

Contemporary Issues in Africa's Development

Contemporary Issues in Africa's Development:

*Whither the African
Renaissance?*

Edited by

Richard A. Olaniyan
and Ehimika A. Ifidon

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PREFACE

The inspiration to embark on the writing of this book came from a course, *IS 390: International Studies*, co-taught by the late Professor Lillian Trager of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside and Professor Richard Olaniyan of the Obafemi Awolowo University in the Spring Semester of 2006. Using an innovative method which provided a ‘virtual exchange’ experience in which UW-Parkside students were linked with students at OAU in Nigeria in a weekly on-line discussion via the internet, the course explored a wide range of contemporary issues and problems in Africa and sought to understand them in their social, political, cultural and historical contexts. Those issues are not dissimilar from the ones represented in the following chapters.

There is no doubt that Africa has been quite a dynamic continent. Unlike other continents where changes have occurred within a specific and anticipated range, and, therefore been controllable, Africa has suffered severe returns necessitating new beginnings. Nothing would seem to have escaped this law-like and seemingly cyclical pattern of development: its economies have oscillated between forms of state control and free-fall models; its politics between militarization and democratization; and its cultural life hanging somewhere between the African and conceptions of the Western. The African condition is characterized by two distinct features: economic crisis in an era of globalization; and political weakness caused by centuries of oppression, exploitation, bad governance, and marginalization. Africa is in a state of crisis, and diverse manifestations of Africa’s destitution in critical areas demonstrate this. Consider the following data:

- although endowed with abundant human and natural resources, Africa remains the least developed and most indebted continent;
- more than thirty of the forty-seven countries considered least developed are in black Africa, and 50% of the population living in the region are considered among the world’s poorest, earning less than a dollar a day;
- the continent suffers from infrastructural deficit: poor road network, poor communication facilities; and poor access to electricity and potable water;

- Africa has the highest incidence of malaria and HIV/AIDS;
- the continent is the most conflict-ridden, war-torn, and politically unstable, and suffers from problems of refugees and internally displaced people;
- Africa depends heavily on food import, and her peoples' calorie intake is below the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization;
- educationally backward, technologically unprepared, and with a low level of industrialization, Africa remains an exporter of primary commodities and natural resources;
- even though the continent constitutes 12% of the global population, it contributes less than 1% of the world's trade and services; and
- Africa suffers from deplorable environmental disasters consequences of oil and mineral exploration, exploitation and spillage and deforestation that destroy the ecosystem.

It is no wonder that only four African countries: Mauritius, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia, fell within the 1-100 range in the Human Development Index ranking for 2011 and 2015, while the seventeen bottommost countries in the 2015 ranking are from Africa.¹

What seems obvious is the fact that the issues thrown up by the African situation have been recurrent: absence of good governance whether democracy exists or not, political corruption, personalization of state power, widespread diseases, persistent policy failure in education, economy and infrastructural development and dependence on Western (and now, Asian) expertise. Yet, the current form of these issues cannot be said to be the same as they were some decades ago. Intervening factors in the domestic and international environment, and in the intellectual and policy environment, have caused mutations and transformations of a qualitative character. What are the contemporary forms of these problems? This is the central question that this collection of essays has responded to.

The making of this volume, in a sense, was not a guided process. There was no seminar or workshop to identify or determine the focus, approach, perspective or even documentation system that contributors should adopt beyond advertising the general theme: Contemporary Issues in Africa. What is clear from the contributions is the dismalness of the African situation. Is this apparently "realistic, hard-headed analysis of African

¹ UNDP, *Human Development Report, 2011* (New York: UNDP, 2011), 126; and *Human Development Report, 2015* (New York: UNDP, 2015), 208-211.

conditions”² not another exercise in Afro-pessimism? But is any other analytical outcome possible?

Morgan Tsvangirai (Zimbabwe’s prime minister between 2009 and 2013) described the African condition as “a phase that Africa should accept - mistaken policies, mistaken positions - but it’s a phase all the same.”³ The view that the dismal African condition is a stage in the historical development of the continent is an aspect of the now clearly fictive African Renaissance, at least in its most recent and peculiarly South African conceptualization. But what should have been attached as a preface is a description of Africa’s golden age that has motivated a rebirth. Has African existence in the past 200 years been anything but dismal? Where is evidence of the African Renaissance? To claim, as Gilley has done, that the African Renaissance is now over, and that across sub-Saharan Africa since the early 2000s “tyranny, stagnation, and conflict are on the rise again”⁴ is to suggest that the 1990s of civil wars, genocide, economic decline and political instability represented the period of the African Renaissance. Or is such an interpretation of Africa “based on Western imagination rather than on objective facts about the African condition”⁵ The conceptualization of the African Renaissance is idealistic, elitist and built on mere hope, and has come to constitute a ‘cargo cult mentality’. Why is it that this hope of African resurgence is not shared by the masses of Africa, but rather situated “along the corridors of power in the richest countries, and among the university elites”⁶

