FROM THE SHADOWS: A RE-INTEGRATION OF AFRICA INTO GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT MAP

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Abstract: *Granted the simultaneous existence of socio-economic challenges and life threatening security problems of militancy and piracy, Africa, particularly after the Cold War, was regarded as fallen off the global map. Unfolding events within the international system are presently impelling a re-sewing of the continent into global economic landscape. As Africa is currently being repositioned for a rebirth in a highly globalizing and competitive world, it becomes important to understand the underlying factors for its re-emergence. This study, through its four sections of Africa's dossier, gives brief insight into past scrambles for the continent, the drivers of continental resurgence, new hopes and challenges, and suggestions for shaping the future. Overall, this paper seeks to unearth the hidden transcripts of the importance currently alluded to Africa.*

Keywords: Africa, Mining, Oil, Growth, Challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

> 'The sleeping giant' is on its way, and the African trajectory continues upward ... (Donald Kaberuka, African Development Bank (AfDB) President)

Presently, Africa is in the news, this time, not the unending conflicts and/or illogic crimes that have contributed to its being tainted in global opprobrium; but for the news of the juicy growth rate of some of its units surpassing that of China and India, the emerging Asian powers. Really enjoying the praises while it lasts seems the most appropriate thing to do, but looking at this attitude critically, it becomes obvious that Africa still has a lot to do in either going beyond the present achievement or sustaining it. If this is going to happen, particularly since African states are yet to come of age on how to explore the dynamics of economic development that are latent in them, it becomes important for them to curry relationships with extra-continental powers, most, if not all, of whom are out to satisfy their national, at times elitist, interests. To this end, African countries have to make do with the excesses of some of the extra-African powers or the aggressive and sometimes inhumane charge of their multinationals.

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Without proper consideration of events in historic present, some of which are responsible for Africa's current placement at the lowest part of international politics, some extant literature and some persons in governmental quarters are celebrating the current influx of funds into the continent to high heavens; hence claiming that the 21st century is Africa's century. Irrespective of how much Africans desire such claim, the indices on ground reveal that if Africa is going to enjoy such claim, so much has to be done, especially the correction of the prevalent anomie in the continent. It is in this light that this paper, delineated into Africa's dossier, drivers of continental resurgence, new hopes, new challenges, and shaping the future, presents some bits of the landscape that Africa has traveled, the present it is grappling with and some caveats for ensuring that the continent does not always remain the 'pitied continent'.

AFRICA'S DOSSIER

Since the Millennium began, Africa has been witnessing outstanding growth rate. The true picture could be gleaned from the fact that a "continent-wide GDP of US $600 billion in 2000 had reached US $2.2 trillion in 2012 … and it will achieve 6.6% growth in 2013."[1] The news of this growth pace, and the growth rate itself seem responsible for the massive investments ongoing in the continent. As such, from Cape to Cairo, particularly Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria and some few other African states, fund managers from beyond the continent seek to invest tens of billions of dollars in the continent; while major powers in contemporary international politics and their multinationals crave to deepen both their presence and interests in Africa. Almost a billion dollars a month was invested in African equities by the close of 2012. This is more so as multinational companies, some of which represent both the interests and presence of their home governments, and even some major powers, readily proffer funds, expertise and machineries for investment and ensuring the success of their investments in African countries. As Africa assumes the global dynamo of opportunities and the new investment frontier, it is reported that "the US President, Barack Obama is mounting an early push to extend a trade pact with sub-Sahara African countries that is set to expire in 2015, and is seen as a cornerstone of US-African economic relations."[2]

The scramble for Africa has a much longer antecedent than literature on the contemporary scramble have acknowledged. Most of the literatures on current scuttling for resources and market in the continent have focused on the period when the US policy makers and their Western counterparts decided; particularly after 9/11 terror attacks on the US, on making Africa, one of the new centers of global advancement. For instance, Cyril Obi insists that "since the late 1990s, Africa has rebounded in the geo-strategic and security calculations of the world's dominant powers. A key element of Africa's importance particularly after 9/11 attacks on the United States is its centrality to global energy security."[3] It is needful however to remedy the situation by historicizing the dynamic political economy of the continent from the period immediately before the second half of the fifteenth century, around 1440s.[4] Starting from then, the inhabitants of region "began to engage with a succession of European explorers, missionaries, slavers, colonial mandarins and post-independence state authorities, to produce the unique blend of social and political relationships that is evident to date."[5]

The arrival of the Europeans on the west coast of Africa led to a new dimension in African trading relations, particularly the slave trade, which was earlier dominated by the Trans-Saharan slave trade. Articles of trade like "gold, ivory, slaves, dye-woods, gum, pepper, sugar, leather, and a few minor commodities like palm oil"[6] were the main supplies from West Africa. The trading relationship that began on the note of exchange of genuine goods became horrifying with human beings becoming the articles that were traded; even in large volumes. This was due to the perception of Africans as items of trade and/or domesticated animals and so were enslaved, traded in, and sent to work by Europeans on their (European) plantation farms in the New-found-land. This informs the view that "when a political unit is not recognized by others' as Barry Buzan perceptively explains, 'its socio-political institutions are not considered to embody legitimacy, and its territory is considered politically empty and available for occupation. If, in addition, the people are not recognized by others as fully human, they risk being treated either like domesticated animals and so enslaved or like vermin and so eradicated."[7] As such, this dastard trade, conducted with extreme greed and carnage, went on for four centuries. This was so because "the enslavement of the African continent was of basic importance in the development of world capitalism, as Africa's intensified exploitation … has been of consequence in the strength of world imperialism …"[8]

