

# **African Agency and Global Orders: The Demanding Case of Nuclear Arms Control**

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**Abstract.** How much agency do African actors have to shape global orders? This study puts the global nuclear order under scrutiny to answer this question. This amounts to a demanding case. Arms control is something that global great powers take very seriously, and there is no weapons category that they take more seriously than nuclear weapons. My findings provide a nuanced picture. Although often outflanked and frustrated by nuclear weapons states, the nuclear order would look different without African actors exerting their agency. They successfully shaped background and foreground institutions constituting the global nuclear order by building advocacies for new institutions upon already existing ones, reaching out to state and non-state actors outside of Africa, and channelling communication through African states with authority in global fora. This study makes three contributions: First, it underlines the key finding of recent literature on African agency that African actors are more to be reckoned with than often assumed. Second, it provides novel evidence about the diplomatic mechanisms through which they come to make a difference. Third, it adds to our grasp of the constitution of global orders as well as the processes through which they come to be made, re-made and unmade more generally.

Key words: Africa, agency, diplomacy, nuclear, order

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To what extent do African actors have political efficacy to make, re-make and unmake global orders? How do they come to fail and succeed to generate this efficacy? Sceptical views about African agency<sup>1</sup> in international relations are so widespread that scholars often do not even ask these questions. The scepticism comes in two principal variants: First, some authors contend (or simply assume) that material power differentials between global great powers and African actors are so pronounced that the latter lack meaningful global agency. According to this reading, senders of order are located in the global north.<sup>2</sup> The preponderance of the United States,<sup>3</sup> and, in the past, the Soviet Union,<sup>4</sup> is often highlighted. There is research on how former colonisers such as France<sup>5</sup> and the United Kingdom<sup>6</sup> assert themselves vis-à-vis Africa. More recently, authors arguing in this vein also direct their analytical gaze towards Sino-African relations. These are also often depicted as distinctly lopsided in favour of China.<sup>7</sup> There is also some research on how the European Union leaves a mark on Africa.<sup>8</sup>

Second, other studies depicting Africa as a mere receiver of order, underpinned by poststructuralist and critical understandings of productive power, write about Africans as postcolonial subjects.<sup>9</sup> They claim that knowledge production happens elsewhere. Africans are placed into 'Eurocentric meta-narratives'.<sup>10</sup> International institutions, including international law, deny African agency.<sup>11</sup> Africa, according to this interpretation, remains a colony in the imperial governance of the globe whose centres are elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, many of the authors arguing in this vein postulate a way out. They seek to empower those whose voices are not heard.<sup>13</sup> But it is not all that clear how an international system in which productive power pushes Africa to the margins to such a great extent could be changed around fundamentally by Africans.

More recently, however, a small set of literature has emerged that challenges the conceived wisdom. It shows empirically that African actors, albeit structurally disadvantaged in several ways, are at times rather successful in shaping international institutions. Most

authors investigate the making of economic institutions. Taylor<sup>14</sup> as well as the edited volume by Brown and Harman<sup>15</sup> cover a range of bilateral and multilateral negotiations, Murray-Evans<sup>16</sup> examines bargaining between the European Union and Southern African states, Besada and O’Bright<sup>17</sup> look into Sino-African economic relations, and Samuda<sup>18</sup> inquires into the negotiating patterns of the World Bank and African states. The latest contribution to this literature, an edited book by Coleman and Tieku<sup>19</sup>, goes beyond international political economy and focuses on international security. The authors add empirical research on the design, interpretation and implementation of security norms to literature on African agency.<sup>20</sup>

First and foremost, this article seeks to build on this literature. Adding to empirical investigations on African agency and global security, I examine the global nuclear order. Without any doubt, this order is about ‘high politics’.<sup>21</sup> Not only is it about international security but about the ultimate weapon. If there is a functional order in which global great powers should be particularly reluctant to allow for input from others, it should be the nuclear one. This makes for a tough test for African agency. Carrying out this test, I aim for empirical breadth. Analysing the *longue durée*, I compare the making of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) from 1958 to 1970, its re-making from 1974 to 1995, and the making of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) from ca. 1980-2017. Together, these observations span almost six decades.

On a more general level, this article also contributes to the burgeoning literature on global orders by putting under scrutiny background and foreground institutions.<sup>22</sup> The former – Hayek refers to them as cosmos, Colson as tradition, Bull as foundational institutions and Buzan as primary institutions – come to be deeply taken for-granted by actors and evolve spontaneously. The latter – Hayek’s taxis, Colson’s contract, Bull’s non-foundational institutions and Buzan’s secondary institutions<sup>23</sup> – can be much more easily reflected upon by actors and are purposefully designed. The bulk of research on orders privileges either

background<sup>24</sup> or foreground<sup>25</sup> at the expense of the other. This helps generate important insights on each of these institutional dimensions but does not allow for a more comprehensive analysis.<sup>26</sup>

As a quick preview of my argument shows, this theoretical contribution is not made for the sake of theory only. An exclusive focus on foreground institutions would end up seriously under-estimating the extent to which African actors shaped the nuclear order. They proved politically efficacious in leaving a mark on its background institutions. When the order was still at a nascent stage, African actors made a difference by advocating a three-fold objective, i.e. non-proliferation, disarmament and technological transfers for peaceful use. This set the stage for all negotiation processes to happen in this order. About half a century later, African state and non-state actors featured prominently in contesting the orthodox understanding that the nuclear order is to protect national security by introducing the notion of human security to the order.

