

WHITHER AGENDA 2063? THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GOVERNANCE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA(SSA)¹

BY

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1. Introduction

Africa has been described by various scholars and those interested in the continent as a ‘dark’, ‘lost’ and backward agglomeration of persons suffering from underdevelopment, backwardness, and poverty. While it is a fact that SSA was colonized and millions of its people were trafficked as slaves to work in the Americas, United Kingdom and various islands either owned by European countries and/or ‘discovered’ by them. The economic implications of transatlantic slave trade on the African continent though adverse can never be properly analyzed – loss of skilled manpower, loss of human, material and natural resources, loss of independent thinking, loss of respect and dignity. The transatlantic slave trade has been one of the world’s known history of human brutality and wickedness, never imagined. Animals were treated better than the Africans. During the Berlin Conference in 1884, Africa was shared as a piece of cake to various colonial powers except the USA which of course was deeply involved in the slave trade.

The Africans resisted slavery and oppression but lack the instruments required to fight back. Nonetheless, the resistance continued in various forms. Several of the African leaders, for example, who refused to participate in slavery were either killed or sent to die in exile. Even our brothers and sisters who were taken to Europe, America, Caribbean etc continued to resist and fight for freedom.

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Our brothers and sisters who were taken to the USA – some returned back and settled in Liberia. It is for this reason that the capital of Liberia is named after President Monroe of the USA while the flag of Liberia is the American flag with one star. The returnees sloganized that “the love of Freedom Brought Us Here”. Liberia was never colonized like the other countries in SSA but the relationship between the Americo-Liberians and the Indigenes was never cordial for the most part during the 19th century. Britain, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal owned colonies. Italy occupied Ethiopia for some time and the influence of Italy is still felt in Ethiopia.

Africans received colonial education through missionaries for the most part. Consequently, the agitation for freedom from colonial rule was intense from the 17th century in almost all the countries in SSA. In some countries like Zimbabwe (former Rhodesia – named after the son of Cecil Rhodes, an explorer), Malawi, Zimbabwe had settler regimes fully supported by their home countries. Kenya also had white settlers. South Africa, Namibia had both the British and the Dutch but the later finally took after and established apartheid, that is, a policy of separate development. The apartheid regime was another form of cruel oppression beyond description. In all the countries, there was resistance and when crushed by the colonialists, the Africans never gave up.

It must be stated that there were colonialists who were against slavery and exploitation. The intense agitation by Africans for freedom began to yield some results. In some of the countries the resistance movement had to form National Liberation Armed struggle to gain freedom such as Angola, Algeria, Mozambique, South Africa, Guinea Bissau, among others. Other countries utilized civil disobedience to drive the message of emancipation. African themselves established two blocs namely the Casablanca group and the Morocco Bloc. It is the coming

together of these two blocs that gave rise to the Organization of African Unity, the precursor to the African Union. The few African countries which had political independence such as Algeria and Ghana assisted others to press the need to throw away the colonial shackles. For example, when Ghana became independent on March 7, 1957, Kwame Nkrumah declared that the independence of Ghana was incomplete except it is linked to the total liberation of Africa.

In the 1940s -1960s, African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Kenneth Kaunda, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sekou Toure, Modibo Keita of Mali, Ben Bella, Abdul Gamel Nasser etc were in the forefront of assisting other countries to gain independence. It is known that Algeria under Ben Bella trained many freedom fighters who fought to liberate Angola, Mozambique etc. Zambia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana etc played significant roles in countries which later gained political independence. The last of the countries to be free from colonial and apartheid rule was South Africa.

It is on record that Africa is the only continent which in less than 100 years liberated itself from colonial rule and most of the credit must go to the Organization of African Unity (OAU). However, political independence did not come with economic independence. Hence, after political independence, SSA was characterized by neo-colonialism – fully integrated in the world capitalist system as producers and suppliers of raw materials to their former colonial masters.