Given the vastness of the wealth gotten from the plantation farms and mines in which African 'slave labour' was of intense significance; and the realisation that such labour, if left in their varying regions, could produce raw materials that would feed their newly developed industries, Europeans, particularly British, canvassed for, and worked towards the ending of the horrific trade in humans. Sequel to this was the legitimate trade era, which dovetailed into the scramble for African colonies. A situation actualized through the instrumentality of the Berlin Conference in 1884/85 through which "… diverse tribes (were) 'gang pressed' … into artificial boundaries by the then colonial power without much consideration for the harmony of cultures, religions, languages and aspirations of the people."[9] As such, the colonization of African territories was meant to satisfy only the economic interests of the European powers. Lugard therefore hinted that "it is in order to foster the growth of trade of this country (Britain) that our far seeing statesmen and our commercial men advocate colonial expansion."[10]

Through colonialism, Africans were forcefully made to produce what would satisfy the needs of European factories. Colonized Africans thereby became an industrial reserve army meant to satisfy the system's need for an elastic labour pool. All imperialists, according to late Ghanaian Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah:

> … without exception, evolved the means, their colonial policies, to satisfy the ends, the exploitation of the subject territories, for

> the aggrandizement of metropolitan countries. They were rapacious; they all subserved the needs of the subject lands to their own demands; they all circumscribed human rights and liberties; they all repressed and despoiled, degraded and oppressed. They took our lands, our lives, our resources and our dignity. Without exception, they left us nothing but our resentment …. It was when they had gone and we were faced with stark realities … that the destitution of the land after long years of colonial rule was brought sharply home to us.[11]

Another scramble for Africa evolved with the Cold War, which was one of the fallouts of the World War II (WWII).The major participants in the Cold War -the US and the erstwhile Soviet Union- both of which locked horn in a zero-sum ideological conflict intruded in Third World politics and/or conflicts, Africa inclusive. The situation thereby fed into their (US and Russia) perceptions of "many local conflicts as expressions or extensions of their own rivalry … and they frequently viewed the outcomes of such conflicts as significant indicators of success or failure in their own struggle.' Hence, they pumped 'vast resources into Third World conflicts."[12] An example of this was during the Angolan crisis, in which both superpowers' and their allies' arms supply fuelled the conflict.

With the demise of the Cold War, it was thought that the world would witness a period of global peace. As at then, Africa had begun to slip into global disregard. The loss of relevance occurred partly because some African countries were failing; Somalia in particular while some, Liberia and Sierra Leone for instance, witnessed outright combustion. Thus, Fawole dares say that "states have failed and collapsed with such alarming regularity that people have actually began to question the suitability and viability of the Westphalia state in Africa …. (And) governments in Africa also often exhibit characteristics that confound the rest of the world."[13]

Presently however, Africa is assuming the epicenter of global economic advancement, particularly because it is adorned with a cornucopia of mineral resources, and large population, which has a robust youth bulge, and is currently serving both as a pool of cheap labour and large market for the mass produced goods from the factories of extra-African producers. It thus becomes important to examine the factors that are serving as the drivers of the present scramble for Africa.

DRIVERS OF CONTINENTAL RESURGENCE

African economies have been recording tremendous growth since the beginning of the millennium; even as some African countries, prior to the crippling financial crisis of 2008, attained significant annual economic performances. Africa Development Bank (AfDB) thus hinted that "Ghana was growing at 13.7%; Ethiopia at 8.5%; Angola at 7.8%; Uganda 7.6%; and Mozambique at 7.5%. In fact, as the AfDB commented, in the period

2000-2008, six of the world's fastest growing economies were in Africa."[14] In addition to this, the "foreign direct investment projects in Africa', according to the recently released Ernst & Young's 2012 Africa Attractiveness Survey, 'doubled from 339 in 2003 to 857 in 2011."[15] One thus wonders about the factors presently serving as the drivers of the African GDP, which, starting from the next decade might grow at between 4% and 5% on annual basis, and not just make Africa one of the fastest growing economies globally, but help confirm the fact that Africa is the 'hopeful continent[16] as against the Economist claim that Africa was a 'hopeless continent' in May 2000.[17]

Really, these drivers are not far-fetched. And one of such is the extractive industry that spreads across the African landscape. Africa is a resources laden continent, with some of its units sometimes ranking high whenever the volume of deposits of valuable resources is considered. Hence, in the face of the Euro-zone meltdown, investors seek a safe haven in the oil and/or mining sectors of African states.

Given the political imbroglio in the Middle-East, and partly in the Caspian Sea, the growing consumption in the face of declining supply, the peak oil thesis that explains that oil would soon go into extinction or irrelevance, and the cheapness of oil as an energy source; extra-African powers and their state and/or private multinationals seem always ready to direct huge funds to the search for oil in Africa. Hence, in view of the huge funds of offshore hydrocarbon capital investment, for which Angola might earn about $20 billion in investment, and for which SSA governments may get over $200 billion in oil revenues[18], Michael Roll posits that "the international geostrategic importance of the oil and gas reserves in the region is bigger today than ever before."[19]

In addition to the search for the oil and gas resources, multinationals are deeply searching for mineral resources that could be gotten for use as raw materials in their producing companies. The mineral resources are, and the list is not limited to uranium, copper, cobalt, coltan, gold, platinum, and diamond. In the face of the current scramble for the zone, the mining industry has assumed a new level of importance. As such, Wilson Prichard argued that

> the mining sector is of major importance to many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, frequently contributing major shares of both exports and tax revenues (hence the) … surging mining activity in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) since 2002 has attracted significant popular attention and has frequently been seen as part of a new scramble for Africa's primary resources.[20]

This was confirmed in 2012, when the price of Gold that started at $1,400/oz jumped to $1,900 in August because of prevalent panic which impelled investors who were afraid for their investments to channel their funds towards African mines. This explains the attractiveness of the continent to mining investors who are making enormous scale of investments across the continent, and this trend may continue, even as Africa's share of global mining investments increases.

