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English Abstract

The Dilemma of National Transformation in Ethiopia:

A Center –Periphery Structure Perspective

Zhang Chun and Hao Rui

Abstract: As one of the most representative developmental states in Africa, Ethiopia is currently facing profound challenges of transformation. Despite considerable economic achievements, domestic political and social tensions have continued to intensify since 2012, evolving into multiple crises after Prime Minister Abiy came to power in 2018. The predicament of Ethiopia's national transformation stems from the stubbornness and fluidity of its center –periphery structure. This structure possesses a powerful self –reproductive capacity, leading successive governments to inadvertently generate new center –periphery patterns while attempting to dismantle the old ones. This is manifested in the dominance of specific ethnic groups over the central position and the continual competition among other groups for that position; a dynamic fundamentally rooted in the contest among state –building, nation –building and various ethnic nationalisms. Therefore, a rational political system capable of balancing multi – ethnic relations while integrating state and national building is crucial for Ethiopia's successful transformation.

Keywords: Ethiopia, national transformation, ethical federalism, center – periphery structure

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The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and Nile River Hydropolitics:

Water Rights and Disputes from the Perspective of International Law

Wang Zhijian and Jia Jiameizi

Abstract: Historically, Egypt's claim to the majority of the Nile River's water rights has been a main feature of Nile water politics. Through a series of colonial – era

treaties and bilateral agreements with Sudan, Egypt has excluded or restricted the water rights of upstream nations. Although the effectiveness of these water treaties are mainly limited, Egypt's historical water rights and its hydro-hegemony over the Nile persisted due to the upstream countries' lack of capacity to construct large-scale water infrastructure. However, with the full operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the water politics of the Nile Basin have changed significantly. The GERD poses a substantive challenge to Egypt's monopoly over Nile water rights. The new Nile water agreement ratified by four East African countries reallocates the Nile's water resources and grants signatory states the right to review water projects in riparian nations. This not only promotes the enforcement of a new treaty for the equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile but also effectively prevents third-party intervention, creating conditions for a more fair and reasonable water rights allocation structure. Analyzing Nile water politics from the perspective of water rights clearly highlights the critical role of treaties and dams in shaping the Nile's water rights structure, which helps reveal the essence of water conflicts in the region. This study reviews the history of Nile water rights treaties, analyzes the significant role of the GERD in Nile water politics, and discusses the potential for the dam to reset Nile water rights. It argues that a fair water rights arrangement is a crucial guarantee for long-term peace in the Nile basin.

Keywords: Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Nile River, international rivers, water politics, water right

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Investor Obligations in Bilateral Investment Treaties Concluded by African Countries: Patterns, Trends and Implications

Li Xiaoling

Abstract: Traditionally, bilateral investment treaties (BITs) focus on investment

protection and rarely impose obligations on investors. Confronted with potential conflicts between foreign investment and domestic development objectives, African countries are shifting the focus of their BIT negotiations from mere investment protection to the rebalancing of development and sovereignty. Several recently concluded BITs now incorporate binding obligations on investors concerning environmental protection, labor standards, human rights, community relations and anti-corruption. Although this practice has not yet become mainstream, the introduction of investor obligations in BITs has gradually become a regional consensus among African countries. Analysis of relevant arbitration cases reveals that the “African paradigm” of investor obligations produces a dual institutional effect: on one hand, it enhances the regulatory space of host states and objectively lowers the level of traditional investment protection; on the other hand, these broadly defined obligations risk transforming BITs into instruments that compensate for deficiencies in host states’ domestic governance, which is a “governance paradox”. Given that the international community has not yet established mature practices regarding investor obligation clauses, China should proceed cautiously when introducing legally binding investor obligations in BITs with African nations.

Keywords: African paradigm, bilateral investment treaty, investor obligations, rule revolution

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The Construction of a “Bandung Paradigm” for Knowledge Diplomacy:

A Comparative Study of International Programs for African Youth

Xu Mo and Wu Yue

Abstract: Over the seven decades since the Bandung Conference, Global South countries have transitioned from an “anti-colonial alliance” to a “developmental community,” yet their knowledge production remains entrenched in the dependency dilemma imposed by Western hegemonic structures. Grounded in Jane Knight’s theory of knowledge diplomacy, this study employs a multi-case comparative analysis of

