

9. Alternating the Paradigm of Oblivion? Oil and the 21st Century Scramble for Africa

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Abstract:

It is axiomatic that Africa is presently the epicenter of the 21st century scramble by extra-continental powers; which are being celebrated for, in one way or the other, assisting Africa out of oblivion in global affairs, particularly after the Cold War. The major reason for this act being the extra-African desires for some bits of the mineral resources with which the continent is endowed and the continent's market. This experience is already making the continent to feel extra-important in and/or to global politics, thus acting like a pigmy that thinks himself a giant. Without much ado, oil is at the front burner of the current scramble; and extant literature has claimed that the deepening presence and interests of extra-regional powers portend good omen for the continent. As such, there are claims that certain African units are witnessing about 7% GDP growth on annual basis.

Beyond this however, are certain nefarious happenings, which to a large extent, are the concomitants of or are deepened by the 21st century scramble for Africa. In view of this, the study seeks to understand the prevailing groundswell of anomie before the current scramble; analyse the scramble so as to expose the hidden menu of desires, both of the major powers and their multinational companies; and to investigate the unfolding attendants that are entrenching Africa's feet in the quagmire of crisis.

Keywords:

Africa, Gulf of Guinea (GoG), Extra-African, Nigeria, Powers

Introduction

Africa is standing on edge of enormous opportunity ... (Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General).

The breathtaking pace at which major economies are growing, which is making such economies to consume more oil and gas resources than they could possibly produce; the imminent adverse effects of interruption in supply deliveries from the Middle East, and the peak oil thesis are presently contributory to Africa's regained relevance on the map of international economic politics. Thus, there has been serious racing for oil and gas sources, sites of some other mineral resources and markets in the continent. In other words, Africa's natural gift of oil and gas, some other mineral resources and vast population are, more than before, currently attracting serious global attention to the continent that was regarded as falling off the global map immediately after the Cold War. Without seriously thinking about the extent to which the extra-regional presence and interests in Africa would influence policy and impact reality of existence, it is assumed away that the 21st century presence of extra-continental powers would positively impact Africa's development immensely and/or present a win-win situation (Hart, 2008, 1; 2010, 210). This assumption is against the backdrop of the influx of foreign direct investment (FDI), needed machineries and expertise that are necessary for development.

Beyond the dressed truth of win-win situation or positive impact on African societies and economies as reflected in the words of Donald Kaberuka (2013) that the sleeping giant is on its way, and the African trajectory continues upward ... which signals assistances rendered by the scramblers, there are feelers that the current scramble for the region would serve as the fault-line for consigning the region on the eternal path of underdevelopment, poverty and numerous resource-conflicts that might still occur in the continent; and which could lead the region on the reversal path to near stone age. Put differently, while there is near consensus that the demand for African resources is resulting in immense growth, there is far less agreement about the long-term effects of the current impact by external actors (Southall and Melber, 2009, xx); that of a surety, might not lead Africa into the desired greatness and/or great future.

The news of the salubrious growth rate in the continent that brings it at par with Asia notwithstanding, the true picture of which 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 (Kaberuka, 2013); there are pointers that Africa might on one hand, particularly through the numerous act of the extra-regional powers, be perpetually consigned to underdevelopment. And on the other, through the groundswell of societal malady in the continent, would witness escalating catastrophe that are capable of reversing the modicum advancement that the region has ever witnessed.

The newly 'improved' status of Africa as the new frontier of investment, relative though, within the global system might translate to a situation of reversal of the economic revolution that Africa seems poised to seize, particularly in sectors other than the oil and mining. And while equally giving the feeling that some foreign traders might intentionally, perhaps because of their nationalistic

desires, work against the roar of African Lion. A situation that would be engendered by schemes meant to insidiously stultify the eventual rise of Africa as a continent with the largest numbers of developed units. This is not to paint a doomsday canvass; rather, it is to sensitize the leaders of the region to the more important issues of security and economy than the development façade that comes with the tantalizing thought of the 21st century being Africa's own. This is especially against the backdrop of the fact that states, because they are in a self-help system, as Kenneth Waltz claims, have to use their combined capabilities in order to serve their interests (Waltz, 1979, 131).

In this sense, Africans would do well to attempt getting around the scheme meant to delude them into deepening their feet in the quagmire of underdevelopment. If Henry Kissinger's claim that:

An effective decision making process must ... reflect well-thought-out policy choices, that is, they must answer these questions: what are we trying to achieve, or what are we trying to prevent? What consequences do we expect from this decision, and what steps do we have in mind for dealing with them? What is the cost of the proposed action? Are we willing to pay that price, and for what length of time (Kissinger, 1999),

is anything to go by, then one realizes that the 21st century scramble for Africa, may not totally be to Africa's advantage. This is because of the conception of the continent as a market and a pool of cheap labour, and it is majorly seen in the light of its mineral resources endowment and the relatively loose tax system that permits the flexible entrance and exit of foreign capital, into and from the continent. In other words, the claims of an unfolding win-win scenario in this century for Africa, may not necessarily turn out so.

