elites escape from their responsibility for the fate of their people. His neo-Gramscian training and his appreciation of the complexity of state-society relations, as well as his familiarity with the political thought of theorists like Claude Ake, Samir Amin, W.E.B. Du Bois, Amílcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Walter Rodney and others, prevented him from making reductionist and Eurocentric assumptions about Africa's role in the international system and global political economy.

Ian was an extremely hard-working academic, who was marked by his humility and pride in his working-class background. In contrast to some other leading scholars, he really listened when others spoke. He incorporated silenced voices, not least from Africa, into his work and actively engaged in diversifying thought at the institutions he taught by embracing previously unheard or ignored ideas. Throughout his life, he remained a keen "student of Africa". He visited 44 African countries. Whenever he found himself guest lecturing at Addis Ababa University, he would check Ethiopian Airlines' vast route network and book a flight to one of the few African destinations he had not been to. Wanderlust and curiosity were innate to Ian. His untimely death prevented him from completing his personal "Africa journey". Yet, he fully accepted his fate and was immensely grateful for the help he received from medical staff, as well as for the love of family and friends. It was obvious that his firm belief in God gave him faith, no matter what might be.

The elusive attempt at honouring the intellectual legacy of a polymath

This special issue is a very humble attempt at fostering discussion on the body of work of an outstanding scholar. Such an attempt will remain elusive simply due to the sheer volume

and diversity of scholarship Ian had produced. Shaun Breslin of the University of Warwick, another one of Ian's close companions, in a televised address at a thanksgiving service for Ian's life in St Salvator's Chapel at St Andrews argued pointedly that:

> I don't think I've ever met anybody who knew so much about so many places and issues. And he didn't just know about them – he published on them too. What this means is that if you asked five people to say what they thought of Ian's work and asked them to sum up his contribution, they could easily focus on five different dimensions of it; indeed, you might end up thinking that they were talking about different people or that there were multiple Ian Taylors out there.

Shaun Breslin is right. In my own conversations with Ian (and I am sure in those of many others), I regularly encountered different Ian Taylors. The most remarkable aspect of his intellectual personality was that the multiple Ian Taylors spoke to one another in a coherent and intellectually stimulating manner. Thereby, Ian never thought in disciplinary categories and boundaries. He was actually a post-disciplinary scholar long before this became fashionable.

As Breslin pointed out, it was simply impressive with how many thematic (and disciplinary) discourses Ian kept up, and how diverse his research and body of work is. Ian was a polymath. His personal library of about 8,000 titles (not counting the books in his Scottish home in St Monans) that we recently transferred to the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Addis Ababa University, is proof of how widely Ian read and how knowledgeable he was.

With this in mind, one short special issue can obviously not do justice to the many Ian Taylors out there – this is not our ambition. Nonetheless, the contributors to this special issue highlight some facets of Ian's personal research agenda over the two and a half decades of his successful academic career. They do so from the vantage point of their respective positions – some of them being Ian's own disciples, others themselves renowned scholars who knew Ian and his work well and walked parts of his career besides him.

How did we end up with the valued group of scholars who contributed to this special issue? We approached Ian's former PhD supervisees with a call for papers. Committed contributors chose a piece of scholarship from Ian's immense body of work themselves, based on their expertise or because they considered that Ian's thoughts and ideas on the specific topic were particularly influential for their own thinking and work. Ian's students were also given the liberty to choose which senior scholar we should approach for a "response" to their article and to the topic they had selected. We are extremely grateful for both the contributions from Ian's former PhD students and the dialogic responses from leading academics who knew Ian well. We also cordially thank three colleagues from the School of International Relations at St Andrews, who acted as anonymous reviewers for this special issue.

Structure of the special issue

This "special" special issue opens with a contribution by a person who knew the scholar Ian Taylor probably the longest. Philip Nel, who acted as Ian's PhD supervisor at Stellenbosch University, details the intellectual development of the "early" Ian Taylor in an essay that reflects on Ian's time as a PhD student at Stellenbosch and how it impacted his political thought and later work. As Nel elaborates, at the time, Stellenbosch's Political Science department gathered a group of scholars who had become rather disillusioned about remaining inequities in the post-Cold War global order, and who were inspired by the work of critical political economists like Susan Strange, Robert Cox, Stephen Gill and William Robinson, as well as by critical Africanists such as Timothy Shaw, Patrick McGowan and Craig Murphy. It was within this particular intellectual environment that Ian developed a 'distinctive Coxian and Gramscian theoretical approach', which 'allowed him to link the dynamics of ideational factors with the material interests of actors – an ideology critique in the original sense of the phrase' (Nel, this issue). Nel shows how Ian's work rapidly spiralled beyond his PhD research on South African foreign policy. There are few scholars with a similar research output so early in their career. As Janis van der Westhuizen from Stellenbosch University expressed humorously in an email conversation, 'when we shared an office as PhD students, he would churn out one article for every two pages I was able to write!'.

Philip Nel's intellectual biography of the "early" Ian Taylor is followed by a second batch of "conversational" essays, whereby one of Ian's former PhD students analyses a self-chosen piece of research by Ian, followed by a "response" from a senior scholar and expert in the respective field. Sarah Whiteford opens this section with an article that reflects on an 'unfinished conversation with Ian Taylor' on regionalism and regionalisation, a field of study Ian heavily influenced in the 2000s. Whiteford chose an article by Ian titled 'Globalization and regionalization in Africa: reactions to attempts at neo-liberal regionalism', which was published in the *Review of International Political Economy*. Fredrik Söderbaum, a close friend to Ian and a leading contemporary voice on regionalism, comments on the same piece and discusses Ian's lasting legacy on the field of (comparative) regionalism studies, emphasising how immersed Ian was in 'on-the-ground research'. Whiteford and Söderbaum's contributions demonstrate Ian's nuanced and critical understanding of the dialectical interplay between neoliberal globalisation and regionalisation, as well as between official regional integration schemes and actual developments on the ground.

The second pair of essays is concerned with a topic that probably became the "signature" project of Ian's academic career: his extremely influential work on Africa–China relations. Ian's former PhD student Steven Kuo chose one of Ian's first academic articles on 'China's foreign policy towards Africa in the 1990s' (1998). In fact, the article was an outcome of his MPhil research at the University of Hong Kong and was published in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, in which Ian would become co-editor-in-chief, together with Ebenezer Obadare, eighteen years later. Zhengyu Wu from the School of International Studies at

Renmin University of China where Ian was a chair professor, the highest professorial rank foreigners can attain in China, responds to Kuo's essay. Kuo and Wu describe how formative Ian's work on Africa–China relations was for what is now a burgeoning sub-field, both in Area Studies and International Relations. Ian continued to work on the topic throughout his career and became a respected Africa expert in China. He remained largely critical of the detrimental social, political and economic repercussions of China's "rise" in Africa, without falling for the hypocritical China bashing that has become popular among Western commentators.

A third conversation between Athanasios Stathopoulos and Pádraig Carmody evolves around Ian's scepticism about the "Africa rising" narrative that emerged in neoliberal media outlets, consultancies and investment banks during Africa's apparently remarkable growth trajectory amidst the so-called commodity "super cycle" of the 2000s. Discussing Ian's article 'Is Africa rising?', published in the *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, both Stathopoulos and Carmody agree with Ian's analysis that Africa's supposed "rise", while boasting impressive growth figures, failed to bring about the structural transformation of African economies. As Ian argued elsewhere (see Taylor, 2014a), Africa's "boom" of the 2000s, which was not least driven by growing demand for African raw materials from so-called emerging economies, led to a 'diversification of Africa's dependency'.

The final pair of essays departs from the conversational systematics of the previous three. Patrick Tom and Babatunde Afolabi, both former PhD supervisees of Ian's, opted for two articles by Ian that develop a critique of the "liberal peace" paradigm – one published in 2007 in *Global Society*, the other in 2017 in *Africa Development*. Due to the thematic overlap, we decided to pair the two contributions from Ian's former PhD students, instead of reaching out to someone to respond to either of the two. Tom and Afolabi focus on a facet of Ian's work that is most under-acknowledged, *videlicet* his research on conflict and security dynamics. As both authors show, Ian was deeply sceptical about Western interventionism in (post-) conflict settings across the African continent. This scepticism was, as Tom shows, informed by research experience from the ground – for instance, from Liberia. Simultaneously, as Afolabi discusses, Ian's neo-Gramscian leanings allowed him to expose the contradictions in the institutional, normative and materialist organisation of the so-called "liberal peace".

As noted before, this special issue is a very modest attempt at mapping and honouring Ian Taylor's intellectual legacy, one that hopefully triggers further debate. The multifaceted nature of Ian's work, to which the following contributions point, does not lend itself easily for a conclusion. This is probably the main reason why we, as editors, opted against a concluding essay. A second reason is more symbolic: to us a conclusion appeared de trop, simply because we hope (and are optimistic) that Ian's work will live on for generations of students and scholars to come.

Professor Ian Taylor at the Murambi Genocide Memorial in Rwanda's Southern Province in March 2015 (Photo: courtesy of István Tarrósy).

Bibliography

Anesi, F. (2012) 'Book reviews', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25 (1), pp. 171–190.

Carmody, P., Taylor, I. and Zajontz, T. (2022) 'China's spatial fix and "debt diplomacy" in Africa: constraining belt or road to economic transformation?', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 56 (1), pp. 57–77.

Söderbaum, F. and Taylor, I. (eds) (2003) *Regionalism and uneven development in southern Africa: the case of the Maputo Development Corridor*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, I. (1998) 'China's foreign policy towards Africa in the 1990s', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36 (3), pp. 443–460.

Taylor, I. (2001) *Stuck in middle GEAR: South Africa's post-apartheid foreign relations*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Taylor, I. (2002) 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Zimbabwe elections: implications and prospects for the future', *African Affairs*, 101, pp. 403–412.

Taylor, I. (2003a) 'Conflict in central Africa: clandestine networks and regional/global configurations', *Review of African Political Economy*, 30 (95), pp. 45–55.

Taylor, I. (2003b) 'Globalization and regionalization in Africa: reactions to attempts at neo-liberal regionalism', *Review of International Political Economy*, 10 (2), pp. 310–330.

Taylor, I. (2005) *NEPAD: towards Africa's development or another false start?* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Taylor, I. (2006) *China and Africa: engagement and compromise*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, I. (2009) *China's new role in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Taylor, I. (2010) *The international relations of sub-Saharan Africa*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Taylor, I. (2011) *The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, I. (2014a) *Africa rising? BRICS – Diversifying dependency*. Oxford: James Currey.

Taylor, I. (2014b) 'Emerging powers, state capitalism and the oil sector in Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, 41 (141), pp. 341–357.

Taylor, I. (2017) *Global governance and transnationalising capitalist hegemony: the myth of the "emerging powers"*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, I. (2018) *African politics: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, I. (2019) 'France à fric: the CFA zone in Africa and neocolonialism', *Third World Quarterly*, 40 (6), pp. 1064–1088.

Taylor, I. and Smith, K. (2007) *The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).* London: Routledge.

Taylor, I. and Williams, P. (2002) 'The limits of engagement: British foreign policy and the crisis in Zimbabwe', *International Affairs*, 78 (3), pp. 547–565.

Vale, P. (2002) 'The movement, modernity and new International Relations writing in South Africa', *International Affairs*, 78 (3), pp. 585–593.

After Ian Taylor

Author: Philip Nel

Biography

Philip Nel received a DPhil from Stellenbosch University and lectured in the Department of Political Science until 2002. He was Ian Taylor's PhD supervisor. He moved to the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 2003, where he teaches on Global Political Economy, and Ethics and International Relations. He is a fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and has acted as visiting professor in Japan and as DAAD visiting professor in Germany.

Abstract

This commemorative piece reviews Ian Taylor's Stellenbosch experience and the lasting influence it has had on his own work, and that of many of his colleagues. It also considers ways in which this influence can be deepened by shifting the focus from macro to micro determinants of the persistence of inequality and deprivation in Africa – issues that deeply troubled Ian throughout his life.

Keywords: Global governance; Post-Cold War era; Global justice; Gramsci; Africa; China

---

I.

I met Ian Taylor in 1996, when he decided to join the International Studies programme at Stellenbosch University as a PhD student, under my supervision. Ian turned out to be one of the very best PhD students that any supervisor can ever dream of and, in the process, I learned more from him than he could possibly learn from me. In what follows, I pay tribute to this remarkable scholar by reflecting on the forming experiences that we all went through in the 1990s. I also highlight some of the lasting effects that this had on Ian's own work and his legacy. I conclude by suggesting some ways in which we can honour that legacy by taking up some of the unanswered questions that Ian's work raises.

What an exciting time the 1990s were for students of international politics! The structural change brought about by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet empire created space for global and regional normative and governance innovations on a scale not seen since the end of WWII: The Paris Charter for New Europe (1990) and the formation of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe introduced this decade of promise and hope, followed by important milestones such as the United Nations Framework Convention

on Climate Change (1992), the Chemical Weapons Convention (1993), the activation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS – 1994) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (1996). International humanitarian law received a further huge boost with the Ottawa Treaty that banned the production, stockpiling and trade in anti-personnel landmines (1997), and with the acceptance of the Rome Statute and the formation of the International Criminal Court in 1998. In various conflict zones, including the Middle East (Oslo Accords and the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty) and Ireland (Good Friday Agreement), successful conflict-resolving initiatives were launched in seemingly intractable contexts. The end of regional conflicts in southern Africa, with the independence of Namibia and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Angola and Mozambique, heralded a new era of regional cooperation. In South Africa, the release of Nelson Mandela, the unbanning of the African National Congress and the launch of power-transition talks, meant the end of apartheid and the introduction of full democracy in that 'wide and sorrowful land' (as the Afrikaans poet, N.P. van Wyk Louw, once described the country). The 1990s were indeed reminiscent of another famous 90s decade, and William Wordsworth's words about the decade following the French Revolution could easily be applied: 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive' (Wordsworth, 1805).

Not everything was bliss, however, and not everyone was taken in by the signals of a new and promising era of multilateral political cooperation in the 1990s. The then emerging field of critical International Political Economy, inspired by the work of Susan Strange, Robert Cox, Stephen Gill, William Robinson and Craig Murphy, to name a few, highlighted the many contradictions that lurked behind these signs of a political end of history. There were too many signals of brewing trouble in the world economy for these political economists to share the optimism that the end of history had arrived. Recessions and financial crises in Sweden, Mexico, Russia and eventually in Asia, were warning signals of an over-heated financial sector. What ultimately became known as the process of financialisation, in which financial exchanges came to dominate the global economy, was due to a series of political decisions that saw the state deliberately withdrawing from regulating the economy. The resulting 'mad money', as Susan Strange called it in her 1998 eponymous book, increased volatility and undermined many of the social insurance guarantees that were built up during the preceding era of embedded liberalism (1946–1971).

Among heterodox political economists in the 1990s, the alarm was sounded about growing levels of income and wealth inequality both inside and between nations. These alarm bells were not taken seriously by mainstream economists and specialists in international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund though, where the official belief still was that poverty can and should be addressed independently of inequality. In fact, the orthodoxy was that the rich provide the necessary savings required for new investment and economic growth and that the poor would eventually benefit from that. Any attempt to mess with the income/wealth of the rich would, therefore, limit poverty relief and had to be avoided.

The contradictions of a so-called liberal rule-based world trade system were also emerging in the 1990s. While the launch of the World Trade Organization in 1995 was welcomed as an important step in the fight against beggar-thy-neighbour protectionism, critics warned that the final agreements in the Uruguay Round were only formally equitable. Agreements such as TRIPS (Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights) favoured the already industrialised participants, and imposed unfair implementation costs on the industrialising nations of the world. In addition, continued practices of production and export subsidisation perpetrated by many industrialised states, made it extremely difficult for producers in the developing world to compete.

II.

It was amid these conflicting world trends that Ian Taylor decided to apply to Stellenbosch University to do a PhD in the Department of Political Science. As was the case with many of us in the 1990s, the heady mixtures of the successes of global political liberalism and the contradictions of the liberal world economy were the forming intellectual experiences of Ian's early academic career. The contrast between political hope, on the one hand, and economic deprivation and injustice on the other, was particularly acute in the South Africa of the 1990s. What Ian did – something that inspired many – was to develop a critical political economy that could make sense of these contrasts and contradictions.

Ian completed his MPhil on the African policy of the PRC at the University of Hong Kong in the mid-1990s and published his first peer-reviewed academic paper on that work (Taylor, 1997). Painstakingly researched and very clearly written, the MPhil thesis heralded Ian's critical assessment of the economic bases of foreign policy. The distrust of Chinese foreign policy that he developed in the MPhil, served him well in later years and he matured into one of the world's leading experts on Chinese foreign policy and Africa. The distinctive Coxian and Gramscian theoretical approach that characterised much of his later work, however, only developed while he was at Stellenbosch. We were, of course, very flattered that he chose Stellenbosch, of all places, as he would easily have been accepted at high-profile South African English-speaking universities, such as Cape Town and Witwatersrand. Stellenbosch, where the language of instruction then was still predominantly Afrikaans, was just emerging from its long association with leading apartheid thinkers and politicians. Up until B.J. Vorster, all South African Prime Ministers had studied at Stellenbosch, which in 1918 changed its name from Victoria College to the Universiteit van Stellenbosch and became an Afrikaans-speaking institution. In the public mind, Stellenbosch was associated with white-exclusivity, conservative theological thinking and the scholarly justification of apartheid.