Whilst the development of natural resources is providing needed funds channeled into agriculture, education, food security, and health, it is important to note that the immense revenue oozes out of the increased number of deals, which are entered into, not only with the conventional African partners of France, UK, and US, but with the emerging Asian powers and Brazil. Hence, it is reported that in the first half of 2011, there were " 1, 379 deals worth $71bn conducted … The value of the average deal was the highest since 2006. In the first half of the year alone, Africa was the scene for $12.9bn worth of mining mergers and acquisitions."[21] Flowing from the above is the fact of commodity price boom, which often results, though from huge revenues chasing limited supply, but serves as fillip for the deepening of investment. In addition to the above are investments in the non-mining sectors, particularly in the telecommunications and banking sectors that equally received their disproportionate shares of FDI.

The desire for the massive African market equally serves as another plank in the renewed relevance of Africa to international politico-economic relations. This is because local markets of the 21st century scramblers for Africa cannot consume the goods produced *en masse* by their local factories. Africa has either become the final destination of some of the consumer goods produced in such countries or a viable alternative market for the excess goods produced. In the light of this, the US government initiated the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) as a means of better accessing African markets. Adopting and extending this policy, the former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations underscored the place of Africa to US' trading relations. The AGOA trading relationships were however predominated by US exports, particularly manufactured high technology goods and machineries, meant for African markets in "return for the import of oil, strategic minerals and other natural resources' according to Melber, 'that meet the demands of US industries."[22] In another stead, the Chinese equally see in Africa a major market for their goods. Thus China "exports about 45% of manufactured products and 31% machinery and transport equipment to Africa. These include a considerable amount of weaponry."[23]

This crave for market in Africa is not limited to the two countries mentioned above. Equally on the list are Britain, France, Brazil, Russia, Germany, Japan and India, from where certain African countries keep importing tricycles for the conveyance of the citizens and goods. It is thus observed that alongside other extra-African powers, India "has discovered that Africa is where the resources and future markets that will fuel its economic growth are."[24] This inordinate crave for market is also characterized by the desire to sell small arms and light weapons (SALW) for which African units are regarded as potential destination. This is more so as "… Germans and Britons have been identified as masterminds of arms deal … meant for Nigeria."[25] And in view of this, it is claimed that the continent is "awash with old intentions, new possibilities and fresh competition ....

Africa is currently experiencing positive pandemonium."[26] More so, a percentage of revenues from resource export are used in financing the importation of capital goods and technologies necessary for continued extraction of mineral resources and to engage in large scale agriculture, which one expects to soak up excess African labour.

Also deserving mention is the ongoing democratization of African politics. In recent past, most of the units of the continent were in the firm grips of the military, whose 'command style' of ruling made them to trample on the inviolable human and peoples' right. This situation mostly led African states to assume the pariah status. Hence, the numerous sanctions, ranging from economic to suspension of military co-operation, visa restrictions for members of the military cadre and this extends to their families, suspension of all high level visits, which were dispensable, as well as the suspension of development programmes. In short, the military personnel were persona non grata. With the start of democracy in Africa, which is currently deepening; perception about the continent changed, hence its terrain is seen as stable and secure for investment. A situation that currently attracts massive FDI to the units of the continent, and as such is turning Africa into the 'Mecca' of investments.

Equally driving the present growth witnessed in African countries are the reduction in the numbers of violent combustion that starts mostly because of the wanton desires to partake of the accruing largess from the exploitation of the available resources, more intensive regional integration and prudent macroeconomic policies being adopted in certain parts of the continent. Concerning the reduction of violent conflicts, African governments are quickly finding solutions to the innumerable factors feeding into wearying combustions within their confines. In Nigeria for instance, the government offered amnesty to militants (that surrendered their arms within a specified duration) in the Niger Delta, who had prior to 2009 brandished arms and engaged the military Joint Task Force (JTF) in duels, blown oil installations, threatened oil multinationals and caused serious reduction in the barrels of crude oil lifted in the country. A situation that "the US government regrets' according to Bassey Ate, 'because about 200,000 barrels of exportable crude oil is lost to Nigeria per day due to the instability in the Niger Delta."[27] Acknowledging that none of them is a highland, African countries are committed to improve their rapprochement so as to either ensure or deepen their mutual benefits. While some of the structural reforms adopted in countries like Rwanda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone to mention a few, are presently impacting positively on the financial sector, governance and business environment.

NEW HOPES, NEW CHALLENGES

Given the unfolding desires for Africa by extra-territorial powers, one realizes that their cravings might have some new hopes as its concomitant. These new possibilities include, but are not limited to, new job vista, increased foreign direct investment (FDI), new formats of assistance, particularly from the emerging powers of China, India and Brazil, more opportunities for Africans to travel to, live and/or explore the opportunities readily available in the current Africa's partners.

More so, the advent of the emerging powers on the radar as Africa's new partners is compelling the conventional powers to rethink and/or bring their relations with Africa into proper perspective, especially in the face of the new drive for the exploration of oil and gas resources and some other mineral resources in the continent. This thus seems the only raison d'etre for the reopening of the US embassy in Equatorial Guinea, in spite of the human rights violation record of President Obiang Nguema's administration. Hence, while alluding that West Africa's potential is phenomenal, Van Dyke, the founder and chairman of Vanco Energy insisted that "West Africa is now, and will be in future, fantastically important to the global oil economy."[28]