Advertising the African Renaissance without pin-pointing its manifestations, or proclaiming hope of African resurgence amidst much suffering, poverty and insecurity, has become an instrument of political legitimization and ideological correctness for Africa’s elite. The state that is the source of the African crisis is unfortunately the hope for a true African renaissance. But as van de Walle has rightly observed,

² Thomas M. Callaghy and John Ravenhill, “Vision, politics, and Structure: Afro-Optimism, Afro-Pessimism or Realism?”, in *Hemmed In: Responses to Africa’s Economic Decline*, ed., Thomas M. Callaghy and John Ravenhill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 2.

³ *TIME*, November 28, 2011, 108.

⁴ Bruce Gilley, “The End of the African Renaissance,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 33(4), 2010, 87.

⁵ Mabogo P. More, “African Renaissance: The Politics of Return,” *African Journal of Political Science*, 7(2), 2002, 71.

⁶ Ama Mazama, “The African Century”, in *Africa in the 21st century: Toward a New Future*, ed., Ama Mazama (New York: Routledge, 2007), xiii.

With a handful of exceptions, the postcolonial state in Africa has been largely antidevelopmental. Parasitic, rent-seeking, and inept, it has been simultaneously very coercive and extremely weak, forced to prey on the economy and civil society - with devastating effect - just to survive. The bureaucracy's effectiveness has typically been undermined by a patrimonial logic, in which state assets are routinely plundered for the political advantage of the regime, and state-society relations have been characterized by clientelism rather than citizenship. The state, powerless to elicit respect or loyalty from the populace, has typically used threats and coercion to achieve minimal - usually passive - acquiescence.⁷

But this is not a new condition. What the colonial state was, the post-colonial state became. The recurrence of the African condition in its varied forms in almost cyclical movements has become persistent. To “understand a slow-moving society, trapped for centuries in a cycle of poverty and tradition and disease and ignorance,” Mills has argued, “requires that we study the historical ground, and the persistent historical mechanisms of its terrible entrapment in its own history.”⁸ To therefore speak of the logic of return within a cyclical framework is not a return informed by knowledge of the past, but by a lack of it. “Those who cannot remember the past,” Santayana’s warning rings true, “are condemned to repeat it.”⁹ Whither the African Renaissance?

We must here express our deep appreciation of the unflinching support and forbearance of the contributors. The publication of this book has taken a much longer time than we ever anticipated. The delay was due, in part, to inevitable changes we had to make at different times on the list of contributors. Now, we are happy to share in their pride and joy that the book is finally out.

⁷ Nicolas van de Walle, “Crisis and Opportunity in Africa,” *Journal of Democracy*, 6(2), 1995, 132-133.

⁸ C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 155.

⁹ George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1906), 284.

PART I:
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

AFRICA AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

RICHARD A. OLANIYAN

The Past in the Present

Some four decades ago, the prolific scholar of African history, consummate journalist and current affairs commentator, Basil Davidson, asked the intriguing question, *Can Africa survive?* It was the title of his contentious book with the sub-title, *Arguments against growth without development.*¹ Today, the question and the sub-title are still relevant and topical. But the thrust of the contemporary discourse is not whether Africa can survive, that has never been an issue, for Africa can and will survive, as Basil Davidson himself unequivocally admitted. The pertinent question is: What are the prospects for growth and development in Africa in this century? It is the issue of growth *and* development that has now engaged the attention of the community of leading lights in the academic and policy-making circles.

Over the years, the concept of development has undergone several transformations from its simple definition in the early 1960s to its present broader, all-inclusive, comprehensive meaning involving all aspects of human preoccupation capable of or requiring improvement and transformation. Development was first conceived as the process of emerging from the state of underdevelopment to one of development as typified by the states of Europe and North America. Later, the concept of development was considered from the comparative point of view as between the developed, industrialized societies, with their moral and material superiority, as against the backward and 'underdeveloped' societies mainly found in essentially non-Western societies of Asia and Africa. It has also been posited by the dependency theorists that the syndrome of growth without development persists when feudal interaction structures, consisting of asymmetrical relations of highly unequal exchanges

and differential beneficial spin-offs dating back to the colonial era, exist in commodity and trade concentration which ties African states (periphery/satellite) in relations of dependence to the developed former colonial centres (metropolis) in particular and the world capitalist system in general. The upshot of this relationship is that the periphery, producers and exporters of primary goods and consumers of manufactured goods from the metropolis, will continue to wallow in underdevelopment, while the metropolitan countries will continue to reap the benefits and enhance their development.