As such, African elites and/or citizens would do well not to be oblivious of the fact that the interest of a state is to satisfy its national needs, and not necessarily to assist another, except in few cases, in climbing out of the encumbrances of underdevelopment. Hence the desires of both the neo-scramblers and the conventional ones are meant for satisfying their countries' interests ahead of Africa's development. This is more so since their perception of Africa is mostly that of an ... unhistorical underdeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here as on the childhood of the world's history ... (Magubane, 1999, 25). And which can still make do with the pangs of underdevelopment, even as ... sub-Saharan Africa according to Fukuyama (1999) has so many problems that its lack of political and economic development seems over-determined.

In this vein, if extra-African presence in the continent is largely to actualize their national needs, how would they seek the outright development of Africa when the international system is power configured? If the situation is a win-win one as claimed by some extant literature, then the extra-regional powers must be willing to alter their objectives. But none should forget the fact that such amendment to policy would, if at all, take years in coming and might translate to the loss of funds already committed to the pursuit of the already running policy. Hence, putting this into perspective, Morton Kaplan insists that:



... once an objective or means of implementation is pursued, the investment in that objective is lost if a change is made. Other actors have already pledged their cooperation. Claims have publicly been made. Reversals would cloud the entire issue and make policies appear arbitrary. Besides, time, money, and personnel have already been expended. Moreover, the organisation is structured to scan for information which seems consonant with the given objective and to ignore information which appears to conflict ... New administrations may intend to make changes, but it is difficult to make changes at a single point without touching off a ramified series of consequences. It is much easier to maintain existing agreements than to negotiate new sets of agreement (Kaplan, 2005, 142).

And even if new regimes feel committed to altering the conventional view of Africa as the raw material and cheap labour pool, and the large market for their mass produced consumable and industrial goods, one realizes that such feat may be difficult to achieve within the short tenure of between 4 and 8 years. So what else? The interest of each scrambler remains, hence the status quo of Africa being the bringer of necessary raw materials to the global table to be feasted upon. Thus, this optic has determined for some persons their notions of Africa falling off the global map, some sort of being entrapped in oblivion in international socio-economic and politico-diplomatic spheres, immediately after the Cold War.

In view of the foregoing, the study considers the prevailing scenario in Africa prior to the continent's assumption of the status of the epicenter of the 21st century scramble. Thus the paper is divided into interconnected sections. After the introduction, the study takes a broad look at the contributory factors to, and the context within which Africa sauntered into oblivion in global politics. In order to tease apart the covert menu of desires of the giant scramblers and their varying multinationals, the paper goes ahead in the following section to answer the questions of 'why' and 'how', with respect to the neo-scramble for the continent. It also examines the emerging varying fallouts of the current scramble that are gradually turning the continent into the cauldron of challenges. In the final section, it considers the numerous ways in which African states are responding to the 21st century scramble.

Theoretical Underpinning for the Study

A variant of theory -liberalism- claims that the international politics can be a non-zero-sum game, that it is possible to have win-win situations in which gains of one or more countries do not have to come at the expense of others (Rourke, 2008; 23). The dynamics contained in and the intensity of the current extra-regional interests and involvements in Africa are however proving this perspective wrong. As such, one realizes that notwithstanding the claims that morality, ideology, emotions, habits of cooperation, and even altruism are factors that influence the behaviour of national leaders and the course of global affairs, the traits of realism, particularly the neorealist strand, cannot be divorced from the unfolding dimension of international politics ongoing in Africa. Within the 'international jungle', where in existence is the concourse of interacting and/or interdependent states that must of necessity nibble at international resources, which they sometimes



possess limited or no supply of; one cannot always expect to see lesser than states, mostly the ‘big wigs’, acting out their malignity. While attempting to deepen their interests and involvements in Africa therefore, the extra-continental entities may not seriously consider the African interests as such. This is because they already have a conception of Africa, and on the basis of their perception they will relate with the African milieu. Much more is that their nationalistic interests are all they are out to satisfy; hence they would take this into consideration before the thought of assisting their host. And even if they are going to do anything tangible towards the host-continent, their interests must come first, which they would be willing to ensure at any cost.

