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## Global Governance, Glocalisation and Endemic Instability in Africa

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### Abstract

How has endemic instability in Africa reflected in global governance, or why does global governance appear not to significantly contribute to addressing troubled political developments in Africa? And what are the implications for Africa within the changing global order? While the related debates generally link global governance and regionalism to concerted, integrated, and coordinated efforts to solving global development challenges, others suggest that global governance forces have had more negative impacts, especially on development in the Global South. Yet, there remains no detailed analysis about how evolving global governance dynamics may have promoted sustained negative developments in developing countries and the implications for contemporary global order. This article undertakes a Comparative Historical Analysis of how key developments within the global governance space surrounding political, economic, and environmental or natural resource dimensions have enabled political instability in Africa since the end of World War I. The article demonstrates that the apparently limited success of global governance in promoting political stability in Africa is best understood from an entwined triad of entrenched, competitive interest in Africa, complex glocalised local realities, and the violence of liberal universalism.

### Keywords

Global Governance, Instability, Global Order, Conflicts, Africa, Liberal Universalism

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the world has faced a surge in threats to global order, including terrorism and insurgency, ethnic and political conflicts, natural resource and climate change related conflicts, and migration crisis. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing battles in the Middle East, and the Russia-Ukraine war, have contributed to the consistent decline in global peace and order in the last decade (The Global Peace Index, 2024). These challenges cause various forms of fragilities and vulnerabilities in many states and regions, exposing the limited capacity of international institutions (Dzhyhora et al., 2024). For instance, the Rwanda genocide, the post-Gaddafi protracted fragilities in Libya, the recurrent security volatilities in Central Africa and the Sahel, and the largely unsuccessful international and collaborative interventions in eliminating terrorism and violent extremism in Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Somalia among others, point to the limited capacity of global governance institutions to cultivate sustained peace in Africa. This situation also call attention to the myriads of threats to the internal and external sovereignty of the state as well as the safety of the international system. The growing fragility of the international system is thus of particular concern in Global South contexts, where long-standing politics about the legitimacy of the state has provoked widespread insecurity and instability (Sears, 2013).

Africa remains a major area of concern for key players in international development largely due to several challenges facing the continent. Instability in Africa is witnessed in various dimensions emanating from key areas such as politics, economic engagements, ethnic and civil rifts, migration, resource conflicts, and natural disasters as well as relatively recent dynamics such as xenophobia, terrorism, insurgency, and climate change. These broadly translate into political instability, characterised by legitimacy crisis leading to conflicts among interest groups linked to resource control and state power (Sears, 2013). The peculiarity of political instability in Africa is linked to the complex interplay of internal and external factors. The internal causal mechanisms are rooted in the legacies of colonial and post-colonial politics, which weaken the viability of the state by compromising critical state institutions such as the judiciary, treasury, and legislature among others (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Adefeso, 2018). Cumulatively, this provokes contested legitimacy of political power, economic frustrations and recurrent conflicts across the continent, retarding economic growth and causing further instability (Dalyop, 2019).

The external factors for the endemic instability in Africa are broadly seen through the global political economy, especially as engrained in the deep-seated North-South relations. Global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) misdiagnose developing countries' economic problems and supervise the implementation of inappropriate policies such as liberalisation, austerity, and currency devaluation, among others, seen through Western lenses (Singh, 1999). This external influence on the economic foundations of the Global South gained grounds through the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and subsequent Foreign Aid engagements (Konadu-Agyemang, 2018). The ensuing widespread liberalisation failed to yield positive results, creating and sustaining conditions of dependency and asymmetric international economic relations broadly between the Global North and Global South (Eichengreen, 2010). The negative impacts of these externally-driven economic policies have attracted strong domestic resistance in parts of Africa. For instance, the recent famous Genz protests in Kenya and the *#OccupyJulorbiHouse* protests in Ghana are direct rejections to the decades of many IMF-inspired government tax policies in Africa (Gachuki, 2024; Asomah, 2024).

Embedded in the Western-dominated global governance processes, the attempts by global financial institutions to transplant the liberal economic structure in Africa is integral to the broader push by Western superpowers through the United Nations and allied international organisations, as well as through various bilateral and multilateral agreements. The byproduct is weak, stagnated, and largely non-competitive economies with limited capacity to fund critical aspects of development surrounding welfare, robust rule of law, and strong political institutions (Mkandawire 1988; Lall, 1995). This reproduces contestations over legitimacy and access to the scarce resources, generally leading to protracted conflicts and instability (Haggard & Kaufman, 2018), worsened by COVID-19-related economic frustrations and state repression (Pasara, 2020).

Therefore, while global governance is aimed to contribute to sustained economic growth and political stability through good, democratic governance and economic integration (Biersteker 2009; Lamy, 2012), the evidence reveals a lack of capacity by key international institutions to help forge stable economies and political systems. The manifest limited capacity of international institutions is caused by factors including the liberal universalist approach to politics and economies, coordination failures, power friction, domestic politics, and the excessive pursuit of national and personal interest (Dzhyhora et al., 2024). The cumulation of these challenges within the global governance framework partly breeds and/or creates a vacuum for complex networks of actors to engage in activities which promote condition of instability, especially in so-called peripheral states. While the failures and excesses of global governance institutions have also reflected in other regions, as witnessed, for instance in the recurrent issues of the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas battle (largely a Middle East question), and the Haiti crisis, this article focuses on the peculiarity of such challenges in Africa. Africa's conditions of instability are more widespread and protracted, especially across the sub-Saharan region. This is largely rooted in a complex combination of domestic politics and international forces.