It is, thus, a bit of a mystery why a promising young scholar such as Ian Taylor would choose to come to such a place. I have never discussed this with Ian in detail, but it became obvious that he looked beyond this public image and saw something of a more complicated and contradictory, and therefore exciting and enticing, reality. Stellenbosch was, since the 1970s,

also the seat of explicit critical thinking about South African politics and economics. Critical voices included the philosophers Johannes Degenaar, Andre du Toit and Willie Esterhuyse, the historian Hermann Giliomee, the economist Sampie Terreblanché (one of Ian's eventual PhD examiners), and the political scientists Hennie Kotze, Pierre du Toit and Jannie Gagiano (the fact that they were all white males also tells a story, but let us leave that for another day).

By the early 1990s, the Department of Political Science at Stellenbosch also launched a robust International Studies programme, eventually strongly influenced by critical global political economists such as Robert W. Cox and William Robinson, and critical Africanists such as Timothy Shaw, Patrick McGowan and Craig Murphy. One of the early results of this programme was the publication of studies critical of mainstream international multilateralism, and the propagation of the idea of a bottom-up, people-oriented multilateralism that would address global inequalities systematically. Those of us who participated in this programme, which Ian Taylor joined enthusiastically, originally had high expectations that post-apartheid South Africa would exploit its achieved moral capital and would play a leading role in establishing an inclusive and just multilateralism in a world no longer racked with the divisions caused by the Cold War.

The exceeding high esteem that Nelson Mandela enjoyed internationally, and the exemplary largely peaceful process that led to the end of apartheid, created a unique opportunity, we believed, for South Africa to become an ethical broker, bringing both industrialising and industrialised countries together in giving effect to a new normative order – already heralded by all the multilateral political innovations of the 1990s listed above. This was not pure wishful thinking on our part. Many prominent decision-makers and officials in the new Government of National Unity in South Africa, signalled the desire of South Africa to become a proponent of an ethical multilateralism that would serve the interests of the poor and the underprivileged of the world. This signalling reached its apex when Thabo Mbeki took over from Nelson Mandela and became the second President of the new South Africa. On numerous occasions, Mbeki underlined South Africa's desire to become a champion of forms of global governance that would protect the developing world against and compensate it for the negative impacts of rampant globalisation.

Critical scholars – Ian included – did, however, point out the glaring contradiction between these lofty global ideals and the reality of a domestic economy in South Africa that continued to serve only the interests of an elite, and left a large segment of the population as poorly off as they were under apartheid. While the ranks of the elite were now swelled by an increasing number of Black South Africans, the country continued to be one of the most unequal economies in the world, with a large dependence on natural resource exports, a shrinking manufacturing sector, large indebtedness, a shortage of FDI and huge resulting unemployment. Many of these problems were obscured by the flashy features of a highly sophisticated financial sector, a booming export programme, and the growth of post-apartheid

international tourism.

While it was indeed, politically speaking, bliss to be alive in that foreign-policy dawn of the new South Africa, the more astute among us developed grave doubts about the economic underpinnings of South Africa's "reformist" foreign policy goals. In his PhD, Ian Taylor set out to understand and evaluate South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy. It soon became clear, though, that this project necessitated a thorough appreciation of the South African political economy. With his typical thoroughness and enthusiasm, Ian started to read widely on the nexus between foreign policy and political economy. Inevitably, that exposed him to the critical thinking of Robert W. Cox and Stephen Gill, and via them, to the thought of the "idealist" Marxist, Antonio Gramsci. There is an irony involved in the fact that it was only after he arrived at Stellenbosch that Ian really got exposed to Marxist thinking. This was the same university where, just ten years previously, library users still had to apply to consult Marxist texts, due to strict national censorship practices. Be that as it may, Ian soon became engrossed in Marxist texts, and the "contradictions" of the 1990s all of a sudden began to make sense to him. The emerging post-Cold War global political order served the interests of elites, largely because of the constraining influence of a global economic order that institutionalises and legitimises privilege and inequality. A set of economic beliefs and prescriptions, increasingly becoming known as neo-liberalism in the 1990s, served to legitimate these patterns of privilege and deprivation in the name of economic common sense, based on a narrow utilitarian understanding of efficiency.

The task that Ian set himself, and which he pulled off with aplomb, was to make this critical political economy relevant for the understanding of South African foreign policy. Developments on the ground made his task somewhat easier. Surprisingly, if only at first, the new South African Government of National Unity (GNU) seemed to be moving away from a redistributionist interpretation of the Freedom Charter, the national liberation's vision for a free and equitable South Africa. In 1996, the GNU created a five-year plan – the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan – that focused less on redistribution as such and more on privatisation and the removal of exchange controls. In what could be described as a "bargain on investment", GEAR's main purpose was to make the South African economy attractive again for foreign direct investment, and to stimulate the outward investment of South African firms into the rest of Africa. GEAR sent shockwaves through the national liberation movement in South Africa and its supporters internationally. How could it be possible that the highly respected ANC turned its back on its poor and land-starved supporters and became part of a government that promoted and implemented most of the macroeconomic proscriptions and prescriptions of neoliberalism?

Many studies have tried to answer this question, with various levels of success. Ian Taylor's PhD thesis was the first systematic attempt to explain not only the intricacies of the transition politics in South Africa that gradually emasculated the leftist orientation of the ANC –

something that he did with exceptional focus on detail. He painstakingly traces the ways in which the agents of neoliberal ideology came to persuade decision-makers in the new regime that there is no alternative in an integrated world economy for a developing country like South Africa to become investor-friendly and fiscally "responsible". Ian analyses the politics and economics of the process that makes neoliberal policy beliefs plausible in minute detail, guided by some of the core insights of Antonio Gramsci on how social forces and leadership can conspire to be a force either for good or for exploitation, as it turns out in post-apartheid South Africa. He also managed to explain how the "domestic" political processes of the transition in South Africa fed into, and were legitimated by the "reformist" multilateral approaches pursued by South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy. By attempting to become a bridge-builder between North and South, and by pursuing humanitarian global goals, South Africa could simultaneously live up to the credentials of the ANC as a national liberation movement, and not alienate the potential sources of foreign direct investment in the process. The veneer of this reformism is too thin, though, to obscure the degree to which the South African GNU had come to embrace the most important tenets of neoliberal macroeconomic orthodoxy and, thus, distance itself from the daily material concerns of the South African population. The result was a tragic mismatch between the material needs of the majority of South Africans and the self-enrichment mission of a newly empowered Black elite. This mismatch continues to this day, and thanks to Ian's original research, we understand the why and how of this mismatch much better.

III.

It is impossible for me to do full justice to Ian's exceptional PhD here, eventually published in 2001 with the telling title *Stuck in middle GEAR: South Africa's post-apartheid foreign relations*. It is understandable that he wanted to move on from South Africa to a broader focus on Africa, after he received his PhD with flying colours. The increasing role of the PRC globally, also took him back to the focus of his Hong Kong MPhil. In the spirit of celebrating the work of this young scholar who was taken away from us far too early, however, I would like to make some comments on the legacy of the work that he undertook at Stellenbosch.

Ian's critical "Stellenbosch" experience continued to be an inspiration in his subsequent writings on important multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (Taylor and Smith, 2007), Africa's relations with the world, and the specific policies of developing countries to encourage South–South cooperation. It also influenced his realistic assessment of China's African policy and its limits. He never lost the ability to look beyond the political façades and to highlight the ways in which local, regional and global forces manipulate economic practice and beliefs to sustain hegemony, that is, their self-anointed privilege to lead. Ian's reading of Gramsci, and Robert Cox's interpretation of the Italian Marxist, allowed him to link the dynamics of ideational factors with the material interests of actors – an ideology critique in the original sense of the phrase (Taylor, 2004; 2016). Together in an edited volume with his good friends

Donna Lee and Paul Williams, Ian published an updated version of his Gramscian critique of neoliberalism and South Africa's multilateralism (Taylor, Lee and Williams, 2006). His enthusiasm for a Gramscian understanding of the nexus of political order, economic dynamics and macroeconomic beliefs inspired many of the fellow students he encountered at Stellenbosch, and his own students once he was appointed into academic positions. His Gramscian influence is still very much felt at Stellenbosch, where he was appointed a visiting professor. Together with the Stellenbosch academic, Anthony Leysens, who became a leading Cox specialist in South Africa, and the Dalhousie-taught Janis van der Westhuizen, who is a professor at Stellenbosch today, Ian played a very important role in establishing Stellenbosch's reputation as a seat of critical Global Political Economy.

One can only hope that this legacy of critical political economy will continue to grow and that Ian's legacy will, thus, be kept alive by his many friends, like-minded colleagues and the students who found him such an inspiring teacher. What comes after Ian Taylor is an important question. I believe that his legacy will be best honoured if we not only continue with his focus on the nexus of politics–economics–beliefs, but also strive to sharpen it, perhaps by introducing some micro-level dimensions that could complement the necessary focus on macroeconomic and political forces that Ian analysed so well. It is in that spirit that I suggest two ways in which I believe Ian's legacy can be given additional sharpness and longevity.

One of the disappointments shared by both critical and mainstream scholars of political economy is that people do not always behave as our theoretical models expect them to behave. This disappointment, acutely suffered and expressed by the so-called Narodniki in pre-revolutionary Russia, and by many intellectual reformists since, also confronts the critical student of inequality and poverty in Africa and elsewhere today. Why is it that so many of the poor, and not only in Africa, sanguinely accept the high levels of interpersonal and inter-group inequalities that continue to plague their daily lives? Why is there so little congruence between what one can call their objective interests and their subjective responses? One answer would be to fall back exclusively on a notion of "false consciousness" that is inculcated and normalised by the agents and institutions of hegemony, which in our time has become closely associated with a globalised neoliberalism that has been quite successful in popularising its macroeconomic beliefs. Ian's PhD and some subsequent publications made it clear that he valued this as one possible answer. He was also, however, an astute observer of Africa, and had too much appreciation for the irrepressible agency of African people, to attribute everything to the ideological power of an alien ideology that duped people into forgetting their own best interests. In one of our last exchanges before his illness, Ian made it clear that he appreciated the potential effect of traditional patterns of cultural responses as at least co-determinants of what the outside observer may perceive as irrational quiescence in the face of adversity. Ian was fond of citing the anthropological research of Peter Lloyd, who in the 1960s and 1970s identified dominant patterns of social conservatism and acceptance of inequality among young urban Yoruba males. Lloyd's research (Lloyd, 1974) shows that such

social conservatism is the rational outcome of, among others, the trust placed in the necessity of concentrating resources in the hands of a few "big men" as a precondition for benefitting, eventually, from the largesse that could flow from the ensuing patron-client relationship with the favoured "Big Man".

Ian would, of course, warn against generalising from these research observations from urban Nigeria to Africa as a whole. He did, however, suggest that this could provide one line of research that would lead to a richer understanding of what rational expectations concerning income and wealth inequality in sub-Saharan Africa are all about. This richer understanding could do worse than also (re-)turning to the work of another astute observer of socio-economic patterns in developing countries in the 1970s: Albert O. Hirschman. Although there is no evidence that Hirschman was aware of Lloyd's Yoruba research, the former did also suggest reasons why actors may accept relative inequalities in times of economic modernisation, in the expectation that their own time will come to benefit from the economic 'movement' brought about by economic modernisation (Hirschman, 1973). Combined with the insights of Lloyd, these ideas could help us fill out Ian's explanation of why thorough-going economic redistribution in South Africa has not been achieved, 38 years after the end of apartheid. The exceptional tolerance showed by the large majority of poor South Africans in view of increasing unemployment and deprivation, among ostentatious displays of wealth, must be a central part of that explanation.

There is one further dimension in which we can attempt to expand this understanding of the dynamics of the political economy in sub-Saharan Africa even further. It is well known that Ian was a devoted Christian with strong social beliefs that he inherited in part from his father's involvement with the Salvation Army. As for many Africans, Christian beliefs provided inspiration for Ian in his pursuit of a more equitable/fair world. Christianity also played a major role in the political transition in South Africa. The fact that more than three quarters of the South African population were Christian at the time of the 1990s transition from apartheid, provided a common normative basis without which the end of apartheid could have been more brutal and violent than it already was. The recent death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931–2021) reminded observers of South Africa of how important Christian leadership was in the whole process (Weisse et al., 1998).

Nevertheless, we should not forget that religious belief is very much a Janus-faced phenomenon when it comes to questions of political-economic equity. All mainstream religions, including Islam, profess a normative commitment to the display of compassion with the poor. Conversely, as empirical research in Africa and elsewhere has shown, religion also serves to justify and normalise existing patterns of inequality as the will of an all-determining, merciful god whose plans for the world are not always transparent to mere mortals (Scheve and Stasavage, 2006; Nel, 2021). Social psychologists have identified a common "status quo bias" among respondents worldwide in terms of which people commonly believe that the world as it is, is

actually also how it should be (Trump, 2013). Religion provides it with a metaphysical and normative grounding. To what extent does this contribute to the exceptional forbearance displayed by generations of the poor in a country like South Africa, with its extreme levels of inequality? And to what extent has this provided generations of political leaders with the excuse of not addressing inequality systematically and vigorously? Throughout his life, Ian Taylor displayed a deep concern about issues related to social inequality, and this inspired him to explore macroeconomic and political explanations for its persistence. I am sure, though, that as an academic he would have been keen to explore the effects of the micro-factors that I raised in this and the previous paragraphs. Herein lies fruitful ways in which to honour his legacy.

Bibliography

Hirschman, A.O. (1973) 'The changing tolerance for income inequality in the course of economic development' (with a mathematical appendix by M. Rothschild), *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87 (4), pp. 544–566.

Lloyd, P. (1974) *Power and independence: urban Africans' perception of social inequality*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Nel, P. (2021) 'Why Africans tolerate income inequality', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 59 (3), pp. 343–365.

Nel, P., Taylor, I. and van der Westhuizen, J. (2001) *South Africa's multilateral diplomacy and global change: the limits of reformism*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Scheve, K. and Stasavage, D. (2006) 'Religion and preferences for social insurance', *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 1, pp. 255–286.

Strange, S. (1998) *Mad money*. Reprint, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015.

Taylor, I. (1997) 'The "captive states" of southern Africa and China: the PRC and Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 35 (2), pp. 75–95.

Taylor, I. (2001) *Stuck in middle GEAR: South Africa's post-apartheid foreign relations*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Taylor, I. (2004) 'The democratisation of South Africa's foreign policy: critical reflections on an untouchable subject', in Nel, P. and van der Westhuizen, J. (eds), *Democratizing foreign policy? Lessons from South Africa*. New York: Lexington Books, pp. 23–38.

Taylor, I. (2016) 'Dependency redux: why Africa is not rising', *Review of African Political Economy*, 43 (147), pp. 8–25.

Taylor, I., Lee, D. and Williams, P. (eds) (2006) *The new multilateralism in South Africa's diplomacy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Taylor, I. and Nel, P. (2002) '"Getting the rhetoric right", getting the strategy wrong: "New Africa", globalisation and the confines of elite reformism', *Third World Quarterly,* 23 (1), pp. 163–180.

Taylor, I. and Smith, K. (2007) *The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*. London: Routledge.

Trump, K.-S. (2013) *The status quo and perceptions of fairness: how income inequality influences public opinion*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Harvard University.

Weisse, W., Körner, P., Günther, U., Ossenbrügge, J., Kamphausen, E. and Heuser, A. (1998) 'Religion and politics in the transition-process of South Africa: outline of a research project', *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 11 (2), pp. 149–173.

Wordsworth, W. (1805) *The prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*. Reprint, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979.

Regionalisation in Africa: reflections on an unfinished conversation with Ian Taylor

Author: Sarah Whiteford

Biography

Sarah Whiteford is a public policy practitioner, with research interests in policy discourse and design. Sarah is one of Ian Taylor's former PhD students (2005–2011), and her doctoral thesis examined cross-border micro-regionalism in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

Abstract

This contribution discusses Ian Taylor's article on 'Globalization and regionalization in Africa: reactions to attempts at neo-liberal regionalism' and what it reflects about Taylor's contributions to the study of African politics and international relations for three reasons in particular, namely the re-conceptualisation of regionalism in the twenty-first century, the power and politics of regionalisation and space and, finally, the potential of the applied policy implications of Taylor's research.

Keywords: Regionalisation; Africa; Neo-patrimonialism; Maputo Development Corridor; New Regionalisms Approach

---

Introduction

Ian Taylor's scholarship on African politics and international relations was wide-ranging, rigorous and prolific, as is evident within this journal dedicated to the impact and legacy of his research. I met Ian Taylor in 2005 and was one of his many doctoral students in the School of International Relations at the University of St Andrews. He was an incredibly supportive and engaging supervisor, who encouraged me towards a study on regionalisation in Africa, a subject that was entirely new to me at the outset of my doctoral studies.

Of Ian Taylor's many research articles, there is one I recall having a significant impact on my initial understanding and approach to the study of African regionalisation. 'Globalization and regionalization in Africa: reactions to attempts at neo-liberal regionalism' was published in the *Review of International Political Economy* in 2003. In this, Taylor critically analyses the regionalisation project of the Maputo Development Corridor (MDC). The MDC is a trade corridor between South Africa and Mozambique, launched in 1996 as a flagship Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) later tied to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Touted as a means of stimulating growth via infrastructure and capital investment,

Taylor (2003, p. 319) argues that the MDC was an effort by state elites and private enterprises to 'reconstruct a cross-border relationship and micro-region that had effectively existed since at least […] the late 1800s.' As an analysis of a specific regionalisation project in Africa, this article is an interesting precursor to later studies that Taylor would undertake, often in collaboration with other regionalist scholars. In those later works, Taylor delves further into the MDC and other case studies, continuing to explore the success and failure of regionalist efforts in sub-Saharan Africa, from a strong basis in both theory and practice.

I will discuss this article and what it reflects about Taylor's contributions to the study of African politics and international relations for three reasons in particular: namely the re-conceptualisation of regionalism in the twenty-first century, the power and politics of regionalisation and space and, finally, the potential of the applied policy implications of Taylor's research.