Neo-Marxism equally forms a platform from which a better comprehension of the 21st century scramble for Africa can be sought. This is because this theoretical perspective is focused on the international system of capitalism, the competition among economic classes, and the relationship of politics and society of capitalist production (Wallerstein, 2004; Cox, 2002; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979). Really the present relations between Africa and the major powers is underpinned by international dimension of capitalism, even as these relations form serious entrapment of or for African units, which are seen in the light of the ‘proletariat’, by the external powers that form the ‘bourgeois’ of the international system. As such, one can claim that the neo-scramble for Africa is informed by economics, which is the primary reason for international politics.

Flowing from this therefore is the perception that the major powers are bent on, and will take serious advantage of African units whose leaders are majorly, if not only, concerned with the accrual that is flowing from the ongoing interactions between their states and the different extra-regional powers. Thus, the clamour for democratization, liberalization and many other of the ‘izations’ that Africa is getting inundated with, seem to be guises to lure the leadership of the different units of the region off their concentration on the local dynamics that should feed into Africa’s variant of development. This claim is situated on the fact that the global economy has always been bifurcated into core (haves) and the periphery (have nots). Most of the 21st century scramblers fall into the core; whereas the African units are parts of the periphery. And the two sides are relating within a global system that agrees with the core’s reception of the most favorable portion of the system’s economic surplus, as William Thompson (1983, 12) claims, through its exploitation of the periphery, which, in turn is compelled to specialize in the supply of less well rewarded raw materials and labor.

The Landscape of Anomie

Lest the 21st century becomes the threshold through which future generations understand events in Africa, it becomes important to explain the landscape of past events through which Africa has traveled to this point. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism in Africa and Cold War, and the impacts of each in and/or on continent have been widely discussed in literature. Worthy of note however is the fact that most of the prevailing malaise bedeviling the continent started and extended from, even as Africans have built on these epochal events. On one hand, although the slave trade seems part of African history, but the Trans-Atlantic slave trade foisted on Africans the knowledge of White supremacy, from which the colonial era emanated. On the other, the Cold War brought to the



fore the knowledge of how African leaders, because of the unseen strings of overseas development assistance (ODA), military aid and bits of acquiescence from the then 'global lords' to embark on personal aggrandizement at the expense of the state and citizens, became puppets in the hands of either of the then two 'supremos' in international politics. Flowing from these three events that dealt indelible blows on Africa, some festering sores have come to the front burner. What follows thus becomes a consideration of the menu of anomie in the continent.

Sequel to independence, certain African states realized how blessed they were to be geographically located where they presently are. This is because of the humongous deposit of natural resources they sit on. Since they were lacking both in fund and technological expertise, and necessary machines that make for exploration and exploitation of such resources, they turned to their former 'masters', who have already deepened and were unwilling to curtail their presence in the continent. As such, Potekhin claims that:

To develop mining and consumer goods industries, machine tools and equipment are required. Who is to supply them? The industrially developed western countries would like to reserve the monopoly in delivering machinery to African countries 'Balanced industrialisation' entails the setting up of an industry putting out the means of production (Potekhin, 1962).

This paved way both for their citizens and multinationals to either deepen or establish their presence in the units of the continent. As such, Africa became a region where foreign fund and expertise predominate, thus becoming an economic colony. This is reflected in the view of Bauer who insists that:

Any country in which foreign private capital earns a positive return or where foreigners are engaged in service industries is an economic colony; and conversely any country whose citizens have investments abroad, or who perform services there, is economic imperialist or neo-colonialist (Bauer, 1972, 170).

Really African spokesmen at different times and fora argued for the economic freedom of their individual countries, particularly when economic colonialism still impacts considerably on political freedom. In the bid to satisfy the innumerable desires of the foreign investors and multinationals, who were the representatives of their home governments in the continent, some African leaders, perhaps because of international politics or selfish desire to perpetuate themselves in power, even with acquiescence from the major powers, turned bestial and misgoverned their citizens with 'iron fist'. Such leaders thus lost their legitimacy with the people; and thereby embarked on bad governance with sinister fallouts.

Alongside the foregoing is the fact of the growing corruption, which is assuming the order of the day on the continent. Really, some thoroughgoing cynics, as Robert Klitgaard (1999, 91) claims, do not understand why corruption needs to be explained since corruption is everywhere, even as it is regarded in some quarters as the norm. Corruption is the misuse of office to satisfy private ends. It is highly embarrassing, and most persons in the continent are either already feeling exhausted by it; or perhaps, because of the long duration of its existence or warped view, some persons are already



seeing it as rightful to do. Kofi Annan, a former UN Secretary General put this in proper perspective when he insisted that Africa’s ... citizens are being robbed by corruption and rising inequality ... (African Progress Panel, 2013). It is so common placed that it roves freely in governmental circles. For instance in Nigeria, due to manifest aversion to fight the menace, this malaise has assumed an all-time high under the present administration. And this becomes so since the existing agencies meant to deal with the challenge are already going moribund, while there is dearth of tangible and/or functional policies to address the issue. In view of the freeness with which this crime is committed therefore, a UN summit adequately concluded that:

Corruption in government is pervasive at all levels of public management, including, in some countries, the deliberate mismanagement of national economies for personal gain. ... Corruption is pervasive and is apparently expanding. ... [I]t has become systematic and a way of life in many countries (UN, 1990).