Beyond this, since all the powers scuttling for pieces of Africa are attempting to deepen their relations with the continent, the educational sector is already benefiting from the new scramble. And this is in the form of scholarships and fellowships granted to African citizens who are academically inclined; while African academic institutions are getting sponsorship for numerous infrastructural projects and free supply of relevant books from some of the major powers currently parading the African terrain. An instance of this is the "Africa U.S. Higher Education Initiative, which is funded by US A.I.D. and the Gates Foundation, and is meant to provide grants for collaboration partnerships between African and U.S. higher education institutions to strengthen African higher education institution capacity"[29]. Much more, between the year 2000 and 2005 as well as the year 2005 to 2010, "six U.S. foundations (Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford, MacArthur and Rockefeller Foundations) … committed $200 million over five years to support dozens of African universities."[30]

Another dimension of the hopes raised by the reintegration of Africa into global map is in the area of gender equality, which is encouraged by the conventional Western partners of the continent. This is done through the encouragement given to African governments on adopting gender inclusive programmes; and this is seen more in the academic terrain, even as the feminine gender is given higher priority in the sharing of grants. This is not to say that the giving of priority is done haphazardly, rather, it is only meant to underscore the fact that policies are gradually being made to be gender sensitive, and this came with the developments in the present century. Buttressing this was the Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equity and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who while explaining that education is a means through which the feminine gender can make a difference, insisted that "facilitating access to education for women and girls is vital to lift millions out of poverty and must be a priority for Governments and international organizations"[31]

Much more, the technological aspect of the nascent opportunities has been of immense blessing to the continent; even as the African masses are able to use some of the latest gadgets made available by producers abroad. Besides, with the rise of the emerging powers in African business sphere, Africans are no more limited to trading strictly with the conventional powers of the West; hence, it is claimed that during President Kibaki's ten year tenure in Kenya for instance, the country's "major foreign direct investors ceased to be British as Chinese investment gradually became more dominant. Indeed, Kibaki's game-changing "Look East policy" saw China, India, Thailand and other Asian economies making huge strides in Kenya. This was a radical departure in every sense of the word."[32]

And it has in some ways saved the continent from witnessing serious backlash from the ongoing economic distress in Europe; which some decades ago, would have swept Africa off its 'economic feet'. This is because the varying African economies are seriously integrated into the global economic system as sources of cheap labour and raw materials pool. As such, whatever is ongoing in any of the advanced economies of the West, be it contraction or expansion, often impacts on African economies. With the presence of emerging powers that formed themselves into BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) however, Africa is able to meander around the economic slump in the West. This is particularly because of the insatiable search for energy and mineral resources and African markets by the BRICS and some other Asian countries. A proof of this is the fact that China was expected to "invest more than $100 bn in Africa (in 2012) more than double the $46 bn invested by India' while Brazil's total 'trade with Africa quadrupled since 2002 to $20.6 bn last year…"[33]

Really, Europe is an important trading partner for most African states, to which they send bulk of their exports and import bulk of goods from. And it has proven to be a crucial source of capital investment funds and overseas development aid (ODA), even as millions of Africans who study, live and work in Europe are currently serving as sources of huge remittances sent home by Africans in diaspora. Without the current scuttling for parts of the African economies by the new powers, there is the likelihood that African economies would have been negatively impacted, particularly the francophone countries, whose economies run on the CFA franc, which is pegged to the euro.

Another form of hope present in the current re-sewing of Africa into the global economic and/or developmental map is the fact that some oil rich African countries are currently attempting to diversify their economic base from the oil and gas resources. This is more so since the mining sector is one of the drivers of the current scramble for Africa; and is generating so much funds for the countries where the desired treasures are found. Significant examples in this direction are Angola and Nigeria, two oil rich states in the Gulf of Guinea, which have for most times, concentrated on the revenue from the oil fields. With unfolding search for mineral resources, these countries are equally turning their attention to their mining sector; and this is simply because aside from having so much oil reserves and being significant players in the oil sector, they are equally treasure troves.

More than the ownership of some mineral resources and the funds presently chasing the resources are internal factors that seem to be leading these countries on the path of combustion. This view is based on the fact that the Nigerian government for instance, would appreciate the diversification of its economic base, thereby save itself from the age long multiple challenges of militancy, piracy, oil theft and kidnapping that most times evolve from its 'oily' Delta, and are presently getting deepened. This scenario would not have played out if not that meager portion of the oil revenue has been invested in the Niger Delta communities where most of the oil is produced. Thus, Okey Ibeanu and Robin Luckham insisted that "these communities have borne the brunt of the extensive environmental damage from oil extraction …"[34] In this sense therefore, Nigeria's government seems committed to developing the country's mining sector so that it can play a major role in the diversification of the country's economic base. This was substantiated by the claim that:

> Nigeria's solid minerals remain untapped and largely unmapped, an anomaly in a region that is a growing source of materials such as iron ore, gold, diamonds, uranium and bauxite. The government wants to change that. Mines Minister Musa Sada aims to revive mining's contribution to the economy to 5 percent from its current 1 percent by 2015."[35]

On this note, one realizes that alongside the unfolding opportunities is the construction of new facilities and/or revamping of old or dilapidated infrastructures such as office, road, sea and air port, rail, and residential housing projects, which would serve as the necessary framework meant to sustain the inflowing investment in the continent. This becomes important since the new businesses would recruit new personnel, some of whom would be resident some distance from their offices. Such staff would need transport, thus bringing into view the need for good road network, which would equally serve the purpose of conveying the necessary instruments and raw materials. The rail network and sea port are meant for the conveyance of the resources and machines to and fro the point of mining and necessary outlet for getting such to the final consumers. Hence, it is claimed that "port and railway schemes are now being constructed in conjunction with each other, while road and even rail links are being included in the most modern new city developments."[36]