Regions as constructed and contested

At the time of writing his article, Taylor situated his exploration of the MDC within a growing body of research under the auspices of the New Regionalisms Approach (NRA). Contrasted with a previous paradigm of regionalism that focused on institutionalised, state-centric efforts at cooperation, the NRA emerged not with a unitary definition of regionalism, but rather an appreciation of the multidimensional quality of regionalisation processes taking place towards the end of the twentieth century. The "new" regionalism is multi-actor and multi-level (Hettne, 2000, pp. xx–xxi); it is multi-disciplinary (Schulz et al., 2001, p. 4), and regionalist efforts can attempt to reify or to subvert existing dynamics within a geographic space. Regionalisation is understood as both formal and informal, with macro- and micro-regions constructed in the space between state- and industry-led initiatives, often contested by cross-border flows of people, resources and cultural engagement on the ground.

Taylor establishes his study of the MDC within its historical origins, precisely in order to contextualise the interplay between the informal and formal regionalist efforts occurring at the turn of the twenty-first century. He argues that the contested space of the MDC has its roots in the colonialist incursions into the region several centuries prior, which itself redefined the micro-region. The colonialist transport corridor tied Johannesburg to the sea port at Maputo and influenced the earlier re-construction of the flow of migrant labour and exports, supporting the rise of several industries like mining and agriculture. While Taylor argues that the micro-regional dynamics were dislocated by the rise of the *Frenta de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) in the 1970s, by the 1990s a convergence of political and international economic factors led to the alignment between the regimes of Mozambique and South Africa, who formalised and institutionalised their joint commitment to the MDC.

While Taylor asserts that the micro-region reflects a high degree of 'regionness' – that is to say, significant interconnectedness both social and economic – this plays out both formally

and informally. The illegal and illicit activities that had their origins prior to the formalisation of the MDC project continued to thrive and evolve within the micro-region, with the potential to both contest and reinforce this regionness. The hubs and spokes of illegal activities may adjust themselves to take advantage of the new structures imposed from above, and Taylor suggests that these informal flows may reflect the *real* micro-region.

Regionalisation and power structures

While scholars often explore the phenomenon and dynamics of regionalism (the "what"), Taylor's approach to this research very much emphasises a focus on uncovering the "why". His exploration of the power structures and impact of globalisation on elite support/co-optation of regionalist projects and attendant discourses is strongly centred in his paper. Taylor is ultimately arguing that, despite official policy discourses on the aim of the MDC as addressing poverty in the region, the neo-liberal thrust of the MDC structures ultimately creates elite and industrial 'winners' at the expense of the masses. In his fieldwork to support this study, Taylor interviewed local women traders who were being displaced by the investments to support the MDC infrastructure, like the N4 toll route. Despite promises of free housing and support made to them by local politicians, these traders were being precluded from a livelihood that they had relied upon for decades. He also explored the rise and persistence of criminal networks involved in weapons and drug trafficking, as well as xenophobic reactions to migrant labour and encampments. Taylor demonstrates that the structures of globalisation lead to a contradiction in regionalist projects like the MDC, namely that integration into the global economy further marginalises the people it ostensibly intends to integrate, and that the formalisation of an economic region may in fact undermine the deep penetration of regionness through the destabilisation of community.

In this regard, Taylor is aligned with colleagues from the school of the NRA. In 'Global politics of regionalism', Mary Farrell (2005, p. 2) suggests that two premises underpin a flexible understanding of regionalism: first, that it is 'a response to globalisation'; and second that it 'emerges from the internal dynamics of the region, and the motivations and strategies of regional actors'. We see these premises explicitly reflected in Taylor's study of the MDC in this particular article from 2003, but also later expanded in a collaborative piece with Fredrik Söderbaum that layered in an analysis of neo-patrimonialism. In their chapter on 'Competing region-building in the Maputo Development Corridor', Söderbaum and Taylor (2008) delve further into this exploration of elite support for regionalist projects and find that there is a convergence of neo-liberal capitalist aims that serve to reinforce patronage politics to the advantage of state elites. Taylor (2004) argues that neo-patrimonialism is a feature of the state in Africa, with political power wielded less to ensure good administration of policy and programmes to the benefit of the populace, and more as a means of strengthening the position of state elites or weakening the position of their opponents. Ultimately, in advancing the MDC, elites had greater opportunities to reinforce their own patronage networks, while attempting to redraw intra- or inter-state territorial spaces 'along lines favoured by private

enterprise' (Taylor, 2003, p. 317). These two forces, neo-liberalism and neo-patrimonialism, explain the inherent contradiction between the expressed aims of the MDC project and its outcomes, as well as the ways in which regionalist efforts are contested.

Intersection of politics and policy

In this article and his later study, Taylor emphasises the role of the state and state actors in the regionalisation project of the MDC, towards 'certain directions and in the service of a particular agenda' (Söderbaum and Taylor, 2008, p. 35). These regionalising policies and attendant structures are neither neutral nor merely reactive to the imposition of globalising forces. Regionalisation affords another avenue to advance the political aims of state actors, and involves a dynamism among state institutions and private enterprises, as well as competing regionalist strategies of local actors, individuals, communities and criminal forces. Other scholars have further explored Taylor's conclusions, such as J.J. Hentz's (2005) study of the internal competing forces within the domestic politics of South Africa to illuminate the contested approaches to regionalisation in southern Africa more broadly.

In my own research on African regionalisation, Ian's guidance and advice had an incredible impact even beyond my doctoral dissertation. Following my PhD, I began a career in public service and also pursued further academic study in public administration. Ian kindly reviewed an unpublished research study I had undertaken, examining the penetration of regionalist policies within state institutions in Ghana. Through a content analysis of key policy and legislative documents of two state institutions, I found that both institutions' discourses were reflective of territorial sovereignty more so than regional integration. Ian's guidance on this study challenged me to interrogate why this would be the case, in contrast to the political rhetoric and regional institutional partnerships being advanced by state elites in West Africa. Not satisfied by merely demonstrating what was occurring through a public administration lens, Ian again emphasised the importance of enquiring further about the "why". In our correspondence between November and December 2016, he explicitly asked questions about the role of political will in stunting the deep penetration of regionalism within the state apparatus, suggesting that political culture and neo-patrimonialism were central to this enquiry.

I wish that I had had further opportunities to discuss with Ian this interplay between politics and policy in respect of regionalisation in Africa. His perspective on uncovering the reasons and forces that perpetuate the lack of progress on the regionalisation project in Africa has much to offer researchers in this field of study. The strength and role of African state institutions and their relationship to political elites is an area that would have been particularly interesting to discuss further with him in the context of public administration and policy. Ian's tendency towards a pragmatic study of international relations often revealed challenging conclusions that could be applied to active policy deliberations.

Concluding thoughts

Ian Taylor's contributions to the study of African regionalism helped to advance the New Regionalisms Approach, adding to the empirical evidence on the rise of a phenomenon that did not reflect the institutional regionalism of the past. He did so in several key ways through his case study of the MDC, supporting the growing body of research that demonstrated that regions are constructed and contested, that regionalisation was yet another tool for African state elites to solidify their political power, and that the politics and policy of regionalisation do not necessarily align.

In considering this article and subsequent discussions with Ian Taylor, his commitment to justice and equity in his study of African politics is clear. His critique of global actors and their exploitation of Africa features throughout his research. He is frank, however, in his assessment of the role that African state elites play in the co-optation of regionalist forces to their own ends and often to the disadvantage of those most vulnerable (Taylor, 2004). Exploring the ways in which African regionalisation is designed, institutionalised, rhetorically sold and ultimately implemented is what Taylor's research continues to challenge us to interrogate.

Bibliography

Farrell, M. (2005) 'The global politics of regionalism: an introduction', in Farrell, M., Hettne, B. and van Langenhove, L. (eds) *Global politics of regionalism: theory and practice.* London: Pluto Press, pp. 1–20.

Hentz, J.J. (2005) 'South Africa and the political economy of regional cooperation in southern Africa', *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* 43 (1), pp. 21–51.

Hettne, B. (2000) 'The new regionalism: a prologue', in Hettne, B., Inotai, A. and Sunkel, O. (eds) *The new regionalism and the future of security and development.* London: MacMillan Press, pp. xviii–xxxii.

Schulz, M., Söderbaum, F. and Öjendal, J. (2001) *Regionalization in a globalizing world: a comparative perspective on forms, actors and processes.* London: Zed Books.

Söderbaum, F. and Taylor, I. (2008) 'Competing region-building in the Maputo Development Corridor', in Söderbaum, F. and Taylor, I. (eds) *Afro-regions: the dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa.* Stockholm: Elanders Sverige AB, pp. 35–52.

Taylor, I. (2003) 'Globalisation and regionalization in Africa: reactions to attempts at neo-liberal regionalism', *Review of International Political Economy*, 10 (2), pp. 310–330.

Taylor, I. (2004) 'Blind spots in analyzing Africa's place in world politics', *Global Governance*, 10 (4), pp. 411–417.

Ian Taylor's legacy for comparative regionalism

Author: Fredrik Söderbaum

Biography

Fredrik Söderbaum is Professor of peace and development research at the School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, and an Associate Research Fellow at the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS), in Bruges, Belgium. For more than two decades, he worked with Ian Taylor on regionalism and politics in Africa, which resulted among many other things in *Regionalism and uneven development in southern Africa. The case of the Maputo Development Corridor* (2003) and *Afro-regions. The dynamics of cross-border regionalism in Africa* (2008).

Abstract

This article reflects on Ian Taylor's legacy for comparative regionalism which has not received as much recognition as it rightfully deserves. Some of Ian's most important contributions to this research field evolve around two themes: firstly, neoliberalism and the relationship between globalisation and regionalisation, and, secondly, regionalisation beyond the rhetoric of regional organisations. This piece reflects on his article of 2003 published in the *Review of International Political Economy*, entitled 'Globalization and regionalization in Africa: reactions to attempts at neo-liberal regionalism'. It also situates Ian's contributions within a broader context and refers to Sarah Whiteford's excellent contribution on Ian's impact on regionalism studies. Finally, the last two sections reflect on Ian's legacy as a field worker, as well as some of his personal traits.

Keywords: Regionalism; Micro-regionalism; Neoliberalism; African politics; Ian Taylor; New regionalism approach

---

Introduction

In this short article, I will reflect on Ian Taylor's legacy for comparative regionalism. Although Ian contributed a long list of impressive publications in this field, his research on comparative regionalism has not received as much recognition as it rightfully deserves. Some of Ian's most important contributions to this research field evolve around two themes, which are both elaborated at length in his article published in the *Review of International Political Economy* (*RIPE*) from 2003, entitled 'Globalization and regionalization in Africa: reactions to attempts at neo-liberal regionalism' (Taylor, 2003). The first theme is neoliberalism and the relationship between globalisation and regionalisation, and the second, regionalisation beyond

the rhetoric of regional organisations (ROs). I will reflect on the article itself considering the two themes but also situate Ian's contributions within a broader context. I will also refer to Sarah Whiteford's excellent contribution on Ian's impact on regionalism studies. Finally, in the last two sections, I will reflect on Ian's legacy as a field worker, as well as some of his personal traits.

Neoliberalism and the relationship between globalisation and regionalisation

One of Ian's major achievements as an academic, especially during the first two decades of his career, is related to his analysis of the origins, processes and effects of neoliberal capitalism. By foregrounding 'the hegemony of neo-liberalism' (Taylor, 2003, p. 315), he managed to connect a whole range of diverse regionalisation processes and agencies at various levels of the global system (i.e. continental, macro-regional, national, micro-regional). Since most other scholars focused on a single level or scale (or even on one single RO) at a time, they usually ignored or failed to understand how diverse processes and agencies were interrelated or even part of the same general logic.

Ian's insights on neoliberalism led him to new ways of understanding how globalisation and regionalisation/regionalism were interconnected, which was one of the key debates within International Relations (IR) from the mid-1990s to the mid- or late-2000s. According to one influential approach within the IR community at the time, regionalism could be seen as a political response against economic globalisation. Björn Hettne was a leading proponent of this approach and, drawing inspiration from Karl Polanyi's *The great transformation*, claimed that regionalism could be understood as the 'return of the political' in the context of neoliberal globalisation. As seen in his *RIPE* article, Ian was very sympathetic towards Björn Hettne and the new regionalism approach (NRA). Ian's understanding of the relationship between globalisation and regionalisation, however, differed quite substantially from the perspective advanced by Hettne.

While both Hettne and Ian agreed on the disruptive effects of neoliberal globalisation, they had somewhat different understandings of the role and agency of state elites in the Global South. Hettne basically viewed state elites as victims of hyper-globalisation, hoping that state elites and civil society actors in the Global South (and the Global North) would join forces to protect their regions, countries and societies against the evils of neoliberal globalisation. Ian had a less idealised understanding of state and business elites. As outlined at length in the *RIPE* article, Ian explained how state and business elites were *reinforcing* neoliberal globalisation through a range of policies on different levels (i.e. country level, micro-regional and macro-regional levels). For example, 'African leaders […] have sought to craft a relationship with the North and promote a developmental agenda which is based largely along neo-liberal lines' (Taylor, 2003, p. 311). Ian's case study, the Maputo Development Corridor (MDC), underlined the same general logic. As he notes, '[t]his attempt to (re)construct a micro-region is explicitly connected to perceptions held at the elite level that in an era marked by

globalization, regionalization is a crucial means by which states may come together and tap into this process in order to maximize their pulling power vis-à-vis international capital'. In short, Ian viewed state elites predominantly as neoliberal agents, not as forces that would protect their regions against the evils of neoliberalism, which was what Hettne hoped. By implication, Ian and Hettne's understanding of 'regionalisation from within' also diverged. Their mutual differences are intelligible since Hettne was strongly influenced by Karl Polanyi, whereas Ian drew on Robert Cox and neo-Gramscian approaches, which he had delved into during his PhD studies at Stellenbosch University (see Philip Nel's contribution in this issue).

Certain parts of Ian's *RIPE* article were, thus, informed by his earlier research. His understanding of South Africa's neoliberal foreign policy was based, among other things, on his pathbreaking PhD thesis, *Stuck in middle GEAR: South Africa's post-apartheid foreign relations* (Taylor, 2001). Parts of the analysis of the MDC drew on an article we co-authored, which was published in the *Journal of Modern African Studies* (Söderbaum and Taylor, 2001). In this piece, we made use of Robert Cox's famous distinction between the state as a facilitator for development versus the state as a transmission belt for transnational capital, and applied this framework to the Maputo Development Corridor. Apart from the analysis of South African foreign policy and the MDC, the article in *RIPE* adds yet another layer by contextualising it all within the broader context of the NEPAD framework. Ian managed to tie the different levels together. His interest in the MDC was motivated, among other things, by the analytical quest to demonstrate that what occurs at the micro-regional level is invariably reflective of what is happening at higher levels or "scales". Informed by his sophisticated understanding of the multi-scalarity of neoliberal restructuring, Ian subsequently developed the analysis of NEPAD in his excellent book, *NEPAD – Towards Africa's development or another false start?* (Taylor, 2005).

As illustrated by the subtitle of the *RIPE* article, Ian's analysis was not limited to how state elites reinforced neoliberal capitalism through regionalist projects at various levels or scales. Rather, he also explored the 'reactions to attempts at neoliberalism', which was a similar ambition to Hettne's and the NRA. Whereas Hettne, however, mainly concentrated on politics and society in general, Ian managed to uncover very diverse sets of reactions, both detrimental (smuggling networks, armed rebel groups) and development-oriented (informal traders and civil society agents) ones. In this sense, regionalism was multifaceted and heterogeneous. This multidimensionality is eloquently described in Sarah Whiteford's review of Ian's work, and will be further commented upon below. In this context, it is relevant to point out that what may be missing from Ian's own publications is that his analysis was in important ways more multifaceted compared to that of Hettne, whose investigations were rather structural in nature. I immensely benefited myself from working closely with Ian. As far as my research on regionalism in Africa is concerned, Ian was a much greater source of inspiration compared to Björn Hettne and other NRA proponents. Ian contributed insights and a framework that had not been appropriately acknowledged in the literature, either on new and critical regionalism

or in mainstream and problem-solving studies. This legacy is just as relevant today as it was two decades ago.

Beyond the rhetoric of regional organisations

Ian's research transcended the conventional obsession with states as the main actors, and the unduly emphasis on the formality of ROs and regionalist policies, in order to bridge the artificial, dichotomous divide between formal and informal regionalisation. In line with the NRA research agenda, ROs were seen as second-order phenomena compared to the deeper, more comprehensive and diverse processes of regionalisation (which could be top-down and bottom-up, formal and informal). This perspective advanced the research agenda of the NRA and is still highly relevant, not only in Africa but in a wide range of other contexts as well.

Ian had several overlapping motivations for transcending the official policies and rhetoric of ROs and other top-down and formal regionalist strategies. Ian was strongly driven by a general interest to look at African regions *as they actually were* and how they *really* were constructed, as opposed to how preconceived ideas portrayed them or how elite actors would have us believe they were. His interest for micro-regions – the main focus in the *RIPE* article – could be explained by two more specific motivations: (i) 'these were new and potentially enormously influential frameworks for governance' (Taylor, 2003, p. 319); and (ii) this type of regionalism was most beholden to "real" processes on the ground. Hence, micro-regions provided a concrete way to assess the interface between elite-derived agendas and popular reactions. Sarah Whiteford eloquently summarises Ian's views on the elite-driven agendas: 'Taylor demonstrates that the structures of globalisation lead to a contradiction in regionalist projects like the MDC, namely that integration into the global economy further marginalises the people it ostensibly intends to integrate, and that the formalisation of an economic region may in fact undermine the deep penetration of regionness through the destabilisation of community'. As far as the bottom-up reactions are concerned, these were diverse and carried out by a range of actors. As noted above, some were detrimental whereas others were development-oriented. One of Ian's main contributions was to explain how top-down and state-steered micro-regionalist processes were directly related to the diverse bottom-up reactions, and that the different processes were played out under the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. Given that contemporary research on comparative regionalism is so heavily dominated by mainstream and problem-solving scholarship, this type of critical analysis is arguably even more relevant today compared to two decades ago. Comparative regionalism as a research field would benefit immensely if a new generation of scholars would further the type of critical analysis developed by Ian Taylor.