The related debates have exposed two important knowledge gaps. First, there remains no detailed discussion about how evolving global governance dynamics may have enabled sustained instability in Africa since the League of Nations—the first official global governance platform and the implications for contemporary global order. Second, there is no systematic analysis on how central issues of instability surrounding politics, the economy, and natural resources shape and are being shaped within the forces of globalisation and how they reproduce instability in Africa within the context of growing innovation in global governance.

Addressing this research concern, the article uses a Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA) as its analytic framework to examine the relevant literature from international relations, political science, history, regionalism, and African studies. Comparative Historical Analysis is one of the oldest approaches employed by different disciplines in social science and humanities research committed to offering historically grounded explanations of large-scale and substantively important outcomes (Thelen & Mahoney, 2015; Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003). To Marcus Kreuzer, CHA is an ontological stance which advocates historical analysis of phenomena by bringing various periods and geographies into a coherent comparative analysis to understand the development of events across time and space. Marcus Kreuzer presents three broad dimensions of CHA, namely macro-causal analysis, *longue durée* analysis, and eventful analysis (see Kreuzer, 2023: 73-131).

Given its objective, this article adopts the eventful analysis. According to Kreuzer (2023), the eventful historical analytic approach embraces periodisation, chronicling, and interpretation of historical facts or events, by using common patterns across time and space. Here, the focus is on noting and interpreting 'eventful' or vital developments or junctures in the

history of phenomena as they evolve at different places through patterns. This means, the CHA, and for the purpose of this article, the eventful analytic dimension is less concerned about narrating the history of global governance and its connection to instability in Africa *per se*. Rather, it offers a unifying analytic framework to chronicle and interpret the evolution of global governance and its relationship with instability in Africa through observed important patterns over time and place.

This article therefore, examines how key developments within the global governance space surrounding political, economic, and environmental/natural resource dynamics have contributed to political instability in Africa since the end of World War I. The CHA framework thus helps to unfreeze different times and geographies for comparison and critical engagements of how patterns—political, economic, and environmental/natural resource dimensions—within global governance have evolved over time internationally and the link to Africa, and how such developments are connected to endemic instability in the continent. The usefulness of the CHA for this article is that it helps to assess the emergence, relevant (dis)junctures, and continuities of major patterns of development in global governance, helping to understand how such interurrences are reflected in protracted political instability in Africa. This does not only contribute a vital nuance to scholarship, but also offers potential direction for domestic and global policies, especially in connection to Africa in international relations. The analysis reveals a limited success of global governance in promoting political stability in Africa, because of the enduring and evolving complex interplay between international institutions and the complicity of powerful states' engagements in critical areas of the continent. This plays out in an entwined triad of entrenched, competitive interest in Africa, complex glocalised<sup>1</sup> local realities, and the violence of liberal universalism.

The next section briefly discusses the concept of global governance, followed by an evolutionary engagement of the relevant literature on global governance. Here, the focus is on global governance through politics, the international economy, and environmental or natural resource policies and how they have evolved across major phases of international politics since the end of WWI. This is followed by the discussion section which through the CHA demonstrates how entrenched, competitive interest in Africa, complex glocalised local realities, and the violence of liberal universalism in the continent both reflect in and weaken the potential of global governance in addressing protracted instability in Africa. The conclusion recasts the image of Africa as a continued victim of global order-making and order-shifting, and this could only be addressed through contextualised regionalism and domestic political systems to derive dividends and not curses from intense globalisation.

## 2. Contextualising Global Governance

Global governance refers to the collective efforts of institutions, regimes, processes, partnerships, and networks at the international level, including formal and informal arrangements involving both state and non-state actors to address common issues of international importance (Lee & Kamradt-Scott, 2014). Global governance provides a framework for addressing global issues and managing cross-border interactions by establishing institutions or rules, and processes. This involves collaborative leadership processes that bring together national governments, multilateral public institutions, and civil society to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals. Global governance processes are run through

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<sup>1</sup>Glocalisation is used here to refer to the complex interplay and influence between local and external/global forces in global governance, and the connection to instability in Africa (for more on the concept of glocalisation and security in Africa, see Bah, 2024).

international institutions such as the United Nations and partner regional organisations supported by national governments and institutions as mandated by international law (Boughton & Bradford, 2007).

Rahul Das traces the idea of global governance to the 14th century, when philosophers such as Dante Alighieris emphasised the establishment of a world government in his book *The Monarchia*. However, it was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that world governance became apparent with the establishment of the League of Nations in 1919 (Das, 2020). Since then, global governance has evolved in scope and impact, facing and in turn causing different challenges. Understanding the key developments in global governance and how they contribute to instability in the African continent requires a systematic examination of the key phases in the institutional and processual dynamics in the international system. For the purpose of analysis, our reading and discussion reveal four major phases of evolution in global governance, including post-World War I, post-World War II, post-Cold War, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In discussing these periods, we see that issues of politics, economies, human rights, and the environment, are pivotal and evolve in the discourses and practices of global governance. Additionally, we note, the impact and challenges in global governance are produced through complex internal-external interactions. Under each phase, we critically discuss the characteristics of global politics, economies, and environmental dynamics, and highlight Africa's position at each stage to understand how the junctures could have contributed to or failed to address instability in Africa.