In spite of the aforementioned opportunities, a menu of challenges is unfolding, even as some problems are getting deepened as a result of the reintegration of the continent into globalized economic map. Quite clearly, oil and gas and some other mineral resources are the major attractions for extra-African powers, which are willing to channel huge funds to the search for such resources. Inherent in the process of exchange of funds–either as license fee or royalty–for the right to explore for the resources is the tendency of Africa being consigned to the status of perpetual supplier of raw materials to the global market. There is no doubt that the continent cannot afford to go the long haul of development alone. In its dealings with extra-regional presence and interests which are meant to satisfy their national interests however, Africa might permanently assume the role of an underdeveloped raw materials supplier, a role it has been playing since time immemorial. Alongside this challenge is the transference of pathological loyalty to any of the major powers that seems to be satisfying the financial cravings of the ruling political elites in the varying units of the continent. This came out bold in the words of president Robert Mugabe, who after realizing that China runs a 'hands off politics' scheme in its dealings with African countries, insisted that African leaders should "turn their backs on Western countries (especially Britain and the USA) and to focus on better relations with China, which he said represented Africa."[37]

Although most African economies are underdeveloped; a situation that had been acknowledged and eloquently articulated by Richard Akinjide, who, while discussing the Nigerian economy, one of the leading economies in Africa, insisted that "…if we must be frank (Nigeria's economy) is still grossly underdeveloped –in fact, primitive. Let us ask China and India to solve our problem. Let us be honest enough to admit that we cannot do it."[38] However, the dependence on extra-territorial powers for Africa's development may not bode well for the continent, since in international politics, "… countries are not known', as W. Alade Fawole puts it, 'for their altruism when it comes to providing assistance."[39] Instead of assisting, most countries seek to eat up other countries so as to move to a higher rung of international politics ladder. If this is so, most of the funds chasing resources on the continent might be or would become measures of luring Africans off the trail of substantive development that may, if necessary supports and structures are provided by the different African governments, evolve from amongst the African masses. In view of Lord Palmerston's claim that "we have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow"[40] therefore, the sudden hailing of Africa as the last 'investment frontier', the 'world's newest and greatest growth pole', the 'salvation of global economy during a time of crisis' might turn out as mere ruse to disguise the inimical schemes of undoing the little growth the continent has been able to achieve at a time when the formerly strong economies of the West are shuddering in the face of economic crisis.

Though these funds are necessary to Africa's further development, but such massive influx of funds into the varying sectors of African economies might lead to the recurrence of resource curse in Africa. This situation might arise when, in the words of Paul Collier the "resource exports cause the country's currency to rise in value against other currencies. This makes the country's other export activities uncompetitive. Yet these other activities might have been the best vehicles for technological progress."[41]

Really Africa's fortunes have changed dramatically, particularly through the impressive growth witnessed in resource-rich countries; however, this is yet to translate to any meaningful improvement in the lives of the masses. Other than this, economic growth is feeding into an unequal wealth distribution pattern. This is so since natural resource wealth that ought to contribute to human development, as witnessed in most of the resource rich countries of the continent, is increasingly driving inequality, poverty and conflict; the evil trio evolving from corruption. Perhaps feeling that improved living standard for the masses would create a formidable opposition to their different administrations; African political elites are failing to use the accruing revenue from the new found importance of the continent as drivers of tangible developmental policies. This is so since most of the African elites are yet to divest themselves of directing funds mostly into the construction of white elephant projects, which would only gulp such funds without having much meaningful impact on the living standard or economic status of the citizens. Rather, such projects often turn out as avenues of siphoning funds from governmental coffers, an act perpetrated through the award of bogus contracts, the prices of which are mostly too high. Perhaps borrowing a leaf from the past in which the former President Shehu Shagari led administration in Nigeria was noted to have "recall a massive public investment project for a dam that had been awarded under the military government. The project was re-awarded, but its cost according to the new contract rose from $120 million to an amazing $600 million"[42]; some members of the present elitist club all over the continent are busy channeling funds to projects with bogus costs.

More than the use of state projects as loopholes through which funds are siphoned is the straight misappropriation of governmental funds; and funny enough the funds are part of the accruals from the sale of energy and mineral resources, which are currently driving the growth in Africa. As such, it is noted that:

> In 2009, a French judge decided to investigate in response to a lawsuit filed by … Transparency International, which accused Presidents Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, Dennis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea of buying luxury homes with state funds. Sassou Nguesso allegedly owned 24 estates and operated 112 bank accounts in France, while Bongo and his relatives allegedly owned about 30 luxurious estates on the French Riviera and in Paris and its suburbs.
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> … President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo's son Teodoro Obiang Mague, who is a government minister, cast further light on the scale of the assets accumulated. The US Justice Department civil forfeiture action against assets allegedly acquired with money stolen from the people of Equatorial Guinea details items of property including a Gulfstream jet, a variety of cars –including eight Ferraris, seven Rolls-Royces and two Bugattis –a 12 acre estate in Malibu valued at US$38 million, and white gloves previously owned by Michael Jackson.[43]

Another format of the corruption challenge concerns the inability or the intentional strategies of states' institutions that are responsible for the supervision of the extractive industries, to dispense their duties appropriately so as to ensure transparency. Some of such institutions sometimes prove too irresponsible for this hallowed duty, and this thereby impacts negatively on accountability; a situation that easily feeds into or deepen corruption. This is because states' companies often have their operations enshrouded in opaque financial management systems with restricted auditing. Legislative supervision of such companies, if not lacking, is limited; thus, activities like production-sharing agreements, signature bonuses on contracts, and concession trading are kept away from public consumption. This might enhance the benefits derived by political elites and bureaucrats from surreptitious deals made with foreign investors. A case-in-point is the DRC's Gécamines, which was implicated in the undervaluing of the countries assets, and selling concessions on terms that generate huge profits for foreign investors, with commensurate losses to the public; thus, subordinating public interests for private aggrandizement and corruption.