An exclusive focus on background institutions would not be sufficient either. It would make the analyst overlook the extent to which African actors shaped foreground institutions. While they struggled considerably to make themselves heard while the NPT was designed, they left a major mark on the terms under which the NPT was extended indefinitely fifteen years later. Equally importantly, they recently played a major role in creating the TPNW. They did so both by preparing the stage for it – human security as background knowledge – and by negotiating the actual treaty.

How did this become possible? I identify three simultaneously operating diplomatic processes through which African actors came to exert their agency successfully: First, they made use of the global reputation of some African states, such as Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa. They became something akin to ‘spokesstates’ of Africa. Second, African actors, especially those representing the ‘spokesstates’ but even some non-state actors employed

broad networking strategies connecting African actors to like-minded ones in the global south and north. In the terms of network theory, they succeeded to broker affiliation networks<sup>27</sup> that span across more tightly-knit networks such as the African Group and Europe's neutral states. Third, African states carefully built advocacies for institutional change upon already entrenched institutions. These were, for the most part, constitutive of the nuclear order. Human security is an interesting exception in this regard. Having become widely accepted in the development order and other arms control orders, it was imported into the nuclear one.

This article is organised into four sections. I start with an analysis of the making of the NPT, follow up with the process that led to its indefinite extension, and then move on to the origins of the TPNW. Finally, the conclusion summarises my findings and elaborates on their implications.

### **Making the NPT, 1958-1970**

Did African states make a difference in the making of the NPT? If so, how? The NPT constitutes a set of foreground institutions. Ultimately, therefore, the question that this section asks is about how African states affected critical foreground institutions of the global nuclear order. I contend that they did, albeit in a round-about way. They were, together with like-minded states from other regions, quite successful in shaping the background institutions that set the frame for the foreground institutions enshrined in the NPT.

Debates about nuclear weapons control gained momentum at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in the late 1950s, i.e. when the decolonisation process in Africa was about to begin. Ireland started pushing for a convention on nuclear non-proliferation, hoping that this would be a stepping stone towards reaching the more distant but paramount goal of nuclear disarmament.<sup>28</sup> The United States, backed by NATO members, campaigned against this initiative. In 1959, however, UNGA passed a resolution that followed the Irish

reasoning – i.e. immediate focus on non-proliferation in order to move closer towards progress on disarmament – quite closely.<sup>29</sup>

Between 1959 and 1966, the debate about nuclear arms control changed significantly. The soon-to-be parties of the NPT were still miles away from agreeing on how to design nuclear arms control. Yet more and more general ideas for what ought to be on the agenda entered discussions. African states first debated nuclear issues on the regional level. The first meetings of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) revolved around completing decolonisation, developing economies, disarmament in general and nuclear disarmament in particular.<sup>30</sup> In Africa, Ghana, due to the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, was an important player at the time. Outraged by France's nuclear testing in Algeria, Frantz Fanon, Patrice Lumumba and Tom Mboya were also very outspoken critics of nuclear weapons.<sup>31</sup> African states quickly converged around a much broader view of how a nuclear order ought to look like. It ought to be not only about non-proliferation but also disarming NWS and technological transfers for the peaceful use of nuclear energy from those possessing this technology to those who do not. Nuclear issues were bound up with issues of sovereign equality and development.<sup>32</sup> African states linked up with other states from the global south to debate about and advocate for this perspective on the nascent nuclear order. In September 1964, the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) put non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful use on its diplomatic agenda.<sup>33</sup>

Some African states were invited to join the global debate between NWS and non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS). Egypt, Nigeria and Ethiopia became part of the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament. This selection corresponded very closely to the status the three states enjoyed in Africa and the world. Egypt was widely recognised as a major player in the Middle East, Africa and NAM.<sup>34</sup> Prior to South Africa's re-emergence from pariah status, Nigeria was widely considered to be the most important player in Sub-Saharan Africa,

and an important actor on the world stage. Commentators labelled it a ‘regional power’<sup>35</sup>, ‘Africa’s great power’<sup>36</sup> and a global ‘middle power’.<sup>37</sup> In the same time period, Ethiopia never reached this kind of status. But it, too, was considered a significant player, especially in the 1960s.<sup>38</sup>

In the Eighteen Nation Committee, the three African players teamed up with like-minded states (Burma, Brazil, India, Mexico and Sweden) to push for their three-fold agenda. African states justified their broader agenda by linking it to the principle of sovereign equality as spelled out in the United Nations Charter. The Ethiopian Representative at this Committee, for instance, was unequivocal that Ethiopia would not accept ‘a position of perpetual inferiority’ in the nuclear weapons regime.<sup>39</sup> The Nigerian Representative echoed this stance.<sup>40</sup> This campaign was rather successful. By the mid-1960s, the global debate had broadened. It was no longer confined to non-proliferation. Disarmament and peaceful use were very much part of it, too.