### ***2.1. Post-World War I – the era fixated on global peace and stability***

The League of Nations is often credited as the first official platform for global governance thinking and practice. Established after WWI, the League of Nations aimed to prevent another major war, and broadly to promote global peace and security. Although this goal was not met, with the occurrence of WWII, its vision was preserved in various practical manifestations of global governance theory. It promoted unity for global peace by European and American leaders, leading to the seizure of colonial territories from Germany and Turkey, weakening aggressors, and establishing the principle of national self-determination through the Treaty of Versailles (Anderson, 2017). The broader mandate of the League of Nations bordered on politics, economics, and other relevant spheres that were of common interest among member states.

In the political dimension, the League of Nations was established by states as an inter-state organisation, and thus global political institution for world order and governance. According to Tsagourias (2020), the League of Nations marked the era of intergovernmental organisations as sites of governance and the first global political institution of world order. It created a network of specialised agencies as sites of complementary governance, crafting norms, policies, practices, processes, and structures that supported and shaped global governance. These intergovernmental agencies aimed to satisfy human needs that could provoke conflicts and hinder state cooperation. Therefore, the League of Nations established new standards for political leaders, focusing mainly on achieving lasting global peace. For instance, the League was successful through the 1920s, impacting transnational disputes and working towards international justice.

The League of Nations also had an economic dimension. Arthur Salter discusses the League of Nations' contributions to the economic recovery of Europe after the war, indicating that while the League of Nations was not primarily to achieve economic recovery in Europe, its Supreme Economic Council helped to address disputes to promote the required atmosphere for economic recovery (Salter, 1927). Also, the landmark meeting, the International Financial Conference of 1920 in Brussels, targeted to alleviate the economic distress caused by the war

across Europe, convinced delegates to agree on basic principles for national policies such as budgetary balance, disinflation of currencies, cutting back on armament expenditures, the reversal to the gold standard for exchange rates, and doing away with artificial trade restrictions (Pauly, 1996).

Additionally, environmental issues were reflected in global governance during the post-WWI era. According to Robert Falkner, WWI halted the convening of a further international conference of August 1914, and the League of Nations did not add environmental concerns to its primary mandates. While the League lacked a functional mandate for environmental protection, environmental campaign groups persistently focused on more limited international initiatives, such as the 'Internationale Komitee für Vogelschutz' and the International Office for the Protection of Nature (IOPN). However, efforts to establish a formal international environmental agenda were hampered by Europe's disintegration in the 1930s, which weakened domestic political commitment (Falkner, 2020).

The League of Nations faced many important criticisms, especially about its inability to command compliance, as it failed to restrain signatories from violating key provisions, as happened with Japan's incursion into Manchuria, Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland, and Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia (Lopez-Claros et al., 2020). The failure to sanction these violations confirmed the lack of enforcement and thus the League's ineffectiveness in terms of implementing collective security. This challenge was expected due to the lack of economic and standing military power, as well as judicial restraints to leverage aggressor states (Lopez-Claros et al., 2020). Therefore, the League of Nations failed to fulfill its core mandate of restoring peace or preventing future wars, although it was able to resolve disputes with less powerful countries like the Aaland Islands and the Greek-Bulgaria.

During the League of Nations' existence, African states were still under colonial rule, navigating the path to decolonisation. Colonialism restricted Africa's direct engagement in global affairs, with Africans participating indirectly, guided by their colonial rulers. In 1919, a Pan-African Congress convened in Paris, where around sixty representatives from sixteen nations, protectorates, and colonies gathered. The congress adopted a resolution urging the creation of an international legal code for protecting African natives, advocating for the League of Nations' oversight to prevent economic exploitation, calling for the end of slavery and capital punishment for colonial subjects (Mbouko, 1983).

During this period, Africa also played a crucial role in global economic affairs. African colonies imported more manufactured goods, traded for tropical raw materials, and expanded their civil administrations. This new professional class engaged with entrepreneurs like farmers, traders, miners, and dockworkers, who were compensated through harvests and exports. European administrations and investors set objectives for economic expansion, and Africans responded in various ways to the continent's integration into the world economy. By the end of WWI, two principal methods of expanding agriculture and exports were established: (i) incorporating African individuals into the global market economy, and (ii) setting up plantations in Africa under European management using African labor (Walker- Said, 2016).

## ***2.2. Post-World War II – the Phase of Great Power Politics***

The post-WWII period is characterised by a huge growth in global governance led by the United Nations (UN) and powerful states and international/regional organisations. Despite its weaknesses which led to WWI, the League of Nations provided a great background for learning and shaping global governance, and thus the establishment of the UN in 1945 was an extended and more robustly revised version of the League of Nations. Unlike the League of Nations which mainly targeted preventing wars and building economies, the UN extended the coverage

to the development of a robust international legal regime beyond Europe, and later worked in connection with other organisations including the International Labor Office, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, and the International Chamber of Commerce, to build regulatory systems for preventing wars and building and sustaining economies (Maynzt, 2014). With the promotion of the establishment of regional organisations in its founding Charter III, Art. 5, the UN successfully extended its mandate across the globe. The post-WWII era marked the beginning of liberal universalism in global governance as reflected across political, economic, and environmental engagements.