Today, with the emphasis on market value and correct pricing, the consensus of opinion is that development is “a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development and institutional change, are all in harmony, and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations.” In its more comprehensive and explicit definition, it is seen as combining “sustainable growth, poverty reduction, human development, environmental protection, institutional transformation, gender equity, and human rights protection.” There is now a decided emphasis on anti-poverty strategies fashioned to empower the poor. The post-colonial discourse on development, especially in the Third World countries, has been essentially a story of backwardness, poverty, disease, declining quality of education, political instability, ethnic conflicts, civil wars, insecurity of lives and property, debt crises, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS pandemic, human rights abuse, infrastructural deficit, social disintegration, corruption, burgeoning terrorist incidents, failed states, sit-tight syndrome, ineffective and uninspiring leadership, neo-colonialism, marginalization and exploitation. Africa has for long been a victim of all these and more.²

To fully understand and appreciate the contemporary predicament of African development, the prevailing global ethos of globalization must be examined from the African perspective in a world of competing national interests defined in political, economic and strategic terms. The result of the competition has produced a troubled international environment engaged in the scramble for global resources, making the world more and more unstable, insecure and inequitable. Globalization can be simply defined as the global structure and processes which increase and deepen interconnectedness, interdependence, and active interaction among global actors at virtually every level of their engagement. The impact, as can be deduced from what it encompasses, is not just economic, it implicates politics, governance, environment, technology, culture, information; it permeates virtually every facet of international contacts, but perhaps more

profoundly the economic sphere where the capacity for trade and investment constitutes the sinews of economic growth and development, and therefore the well-being of nations. The open secret therefore is that to reap maximally the benefits of contemporary globalized economic order, it is imperative that a country possesses the institutional capacity in the areas of trade and investment, and technological and financial innovations that can accommodate and appropriate the dynamic opportunities and challenges of the globalized market.³ In this respect, Africa's capacity has been greatly vitiated by her history of dependency, backwardness, technological unpreparedness or inadequacies, weak financial and investment portfolio, neo-colonial arrangements, and general lack of or low savvy in global enterprise. As a result, African countries face an arduous task competing with the more advanced industrialized economies of the North and even the emerging Asian global actors.⁴

Admittedly, globalization carries with it certain advantages for the developing economies; for example, it has opened up wider markets and made cheaper sources of finance accessible; it has put in the global pool new products, new technologies and new ideas; it has created a higher degree of specialization, efficiency, and better quality products; it has caused greater competitiveness and increased productivity. It has, nevertheless, contributed to the widening of the gap between the industrialized countries of the North and the developing countries of the South. Thus, while the countries of the North with greater economic capacity reap the benefits of globalization, the poor countries of the South, the Third World, especially in Africa with low trade and investment portfolios, stand at the marginal end. Consequently, the gap between the rich and the poor people and between the rich and the poor nations continues to widen.

The developing countries are prone to catching cold when the developed countries sneeze because of the interlocking global financial flows, weak opportunities for trade and investment and declining economic competence which are crucial for wealth creation and development. In its operation, globalization calls for a diminished role of the state in the economy and increased private participation, good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights. It calls for downsizing of the public service, and puts a noose on public finances; and privatization of public companies, deregulation of social welfare services, and introduction of austerity measures to curtail government spending. These are key aspects of the new economic order promoted by globalization. The impact of this policy of less government on the society would include higher unemployment as a result of the required retrenchment in the public

service; reduction in social welfare programmes; inevitable increase in the cost of public utilities; and decline in the standard of living generally and pauperization of the masses.

Another dimension of the African predicament is the heavy external debt burden which has put a damper on development processes in many countries. Indeed, Africa is the “most externally indebted and aid-dependent continent.” For example, twenty-eight of the thirty-four countries classified in 2000 as chronically indebted by the World Bank were in Africa. This, again, is a consequence of a combination of developments relating to the nature and operation of the international markets: skewed balance of trade, unequal exchange, collapse of commodity exports, fall in the demand for primary products, marginalization and decidedly neo-colonial relationship with the leading trading partners and the global financial and development organizations, brazen corruption, poor leadership, and gross economic indiscipline of the African ruling elite. The imposition of oppressive reform and debt-servicing policies of the World Bank, the IMF and WTO made matters worse for the development aspirations of the developing countries. The politics and diplomacy of the African development environment in international politics is complex; only a determined, altruistic, focussed, nationalistic and purpose-driven national commitment can pull a nation out of its vortex. The Asian development miracles can attest to this.