There was, however, no movement towards designing institutions yet. Given this problem, African states, together with other NAM states, resorted to threats. They threatened that they would seek a convention on nuclear weapons without NWS, if the latter would refuse to move forward. There was also some talk about acquiring their own nuclear weapons if NWS failed to work towards a convention with the NNWS.<sup>41</sup> African and Non-African NAM states made use of the rapidly increasing membership of the United Nations General Assembly and pushed through several important resolutions on nuclear disarmament. The most important one of them formulated the general demands for a nuclear weapons convention very clearly. It would have to be ‘void of any loop-holes’ for proliferation, there would have to be an ‘acceptable balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations’, and it would have to constitute a ‘step towards the achievement of general and complete disarmament, and, more particularly, nuclear disarmament’.<sup>42</sup>

This pressure to negotiate a legal instrument played its part in making the superpowers sit down at the negotiation table. During the process in which the NPT was designed, it became increasingly clear that the triad of non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful use had sunk in as a set of background institutions. They formed the pillars upon which nuclear order would be built. This was a great success for NNWS, African ones very much included. When it came to the actual designing of the NPT, however, it was a different matter. The United States and the Soviet Union marginalised other actors in general and African ones in particular. Egypt put forward several draft elements on nuclear disarmament that were meant to formalise the disarmament process by NWS in detail. When this did not materialise, Nigeria advocated for a withdrawal clause with teeth. NNWS should have the right to withdraw from the NPT if NWS did not honour their disarmament obligations. This proposal was vigorously rejected by the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>43</sup> Nigeria also proposed strong stipulations on peaceful use that centred on the IAEA (rather than bilateral agreements between nuclear suppliers and other parties). This proposal, too, was rejected.<sup>44</sup>

In short, African states did not leave much of a mark once the negotiation process moved into the decisive phase of designing the NPT. As a result, the foreground institutions codified in the NPT are more specific on non-proliferation than on disarmament and peaceful use. This does not mean, however, that the NPT lacks African co-authorship. Without the prior success to make the triadic structure sink into the background institutions of the nascent nuclear order, there would have been much less – possibly nothing – on disarmament and peaceful use in the NPT. And this triadic background structure would remain highly important in the years to come.

### **Re-making the NPT, 1974-95**

The processes leading to the re-making (indefinite extension and strengthened review procedures) of the NPT were somewhat different. African states, putting the triadic background structure to use, sought to specify foreground institutions on disarmament and peaceful use further. They were more successful in doing so than in drafting the NPT. At the 1995 Review and Extension Conference (RevExCon), a number of far-reaching specifications were agreed upon.

As soon as the ink had dried on the NPT, the controversies about its implementation began. They focused mainly on the issues of nuclear disarmament and peaceful use. In April 1974, when the first Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) started for the first NPT Review Conference (RevCon) to take place in 1975, these controversies were already very much out in the open. They recurred over and over at the RevCons in 1980, 1985 and 1990 as well as the PrepComs that were supposed to prepare them. The NNWS network consisting of NAM and neutral states that had formed during the making of the NPT continued to be put to use by African states. Egypt assumed a very important position. It became something akin to a double-‘spokesstate’, one for Africa and one for the Middle East.

Egypt and other critical NNWS accused the NWS of not honouring their disarmament obligations. In 1980, for example, NAM put together a ‘Working Paper containing some basic elements’ for a final document. Tede Paper complained that Article 6 has ‘remained dead letter’, and listed the superpowers’ increasing arms expenditures and the acquisition of new nuclear warheads in great detail.<sup>45</sup> In order to make NWS honour their disarmament obligations, critical NNWS attempted to elaborate on Art 6 of the NPT. There should be a concrete timeline of disarmament steps, culminating with the abolishment of nuclear weapons.<sup>46</sup> Critical states also called for a stop to all kinds of nuclear tests and the production of weapons-grade fissionable materials.<sup>47</sup> These two postulates soon came to be known as comprehensive test ban and fissile material cut-off. Prior to the 1995 RevExCon, these efforts

came to naught. In his message to the 1980 Review Conference, US President Jimmy Carter did not mention the word 'disarmament' at all.<sup>48</sup>