On the political tangent, the UN was formed to seek a political solution to the WWII. Bloor (2022) opines that the UN Charter, signed in 1945, sought to create a world centred on peace and the rule of law. The UN Security Council, consisting of fifteen members, was responsible for peacekeeping operations and military action. Decisions taken within the Security Council are binding on all member states. He reiterates that UN resolutions often contain strong denunciations rather than effective actions, which is considered a weakness of the organisation. On another political angle, Lovelace (2014) indicates that the UN played a vital role in decolonisation, setting up international law, and promoting self-government principles. This principle was reiterated in anti-colonial nationalist movements, especially in Southeast Asia and Africa. Subsequently, the UN Charter aided former colonies' transitions to independence. Thomas' (2001) work focuses on the post-WWII political aspect of global governance from a human security dimension, which was rooted in the pursuit of regionalism and multilateralism to address human security challenges and those bordering on the territorial integrity of states.

Additionally, the need to revamp war-torn economies became a collective affair through the UN. For instance, it was based on the sense of collective economic recovery and development that the US through the Marshall plan granted monetary assistance to Europe. Grieco (1995) argues that during the post-WWII era, economic integration had bumped among liberal capitalist, developing countries, and former communist nations. He notes that during this period, the global economy was more open to trading partners, cross-border financial transactions, and foreign direct investment, which promoted trade integration and industrialisation of national economies. The Bretton Woods institutions created a system of a world economy, with policymakers progressively acknowledging global trade as critical for economic progress. Consequently, between 1948 and 1960, the total value of merchandise exports from non-communist countries rose from \$53 billion to \$112.3 billion, at an average growth rate of over 6% per year. This advancement rate far topped the rate of rise of world trade experienced in the half-century before 1914 (Terborgh, 2003). The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) or World Trade Organisation was established within the period to promote further trade while the IMF ensured the functioning of the international financial system (Boughton & Bradford, 2007). However, the UN and its partner institutions, including the IMF, World Bank, and GATT mainly favoured like-minded states in their promotion of Western liberal universalism, which did not capture the needs and peculiar contexts of especially Global South realities and failed to be in synch with Eastern Socialist and Communist economic and political leanings (Acharya & Plesch, 2020).

Moreover, the issue of environmental governance received more attention during this time compared to the immediate post-WWII period. Hale (2020) claims that local issues like pollution and the extinction of species became important topics in global politics following WWII. The modern environmental movement began with the environmental concerns of the post-World War II economic boom and was symbolised by the Earth Day in 1970. Environmental issues became more transnational as a result of local and international social movements as

industrial production and resource extraction spread with globalisation. For example, more than 1,300 multilateral environmental agreements to regulate every facet of the natural world were established following the 1972 Stockholm Earth Conference, signaling the beginning of a vast and intricate set of environmental regimes (Hale, 2020). In the mid-1980s, the UN requested the Brundtland Commission to review its policies and programmes, producing a report called "Our Common Future" (United Nations, 1987). This report reinforced Stockholm's principles and the World Charter and was a catalyst for bringing sustainable development to the forefront of the global stage (Scanlon & Burhenne-Guilmin, 2004). In subsequent years, concerns about environmental issues on a global scale deepened. Twenty years after Stockholm, nations realised the deterioration of environmental conditions, leading to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. The drive to bring the international community together to address environmental difficulties persisted despite the UNCED's lengthy recommendations and supervision.

WWII was a pivotal moment in Africa's history. The UN championed redefining the concept of 'trustee territories', requiring colonial powers to report on their territories annually and allow Africans to voice grievances, which eventually promoted anti-colonial movements and independence, as African and Asian states got recognition to act as sovereign nations within the international system, contrary to the post-World War I period (Myrice, 2015). The foremost achievement of Africa in global politics during this period was the attainment of political independence and sovereignty status, contributing to global and regional politics, with African leaders shaping their nations' futures. Though the Cold War grew more intense, in the 1960s, the majority of African states attained independence and took imperative decisions in global politics. For instance, measures to sever diplomatic ties with France and block its assets as a result of the country's nuclear tests in the Sahara Desert were practical steps taken by African nations.

A greater proportion of African nations backed UN Resolution 1652 in 1961, which declared Africa to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone (Van Wyk, 2014). In 1963, African states adapted the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, now the African Union) Charter, which emphasised the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of each state. The OAU Charter acknowledged the sovereign equality of member states, respect for territorial integrity, and the right to independent existence. Additionally, African states were active members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), aiming to assert sovereignty over post-World War II ideological superpower rivalry. However, internal institutional weaknesses, dependence on colonial powers, increasing indebtedness, entrenchment of authoritarian regimes, and personalisation of state power by ruling elites contributed to the erosion of the legitimacy of African states, limiting their internal sovereignty and influence within global politics (Otunko et al., 2019).

Regarding the economy, Collier (1998) argues that the integration of Africa into the global economy was further enhanced through the post-WWII economic institutional development, as indicated. The period witnessed the consolidation of Africa's position as a primary supplier of raw materials for European industries and a ready market for finished goods (Rodney, 2018). Rod Alence postulates that from the 1970s, Africa was falling sharply behind developing economies and by the late 1980s, nearly every African country had formally adopted a market-oriented reform agreement with the IMF and the World Bank through the controversial Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). For cash-strapped governments, these agreements unlocked much-needed financial assistance, but with major strings attached. Recipients were required to reduce budget deficits substantially, devalue their currencies, and, more generally, scale back state intervention in their economies. Through the

end of the 1980s, most governments maintained this balancing act, though doing so exposed them to mounting economic crises and criticism due to the negative consequences of the SAPs, broadly described as the crisis of governance across the Third World, especially in Africa (Alence, 2009). The foregoing development in the context of the post-WWII global governance exposed African countries to Cold War politics, with attendant external influence on military coups and related political instability across the continent (Schmidt, 2013).