And in spite of the knowledge of how destructive this malaise is to any country’s development, it has, to a large extent, become the currency of most of the powerful and some of the commoners on the street. However, it affects economies mostly from top to down. It is thus 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.

... 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 (African Progress Panel, 2013, 29).

Worse enough, the recent investigation of corruption in Angola underlies the current crisis between the country and its former colonial master and partner –Portugal. And to this President Jose Eduardo dos Santos insisted that

in the battle against corruption, the anti-corruption organizations in the West are deliberately creating misunderstandings in order to intimidate Africans who are generating wealth and who want to get access to it. They are creating the general impression that a rich African is invariably a corrupt one (Omojola, 2013/14, 27).

This submission notwithstanding, one realizes that since corruption is contributory to the sliding of states into economic distress, it is partly responsible for the political crises that have rocked the continent in time past.

More than this is the fact of poverty, whose fingers are so palpable that, many African families under the heaviness of these fingers could barely afford life's necessities of food, clothing and shelter concurrently without much grimace on the breadwinners' face. This is so since some, if not many, families could hardly get tangible sources of income. Even those with such sources have to commit huge chunk of their salarium to every day needs. This is because most of the socio-economic infrastructures are in dilapidated conditions, hence the high cost of enjoying such services. In this stead, if it becomes very difficult for those with jobs to keep their heads above the waters, what about those without? Really there are arguments that such persons/families should find something else to do. The list of such 'other jobs' is by no means exhaustive. However, one still needs to consider the level of resources to be gotten from this that would be enough to sustain the family. This may sound subjective, but until one finds her/himself in such situation before the reality of it would dawn.

The wisdom from the above is that on one hand, the chronic nature of poverty in Africa is majorly engendered by the high level corruption, through which the necessary funds for the provision of the socio-economic infrastructures have been diverted to private ventures. Such infrastructures would have been frameworks meant for buoying businesses that are going moribund or for the survival of the different small and medium scale enterprises started by the innumerable citizens of the continent. On the other, the situation serves as a serious cesspool for the fermentation of 'Grade A' crisis and insecurity; and from this, one can count some serious threatening crimes witnessed on the continent that have evolved from it, part of which are piracy, robbery, militancy, and kidnap and recently, terrorism. This view is underpinned by the frustration/aggression theory (Gurr, 1969, 33), which explains the readiness with which frustrated individuals might dabble into any nefarious act that could, to such persons anyway, serve as salve for their situations.

Beyond the above were the numerous military putsches that occurred on the continent. As a result of the claims of the failure of civilian regimes to good governance through which they could legitimate themselves, a situation that results from civilian incompetence or "legitimacy deflations" of inept civilian governments, the military controlled the African political scene for a long while. Hence, through military intervention, which is a design of organized political violence involving the threat or actual use of force to accomplish certain predetermined objectives which may be political, economic, social or even military (Fawole, 1994, 16); the human and peoples rights of many African citizens were violated. This added to the opprobrium in which Africa was seen in global light.

Rather than address these anomie, governments only attempt skin-deep solutions, which would barely glide over such challenges. Even at high-level inter-governmental summits, hardly has there been any comprehensive formulation and implementation of policies meant to address these challenges, which the neo-scramble might worsen.

21st Century Scramble for Africa and its dimensions

Having provided a broad view of some of the anomie that led Africa into global oblivion, we can now go on to examine the specific issues involved in the 21st century scramble for the continent. The disruptive effects of the prevailing political climate of the Middle-East on oil prices and the attendant shifts in the structure of oil demand, the peak oil thesis that explains that oil would soon go into extinction or irrelevance, and the cheapness of oil as an energy source are parts of the factors that are forcing cognition on Africa as a relevant region to global politics. As such, Africa's oil exporting countries, both old and new, have gained serious importance in the United States, Europe and Asia energy strategies. It thus becomes apparent that the extra-territorial powers' concern about the continent is mostly because of their desire to diversify the sources of their energy supply in order to reduce, if not to totally remove, the risks associated with high dependence on a region as the major supplier.

