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Mayke Kaag, Alena Thiel & István Tarrósy (Eds). *Trust and Trust-Making in Africa's Global Connections*. Leiden: Brill, 2025. 148 pages. ISBN# 978-90-04-73476-0.

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This edited book focuses on the notion of trust and distrust in the context of Africa's global connections. The book is premised on the overarching theme of the poly-crisis and relies on several empirical case studies. It weaves in contexts ranging from development, climate change, health, trade, and soft power interventions to elucidate layers of trust and distrust while simultaneously centering Africa in global conversations. The chapters in the book diversely demonstrate how 'trust' works in global connections, far removed from the well-known facets of 'trust' in interpersonal relations.

The book pursues the thesis that trust-building in global contexts is often punctuated by, among others, the notions of remoteness, difference, and power imbalances. The chapters in the end situate how trust is to, sometimes, be navigated through normative structures, but also through adaptation. The chapters observe that trust is under constant navigation and carries with it consequences when distrust is present. A key strength of the book is its focus on trust as a concept to explore Africa's agency in the global world, which in turn helps to interpret politics, development, and interpersonal relations in a globalized world.

The book—following an introduction that situates the focus of the book on the notion of trust and distrust in Africa's global connection—is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector with an ethnographic case study of Burkina Faso. This chapter makes a case for how transnational NGOs and their local interlocutors navigate trust in their work. The chapter situates not only how African agency is navigated—for example, in project prioritization—but also how donor preferences influence project trajectories, including in-built accountability mechanisms such as audit trails, to overcome suspicion of local project partners. This chapter further nuances how such sensitivities, such as prioritization of donor preferences, affect not only the entry of projects but also their reception.

Chapter 2 examines trust and trust-making among the members of the Senegalese Murid Sufi order residing in Amsterdam, but also among other migrant communities and the wider diaspora. This chapter demonstrates trust-making among Senegalese through the rise of mutual self-help associations (*dahiras*), which support communities in navigating social life—navigations largely influenced by their religious inclination and morality. This chapter also illustrates the distrust that arises with other migrant communities, as well as their interventions in trust building. This chapter further situates the Senegalese community's difficulties in meeting with local authorities in a changing context, where integration is pegged on individuality and the pursuit of an 'Amsterdam identity' with less emphasis on ethnic-based organizing.

Chapter 3 focuses on trust and trust-making in the distribution and consumption of Chinese-made electronics and household appliances in Ghana. This chapter situates how entrepreneurship is navigated by overcoming what it terms the Chinese 'dilemma' around the quality and authenticity of their products. The chapter documents several trust-building mechanisms that include event sponsorships such as football matches, persuasive advertisements, and celebrity endorsements on the part of corporations. Consumers, on the other hand, navigate trust dilemmas with Chinese products through product validations from previous users, references to online reviews, offers of product warranties, and trial purchases.

Chapter 4 takes a historical focus with a case of trust-making between Hungary and Africa since the 1950s. This chapter focuses broadly on public diplomacy and particularly the use of soft power, such as the granting of educational scholarships and cultural exchanges, which in the long term have enhanced bilateral relations and trade opportunities. The chapter situates Cold War solidarity in Africa's neo-colonial struggles, a period of retreat in bilateral relations following the 1990s, and the return of bilateral relations in the mid-2000s. In summary, it situates the significance of education in building long-term connections and ultimately in shaping worldviews and interpersonal relations.

Chapter 5 focuses on trust and distrust between the Global North and South in conversations around climate justice. This chapter calls for epistemic justice, particularly in responding to the impacts of climate change. It highlights the role of climate change activists who challenge existing layers of structural inequalities linked to climate change. It foregrounds relevant conversations around trust in climate change, as guided by conversations around responsibility, vulnerability, and mitigation. The chapter situates the *Ubuntu* philosophy, an indigenous knowledge framework, and how it can be adapted to climate change. Additionally, the chapter

references the degrowth moment as a strategic imperative to reduce the negative impacts of climate change.

Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, is written in a conversational and critical lens, speaking to the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter illustrates how the pandemic exposed the crisis of governance across the planet. Weaved through the overarching theme of trust and distrust, it speaks to the response gaps that were experienced globally, especially in preparedness and accountability, with a particular focus on Africa. It speaks to varying levels of trust and distrust in government as response measures were rolled out.

In conclusion, the chapters in the book, while drawing on varied ethnographic contexts, serve to illustrate how trust and distrust manifest amidst global connections. The case studies are inspired by the current policy crisis that is marked by many dynamics such as the climate crisis, which helps to illustrate trust and distrust. The chapters illustrate Africa's agency in varied facets of global relations—ranging from education, development, and climate change. The contributions demonstrate trust-making in progress, but also the barriers and interventions needed to overcome some of the systemic challenges of our time. The book is a welcome addition for scholars interested in African Studies, African International Relations, and Anthropology. It can be used as a core text in introductory classes in International Relations for graduate students.

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