A corollary to the foregoing is the yet to be addressed poverty in the continent. In spite of the fact that the current climate of rapid growth presents unprecedented opportunity to reduce poverty faster, too many Africans are still caught in a downward spiral of penury, especially when many of these persons live on less than a $1.25 per day; even as a handful of individuals benefit from the current geo-strategic importance. Although increase in income tends towards reducing poverty, the ongoing trickle down growth leaves much to be desired. By the same token, governments in most African countries, especially the resource rich ones, have often failed in the responsibility of channeling resource revenue towards tangible developmental strategies. An instance of this is the Angola's economy, which has been growing at the average rate of 7 per cent per annum; and registers "a GDP average of 21% and peaking at 23% between 2005 and 2007."[44] More so, oil has generated revenues within the bracket of US$3-6 billion per annum for the government in Luanda. Yet, "after a decade of rapid growth, half of the country -10 million people … live on less than US$1.25 a day"[45]; even as the country records one of the highest rate of infant mortality globally.

Beyond the biting poverty within the African landscape is the two-pronged combustion that could erupt as one of the fallouts of Africa becoming the nascent El Dorado of foreign direct investment. On one hand, the imbroglio might arise from within some of the resource endowed units of the continent; on the other, it may be between two contiguous neighbours. It is a known fact that Africa boasts of a burgeoning population, which has a large youth bulge that could become an important force for change. In the face of corruption that is deepening the varying African units in socio-economic and infrastructural quagmire, funds are not properly channeled; thus leading to increase in unemployment rate.

Without employment through which necessary capital could be garnered, or gift of capital from relatives, with which to start a small and medium enterprise (SME), coupled with the absence of the necessary structure meant to ensure the survival of businesses, the 'demographic dividend' might become a burden. And this would be if the frustration/aggression thesis plays out. As Ted Gurr explains "discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic instigating condition for participants in collective violence."[46] Discontent might really arise since the African youths, through the internet, have access to the living standards and the activities of their contemporaries elsewhere. Thus, knowing that they tend towards becoming a wasted generation rather than the 'leaders of tomorrow' that they are called and/or should be, some of the youths are fast becoming instruments for societal combustion. This is because youths who are without tangible purposes into which they can channel their energy represent sheer waste of necessary human capital. As such, the likelihood of these youths, educated or illiterate as the case may be, getting restive is high.

This seemed to have played out most in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the area that can be regarded as the goose that lays the golden egg, but which once suffered serious marginalization. This situation presents inhabitants with negative living experience, even leaving most persons deprived of their conventional means of livelihood. Given the canvass of events in the region which serves as home to some "32 million Nigerians (22 per cent of the nation's population), 62 per cent of whom are below 30 years of age …"[47]; the youths, perhaps under the directives of some godfathers or attempting to secure their stakes in the struggle for resource control, led demonstrations, took over oil installations, attacked pumping stations and oil pipelines, and at some point, kidnapped foreign expatriates and Nigerian oil workers, and some of these acts are still ongoing. Thus justifying the notion of collective violence happening once there is shared discontents among certain, if not all the members of a society.

Ill-delineated boundaries inherited at independence may lead contiguous neighbours into conflict. Though the borders were not properly divided, there are views that Africans should have outlived this challenge. Contrary to this, some conflicts are still brewing over shared boundary. In the face of the current scramble for Africa as the epicenter of investment, one realizes that such problem could get intensified. This is because most of the FDI flowing into Africa are directed at the extractive industry, which entails drilling for oil or mining of gems. If oil for instance is found at a border town, serious conflict could arise. The existence of oil fields is proven through the exploratory processes of seismic research and test drilling, which is meant to confirm availability. The viscosity of oil could however create problems during exploitation. While tapping, there is the possibility of oil flowing from one end to another. Assuming that the frontier is not properly divided, the use of advanced technology in tapping could create suspicion that oil is being stolen from adjacent reserves.

Attempts are being made to avoid this, hence the Joint Development Zone between Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe. The two countries have not properly delimited their offshore boundaries in the Gulf of Guinea, but they have officially taken the median lines as the limit of their jurisdiction. Equally, the border challenge between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi peninsula has been resolved through the verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ); and perhaps because of the feeling that the 'Nigerian bear' is still be nursing grudges over its lost cub, mutual confidence between these neighbours is yet to be restored. This notwithstanding, some other border problems still subsist in Africa. As Kidane Mengisteab claims, "Republic of Congo has disputes with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)… Equatorial Guinea has disputes with Gabon … Nigeria has disputes with … Chad … In some cases, the disputes are over territories that are known to be rich in resources such as the … Corisco Bay between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon …"[48] If either of the two conflicts explained should break out, the level of development already attained could be reversed, since whenever violent conflict occurs, there are both direct and indirect costs, which are mostly high and might take the belligerents (countries or individuals) a generation or more before they could return to prewar conditions.

Another serious challenge is the issue of the destruction of the ecosystem. This seems the grievous consequence of the immense contribution of resource-rich African countries to the continent's growth record. Most of the exploration for and exploitation of oil and the mining activities are conducted in areas inhabited by African citizens. With little care for the living, health and employment conditions of the inhabitants, the activities of the multinationals, which sometimes employ a minute fraction of the inhabitants, are readily tampering with the ecosystem, sometimes destructing it to inhabitable condition. This is expressly explained in the 2013 Africa Progress Report that:

> Extractive industry operations come with unavoidable environmental impacts. Large-scale mining cuts back forest and grassland cover, removes topsoil and introduces heavy machinery into fragile environments. For each carat recovered from the Catoca mine in Angola, the fourth-largest diamond mine in the world, more than a tonne of material is removed. Many of the environmental problems associated with mining stem either from the contamination of water, or from the overuse of surface water and groundwater. The petroleum sector is engaged in extracting oil and natural gas from marine, land and lake environments that are highly susceptible to ecological damage. Such environmental impacts can inflict serious harm on the livelihoods of vulnerable people.
>
> … Nowhere in Africa, and probably nowhere in the world, illustrates the ecological risk that comes with poorly regulated