Over the years, global institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization have, at different junctures, decreed policy interventions such as the Import Substitution Industrialization Programme, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the Trade Liberalization policy, ostensibly meant to reform and restructure the economy and, by so doing, arrest the declining development efforts in Africa. It is patently clear that SAP, for example, yielded no good fruit considering the deleterious impact on the populace. It caused devaluation of the national currency and brought untold social and economic hardship and pain to many in those countries where it was implemented. Indeed, globalization and the world financial institutions which serve to police its implementation have come under close scrutiny and heavy criticism. According to Sam Aluko, a leading Nigerian economist, globalization has increased the competence gap and reduced the “propensity to perform and innovate on the part of the African stragglers.” Furthermore, “the continent continues to be marginalized or peripheralized as it continues to succumb to the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank, which are controlled and manipulated from the Triad axes,” thereby turning the African countries into “mere appendages and

outposts of the more developed economies” of the Euro-American-Asian axes.⁵

In a similar vein, Bade Onimode believes that “globalization, liberalization and deregulation under the banners of SAP and WTO, are unrelenting in their pursuit of unequal exchange, debt peonage and the thwarting of development in African countries.” The challenge before Africa in this century, as he perceives it, therefore is “how to curtail unequal exchange and its debilitating effects, restore development to the top priority of public policy and regain regional autonomy or control over recovery and development policies.”⁶ The extent of the infringement on the sovereign rights of the receiving developing countries is another issue entirely in the litany of adverse effects of globalization.

More recently, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, in a lecture titled “Neither the Washington nor Beijing Consensus: Developmental Models that fit African Realities and Cultures” at The Royal School of Medicine, London, contended that the defective economic ideologies prescribed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization contributed to the “development gaps in African economies” in that in spite of the faithful implementation of the policies they prescribed, Africa’s share in the global trade remained unimpressive for years.

Over the last quarter of a century, Africa has been at the receiving end of liberal orthodoxy from these institutions that have persistently advocated, among other things, privatization of state-owned enterprises, free trade, intellectual property rights protection and deregulation of foreign direct investment (FDI) as requirements for developing countries to grow and develop.

He stressed that the neo-liberal ideology of the three international financial and development institutions is reflected in the policies of the Bretton Woods institutions which are encapsulated in the ‘Washington Consensus.’ Sanusi averred that the Washington Consensus has attracted severe criticism because the developing countries that had adopted its doctrine, especially in Africa, Latin America and the former Soviet countries, showed that “it had failed to deliver sustained growth as promised by its promoters.” He concluded that the fact that China’s spectacular growth has been achieved outside the framework of the Washington Consensus has raised “further doubt on the unassailability of its capabilities.” He therefore called for a paradigm shift advocating a timely “radical refocusing on development strategies for African countries to be relevant in the global economy.”⁷

Windows of Opportunity

The lot of Africa has been tortuous, complex and variegated. She was in the nineteenth century, and simultaneously too, a region of European scramble, imperialism, vassalage, colonial market and investment. Before that and in the four centuries preceding the nineteenth, she was a territory of slaves, European mercantile trade, geographical exploration, internecine wars and environmental purity. Post-colonial Africa has been burdened by vulnerable aid and export-dependent economies which have not lifted her out of underdevelopment; and the current international economic order based on globalization has not brought *uhuru* anywhere closer; if anything, the search for sustainable development remains tantalizing. The challenge now is for Africa to devise new approaches and strategies that can redeem her from crippling underdevelopment.

What has become of Africa today has, however, been shown in two sharply divided schools of thought. One of the schools, the pessimist, believes that Africa is today a region that has not significantly changed in its position of underdevelopment and, as such, she is bedevilled by poverty, malnourishment and utter deficit in leadership. Two decades ago, for example, this unflattering picture of the continent was painted:

The social and economic situation in Africa has been deteriorating since the late 1960s. The number and intensity of distressing economic features have perpetually increased. Poverty and destitution have become almost endemic. The tempo of increasing mass unemployment and underdevelopment on the continent has also been accentuated by the rapidly growing population. By the 1980s, Africa had a staggering number of people living in absolute poverty, malnourished and underfed, and with limited access to basic necessities of life: potable water, shelter, health and education.⁸

But the second school, the optimist, however presents a promising picture of Africa. It sees her as, in the words of the late Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, a “rising star” but which would nonetheless need a huge dose of private sector investment to sustain the growth trends it has continued to record since 2001.⁹

Judging by the indices of food availability and good nourishment defined in terms of access to affordable food and drinking water, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria, a pessimist, has no soft words for the African condition. To him, Africa is way off the mark of development. Chief Obasanjo has predicated his dismissal of any attempt to show optimism in the trajectory of Africa’s development on the 2012 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report. The report,

released in May 2012 and titled *Towards a Food Secure Future*, reveals that 218 million Africans (about 25% of the people in the continent) are undernourished,¹⁰ meaning that one in four Africans go to bed every night hungry. It also means that, whereas in other parts of the world, the question of access to good and affordable food had been solved by the 20th century, Africa is still unable to feed its people by the second decade of the 21st century.

