Introducing normativity in African international politics

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With fifty-four states, Africa represents a microcosm of the Westphalian world. In conjunction with the Westphalian fragmentation of the continent, other fragmentations have compounded the intractable problem of 'othering' on the continent. The fragmentations sum up an African condition in the twenty-first century because they simultaneously represent the 'divisions' based on which Africans are 'differentiated' and the 'differences' based on which Africans are 'divided.' This article argues for normative international politics in which the divisions and differences are superseded by non-discriminatory, unifying, positive identities and shared values. In this normative international politics, cooperation is the organising principle. The article proposes 'fusion of horizons' as the mechanism through which the supersession of the divisions and differences by positive identities and shared values can be realised.

Introduction

With fifty-four states - or what Ali Mazrui (1979; 1980) refers to as little Lilliputs - Africa represents a microcosm of the Westphalian world. In conjunction with the Westphalian fragmentation of the continent, other fragmentations have compounded the intractable problem of 'othering' on the continent. The fragmentations sum up an African condition in the twenty-first century because they simultaneously represent the 'divisions' based on which Africans are 'differentiated' and the 'differences' based on which Africans are 'divided.'

By an African condition in the twenty-first century, I mean the inclusionary and exclusionary - sometimes rational and at other times irrational - relationships, interactions or non-interactions between geographical entities, between racial entities, between linguistic entities and between religious entities in Africa. In these morally unjust relationships, interactions or non-interactions, one entity negatively relates, interacts or refuses to interact with another entity for the gains of the former and to the detriment of the latter, or even to the detriment of both entities. Constitutive of the morally unjust relationships, interactions or non-interactions is differential treatment in which members of one entity are given preferential treatment which advantages them while members of another entity are ill-treated in ways that disadvantage them. This can be either formal (ingrained in laws and procedures), informal (for instance, systemic biases), or both formal and informal.

My aim is to argue for normative international politics in which the aforementioned divisions and differences are superseded by non-discriminatory, unifying, positive identities and shared values. Narrowly defined, value 'is that which is good, desirable, or worthwhile' (Mintz 2018, s.p.). Broadly defined:

Values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine what is important to us. Values describe the personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions; the sort of person we want to be; the manner in which we treat ourselves and others, and our interaction with the world around us. They provide the general guidelines for conduct…. Values are the motive behind purposeful action. They are the ends to which we act. (Mintz 2018, s.p.).

In the normative international politics I am arguing for, cooperation is the organising principle. I admit that norms already play an important role in African international relations. In global politics at the global level and in African international politics at the regional level, norms play an important role. Moreover, we live in a liberal international order. Realists/neo-relists, liberals/neo-liberals, constructivists, the English school and critical theorists disagree on what exactly the nature of the current global order is. Whatever it is, it entails institutions, norms and rules.

In addition, cooperation already exists in multilateral organisations such as the United Nations (UN) at the global level and the African Union (AU) at the regional level. Furthermore, at the sub-regional levels, cooperation already exists in multilateral organisations such as the Economic Community of West-African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Commission (SADC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

However, in view of the problem of 'othering' on the continent, I think normativity is not sufficiently entrenched in African international relations. To resolve the problem of 'othering', I think more consideration should be given to normativity. The kind of cooperation

I argue for will make the existing normativity in African international relations robust. I am using 'normativity' in both its descriptive (institutional) and prescriptive (ethical) senses. In its descriptive or institutional sense, normativity refers to the acceptable norms, standards or rules of behaviour that are the order of the day. In its prescriptive or ethical sense, normativity refers to the morally right thing to do.

My normative view echoes cosmopolitanism; however, they are different. Firstly, cosmopolitanism is concerned about the whole world while I am concerned about Africa. Secondly, and more importantly, what my normative view echoes even in the African context is moral cosmopolitanism rather than legal cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, legal cosmopolitanism defends 'a concrete political ideal of a global order in which all persons have equivalent legal rights and duties, that is, are fellow citizens of a universal republic' (Pogge 1992, 49). On the other hand, moral cosmopolitanism argues that 'all persons stand in certain moral relations to one another; we are required to respect one another's status as ultimate units of moral concern' (Pogge 1992, 49).

In view of legal cosmopolitanism, I am neither committed to a concrete political ideal of an African order in which all Africans have equivalent legal rights and duties, that is, are fellow citizens of a regional African republic. Nor to 'a single community on the African continent in which there are similar moral standards, economic practices, political structures and cultural norms.'[1] In view of moral cosmopolitanism, I have a two-fold commitment. Firstly, all Africans stand in certain moral relations to one another, they are required to respect one another's status as ultimate units of moral concern. Secondly, all African states should stand in certain moral relations to one another; they should respect one another's status as units of moral concern.

I divide the discussion into five sections. In the first section, I discuss the development of norms in international relations. In the second section, I discuss how norms can be employed at the African regional level. In sum, in the first and second sections, I develop 'a theoretical framework based on the appropriateness and strength of utilizing a normative approach to African politics and continental interactions.'[2] In the third section, I discuss the divisions and differences that disunite Africa as a continent and Africans as a people. In the fourth section, I discuss how the divisions and differences in the third section can be superseded by non-discriminatory, unifying, positive identities and values. Then in the fifth section, I discuss 'fusion of horizons' as the mechanism through which the non-discriminatory, unifying, positive identities and values can be realised. In sum, in the fourth and fifth sections, I discuss the possibility of creating identities and values that can unite Africa as a continent and Africans as a people.