Ian Taylor's legacy as a field researcher

Ian undertook an incredible number of field trips and travels to conferences, workshops and other universities. Ian's track record as field worker will be very difficult for anyone to match. Travelling, however, was only a means and not an end in itself. One main driver for Ian

can be found in his extreme reluctance to carry out research without first-hand experience about what was happening "on the ground". This attitude was an integral part of his identity as a scholar, and he was openly critical of colleagues who had poor understanding of local dynamics on the ground or conducted research on Africa or IR without undertaking "proper" fieldwork. With his rather harsh jargon, he could refer to such scholars as "clowns" or sometimes even as a "disgrace" to the academic community. Ian had set high standards for his own work, which was characterised by a tireless perusal of a wide array of literatures and frequent fieldwork. Meeting his own high standards for about 25 years of his academic career deservedly earned Ian immense scholarly authority in his fields of study.

I had the privilege of undertaking several field trips with Ian, including the fieldwork for the *RIPE* article discussed here. I will, therefore, use my space to share some experiences from "the ground" with Ian. During our joint fieldwork, we nearly always conducted interviews together. Ian was a great collaborator, always prepared, knowledgeable and creative. Many of my best interviews were conducted with Ian. I share three examples of our most remarkable interviews. One was with the former highest representative of the MDC project. In sharp contrast to the official history of the MDC, the respondent claimed that the MDC was never intended as a development corridor; rather, its main goal was limited to attracting 'bankable investment projects'. This implied that the MDC was best understood as an investment corridor, which led us to our claim that the state had been reduced to an 'investment promotion agency'. In another interview during fieldwork carried out in eastern DRC in 2010, the representative of one of the EU's civilian peace missions stated: 'I don't know what I am doing here'. Given the EU's high profile as a peacemaker in the DRC at the time, this was totally unexpected for us. Yet, it allowed us to make sense of many of our subsequent interviews, as well as the EU's failure and disjointed role as a peacemaker. My third example is provided by the French Ambassador to Rwanda at the time, who claimed that the only way to end the conflict in eastern DRC was 'by bombing the area and sending in the French Legion'. That powerful actors would think in these terms was even more unexpected, as it was shocking. I am convinced that it was not least Ian's presence and his unconventional, yet at the same time professional and extremely well-informed, way of engaging with research participants which made them speak to us so openly.

A typical pattern when travelling and doing fieldwork together with Ian was that his DNA would not allow him to pass by a book store without entering. If we did not have enough time to enter, he would nearly always say: 'Fred, we must come back'. Once into the book store, he would usually buy a considerable number of books, many of which I had never heard of, and he would always explain to me that these were 'very important books'. He had a never-ending enthusiasm for gaining new knowledge, which should serve as an inspiration to any scholar. Shaun Breslin stated in a speech at Ian's funeral that Ian knew incredibly much about incredibly many things. In fact, I have never met anyone with so much knowledge about the politics of Africa, ranging from history and philosophy to political, economic and cultural

processes in specific countries, regions or the continent as a whole. Ian's knowledge, however, went far beyond Africa, and experts in other fields are likely to praise his understanding of their areas of specialisation.

Compassionate friend and scholar

I will round up with a few reflections on Ian's personality because it very much shaped the way he conducted his academic life. I first met Ian Taylor at an academic conference in 1999, and I was fortunate to have him both as a friend and co-author. Ian was the type of friend and collaborator that everyone would want. He was extremely generous and compassionate as a person. Our discussions on issues such as Mugabe, new regionalism, neoliberalism or neopatrimonialism would nearly always involve engagements in each other's families and lives more broadly. Ian, however, was always the more engaged one between us and the one who managed to combine compassion with work. For example, apart from the usual interest in the core family, Ian showed great concern for my parents and even for my parents-in-law (whom he had met during one of his many trips).

His compassion, however, did not end there. Beyond our private lives, Ian also showed a genuine concern for some of my colleagues and PhD students. In particular, Ian always sought the latest update on Björn Hettne, whose health had deteriorated since the late 2000s. Ian would always ask me to forward his greetings to Björn. Sometimes he would also send greetings to other colleagues at my department, whom he had met at various conferences or visits to Sweden. He also kept track of those of my doctoral students who carried out research on Africa. Sometimes he would even send them e-mails with clever comments or references that were relevant to their research and PhD projects. For me, and I know for many others too, Ian was absolutely a source of inspiration.

Finally, humour was an essential part of Ian's character. I round up my text with yet another anecdote. During our joint trip to Rwanda/DRC in 2010, I organised a policy dialogue seminar with representatives of foreign ministries from Rwanda, DRC and Burundi, and a handful of western diplomats (EU Commission, Nordics, UK etc.). The meeting was part of a larger EU-funded research project, in which I participated. Although Ian co-authored one of the sub-studies together with me, he was not really part of the broader research project. While I had done my best to prepare the diplomats and policy experts in advance, at least the first half of the meeting was a complete disaster. The moderator and I tried in vain to make the diplomats and national representatives speak to us or to each other. For what seemed like an eternity, almost no-one, except for the moderator and myself, had anything to say to anyone else. During yet another period of complete silence in the room, Ian (who sat next to me) whispered in my ear: 'I am so glad this is not my project'. Ian kept his "poker face" but I could not stop laughing. Some of the participants stared, as it was impossible to understand what was so funny about this bizarre meeting. This was Ian "in action" and this is how I will remember him. He often had a smile on his face and the fine ability to make other people

laugh with him.

Bibliography

Söderbaum, F. and Taylor, I. (2001) 'Transmission belt for transnational capital or facilitator for development? Problematising the role of the state in the Maputo Development Corridor', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39 (4), pp. 675–695.

Taylor, I. (2001) *Stuck in middle GEAR: South Africa's post-apartheid foreign relations*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Taylor, I. (2003) 'Globalization and regionalization in Africa: reactions to attempts at neo-liberal regionalism', *Review of International Political Economy*, 10 (2), pp. 310–330.

Taylor, I. (2005) *NEPAD: towards Africa's development or another false start?* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Ahead of the curve: what Ian Taylor's 'China's foreign policy towards Africa in the 1990s' tells us about China's grand strategy today

Author: Steven Chiun-yi Kuo

Biography

Steven Kuo is a Taiwan-born South African. He was Ian›s PhD student between 2007–2012, working on a thesis focusing on China–Africa security relations. Alongside his academic position as Adjunct Senior Lecturer at the Graduate School of Business at the University of Cape Town, he currently also acts as a consultant on China–Africa relations

---

Abstract

Political support has long been the top priority and foundational consideration of Beijing's Africa policy in the United Nations and other international fora. Taylor's article highlighted the main drivers behind Beijing's policy towards Africa. His arguments on this point provided support for a great deal of his later publications arguing against the waves of the "Chinese resource neo-colonialism in Africa" discourse, which was all the rage throughout the 2000s and 2010s.

Keywords: China–Africa relations; China–Africa history; China's Africa policy; Chinese foreign policy; African international relations

---

Introduction

Ian Taylor was one of the pioneers in the study of China–Africa relations and has since become a colossus in the developing scholarly field of China–Africa studies. At the time Taylor started to engage with the topic (in the mid-1990s), China–Africa trade was negligible and there were limited significant political connections between Beijing and African capitals. Today, popular news stories frequently cast China as the alleged "new coloniser in Africa", while plenty of reports try to debunk these myths. A thriving research field has developed around all facets of Africa–China relations. Taylor was indeed ahead of the curve.

Ian Taylor's authoritative work on China–Africa relations not only fast-tracked his own career, but also cleared the way for scholars and think-tank researchers to follow on the path he had cleared. Taylor advanced the China–Africa Studies sub-discipline through his cutting-edge research that combined Chinese foreign policy analysis with fieldwork-based African studies. He also won research funding to nurture young scholars. For example, together with Oliver Richmond at the

Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies of the University of St Andrews, he secured the Allen and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust Scholarship for sub-Saharan African peace studies. Patrick Tom, Walter Lotze, Inga Jacobs and myself were among those who benefitted from this research grant, which allowed us to carry out our PhD research on African peace and conflict studies.

In the following, I will discuss one of Ian Taylor's first academic articles on China–Africa relations, entitled 'China's foreign policy towards Africa in the 1990s', which was published in 1998 in the *Journal of Modern African Studies* (*JMAS*). By the mid-1990s, Ian had completed an M.Phil. thesis at the University of Hong Kong on *The People's Republic of China's anti-hegemonic posturing in the post-Cultural Revolution era in southern Africa* (Taylor, 1997). For the 1998 article, he drew on his M.Phil. research. The article filled a significant knowledge gap by accounting for and explaining developments in Africa–China relations throughout the 1990s, thereby carrying forward Yung-lo Lin's previous work on 'Peking's Africa policy in the 1980s' (Lin, 1989).

I have read this article many times, even prior to becoming Ian's PhD student. Later on, I prescribed it in my student reading lists. This article, for me, is the foundation of my personal understanding of Beijing's foreign policy. I feel it remains relevant today, as scholars and analysts continue their efforts to understand the Africa piece of the Chinese foreign policy puzzle. While popular accounts have often remained preoccupied with China's interest in Africa's natural resources, Taylor's 1998 article argues that securing African political support in international organisations, such as the United Nations, has been a driving factor behind Beijing's Africa policy. A quarter of a century on, Taylor's insistence that political support, and not necessarily economic advantages, is Beijing's top priority in Africa remains relevant, considering the intensifying geopolitical competition between China and the West. I claim that Beijing's Africa policy today – at the beginning of President Xi's third five-year term – is built on the foundations that Ian identified in his 1998 article.

Africa as a reliable political support base for China

Following scholars in the 1960s and 1970s (Hutchison, 1975; Larkin, 1971), Taylor situated China–Africa relations within the context of the Cold War and the superpower rivalry between the US and the USSR. In the same way that the superpowers had client states in Africa, albeit to a far lesser extent, China fostered revolutions in the continent (Ogunsanwo, 1974, p. 260). Compared to the previous two decades (the 1960s and 1970s), however, a decline was observed throughout the 1980s in the importance of Africa for Beijing. On the one hand, post-Cultural Revolution, Beijing had embarked on a policy of *détente* with the West, and the struggle against Western neo-imperialism had lost its significance (Li, 2006, p. 15). On the other, according to a point Taylor made in his unpublished M.Phil. thesis, Sino-Soviet rapprochement meant that 'China no longer saw the continent as an area where Beijing could or should combat either American or particularly Soviet influence' (quoted in Taylor, 1998, p. 445).

Deng Xiaoping's China in the 1980s was focused on economic reform and opening up to global markets. In order to achieve economic development, receiving support from Japan and the West

was a priority, while African camaraderie was secondary. Taylor's argument for China's neglect of Africa in the 1980s was not made haphazardly. In support of this view, Taylor references, among others, Philip Snow's work (Snow, 1995). As Taylor (1998, p. 444) shows, despite China's leading position as the world's fastest growing economy at the time, both aid to Africa and trade numbers between China and African countries had stagnated. In addition, Taylor (1998, p. 445) documents a significant drop in high-level visits from China to Africa from the mid-1980s onward, a trend which was quickly reversed after the Tiananmen Square incident. As Taylor (1998) sets out in the opening sentence of his article, '[t]he PRC's policy towards Africa in the 1990s has its roots in the crisis surrounding the Tiananmen Square crackdown on 4 June 1989, and the heavy and persistent criticism by the developed world levelled against Beijing's human rights record since that date' (p. 443). While Beijing found itself a pariah in the Western world, being roundly criticised for its handling of the Tiananmen Square incident, it found vocal support for its actions among African states. Taylor's article convincingly demonstrates that Tiananmen Square had become a "watershed" moment causing a rejuvenation of Sino-African relations.

Taylor's article remains a highly relevant contribution, not only because it provides a dispassionate and objective assessment of Africa's importance for Beijing, but also because it sheds light on the trilateral relationship among Africa, China and the West. Taylor (1998, p. 447), with his occasionally colloquial choice of words which made his articles all the more readable, argues that 'whilst Tiananmen Square ended China's "honeymoon" relationship with the West, Africa's reaction was far more muted, if not openly supportive', a claim he substantiates with statements from African statesmen lauding Beijing's reactions to the 1989 demonstrations.

Taylor discusses the changing Western attitudes *vis-à-vis* Beijing, which was originally seen in a favourable light by Western media and Western policy-makers, 'who saw/hoped that China was being remade as a Chinese imitation of the West's self-image' (Taylor, 1998, p. 446). As the realist John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago argues in a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, the liberal triumphalism that pervaded the Washington establishment in the 1990s meant that spreading democracy and promoting an open international economy was considered an opportune foreign policy by US policy-makers. In the case of China, liberal reasoning assumed that, if the United States were to integrate the country into the global economy, China would eventually become a democracy once it had reached a certain level of economic development (Mearsheimer, 2021, p. 53). Mearsheimer laments that four US administrations, from George W.H. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush to the Obama administration, had all embraced this liberal ideology. He quotes Bill Clinton's 1994 declaration that the United States should 'intensify and broaden its engagement' with China, which would help it 'evolve as a responsible power, ever growing not only economically, but growing in political maturity so that human rights can be observed' (Mearsheimer, 2021, p. 53).

Following the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, Western criticism of China's human rights violations became frequent, vocal and a major concern for Chinese foreign policy formulation (Taylor, 1998, pp. 446–447). Taylor's scholarship on the matter was demonstrably good, especially for someone

who was, at the time, "only" a PhD candidate. He noted that Chinese officials saw other reasons as quintessential for Western criticism. He quotes an interview he had conducted in Stellenbosch in 1998 with the then Chinese Ambassador to South Africa, Wang Xue Xian, who held the view that the West 'jump[ed] on human rights' after China began to develop (quoted in Taylor, 1998, p. 447). Taylor (1998) also argues that Chinese and many African decision-makers shared the sentiment that 'human rights such as "economic rights" and "rights of subsistence" are the main priority of developing nations and take precedence over personal, individual rights as conceptualised in the West' (p. 448).

Taylor identifies three essential reasons why African governments openly supported Beijing in the post-Tiananmen era. First among those reasons was self-interest because African elites were themselves under threat from democratisation projects. On the African continent, ruling elites, many of which had questionable legitimacy domestically, were supportive of Beijing's culturally relativist interpretations of human rights, and sympathetic towards the rationale that linked "stability" with one-party rule (Taylor, 1998, pp. 447–448). The second reason was Third World solidarity and shared resentment at Western interference in the affairs of fellow developing countries. Taylor (1998) notes that '[m]any African governments viewed the emphasis by the West on human rights as a pretext to undermine China's development and interfere in its own path to modernisation' (p. 448). Politically capitalising on African resentments against Western interventionism, Beijing rediscovered the roots of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, notably the foundational principles of sovereignty and non-interference, principles that were conveniently forgotten during the revolutionary period of the 1960s and 1970s, when Beijing supported revolutionary forces across Africa and Southeast Asia (Taylor, 1998, p. 451). The third and final reason was that criticising Beijing would spell the end of Chinese aid to African leaders (Taylor, 1998, pp. 447–449).

Following the Tiananmen Square incident, China launched a diplomatic offensive to win international support. Africa was central to these efforts. Taylor highlights that, in the three-year period between June 1989 and June 1992, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen toured fourteen African countries. These visits to "friendly" states in Africa usually included the granting of Chinese aid money, as in the case of Mozambique, which received US$12 million in September 1989 (Taylor, 1998, p. 450).

African countries did not only serve as a diplomatic bulwark against Western criticism. The continent as a whole also became an arena of competition for diplomatic recognition and ties with the Republic of China on Taiwan. The so-called chequebook diplomacy between the "two Chinas" was raging in the late 1990s, whereby Beijing and Taipei competitively distributed aid across Africa in return for political support and/or diplomatic recognition (Taylor, 1998, p. 457). At the time, Taiwan still maintained official diplomatic relations with about thirty, mostly small countries, about a third of which was in Africa (Taylor, 1998, p. 457). Taipei's chequebook diplomacy, however, was becoming increasingly less successful, especially when Taiwan lost its most important African diplomatic tie, South Africa. This was made official when Beijing opened an embassy in Pretoria in January 1998, despite a couple of years' worth of vigorous lobbying from Taipei with the new Mandela

government. Today, Eswatini is the last African country maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan. As Taylor's article shows, African support for Beijing was becoming increasingly important to the People's Republic of China throughout the 1990s.

The enduring relevance of Taylor's *JMAS* article

By choosing to publish the article in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Taylor brought the study of modern Chinese history and Chinese foreign policy analysis to an African Studies audience, thereby effectively linking Chinese studies with scholarship on African politics and international relations. By June 2023, Taylor's article had been cited 385 times according to Google Scholar, which underlines its impact.

