

Positive Steps for the Future of African Studies in Australia**Tanya Lyons***Flinders University***Jay Marlowe***University of Auckland***Anne Harris***Monash University*

When Richard Higgott declared there were “no votes in Africa” back in the early 1980s¹ he could not have foreseen over thirty years later, the success of now former-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s policy to ‘re-engage’ the African continent. Driven by trade and security, aid, development and humanitarian assistance, and for enhanced diplomacy opportunities, and - as Lyons² has argued previously - for the direct strategic opportunity of gaining the support of African Nations to win Australia a seat on the United Nations Security Council. On 18 October 2012 the final votes were cast and the hard work and dedication of Australia’s diplomats had paid off. The current Foreign Affairs Minister Bob Carr’s jubilation managed to incorporate acknowledgement of the efforts of former Prime Minister Rudd as well as Carr’s predecessor Stephen Smith. While Carr acknowledged the long-term effort by the current labour government to win this temporary seat on the Security Council, cynics have had a lot to say about the \$25 million pricetag for taxpayers. And yet whether intentional or unintentional, there have been marked positive outcomes for our African partners. As Bob Carr stated “It forced us to intensify our diplomacy with, for example, Africa.”³

The enhanced re-engagement with the countries of Africa has also seen increased aid budgets, including importantly the number of scholarships under Ausaid’s *Australia Awards for Africa* scheme increase to 1000 in

¹ Higgott cited in Tanya Lyons, “Australian Foreign Policy Toward Africa” in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), *Middle Power Dreaming, Australia and World Affairs Series 2006-2010*, (Oxford University Press, December 2011), 185.

² Tanya Lyons, 203-207

³ Tony Eastley and Lisa Millar “Australia wins seat on UN Security Council” <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-10-19/australia-wins-seat-on-un-security-council/4321946>, 19 October 2012 (accessed 23 October 2012).

2013. This latter scheme is crucial in enhancing the people-to-people links, re-connecting our increasing African-Australian population with the African continent, as well as providing enhanced opportunities for the Australian tertiary sector to do its bit for African development. The launch of the *Australia-Africa University Network* (see AAUN.edu.au) has thus established itself at a strategically good time. Going forward, the *Australia Awards for Africa* program outcomes will need rigorous assessment to ensure Australian postgraduate studies can be directly applied within the African context. Furthermore, the institutional partnerships fostered by the AAUN will also need assessing for the benefits to African development.

Yet for such costly internationally-focused initiatives, Australian cynics have questioned the meaning of such roles as the temporary Security Council seat, given that vilified nations like 'Rwanda can also get a seat' casting doubt on the validity of the voting process. Such views harken back to general stereotypes about 'Africa' and in Rwanda's case its prevailing legacy of genocide. But that was 18 years ago and much has been achieved in this small land-locked nation since. Its international recognition as both a member of the Commonwealth and now as a non-permanent member of the Security Council should be heralded rather than criticised. This cynical view, heard on an ABC radio news program (19 October 2012), underlines the importance of understanding Africa in Australia. Australia as a self-declared and internationally-recognised middle-power cosmopolitan nation is finally fulfilling Rudd's dream of influencing strategic international directions affecting our region through increased standing in the United Nations. To do so effectively, it is crucial to bring the Australian population along on the journey.

That means taking some steps to educate Australians about Africa, one of AFSAAP's main objectives. While the government has stated that it will not implement 'Recommendation Number 10' from the report of the *Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*, and not establish a national African Studies Centre, there remains enormous scope for AFSAAP and its membership to continue to promote research and education on African issues and affairs. Often this means starting with the acknowledgment that there are now 55 diverse nations in Africa (if we include Western Sahara, now a member of the African Union). In addition, AFSAAP's role continues to be instrumental in promoting and critically examining the diversity of research, knowledge and experience across the continent and throughout the African diaspora, especially in Australia. Lastly, we remain active in informing those who

wish to develop, educate, and invest in Africa, and those who wish to problematise and monitor such investment. Most of all, AFSAAP and the ARAS journal are proud to play a prominent role in disseminating the voices of African Australians who wish to research, write and report on such developments from their own perspectives and experiences.