> extractive operations as powerfully as the Niger Delta. The source of Nigeria's vast oil wealth is also a site of an ecological disaster that has destroyed livelihoods of farmers and fisher folk in the delta's inlets on a huge scale. [49]

Since Africa is re-integrated into global politico-economics on the basis of its gems and/or raw-material, which presently, are pursued by skyrocketing price, there is the possibility of its being hurt in the long run. This view is underpinned by the fact that past commodity booms witnessed on the continent were followed by serious fall in prices. And this hurt so many African states, which did not only base their large budgets on the increased revenues from the increasing prices, but had decided to use such opportunities to import both manufactured goods and machineries of the continent. As the prices of their goods declined at the international market, while those of manufactured goods and machineries remain static or increased, the economies of such African countries did not only plummet, but they sauntered into debilitating debt, even as they service such debts with high interests. Presently, a downward spiral does not seem probable, but over the next decades, if African states are not on serious guard, there could be a repeat of the boom-bust scenario. This is because the African suppliers have little or no control over market events (demand and supply principles) that determine the pricing of the African products.

The performances of African economies enjoy widespread accolades presently, and this is simply because the continent has, for almost a decade now, been riding on the crest of a global commodity wave. Attendant to the positive reports that fill news tabloids daily is the looming reversal that might be witnessed all over the continent. This is because the revenue gotten from the sale of natural resources is used in purchasing consumer goods and machineries, with little of the fund trickling down into research that could churn out initiatives for development. Much more is that the extra-African explorers only bring into the African fields the necessary machines and knowledge for the exploitation of African resources with little concern for how the Africans can of themselves acquire the needed knowledge and develop tools and/or machines with which to exploit their resources. In this vein therefore, it is realized that if Africans are not careful, their ownership of oil and gas and mineral resources would perpetually consign the continent on the path of dependence and underdevelopment, a situation that support the deepening of neo-colonialism.

Equally challenging is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), which currently serve as a ready fillip for the worsening of the numerous activities of the underworld kingpins and militants, which are taking new format. Though the continent has been bedeviled by certain crimes before now; however, an attendant to the reintegration of the continent as an important part of the international market, is the increased crime wave. At a level, it is because Africa has already become a serious market for SALW mostly produced by the extra-African powers parading the continental terrain or some of their military hardware producers. Really, some of these arms are purchased officially so as to upgrade the stocks of arms in the military and para-military armouries, but due to national laws in Africa, most are illicitly possessed. At another level, it is likely that the SALW illicitly possessed are somewhat purchased or leased from residents of zones that have witnessed conflicts, an example of this was Libya in recent past. In view of the increase in the shady activities of criminally-minded persons who have access to illicit arms, lives and properties on the continent are less secured. While explaining the impact of the proliferation of SALW, the former United Nations (UN) General Secretary, Kofi Annan, insisted that:

> The world is flooded with small arms and light weapons numbering at least 500 million, enough for one of every 12 people on earth. Most of these are controlled by legal authorities, but when they fall into the hands of terrorists, criminals and irregular forces, small arms bring devastation. They exacerbate conflict, spark refugee flow, undermine the rule of law, and spawn a culture of violence and impunity. In short, small arms are a threat to peace and development to democracy and human rights.[50]

On the bedrock of SALW proliferation therefore, so many nefarious activities, some of which are unprecedented, are springing, even as the perpetrators are becoming more emboldened. Hence, it was reported in March 2013 that "in the Niger Delta, pirates attacked an Indian-owned boat, killing four people, on 5 February. They are also spreading their attacks across the region. Authorities suspected Nigerians of a Luxembourg-flagged ship off Côte d'Ivoire and attacking a Russian ship off Cameroon in February."[51] These activities are not restricted to piracy, rather, kidnapping of local and expatriate oil workers, illicit oil bunkering and/or theft, and political killings included.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

Following from the significant roles that the oil and mining sectors are playing in Africa's resurgence from oblivion in international relations, the first way for African governments to go then, particularly countries that are considered as the treasure troves of the continent become the divesting of their economies from over-dependence on revenue from the sale of such resources. In other words, they should diversify their economies. This would not only assist in weaning Africa and/or its units from always being considered as the source of cheap raw materials, rather, it would save the continent from partaking from the fallout of ruinous economic activities or policies in extra-African economies that seem to regard the continent as their extension; as well as salvage the continent's economies from the boom-bust pricing of goods at the international market. The boom-bust pricing causes volatility in revenues, which makes an economy highly difficult to manage. During price boom, government institutions and/or ministries tend towards adopting outrageous budgets; while during the bust period, the prevailing spending becomes difficult to control. Hence hampering the country's economy since it would bring about deficit budgeting. Examples of this are the oil majors in Africa, which during the 1980s, enjoyed sumptuous oil revenue, which they used for projects, some of which had little or no impact on the living standard of majority of the citizens. When the global oil price dipped around 1986, these economies suffered serious shock, with the masses having to go through throes of austerity measures.

Although IMF study reveals that African governments are already "assessing future revenue streams more cautiously and pursuing counter-cyclical budget strategies, increasing spending during economic downturns rather than during upturns"[52], the African elites should still regard and make serious investment into agriculture. This becomes imperative since presently, the agricultural sector employs the largest proportion of African population; and would help guarantee food security, excess of which could be sold at the international market. This approach would lead to the modernization of the agricultural sector in African countries; mostly by incorporating smallholder farmers through cooperatives, and providing them with funds to buy necessary machineries and chemicals. This would thus translate to the provision of more jobs in both the agricultural and agro-allied sectors to the youth bulge of African population, whose future seems bleak. This would also assist in avoiding the recurrence of the 'Dutch disease', and also assist in shielding the African economies against economic crisis that could evolve from the economies of their trading partners; especially since the resource sectors would cease from being the major revenue earner in African economies.