Flowing from the above is the realization that Africa is of serious relevance to the countries currently scrambling for the continent, and is even likely to matter more in the future. By 2025, there is the likelihood of the continent providing the United States with upwards of 25% of its imports of crude oil. Thus, the ongoing featuring of Africa on the radar screens of US policymakers is traceable to oil that has attracted their renewed interest in a continent long neglected and still weakly understood in the US (Clarke, 2007, 63; Southall, 2009, 13). Even as the insatiable quest for new energy sources is compelling Beijing to deepen its efforts to gain access and foothold in new oil-rich countries of the continent, even to the extent that the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) had to bear with Chadian government's chastisement over the pollution of the environment through oil spills.

Granted the above, extra-African powers and their state and/or private multinationals are directing huge funds to the search for oil in Africa. This is particularly around the Gulf of Guinea (GoG), which consists of 16 countries that include Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cot d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroun, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are strung along the north-western coast of Africa and Angola on the southernmost fringes; as well as elsewhere on the continent. This elsewhere covers East African region, where the oil majors are already exploring for oil. In Uganda for instance, Total and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) are already spending fortune in their bid to gain access to the new oil province; while Statoil and ExxonMobil are equally making their presence felt in Tanzania. In the bid to increase its prospecting blocs to six in Kenya, Tullow Kenya BV paid \$9.3m, even as the French oil giant Total and a consortium of other oil exploration companies, Anadarko of the US and Cove Energy have stakes in blocks covering more than 30, 500 sq km (Kabukuru, 2012, 68).

Beyond oil, extra-African powers and their multinationals are equally exploring for and committing huge funds to the exploitation of other mineral resources. This is because Africa is endowed with about 30% of the planet's known mineral reserves, which includes gold, cobalt, platinum, diamonds, manganese, chromium, bauxite, nickel, copper and some other minerals. As



such, the mining industry in the continent is presently enjoying the full glow of fame. This is particularly so since the US war machine, according to Southall, is heavily dependent upon imports from Africa of cobalt, manganese, chromium and platinum essential to the manufacture of defense equipment, (Southall, 3); even as China has already become a serious consumer of Africa's minerals, hence engaging in significant investment in mines and mining-related infrastructure, notably in Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In this vein, the mining industry forms another attraction for the scramblers that are engaging Africa presently. Really the sector has always been operative, but the present level of investment in it has been very significant; hence the sector is proving its relevance to the new scramble for Africa's resources. As such, Africa has been entering into billion dollar deals with biggest global players in the mining sector; and more investments are still flowing into the continent since the demand for metals on the continent still outstrips supply, thus pushing prices to near record levels in some cases. In 2011 for instance, Africa was regarded as the scene for \$12.9 bn worth of mining mergers and acquisitions (Morgan, 2012, 28).

Of equal importance is the fact of Africa is assuming a serious market for the mass produced consumer goods, machineries, and military hardwares of companies from some of the present scramblers for the continent. In view of this, citizens of African states now celebrate their easy access to consumer goods of cars, homestead electronics, furniture, mobile phones, laptops, and even clothes to mention a few. Thus where Africa is lacking in its responsibility of providing the necessary consumable goods for the welfare of its citizens, the 21st century scramblers seem to have been of immense assistance by meeting such needs; hence the claim that the 21st century scramble for Africa presents it with a win-win situation. In this vein, Melber dares say that:

... efforts to access African markets ... became visible with the adoption of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) ... Through this initiative, the US openly underlined the relevance of the African dimension for its external trade relations: Africa ranks higher than eastern Europe in the US trade balance (Melber, 2009, 61).

And this is more so as the trading relations between China and Africa is on the increase; hence, it was noted that Africa's exports to China witnessed considerable rise of about 40% per annum to reach \$28.8 billion between 2001 and 2006. During the same period imports from China quadrupled to \$26.7 billion (Wang, 2007, 5). The scramble for Africa's market is not limited to the US and China, rather, the other players of Britain, France, India, and Japan to mention a few, are deepening their footholds in the continent through the ongoing scramble for the pieces of the African market.

Another angle to the neo-scramble is the fact that it serves as a new avenue for geo-strategic competition on the continent. This is because rather than the scramble being limited to search for oil, other mineral resources and market on the continent, it is serving the purpose of attempts at gaining geo-strategic significance. This becomes so since the grim reality in the contemporary international system is the fact of a world where power and might mostly determine what, how and when any player in global politics gets what and at what rate. In this light, the neo-scramblers do not only see

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Africa as a 'bride to court', rather, they compete for space in the continent. This act blurs into their numerous friendly acts in the region, hence not easily visible to sight. As such, their numerous friendly and/or aggressive policy advances are directed at winning the hearts of African political elites, particularly through the aim of assisting the African units. An instance of this are the aggressive and militarised policies of the US directed at Africa at large, and the Gulf of Guinea, in particular; which are aimed at protecting and securing access to strategic resources and military bases. Thus, under the guise of war against terrorism, the United States, according to Rita Abrahamsen, has increased its presence in Africa ... in the oil rich states and in the Sahel, which is regarded as a buffer zone ... (Abrahamsen, 2004).

