

John Anthony Pella, Jr. (2015). *Africa and the Expansion of International Society: Surrendering the Savannah, London and New York: Routledge. 205 pages. ISBN: 9780415662000*

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The expansion of international society is a highly-debated subject in International Relations – a subject whose main scope is closely associated with the European continent and European people. Nonetheless, in his book, *Africa and the Expansion of International Society: Surrendering the Savannah*, John Anthony Pella, Jr examines the expansion of international society by concentrating on the people of the region. The author's well-organized study offers unorthodox-seminal insights into the expansion of international society and challenges the commonly-held view that the expansion of international society is dominated by Europeans. It makes the contributions and impacts of both the West-Central African region and its people into the expansion narrative and the concept of world society visible.

The book is divided into eight chapters, with the first being an introduction, followed by two theoretical chapters, four empirical chapters, and a brief conclusion. The first two main chapters of the book, entitled 'Studying the expansion of international society' and 'Towards a deeper empirical and theoretical understanding' respectively, draw upon the theoretical framework of the English School. The author theoretically and empirically criticizes the contemporary studies concerning the expansion discourse, such as "World System Theory" of Immanuel Wallerstein and Charles Tilly's book of "Coercion, Capital, and European Studies"; however, his principal critics and focus are largely upon "The Expansion of International Society" by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson. These works are revisited to form a theoretical base for subsequent examinations. In this sense, the remaining chapters are allocated to the empirical analysis of how West-Central African dynamics are crucial to the expansion process, drawing extensively upon primary and secondary sources that draw the reader's attention. To that end, Chapter 4, which is the beginning of the empirical research, delves into the unique system of the West-Central African region. According to the classification made by the author, the regional African international system features four different types of political organizations – stateless societies, savannah states, consolidated savannah states, and

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hinterland states. This chapter also focuses on factors such as slavery, war and trade, which directly have bearings on the expansion process and the relationship amongst states in that system.

The fifth chapter of the book looks into the African and European interaction taking place between 1434 and 1650. In this chapter, the author discusses the changing nature of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which was one of the factors that strained the relationship between the Africans and Europeans. Whereas the Africans who were reluctant concerning the sale of African slaves to the Europeans saw them as a part of their society as well as a vital element of the traditional social system; the Europeans attached an economic-oriented approach to slavery, which eventually would spark conflict on multiple occasions. Later on, many African elites and merchants changed their understanding of slavery and benefitted from the slave trade economically. The sixth chapter, covering the period between 1775 and 1875, offers an account of how the interaction between people living in Europe and Africa shifted away from the slave trade towards civilizing attempts that aimed at forcefully transforming uncivilized and pagan African people. The intriguing argument in this chapter is that while the slave trade, which was declared illegal by a few countries like Britain, provided economic gains for the Europeans who were willing to employ Africa slaves for trading, the Europeans who attached a different meaning to the slavery attempted to civilize Africans in accordance with the norms, values and practices that were widely accepted by the Europeans, such as free trade and Christianity. The last empirical chapter of the book studies the unbridled competition between the Africans and Europeans in the period between 1859 and 1884, which resulted in the European supremacy over the African continent. As is discussed in this chapter, Social Darwinism, based on the belief of the survival of the fittest, played a crucial role in shaping the Europeans' mindset and ultimately encouraged the competition between the two sides. Many Europeans, thanks to this belief, began to perceive that they could demonstrate their superiority over Africans through both political and military means, as Africans were biologically and racially inferior. In this connection, the author also argues that as the Europeans were expanding their interests on the African continent in line with this idea, the Africans who were drawn into the competition realized the importance of the cooperation with any one of the Europeans. Hence, African rulers and elites took advantage of this situation for their own, such as protection against both African and European states, which enabled Europeans to easily formed military alliances and formal political agreements to both exploit the region and take the region under their control. In the concluding chapter of the book, each chapter's detailed findings are summarized, and some essential conclusions about the discussions in the previous chapters are presented.

Regarding originality, firstly, much of the book is dedicated to the examination, which brings the West-Central Africa and its people into expansion studies through a detailed analysis of primary historical sources. For instance, in the interaction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, an effective socio-institution in the development of international society, the trade was shaped by "the African

side that decided the laws and practices that structured the trade” (p. 83) unearths that the expansion process of international society is not characterized unilaterally by the Europeans; however, it is a comprehensive and diverse interaction that dictated the fate of the expansion. On the other hand, the book’s author successfully employs the world society approach of the English School with a view to demonstrate “the significance of individual interaction, and the common interests, values, norms and ideologies that bring individuals together outside the state during the expansion of international society” (p. 19). Whilst the role and impact of the non-state actors have been marginalized or pigeonholed in the scholarly-expansion studies, the author uncovers that the non-state society, which “evolved from initially associative society to later communal society and competitive society respectively” (p. 43), sealed the fate of international society’s expansion from the very beginning of the African-European interaction. In other words, in light of the reflection upon the ‘scramble for Africa’ and ‘obligation to civilize’, this is also to say that throughout the 15th century to the 20th century, it was the African and European people rather than states that were the prominent actors in shaping and conditioning the expansion process, which features both economic, socio-institutional and political dimensions.

Pella’s work suffers from three significant shortcomings about which are concerned essential aspects that can impact on the interaction between the European and non-European sides, as well as the expansion of international society. First, the author provides a historical account on the role and contributions of the West-Central Africa and West Central Africans in the expansion period at length, using a wide range of primary and old-dated resources; nevertheless, he does not mainly investigate the analysis of the possible impact(s) and contribution(s) of the North-Africa and North Africans in the expansion process of international society. Considering the fact that the North-African region also came into contact with the Europeans and was colonized by European powers in world history, the author, unfortunately, does not elaborate on them. The second shortcoming of the book evolves out of that the significance of Islam in the West-Central Africa is acknowledged by the author himself when he writes that “Here, from the ninth through the late sixteenth century, the succession of Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires meant that the area was consistently under the rule of a king invested with divine right in accordance with Islamic tradition.” (p. 58). In addition to this, the beliefs and teachings of Islam were also being spread as in the case of Kankan Mansa Musa – the Muslim king of the Mali Empire – who commissioned advisors and judges in his lands for that purpose. Yet, he dramatically ruled out a comprehensive examination of why Islam as a monotheistic religion cannot play a significant role in the interaction between the two sides. The last one is related, to a large extent, to factors that can be efficient in the changing nature of the expansion process. While the author attempts to provide deep insights into how the domestic factor in both the European continent and the African continent, such as Social Darwinism in Europe and fetishism in the West-Central Africa, played an influential role in the transformation the idiosyncratic society from 1859 to 1900, he considerably fails to take into consideration external factors in this period.

In conclusion, *Africa and the Expansion of International Society* can be a guiding example of how the expansion process is affected by a non-European continent, highlighting the role and impact of West-Central Africa and West-Central Africans into the expansion of international society. It also provides a good understanding for the African region and makes contributions to the empirical studies regarding the expansion of international society on account of primary sources presented throughout the empirical chapters. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that *Africa and the Expansion of International Society* of which language style is easy to follow the discussions in the book will be of interest to the readers who intend to gain eye-opening insights into the expansion of international society, the English School and world society approach, European colonialism, and the history of Africa-Europe relations, in particular before the European arrival. Nevertheless, it should be noted here that this study is especially instructive for students of International Relations and Political Sciences.