Another good path to tread is to either invest in or increase the funding for investment in the manufacturing sector as this would to a large extent, absolve the continent from being the perpetual dumping ground that it is currently assuming in the context of the 21st century scramble. By diversifying the humongous funds accruing to some of them, particularly the oil exporting countries of Angola and Nigeria, into the manufacturing sector, one realizes that the massive influx of consumable and industrial goods into the continent would gradually reduce, and would feed into development, as well as proffer new employment opportunities for citizens from and within the continent. The investment should however be done under close monitoring in order to allow for transparency. This would thus assist the continent's gradual rise from existing as the permanent global dumping ground.

More than this, the African states should invest in technologies meant for adding value to their crude oil and mined gems. The value-adding has a way of increasing the revenues that accrue from the sale of raw materials. Thus, it is claimed that "the value of processed products was typically 400 times greater than the equivalent unit value of the raw material"[53] As such, African exporters should cease from the mere sale of unprocessed materials; rather, they should engage in mineral processing and manufacturing. This would reduce unemployment at a drastic rate, since some persons would be engaged in the mining and/or exploitation processes, while many others would appreciate jobs in the 'value-adding' sectors.

Much more, the African ruling elites should ensure that the extraction of their countries' natural resources is not done with the conventional mindset of 'this is Africa'. Other than being business as usual, the governments should put in place measures that would restrain investors from merely extracting resources, and ensure that they bring about serious local transformation, both to the host communities and the inhabitants of such environ. Alongside this, the varying African governments or governmental institutions that serve as the interface between their governments and foreign investors should decide on compelling foreign investors to adopt benchmarks that are operational in the leading countries within the international system. This would assist in ensuring that Africans enjoy goods and services of international standard. Put differently, African governments should insist that international benchmarks that are obtainable in the US, leading European countries France, Germany and UK, as well as in Japan are used in Africa. This has a way of encouraging development within societies and ensuring the advancement of the citizens.

Of great significance it would be if African governments could increase the fund invested in the provision of necessary socio-economic infrastructures, and monitor how it is spent. This would deepen the confidence of both local and foreign investors, who might be willing to commit their money to the provision of goods and services; and thus providing more employment opportunities for the citizens. Rather than seeing and/or using the provision of socio-economic infrastructures as avenues of siphoning funds from government coffers, the African political elites should seize the prevailing opportunity in enhancing the stance of their individual countries within the international system. This would be since through the provision of necessary infrastructures, the citizens' living standard would improve, the survivability of business ventures could be guaranteed (to an extent though) and rural-urban conurbation would be curbed. Also, it would translate to food security. This situation would arise since the rural youths, while enjoying the same amenities available in urban centres, may resolve to stay in their local regions so as to engage in agriculture meant for the production of necessary raw materials and food products, the excess of which could be sold at the international market. This would reduce poverty to the barest minimum in the continent; hence giving Africa and its units another form of relevance within the globalized village.

Beyond the foregoing is the need for African states to deepen their engagements and/or investment in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. Examining some Asian countries, particularly India, reveals that ICT has saved such from the consequences that would arisen from their lack of adequate infrastructure. In fact, in the 1990s, India's economic growth was largely fuelled by its good ICT infrastructure, rather than its physical infrastructure. In this light therefore, one assumes that adequate investment into ICT infrastructure would proffer more jobs for the massive youthful bulge of the African population, thus reducing the menace that unemployment could pose to the security and stability of a state.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis has shown the trajectories of Africa's evolution in international politics; and it equally explains how presently, the continent has become the epicenter of global investment. Equally it has presented the two sides of a disc, which are some of the hopes that are arising and the attendant challenges that evolving presently. And given the challenges, perhaps more because of the desire for Africa to continue enjoying the present or better growth rate, the paper suggests how the future could be better shaped. All these notwithstanding, Africans should not be oblivious of the wisdom intrinsic to animal relation; that is a stronger animal would always desire maintaining its superiority over others. Applying this to states relations, one realizes that countries would always desire to be ahead of others, and as such, would want to maintain some handle on others. Since realism cannot cease from playing out in international politics, then the current scramble for Africa as the '21st century investment frontier' and/or whatever accolade the continent is showered with should be taken with serious alertness. This is because the present relevance of Africa might cease once, on one hand, other regions are found to be depositories of the needed natural resources; and on the other, some other resources become more necessary than the ones presently be exploited or mined in Africa. Besides, since the Stone Age became extinct, not really because of the dearth of stones, but because men became more sophisticated than the stone use; so also, human sophistication can transcend the relevance of the natural resources that Africa pride itself in bringing to international table, hence loosing the seemingly prevailing growth rate and relevance accorded it within the context of international political economy.

In another stead, African elites should not be too quick to laugh to their banks; rather, they should scrutinize every largesse and/or partnership offered by any extra-African country or multinational, irrespective of such already being a trading partner. This is because intrinsic to the offers being made are hidden processes by which the 'offeree' might become an offering, either to the 'offeror' or its cohorts. As such, African countries should learn from the experience of Lobengula who asked missionary Helm "did you ever see a chameleon catch a fly?' Explaining further, he hinted that 'the chameleon gets behind the fly and remains motionless for some time, then it advances very slowly and gently, first putting forward one leg and then another. At last, when well within reach, it darts its tongue and the fly disappears. England is chameleon and I am that fly."[54] As Lobengula became fly for the English chameleon, African countries can also be eclipsed if not consumed by the so much funds from extra-regional powers that is chasing limited business deals that Africa has to offer. This is nothing more than a caveat and it should be regarded in this light.

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