### ***2.3. Post-Cold War – the Phase of Intense Liberal Universalism***

The end of the Cold War led to increased international complexity and challenges to the state and the international system. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Western-led liberal order marked by intense democratisation became the key feature of Post-Cold War global governance. Three key developments liberal constitutional state, transnational corporations, and liberal organisations—were further enhanced following the end of the Cold War, to bolden the Western unipolar grip of global politics and economies in the post-Cold War period (Friedrichs, 2009). This means a shift towards more liberalism, promoting multiparty democracy, human rights, good governance, transparency, and accountability, were vigorously pursued within the Western-dominated global governance during the post-Cold War period. The democratising global system promoted the increased involvement of non-state actors in global affairs, fundamentally changing power relations, speeding up national economies' integration and contributing to the convergence of policies in different issue domains. Global governance thus came to involve new agencies, actors, and institutions beyond the realist-oriented traditional state actors and state-led regimes. This caused increasing fragmentation across levels, shaped by various actors, including states, international organisations, corporations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other civil society groups, creating flexibilities, partnerships, and new initiatives. This change in power relations also included four structures: Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs), Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), private governance, and tripartite governance mechanisms (Jang et al., 2015).

With increasing sophistication in economic, social, and political interactions and interdependence in this period, global governance embraced science and technology in trade and investment, which provided unprecedented opportunities for economic revival. This promoted the role of the private sector and NGOs, thus reducing the significance of military power and confrontation in national and international security, while international cooperation in environmental protection, energy resources, economic management, and information access became more important (Kamat, 2017).

Additionally, the decades-old lingering issue of environment and climate change became more important toward the end of the Cold War period and subsequently, with the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, with a correspondent increase in voluntary actions from both governmental and non-governmental bodies and actors to curb climate change risks (Werrell & Femia, 2019). The Stockholm Conference in 1972 culminated in the creation of the United Nations Environment Program and the signing of multiple environmental treaties, concentrating on a global commons approach to dealing with environmental problems (Zebich-Knos, 1998). However, the concerns of developing countries were discerned as not being properly addressed by the IPCC. In response, an International Negotiating Committee (INC) for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, with its mandate intended to negotiate a framework convention, containing appropriate commitments, and any related legal instruments as might be agreed upon. The UNFCCC was entered into force on March 21, 1994, with 192 instruments of ratification deposited, and a near-universal

membership. In subsequent years, a voluntary agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, focusing on International Emissions Trading (IET), Joint Implementation (JI), and Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), was established by the Kyoto Protocol on Climate. Although only partially successful due to critical issues for future conferences and US ratification, it was seen as a significant step towards addressing global warming (Begg, 2002).

In Africa, the uprooting of one-party and military rule in countries like Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Benin, the DRC (Zaire), Gabon, Togo, Somalia, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Nigeria was brought about by the push for multiparty democracy. A universal phenomenon in Africa was witnessed as this movement for multiparty democracy unfolded in the early 1990s (Paki & Concodia, 2011). The promotion of sustainable development through democracy, equity, human rights, and humanitarian action, seemed to be uniting the world community, and the change had gripped Africa as well (Neethling, 1998). Yet, a lack of consensus in the UN Security Council (UNSC) on African politics, caused African states to compete for concessions across the Western and Eastern blocks, causing tension and political instability amidst the democratisation drive. Furthermore, an African voice in international institutions was observed during the 1990s, leading to restructuring and comprehensive peace-making approaches, with the transformation of the AU, aimed to enhance better regional capacity to address growing insecurity due partly to the OAU's principle of non-interference (Oloo, 2016).

#### ***2.4. 21st Century – the Phase of Increased Complexity in Global Order***

Global governance in the 21st century has been more complex in terms of scope, mandates, and participating actors or institutions. The issues of democratisation, economic integration, human and food security, and environmentalism have been further placed within the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More than before, the cooperation among states, intergovernmental organisations, nongovernmental institutions and private organisations, transnational corporations, networks of experts, and civil society, is emphasised in global governance policies and practices, championed by the UN through the various regional, national, and civil society partners (Jang et al., 2016).

Marked by complex challenges such as the 9/11 attack, the 2008 financial crisis, the recurrent Middle East conflict, Russia-Ukraine question, and the spread of radical and terrorist activities across the world, global governance has mainly focused on stabilisation mission. Also, the pluralisation of agency in global governance and changes in the international balance of power have led to no consensus on what kind of institutions and mechanisms should replace old ones. Emerging strong powers such as China, Russia, and Brazil, have shown flexibility in infiltrating interests in regions other than their origin (Villa & Ramanzini Junior, 2021). Consequently, the effectiveness of norms and policies in managing the global economy remains uncertain. As Birdsall et al. (2013) indicate, the concern about 21st-century global governance is that the politics, rules, and institutions of cooperation among nations are not keeping up with global citizens' demands for changes in the global political order. Additionally, emerging global governance actors are addressing interdependent issues, sometimes clashing with established regimes, causing "gridlock" when international institutions fail to provide coordinated responses. Linked to this, the principle of sovereignty remains challenging due to severe human rights violations within the context of increasing multipolarity (Jang et al., 2016).

