

Strategies for African states in multilateral diplomacy

The DiploFoundation in Belgrade (Serbia) played host to a WebDebate focusing on Multilateral Diplomacy on the African continent. Speakers discussed the impact of colonialism on African states diplomacy power, and the geography and cultural skewance of a multilateral system built with the outlook of the victors of World War II.

Dr Yolanda Kemp Spies¹ and Ambassador Amr Aljowaily² brought the listeners through some of the avenues multilateral African diplomacy can take in the future, how is the African Diplomacy experience informed by the colonial past, and how African states can use of the AU, the Group of 77, The Non-Aligned Movement, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as ECOWAS and SADC to enhance their diplomatic capacity.

Multilateralism and African diplomacy is interwoven with identity: Egypt and South Africa (the countries of today's speakers) are two of only four founding members of UN from the African continent. Today Africa represents the largest regional block in the UN. However, the foundation of the UN coincided with the march towards independence and African state-building was and has been hampered by the artificially set colonial borders. Hence the obsession with African Unity and block formation in multilateral arenas. African unity is needed towards new external powers scrambling for resources on the continent. However, more conversations could shift towards BRICS fora.

In diplomatic manoeuvring and practise more flexibility is needed: Smaller groups of four to five states as drivers rather than a sole focus on a full African block. *The impact of South African and Nigerian hegemony will have to play itself out vis-à-vis African block unity.* Other innovations could be poly-lateral engagement, thereby reaching out beyond the continent. However, capacity is needed. Buyer's remorse on treaty adoption is still a significant problem in the continent. South Africa is one of the exception of diplomatic training with their own academy. African diplomats do not have many think tanks and academic institutions feeding them relevant research findings.

Final advise from the speakers: To set up diplomatic academies – regionally based within RECs to ensure economies of scale. Foreign training gives cultural bias (e.g. Clingendael Institute) and African grown diplomatic practise is a necessity for lasting impact.

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