The critical NNWS were also outspoken about the lack of implementation of the provisions on peaceful use. Egypt was a vigorous advocate for setting up multilateral institutions, such as a nuclear fuel bank, to facilitate technological transfers.<sup>49</sup> The above already quoted Working Paper vilified nuclear suppliers and their 'additional unilateral measures' as 'unacceptable practice'.<sup>50</sup> Again, however, NWS and other nuclear suppliers did not move an inch. Brezhnev's Message to the Review Conference, for example, claimed that the Soviet Union, fully in line with the NPT, complied with the principle of peaceful use and did not see any contradiction between this principle and bilateral checks against the diversion of such technology for military use.<sup>51</sup>

The 1995 review cycle was different. This time around, the issue was not just to review the NPT but also whether to extend it indefinitely or not. This changed the diplomatic game around considerably. NNWS and NWS adapted their strategies to this peculiar situation. Among the former, some states rejected indefinite extension while others, including NAM, demanded major concessions on disarmament and peaceful use from the NWS. Egypt succeeded in putting an additional item related to disarmament on the advocacy agenda of NAM. Concrete steps would have to be made towards establishing a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East. Additionally, the Egyptian representative Nabil Elaraby made use of his friendship with Jayantha Dhanapala to push for this issue.<sup>52</sup> Dhanapala, a Sri Lankan (also a NAM state) career diplomat, was appointed conference president.

At the RevExCon, negotiations soon reached an impasse on disarmament. The disarmament committee was, in the words of observers, 'a disaster from the outset.'<sup>53</sup> Reacting to the impasse, Dhanapala opened up a new forum for discussion to shake up the debate. The 'Friends of the President' succeeded in doing so. Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa

were part of this exclusive circle of twenty-five states.<sup>54</sup> Among these players, South Africa had the most clout. Having left Apartheid behind, it had become a middle power with considerable authority in world politics. Having abandoned its nuclear weapons, South Africa acquired even further authority in the nuclear order.<sup>55</sup>

Dhanapala selected two proposals as starting points of a package deal he put forward. The one proposal he selected was South Africa's, whose diplomats made the most out of its newly acquired authority. South Africa demanded a strengthened review process for monitoring the parties' compliance with their obligations to disarm, transfer technology for peaceful use and not to proliferate.<sup>56</sup> Canada – close to the United States but also a respected player in arms control – advocated for an indefinite extension of the NPT. Hammering out a deal remained a 'hard struggle', in particular the strengthened review.<sup>57</sup> But the about twenty-five important players, representing different positions and geographical regions, found it easier to open up to one another in this *ad hoc* format. Parties came to change their preference rankings. The 'collective preference' of arriving at a deal came to dominate the 'individual state preferences'.<sup>58</sup> The negotiators, therefore, came to balance concessions within the package. This included South Africa and Canada, who were major bridge builders among the parties. A compromise came to emerge in which states initially rallying behind the South African proposal agreed to indefinite extension and those who had backed the Canadian one ceased opposing a strengthened review process.<sup>59</sup>

To be sure, the NWS, especially the United States, muscled in to get the indefinite extension of the treaty done. Egypt, for instance, only gave up its recalcitrance when Clinton called up Mubarak and threatened 'reviewing American aid (\$2.2 billion per year) in light of the Egyptian threats to obstruct NTP extension.'<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, African states successfully co-authored the three decisions and the resolution on the Middle East that the RevExCon produced. The review process was strengthened, more detailed provisions on disarmament

and (, to a lesser degree,) peaceful use were designed, and it was decided that a Middle East peace conference should take place to start preparing the establishment of a NWFZ in this region. Egypt and South Africa, which co-operated closely with Nigeria,<sup>61</sup> had successfully asserted themselves as players to be reckoned with in the nuclear order.

In analytical language, Egypt and Nigeria again enjoyed the status of ‘spokesstates’ for Africa. South Africa, just having overcome Apartheid and giving up its nuclear capabilities, had plenty of authority inside and also outside NAM. Reaching out globally again proved to be very important. The African players did not confine themselves to the African Group<sup>62</sup> or even NAM. Reaching out to other NNWS and even NWS, they could accomplish much more. The broad networking strategy paid off again. The advocacies were closely linked to already agreed upon principles. For the most part, they were elaborations of Articles 5 (peaceful use), 6 (disarmament) and 7 (regional NWFZ) of the NPT.

These elaborations on the foreground institutions were a major success for NNWS in general and African states in particular. But the South African negotiator Peter Goosen got it exactly right. Ultimately, the result was ‘not an end to the issue but rather a beginning. The agreed principles and objectives will be brought up at future review conferences as a yardstick for progress.’<sup>63</sup>

### **Making the TPNW, ca 1980-2017**

The making of the 2017 TPNW, also often referred to as Nuclear Ban Treaty, would not have been possible without a prior change of background institutions. By the 1980s, the advocacy by non-state actors that there is a humanitarian imperative to strengthen arms control had made inroads into inter-state diplomacy. This turn towards a humanitarian perspective was reinforced in the 1990s, when the concept of human security gained more and more currency. State and non-state actors from Africa were very much involved in these processes. The

humanitarian lens was put to use more and more in discussions about banning landmines and cluster munition. Starting in 2010, the perspective was applied to the nuclear order by a number of actors, too. South Africa played a leading role in pushing the agenda forward.