Chief Obasanjo, who found this condition indefensible and unpardonable, blamed Africa's leadership for the food crisis in the continent. He believed that the basic irreducible standard by which development could be measured in any civilized society should primarily be access to affordable food and nourishment. Hence to him the report

is a damning condemnation of governance in Africa. It tells us what we know that the poverty of Africa is the making of African leaders over the years. African leaders have taken us together along the route of this shame. It is an indictment of African leadership particularly in the area of food production. Africa has the knowledge, technology and means to end undernourishment and food insecurity.¹¹

However, early in May 2012, the World Economic Forum on Africa, whose theme was "Shaping Africa's Transformation," expressed great optimism in what it regarded as the renaissance of Africa, the birth of a new trajectory of development and growth on the continent. After a survey of Africa's contribution to world trade, commerce, and development, the Forum concluded very emphatically that:

No doubt, Africa is on the brink of a major transformation – the continent is home to seven of the world's 10 fastest growing economies with a projected growth rate of 6% in 2012. While the rest of the world, particularly developed regions, grapple with embedded financial crisis and uncertainty, Africa is ballasted by macroeconomic and political stability, rich natural resources, a growing consumer base, strong retail markets and a young population. Around the globe, companies and countries are turning to Africa's promise.¹²

Obviously, the Forum predicated its perception of renascent Africa on the fact that at least in the last ten years, extensive warfare and large-scale human displacement had begun to cease or slow down in traditional war-torn areas like the Sudan, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola, Chad, etc. It did not, like Chief Obasanjo, factor into its calculus the quality of the human person in Africa as defined by calorie intake or availability of drinking water, which obviously are the basic irreducible

minimum of human development. But there is no denying the fact that Africa has still continued to contend with the challenges of persistent political instability such as we have had in Libya, Guinea Bissau, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and so forth. Extreme poverty, inequality and social discrimination against women, environmental degradation, infrastructure deficits (especially in roads, water supply and electricity) as well as corruption, disease and low-intensity violence, such as the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria.¹³ There is hardly any sub-region in Africa today that does not have the persistent problem of political instability, poverty of leadership and ethnic tensions, all of which are very destructive of economic progress and peace.

Added to the renewed optimism in the capacity of Africa to confront the underdevelopment which had been her unfortunate lot in the last century is the fairly positive report of economic growth shown by both the World Bank and the IMF on the state of economic performance by the continent. The IMF, for instance, predicted an average growth rate of 6% for 2012,¹⁴ an increase from 4.7% in 2011. The Fund also predicted a 5.3% growth for 2013. This is in spite of the continued negative effects of the global financial crises which began in 2008 in the US and which has continued to affect adversely Africa's trading partners in the *eurozone* and in the Americas.¹⁵ The adverse effect on Europe has come in the form of reduction in foreign direct investment and, even in some dire cases, capital flight from Africa.¹⁶ But the argument on the extent of the impact which the global financial crisis has on Africa should not detain us here. Rather, what is noteworthy is that at least for the first time the IMF has something positive to say about Africa, namely, that the continent is growing economically. This contrasts sharply with the Fund's traditional vilification of the continent as a region of acute economic inefficiency, underdevelopment and war. At least, the report is a big relief from the usual refrain of external debt, currency devaluation, structural adjustment, retrenchment of workers in the public services and trade liberalization, all of which are the IMF's traditionally recommended antidote to Africa's perceived economic problems which have hardly worked anywhere in the continent.¹⁷

The Fund's projected growth rate for 2013 is only slightly lower than the African Development Bank's figure of 5.4%. ADB's apparent cautious optimism is a result of the increasing strong demand for raw materials, including oil and copper, from emerging markets. For example, a lot of Zambia's copper is bought by Chinese state-owned companies and Beijing's driving force is a well-articulated policy to gain access to Africa's natural resources and energy. According to the Bank's president,

Donald Kaberuka, about 30% of the recent dynamic performance of sub-Saharan African economies can be attributed to commodity exports; the remaining 70% is due to two key factors, namely,

- a). the cumulative effects of economic reforms, which have improved the investment climate, risk profile and resilience; and
- b). the impact of demographic dynamics, urbanisation and the leapfrogging afforded by factors such as mobile telephony on the cost of doing business, markets efficiency, and service delivery.