The contribution of the article has been significant for at least two reasons. First, it effectively served to bridge two Area Studies disciplines: Chinese Studies and African Studies, thus laying the groundwork for the establishment of a new sub-field, China–Africa Studies. Thanks to his M.Phil. research, Taylor was one of the few scholars able to combine scholarship from two Area Studies traditions that scarcely shared any communication. Not only was he able to explain the impact of a rising China on Africa, but he also pointed out why and how African countries were important for Beijing. Second, Taylor accurately assessed Beijing's geopolitical calculations throughout the 1990s, revealing the importance of African support for the PRC against Western pressure on the international stage. As early as 1998, Taylor's article established that Africa, following the short-lived Sino-Western *détente* period of the 1980s, would become an arena for geopolitical and ideological rivalry between China and the West. He concludes that 'in an attempt to offset the West's position vis-à-vis China in the international system, Beijing has and will continue to seek improved relations with non-Western powers. Africa has been no exception to this policy and this is likely to continue' (Taylor, 1998, p. 460). Subsequent Chinese policies towards Africa, marked by milestones such as the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) inaugurated in 2000 (Taylor, 2011), China's Africa Policy White Paper published in 2006 (Taylor, 2009), the invitation of South Africa to the BRICS group at the end of 2010 (Taylor, 2014) and the centrality of Africa within the Belt and Road Initiative (Taylor and Zajontz, 2020), empirically prove his point. His assessment, dating back to 1998, that political support from Africa is a key Chinese foreign policy concern remains apt 25 years later in the light of intensifying great power rivalry between China and the West.

Endnotes

[1] The author gratefully acknowledges support by Tim Zajontz and the editorial team.

Bibliography

Hutchison, A. (1975) *China's African revolution*. London: Hutchison and Co.

Larkin, B. (1971) *China and Africa 1949–1970: the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China*.

Berkeley: University of California Press.

Li, A. (2006) '论中国对非洲政策的调适与转变' [On the adjustment and transformation of China's African policy], 西亚非洲 [*West Asia and Africa*], 8, pp. 11–20.

Lin, Y. (1989) 'Peking's African policy in the 1980s', *Issues and Studies*, 4 (25), pp. 849–862.

Mearsheimer, J.J. (2021) 'America, China, and the tragedy of great-power politics', *Foreign Affairs*, 100 (6), pp. 48–58.

Ogunsanwo, A. (1974) *China's policy in Africa 1958–1971*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Snow, P. (1995) 'China and Africa: consensus and camouflage', in Robinson, T.W. and Shambaugh, D. (eds) *Chinese foreign policy: theory and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 285–287.

Taylor, I. (1997) *The People's Republic of China's anti-hegemonic posturing in the post-Cultural Revolution era in southern Africa*. Unpublished M.Phil. thesis. University of Hong Kong.

Taylor, I. (1998) 'China's foreign policy towards Africa in the 1990s', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 3 (36), pp. 443–460.

Taylor, I. (2009) *China's new role in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Taylor, I. (2011) *The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, I. (2014) *Africa rising? BRICS – Diversifying dependency*. Oxford: James Currey.

Taylor, I. and Zajontz, T. (2020) 'In a fix: Africa's place in the Belt and Road Initiative and the reproduction of dependency', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 27 (3), pp. 277–295.

Ian Taylor and China: a long intellectual journey, called to a halt

Author: Zhengyu Wu

Biography

Zhengyu Wu is professor of International Politics at the School of International Studies of the Renmin University of China (Beijing), where he has taught since 2002. Professor Wu earned his PhD from the Department of History at Nanjing University (Nanjing, China), and has travelled extensively to the UK and US as a visiting and research scholar. His areas of specialisation include the Theory of International Politics, Geopolitics and Grand Strategy, and East Asian Maritime and Naval Affairs. Some of his most recent articles have appeared in the *Naval War College Review, the Journal of Strategic Studies* and *The Pacific Review.*

Abstract

This paper is divided into three sections. First, it evaluates Professor Ian Taylor's characteristic approach to the study of China–Africa relations, as showcased in one of his articles. Then, it brings attention to Ian Taylor's engagement with China since 2009, with a special focus on his non-typical approach to China Studies. Finally, it deals with Ian Taylor's unfinished project on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China–India relations.

Keywords: Ian Taylor; China–Africa relations; Intellectual journey; Contextualised understanding; Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); China; Africa

---

Introduction

Professor Ian Taylor has been renowned for his distinguished career in Africa Studies. His most commendable achievement, however, lies in his contribution to reviving the study of China–Africa relations as a respectable sub-field in International Relations (IR). Ian established his academic status not just through his prolific publication record, but also through his unparalleled insight into the problems and challenges facing China and Africa today. His insights, which were accumulated through wide reading and laborious fieldwork, laid a solid foundation for his analyses of the events in China and Africa. Ian's impact stretches far beyond his illustrious academic research. He helped, in one way or another, to nurture a younger generation of scholars in China and Africa Studies.

Compared to his reputation in Africa Studies, Ian's engagement with China has been less well-known to his colleagues and friends. This relative obscurity could be attributed to his

research focus and personality. Ian's public comments on China had been focused on China–Africa relations. This topic can hardly hit the headlines in the same way that China–US relations usually do, not to mention attract much public attention. Besides, Ian was humble and reserved by nature. He preferred to stay out of the public gaze, much less advertise his academic activities widely. Notwithstanding his low profile, Ian had actually managed to establish himself as a competent China watcher over the previous decade. Had he been awarded more time, Ian could have made as distinguished a career in China Studies as the one he had accomplished in Africa Studies.

This commemorative paper is divided into three sections. First, I focus on Ian Taylor's characteristic approach to the study of China–Africa relations, as showcased in 'China's foreign policy towards Africa in the 1990s' (Taylor, 1998). Next, I bring attention to Ian Taylor's engagement with China since 2009, with a special focus on his unique approach to China Studies, which made him a non-typical China watcher. Finally, I examine Ian Taylor's proposed but unfinished research project on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially China–India relations since the early years of the Cold War.

Ian Taylor and China–Africa relations

Ian began his study of China–Africa relations when pursuing an MPhil at the University of Hong Kong. Drawing on his MPhil research, Ian later published an article entitled 'China's foreign policy towards Africa in the 1990s' (Taylor, 1998). This article, according to Dr Steven Kuo, filled gaps left by Yung-lo Lin's study, 'Peking's Africa policy in the 1980s' (Lin, 1989). Kuo has written an excellent review of Ian's article, especially in terms of revealing its significance to the study of China–Africa relations (Kuo, this issue). The value of Ian's article, however, in my view, probably goes beyond its contents. The article epitomises Ian's characteristic approach to the study of China–Africa relations. This approach comprises two elements: a combination of academic study and fieldwork, and a contextualised understanding of the motives behind China's policy and Africa's responses.

Ian was a highly practical rather than bookish scholar. Despite being a prolific author, he scarcely employed theoretical models in his studies. As such, Ian preferred to build up his research on the basis of solid fieldwork rather than pure desk study. His publications, in general, are full of references and quotations from his voluminous field journals, which he had accumulated through countless on-site trips and face-to-face interviews. This working style, unsurprisingly, was handed down to his PhD students.

Ian boasted a rare talent for contextualising his research subjects regardless of their background and different identities. This talent, in my view, has much to do with his formative experiences and his practical approach to study. Ian grew up in a relatively disadvantaged family. He made his career mainly through hard work rather than any inherited privileges. This growth trajectory helped him to develop a habit for scrutinising a topic from different

angles. Ian's highly practical approach to his study also helped him to develop a contextualised understanding of his subjects. He never approached his material from a rigidly theoretical or ideological perspective. His research was mainly built up on the basis of wide reading and carefully designed fieldwork. This practical approach shielded him from some common biases.

Ian's approach to the study of China–Africa relations was vividly showcased in his 1998 article. Ian was not misled by China's official rhetoric packaged in ideological platitudes and clichés. As Kuo contends in his review, Ian identified two practical motives behind China's African policy in the 1990s: a desire to garner as much political support as possible in the United Nations; and the need to compete successfully with Taiwan for diplomatic recognition. Likewise, Ian indicated that Africa's acceptance of China's offers was also based on similar practical motives, such as self-interest, sentiments of Third World solidarity, and the dire need of China's financial and material aid (Kuo, this issue).

The significance of Ian's article, as Kuo argues, persists to this day. Over the past decade, the world has witnessed a new honeymoon phase in China–Africa relations. The two motives Ian identified behind China's policy in the 1990s could be applied to the new situation without much distortion. The only variable that was left out in Ian's article is China's economic considerations. To be fair, this neglect is understandable given that China was still an economic dwarf when Ian wrote the article. In addition to political and diplomatic considerations, China's new enthusiasm for Africa in the early twenty-first century has been largely motivated by its pursuit for raw materials, energy and markets. These practical motives also fit in with the explanatory framework established by Ian in his article.

A non-typical China watcher

In order to understand Ian's academic achievements and the context of Kuo's review, it is necessary to bring to mind Ian's engagement with China since the 1990s. Ian had shown great interest in China as an MPhil student. At one point, he even planned to carve his professional career in China Studies. Nevertheless, he was dissuaded by the language barrier. Ian's engagement with China continued well into the late 1990s as a PhD student at Stellenbosch University (South Africa). His experience with China was confined to short visits until 2009 when he was invited by the Renmin University of China (Beijing) as a visiting professor for a year. It was then that I first met him face-to-face. I gradually became entangled in his academic activities in China ever since. Ian's approach to China Studies, in my view, shares a lot with his approach to Africa Studies. It is this approach that helped him to develop a highly contextualised understanding of China today.

With the rise of China over recent decades, China Studies has experienced a renaissance. Mainstream China watchers, however, are inclined to mystify China. That is, they tend to treat China as something unique rather than something akin to all other countries in

terms of values, outlooks and aspirations. This inclination is partly understandable since Chinese history, which goes back millennia, is replete with seemingly inexplicable puzzles that bewilder even native scholars. These puzzles may overwhelm many China watchers, fostering a deep sense of helplessness and frustration on the one hand, while spontaneously resonating with the Chinese exceptionalism that has been widely propagated by Chinese official media and publicists on the other.

To be sure, Ian Taylor differs from mainstream China watchers. He is non-typical in that he preferred to approach China from a practical rather than a theoretical perspective. He was also devoid of the condescending attitude that characterises many US China watchers, and treated the Chinese as equals who shared a lot with himself. His reading on China was focused on modern China, especially China in the twentieth century. He also exhibited great enthusiasm for the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and this provided him with many insights that informed his views on contemporary China. Ian's commentary on China was largely based on his fieldwork. Whenever he visited Beijing, his itinerary was usually full of presentations, seminars and interviews. His fieldwork not only complemented his background reading but also enriched his contextualised understanding of China.

Ian's practical approach to China Studies helped him to develop a sophisticated, rather than simplified, understanding of contemporary China. This sophistication is manifested throughout his publications on China–Africa relations. More specifically, Ian sincerely appreciated the vast benefits that humanitarian aid, business investment and infrastructure construction, provided by the Chinese government and business (both state-owned and private), brought to African countries. This appreciation, however, did not prevent him from publishing critical, even sarcastic, observations on some of China's more narrow-minded or short-sighted policies towards Africa. Importantly, however, Ian's unfavourable comments were based on his professional integrity and sophisticated understanding of China and Africa, rather than any theoretical or ideological dictates.

Ian's sophisticated understanding of China was most vividly manifested in his attitude towards Chinese exceptionalism. In some sense, the tendency to mystify China, albeit unsatisfactory, can hardly be remedied in the short term because it panders to both sides. Ian, however, showed sincere concern for this logrolling business. He cautioned many times against the lavish promotion of Chinese exceptionalism. He listed two reasons for his concern. First, promoting Chinese exceptionalism without limits is equivalent to self-isolation, which China should avoid as much as possible given its policies for reform and opening up to the international markets. Second, Chinese exceptionalism could make US policy elites increasingly impatient, forcing them to shift their policies drastically. In retrospect, Ian's concern has been largely corroborated by the radical shift of the US China policy during the Trump Administration.

China, India, and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Ian's study of China–Africa relations brought with it an unexpected consequence. In the process, he became fascinated with relations between China and India. He had mentioned on many occasions that China's biggest rival in Africa is India, rather than any European country or the United States. Ian's academic reorientation towards China–India relations was catalysed by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was formally announced by China's top leader in 2013. In his view, this ambitious project would likely increase volatility in the delicate relationship between China and India in the foreseeable future.

Ian's attitude towards the BRI was ambivalent. On the one hand, he appreciated the potential benefits that the BRI, if properly executed, could bring to many Asian and African countries, especially to people living in less developed areas. On the other, he was fully aware of the potential pitfalls and complications that are concomitant with the advance of the BRI. His criticism of the BRI was focused on two points. First, Ian argued that China's approach to the BRI, despite its sincerity, seemed to lack proper coordination with international partners, as well as the necessary transparency to outside scrutiny. Second, he postulated that China's blueprint for the BRI, especially the three southern overland corridors and the maritime one, did not seem to take India's security concerns fully into account. In retrospect, these two points have been largely corroborated by a series of subsequent events. Ian was lucky enough to witness his two prophecies being partly substantiated by reality.

Ian's sophisticated understanding of China was also exhibited in his comments on the BRI. He had been intrigued by China's expanding maritime blueprint in the BRI framework. Intuitively, he thought that China was eagerly seeking to improve the odds of success for the BRI by expanding the blueprint without due consideration. This is contrary to the conclusion drawn by an American policy analyst. Ian's empathy, if not sympathy, with China had earned him some popularity in Chinese policy analyst circles, especially among those working for the government. In hindsight, this popularity could be ascribed to two factors. First, Ian's empathy towards China made his viewpoints more acceptable to Chinese policy elites. Second, his critical comments on China's foreign policy, especially the BRI, expressed what many of his Chinese colleagues were reluctant to publicise.

Ian's last academic activity in China took place in 2018. In the autumn of that year, he convened an international workshop on the BRI at the Renmin University of China inviting European and Indian scholars. Ian looked very confident and healthy. He told me with pleasure that he had received a number of invitations from some of China's top-gun think tanks to make presentations on the BRI. Of those presentations, Ian only made one. On the day after the workshop, Ian went over to the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) to make a presentation on 'India's policy towards the BRI'. He never had time for the rest. It was sad to see Ian off when he was only so young. If anything can be of some comfort, it is this: his footprints were forever left on Chinese soil, and his intellectual torch had been passed to

many younger scholars in China, Africa and Europe.

Endnotes

[1] The author would like to thank Professor Shaun Breslin (University of Warwick) for clarifying this point.

[2] For a typical example of the mystification of China, see Pillsbury (2014).

[3] For a contrary conclusion on the same issue, see Fanell (2019).

Bibliography

Fanell, J.E. (2019) 'China's global naval ambitions and expanding force structure: pathway to hegemony', *Naval War College Review*, 72 (1), pp. 1–46 [Online]. Available at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7871&context=nwc-review (Accessed: 22 May 2023).

Lin, Y. (1989) 'Peking's African policy in the 1980s', *Issues and Studies*, 4 (25), pp. 77–96.

Pillsbury, M. (2014) *The hundred-year marathon: China's secret strategy to replace America as the global superpower*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.

Taylor, I. (1998) 'China's foreign policy towards Africa in the 1990s', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36 (3), pp. 443–460.

Rising for whom?

Author: Dr Athanasios Stathopoulos

Biography

Dr Athanasios Stathopoulos is a University Lecturer (Assistant Professor) at the Institute for History at Leiden University. He completed his PhD at the School of International Relations, University of St Andrews, under the supervision of Professor Ian Taylor (2011–2015).

Abstract

The increase of African per capita growth figures led international organisations, the media and pundits to proclaim that the rise of Africa is inevitable, as the result of novel policies and an improved environment in the continent. Ian Taylor, in his article 'Is Africa rising?', is questioning the arguments on which this narrative is based. The present piece seeks to discuss the main contributions of Taylor's article and show how it has influenced debates on the topic.

Keywords: Africa rising; Economic growth; Commodity dependence; Natural resources; Development; Ian Taylor

---

Introduction

The untimely loss of Ian Taylor has undoubtedly left a huge void in the lives of his family and close friends. At the same time, the academic world, and more specifically the fields of African Politics and International Relations, have lost a unique scholar, a brilliant mind and a very kind person.

Ian Taylor was a rare kind of academic. He managed to combine his impressive knowledge, deep love and interest for Africa, with a profound understanding of the inner workings of international relations. Although scholars working on a particular region often become uncritical proponents of that area, Ian Taylor managed to walk a fine line; he combined both a critical stance towards the interventions and contributions of foreign states and international organisations to Africa, as well as a concern about the failures of African elites to improve their countries' quality of governance and overall living standards, with an unabated enthusiasm for the continent.

I had the privilege to write my PhD thesis under his supervision at the University of St Andrews. The discussions that we held have been indelibly stamped on my memory. I

remember vividly our conversation about the prospects of Africa, and his criticism of the "Africa rising" narrative. He was eager to see the continent rise and develop. It was also plain to him, however, that the current process of growth would not lead Africa to its desired path. His criticism, which at the time sounded to many as misguided, is now commonplace, and his arguments have influenced, and are being reproduced by, the majority of scholars in the field. As Paul Williams (2021) has noted, 'Ian was way ahead of the game'.

The present piece aims to discuss Ian Taylor's article 'Is Africa rising?', which is widely considered to be a crucial contribution to the debate on Africa's future.

"Africa rising"

Ian Taylor's article is one of the first that questioned the "Africa rising" narrative. At the time of its publication, most of the discussion centred on Africa's impressive growth, its potential to become the next Asia, and its clean break from past "sins" (Rotberg, 2013; Clarke, 2012; Radelet, 2010; French, 2012; Young, 2012). *The Economist* had moved away from its characterisation of Africa as 'hopeless', and was talking about 'the hopeful continent', providing evidence that Africa was rising (2011). In the same vein, *Time Magazine*'s 2012 edition was also certain about the rise of Africa, even though, as Taylor (2016) had astutely remarked, the magazine had run a story with the exact same title fourteen years earlier (pp. 11–12). Thus, the importance of his article lies not only on its thorough and detailed argumentation against the "Africa rising" narrative, but also on its foresight.