The African Union has persistently strengthened Africa's voice in global affairs within this period. The AU has made significant achievements in peace and security, promoting non-indifference towards war crimes and genocide. In most African conflicts, the AU's Peace and Security Council has made efforts to build peace. Since its inception, nearly all major African conflicts have seen the involvement of the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC). Improved

relations between the AU and the UN have led to new forms of partnership in peacekeeping (Abrahamsen et al., 2023), contributing to vital ceasefire agreements, for instance, in Sudan and South Sudan (Desmidt, 2019). However, the ceasefire agreements fell apart, prompting the expansion of the AU's presence, especially in Darfur. Despite efforts by the AU, the continent remains a theatre of violence and instability (Nkurunziza, 2019).

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century global economy has presented opportunities and challenges for African states. The signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) has brought optimism to African states, but recent international developments have impacted its significance. Challenges in the multilateral trading system, such as the WTO appellate body crisis and the EU Brexit fracture, have impacted the agreement. The AU is negotiating a new cooperation agreement post-2020, while the US is considering the maturation of trade relations with Africa (Akinkugbe et al., 2020). Additionally, the rapid integration of African economies into the global system has caused dislocations, particularly among the poor and unprivileged. Programs for global economic integration have been disappointing due to disparities in development status between external initiators and African states. As a result, Africa faces political and economic backwardness (Thang & Uyen, 2020).

### **3. Instability and Global Governance in Africa**

Having traced the history and major phases of global governance and the reflections in Africa, we then use the CHA approach to examine how global forces at and across each phase contribute to instability in Africa. The evolutionary engagement of the literature through the CHA lens reveals that global governance processes have both promoted and failed to address political stability in Africa, because of the complex interplay between international institutions and the complicity of powerful states' engagements in critical areas of the continent. These complexities are seen through the entwined triad of entrenched, competitive interests in Africa, complex glocalised local realities, and the violence of liberal universalism.

#### **3.1. *Entrenched, Competitive Interest in Africa***

Global concerns for Africa are characterised by a mixture of liberal and realist philosophies and approaches, whereby, on the one hand, international institutions project the image of collective efforts at addressing the challenges, while representatives of member states operate within national and group interests mostly been enabled by or less constrained by existing structures within the international political economy. The fabric of instability in Africa due to competitive interest was apparent in the aftermath of WWI. Africa remained subject to global interference, entrenched in colonial geopolitical struggles that fueled political dominance. The imperial power policy arrangements in Africa signaled a thirsting attempt to keep colonialism alive at a time when it was in a parlous state (Decker & McMahon, 2020). Italy's attack on Ethiopia or the Abyssinian crisis of 1935 professed an elemental realist spur towards Africa during this period (Lopez-Claros et al., 2020). During post-World War II, the UN presented a liberal ground for newly decolonised states (Myrice, 2015). Yet, the deep-rooted interest in Africa remained unchanged. For instance, during the Cold War, the superpowers viewed competition for Africa as a zero-sum game. This resulted in several interventions and ideological battles for alliances in Africa (Dower et al., 2021). Additionally, the end of the Cold War led to a shift in US policy towards Africa, with a new strategic interest emerging and destabilisation causing new humanitarian concerns. Multi-party democracy enshrined in the lexicon of participatory governance, accountability, and human rights was demanded of Africans against other forms of non-liberal democratic order (Paki and Concodia, 2011). Such interferences in Africa's political landscape have become more complex from the late post-

Cold War era to the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the emergence of new superpowers, and non-state actors; both local and international (Taylor & Williams, 2004).

Besides, the evolving integration of Africa into the global economy has also contributed to instability in the continent. During and after World War I, utilizing price controls, the confiscation of food crops, and the forced cultivation of specific crops, European colonial powers enforced stricter control over the African economy. The League of Nations did not do so much to modulate widespread individual state interest within the global system, as the body was overwhelmed with happenings in Europe (Lopez-Claros et al., 2020). However, the Pan-African Congress convention in Paris appealed to the League of Nations to prevent economic exploitation after its creation in 1920 (Mboukou, 1983). During post-World War II era, Africa became much more part of the global capitalist economy with a collective economic mindset. By the 1970s, most African countries faced a decline in economic growth, which plunged Africans into market-oriented reform agreements with the World Bank and the IMF leading to the adoption of SAPs and its consequent crisis of governance and economic growth (Alence, 2009). After the Cold War, the global economy was more open to trading and cross-border financial transactions, which promoted trade liberalisation, enhancing further external access and exploitation of African rich resources and vast markets (Grieco, 1995). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China, for instance, has changed its aid strategies, eschewing open aid and bilateral economic cooperation. However, there are several concerns about the deliberate debt trap diplomacy of China. These external influences in the economic affairs of African economies have created economic crises and widespread frustrations among the populace, which translates to various forms of tension and violence (Njie, 2016).

Additionally, natural resources have also been a major source of instability in Africa. After World War I, colonial powers insatiably exploited Africa's natural resources. Colonies such as the Congo, South Africa, and Zimbabwe among others served as high sources of mineral resource supply due to rising industrial production, which compelled an increased global resource extraction after World War II (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012; Hale, 2020). The competition for natural resources in Africa has become more intense with the growing influence of China and other so-called non-traditional powers such as India, Brazil, and the Gulf states. This has entrenched natural resource exploitation trends related to illegal mining activities, causing environmental and human security challenges cumulating to political instability in many parts of the continent (Schmidt, 2018). Therefore, with the global mad-rush for both conventional and emerging critical minerals in Africa, external exploitation of Africa's natural resources and the attendant environmental and human security challenges may remain a defining feature of African polities.