It is difficult to date the beginning of the process that led to the TPNW. Advocacies for banning nuclear weapons even precede the first explosion of a nuclear device.<sup>64</sup> Yet the paradigmatic ideas underpinning the TPNW have a lot to do with a long-standing stance taken by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). From the 1980s onwards, they argued vehemently that, from a medical point of view, nuclear weapons and concerns about national security do not match. What really matters is the security of the human being. Nuclear attacks cause unimaginable human suffering. No medical service in the world would be able to help the victims (Bonhoeffer and Gerecke 1987).

This amounts to a fundamentally different lens through which to look at nuclear weapons. National security had been the prevailing reference object of the nuclear order for decades. IPPNW challenged this paradigm. From the start, IPPNW was a transnational movement. Doctors from Africa, Asia and Latin America always featured prominently within its ranks. IPPNW tried to lobby states and international organisations. Early on, it was not all that successful with the former but left a mark on the latter. The World Health Assembly passed Resolution WHA34.38 (1983), requesting experts to write a study on the effects of nuclear war on health care systems. The report, published in 1984, underlined in detail that such systems could not cope at all.<sup>65</sup> One of the experts who wrote the report was the Nigerian General Olusegun Obasanjo.

When Obasanjo became president of Nigeria, he continued his involvement with civil society. In 1988, he founded a non-for-profit organisation that was called Africa Leadership Forum (ALF). The forum lobbied for security to refer to human beings rather than states.<sup>66</sup> In its annual report of 1994, the United Nations Development Programme coined the concept of

human security.<sup>67</sup> This concept was further pushed for by Kofi Annan when he served as UN Secretary-General, culminating in his report *In Larger Freedom*, which he delivered to the Heads of State and Government at the General Assembly in 2005.<sup>68</sup> This more general diplomatic move towards human security reinforced the earlier attempts to move the nuclear order into this direction.

In 1996, the Canberra Commission, a hybrid panel consisting of representatives from state and non-state actors, foreshadowed the application of the human security lens to nuclear arms control. Egypt's Nabil Elaraby, a highly respected diplomat with plenty of expertise on nuclear issues, was on this panel.<sup>69</sup> Two years later, the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) formed. Its members (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and originally also Sweden and Slovakia) took up many ideas from the Canberra Commission, including the understanding of human security and its linkage to nuclear arms control. In 2007, NAC introduced the human security lens to the PrepCom for the 2010 RevCon.<sup>70</sup> It put to use traditional and non-traditional diplomatic channels to diffuse this new line of argumentation.

At the beginning of the PrepCom, which took place in Vienna, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was officially launched at the office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the same city. IPPNW was part of this network from the very beginning. ICRC has not formally been part of it but always cooperated very closely with it. ICAN is a global network of international and domestically based civil society organisations. In 2017, i.e. the year the TPNW was concluded, civil society organisations from no less than 25 African states were active in this network. This number was second only to Europe and significantly higher than that for Asia and Latin America.<sup>71</sup>

Ten days before the 2010 RevCon started, Jakob Kellenberger, president of the ICRC and also an experienced Swiss career diplomat, gave a speech to the diplomatic corps in

Geneva. This speech formulated the full advocacy of looking at nuclear weapons through the lens of human security.<sup>72</sup> The speech inspired 16 states to launch what was soon to become known as the Humanitarian Initiative (HI), i.e. Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, the Holy See, Egypt, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa and Switzerland. Of these, six states were particularly active. Diplomats from Austria, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Switzerland and initially also Norway were repeatedly the voice of HI, being very active advocates and delivering joint statements.

HI did not leave much of a mark on the Final Document of this RevCon. It was briefly mentioned in the midst of the document but did not even come close to being an agreed-upon new lens through which to look at nuclear issues.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the human security advocacy, always strongly supported by ICAN and the ICRC, gained more and more momentum. At the 2012 PrepCom, the HI joint statement was still confined to the original 16 states. At the General Assembly's First Committee a few months later, the number increased to 35. By the time South Africa delivered the HI joint statement to the 2013 PrepCom, there were already 78. Again a few months later, 125 states backed the joint statement delivered at the First Committee. This extraordinarily high level of support continued at HI conferences in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna (2013-2014). In Vienna, African states formed once more a coherent group of states, circulating a joint statement and giving no less than twenty individual country statements aligned with this statement.<sup>74</sup>