Taylor's analysis is, as always, thorough. It questions the "Africa rising" narrative by looking at it from numerous angles. The article is built around the following arguments: the current process of growth is unsustainable, given that it is based on over-dependence on the export of raw materials, which constitutes a process that does not alter Africa's structural profile and its detrimental place in the international division of labour; growth is driven by external demand and rising commodity prices; a real rise of Africa would necessitate changes in the structural features of Africa's economies; current growth is not based on policies within Africa or improved quality of governance; Africa's economies have become less diversified and are now actually more commodity-dependent; past commodity booms have not led to sustainable growth for African economies; and increased focus by economists on GDP presents a skewed picture of growth, as it ignores the fact that it is based on an unsustainable exploitation of finite resources.

The two main contributions of the article can be considered to be the following. On the one hand, the article shows that the notional "rise" of Africa is based on growth, which can be considered at best shaky, as it is not the result of improved internal policies within the continent, but of increased external demand for – and rising prices of – Africa's raw materials by emerging economies, and more specifically China. On the other hand, and closely linked to the previous argument, the article shows that this process of extraction and exportation of

natural resources is unsustainable and detrimental for Africa in the long term, as it actually deepens the continent's 'dependent position in the global economy' (Taylor, 2016, p. 9).

Old wine in a new bottle?

Can we argue that 'Africa emerges' (Rotberg, 2013) or that it is moving from 'darkness to destiny' (Clarke, 2012)? That is, have the fundamental characteristics of Africa's political economy changed to such an extent that we can confidently say that 'Africa will rule the twenty-first century' (*African Business*, 2013)? Taylor was adamant that the narrative about Africa's rise is unfounded and undeservingly optimistic, as much of this process is 'overwhelmingly characterised by the deployment and inflow of capital-intensive investment for the extraction and exportation of natural resources' (Taylor, 2016, p. 11) and, thus, not a result of improved policies in the continent.

The "Africa rising" narrative is based on the presumption that political and economic conditions in the continent, both of which account for the growth seen in the past few years, have improved significantly, a fact which constitutes the basis for optimism about Africa's prospects. '[T]he engines of development are still going strong. Democratic governance, political participation and economic management look set to improve further' argued *The Economist* (2013). Taylor provides convincing evidence to show why this is not the case. Governance indexes reveal that 'there is little evidence that the quality of governance in African countries overall is improving' (Taylor, 2014, p. 147). The majority of Africa's population has seen no overall governance improvement since 2010, with the World Bank agreeing that the governance environment has not improved during the period associated with Africa's growth. Moreover, people's perceptions about their countries' performance are diametrically opposed to the "Africa rising" narrative. According to an Afrobarometer survey, the majority of Africans is dissatisfied with their governments on issues relating to economic management, living standards and income inequality (*AfricaFocus Bulletin*, 2013).

Taylor (2014), thus, shows that the growth reported is significantly due, on the one hand, to increased demand for Africa's resources, and on the other, to an increase in commodity prices; consequently, this reality is 'qualitatively different from the picture of a rising Africa whose policies have driven growth' (p. 147). Africa's growth has not only taken place within a favourable international economic environment but can, in fact, be linked directly to the increasing demand of commodities by emerging economies. As Taylor notes, SSA's growth figures can be attributed to the latter, while 'concern over predicted declines in petroleum reserves, apprehensions over the so-called Peak Oil scenario, instability in the Middle East, and oil price speculation placed further upward pressure on prices, peaking in 2008' (2014, p. 147). The role of China, more specifically, is one that cannot be disregarded. Taylor had studied closely the relationship between emerging economies – and in particular BRICS – and Africa, thus recognising the ever-increasing role of the former in the continent. He argued that 'economic relationships with the BRICS nations, particularly China, and rising

commodity prices were the main drivers behind the recent economic improvements in SSA, adding nearly 2.5 percentage points to the growth of the typical African economy by the mid-2000s' (Taylor, 2014, pp. 148–149). Taylor was thus convinced – and reality has, so far, corroborated his findings – that Africa's growth was not based on 'spectacularly right' policies, as has been the emphasis from reports by international organisations, but has instead been based on increasing demand by China, India and other emerging economies for Africa's primary commodities. Finally, the "Africa rising" narrative is misguided according to Taylor, not only because there is no evidence to claim that the continent is going through a radically different and better stage in its history, but also because there are signs that history is repeating itself. Commodity booms were initially heralded by commentators as positive for Africa, argues Taylor, and in 1974, 'in the wake of the then-latest commodity boom, a popular assertion was that "trade prospects for the developing world [were] considerably better in 1973 than they were in 1951 or even in 1960". Yet, the following three decades saw widespread economic collapse and much of the continent plunging into instability, debt, and perpetual crises' (2014, p. 149). Africa's structural characteristics and political economy have not changed significantly since then, and Taylor cautioned against us repeating the mistakes of the past.

Structural dependence

Africa's growth, then, can hardly be attributed to new economic policies within the continent or improved governance, but is mostly due to increased external demand for Africa's resources by emerging economies, and a boom in commodity prices. Even if this is the case, however, can it still be argued that Africa will "rise" taking advantage of these favourable conditions? Taylor argued that, not only is the current process unlikely to lead to Africa's rise but will, instead, be detrimental to its development.

The main reason for these negative prospects relates to Africa's subordinate position within the global political economy, and the nature of the current model of growth. As Taylor noted, '[d]ue to the colonial experience, Africa was inserted into the global division of labour in a particular fashion' and 'African economies remain integrated in the global economy in ways that are generally unfavorable to the continent and ensure structural dependence' (2020, p. 33; 2014, p. 144). What is important to note is that the current process of growth risks entrenching underdevelopment by trapping Africa in the 'natural resource corner', while it does nothing to alter the 'external dominance and socially damaging and extraverted forms of accumulation' that characterise Africa's position in the global political economy (Bracking and Harrison, in Taylor, 2014, pp. 143–144).

The current growth on which the "Africa rising" narrative is based can be considered damaging for the prospects of the continent, as it contributes to an increase in commodity dependence and a decrease in the economy's diversification. Africa, which constitutes the continent most dependent on primary commodity exports, has seen its dependence increase

during the period associated with the "Africa rising" narrative. More specifically, 'dependence on external markets, as measured by the export-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio […] doubled from 26 per cent in 1995 to 51 per cent in 2007' (Dembele, in Taylor, 2014, p. 148). This rapid rise in the share of primary commodities is rightly judged as a negative development by Taylor, since the evidence is clear that countries rich in natural resources often suffer from a resource curse, whereby resources undermine development (Sachs and Warner, 1999). Indeed, '[t]he figures demonstrate that Africa continues to be much less diversified than the rest of the world', trapping the continent in the 'natural resource corner' and increasing its de-industrialisation (Taylor, 2014, p. 149).

Moreover, central to Taylor's argument about the unsustainability of the current process of growth is the fact that the characteristics of this growth do not alter the structural features of Africa's economies. He distinguished between superficial features, which include, among others, GDP figures, and structural features, which 'are less obvious but more critical, chief among them being Africa's place in the international division of labor' (Taylor, 2014, p. 144). As he argued a few years later, this process essentially perpetuates and reproduces the damaging conditions within which African economies operate, and it 'is clear that the idea of "Africa Rising" has gone hand in hand with no serious structural change in the continent's economies; indeed, they are linked with de-industrialisation, alongside the entrenchment of dependency on primary products' (Taylor, 2020, p. 18). Taylor was clear that unless natural resources and high commodity prices are converted into structural change, no sustainable development will occur in Africa.

Finally, Taylor noted that the negative features of this structural dependence and the current model of growth promotion are concealed by the fixation on GDP figures. The transition from GNP (Gross National Product) to GDP has resulted in the notional economic boom of a number of countries, which incorporate the earnings of multinational corporations operating within their borders in their calculations, even though the effect on the economy might be minimal or non-existent, as the profits may not remain in the country. Moreover, and of high import for the development of the continent, is the fact that the trade of non-renewable resources is not accounted for and is considered as a positive process. As Taylor argued, 'a country can have very high growth rates, calculated using GDP indicators, while also embarking on unsustainable exploitation of its finite resources' (2014, p. 151).

Conclusion

Ian Taylor's analysis leaves us with valuable advice and lessons for the future. It asks us to contemplate the conditions under which a true rise of Africa would occur. What are the necessary changes on both the domestic and international levels that would allow Africa to witness long-term, equitable progress? Can resource extraction lead to sustainable development, whose benefits can be reaped by the vast majority of the people? Finally, how can Africa move up the global production chain and alter its place in the international division

of labour? These are questions that remain to be answered; Ian Taylor's work though, has already provided us with important lessons and invaluable insights.

Bibliography

AfricaFocus Bulletin (2013) 'Africa: whose "Africa rising"?', 18 October [Online]. Available at: http://www.africafocus.org/docs13/econ1310.php (Accessed: 30 October 2021).

African Business (2013) 'Why Africa will rule the 21st century', 7 January [Online]. Available at: https://african.business/2013/01/economy/why-africa-will-rule-the-21st-century/ (Accessed: 30 October 2021).

Clarke, D. (2012) *Africa's future. Darkness to destiny: how the past is shaping Africa's economic evolution*. New York, NY: Profile Books.

French, H.W. (2012) 'The next Asia is Africa: inside the continent's rapid economic growth', *The Atlantic*, 21 May [Online]. Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/05/the-next-asia-is-africa-inside-the-continents-rapid-economic-growth/257441/ (Accessed: 18 May 2023).

Radelet, S. (2010) *Emerging Africa: how 17 countries are leading the way*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.

Rotberg, R. (2013) *Africa emerges*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Sachs, J.D. and Warner, A.M. (1999) 'The big push, natural resource booms and growth', *Journal of Development Economics*, 59 (1), pp. 43–76.

Taylor, I. (2014) 'Is Africa rising?', *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 21 (1), pp. 143–161.

Taylor, I. (2016) 'Dependency redux: why Africa is not rising', *Review of African Political Economy*, 43 (147), pp. 8–25.

Taylor, I. (2020) 'Afro-Asian trade and the "Africa rising" story', in Anthony, R. and Ruppert, U. (eds) *Reconfiguring transregionalisation in the Global South*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 19–40.

The Economist (2011) 'The hopeful continent: Africa rising', 3 December [Online]. Available at: https://www.economist.com/leaders/2011/12/03/africa-rising (Accessed: 29 October 2021).

The Economist (2013) 'A hopeful continent', 2 March [Online]. Available at: https://www.

economist.com/special-report/2013/03/02/a-hopeful-continent (Accessed: 29 October 2021).

Williams, P.D. (2021) [Twitter] 24 February [Online]. Available at: https://twitter.com/PDWilliamsGWU/status/1364566844124848130?s=20 (Accessed: 29 October 2021).

Young, A. (2012) 'The African growth miracle', *Journal of Political Economy*, 120 (4), pp. 696–739.

Africa rising? Ian Taylor's legacy in the study of African underdevelopment

Author: Pádraig Carmody

Biography

Pádraig Carmody is Professor in Geography at Trinity College, The University of Dublin, where he did his undergraduate and Master's work, and is a Senior Research Associate at the University of Johannesburg. His PhD is from the University of Minnesota in the US. Upon graduation, he taught at the University of Vermont. At TCD, he directs the Master's in Development Practice and CHARM-EU. His research centres on the political economy of globalisation in Africa and he has published in journals such as the *European Journal of Development Research*, the *Review of African Political Economy*, *Economic Geography* and *World Development*.

Abstract

African Studies lost one of its brightest stars in 2021. Though his life was cruelly cut short, Professor Ian Taylor has left a remarkable legacy to the field, not just in terms of his publications but for the impact he has had on students, colleagues and the community more generally. His work was, and is, marked by both intellectual rigour and generosity. His insights, impact and spirit will continue to live on through these and other contributions.

Keywords: Africa; Ian Taylor; Africa rising; Underdevelopment

---

Introduction

I first met Ian in 2005 at the African Studies conference in Ireland, where he had come to give the keynote lecture a few years out of his PhD. We had corresponded previously but hit it off when we met. He had a restless intellectual curiosity about, and commitment to, Africa and its study that motivated him. This was not work for him, despite the seriousness and dedication with which he approached it. His work was both a challenge and a joy, and he radiated that enthusiasm for his subject through conversations, debates, presentations and other channels. There was, however, a serious moral dimension to his studies; his desire bears witness and tells truth to power. He always spoke his mind but always in a measured way. He would guide students through his use of carefully worded, pedagogic but penetrating questions. He did not take himself too seriously, but he was serious about what he did and his commitments. Keeping that balance is one of the things that made him remarkable and widely admired, along with the volume, quality and insights of his work. The remarkable outpouring of grief in the African Studies community on the news of his death bore testimony to that.

I was asked to review a piece that Ian published in 2014 on 'Is Africa rising?' and the response by one of his former students, Dr Athanasios Stathopoulos. Stathopoulos captures the themes, argument and content of the paper well. This is a difficult task for me as Ian, and also Stathopoulos, are preaching to the converted.

Ian's paper, as always, is scrupulously researched and tightly argued. He is realistic about the nature of "Africa's rise". He is not a complete rejectionist, noting that there has been progress in some social and economic indicators. The overall structure of dependence in and on the continent, however, remains. This is empirically supported, sometimes by using quotes and data from organisations and people promoting the discourse he critiques. He was always conversant, cognisant and engaged with the work of those with whom he disagreed. He eschewed dogma, while being theoretically grounded and informed.

Where he got the time to read all the sources used in his writing was always a mystery to me. A visit to his "bat cave" of an office, full of books, gave some indication of his erudition. He always swore to me he worked nine to five but having him stay with me disabused me of that to some extent. His mind was always on. When he visited with me, he bought a book about the Irish Left which included reference to my father, who was a trade unionist. He asked me about it. Where he found the time to read, not only the mass of work in African studies that he did, but more widely, was very impressive, if also a little unsettling.

Writing something with Ian was also an education. Where I often struggle with writing, his turnaround was seemingly near instantaneous, bespeaking a highly unusual clarity of mind and thought which he also brought to his reading, teaching and other academic activities. His intellectual curiosity also led him to volunteer to be on many PhD committees around the world. He relished education, and helping early career scholars in particular, as one of his greatest joys. He lived life at speed and focus, including relaxing, packing more in than most in his too short time, visiting most of Africa for example. Once he emailed me to try and source some papers, as he had been drafted in to help write Uganda's new national development strategy. All of this was delivered with his usual self-deprecation.

Ian's paper seems prescient in the context of COVID-19, where the "Africa rising" discourse has been revealed to be, largely, unsupported. The distinction between the superficial and the structural was key to his analysis, as Athanasios notes in his response. In African development studies, there is an ongoing debate between internalist and externalist explanations for the continent's underdevelopment. Ian, with his usual clarity, rejected this binary, noting the structural context and how it shaped "internal" patterns of often neopatrimonial governance on the continent. This nuanced understanding gave him access to multiple networks of scholars, thought and challenges.

As Ian notes in his paper, the "shallow" growth of most African economies did not lead to fundamental changes to extant patterns of governance, which were and are transnationally constructed. He ends his article by asking who the continent is rising for, showing deep appreciation, as always, to the importance of supposedly outdated categories of analysis, such as class. This is one of Ian's main intellectual legacies. He reinterpreted, reinterrogated, updated and expanded Marxian theories of underdevelopment in Africa. One of what I thought was among his last papers in the Russian *RUDN* journal is particularly notable in its contribution in this regard, although several papers have subsequently come out posthumously. His work is alive in insight and will continue to be.

Athanasios notes that Ian's paper has a deep grounding in, and appreciation of the importance of history, not only because of its impact on the structures and ideas of the present, but also for its lessons. Previous commodity booms in Africa and other parts of the world have proven to be false dawns, even if they offer some potentialities to do things differently. The breadth of his reading and topics of analysis contributed immensely to the quality of his writing. He was simultaneously an expert on African development, underdevelopment and international relations theory, regionalism, UNCTAD, African politics, China, China's role in Africa and the emerging powers more broadly, neoliberalism, foreign policy analysis, special economic zones, European relations with Africa and many more. I also learned recently that he had also published on Europe. Few scholars make such wide, deep and impactful contributions while wearing it so lightly.

Ian is perhaps best known for his contributions on Chinese-African relations. This interest partly arose out of his experience studying in Hong Kong in the 1990s, but he was a forerunner in the field sensing the importance of his topic of study before others. In time, this led him to study the rise of the emerging powers in Africa more generally and the "Africa rising" phenomenon. Through this and other papers and books, he was the best-known critic of this discourse. With clinical precision, he unpicks the discourses' theoretical "foundations" through analysis and use of empirical details and data. In his paper in the *Brown Journal*, he does this in a way, which is nonetheless highly accessible to university students across all levels – a gift. The headings in the paper serve as hooks to engage the audience by intriguing them and building the argument. The simplicity of a heading such as the 'Natural resource corner' is telling, analytical, indicative and evocative. The paper reads as a piece of literature, rather than just an academic paper given the skill with which it is crafted and delivered. He had mastered his trade.

The problem of "African" underdevelopment is really a problem of globally combined and uneven development. Ian appreciated the importance of that type of relational place-making, in which China's role has loomed increasingly large. He was clear-eyed about the nature of the governing regime in China, while also being sceptical of arguments that the government there was in command of Africa–China engagements. He was also a critic of the

fallacies and ethno-centrism of "China-bashing". In many ways, Ian laid the infrastructural architecture for the analysis of "China in Africa" into the future. In the same way that he always reflected back in his work on what previous scholars had said decades ago, in order to inform his current analysis, I am sure his work will be referred to in the future to examine what analogies might be drawn between future rounds of Africa–China engagement, and the more and less intensive periods of these that he studied.