Altering Oblivion? A Consideration of Situation

Africa cries out for both development and pragmatic policies that would address developmental challenges and withstand the test of time. In recent decades, certain countries like China and Singapore have evolved from the trappings of underdevelopment, while some other Asian countries, Malaysia for instance are stretching to fully evolve; even as India is adopting varying policies to establish itself as a force to reckon with within the global system. Comparable tendencies in the African continent, however, have yet to stir.

The ongoing scramble, as earlier explained, is serving as one of the drivers, if not the most important, for the resurgence of Africa in contemporary international politics; a sort of contributing to the obliteration of the oblivion in which the continent has for a long while been enveloped. An allusion to this is the fact that the continent is presently seen as the 'last frontier, the world's newest and greatest growth pole', the 'salvation of global economy during a time of crisis' and as an Indian government minister puts it, if you are not in Africa, you are not on the global playing field (Anver, 2012, 19). But one wonders what he meant by global playing field? The unfolding attendants of the new situation, in addition to the already existing situation, may turn the experience into a fiasco. Indeed serious advantages of socio-economic, politico-military and diplomatic leanings are encapsulated in the current scramble. However, adapting Marx' commodity fetishism that occurs when one mistakes a commodity's value for its appearance to this study, one realizes that more than the benefits that have been projected to Africans as the additions that the 21st century scramble brings, are the heart-rending attendants that presently serve as the Siamese twins of the said additions. This is because more than the challenges of robbery, prostitution, narcotic and child trafficking that used to be the most grievous of crimes and/or challenges witnessed by African countries, are the new threats of pirate attacks, crimes linked to theft and illegal trade in crude oil, firearms and pharmaceuticals, waste dumping, pollution, wholesale destruction of the ecosystem, kidnapping and terrorism, to mention a few. In this light therefore, accepting the claim that the 21st century is Africa's becomes difficult.

Beyond this is the fact of the conflict that could arise between two contiguous neighbours within the continent. This might be on the issue of the deposit of oil and some other mineral resources stretching across proximate land and maritime boundaries of neighbouring states. In the



face of the present scramble in which each state desires the flow of fund into its coffer, one cannot but suspect that such depository of resources might engender conflict. It would be expected that such impending crisis should be resolved amicably. However, in the face of the heightened proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) which are some of the leading products of most of the current scramblers, which they (major powers), certain rogue nationals of theirs or groups within them seek markets for; and even, for which the personnel of the producing factories might be willing to stoke crisis in order to sell, the resolution of such crisis might turn herculean.

Put differently, though African economies are getting transformed by the ongoing global commodity wave, there however is the likelihood of the transformation being short lived. The possibility of this cannot be trivialized. This consideration becomes important since ownership of frontier towns, which sometimes are depositories of prized oil and mineral resources, is not clearly stated in any document; and many a times, African states had had to reach near conflict situations before such were partially resolved. Really, examples of the crises engendered by the ill-delineated borders amongst or between African units are not far-fetched; even as such borders are still posing as serious fault-lines for another round of conflict, particularly because of the search for and desire to exploit the natural resources that Africa is immensely blessed with. Thus, granted the rate at which both licit and illicit arms flow into African states presently, the situation between two neighbours over shared frontier could become convoluted, especially when the possession of arms can embolden a weakling against a giant. If this scenario plays out, then the significant growth that African economies are said to have recorded would not only amount to nothing, but might revert the existing order on which the said growth is being laid.

Much more is the fact that the proliferation of arms in Africa, where most units are fragile, is quickening the fragmentation of the dispensers of force. These dispensers comprise of the military and paramilitary, through private security firms, to terrorists, militants, pirates, vigilante groups, community defenses, local strongmen, and youth gangs to use some common labels. Embedded in the fragmentation of force dispensers are the issues of the heightened militarisation of the society, privatisation and/or informalisation of security within society, and incertitude of security which results from the rise in crime wave in the continent. The situation is impacting on security in the Gulf of Guinea for instance, where the Nigerian government is noted to have:

... lamented the rising insecurity ... as a result of the activities of kidnappers, pirates and crude oil thieves ... crude oil theft and illegal oil bunkering in the Gulf has become a major sources of concern ... with US Naval Intelligence Report indicating about nine hijacking incidents, 55 unauthorised vessel boarding, several kidnappings and vessels fired upon in the first half of this year (2013) ... the current high insecurity had negatively impacted the region's broader economic development, adding that maritime resources such as fish aquaculture and the ecosystem which directly contribute to the livelihood of many Africans had been affected (Madueke, 2013).