The development of norms in international relations

Since the sociological concept of institutions and the political science concept of norms appear to be identical but are actually different, I begin the discussion of norms by distinguishing norms from institutions. Institutions are 'a relatively stable collection of practices and rules defining appropriate behaviour for specific groups of actors in specific situations' (March and Olsen 1998, 948). In international politics, norms are 'collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors with a given identity' (Katzenstein 1996, 5). In other words, norms are 'generalised standards of conduct that delineate the scope of' an actor's 'entitlements, the extent of its obligations, and the range of its jurisdiction' (Raymond 1997, 126).

Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998, 891) explain that 'aggregation' is what differentiates the concept of institutions from the concept of norms. On the one hand, the concept of institutions 'emphasize the way in which behavioural rules are structured together

and interrelate ("a collection of practices and rules")' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891). On the other hand, the concept of norms 'isolates single standards of behaviour' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891). Norms perform a three-fold function. Firstly, norms order and constrain the behaviour of actors (regulative function). Secondly, norms create new actors, actions or interests (constitutive function) (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891). Thirdly, norms stipulate for actors the ethical things they should do and the unethical things they should not do (prescriptive or evaluative function) (Abumere 2019b, 5).

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998, 895) describe the life cycle of norms as a three-stage process; norm emergence, norm cascade and norm internalisation. At the stage of norm emergence, due to a factor or a combination of some factors such as altruism, empathy or commitment to certain ideas, norm entrepreneurs persuade norm leaders, usually a small number of actors, to accept or reject certain behaviour (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895, 898). Norm emergence and norm cascade 'are divided by a threshold or 'tipping' point, at which a critical mass of relevant state actors adopt the norm' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895).

At the norm cascade stage, norm leaders, or international organisations and networks socialise other actors into accepting the emergent norm. The reason a norm cascades varies from one actor to another. Some actors may accept the emergent norm due to peer pressure or conformity, while others may accept an emergent norm due to concerns about their own legitimacy, reputation or esteem (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895). When many actors have been socialised into the cascaded norm, norm cascade reaches a tipping point at which the norm is internalised, that is, it becomes banal. Thus the norm internalisation stage (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895).

'This three-stage process is the ideal-type life cycle of a norm. Emerged norms may not reach a tipping point at which cascade occurs. Cascading norms may not reach a tipping point at which norm internalisation occurs' (Abumere 2019b, 5). In addition, 'internalised or

cascading norms may eventually become the prevailing standard of appropriateness against which new norms emerge and compete for support' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895).

Matthew J. Hoffmann (2005; 2010, 16) says that, paradoxically norms have dual quality. On the one hand, by virtue of being shared objects, norms appear to actors as external phenomenon. In other words, actors perceive norms as external phenomenon and experience norms, at least partially, as rules that are external to the actors, as rules that are out there. On the other hand, norms only exist when a community of actors enact them and norms are sustained when a community of actors continue to re-enact them. Because of their participation in the enactment and re-enactment of norms, actors perceive norms as internal phenomenon, and they experience norms, at least partially, as internal rules (Hoffmann 2005; 2010, 16). To sum up the paradoxical dual quality of norms, for actors norms are simultaneously internal and external rules.

Hoffmann explains that:

There is an implicit equivalence made between contestation that goes on within a normative community (generated by the "gap between general rules and specific situations") and contestation that occurs between different normative communities ("inevitable tension between norms"). The first is endogenous contestation – actors that accept a general norm and are constituted by it nevertheless have different understandings of it or operationalize its strictures differently, leading to disputes and change in the meaning of the norm from within. The second is compliance or diffusion – actors from different normative communities seek to enlarge their communities or to hold on to extant norms in the face of external normative challenges and disputes that arise can lead to normative change in both communities. (Hoffmann 2010, 15).

How norms can be employed at the African regional level

Amitav Acharya (2011) argues that international relations should revolve around regionalism. Therefore, his explanation of norm subsidiarity and norm localisation - although the explanation was not specifically given within the African context - is helpful in understanding African international relations. He defines 'norm subsidiarity as a *process whereby local actors create rules with a view to preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors'* (Acharya 2011, 97) (emphasis in original).

Norm localisation does not merely ascertain the congruence between local identity and international identity norms and institutions, and the acceptance or rejection of the norms and institutions. Importantly, norm localisation simultaneously describes a complex process and the outcome of the process through which norm-takers reach 'congruence between transnational norms (including norms previously institutionalised in a region) and local beliefs and practices' (Acharya 2004, 241). According to Acharya (2004, 241), in the norm localisation process, foreign norms are incorporated into local norms even when the former did not cohere with the latter initially. Ultimately, he contends that whether norm diffusion strategies and process succeed or fail 'depends on the extent to which they provide opportunities for localisation' (Acharya 2004, 241).

Generally, whether the employment of norms at the African regional level succeeds or fails depends, at least in part, on the nature of African international relations. Particularly, whether norm localisation succeeds or fails at the African regional level also depends – at least in part – on the nature of African international relations. We need to know the nature of African international relations in order to ascertain the role norms can play at the African regional level know.

James Hentz (2019, 144) asserts that African states are prone to conflicts. This assertion may be contentious; however, one cannot deny that approximately the assertion reflects the reality on the continent. Hentz (2019, 144) traces the origin of intra-state conflicts in Africa to

four sources. Firstly, the states are undemocratic or experiencing intractable problems in their transition to democracy. Secondly, they are simultaneously underdeveloped and characterised by astronomical inequalities. Thirdly, they are artificial colonial creations. Fourthly, although to different degrees in different states, generally they are ethnically heterogeneous.

Ultimately, Hentz (2019, 145) argues that the African state system inherently engenders conflict because of three unique features of the system, namely juridical statehood, neo-patrimonialism and weak centre–periphery relations. For him, these unique features lead to the emergence of conflict zones in which inter-state wars are the order of the day. In their respective conflict zones, actors are constrained to behave in accordance with the waring nature of their zones. This structuralism explains the contexts within which the actors in African state system act and how the contexts determine their actions. Although the separate actors are only parts of the whole system, in their interactions they form a whole whose characteristics are greater than and different from the mere summation of the characteristics of its constituent parts.