### ***3.2. Complex Glocalised Local Realities***

In many years of global governance, there has been a complex interplay between local and external forces in Africa who, at the expense of the citizens in Africa, have collaborated to satisfy their interests. The post-WWI period saw the reestablishment of a rationalised system (indirect rule and *mise en valeur*). The British, for instance, relied on an indirect rule system and gained the support of African traditional leaders to rule their colonies, which has caused long-standing conflict between groups within African politics and governance to date (Müller-Crepon, 2020). In the aftermath of World War II, the OAU Charter projected the promotion of non-intervention, territorial integrity, and independence. However, internal weaknesses and dependence on external powers limited African states' legitimacy (Otunko et al., 2019). As African regimes became more dependent, their domestic politics became a matter of international concern, contrary to the principles of the OAU. For instance, during the Angolan

civil war in the 1970s, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) relied on military support from Cuba and the Soviet Union, leading to increased conflict engagement in Africa (Engel & Olsen, 2005). The end of the Cold War saw a shift in international focus towards Western interventions in small local conflicts away from Cold War strategies under the concept of peace support operations. This shift has persisted in recent times; Africa has become a main arena for the US, China, and Russia to form strategic alliances with African governments and groups to advance their interests. China, for instance, since the early 2000s, has always supported and maintained a close relationship with the power in Khartoum to protect its interests in Sudan (Bridge, 2023). This could also be seen playing out in recent coups in the Sahel, such as in Niger and Mali, where the manipulation of local forces by external power play between France and the West on the one hand and Russia on the other hand, is apparent. Similarly, the protraction of the ongoing Sudan conflict is mainly caused by complex transactions between local forces and external super powers such as Russia, the USA, and China (Okwany & Hansen, 2023).

On the economic front, African economies have faced severe challenges posed by the complex interplay of domestic and external forces. Africa's colonial economy depended on both internal and external collaborations after the First World War. Internal collaborations between colonial agents and chiefs extended colonial economic policies, leading to the deterioration of local industries and traditional agricultural practices (Ceesay, 2019). Glocalisation of the African economy was evident after WWI, with African state leaders entering into economic agreements with regulatory political entities such as the World Bank and IMF (Yalin & Ario, 2023). These led Africans into unending borrowing and the signing of many international trade and financial agreements detrimental to domestic economic growth. Following the end of the Cold War, local and global forces partnerships became broad as transnational companies gained dominance. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was established in the early 2000s to strengthen African regional markets for global integration. However, NEPAD does not significantly prioritise domestic economic needs. Instead, it advocates for WTO negotiations for more equitable trade terms. Critics highlight concerns about unfair practices and regulations restricting African goods' competitiveness (Wolff, 2006). In contemporary situations, several multinational companies, through trade agreements, have gained access to commodity markets in Africa, exerting competitive pressure on local African companies, while domestic governments have failed to meaningfully enhance the capacity of local industries, due largely to wrong policy decisions, corruption, and non-competitive tax regimes (Mills, 2012).

The glocalised extraction of natural resources also strongly promotes instability in Africa. Despite many years of environmental protection frameworks and COPs under the auspices of the UN and various regional and national resource and environmental governance frameworks in Africa, the complex glocal interplay of the forces of natural resource exploitation continues to be a key source of instabilities (Begg, 2002; Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Natural resource extraction and exploitation were significant for colonial powers before and after WWI. They did so by adopting clientelism; establishing close relationships with chiefs, and manipulating local power structures to enhance the exploitation of resources such as gold, diamonds, and more, mostly at the expense of the local population. After WWI, natural resource exploitation of developing nations by Western powers continued through neo-colonialism. Since the end of the Cold War, African states, through bilateral and multilateral relations with states and non-state agencies, have continued to facilitate natural resource extractions with little participation from local societies, leading to environmental degradation,

climate-induced crises and resource conflicts, especially in East, Central, and West Africa (Seter et al., 2018).

### ***3.3. The Violence of Liberal Universalism***

This section furthers our understanding of the entrenched glocalised competition for influence in Africa by specifically illustrating the evolving connection between liberal universalism as a global governance structure and instability in Africa from the political, economic, and natural resource dimensions. As the liberal world order gradually built up from the League of Nations and took broader effect in the post-WWI era, Africa became invariably integrated into the liberal international system. Following the end of WWI and the creation of the UN, independent African countries had direct participation in global affairs, with a major objective to promote liberal ideals, broadly rooted in the idea that democracies do not go to war. The Western-oriented liberal world order was further boosted by the post-Cold War wave of democracy across the Global South as the US became the centre of a unipolar world, pushing the agenda of liberal world order through multiple international institutions, bilateral agreements, and regional organisations' policies on African governance (Paki & Concodia, 2011; Thérien, 2015). As many African countries adopted multiparty democracy in post-Cold War, old ethnic and political rivalries were resurrected, with attendant widespread political-related conflicts across the continent. This challenge remains in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the practice of democracy is continuously being characterised by intense conflicts, especially around elections and the exercise of political power. With other challenges such as the military takeover of governments especially in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) and other non-constitutional and illegitimate governance practices, which attract conflicts and insecurity, democracy is deemed to have greatly retrogressed (Paolo et al., 2024) or even stalled in Africa (Shola Akinyetun, 2022).