Beyond this is the issue of geopolitics that could be transferred from elsewhere to or play out in Africa. Though supposed, extra-regional powers are meant to be the 'co-sojourners' in Africa, however, given international politics, each of them seeks to carve out a space of influence for itself, just like Britain and France have done with their former colonies; even as the two conventional 'lords' in Africa strive to ensure they are not outwitted within or pushed out of their conventional terrains. In view of this, each of the scramblers, both old and new keep employing all the means they could muster in order to win the African rulers to their side. But the ongoing trend in global politics - the sanctioning of Russia by its former colleagues in G8 over the former's relations with Ukraine, the format China has so far adopted in its trading relations with African states and its dissemination of cyber intelligence to favoured Chinese corporations, America's decision to support Japan in anticipation of Sino-Japanese conflict over the islands known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China; and the recent visit of President Obama to Asia, which according to Kevin Liptak (2014), is meant to, reassure allies the United States remains ... a "pivot to Asia," ... and send a message to China that the United States has its allies' backs in territorial disputes- one cannot but think that there is high possibility of these powers taking side with each other; thus leading to a geopolitical configuration and/or tussle that should be of serious concern. This could be in the pattern of China and Russia against Britain, France, India, Japan and the US. This thought becomes important in view of recent allegations regarding American cyber-spying and attacks on Huawei (Brodkin, 2014; Jacobs, 2014); and the deepening gulf between US and China, even as the US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel could not convince the Chinese, who operates a massive peacetime industrial espionage apparatus, on the need for cyber transparency. This situation came about, according to Joe McReynolds, since the PLA offensive cyber actors are aggressively gathering not only military but also industrial intelligence, which is then passed on to privileged Chinese corporations to impart a competitive advantage in international markets (McReynolds, 2014).

In view of the perspective that there is neither a permanent friend nor foe, but permanent interests, this configuration might alter; hence, we may have India on the side of China and Russia, especially when the trio belong to the BRICS bloc. The pattern that plays out notwithstanding, Africa is going to become the playing ground, what then becomes of Africans in the face of such configuration? Perhaps the external powers are interested in the proxy format of antagonizing themselves, would African states not become agents in such situation? Irrespective of the level at which African units would be brought into the geopolitical tussle, the concern is about 'mother Africa' and 'us' -Africans. Or how does one explain the view that the US should dominate the sea lanes that China transports its imported oil through as a tool for proving its (US) might in international politics? A situation that one assumes is feeding into the current US naval ships patrol of the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Going beyond this is the consideration of the advantages that are arising with the 21st century scramble becoming a web in which Africa would be entrapped in near future. There is so much wisdom in nature, hence the web of the American house spider (AHS) (*Parasteatoda tepidariorum*) serves to better illustrate the entrapping of Africa by the ongoing benefits that are



being celebrated in some African quarters. Not that Africa can go the journey alone, but there is need for African elites to put in place serious policies that would ensure its interests in the 21st century. The web of the AHS can both be strong and weak. Given its adhesive properties, it sticks to the wall and is strong enough withstand the impact of flying prey; while weak enough to detach from the ground and serve as a spring-loaded trap for walking prey (Awake, 2014, 16).

The current external interests and involvements in Africa share these characteristics of the AHS' web. Like the web, the strong dimension of the ongoing interdependence between Africa and its many 'suitors' will deepen –in the case of the already existing formats- or lay the fresh foundation for pathological loyalty to the extra-territorial powers. On one hand, African elites might willingly transfer such loyalty to whichever country they think is serving their purposes of selfish orientation. On another, these extra-regional powers might expect such transfer of loyalty from the African elites to whom they could have express their magnanimity in time past. Thus, African elites might be expected to acquiesce to the activities of these external powers that may sometimes, if not most times contradict African positions. And this situation would play out most when their (major powers) policies negatively impact African economies. A clue to this is reaction that the recent anti-gay bill assented by the President Goodluck Jonathan in Nigeria generated. For instance, The European Union Commission (EUC) expressed reservations at the signing into law of the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act by President Goodluck Jonathan (Oyedele, 2014); while the British Foreign Secretary is noted to have:

... expressed disappointment over President Goodluck Jonathan's assent to the same sex marriage Bill; (even as the) Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, Jeremy Wright, said: The UK is a close friend of Nigeria, but we are disappointed that President Jonathan has given his assent to a Bill which will further criminalise same sex relationships in Nigeria (Ojeme, 2014).