> The anarchy that provides structure to the African state system is not the same as that which provides the structure of the Westphalia state system and shapes the behaviour of the states in that system. The African state system is a conflation of interstate and intrastate forces, which shape the conflict zones across the continent. Thus, while most of Africa's conflicts and wars have been intrastate, there is often a systemic dimension to them because they are often imbedded in regional conflict zones. (Hentz 2019, 147).

Unlike Hentz's (2019) structuralism, social constructivism believes that structural conditions are not the principal determinant of the behaviour of actors (Tieku 2013, 4). It thinks rather than material factors, ideational factors are the principal determinant of the behaviour of actors in that the preferences of actors are socially constructed, their actions are determined by their social interactions and their interests. In other words, when pursuing their interests, actors

are conscious of their place and role in a social group, consequently they pay attention to, and respect, the interests and reactions of the other members of the group.

The preference formation of actors is influenced by their social interactions in three fundamental ways. Firstly, actors are socialised into accepting certain norms and behaving in accordance with the norms. Secondly, without being incentivised by any material factor (if not always, but at most times), actors' comprehension and conception of international politics become intersubjective. In other words, actors acquire intersubjective, rather than subjective, worldview. Thirdly, actors have a better understanding of their international environment and recognise the different options that are available to them within their environment (Tieku 2013, 5).

On the one hand, Tieku (2013, 7) contends that regional normative fabrics have been neglected in Africa, and such neglect limits the applicability of social constructivism to international politics on the continent. On the other hand, he contends that any African International Relations theory that is worth its salt must consider pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism is a description of African political elites' internalisation of the norm that Africans are one, and as such, Africans ought to support, and cooperate, with one another. In other words, unity ought to be the right kind of relationship among Africans, and African leaders must always act harmoniously, seeking compromise rather than confrontation (Tieku 2013, 7). Consequently, disagreements among leaders are discouraged while consensus is encouraged. Leaders are pressurised to align with the consensus on continental matters (Clapham 1996).

Tieku (2013, 7-8) thinks that international politics in Africa has been greatly impacted by pan-Africanism. To conform to pan-Africanism, African governments frequently sacrifice their states' interests and preferences. Pan-Africanism sets the ethical standard of behaviour for African political elites and governments. It does:

not only encourage African political elites to show loyalty in public to continental unity; it also makes it hard for those elites to oppose openly an issue that commands broad support. Decision-making is often made easy by the self-regulation of the norm. It is the powerful effect of the norm that allows African states to develop common positions on crucial international issues. It often encourages African governments to engage in block voting in international forums. Indeed, it dictates actions of African governments in international politics especially in the absence of obvious material concerns. (Tieku 2013, 7-8).

In a nutshell, Tieku (2013, 1) argues that the central referent of international politics in Africa are group preferences formation, consensual decision-making procedures and the solidarity principle. For him, except these three collective traits are taken into consideration, we will not be able to explain international politics in Africa. In other words, any African international relations theory that fails to consider the three collective traits in its explanation of international politics in Africa is bound to fail. Consequently, to employ norms at the African regional level, one must rely on the three collective traits. In sum, to employ norms at the African regional level, one must rely on pan-Africanism. I will discuss this in detail in the fifth section.

Divisions and differences: *geography, race, language and religion*

The 'divisions' based on which Africans are 'differentiated' and the 'differences' based on which Africans are 'divided' are geographical, racial, linguistic and religious. My classification of the divisions and differences has two provisos. Firstly, the geography-race-linguistics-religion analysis is to be construed as a Weberian ideal type. A Weberian:

Ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasised viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct. (Weber 1949, 90) (emphasis in original).

The Weberian ideal type is fundamentally and entirely a representation and portrayal of a model-phenomenon which cannot only be imagined but, crucially, also sufficiently represents the realities it portrays. While ideal type may not be realistic, nevertheless the realities it represents or actual cases are approximated to it. However, ideal type neither stands for 'perfection' nor is it the 'average' of what it represents (Weber 1949, 90-92; Abumere 2015a, 35).

Secondly, note that my focus is on the aforementioned divisions and differences rather than other divisions and differences on the continent. I am concerned with racial differences but not ethnic differences. I am concerned with Anglophone versus Francophone but not Shona versus Ndebele. I am concerned with Christianity versus Islam but not Shia versus Sunni or Catholicism versus Pentecostalism, etc. So, throughout the discussion, the phrase 'divisions and differences' should be understood as those particular divisions and differences.

It is necessary to know whether the consequences of the geographical, racial, linguistic and religious divisions and differences are overt/explicit or covert/implicit because 'the correct regulative principle for anything depends on the nature of that thing' (Rawls 1971, 29). Sometimes the nature of the divisions and differences is systemic. That is, sometimes the divisions and differences do not appear to have any direct role in the African condition. However, a careful observation reveals how they indirectly affect the African condition in the twenty-first century.

Vigilance is the price of systemic causes because:

A systemic cause may be one of a number of multiple causes. It may require some special conditions. It may be indirect, working through a network of more direct causes. It may be probabilistic, occurring with a significantly high probability. It may require a feedback mechanism. In general, causation in ecosystems, biological systems, economic systems, and social systems tend not to be direct, but is no less causal. And because it is not direct causation, it requires all the greater attention if it is to be understood and its negative effects controlled. (Lakoff 2012, s.p.).