The Vienna conference produced the Humanitarian Pledge. This Pledge signified the beginning of a new phase. In its formative stages, HI had been about making the background institution of human security – a new lens through which to look at nuclear weapons – stick with an ever increasing number of state and non-state actors. The Pledge affirmed this lens. Yet, at the same time, it also moved beyond this affirmation by postulating to revisit

foreground institutions in light of this new background institution. It vowed to ‘fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons’. The Pledge was formally endorsed by 127 states. Among these were 47 African states, making this the strongest regional grouping within HI. Additionally, 23 states (among these six African ones) of those who did not formally endorse the Pledge voted in favour of it at the United Nations General Assembly.<sup>75</sup>

With NWS vigorously rejecting HI, the latter pushed forward without the former, emulating the experiences of the landmine and cluster munition conventions. Given the overwhelming support for HI, it proved easy to pass a resolution in the General Assembly about commencing negotiations regarding a legal instrument to ban nuclear weapons in December 2016.<sup>76</sup> Negotiations could be completed swiftly in two negotiation rounds in Spring and Summer 2017. The core group of states exerting the most influence was composed of Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico and South Africa. Algeria, Cuba, Egypt, Iran and Venezuela were also outspoken but experienced difficulties in making some of the more far-reaching proposals stick. Since the states had a history of like-mindedness and campaigning together, they did not encounter any major difficulties in reaching compromises. For example, the treaty includes two avenues for NWS to join the treaty, one is to ‘disarm and join’ and the other to ‘join then disarm’. The former pathway goes back to a South African proposal.<sup>77</sup> The treaty was adopted in July 2017.

To sum up, it took a while for the humanitarian argument to enter debates on nuclear arms control. The bans on landmines and cluster munition entered into force years before HI gained momentum in the nuclear order. But inspired by what happened in these adjacent orders, HI came then to make rapid progress. No other world region asserted itself more strongly in HI than Africa did. South Africa, positioning itself well first among NAC and then the original small grouping of states creating HI built bridges to other groupings of states.

This proved to be important for making HI's membership expand further and further. What neither African actors nor any other HI parties have been able to accomplish, however, is to make NWS embark on nuclear disarmament. Again, therefore, the TPNW can only be a beginning. It is not an end.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this article show that African diplomacy did make a difference in shaping the global nuclear order although NWS were not easily swayed. In the 1960s, newly independent African states played their part in broadening the agenda of nuclear arms control. The triadic background structure – not just non-proliferation but also disarmament and peaceful use – provided the frame within which the negotiations about the foreground institutions enshrined in the NPT took place. African states were, for the most part, sidelined when the NPT was designed. But this design rested upon the background institutions that were co-authored by African states. The background institutions persisted during the negotiations for extending the NPT indefinitely. This time around, African states, above all South Africa and Egypt, were much more successful in co-authoring new foreground institutions as well. More recently, African state and non-state actors asserted themselves in HI. They played a major role in making human security sink in as a new background institution and in building the foreground institutions codified in the TPNW upon these newly laid foundations.

How did African actors make a difference? Analysing authorities, networking strategies and messages goes a long way towards explaining this. During the analysed time period, some African states were globally recognised as 'spokesstates' for Africa. This pertained especially to Egypt, Nigeria and, since the mid-1990s, South Africa. Given this status, they were heard. Broad networking was an important diplomatic strategy used by African states. In the nuclear order, African actors teamed up together<sup>78</sup> and connected with

other states from the global south as well as neutral European states. This broad network amplified the opportunities for African actors to push for their positions.<sup>79</sup> Successful advocacies were built upon already agreed upon institutions. The case for revisiting foreground institutions in 1995, for example, was underpinned by the triadic background structure as well as already existing foreground institutions codified in the NPT. At first glance, human security is an outlier in this regard. The advocacy for it was not based on an institution that was already entrenched in the nuclear order. At second glance, however, human security was anything but unfamiliar to the actors involved. Some had come to embrace it as a paradigm on development and others as prism through which to make sense of landmines and cluster munition. Human security was imported – in more conceptual language transposed<sup>80</sup> – from adjacent orders that actors crisscrossed on a regular basis.

Plenty of further research on African agency is warranted. To some extent, such an agenda overlaps with the further exploration of the making, re-making and unmaking of orders. At least two issues come to mind immediately: First, more research is required on the relationships between background and foreground institutions. While overcoming the bifurcation of the literature is important for any kind of research on international institutions, it may be particularly important for studying how African actors shape these institutions. Similarly to the making of the NPT, they may at times struggle to leave a mark on negotiating foreground institutions but be more successful in moulding background institutions. If we stay away from studying the latter, we may end up under-estimating African agency. Second, more fine-grained research is necessary on the actors and relations in networks that bring about institutional change. This study focused on Africa's relations with the outside world. While I alluded to intra-African relations in all three cases under scrutiny, more research on these relations and individual actors – leaders, diplomats, civil society actors – is warranted. It

would tell us more about how networks form and persist, and how they come to be vehicles for institutional change.