Worse off, however, is the soft dimension of the current scramble, which might do more damage to Africans at a future date. Africans celebrate their numerous devices purchased from the factories and shops of some of the scramblers. This keeps luring us –Africans- down the aisle of not bothering ourselves with the production of our own type of such devices; and those who bother themselves are by no means getting the necessary funding that would assist them in taking such venture to heights of finesse.

Also, the 21st century scramble for the continent is deepening the coupling of African economies with that of the various scramblers; thus, any format of change in such external economies would sure reflect in the finances of the African units. This translates to the fact of the straddling of African economies to extra-territorial economies in which there are some dimensions of anomalies, which could hurt Africa seriously.

More dangerous is the fact of the peak oil thesis (Campbell, 2005; Deffeyes, 2001). This view holds that oil would one day dry up. Hence, it is partly responsible for the pace with which extra-continental powers search for oil; particularly in Africa. Though there have been counter-arguments



against the peak oil thesis. For instance, Jackson (2007, 8) insists that the peak ... is not an objective fact, but is dependent on extraction technologies and on the evaluation of reserves; even as it is claimed that the world is not running out of oil –at least not yet. What our society does face, and soon, is the end of the abundant and cheap oil on which all industrial nations depend (Campbell & Laherrere, 1998, 83). The critique of the peak oil thesis notwithstanding, serious search for alternative sources of energy as against petroleum is increasing amongst the scramblers for Africa. The US ethanol production, for instance, in the first half of 2012 averaged about 900,000 barrels per day (bbl/d), or an annualized total of 13.8 billion gallons; and because of widespread drought around the Midwest corn-producing region, ethanol production in the second half of 2012 fell to an average of 830,000 bbl/d, or an annualized total of about 12.7 billion gallons (US E.I.A, 2013). Even in Brazil, an increasing amount of land is being used to grow sugarcane for ethanol; while peat-lands in Malaysia and Indonesia are being drained and cleared so as to grow palm oil for palm bio-diesel.

Flowing from this perspective is the fact that oil, which African states are currently celebrating as a reliable source of revenue, and into which they are allowing their feet to be deepened, may become obsolete. At least, stone was appreciated during the Stone Age but fell into obsolescence in spite of its still being so much around. The same fate seems to be lurking ahead for oil. In view of this, African states might turn out to be the ones searching for sources of energy in years ahead. Our needs then would become multidimensional and burdensome. We are yet to be producing any of the technologies we are presently using, and still, the possibility of our needing to purchase energy to power such technology is looming.

Conclusion

To an extent, the study has attempted exposing the hidden transcript of the ongoing scramble for Africa. Equally, it has explained some of the anomalies that are serving as bane to Africa's rise. The study is cognizant of the fact that Africa may not be able to do away with the advances of the extra-regional powers within its confine, especially when it is yet to find an alternative to the benefits that they (extra-continental powers) offer. Be that as it may, the study argues that irrespective of how deep the 'hooks' of the magnanimity of the scramblers could have sunk into Africa's 'skin', it is pertinent to know that an attempt to pull out such at any time and/or for any reason, by one or all of the scramblers, would damage Africa's skin; may be beyond repair. And irrespective of how soon Africa recovers, the action would have left a permanent scar. It is this knowledge that the study proposes as a caveat for all and sundry that tend to be celebrating the appearance of the current scramble, rather than pay attention to the hidden value.

In view of the above, the study claims that African governments should put policies that would serve to limit the convoluted advances of the 21st century scramblers within their terrain to a level. They should work together so as to present these scramblers, their status notwithstanding, a common front and policies that would serve as bulwarks against unnecessary exploitation of Africa for ephemera benefits.

Given the benefits that Africa and its people may not be able to do away with, which come with the presence of the extra-African forces, African governments and elites in the varying spheres of African units should work assiduously towards adopting the wisdom that comes with the ‘peeling human skin’. Many a time, while the human skin is peeling, another would be replacing it immediately. In the same vein, while not telling the many ‘suitors’, who are already chasing the continent to go away, the African leadership should channel the accruing funds from their engagements into serious research for development, and embark on the prompt introduction of the results of such research for immediate use or adoption. Much more, a serious programme for the reorientation of the masses should be embarked on, and such should be meant to encourage Africans to always see the oneness of Africa; as against the frontiers that come with the ill-delineation that turns the continent into units. This is not to encourage racism of any sort, but should be for encouraging Africans to work for the rise of the continent beyond the ‘base’ that it has always been in the base-super structure model postulated by Karl Marx. If these propositions and so many that have been suggested in existing literature are put to use, then one can be rest assured that the African Lion would roar; anything short of this, one would need to interrogate the reality of Africa’s oblivion being alternated by the 21st century scramble.

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