It must be noted that the growth figure would be as high as 6.6% if South Africa, which is 30% of sub-Saharan Africa's economy, is excluded; if included, the growth figure drops to 5.4%.¹⁸

However, the positive report from the IMF and the World Bank cannot be equated with the abolition of the huge problems of poverty, disease and maladministration which continue to plague Africa. In fact, the World Bank in its report released in June 2012 - *Global Economic Prospects* - warned that Africa would still need to strengthen its Domestic Fundamentals, that is, good governance, infrastructure, balanced budget, inflation, food production, etc., to be able to stay afloat on the sea of abject poverty.¹⁹ In fact, the Bank warned that the projected growth for the continent, gladdening as it might be, would not be sufficient to reduce poverty in the continent. Marcelo Giugale, the Bank's Director of Economic Policy and Poverty Reduction Programmes for Africa, was even more poignant and less optimistic about Africa's capacity to sustain the growth trajectory she now has when he said:

The growth rate is not enough to redefine poverty, not enough. We have specific targets that are in reach. Child mortality has fallen fast in many countries. But at the same time, poverty is going down very slowly. You certainly need much more than the GDP number going up. The transition from growth to employment is complex. It depends on labour market, skills, infrastructure, the quality of the business environment. Growth can be very fast and you still don't see poverty reduction.²⁰

Yet, it is important to show that a new dimension has emerged in the history of contemporary Africa within the last three decades. Whereas *The Economist* had sounded the death knell of Africa in the year 2000, dismissing the region as a "hopeless continent," the combination of increased global competition for natural resources and the emergence of China as a world economic power and challenger to the hegemony of the United States have suddenly propelled Africa onto the centre-stage of

world economic relevance.²¹ The competition for Africa's gas, oil, diamond, gold, timber, and so on, has produced in the continent what E. Cheng calls the "new imperialism."²² Corroborating Cheng's prediction, N. Ferguson,²³ C.K. Lee,²⁴ S. Marks,²⁵ and Van der Walt and Schimdt²⁶ have also predicted a new found relevance for Africa in the World Economic Order. In that order, they contend, Africa stands to gain from the competition between the entrenched interests of the Western countries, which they believe are fast diminishing, and the new investment and partnership drive from the East and South.

In the last twenty years, huge foreign investments have continued to pour chiefly from China, India, and Indonesia into Africa. This explains why Niall Ferguson, the British historian, also predicted that the age of American informal empire was coming to an end.²⁷ In the place of that vanishing empire is what Ferguson believed would stand China, and possibly, India, Indonesia and Malaysia, thus provoking a new scramble for Africa's resources by these Asian or eastern countries in the contemporary world. The 'new scramble' for Africa has thus begun. The scramble is today propelled not from Berlin but now from Beijing. This explains why Melber and Southall²⁸ insist that the scramble is "primarily about investment and business" and that this has the tendency to replace and is very similar to the historical epoch instigated by the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-1885. The decision of the conference to partition Africa among European states, it should be emphasized, was responsible for much of the imperialistic design in Africa leading to almost one hundred years of colonisation.²⁹ Chinese financial aid and investment appear to show the direction for Africa's trade and commercial orientation in the decades ahead. Asked whether he considered China to be the new imperial power in Africa, Morgan Tsvangirai, as Zimbabwe's prime minister said: "No, I don't think so. But they are not missionaries, all the same. They are after business interests. China knows that there is going to be a scramble for resources."³⁰

In addition, scholars have been particular about the extent to which Chinese investment capital can alter the direction of Africa's history from pro-Western to pro-China profile. For example, V. Satgar,³¹ S. Naidu³² and J. Honke³³ have shown that Chinese, Indian and Brazilian aid and the extension of Chinese influence and investment capital in the areas of basic social infrastructure have the tendency of shifting African attention from the traditional Western spheres of influence to these eastern and southern countries. These are the countries that are fast becoming world economic powers.

Thus, such a new imperialism and investment, M. Lee³⁴ and H. Broadman³⁵ contend, can even be beneficial to African labour and the middle class, regardless of their original bourgeois content. This is because observers believe that more capital investment was flowing into Africa at least from the 1990s up to the time of the world global financial crises in 2008 than at any period before the 1970s. Much of this investment, even the World Bank believes, has originated in China and India either directly as official foreign direct investment or as aid in the areas of critical infrastructure. Some of the investments have also come indirectly from Chinese and Indian private investors in electronics and pharmaceutical goods and services in African countries.³⁶ Furthermore, Chinese consumer goods have continued to enjoy wide acceptability and patronage in Africa. This is in spite of the hue and cry about the inferior products being dumped in Africa.