Indeed, studying African agency and institutional change becomes more and more important. This is due to the confluence of two simultaneous developments. On the one hand, global orders, ranging from economics to migration and from security to health, are very much in flux. Ongoing debates about the resilience or fall of an overarching 'liberal world order' speak volumes about this fluidity.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, Shaw may very well be right that the increasing inward looking of states in the global north provides new openings for African actors to shape global institutions.<sup>82</sup>

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow the conceptualisation of agency as efficacy from Sewell, 'A Theory of Structure'.

<sup>2</sup> Amin, 'Underdevelopment and Dependence'; and Yates, *Rentier State*.

<sup>3</sup> Rothchild and Emmanuel, 'United States'; and Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy*.

<sup>4</sup> Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence*; and Patman, *Soviet Union*.

<sup>5</sup> Chipman, 'French Military Policy'; and Medard, 'France and Sub-Saharan Africa'.

<sup>6</sup> Bush, *Imperialism*; and Cumming, 'From Realpolitik to the Third Way'.

<sup>7</sup> Campbell, 'China in Africa'; Martin, 'Africa's Futures'; and Mason, 'China's Impact'.

<sup>8</sup> Farrell, 'A Triumph of Realism over Idealism?'; and Hurt, 'Co-operation and Coercion?'

<sup>9</sup> Jabri, *Postcolonial Subject*; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Coloniality*; and Werbner, 'Introduction'.

<sup>10</sup> Hobson, *Eurocentric Conception*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Okafor, 'Poverty, Agency and Resistance'.

<sup>12</sup> Glenn, 'Imperial Governance'.

<sup>13</sup> Matthews, 'Colonised Minds?'; and Shilliam, 'Perilous but Unavoidable Terrain'.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, 'International Relations'.

<sup>15</sup> Brown and Harman, eds., *African Agency*.

<sup>16</sup> Murray-Evans, 'Regionalism and African Agency'.

<sup>17</sup> Besada and O'Bright, 'Maturing Sino-African Relations'.

<sup>18</sup> Samuda, 'African Agency and the World Bank'.

<sup>19</sup> Coleman and Tiekou. eds., *African Actors in International Security*.

<sup>20</sup> For important precursors of this literature, see Mazrui, *Africa's International Relations*; Obasanjo, 'A Balance Sheet'; and Zartman, *International Relations in the New Africa*. See also recent more theoretically-minded clues on African agency: Brown, 'A Question of Agency'; Harrison, *Neoliberal Africa*, 14-18; and Taylor, 'International Relations', 22.

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<sup>21</sup> Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*.

<sup>22</sup> I borrow the distinction of background and foreground from Searle, 'The Background of Meaning'.

<sup>23</sup> Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*; Colson, *Tradition and Contract*; Bull, *Anarchical Society*; Buzan, 'From International to World Society?', pp. 161-204.

<sup>24</sup> Adler, *World Ordering*; Nwanunobi, *African Social Institutions*; and Pouliot, *Pecking Orders*.

<sup>25</sup> Deudney and Ikenberry, 'Liberal World'; Graham, 'Institutional Design'; and Kuperman, *Constitutions and Conflict Management*.

<sup>26</sup> For further details on foreground and background institutions, see \*author\*. If *ubuntu*, for example, were to become widely shared and sink into the social background, it would be a rather different 'standard operating system' upon which to build institutional designs than, say, state sovereignty. On *ubuntu*, see Zondi, 'Ubuntu'.

<sup>27</sup> Newman, *Networks*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Shaker, *The Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty I*, 3-5.

<sup>29</sup> UNGA 1378 (XIV), 20 November 1959.

<sup>30</sup> In 1963, the OAU's first Assembly of African Heads of State and Government passed four resolutions, one of which was about 'general disarmament' (CIAS/Plen.2/Rev.2).

<sup>31</sup> Ahlman, 'Algerian Question'; and Allman, 'Nuclear Imperialism'.

<sup>32</sup> Adeniji, *Treaty of Pelindaba*, 35-41.

<sup>33</sup> Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, *Final Document*.

<sup>34</sup> Boutros-Ghali, 'Foreign Policy of Egypt', 770, 784; Guy, *A to Z*, 106; and Kochan, 'Changing Emphasis', 503-504.

<sup>35</sup> Shaw, 'Nigeria in the International System', 207.