If George Lakoff (2012) is right, understanding a systemic cause is more important than understanding a non-systemic cause because of the less-observability of the former. Since systemic causes are less and seldom observable, they can consistently and pervasively cause problems for the continent without the continent identifying the cause of the problems. Since problems whose source is not identified are likely to be intractable, then it is important that systemic causes are not neglected in the theoretical analysis of the problems of the continent and the practical resolution of such problems.

The geographical divisions and differences are state versus state, sub-region versus sub-region and sub-Saharan Africa versus North Africa. The racial divisions and differences are Arabs, Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. The linguistic divisions and differences are Arabic speakers, Spanish speakers, Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone. While the religious divisions and differences are Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religions. Some divisions and differences may affect continental relations more than other divisions and differences do. I am not comparing the extent to which one division and difference affects continental relations with the extent to which another division and difference affects continental relations. As long as a division and difference affects continental relations, that division and difference is important irrespective of its influence when compared with another division and difference. For this reason, every division and difference requires vigilance. After all, the harms

caused by the divisions and differences are not always overt or explicit. They are sometimes covert or implicit. Importantly, when they are covert or implicit, they tend to be systemic because they are indirect and less observable, but yet pervasive.

Racial divisions and differences in Africa sometimes implicitly and at other times explicitly influence continental relations. These divisions and differences are Blacks, Coloureds, Indians, Whites and Arabs. Since an African's racial identity sometimes, and crucially, determines whether he or she subjectively identifies as an African and whether other Africans objectively identify him or her as an African, racial identity influences an African's affinity to other Africans. For instance, apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia, slavery in Libya and the expulsion of Indians from Uganda by Idi Amin are representatives of the ills of racism on the continent.

Like racial divisions and differences, the major linguistic divisions and distinctions such as Arabic, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish affect the scopes and contents of continental relations in Africa. Linguistic divisions and differences are even more important than racial divisions and differences because of the following reasons:

(1) Divisions and differences based on linguistic grounds simultaneously separate African states and Africans from other African states and Africans (let us call this intra-continental alienation);

(2) They influence or determine whether some African states and Africans tend to associate more with certain non-African states and non-Africans and less with fellow African states and Africans (let us call this inter-continental alienation).

Especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the linguistic divisions and differences are mainly consequences of colonialism. In Marxian terminology, colonialism is the sub-structure while the linguistic phenomenon is the super structure. Hence, the linguistic phenomenon does not

operate *sui generis*; it operates simultaneously as a remnant of colonialism and as a conduit for the perpetuation of colonial balkanisation of the continent. For instance, culturally and socially, Nigerians and Ghanaians identify more with one another than they do with Beninese and Togolese even though Benin and Togo serve as geographical barriers between Nigeria and Ghana. This is a case of the intra-continental alienation in the previous paragraph.

The colonialism-linguistic phenomenon is a nexus between former empires and vassal states (colonial powers and colonies). For instance, it is a nexus between France and its former colonies which are practically quasi-overseas French states – they are more pseudo-independent than they are independent. Francophone West African states are more connected to France than they are to non-Francophone African states. For instance, Francophone West African states are more connected to France than their fellow African states in East Africa both politically and economically. Perhaps, economically, being members of the African Continental Free Trade Area will bring Francophone West African states closer to East African states than they are to France. However, this is a mere conjecture. After all, politically, being members of the AU has not brought Francophone West African states closer to East African states than they are to France. This is a case of the inter-continental alienation in the penultimate paragraph.

The geographical divisions and differences are three-dimensional. One dimension of the geographical divisions and differences is the distinction between sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. It might be far-fetched to say that compared to sub-Saharan African states, North African states are less African politically. Put crudely, it might be argued that North African states are more African in theory and less African in practice due to their affinity with the Middle East.

The above argument is contentious because, for instance, comparing Egypt (geographically located entirely in North Africa) with Sudan (geographically located in North-East Africa) one might conclude that Egypt is more Middle East in practice while Sudan is less

Middle East in terms of both subjective identification by Sudan itself and objective identification by other African states. If this conclusion was apt before the separation between Sudan and South Sudan, we cannot be confident that it is still apt after the separation. This is because in spite of geography, Sudan (minus South Sudan) has many things in common (geography, race, language, history, etc.) with the Middle East as much as it has in common with sub-Saharan Africa.

Although countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia are simultaneously African and Middle East countries, there is no mutual exclusivity in such simultaneous membership and dual identity. Moreover, in practice, this geopolitical dimension has not engendered unhealthy rivalry on the continent. Nevertheless, arguably, North Africa 'subjectively' identifies more as Middle East and less as Africa while sub-Saharan Africa 'objectively' identifies North Africa more as Middle East and less as Africa. Therefore, the North Africa/sub-Saharan Africa divide contributes to making a continent-wide identity less cohesive. From a moral point of view, this North Africa/sub-Saharan Africa divide in itself is neither good nor bad; it is neutral. From a geopolitical point of view, it may be good for North Africa that they have a double hedge, but it is not good for African integration.

Another dimension of the geographical divisions and differences is the geopolitical division of the continent into sub-regions, namely, East, West, North, Southern and Central Africa. In theory, it might be argued that the deepening of sub-regional identities by virtue of the sub-regional groupings makes a continent-wide identity less cohesive. However, in practice, this geopolitical dimension has not engendered unhealthy rivalry among the sub-regions. Unlike the fragmentation of the continent into Westphalian states or little Lilliputs, the sub-regions geopolitical dimension has not enabled tragic crises and conflicts. While the former engenders unhealthy rivalry among the various Westphalian states, the latter encourages cooperation among the sub-regional states.