Ian leaves a lasting intellectual legacy as a brilliant theorist, analyst, colleague and educator. He inspired a generation of students and scholars of Africa–China relations but his work extended far beyond this in terms of reach, breadth and impact. His energy, time management, acuity, collegiality and humour were an inspiration to those who knew and mourn him. Ian was born in the Isle of Man, where Gaelic used to be widely spoken, so I often teased him that by rights he should be Irish. As we say in Irish, *ní fheicimid a leithéid arís* [we will not see his like again].

Bibliography

Taylor, I. (2014). Is Africa Rising? *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, *21*(1), 143–161.

Taylor, I. (2020). Sixty Years Later: Africa's Stalled Decolonization, *Vestnik RUDN, International Relations*, *20*(1), 39-53.

Ian Taylor: a critical voice of the Liberal Peace Project in Africa

Author: Patrick Tom

Biography

Patrick Tom is a University Teacher in International Relations at the University of Sheffield, an Assistant Editor for the Peacebuilding journal and a Senior Fellow at the Third Generation Project, University of St Andrews. He earned his PhD in International Relations from the University of St Andrews, where he was co-supervised by Professor Ian Taylor (2008–2011). Patrick has conducted consultancy work with international organisations, including UNESCO and Arigatou International, as well Education Scotland on a project building racial literacy. Patrick has published widely in the area of Peace and Conflict Studies, all with a regional focus on Africa.

Abstract

This article discusses the contributions of Ian Taylor in debates over the Liberal Peace Project in Africa showing how this has shaped my understanding of the challenges of its application in the continent. It also highlights my interaction with him during our fieldwork on "Tensions and contradictions of the Liberal Peace Project" in Liberia in 2009. Finally, it briefly looks at how Taylor's wider scholarship on Africa has advanced and will likely continue to influence scholarly debates in the future.

Keywords: Ian Taylor; Liberal Peace; Africa; Sierra Leon

Introduction

I first met Professor Ian Taylor at the School of International Relations, University of St Andrews in early January 2008 when I joined as a PhD research student. I was one of the two PhD students from Africa who had been offered a scholarship for 'Tensions and contradictions in the Liberal Peace Project' in the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. Ian and Professor Oliver Richmond had identified a gap in the debates and research on liberal peace in Africa.[1] The gap pertained to the absence of Africa-based/African scholars alongside any significant literature on the Liberal Peace Project in post-conflict societies in Africa. Bringing two African PhD students to be part of this was an attempt to fill this gap. Mac Ginty (2011) observed that leading journals in the study of peace and conflict research are dominated by scholars based in the Global North.[2]

I remember when I joined the University of St Andrews as a PhD student, very little research had been conducted on the practical application and limitations of the Liberal Peace Project in Africa. Yet, since the end of the Cold War, the continent has experienced a disproportionately large number of intrastate conflicts. Furthermore, Africa has witnessed war-torn societies emerging from violent conflict experiencing international peace support operations that promote the Liberal Peace. Taylor's 'What fit the Liberal Peace in Africa' (2007) and 'Earth calling the liberals: locating the political culture of Sierra Leone as the terrain for "reform"' (2009b) are among the few papers I read at the time that offered a 'new perspective' (Newman, Paris and Richmond, 2009) on liberal peacebuilding specifically focusing on the challenges of the Liberal Peace Project in an African context.[3] His work, which is highly cynical about the Liberal Peace Project and examines its implications in Africa has greatly influenced my thinking and academic work on liberal peacebuilding in Africa.

The aim of this article is threefold. First, I discuss the contributions of Taylor's 'What fit the Liberal Peace in Africa' (2007) and 'Earth calling the liberals: locating the political culture of Sierra Leone as the terrain for "reform"' (2009b). Second, I look at how Taylor's two pieces have shaped my understanding of the challenges of the Liberal Peace Project in Africa. Lastly, I reflect on how the selected pieces and Taylor's wider scholarship on Africa is likely to continue to influence scholarly debates in the future.

Contribution to the Liberal Peace debates

African states, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, as well as the Balkans in Eastern Europe experienced violent conflicts in the 1990s. These wars resulted in the deaths and mass displacement of millions of civilians. Kaldor (1999) called them 'new wars' highlighting the qualitative changes in the nature of violent conflict in the post-Cold War period. For Kaldor, these 'new wars' had a different logic from earlier forms of conflict in terms of methods, actors, finances and goals. For instance, her 'new wars' thesis noted that one of their aims was 'to control the population by getting rid of everyone of a different identity (and indeed of a different opinion)' (1999, p. 8, 2013). Also, states going through civil war tended to experience war economies characterised by rebels either self-financing the war through extraction of domestic resources, such as alluvial diamonds, or receiving external financial support from the diaspora and/or transnational networks (Kaldor, 1999). As such, there was an urgent need to tackle this challenge of complex emergencies in Africa and other parts of the developing world. As states emerged from these conflicts, they became grappled with rebuilding their war-torn societies. Local actors had no capacity to do so, as these entities had become either failed or collapsed states and risked returning to conflict.

In the 1990s, the problem of state failure and collapse became an issue of international concern witnessing an ideological turn in the United Nations (UN) peace support operations. At the same time, an international consensus emerged that weak, failed and collapsed states

posed a serious threat to international peace and security. In response, the UN peace support operations were transformed. They also became reliant upon 'dominant narratives that construct[ed] state-building as a prerequisite to peace' (Olonisakin et al., 2021, p. 401). They drew on a single model – a Western liberal state model – that emphasised the building of strong and effective state institutions, and the promotion of political and economic liberalisation, a model that has become known as the "Liberal Peace" (Paris, 2004; Richmond, 2005; Mac Ginty, 2006). The assumption underlying the Liberal Peace agenda is that building strong, effective and legitimate liberal states can create conditions for self-sustaining peace in war-torn societies. Post-conflict societies including East Timor, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone and El Salvador were widely heralded as 'success' stories of liberal peacebuilding (Paris, 2004).

In the early 2000s, however, critical voices of Liberal Peace emerged revealing that in many post-conflict situations, it had proven to be partially counterproductive, naive, hard to sustain, disappointing and had produced mixed results (Paris, 2004; Bellamy and Williams, 2005; Duffield, 2001; Fanthorpe, 2006; Mac Ginty, 2006; Richmond, 2005). The critique has also included Liberal Peace's tendency to sideline local knowledge systems, approaches, experiences and expertise, its technocratic and one-size-fits-all approach, its state-centrism and its focus on state elites. Some of these critiques exposed the Eurocentric nature of the international peacebuilding model that draws on the idea of the Liberal Peace. Moreover, Liberal Peace's failure to address adequately the positive aspects of peace, such as welfare and social justice, as well as to achieve a liberal peace for all as per its promise led to the conclusion that it was in crisis (Cooper, 2007).

The emergence of the 'local turn' in peacebuilding (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013) can be seen as a response to the crisis in confidence and the legitimacy of Liberal Peace. The increased emphasis on "the local" is considered to be crucial for improving effectiveness in peacebuilding. Ian made a significant contribution to the critical debates on Liberal Peace, especially in the context of Africa. In his work on this issue, he questioned whether (neo) liberal peacebuilding approaches and strategies are culturally and socially appropriate in African contexts. His 2007 article on 'What fit the Liberal Peace in Africa' noted that the promotion of Liberal Peace as an essential aspect of 'external attempts at peacebuilding reflects the hegemony within the developed world vis-à-vis the best way to organise the polity' (2007, p. 553).

Taylor used Gramsci's concept of hegemony as a starting point to understand the Liberal Peace's application to the peacebuilding context of Africa as a tool to deal with challenges, including violent intrastate conflicts, insecurity, and state failure or fragility. He observed that the concept of the Liberal Peace as a representation of an internationalised neo-liberal hegemony depends in part upon the existence of a domestic hegemony. This, however, is absent in African states. Taylor, thus, argued that in lieu of this form of hegemony with most

leaders using violence, intimidation, personal rule and patronage to control the state and the masses, there exists a disconnect between international prescriptions for peace and the socio-political dynamics on the ground. He highlighted why the 'local turn' matters through his observation that it is difficult for a project such as Liberal Peace to become hegemonic in Africa, as it is based on 'liberalisation, privatisation and representing the dislocating effects of globalisation' (2007, p. 553). This is also reflected in his 2009 piece 'Earth calling the liberals: locating the political culture of Sierra Leone as the terrain for "reform"', which specifically focuses on Sierra Leone (my own research has also largely focused on liberal peacebuilding in Sierra Leone). Using the case of Sierra Leone, Taylor (2009b) provides a profound critique of liberal peacebuilding in the country that offers lessons for international peacebuilding that is Liberal Peace-oriented in other African contexts, and even beyond. His article shows that, in Sierra Leone, the nature of the political culture is a significant threat to the building of a durable and sustainable liberal peace. Furthermore, Taylor contends that the country's political culture does not help create governance institutions acceptable to Sierra Leone's local stakeholders. Moreover, given the neo-patrimonial nature of the political system in Sierra Leone, individuals and groups tend to be excluded from the governing regime and, as a result, are denied access to state resources, generating grievances among them. It is in this sense, according to Taylor and in line with his main argument in his piece 'What fit for Liberal Peace in Africa?', that the ruling elites in the country have historically lacked hegemony (in the Gramscian sense) over society. At the same time, such a political culture has undermined external efforts to build a liberal democratic state in Sierra Leone. As Taylor observes:

An understanding of how politics in Sierra Leone works suggests that the types of stricture on governance advocated by the liberal peace cannot be hurriedly implemented – as the donors demand – without undermining the foundations upon which Sierra Leone's political class bases its rule. In other words, the empirical state in Sierra Leone does not conform to Western liberal (pre)conceptions of the Weberian state, something that the liberal peace assumes as a given. Indeed, it is precisely the rational-bureaucratic state that is taken as the framework and model for what should be constructed in Sierra Leone as part of the liberal peace project (2009b, p. 159).

He considers this to be hugely problematic since 'many of the accepted features of a liberal democratic state are simply not present in Sierra Leone, even though the country's elites have long been adept at appropriating external guarantees for their state – often manipulating the fashionable rhetoric of "democratization"' (2009b, p. 159). At the same time, he contends that '"alternative" formulations of the state in Africa, which may emphasize informal structures and activities outside of the "normal" functions of the state, are also somewhat problematic' (2009b, p. 159). Taylor concludes that an examination of Sierra Leone's political culture suggests that liberal peacebuilding has little chance of success in the country.

Liberia fieldwork

In 2009, Taylor made similar observations during our fieldwork in Monrovia, Liberia on the Liberal Peace Project in the country as part of the 'Tensions and contradictions in the Liberal Peace Project in Africa' research project mentioned above.[4] We conducted interviews with a wide range of local and external actors, including traditional leaders, ordinary people, the Chinese ambassador, the media, and local and international organisations such as the UNDP, USAID and the Carter Centre, as well as the IMF. We often reflected on the interviews when we were back at our hotel accommodation. Taylor's analysis of the situation in the country at the time mainly focused on the nature of the political culture in Liberia. In one of our discussions, he observed that a major challenge in the country related to exclusion, as the country continued to be dominated by a few elites, mostly Americo-Liberians who constituted 5% of the population. He further pointed out that the fundamental political structures had not been addressed. As such, the tension between the indigenous Liberians and the Americo-Liberians continued to exist and it appeared that no one was willing to address it. As international actors, including the UN and its agencies, however, failed to understand the nature of the local political culture in Liberia, these structures were reinforced.

In addition, Taylor made interesting observations about Liberia's middle class. He pointed out that Liberia's economy was dominated by Lebanese and Indians, who were tied to the elite structures. Since the Liberian constitution excludes non-blacks from becoming citizens, the Lebanese and Indian businesspersons in the country do not qualify for citizenship status; however, they are able to control the economy through patronage.[5] As such, the absence of a middle class in the country has been to the advantage of the elites. Even if one were to exist, however, it is most likely that the elites would have co-opted it due to the strong neo-patrimonial system in the country.

Influence

Taylor's work on the Liberal Peace Project in Africa and our discussions during our fieldwork in Liberia, offered me a source of critical understanding concerning liberal peacebuilding in Africa. In my fieldwork in Sierra Leone, I paid attention to the issues that Taylor raised in his work on the liberal peace in Africa. This saw me conducting interviews with Sierra Leone's political class, ordinary citizens, including citizens on the "margins of the state", local traders, rural elites, including traditional leaders, and external actors, all in an effort to understand the country's local context and its peacebuilding outcomes. Several of my publications (e.g. Tom 2013, 2014, 2017) have been partly influenced by Taylor's work on the Liberal Peace Project in Africa. For instance, my 2014 article in *Children's Geographies*, which examines the power relations between traditional authorities and youths in the context of liberal peacebuilding in post-war Sierra Leone highlights the political culture there. It shows that while young people drawing on liberal peace tenets such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights and transparency have created spaces for exercising 'resisting power' and negotiating with chiefdom authorities, given the nature of political culture, this has not

been successful.

Furthermore, the selected pieces and Taylor's wider scholarship on African Studies, Global Political Economy and International Relations have had a huge influence on scholarly debates. For instance, his monographs and articles on emerging powers, such as the ones on whether Africa is rising (2014, 2016), China's role in Africa (2009a) and China's oil diplomacy in Africa (2006) have generated a lot of academic attention as, for example, reflected by the number of citations on Google Scholar and similar metrics, and will likely continue to influence scholarly debates in the future, especially in trying to understand Africa and its relations with emerging powers.

Conclusion

Ian Taylor was indeed a great scholar in International Relations, Global Political Economy and African Studies. His work on Africa, especially that which critiques the Liberal Peace Project in Africa, has had a lot of influence in my own work on international peacebuilding and the "local" in Africa, as reflected in several of my publications on the Liberal Peace Project. Ian's work has provided us with a better understanding of why liberal peacebuilding has failed to produce durable and sustainable peace in Africa, as well as of some of the blockages to enduring peace on the continent. His wider scholarship has had great impact, and his work on emerging powers in Africa will continue to influence scholarly debates in the future, as emerging powers continue to compete with traditional ones for influence on the continent.

Endnotes

[1] Proponents of the Liberal Peace assume that political and economic liberalisation promote lasting peace in societies emerging from violent conflict.

[2] Five years after completing my PhD at the University of St Andrews, the University of Dundee's Africa Research Network invited me to give a talk on an issue of interest to me. I decided to give a talk on the absence of Africa-based scholars in the critical debates about (post)liberal peace. Prior to the talk, I emailed Ian Taylor to check with him what he thought about the absence of Africa-based scholars in these debates. Taylor (2017) replied that '[i]n general, African voices are excluded from the academic circuit at the international level unless they are employed at universities in the North. It is relatively rare to attend conferences on something like peace where large numbers of African (or other non-Northern) scholars are in attendance. This obviously will have an impact on knowledge production and dissemination.'

[3] A few other works critical of the Liberal Peace Project in Africa that I was reading at the time include Willett (2005), Jackson (2005) and Fanthorpe (2006). Taylor has written

several papers that offer a critique to the Liberal Peace Project (e.g. 2010, 2017).

[4] Professors Ian Taylor and Oliver Richmond and three PhD candidates, including myself, were part of the team that conducted research in Liberia in 2009.

[5] Article 13 of Liberia's 1847 Constitution provides that '[t]he great object of forming these Colonies, being to provide a home for the dispersed and oppressed children of Africa, and to regenerate and enlighten this benighted continent, none but persons of color shall be admitted to citizenship in this Republic.' Also, under the "Negro clause" of Liberia's Aliens and Nationality Law, only people of black African descent can be Liberian citizens. In 2022, the Aliens and Nationality Law was amended to allow for dual citizenship, which had been banned in 1973, but the negro clause was left untouched (see Bondo, 2022).

Bibliography

Bellamy, A.J. and Williams, P. (2005) 'Introduction: thinking anew about peace operations', in Bellamy, A.J. and Williams, P. (eds), *Peace operations and global order*. London: Routledge, pp. 1–15.

Bondo, D. (2022) 'All you need to know about Liberia's new dual citizenship law', *Aljazeera*, 27 July [Online]. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/7/27/all-you-need-to-know-about-liberias-new-dual-citizenship-law (Accessed: 7 November 2022).

Cooper, N. (2007) 'Review article: on the crisis of the liberal peace', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 7 (4), pp. 605–616.

Duffield, M. (2001) *Global governance and the new wars*: *the merging of development and security*. London: Zed Books.

Fanthorpe, R. (2006) 'On the limits of liberal peace: chiefs and democratic decentralization in post-war Sierra Leone', *African Affairs*, 105 (418), pp. 27–49.

Jackson, P. (2005) 'Chiefs, money and politicians: rebuilding local government in post-war Sierra Leone', *Public Administration and Development*, 25 (1), pp. 49–58.

Kaldor, M. (1999) *New and old wars: organized violence in a global era*. Cambridge: Polity.

Kaldor, M. (2013) 'In defence of new wars', *Stability*, 2 (1), pp. 1–16.

Mac Ginty, R. (2006) *No war, no peace*: *the rejuvenation of stalled peace processes and peace accords*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mac Ginty, R. (2011) *International peacebuilding and local resistance: hybrid forms of peace*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Mac Ginty, R. and Richmond, O.P. (2013) 'The local turn in peace building: a critical agenda for peace', *Third World Quarterly*, 34 (5), pp. 763–783.

Newman, E., Paris, R. and Richmond, O.P. (eds) (2009) *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press.

Olonisakin, F., Kifle, A.A. and Muteru, A. (2021) 'Introduction: reframing narratives of peace-building and state-building in Africa', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 21 (4), pp. 401–407.

