

## **BOOK REVIEW: The New Scramble for Africa**

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*The New Scramble for Africa* by Pádraig Carmody takes a fresh look at what resources are available in Africa and what different world powers are doing to secure resources from their respective regions. The primary focus is on how this affects different countries and regions economically, but there is an undercurrent of strong human rights violations scattered throughout each chapter. Regardless of the negotiating world power and the individual African country involved, the agenda is “How do we get what we want?” and “Who do we need to pay off to get it?” The new world powers that have come into play are China and India; the rest of the well-known players are the United States, France, Britain, European countries (now in the European Union), and South Africa. Many of these powers have been taking advantage of African countries since the original “scramble” for resources when African territories were colonized by European powers.

The book includes a brief overview of how Africa was colonized by Britain and how African countries have suffered the consequences of this occupation long-term. One of the primary issues that causes ongoing problems for local governments and countries is the way borders were drawn by Britain according to how much land could be occupied and held; this elite mentality was propagated and later emulated by locals. The point in this discussion is that if Africa had been able to divide itself up naturally it likely would have ended up with much larger countries, similar to India, than with a range of

extremely resource rich or poor countries that there are now. The issue of poor geographical divisions between countries coincides with the issue of “successfully” globalizing Africa (but more specifically South Saharan Africa). There is an issue of an extremely unequal distribution of wealth by African elites when it comes to economic growth and development. According to Carmody, “More than half of the population of SSA (South Saharan Africa) live on less than the equivalent of what a dollar a day would buy in the U.S.” (p. 17). Because of the way globalization is being presented and implemented to African elites, the African economy is actually being hurt by globalization instead of bolstered by it.

The arguments that Carmody presents against the current methods of globalization are very persuasive and enlightening. In addition to this, the reflection on colonization and how it stripped the economies of African colonies and enriched Western Europe is very important; it helps us discuss the best way to move forward in globalizing African economies. The effect on the economies is certainly terrible, but what is more tragic is how local elites across the continent are emulating the rule of Britain and are subjugating their own people to keep a very few elite wealthy. Yet while it is difficult to find fault with the arguments that we need to approach globalization differently, Carmody should have given some alternative examples of what fair, successful globalization could or does look like. We are shown the problem without discussing the possibility of fixing those issues in a positive way.

The current westernized world powers discussed as players in the scramble for African resources are Britain, France, the E.U., the U.S., Japan, and South Africa. In all of these interactions, there seems to be a link between relief aid and/or military support being provided in return for something. The degree to which humanitarian aid is used as a bargaining chip with governments and rulers to further the world powers’ interests appears to be overt and completely unimpeded. The way these westernized countries (including South Africa) are taking advantage of suffering economies in countries like Chad and Equatorial Guinea is repulsive and inexcusable. Both of these countries have significant crude oil resources, but instead of using this opportunity to bolster local economies, France

and the U.S. are creating refineries and are importing almost all employees from other locations so they do not have to train locals. Around these refineries, the sex industry is the only area markedly benefitting from economic growth. Again, I wish there was more research and focus on what the local elites' position was in the negotiations with the U.S. and France for resources in Chad and Equatorial Guinea. Why doesn't the author give any details of the negotiations or demands on the local government's side? This by no means justifies the actions and deals made by the U.S. and other world powers (just because they can, does not mean that they should), but the local governments have control over these raw materials and resources. Why aren't they using this opportunity to leverage for jobs and support for their citizens? Is it purely greed on both sides? Carmody needs to provide more information about the negotiation process and not just the end results.