This issue of ARAS brings together an important collection of scholarly work on African issues that should serve as a major step into understanding Africa in Australia as 2012 draws to a close. Adding to a growing Africa-focused international relations discourse, four articles in this issue highlight the depth and breadth of scholarship in this area. Theo Neethling's article on the role played by South Africa during the recent Libyan crisis, entitled "South Africa, the African Union and International Intervention in Libya: A Critical Appraisal" casts a critical eye on the shifting inter-African political landscape. Nikola Pijovic's contribution explores the 'chaos' that we think is Somalia, but argues that "It is Chaotic but not Chaos" and importantly untangles for ARAS readers the "civil society, local governance and the construction of political order in and around Mogadishu". Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni provides an important contribution to the debates on African development in his article "Coloniality of Power in Development Studies and the Impact of Global Imperial Designs on Africa", and Max Halupka and Cassandra Star delve into the theory of trans-territorial deployments and trans-boundary formations in their article "Maintaining Sovereignty in Africa: The Role of External Forces in Warlord States." The diversity that is at the heart of AFSAAP's strength as an organisation, and of ARAS as an international journal, is evident in this broad scope of enquiry and we are pleased to be able to present them to our readers.

This issue of ARAS also includes three important articles on two of the themes related to a growing strategic focus of Australian aid to African countries: agriculture, and maternal and child health. Paul and Veronica Huddleston's incisive look into "Contract Farming and Technology Transfer in Ghana" will be of interest to all readers with an interest in West Africa; Tom McNamara's "Preliminary Findings on Land Tenure Reform in Malawi and the Possible Effects on Tenure and Food Security for Smallholder Farmers" highlights a rapidly changing and concerning area of development; and Jean Burke's "Language as a resource for improving health: Using Swahili-based concepts in responding to infant HIV" links maternal/child health with resource development. These articles will be of relevance to a broad range of scholars including those from (but not limited to) community health, international relations and

education sectors, and the many scholars here in Australia studying under the *Australia Awards for Africa* scheme.

Finally, returning to the Australian context, two articles from Australian academics examine the challenges and experiences of African Australians engaged in resettlement in Australia. Jane Wilkinson and Kiprono Langat's "Exploring Educators' Practices for African Students from Refugee Backgrounds in an Australian Regional High School" and Anne Harris' "*Culture is our Future: the constitutive role of African Australian film*" are two timely reminders that the changing demographic in Australia is still meeting with resistance from some within the Australian community. These articles highlight the need for greater understanding of the differences that new and recent arrivals from refugee backgrounds need in multiple sectors.

A steadily growing body of research concerning African Australians from refugee backgrounds continues to be reflected in the pages of our journal. And for your interest the 'New Arrivals Research Network' in South Australia assists researchers and the researched to ensure ethics and cultural sensitivities remain a central concern to any research project. Our editorial team continues to work not only for the publication, but also dissemination, of the insightful and rigorous scholarly work published here to further inform research that is being conducted further afield (or in some cases, in isolation). ARAS has been publishing on issues facing African Australians over the last decade and more, and all back issues can be viewed on the AFSAAP website at www.afsaap.org.au. We once again encourage all researchers in this area to build upon these important earlier research publications, extending this excellent work. Our community of researchers can only benefit from communicating with each other and drawing on each other's work.

What better place to do this than our annual AFSAAP conference – this year in Canberra at the Australian National University, November 26-28th. Between annual conferences, the membership of AFSAAP and subscribers to ARAS may like to consider reflecting on your own roles contributing to a growing and more complex understanding of Africa in the Australasian region and globally, and how best to go about such important work.

Indeed, more broadly, you may want to consider how you can influence the Australian government's new role on the Security Council, and provide much-needed, evidence-based research to policy makers as they

continue to develop mutually beneficial and interdependent relationships with the African nations who supported Australia's bid for that temporary seat. And what better place to do that than in these ARAS journal pages? How better to judge the impact of important research on African issues than to see it influence the strategic directions of Australian foreign policy toward Africa? The ARAS editorial team offers the readership our best wishes as the year draws to a close, and looks forward to announcing early results of the first round of AUSAid-funded development research grants in the coming months, and new research from our current *Africa Award* holders studying in Australia. We encourage you to share this important issue of the journal with your friends and colleagues, and encourage them to maintain the strong interdisciplinarity of ARAS throughout 2013.

Bibliography

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Tanya Lyons, "Australian Foreign Policy Toward Africa" in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), *Middle Power Dreaming, Australia and World Affairs Series 2006-2010*, (Oxford University Press, December 2011), 185-207