Paris, R. (2004) *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richmond, O.P. (2005) *The transformation of peace*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Richmond, O.P. (2006) 'The problem of peace: understanding the "liberal peace"', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6 (3), pp. 291–314.

Taylor, I. (2017) 'E-mail to Patrick Tom,' 13 February.

Taylor, I. (2006) 'China's oil diplomacy in Africa', *International Affairs*, 82 (5), pp. 937–959.

Taylor, I. (2007) 'What fit the Liberal Peace in Africa?', *Global Society*, 21 (4), pp. 553–566.

Taylor, I. (2009a) *China's new role in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Taylor, I. (2009b) 'Earth calling the liberals: locating the political culture of Sierra Leone as the terrain for "reform"', in Newman, E., Paris, R. and Richmond, O.P. (eds), *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, pp. 159–177.

Taylor, I. (2010) 'Liberal peace, liberal imperialism: a Gramscian critique', in Richmond, O.P. (ed.), *Palgrave advances in peacebuilding: critical developments and approaches*. London: Palgrave, pp. 154–174.

Taylor, I. (2014) *Africa rising? BRICS – diversifying dependency*. Oxford: James Currey.

Taylor, I. (2016) 'Dependency redux: why Africa is not rising', *Review of African Political Economy,* 43 (147), pp. 8–25.

Taylor, I. (2017) 'The liberal peace security regimen: a Gramscian critique of its application in Africa', *Africa Development*, 42 (2), pp. 25–44.

Tom, P. (2013) 'In search for emancipatory hybridity: the case of post-war Sierra Leone', *Peacebuilding*, 1 (2), pp. 239–255.

Tom, P. (2014) 'Youth – traditional authorities' relations in post-war Sierra Leone', *Children's Geographies*, 12 (3), pp. 327–338.

Tom, P. (2017) *Liberal peace and post-conflict peacebuilding in Africa*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Willett, S. (2005) 'New barbarians at the gate: losing the liberal peace in Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, 32 (106), pp. 569–594.

Interrogating the "Liberal Peace" paradigm and "fragile" security regimes in Africa

Author: Babatunde Tolu Afolabi

Biography

Dr Babatunde Afolabi is the Regional Director for Anglophone and Lusophone Africa at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD). He was previously Head of Section at the Directorate of Political Affairs of the Economic Community of West African States Commission (ECOWAS). His book, *Politics of peacemaking in Africa: non-state actors' role in the Liberian civil war*, was published by James Currey, Oxford in 2017. He was Ian Taylor's co-supervisee from 2011–2015 at the School of International Relations of the University of St Andrews.

Abstract

Ian Taylor, my PhD co-supervisor, influenced my interrogation of peacebuilding theories and paradigms in many ways. Apart from his lifelong dedication to critical studies and political economy, Ian worked hard to deconstruct the "Liberal Peace" paradigm in some of his writings. During my doctoral studies at the University of St Andrews, Ian and I debated different peace paradigms in terms of their utility, deficiencies and opportunities, especially for post-conflict and so-called "fragile" African states. These discussions influenced my thoughts and lived experiences as a scholar/practitioner. It is, therefore, with a high sense of appreciation for Ian's influential works interrogating peacebuilding paradigms that I write to honour his memory in this special issue of *Contemporary Voices*.

Keywords: Liberal Peace; Peacebuilding: Hegemony; Civil wars in Africa

---

Prologue

Ian Taylor, my PhD co-supervisor, influenced my interrogation of peacebuilding theories and paradigms in many ways. Apart from his lifelong dedication to critical studies and political economy, Ian worked hard to deconstruct the "Liberal Peace" paradigm in some of his writings. For me, the most direct critique is found in his article 'The Liberal Peace security regimen: a Gramscian critique of its application in Africa', which was published in *Africa Development* as part of a special issue on security regimes in Africa (Taylor, 2017).

During my doctoral studies at the University of St Andrews, Ian and I debated different peace paradigms in terms of their utility, deficiencies and opportunities, especially for post-

conflict and so-called "fragile" African states. These discussions influenced my thoughts and lived experiences as a scholar/practitioner. While at St Andrews, I narrowed down my PhD research to interrogating the motivations and not-so-apparent rationale behind the involvement of religious actors and diasporas in the thirteen-year-long Liberian civil war.

It is, therefore, with a high sense of appreciation for Ian's influential works interrogating peacebuilding paradigms that I write to honour his memory in this special issue of *Contemporary Voices*.

'The Liberal Peace security regimen: a Gramscian critique of its application in Africa'

In his article, Taylor underscored the hegemonic prominence accorded to Liberal Peace, 'as a security regimen and as an integral part of external attempts at peacebuilding' (Taylor, 2017, p. 26). Here, he leaned upon Gramsci's (1971) conception of "hegemony" as a reflection of the dominance and diffusion of a certain way of life, and the diffusion of a (narrowed) conception of reality throughout society. Further to this, Taylor framed the Liberal Peace as the victor's peace (Richmond, 2005). Specifically, Taylor (2017, p. 28) made bold to assert thus:

The variants of the liberal peace serve as discourses that often silence discussion of other alternatives and place the options elevated by the capitalist core at the heart of any dialogue. In Africa, this has meant that African input into the construction of peace has often been subsumed and/or sidelined and ignored, with the imposition of Western notions of what constitutes 'real peace' – the liberal peace, in other words – achieving unquestioned status.

Taylor (2017) identified three broad constituencies that are culpable for advancing the Liberal Peace agenda in Africa. These are the private sector, African civil society, and the established Western-backed Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). He particularly referred to the construction of institutional frameworks that provide the right environment for the private sector to '"deliver" and work its magic in post-conflict spaces' (Taylor, 2017, pp. 38–39).

I have drawn out the key outlines of Taylor's exposition on the subject to examine the manifestation of the Liberal Peace paradigm in fragile and post-conflict societies in Africa, mainly in terms of transitional justice. Before delving into transitional justice issues, I would like to posit that in fragile and post-conflict societies that have experienced Liberal Peace interventions, the hegemonic nature of the dominant paradigm that Taylor (2017, p. 27) describes in his paper, prevents the much-required inclusion and ownership of indigenous people in shaping their societies and shared future. Liberal Peace proponents (or agents) do not actively engage the people of these societies. As a result, the latter are not involved in the various reconstruction efforts, whether it be state-building, security sector reform,

democratisation projects, or matters of dealing with the past and/or national reconciliation. Indeed, some will counter-argue that indigenous civil society is somehow involved in these efforts. The response to that assertion is that there is preference by Liberal Peace agents for a certain type of civil society – the elitist, educated and urbanised civil society, a constituency that is usually largely disconnected from the realities of the vast majority of the citizenry, and whose involvement in the peacebuilding projects is mostly symbolic and tokenistic. This, in a sense, leads to some complicity between the custodians of Liberal Peace, such as the staff of the IGOs and the IFIs, and the "local" elitist civil society, who can speak the lingo of international actors. The latter, therefore, eventually become the new elites and make concerted efforts at trying out the Liberal Peace development models and experiments, for as long as the resources and political backing from outside are available.

The wholesale importation and transplantation of Liberal Peace values from Western societies to war-ravaged ones is neither helpful nor sustainable as a model because of the inorganic nature of the ideas in their new environment. As seen in most post-conflict and fragile state contexts in Africa, such as in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Mozambique, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Burkina Faso and elsewhere, these societies are either on the verge of relapsing into conflict or are already experiencing active insurgencies and serious contestation between the state and one form of non-state armed group or another. This is not to put the blame squarely at the door of the Liberal Peace agenda, for there are several other factors for state failure and relapse into conflict in these societies. The point, however, is that Liberal Peace models are hardly the perfect models for reconstruction and long-term peace, as they are widely portrayed to be.

Elsewhere, I had interrogated the Liberal Peace paradigm and had delineated two main identifiable positions. First, there are those scholars who conclude that the paradigm is workable and useful to societies in and emerging from conflict (Paris, 1997; 2004, pp. 7, 44–45; Richmond, 2003; 2005). The second position is populated by those who find the application of the paradigm to conflict societies as rendering little to no value (Bendana, 2003; Heathershaw, 2008), often referring to it as 'state-building' or the manifestation of 'empire' (Afolabi, 2017, p. 26). As Roger Mac Ginty (2008) notes:

[The Liberal Peace] approaches to peace-making and peace-building emphasize state-building and state-reform as their main methodology. This is essentially a 'problem-solving' approach which accepts the parameters or structures within which the conflict occurs and is content to 'fix' the immediate problem without challenging the meta-structures that support the conflict (p. 146).

Sustainable peace through transitional justice?

Apart from the more popular economic reforms, democratisation and good governance projects, other instruments in the Liberal Peace toolkit include transitional justice, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR), Security Sector Reform (SSR) and social reconciliation. It is believed that the design and implementation of these instruments will likely ensure sustainable peace and stability in fragile or post-war societies. A closer look at transitional justice will be relevant for this article due to its widespread use in post-conflict contexts. In their efforts to deal with the past and start on a clean slate, some countries in post-conflict situations attempt to imbibe the principles of restorative or retributive justice, or a mélange of both, with limited results to show for these expensive experiments.

If one were to undertake an appraisal of the various transitional justice or truth and reconciliation (TRC) processes initiated across Africa from 1995 to the present, the inconclusive nature and inability of these initiatives to tackle historical and structural inequality would warrant further interrogation. Selim and Murithi (2011, p. 58) identify the lack of attention to the structural causes of conflict as one of the challenges that transitional justice initiatives face. Another aspect of transitional justice that requires further interrogation includes the struggle to ensure a balance between the restorative and retributive forms of transitional justice. Additional issues concern local ownership, the participation of victims in war-affected societies in determining the scope and outcome of such processes, as well as the extent to which these processes have been immune from the influence of incumbent governments or the states that initiated them. Processes that qualify under the aforementioned proposed study include the 1995 TRC initiative to address atrocities committed during apartheid rule in South Africa, which breaks from the past. Of equal potential eligibility are the TRC processes established to deal with war-era atrocities in Sierra Leone in 1999 and Liberia in 2005, the TRC process initiated to expose atrocities perpetrated by military and/or authoritarian regimes in Nigeria (1999), and the TRC process initiated in The Gambia in 2018. Determining how far-reaching the recommendations of these processes may be will largely depend upon the indictment and alleged complicity of powerful members of governments or of state structures.

The verdict on transitional justice efforts is that they have hardly succeeded in achieving the lofty goal of restoring societal cohesion, forgiveness and harmony. For some of those initiatives, especially the ones that have been inconclusive, such as in Liberia, societal fragility and the threat of a mass uprising over unresolved atrocities perpetually hang over the head of the respective political leaders. This is likely to be due to the imported nature of these processes in terms of their design and execution. Sooka (2006, p. 314), who had played an active role in both the South African and Sierra Leonean transitional justice initiatives, referred to the 'spaceship' phenomenon, in which external actors parachute in to prescribe and dictate the agenda for truth and reconciliation commissions, with little or no input from the citizenry. According to her, this leads to an ownership challenge (Sooka, 2006, p. 314).

Again, underscoring the helplessness and inability of post-war societies to resist enforced policies

by the international system, Taylor (2017, p. 28) asserts that '[…] what is presented to the IFIs and the UN system is a *tabula rasa* upon which the promoters of neoliberal capitalism believe their programmes can be implemented with minimal resistance'.

Conclusions and alternative approaches

Taylor's critique of the Liberal Peace is surely not the only definitive work on this topic. Moving the discussion forward, the scholars referenced below have proposed alternative peacebuilding paradigms that include 'hybrid peace', 'peace formation' and 'local peace'.

Mac Ginty and Richmond are among the leading proponents of the 'hybrid peace' paradigm. They postulate that this emerges when an inevitable clash occurs between the local and the international, between the internal and the external. These dynamics create an unanticipated new hybrid form of peace, which will be expressed or manifested in forms neither accepted nor expected by dominant powers (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). Richard Jackson (2018) justifies bringing back pacifist political theory into mainstream International Relations. Again, along the lines espoused by Taylor (2017), he advocates for a peacebuilding model in which 'a radically pacifist, locally organised, agonistic politics replaces the Western-oriented, top-down state-building blueprint which is currently central to peacebuilding theory and practice. From this perspective […] pacifism can offer important theoretical and empirical resources for thinking through the challenges of peacebuilding theory and practice' (Jackson, 2018, pp. 1–2).

One, however, cannot overstate the importance of revisiting certain "truths" on African political discourse, including the wide acceptance of liberal democracy as the solution to all of Africa's problems. This solution remains the model upon which democracies must be benchmarked and evaluated (Taylor, 2017, p. 29). It also encapsulates the 'naïve belief that civil society is in itself a "good thing", which mechanically enhances democracy and accountability' (Taylor, 2017, p. 32). Buttigieg (2005) helps us to understand Gramsci's thoughts on civil society by asserting that, as '[…] Gramsci explains, civil society in the modern liberal State is the arena wherein the prevailing hegemony is constantly being reinforced, not just contested' (p. 38). This is an indication that civil society, a key pillar of the liberal state in Africa, is not necessarily intrinsically good. Taylor's exposition of this fundamental assumption further beams the searchlight on the role that civil society has played in shaping and implementing Liberal Peace action.

Whatever stance one adopts – whether it be the exuberant propositions of Jackson (2018) or the more measured, people-focused and gradualist approach propounded by Mac Ginty and Richmond – there is an urgent need to re-examine critically the utility of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm. It may be the case that current shifts in the international system provide the justification and opportunity for such wholesale reappraisal. The emergent, so-called post-American world, where Middle Powers, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and others, are making concerted efforts to exert their influence in Africa and to propagate the elusive reform of the UN Security Council, may have inadvertently presented us with an opportunity to rethink and rework.

Taylor's (2017) fascinating critique of the Liberal Peace paradigm remains relevant. It draws the attention of national and international peacebuilding actors to the inherent weaknesses of their actions. It also highlights the lack of local ownership or agency, and the fact that some transplanted ideas for either economic or political reforms are unsuitable in some local contexts. Taylor (2017) stressed that the entire enterprise, as a transnational project, was designed to subjugate Africa and place it in a position where it can continue to be susceptible to foreign exploitation and penetration (p. 25).

Endnotes

[1] The inconclusive nature of the transitional justice process in Liberia has been attributed to the reluctance of the then President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to implement the recommendations contained in the TRC report, especially the components which called for a thirty-year political ban for Sirleaf and other influential Liberian politicians.

[2] I have interrogated this role of civil society in my doctoral thesis (Afolabi, 2015, pp. 46–75). For more on this, see Comaroff and Comaroff (1998), Makumbe (1998), Paffenholz (2010) and Kieh (2012).

Bibliography

Afolabi, B.T. (2015) *The politics of engagement: diaspora and religious actors' involvement in the Liberian peace process*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of St Andrews.

Afolabi, B.T. (2017) *The politics of peacemaking in Africa: non-state actors' role in the Liberian civil war*. Oxford: James Currey.

Bendana, A. (2003) 'What kind of peace is being built? Critical assessment from the South', *What kind of peace is being built? Reflections on the state of peacebuilding ten years after the Agenda For Peace*, Working Paper No. 7. Ottawa: International Development Research Center.

Buttigieg, J.A. (2005) 'The contemporary discourse on civil society: a Gramscian critique', *boundary 2*, 32 (1), pp. 33–52.

Comaroff, J.L. and Comaroff, J. (eds) (1998) *Civil society and the political imagination in Africa: critical perspectives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers.

Heathershaw, J.D. (2008) 'Unpacking the liberal peace: the dividing and merging of peacebuilding discourse', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 36 (3), pp. 597–621.

Jackson, R. (2018) 'Post-liberal peacebuilding and the pacifist state', *Peacebuilding*, 6 (1), pp. 1–16.

Kieh, G. (2012) *Liberia's state failure, collapse and reconstitution*. Cherry Hill, NJ: Africana Homestead Legacy Publishers Inc.

Mac Ginty, R. (2008) 'Indigenous peace-making versus the Liberal Peace', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43 (2), pp. 139–163.

Mac Ginty, R. (2012) 'Between resistance and compliance: non-participation and the Liberal Peace', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 6 (4), pp. 167–187.

Mac Ginty, R. and Richmond, O.P. (2013) 'The local turn in peace building: a critical agenda for peace', *Third World Quarterly*, 34 (5), pp. 763–783.

Makumbe, J.M. (1998) 'Is there a civil society in Africa?', *International Affairs*, 74 (2), pp. 305–317.

Paffenholz, T. (2010) 'Civil society and peacebuilding', in Paffenholz, T. (ed.) *Civil society and peacebuilding: a critical assessment*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, pp. 108–118.

Paris, R. (1997) 'Peacebuilding and the limits of liberal internationalism', *International Security*, 22 (2), pp. 54–89.

Paris, R. (2004) *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richmond, O.P. (2003) 'Introduction: NGOs, peace and human security', in Carey, H.F. and Richmond, O.P. (eds) *Mitigating conflict: the role of NGOs*. London: Frank Cass, pp. 1–11.

Richmond, O.P. (2005) 'The dilemmas of contracting the Liberal Peace', in Richmond, O.P. and Carey, H.F. (eds) *Subcontracting peace: the challenges of the NGO peacebuilding*. Milton Park: Routledge, pp. 19–35.

Selim, Y. and Murithi, T. (2011) 'Transitional justice and development: partners for sustainable peace in Africa?', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 6 (2), pp. 58–72.

Sooka, Y. (2006) 'Dealing with the past and transitional justice: building peace through accountability', *International Review of the Red Cross,* 88 (862), pp. 311–325.

Taylor, I. (2017) 'The Liberal Peace security regimen: a Gramscian critique of its application in Africa', *Africa Development,* 42 (3), pp. 25–44.