The most recent country to enter into this resource grab is China. China has specific goals for making alliances and gaining control of resources in Africa. China's desires differ from the westernized countries. China wants access to land for agricultural purposes, to capitalize on manufacturing opportunities, to open up a new channel for Chinese migration, and to offer an alternative cooperation with western governments. The primary difference in China's approach to gaining resources is that it wants to work with whatever government or leaders are in power instead of getting involved in the local politics. China is not concerning themselves with the treatment and human rights violations that may be occurring under particular rulers or regimes and is sometimes using these situations to take advantage of those living in poverty. The method China is using is referred to as flexigemony, which strives to work with governments or rulers regardless of how fair their rule is. This is part of China's growth strategy for a "peaceful rise" in which they refuse to force growth through violence, unlike the U.S. who forced democracy through violence in Iraq and Afghanistan (p. 78). Carmody stresses that China's approach is wrong – yet if there was a side by side comparison of China's flexigemony method and the U.S.'s "soft power" method, the United States does not come out looking much better than China. Which is better:

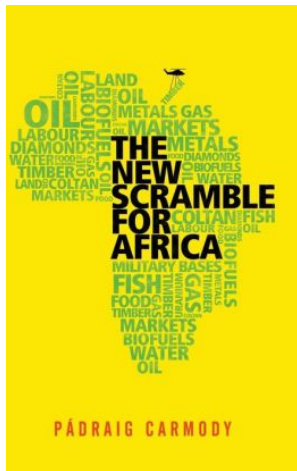
Using “aid” as bribes and to further personal agendas, or openly saying you are in this for your own benefit and negotiating accordingly? Instead of China hiding behind a shield of bribes referred to as “humanitarian aid,” China comes right out and says they are in this for themselves. China’s approach is certainly not the best possible solution to the issue of properly integrating and globalizing the African economies, but it is not much worse than the deceptive and manipulative methods used by most of the western world.

India is taking a similar hands-off approach to trade with Africa. There has been some controversy over India providing humanitarian aid to Africa when its own country has a higher rate of malnourished children per capita, however. While India has sent food to assist in some situations, they are mostly providing more practical goods and services such as mosquito nets and ongoing technical training. China and India are well-known violators of human rights, so there is a lot of controversy surrounding businesses with Chinese or Indian proprietors and the human rights violations that are going on inside of the coal mines, factories, oil fields, and other workplaces large and small. Chinese companies have started putting locally owned companies out of business, and mining companies are paying their workers as little as \$30 per month, for instance. However, in Zambia alone it is estimated that 15,000 jobs were created between 2000 and 2007. This leads to the questions: If the employees are underpaid and poorly treated, is this a good thing overall or a bad thing?

It seems like India has the most balanced interactions with Africa than all of the other countries. They are not seeking to control or overpower, but they are definitely trying to attain resources as much as possible. However, much like China, India is also not too concerned about any human rights violations that are happening with states they have trade agreements with. Overall Carmody has left me wanting to know more about how the local populations are suffering from the Chinese and Indian companies that have moved in and taken over the job market. In these situations the workers have minimal rights, and the companies can just fire the current employees and hire new ones if people try to organize for

labor union formation. While this is terrible, it seems like without governmental support and regulations there is not much that can be done about this. So what is the solution?

The author concludes the book with the idea that African countries are using opportunities from China to compete with and stop the U.S. from making demands by withholding aid, and that it is ultimately up to African countries to determine if they will collaborate with each other or continue to make short-term bargains with other world powers. *The New Scramble for Africa* is definitely an educational and eye-opening read. I think Carmody spends too much time focusing on individual instances of economic corruption and spends entirely too little time on the real ways the meddling of world powers affects the local people and how the outcomes could have been different. Until the end of the book, there is almost no discussion of local governments and politics inside of each country and how internal corruption has contributed greatly to the ongoing economic failure in most governments. Yes, the world powers are absolutely guilty of securing resources any way they can, but it is ultimately the local elites and governments that have not negotiated on behalf of their own citizens for jobs, protections, and other opportunities that could be available to them. Instead the elites have taken a small percentage of the profits for themselves. If you are interested in reading about how so-called “first world”, westernized countries have taken advantage of Africa historically through colonization, and are currently taking advantage under the flag of globalization, then this book does an excellent job of portraying how valuable an asset Africa is to the world powers. It would be better if other background information was provided on what kind of internal corruption has occurred inside of African countries to maintain the status quo that was set up by the original colonization.



**Book Information**

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