PART TWO

FRAMING MULTIPOLARITY
CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW DOES THE CHINESE INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AFFECT AFRICAN SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHANGING NATURE OF POWER?

Sanne van der Lugt

Abstract

Both the physical presence of Chinese actors in Africa and the rise of China as a global power in the international system are influencing the international position and relations of African nation states. This chapter discusses briefly the understanding of African statehood, the recent developments in the change of power distribution in the world order, and how the general perspectives of the EU, China and Africa on the recent development towards a multipolar world order influence the political space for African positions. By using Cox’s framework on social forces, forms of states and world order, it argues that China’s new position in the world order and the Chinese involvement in the continent influences the power that African nation states have to exercise sovereignty. The conclusion is that current changes in the world order are about to change the social forces. However, in order to reap the benefits and make use of this window of opportunity, African state leaders need to change their idea of what makes their power legitimate. They need to depend less on strong external actors and more on their own peoples.

Introduction

China’s influence in the world is rising and the question whether or not China will become a superpower can be answered: China is already a global power, albeit a poor one. Last year China surpassed Japan and became the second-largest economy (in absolute terms) in the world, after the United States. Besides being an economic power,