The greatest merit of the geopolitical division of the continent into sub-regions is that it has resulted in the emergence of sub-regional multilateral organisations that have been politically and economically beneficial to the sub-regions. These multilateral organisations include political and/or economic communities and/or unions such as AMU, COMESA, CEN-SAD, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD and SADC (Abumere 2015b, 67).

However, an effective AU, rather than sub-regional organisations, is at once the *conditio sine qua non* and the *conditio per quam* of continental relations on the continent. Because a stronger African identity and a more effective regional economic and political union such as the AU will make many of the seemingly intractable problems on the continent more tractable. For instance, when the risks, losses and benefits of dealing with transnational, international, sub-regional and regional matters are regionalised in Africa, the seemingly intractable problems on the continent will become tractable.

Consequently, the AU, rather than sub-regional organisations, will be more effective in and should be charged with the:

> Onerous task of dealing with the threats of transnational conflicts such as Joseph Kony's Lord Resistance Army – LRA (across Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad and Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC), Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (particularly across Algeria, Mali and Mauritania, and generally across the Maghreb and the Sahel), Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa (across Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon), Al-Shabaab (across Somalia and Kenya) and transnational crisis such as the Ebola pandemic (across DRC, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal) (Abumere 2015b, 67).

Moreover, in responding to the Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic that requires global cooperation, a collective regional AU approach is a better fit for the continent than isolated sub-regional approaches.

The most important dimension of the geographical divisions and differences is the fragmentation of the continent into fifty-four Westphalian states or little Lilliputs. This fragmentation makes the geographical divisions and differences a very important consequential distinction simply because the Westphalian division of the world into sovereign territories is a very important consequential political phenomenon of our current world (Abumere, 2019, 10). This fragmentation has not only engendered unhealthy rivalry in the present such as xenophobia in South Africa, but it has actually enabled tragic crises and conflicts in the past.

The crisis and conflicts manifested as early as the 1960s in East Africa and North Africa, and later in the 1970s in West Africa and Central Africa. For instance, in East Africa, after the war of independence between the Ethiopian government and Eritrean separatists from 1961 to 1991, Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a border war from 1998 to 2000, and engaged in a standoff from 2000 to 2018. While in confrontation with Ethiopia, Eritrea also had a border conflict with Djibouti in 2008. Since colonialism is responsible for the geographical divisions and differences that are responsible for these wars, colonialism is (at least indirectly) responsible for the crises and conflicts. Ultimately, colonialism and the artificial separation of the peoples in these regions bear responsibility for the crises and conflicts.

Colonialism and the artificial separation of the peoples of East Africa are also responsible for the following crises and conflicts. While in confrontation with Eritrea, Ethiopia fought a border war with Somalia from 1977 to 1978 over the ownership of the region of Ogaden. In the same vein, while in disputation with Ethiopia, Somalia also fought a border war with Kenya from 1963 to 1967 in order to reclaim 'its lost territories including the Northern frontier district of Kenya' (Aremu 2010, 550). Furthermore, Tanzania and Uganda fought a border war over the Kagera Salient from 1978 to 1979. Prior to the war, political disagreements between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda led to the collapse of the EAC in 1977.

Post-independence, no any other sub-region has experienced the amount of inter-state crises and conflicts which East Africa has experienced. Southern Africa has not experienced any inter-state war. Nevertheless, North Africa has experienced its fair share of inter-state conflicts. In 1963, Algeria and Morocco had a confrontation over the ownership of the Atlas Mountain area (Aremu 2010, 550). Morocco is not a stranger to conflicts over claims of ownership of territories. From 1975 to 1991, Morocco and the Polisario Front fought the Western Sahara War and both parties are currently the principal actors in the Western Sahara Conflict that started in 1970. Still in North Africa, Egypt and Libya fought a border way in 1977. Having fought Egypt in North Africa, Libya turned to Central Africa for a conflict with Chad from 1978 to 1987. Again, two countries from separate regions, this time around Central Africa and West Africa, would be involved in another inter-state conflict when Cameroon and Nigeria had a three-decade (1971 to 2002) disputation on the ownership of the Bakassi Peninsula.

Identities and values: *enemies, competitors and friends*

The divisions and differences are significant because they are ultimately inclusionary and exclusionary, and as such, they structure continental relations – both international relations and inter-personal relations. For instance, Westphalian divisions and differences necessarily embrace relationism as their organising and operating principle and consequently negate non-relationism. Although Westphalian divisions and differences may not absolutely reject every strand of non-relationism, the categorical fact is that for Westphalian divisions and differences relationism is the norm while a pretentious or a grudging acceptance of some minimal strands of non-relationism is the exception.

On the one hand, relationism:

Stresses the common relationships that bind subjects and agents of justice together; it is a member-based approach, that is, it is associative. Any person that is not part of a particular relationship is deemed to have neither obligation to, nor right claim against, persons who are bounded together by the relationship. (Abumere 2017, 35).

On the other hand, non-relationism:

Does not see justice to be dependent on such relationship or any relationship other than common humanity and its variants. Justice … is not based on any special relationship and its variants such as citizenship, compatriotism, etc., but on common humanity and its variants such as basic human needs, natural prerogatives and sufferance, etc. (Maffettone 2013, 127; Abumere 2017, 35).

This juxtaposition of relationism and non-relationism is not meant to argue for one position as the morally just theory or against the other position as the morally unjust theory. Rather, it is meant to show why the divisions and differences, and the identities they ascribed to geographical-political spaces and persons, and the consequent values that emanate from those identities, impede continental integration.

The power or agency of the divisions and differences to structure relations is derived from the identities which they ascribe to geographical-political spaces and persons and the consequent inclusionary and exclusionary values that emanate from such identities. To reiterate, these identities are, for example, Cameroon in contradistinction to Uganda, Francopone in contradistinction to Anglophone, Black in contradistinction to White, etc. *Sui generis*, the particular geographical, racial, linguistic and religious identities are neither moral nor immoral; they are morally neutral. However, the identities, especially the Westphalian identities, have moral significance because they embody inclusionary and exclusionary values.