African youth programs led by the United States, France, Japan and China to unveil the power dynamics and cooperative models inherent in global knowledge diplomacy practices. The findings reveal distinct approaches: the United States prioritizes ideological discipline, France emphasizes the reproduction of cultural capital, Japan focuses on technology – oriented knowledge empowerment, while China adheres to the principle of co – construction and sharing in knowledge collaboration, resonating historically with the Bandung Spirit’s core tenets of “equality, mutual benefit, and common development”. Building on this, the study proposes the construction of a “Bandung Paradigm” for knowledge diplomacy, advocating for strengthened knowledge sovereignty, deepened mechanisms for collaborative innovation, and improved institutional safeguards. This theoretical innovation expands the boundaries of knowledge diplomacy theory, revitalizes the contemporary governance value of the Bandung Spirit, offers policy recommendations for optimizing China’s African youth programs, and provides academic foundations for establishing a more equitable and reciprocal global knowledge production system.

Keywords: knowledge diplomacy, Bandung paradigm, international programs for African youth, the Global South

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The Embedded Governance of the Chieftaincy System in West Africa and Its Impact on Chinese Enterprises

Huang Juan, Wang Chenli and Jiang Xinyue

Abstract: Historically, chieftaincy systems in West Africa predate modern state forms, encompassing three dimensions: chiefs, chiefdoms and the chieftaincy. Empirical research conducted in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria reveals that the

chieftaincy system is embedded in grassroots governance through dual mechanisms of content and means. It preserves traditional governance elements through indigenous means such as clan rituals and tribal elder councils, while also achieving functional complementarity with modern governance in areas including anti – corruption, social equality, and economic development. This informal system, through land access restrictions, cultural interpretive authority, and social mobilisation capabilities, effectively constitutes the “second institutional environment” for the sustainable operations of Chinese enterprises in West Africa. Practice shows that Chinese enterprises must activate the key role of chieftains as “embedded forces” through localisation strategies and secure community support to achieve mutual benefit. Meanwhile, when interacting with African traditional authorities, Chinese enterprises must adhere to modern governance principles such as the rule of law, transparency and fairness, striving to strike a careful balance between respecting traditions and complying with modern rules.

Keywords: chieftaincy system in west Africa, embedded governance, Chinese enterprises, grassroots governance

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The Structural Dilemma of Migration Governance in West Africa:

A Multiple Game Perspective

Cao Yuan and Cai Weiyu

Abstract: West Africa is one of the regions with the largest migrant population in the world, and immigration governance has always been an important issue in the process of its integration. Although regional organizations like Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have launched many systematic and continuous attempts in the field of immigration governance, practical progress has remained limited over the past

half – century. Today, amid heightened political instability, terrorism and economic distress, migration in West Africa has evolved into a severe hybrid challenge combining traditional and non – traditional security dimensions. The governance dilemma stems not from a single cause but from complex multi – level games involving international, regional and national actors. Internationally, external forces, especially the EU, prioritize their security interests through fragmented bilateral cooperation, undermining regional coherence. Regionally, ECOWAS struggles with institutional overlap and legitimacy crises, reducing its authority and effectiveness. Nationally, member states vacillate in policy implementation due to sovereignty concerns and domestic pressures, lacking both the political will and institutional capacity to align regional commitments with consistent action. This multi – layered game places governance actors in a dual dilemma: “regional development versus national interest” and “regional freedom versus national security”, forming a structural deadlock in West African migration governance.

Keywords: Economic Community of West African States, immigration governance, multiple game, regional integration

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Resentment, Identity and Violence: The Survival Strategy and Behavioral

Logic of Islamic State’ s West Africa Province

Qi Zhaoyuan and Wang Ruiheng

Abstract: The resilience demonstrated by the Islamic State’ s West Africa province in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region stems not merely from military powers, but from the profound connections it has established with local communities through identity – based political strategies. It adeptly exploits the pervasive grievances among the populace, which are rooted in state failure and systemic marginalization, as the foundational logic for its mobilization efforts. Unlike its predecessor, Boko Haram, which employed

indiscriminate violence, Islamic State's West Africa Province provides basic public services such as protection and justice, thereby positioning itself as a protector of moderate Muslims while framing the government and rival factions as the "other". Consequently, its use of violence is highly selective, primarily targeting military objectives and eliminating opponents to consolidate its legitimacy as an "alternative governance authority" and reinforce community identity and belonging. Therefore, effective countermeasures must extend beyond military operations to address the root causes of this phenomenon. By improving local governance and rebuilding public trust, it is possible to dismantle the social foundations upon which the organization depends.

Keywords: Islamic State's West Africa Province, Boko Haram, identity politics, terrorism

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