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- <sup>36</sup> Holbraad, *Middle Powers*, 82.
- <sup>37</sup> Ihonvbere, 'Nigeria as Africa's Great Power', 510.
- <sup>38</sup> Holsti, 'National Role Conceptions', 287. Libya could have been a contender for entering this circle of reputable states as well. But its own nuclear ambitions stood in the way.
- <sup>39</sup> Zelleke quoted in Sokolski, 'History of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty', 45.
- <sup>40</sup> Sule Kolo in Sokolski, 'History of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty', 48.
- <sup>41</sup> Sokolski, 'History of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty', 41-42.
- <sup>42</sup> A/RES/2028 (XX), 23 November 1965.
- <sup>43</sup> Sokolski, 'History of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty', 40.
- <sup>44</sup> Swango, 'The United States', 219.
- <sup>45</sup> NPT/Conf. II/C.I/2, Group 77, 1980, 2-3.
- <sup>46</sup> Abdel-Maguid, *Summary Record*; Dabiri, *Summary Record*; Gaynor, *Summary Record*; Elaraby, *Summary Record*; and Nasser, *Summary Record*.
- <sup>47</sup> Fartash, *Summary Record*; Elaraby, *Summary Record*; and Spring, *Summary Record*.
- <sup>48</sup> Carter, *Message to the Participants*.
- <sup>49</sup> Abdel-Maguid, *Summary Record*.
- <sup>50</sup> NPT/Conf. II/C.I/2, Group 77, 1980, 2.
- <sup>51</sup> Brezhnev, *Statement to the Participants*.
- <sup>52</sup> Dhanapala, *Multilateral Diplomacy*, 56.
- <sup>53</sup> Rauf and Johnson, 'After the NPT's Indefinite Extension', 29.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. In the years to follow, the standing of these states in world politics continued to grow, making authors include them in the exclusive club of the 'BRIC plus'. Shaw, Cooper, Antkiewicz, 'Global and/or Regional Development?'
- <sup>55</sup> Alden and Vieira, 'The New Diplomacy'; and Schoeman, 'South Africa'.

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<sup>56</sup> Nzo, *Statement at General Debate*.

<sup>57</sup> Dhanapala, 'Management of NPT Diplomacy'.

<sup>58</sup> Essis, 'Individual State Preferences', 536.

<sup>59</sup> At the beginning of negotiations, most African states joined South Africa's advocacy but there were also a few supporters of the Canadian proposal. See Nwogugu, 'NPT Review and Extension Conference', 262-263.

<sup>60</sup> Steinberg, 'Egyptian-Israeli Debate', 239.

<sup>61</sup> Goosen in Welsh, 'Delegate Perspectives', 2.

<sup>62</sup> This group has a very good record in forging intra-African agreements on nuclear issues. See Murithi, 'Briefing', 666; and van Wyk, 'Africa and the 2015 NPT Review Conference'. On a more general note, see also Tiekou, 'Collectivist Worldview'.

<sup>63</sup> Goosen in Welsh, 'Delegate Perspectives', 3.

<sup>64</sup> Wittner, *One World or None*.

<sup>65</sup> World Health Organization, *Effects of Nuclear War*.

<sup>66</sup> Seegers, 'New Security', 271.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1994*.

<sup>68</sup> Annan, 'In Larger Freedom'.

<sup>69</sup> Canberra Commission, *Elimination of Nuclear Weapons*.

<sup>70</sup> *New Agenda Coalition Paper*.

<sup>71</sup> Data on partner organisations are available online at: <http://www.icanw.org/campaign/partner-organizations/> (accessed December 11, 2017).

<sup>72</sup> Kellenberger, *Statement to the Geneva Diplomatic Corps*.

<sup>73</sup> Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, *Final Document I*, para 80.

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<sup>74</sup> Swart, 'An African Contribution', 760. These states were Niger, Uganda, Djibouti, Lesotho, Zambia, Libya, Malawi, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Ghana, Kenya, Congo, Togo, Algeria, Mali, South Africa, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Chad and Comoros.

<sup>75</sup> A/RES/71/47 (2016).

<sup>76</sup> A/RES/71/258 (2016).

<sup>77</sup> Mukhatzhanova, *Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty*.

<sup>78</sup> For further details on convergences and divergences across African states on cases beyond the three under scrutiny, see Ogunbadejo, 'Africa's Nuclear Capability'; Goldblat, 'Nuclear-weapons-free Zones'; and Cawthra and Moeller, 'Nuclear Africa'.

<sup>79</sup> It is interesting to note that this finding elaborates on something that earlier literature on Africa in international relations already pointed out. Africans stand their ground in global affairs if they reach convergences among one another and link up with other powers in the global north and south. See, for example, Akindele, 'Preoccupation and Conduct' and Zacher, *International Conflicts*.

<sup>80</sup> On transposition, see Sewell, 'A Theory of Structure', 17; Boxenbaum and Battilana, 'Importation as Innovation'.

<sup>81</sup> Deudney and Ikenberry, 'Liberal World'; Nye, 'Will the Liberal Order Survive?'; Schmidt, 'Roots of Neo-liberal Resilience'.

<sup>82</sup> Shaw, 'Future Nexus'.

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