The geographic, racial, linguistic and religious divisions and differences socialise African states and Africans into forming various identities and adopting various values. Yet the divisions and differences on the continent are neither necessary nor sufficient for African states and Africans to discriminate against one another. African states and Africans can use the divisions and differences as grounds for positive identities and values which enhance continental relations or as grounds for negative identities and values which militate against continental relations. Taking my cue from Alexander Wendt's (1992, 1) social constructivist argument that 'anarchy is what states make of it,' I contend that the divisions and differences on the continent are 'what African states and Africans make of them.'

All the divisions and differences (religious, racial, linguistic and geographical) and all the dimensions of the geographical divisions and differences (North Africa versus sub-Saharan Africa, sub-regional groupings and Westphalian fragmentation) must be resolved in order to have a holistic resolution to the African condition in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, since the problems are intractable, resolving all of them at once is a herculean task. If it is infeasible to resolve all the problems at once, the next-best option is to move gradually by resolving one problem or some problems at a time.

Resolving one problem or some problems at a time will at least alleviate the negative consequences of divisions and differences on the continent. For instance, in West Africa, we can take the geographical, linguistic and religious problems as a tripod since 'everything exists in relation to other things' (Bray 2008, 302). Resolving one of the problems will unbalance the tripod and may make the other problems tractable. Even if it does not make the other problems tractable, at least we will have less problems to resolve. This will give us more time and space to resolve the remaining problems, that is, we can concentrate our resources on resolving the remaining problems.

In view of the conflicts mentioned in the previous section, international relations theory analyses of African international relations tend to view African international relations through the lenses of realism and neo-realism. Looking at the crises and conflicts mentioned in the previous section, Hentz's (2019) structuralist analysis of African international relations might conclude that African states seem to have adopted political realism as their *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* in their international relations with one another. However, as Tieku's (2013) social constructivist analysis of African international relations shows, pan-Africanism is the order of the day on the continent. In opposition to Hentz's (2019) structuralism and in support of Tieku's (2013) social constructivism, I argue for normative international politics in Africa and, in the next section, I will explain how the norm of 'fusion of horizons' can be internalised to strengthen the already-existing pan-Africanism.

Political realism has significant implications for continental relations due to the following reasons. Firstly, political realism takes the Westphalian system to be the status quo and a very important 'consequential political phenomenon of our world. The system divides the world into sovereign territories whose borders simultaneously serve as barriers between citizens and non-citizens and as negation of external authorities' (Abumere 2019a, 10).

Secondly, (neo)realists take this system to be 'characterised by anarchy – that is to say, the absence of hierarchy' (Abumere 2019a, 10). Thirdly, (neo)realists take anarchy to be 'an ordering principle, which says that the system comprises independent states that have no central authority above them' (Mearsheimer 2001, 30). Fourthly, the anarchical nature of international politics necessarily means the absence of norms in international politics. Fifthly, therefore, states ought to resort to self-help if they are to survive in the dangerous sea and turbulent waters of international relations.

Rejecting the realist assertion that the anarchical nature of international politics necessarily means the absence of norms in international politics, Wendt (1999) argues that there

are three cultures of anarchy, namely Hobbesian culture, Lockean culture and Kantian culture. In a Hobbesian culture, states perceive or understand one another to be enemies and consequently relate with one another as enemies. In a Lockean culture, states perceive or understand one another to be rivals and consequently relate with one another as rivals. While in a Kantian culture, states perceive or understand one another to be friends and consequently relate with one another as friends. Consequently, *contra* realists, 'the anarchical nature of international politics does not necessarily negate norms, but the norms accepted or rejected by states determine how states act in international politics' (Abumere 2019b, 3).

Therefore, using the Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian cultures as a methodological device, one can envisage different scenarios in which African states and Africans can find themselves depending on what they make of the divisions and differences on the continent and depending on which identities they form and which values they adopt. The continent can turn out to be a Hobbesian continent of enemies who are merely settling for a *modus vivendi*, a Lockean continent of rivals who are competing against one another or a Kantian continent of friends who are cooperating with one another. Whether the continent becomes Hobbesian, Lockean or Kantian depends on what the continent makes of the divisions and differences, and what the continent makes of the divisions and differences will have consequences - negative or positive - for the continent.

The crust of the foregoing discussion in this section is that it is possible to transcend the divisions and differences on the continent if African states and Africans are willing to form positive identities and adopt positive values that enhance continental relations. In this case, the different states, the different sub-regions, both the sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa divides, the different races, the different religions and the linguistic entities should not see their particular identities and divisions as limiting cases but as smaller facets of a larger pan-Africanism.

By pan-Africanism, I mean neither a political union of the fifty-four African states nor an extensive relationship and intensive solidarity between continental Africans and African diaspora. By pan-Africanism, I mean genuine African identities and values that transcend geographical, racial, linguistic and religious divisions and differences. In order to arrive at this pan-Africanism, firstly, both at the inter-personal level of relationships and at the international level of relationships, states must allow norms to govern continental relations, and the continent must be amenable to a 'fusion of horizons.'

Fusion of Horizons: *normativity in interpersonal and international relations*

In an ordinary language sense, the word 'fusion' simply means 'the combination or joining together of two or more things' while the word 'horizon' simply means 'the point beyond which we cannot see' (Abumere 2015a, 35). However, my understanding of fusion of horizons is Gadamerian. To understand what Hans-Georg Gadamer means by fusion of horizons, the concept of horizon must be traced back to Edmund Husserl through Martin Heidegger.