The violence of liberal universalism is also reflected in Africa's long-standing economic crises, which serve as a major source of political instability. The connection of Africa's underdeveloped economies with the Western-led capitalist global market and corresponding trade liberalisation through partner institutions such as IMF, World Bank, and GATT, has remained a major challenge against sovereign economic development in the continent since the post-WWI era (Acharya & Plesch, 2020). The incongruence of liberal economic transplant on Africa's much-complex local economic foundations has caused economic crises and resultant indebtedness by most African states, as witnessed by the SAPs and subsequent IMF-backed economic policies (Konadu-Agyemang, 2018). The related economic stresses have attracted domestic political opposition, leading to coups and thus unstable regimes (in Guinea, Niger, and Burkina Faso), violent protests (in Kenya and Ghana), and widespread insecurity induced by economic frustrations across the continent (Alence, 2009).

Additionally, the literature engaged in the preceding sections demonstrates that liberal universalism has contributed to the phenomenon of natural resource exploitation, causing grave insecurity and instability. The widespread environmental crime through various illicit resource extraction in many parts of Africa (Haass, 2021), suggests that the post-World War II and the post-Cold War multilateral environmental agreements to regulate the natural world (Hale, 2020), have contributed little to addressing resource-based conflicts and insecurity, especially in the Global South. The Western-oriented governance of the otherwise multi-actor ownership of land and natural resources in Africa has meant that resource management remains solely in the hands of most African governments and interest groups who enter into dubious mineral deals with international organisations and private companies all in the spirit of the liberal economic practice, with less participation from civil society or citizens. This

causes many conflicts surrounding ownership and the right to partake in natural resource extraction and trade (see Bofo et al., 2019). In particular, the 21<sup>st</sup> century boom in the global natural resource market has further attracted many multinational organisations and redesigned African loan agreements towards concessions involving precious minerals such as gold, diamond, and in recent times, lithium and other critical minerals in the context of global energy transition. This scramble for natural resources amidst the inefficiencies and corruption-related matters surrounding resource management has promoted various levels of conflict in natural resource extraction, trade, and climate change-induced crises, causing widespread insecurity and fragilities (McFerson, 2010).

#### 4. Conclusion

This article contributes to the broader critique of the link between global governance, regionalism and international peace and security. It aimed to investigate how global governance spaces have enabled or failed to address instability in Africa. While the literature points to the failures of global governance and the consequent conditions of instabilities at different times, mostly in the Global South, there remained a vital knowledge gap concerning how instability in Global South settings has evolved within global governance spaces and the implication for contemporary international order. The article addressed this lacuna, using the CHA approach to undertake an evolutionary engagement of the relevant multi-disciplinary literature about how key developments within the global governance spaces surrounding political, economic, and environmental/natural resource dimensions have enabled political instability in Africa since the end of World War I. The central argument is that the ineffectiveness and sometimes complicity of global governance institutions toward promoting political stability in Africa is best understood from three-pronged dimensions: i) entrenched, competitive interest, ii) complex globalised local realities, and iii) the violence of liberal universalism surrounding politics, economic structures and practices, and natural resource access and management in the continent.

The CHA thus helps to reveal that while Africa has gained some agency in recognition and decision-making in the international system through various state and regional partnerships within the context of changing governance structures (Lala, 2020), the continent has failed to derive significant dividends in terms of addressing perennial instability through the assistance of global governance institutions. In this background, Africa has more often been a victim of negative impact from realist actors within global governance spaces, who through complex relations with domestic actors take advantage of the compromised political institutions in the continent. This has caused complex economic and political situations which (re)produce instability.

Informed by the evolving historical developments therefore, this conclusion suggests that Africa will consistently play a catch-up role in the changing global order-making if the long-standing domestic political and economic structures and external relations are not meaningfully transformed. The negative implications on political stability are increasingly uncertain, largely because of the growing multipolar world order within which Africa remains a strategic battle ground for both traditional and emerging powers, while the evolving global governance institutions have demonstrated limited capacity to promote sustained stability by helping to boost Africa's priorities at the global stage.

The potential solution lies in two key context-based conditions surrounding domestic politics and the economy and regionalism, to tackle the shortcomings of liberal universalism and associated external influence in Africa. First, addressing the excessive external influence on the continent requires adapting key lessons of indigenous and context-based politics and

economic structures, for instance, from the Asian tigers (Abdulyakeen & Aminu, 2020). This intersects with the nascent but prominent literature advocating the contextualisation of state politics in Africa to address the various domestic institutional failures that enable external manipulation, weakening the potential for sustainable development in the continent (Simon, 2018). Second, as Kotsopoulos and Mattheis (2020) have observed, the operations of African regional bodies and their external partnerships must be contextualised in ways commanded by domestic demands, not foreign templates. However, this pursuit of 'African solutions to African problems' through these two recommendations also depends on addressing the external gaze by most African leaders and creating more harmonious continental and sub-regional bodies. While achieving these goals may seem extremely challenging in the context of fluctuating threats to regional integration, especially in West and East Africa, and the consistent 'debt-trap' and dependency relations between African governments and external creditors, a more serious commitment to addressing endemic instability in the continent could lead to innovative solutions backed by multi-level political will. This will help to meaningfully fight the greed of powerful political and business actors who engage in complex compromises within the political, economic, and resource transaction spheres, breeding protracted instability.

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