There has been a stupendous increase in demand by China, for example, for African oil, gas, copper, coal, and cashew nuts from Nigeria, Angola, DRC, Zambia, to name a few.³⁷ Chinese private companies have increasingly in the last twenty years been winning construction contracts in railway, transport, electricity and infrastructure as well as in the construction of public buildings in Nigeria, South Africa and Angola.³⁸ Chinese enterprises have certainly made some positive impact in Zambia and Ethiopia in the area of job creation; this is one area where most African countries are faced with the danger of social eruption by millions of unemployed angry youth. Beijing would therefore add greater value to her relationship with Africa if, in addition to her heavy concentration on importation of natural resources, she increases her investment in the job-creating sectors of the African economy. This, if factored in, will inevitably lead to industrial training and skill acquisition by the work-force in the host communities. The standard practice of importing Chinese labour and equipment to execute major infrastructural projects in Africa cannot be considered mutually beneficial economically. Nor will the proliferation of Chinese arms and ammunition across the continent help reduce the incidence of armed conflicts, terrorism and political instability. Without wanting to sound the alarmist gong, one is constrained to ask, could this be the early chapters of a parody of Walter Rodney's *How China Underdeveloped Africa*? The long-term effect of this partnership can at this time only be imagined; for example, what impact will the Chinese presence and products have on the African agenda to revitalize the industries? Would there be any strong incentive left to revive the industries? It can also be argued that African countries themselves are poor gatekeepers. It would be fair to expect that in any partnership with

China, African countries should insist that where there is the requisite labour force in the host country, importing Chinese workers would not be allowed. That should be a necessary clause. In any event, it is hard to deny that the emergence of the Asian superpower in the African development journey has had patently salutary impact on African economic growth and a positive leap in the provision of the much-needed critical infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa.³⁹

Such is the new turn of development possibilities and trade patterns in the African continent in the second decade of the twenty-first century. There is no doubt that the continent is on the swing and if she can play her cards well, the momentum may not be short-lived. What we have begun to see is that the era of aid-dependency and paternalism is giving way to emerging mutually beneficial partnerships; the private sector is beginning to wake up and responding more confidently and creatively to the burgeoning competition aroused by the wind of change blowing from the East. But we must not be lulled into thinking that all is well now that a new suitor has warmed his way into Africa. It is still far from being a 'new heaven' or a 'new earth'. Until Africa can match, or, at least, adequately stand up to the Euro-American and Asian challenges in the key sectors of the global economy, the continent would find her development agenda and aspirations vitiated, and will remain the victim of the dynamic vagaries of the global markets whose terms are dictated and manipulated by the industrialized countries.

The Continuing Challenge

The golden jubilee celebration of the founding of the continental organization – the Organization of African Unity (now the AU) – is an auspicious time to ask: What are Africa's future prospects? What should Africa do to survive? The battle for African development in the 21st century, a complex process indeed, will have to be fought on multiple fronts. The battle calls for a clear understanding of the intricacies of globalization, why some countries derive huge benefits from it while others are beggarly disadvantaged. The prospect for Africa's development in an era of globalization will depend largely on the prevailing global circumstances, internal economic, political and cultural dynamics, as well as leadership matched with effective plans and strategies. We must also bear in mind that Africa is a continent made up of over fifty countries which are at different levels of development and varying degrees of national cohesion and integration. An estimated 60% of the global Arab

population inhabits the northern part of the continent. Essentially, therefore, our present focus must be on sub-Saharan Africa.

We must be realistic: self-interest or national interest is a major motivating factor in international relations. It is therefore unrealistic to expect, in a system characterized by global inequality and competition for resources, that an industrialized power will choose the path of altruism. Consequently, it is important to emphasize that in the final analysis, it is the Africans themselves who have to decide by their action or inaction the substance, the content, the nature, the quality and the level of the growth and development they envisage or wish to realize in the 21st century. The need to have a development plan in which the state spells out her vision and mobilizes the resources and the strategies for realizing it is fundamental. One thing is certain: it would be neglectful for any country to put all her trust in external bodies and externally generated economic and development policies to solve her problem.⁴⁰

As our starting point, let us recall what Adebayo Adedeji, the former United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, said almost two decades ago:

The ECA's alternative framework, in emphasizing the imperative of internalizing the development process, identifies the specific objectives that should be pursued across the continent. These include enhanced production and more efficient use of resources; greater and more efficient resource mobilization; improving human resources capability; strengthening science and technology; achieving vertical and horizontal diversification; establishing a pragmatic balance between private and public sectors; shifting resources from non-productive to highly productive activities and sectors; improving the pattern of income distribution among households and different socioeconomic groups; attaining food self-sufficiency; and realigning consumption patterns with production patterns.⁴¹