According to Husserl (1973, 44):

Perception has horizons made up of other possibilities of perception, as perceptions we *could* have, if we *actively directed* the course of perception otherwise: if, for example, we turned our eyes that way instead of this, or if we were to step forward or to one side, and so forth. (emphasis in original).

Then he goes on to contend that:

There are three types of horizons, namely internal horizon, external horizon and temporal horizon. Internal horizons are those characteristics that an object necessarily has because they are in the nature of the object. External horizons are those horizons that establish the relationship between an object and its environment. Temporal horizons denote the temporal nature or circumstances of the object. In other words, the internal horizon denotes the existence of the object - its nature. The external horizon denotes the special relations of the object to the

environment. While the temporal horizon, *cum* the internal and external horizons, denote the spatio-temporal nature of the object and its relations to time, space, other objects and its environment. (Vessey n.d., s.p.; Abumere 2015a, 35).

In the vein of Husserl's conception of horizon, Heidegger (1982, 267) argues that horizon is 'that towards which each *ecstasis*[3] is intrinsically open in a specific way … the *open expanse* towards which remotion itself is outside itself' (emphasis is original). While according to Gadamer (1989, 302), horizon is 'the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.' In essence, horizon is the:

> Larger context of meaning in which any particular meaningful presentation is situated. Inasmuch as understanding is taken to involve a 'fusion of horizons', then so it always involves the formation of a new context of meaning that enables integration of what is otherwise unfamiliar, strange or anomalous. In this respect, all understanding involves a process of mediation and dialogue between what is familiar and what is alien in which neither remains unaffected. (Malpas 2018, 3.2).

For Gadamer (1989, 302), it is important to have a horizon because 'a person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him.' In the words of Gadamer (1989, 302), 'every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of a situation is the concept of a *"horizon"'* (emphasis in original).

Therefore, importantly, one must fuse his or her horizon with the horizons of others in order for one to go beyond the limits of his or her own horizon. Fusing one's horizons with the horizons of others means that one is able to change standpoints and step out of one's own horizon, and 'the merely changing of standpoints entails the possibility of having different

horizons and the mere stepping out of our horizons entails the possibility of having broader horizons' (Abumere 2015a, 36).

In summary:

Fusion of horizons is not Hegelian dialectics of, say, being + nothingness = becoming, or thesis + antithesis = synthesis which itself becomes a new thesis. Nevertheless, fusion of horizons occurs when individuals understand that the context of their discourse can be seen from a different perspective in order to reach a new conclusion. The acquisition of novel information, or the development of a novel perception of the existing information, makes individuals re-evaluate their previous conclusions, make individuals aware of the limitations of their previous conclusions, help individuals gain novel understanding of their discourse, and supposedly leads to a fusion of the horizons of the individuals who are involved in the discourse. Hence, the limitations of the previous conclusions are at least minimised, previous understanding is improved, new perspectives are formed and the formerly limited horizon becomes a broadened horizon. (Abumere 2015a, 193; see Vessey n.d., s.p.).

Fusion of horizons does not fit with Hentz's (2019) structuralist explanation of African international relations. It fits with Tieku's (2013) social constructivist explanation of African international relations. At the descriptive level, it disagrees that structural conditions are the principal determinant of the behaviour of actors. It thinks rather than material factors, ideational factors are the principal determinants of the behaviour of actors. At the prescriptive level, it demands that when pursuing their interests, actors should be conscious of their place and role in a social group, and pay attention to, and respect, the interests and reactions of the other members of the group.

Therefore, fusion of horizons does not only echo pan-Africanism, it is also capable of strengthening it. It supports the claim that African leaders must always act harmoniously, seeking compromise rather than confrontation. Consequently, it discourages destructive disagreements among leaders and encourages consensus. This is not to say that fusion of horizons does not tolerate disagreement. It tolerates disagreements that are constructive. After all, it is through constructive disagreements, and revision of initially held views that parties in a dialogue arrive at a fusion of horizons.

If Tieku (2013, 1) is right that the central referent of international politics in Africa are group preferences formation, consensual decision-making procedures and solidarity, then fusion of horizons can equally serves as a central referent of international politics in Africa. Furthermore, if Tieku (2013, 7-8) is right that international politics in Africa has been greatly impacted by pan-Africanism, then fusion of horizons can affect African international politics because it will encourage African governments to harmonise their states' interests and preferences. In a nutshell, fusion of horizons can enhance pan-Africanism by setting ethical standard of behaviour for African political elites and governments.

If adopted as the organising principle of African international relations, fusion of horizons will enhance Acharya's (2011, 97) norm subsidiarity and norm localisation in African international relations. In support of norm subsidiarity, fusion of horizons supports African states in creating "*rules with a view to preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors*" (Acharya 2011, 97) (emphasis in original). Then in support of norm localisation, fusion of horizons will not merely ascertain the congruence between local identity and international identity norms and institutions, and the acceptance or rejection of the norms and institutions.

More importantly, it will simultaneously envisage congruence between local norms and international norms, and encourage norm-takers to reach 'congruence between transnational

norms (including norms previously institutionalized in a region) and local beliefs and practices' (Acharya 2004, 241). Since in norm localisation process, foreign norms are incorporated into local norms even when the former did not cohere with the latter initially (Acharya 2004, 241), then fusion of horizons is very helpful in this process because it encourages dialogue and the synthesis of one's view with the view of the other.

Generally, both at the inter-personal level of relationships and at the international level of relationships, the ultimate result of fusion of horizons is the rejection of 'othering' and the inclusionary and exclusionary complex in the relationships and interactions between the aforementioned diverse geographical, racial, linguistic and religious entities on the continent. Particularly at the international level of relationships, the ultimate result of fusion of horizons is the acceptance of norms that will govern the relationships and interactions between the aforementioned entities.