There were African leaders who strived for the unity of the continent. Osagefo Kwame Nkrumah was one of the Pan Africanist that preferred a United African government. In fact, in 1963 before the OAU meeting in Addis Ababa, Kwame Nkrumah published a book titled: **Africa Must Unite**. In the book he laid out all the economic and political conditions as well as the required institutions necessary for a United African Government. It is, therefore, significant that it has taken the African Union(AU) to articulate an **Agenda 2063** as the year to

concretize the Africa We Want. The same Kwame Nkrumah also wrote a book titled: **Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism.**

After the OAU had ‘completed’ the decolonialization agenda, it began to work towards a united Africa that would be economically self-reliant by 2063.

2. State of the African Economy

The economies in SSA have experienced all the phases of a typical business cycle – boom, decline, trough and recovery. The macroeconomic fundamentals have fluctuated over the years. In the last ten years, growth averaged about 3.5 percent slightly above the population growth rate of 3 per cent. Inflation in most of the countries hovers around 12 percent. The rate of unemployment is high and disturbing. While the rate of unemployment is about 30 per cent, the rate for youths is almost 45 per cent. The continent is not industrialized hence manufacturing contributes less than 10 per cent to GDP. The notion that services contribute about 55 per cent to GDP is misleading because the services sector in Africa is rudimentary and not linked to the manufacturing sub-sector. Overall, the misery index in Africa continues to rise and the continent houses the largest population of poor people in the world, no matter how poverty is defined.

Consequently, after about 60 years of political independence, SSA remains underdeveloped and backward. This is not to suggest that there are no pockets of modernization. The political independence has resulted in the training of Africans in different skills and competencies but the vision of the founding fathers of the OAU seem to have eluded the present generation. Africa for the most part remains the supplier of raw materials in various forms to developed countries and an importer of finished goods. It is this organic and unequal relationship that must be broken. The march towards economic independence and unity culminated in Agenda 2063.

3. Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063, rooted in Pan Africanism and Africa Renaissance, provides a robust framework for addressing past injustices and the realization of the 21st century as the African century. There are seven elements of the Africa we want:

- (i) A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.
- (ii) An integrated continent, politically united based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and vision of Africa Renaissance.
- (iii) An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.
- (iv) A peaceful and secure Africa.
- (v) An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics.
- (vi) An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youths, and caring for children.
- (vii) Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.

An extract from the Voices of the African People states clearly:

“We, the people of Africa and her Diaspora, united in diversity, young and old, men and women, girls and boys from all walks of life, deeply conscious of history, express our deep appreciation to all generation of Pan-Africanists. In particular, to the founders of the Organization of African Unity for having bequeathed us in Africa with exemplary successes in the fight against slavery, colonialism and apartheid....”

The AU had the first Ten Year Implementation Plan 2014-2023 in place. Some of the organs and institutions needed to realize Agenda 2063 have been set in motion.

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are in place in different zones. There is the East African Community, Economic Community of West African States, SADDAC etc. These RECs are the foundation for uniting the economies of Africa.

There are plans to have an African Finance Fund, African Investment Bank, African Central Bank, among others. The recent ratification by all the African countries (except one) of the African Continental Free Trade Zone perhaps points to the seriousness of Agenda 2063. The prototype of an African passport is available but the free movement of goods, services and persons with Africa remain a challenge.

4. Governance Conundrum

The road to 2063 cannot be smooth; to reach the promise land, all stakeholders must be committed. Leadership at all levels must rule by example. The present attitude of leaders as regards governance must change in the right direction. Presently, the economies of Africa are characterized by corruption, lack of accountability to the people, tribalism, nepotism as well as security challenges. The role of the state in Africa must be to serve the people; the present heavy doses of misrule must be halted if 2063 is to be realized.

5. Conclusion

There is no doubt that development is a struggle hence all stakeholders and non-Africans interested in the development of the continent must be committed to Agenda 2063. With the human, material and natural resources in Africa, there is no excuse to have so much poverty and misery among our people. Let us make our heroes past be proud in their graves by uplifting the standard of living of Africans.

This conference is not only apt but a turning point in examining the political and economic issues as the continent implements Agenda 2063. We must strive to give the present and future generations of our people in Africa and the diaspora a brighter tomorrow and beyond.

Thank you for your attention.