These objectives represent almost the full gamut of options open to Africa if she must survive; they are heavily loaded to satisfy the economic well-being of the African peoples. They are important and they are critical objectives for economic development which, if properly coordinated and implemented, can have positive consequences on the other sectors. For example, it is impossible to alleviate poverty, fund health care or education adequately without economic growth. But if the purpose of development, according to Ohiorhenuan, is to "enlarge people's choices: economic, social, cultural and political," it must then follow logically that "human choices extend far beyond economic well-being, encompassing among other things, knowledge, health, a clean physical environment, political freedom, and gender equality;"⁴² and indeed, the ability to access

“resources needed for a decent standard of living.”⁴³ It is also important to emphasize that good governance, accountability, effective legal structures, leadership and affordable health care are crucial to development. African development has for long suffered from the ravages of such diseases as malaria and HIV/AIDS. For sustainable development to be meaningful, therefore, it has to incorporate the vital elements that can make it possible for human life to be lived to the fullest. In this context, development, when conceived as a process, has to put on the toga of removing all likely obstacles on the way to full human actualization. The conceptualization of development, in other words, must be holistic to enhance the quality of life in the African society.

By now, we are familiar with the horrendous accounts of Africa’s woes – historical, cultural, economic, political, institutional, etc. These are the challenges that the continent must continue to confront even as the promising new development trajectory takes its course. In offering policy advice, one is mindful of the various earlier inspirations that have responded to the African situation. It is difficult to find fault with the passion, intellectual rigour and objectivity, the cogency, realism and nationalist sensitivity that they engender.⁴⁴ The large body of works on the issue of the possible futures of Africa agree on the need for Africa to look inwards, generate her own strategy of development to confront the future. Africa must have the conviction, the political will to go on a limb, as it were, and liberate herself from the cobwebs of her history. Being involved in an unequal competition with other actors in the global market, she must devise her own development agenda free from the stultifying colonial mentality or spirit that has plagued post-colonial African development objectives and strategies; striving to be Westernized can hardly work. As long as that kind of mindset persists, so long will the African mind, vision, initiatives and confidence remain inured to the development path of the developed North. This makes that kind of development not to be deeply rooted in the African environment. The times call for a paradigm shift!

It is quite instructive that Orhiorhenuan has identified four essential determinants of development which he has labelled “messages”. They are:

- First, development can only be what society considers it to be. It is fundamentally an endogenous process generated and sustained by the energy of the society and its ability to learn creatively from its own and others’ history.
- Second, ... the society must be willing to take ownership of its own development problem. ... the responsibility of a people to articulate

the nature of its problem, define its own vision and seek solutions, cannot be ceded to any external agent, however sympathetic.

- Third, the ownership by, and empowerment of people, can only come from their full involvement in social and economic processes. The importance of inclusiveness derives not so much from its instrumental value, as from its affirmation of “self-in-society”.
- Fourth, path dependence highlights the importance of learning innovativeness and flexibility. The outcome has always depended on the capacity of society and its leadership to generate extraordinary performance from an apparently ordinary combination of circumstances.⁴⁵

A careful reading of these “messages” will reveal that the author, like Adebayo Adedeji, is emphasizing the need for Africa to embrace an alternative development framework, looking inward rather than depending on policy frameworks foisted on her by external institutions.

It is now widely accepted, contrary to the conceptions of a minimalist state envisaged in the 1980s by the World Bank and the IMF, that the sort of massive transformation in all sectors of the economy that most developing countries desire can hardly be achieved without the active role of an enterprising and dynamic state. It is the responsibility of the state to launch a development policy and provide the necessary enabling investment-friendly environment including security of life and property, laws and regulations, as well as requisite infrastructure that can stimulate effective industrialization. The provision of good transportation networks, water, electricity, healthcare and telecommunications facilities, and the urgent task of expanding the frontiers of literacy and drastically reducing corruption are daunting enough challenges that cannot be effectively carried out in a developing economy without government intervention and sustained public support. These should be the primary duties of the state.

One of the critical conditions for growing the African economies is diversification. African countries were, in the closing years of the last century, reported to be dependent on primary commodity exports (agricultural raw materials, food, fuel, metals, ores, and so on) and many were mono-cultural. Relying on only one product, petroleum, for example, because it is a lucrative foreign exchange earner and the main source of a country’s wealth, puts the nation’s economy at the risk of unpredictable adverse developments in the international market. An unexpected fluctuation in commodity price can cause untoward dislocation in the economy of such a country. Another disadvantage of over-dependence on petroleum alone for growth and development is that other sectors will