When, simultaneously: the entities are bounded together by norms; and their relations and interactions are bound by norms; then the realist-rationalist fundamentalism that is characterised by the epistemic conception of the entities as ontologically self-interested and self-regarding entities will fade away. Instead of the realist-rationalist fundamentalism, there will be an emergence of a constructivist conception of the entities in which they will be seen as 'other-regarding' members of the African society that 'are amenable to behaving in standards that are deemed to be appropriate by other members of the society' (Abumere 2019b, 5).

I believe fusion of horizons is capable of reducing African states' proneness to conflicts. If Hentz (2019, 144) is right, as mentioned in the first section of this article, the problems of ethnic heterogeneity and democracy are some of the sources of intra-state conflicts in Africa. Firstly, ethnic heterogeneity is only a source of conflict when it is weaponised to dominate the other or discriminate against the other. Fusion of horizons, as already explained, negates

othering and affirms the other. In other words, it negates the politics of identity and affirms the politics of recognition. Hence, it is very helpful in the management of ethnic heterogeneity.

Secondly, the states are undemocratic or experiencing intractable problems in their transition to democracy. If actors internalise fusion of horizons, they are more likely to settle disputes by dialogue rather than violence. If Pericles' definition of democracy (which is popularised by Abraham Lincoln) as the government of the people, for the people and by the people, is correct, then fusion of horizons is helpful in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy because it entails taking into consideration the views of the other even if that other is the opposition.

In international politics, when actors choose to abide by norms, they do not cease to pursue goals that they are interested in; while actors still pursue their goals, the means they use to achieve the goals are no longer inevitably mere self-regarding and other-disregarding (Abumere 2019b). For instance, states that abide by norms in international politics do not see reliance on materialist means or hard power as inevitable. In addition, they do not see materialist means or hard power as the only means to achieve goals 'everywhere' and at 'all times.' While such states may rely on material means or hard power 'somewhere' and 'sometimes', they are willing to achieve their goals by other means, namely norms (Abumere 2019b). This willingness to achieve goals through norms is an antidote to transnational, international, sub-regional and regional crises and conflicts on the continent.

There is no general agreement on whether norms extensively and ubiquitously shape the behaviour of actors in international politics, and likewise we do not know to what extent norms shape the behaviour of actors in international politics. Nevertheless, at least to some extent norms constrain the behaviour of actors 'in international politics just as law, morality or norm constrains the behaviour of individual members of society' (Abumere 2019b, 4-5).

Conclusion

To reiterate the salient points in the foregoing discussion, the discussion can be summed up as follows. With fifty-four states, Africa represents a microcosm of the Westphalian world. In conjunction with the Westphalian fragmentation of the continent, other major fragmentations have compounded the intractable problem of 'othering' on the continent. The fragmentations sum up an African condition in the twenty-first century because they simultaneously represent the 'divisions' based on which Africans are 'differentiated' and the 'differences' based on which Africans are 'divided.' I argued for normative international politics in which the divisions and differences are superseded by non-discriminatory, unifying, positive identities and shared values. In this normative international politics, cooperation is the organising principle.

An analysis of the contemporary postcolonial state of the continent will inevitably involve references to underdevelopment and poverty, bad governance and conflicts, epidemics and pandemics, immigration and aids, etc. However, I focused on the divisions based on which Africans are differentiated and the differences based on which Africans are divided. Because the divisions and differences hinder robust continental relations without which major transnational, international, sub-regional and continental problems will remain intractable.

After all, it is generally agreed that the economy and politics of a state are interdependent; positive development in one sphere affects the other sphere positively, and negative development in one sphere affects the other sphere negatively. The above condition is not only true of states; it is also true of regions. Hence, the prevailing divisions and differences, and identities and values, on the continent have consequences for the regional political economy of the continent.

Consequently, I contended that the divisions based on which Africans are differentiated, and the differences based on which Africans are divided, should be considered as the principal determinants of the African condition in the twenty-first century. Analogously, I took Karl

Marx's (2011) dialectic that is 'standing on its head' and turned it 'right side up' ironically the same way Marx took Hegelian dialectic which was 'standing on its head' and turned it 'right side up.' In Marxian terms, the divisions and difference can be seen as the substructure while the political economy can be seen as the superstructure.

To the above effect, I divided the discussion into five sections. In the first section, I discussed the development of norms in international relations. In the second section, I discussed how norms can be employed at the African regional level. In the third section, I discussed the divisions and differences that disunite Africa as a continent and Africans as a people. In the fourth section, I explored how the 'othering' caused or engendered by the divisions and differences in the third section can be superseded by non-discriminatory, unifying and positive identities and values. Then in the fifth section, I discussed the mechanisms through which the non-discriminatory, unifying and positive identities and values can be realised.

In summary, in the form of an Aristotelian syllogism, taking the third section as a major premise and the fourth section as a minor premise, the fifth section serves as a conclusion. The conclusion to the syllogism is that the acceptance of norms and fusion of horizons are simultaneously the *conditio sine qua non* and the *conditio per quam* of normative international politics in Africa. In this normative international politics, cooperation is the organising principle. The relations and cooperation in this normative international politics are multifaceted; they are simultaneously vertical, horizontal, multipolar and multidimensional. Primarily, they are continental relations and cooperation that traverse the length and breadth of the continent. Importantly, they are simultaneously inter-personal, transnational, international, sub-regional and regional relations and cooperation.

Notes

[1] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for prompting me to make this clarification.

[2] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this comment and suggestion.

[3] *Ecstasis* or *ekstasis* stands for transcendence or transcendental.

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