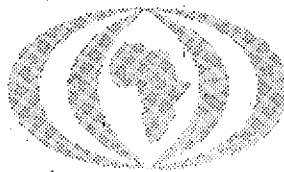


**THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA
AND THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE POWERS**

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If today we focus our attention on our continent and its relations with foreign powers we must ask ourselves several questions - questions which demand our serious attention. Colonial powers launched African independence in the early sixties with great promise. The world had great expectations for the awakening giant.

The world foresaw that the resources of the continent together with the vigour and the enthusiasm of its peoples would introduce a new force to the world.

What has become of that promise?

In the 20 years of Africa's independence, this promise remains to be fulfilled. The first flush of independence gone, the harsh realities of technological and economic competition appear, the tussle with the complexity of diverse cultures commences. Africa has been freed from colonial rule but not from exploitation, want and poverty.

It is not encouraging to recall that from 1934 to 1938 Africa exported cereals. In 1950 it provided for itself. In 1976 it imported 10 million tonnes and in 1978 12 million tonnes. By 1990 East Africa alone will require 11 million and Nigeria 16 million tonnes.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reported that Africa is the only region in which per capita food production has declined in the past two decades and the only region where the number of hungry people will increase sharply in the next 20 years.

In Niger, Lesotho, Botswana and Upper Volta less than 9% of current expenditure was spent on agriculture in the 1970's. Africa could be the grain silo of the world, yet according to the United States Department of Agriculture, Africa's per capita agricultural production "slipped for the fifteenth time in the last 20 years to more than 15% below the level reported at the start of the seventies, and 20% below the level reported at the start of the sixties".

According to the United Nations, 72 million Africans - one in five - suffer from malnutrition. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 10 million Africans are unemployed and 53 million work only a few months a year.

Malaria kills 1 million Africans a year, and 10 000 newly diagnosed sleeping sickness cases are reported annually. Further, most leprosy victims are in Africa.

A World Health Organisation (WHO) study found that 78% of people in rural Africa lack adequate water supplies. To provide Africa with clean water will cost more than US \$4 billion. Communication and transport systems are outdated and insufficient to sustain a minimum economic growth; training and education are not tailored to the needs of the Continent; Africa's protein diet falls short of the minimum required for a healthy human existence. Socio-political stability is lacking. Investors are wary of becoming involved in Africa and Africa's foreign debt is assuming disastrous proportions.

Few African countries are equipped to face up to these difficulties.

The Economic Commission for Africa, in 1981, and the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980, sought the reasons for the threatening disaster at home rather than in the colonial past.

Mr Edem Kodjo, Secretary-General of the OAU, in 1979 uttered this cry from the heart; "What kind of people are we really? Although our countries won their political independence some two decades ago, what victory have we gained, and what has been our impact on this harsh and cruel world? Are we not forced to admit that our continent lives in what is known as 'absolute poverty', synonymous with pauperism and destitution? Does it not contain most of the 25 poorest countries in the world as well as those which suffer from drought and the most appalling natural disasters? The situation is all the more disturbing in that we cannot say when our misery will end and there is no glimmer of hope in the immediate future. The end of the crisis is not yet in sight".

The belief has gained validity that unless the economic and social decline in Africa is reversed soon, the people will be permanently condemned to a state of deprivation and hopelessness; foreign assistance at present levels would be inadequate to rectify conditions. But even if the amount of foreign assistance could be increased two fold, the question remains whether that alone would ameliorate Africa's developmental dilemma. It is vital that Africa should contribute its full share if there is to be any hope of survival with dignity. All available talents and resources should be directed to ways of combating the real threats to the peoples of Africa.

In the two decades since 1960 neither the West nor the East have been passive spectators, Africa has remained their stage. The West claims that its interests lie in Africa's stability; the Soviet Union's interest is in its capture. Judged solely on that, who has had the greater success?

Since independence, the West has set its sights on equilibrium in Africa. Instead, however, we have seen 11 wars, 50 coups and the assassination or execution of at least 10 Heads of State.

Since independence, the West has aimed at development in Africa, but its endeavours have been hampered by an inadequate assessment of the Continent's problems and insufficient funds. African leaders receive red-carpet treatment when they visit Western countries but they return without firm commitments to develop Africa's human and physical infrastructures on a realistic basis.

The OECD countries alone, for example, disbursed US \$6,9 billion in Africa, in 1980. The OECD reported in 1981, "In Africa the average productivity of investment and of aid has been lower than elsewhere", but if you practise something imperfectly you will get it perfectly wrong.

The West has a dim perception that the path it has been following is leading nowhere. The World Bank report of 1980, on Sub-Saharan Africa, proclaimed that per capita GNP would decline in the absence of (i) extensive changes in African governments' policies, and (ii) increased aid amounting to double the present amount of US \$6,9 billion per annum. This, moreover, only to achieve a slight increase of 3 to 4% in per capita GNP, which is insignificant.

The United States Government announced at the IMF and the World Bank meetings in 1981 that future international aid was to be aimed at encouraging the development of the private sector, and thus more rapid economic growth. However, this initiative will be to no avail unless the fundamental preconditions for private enterprise are met.

At independence, the West encouraged the establishment of Western democratic forms of government: today 32 states have one-party systems, and 8 have military governments.

When will it be realised that Africa has dimensions and norms which differ from those which have been developed elsewhere? The industrialised West simply does not understand the depth of Africa's dilemma.

To develop Africa we must face the fundamental problems of Africa, socio-political turbulence, a lack of skills, illiteracy, and traditional systems such as the communal land tenure system. Development needs cannot be met unless the basic circumstances of the peoples themselves are understood.

The West owes it to itself and to Africa to rethink its attitude to Africa, otherwise the impression that the West is merely using Africa cynically for its own ends must of necessity be reinforced. Is the West really perturbed about the welfare of the African man, woman or child? Is the West in Africa for stability or merely to exploit it for its own ends?

The West also offers no comfort by the example of its loyalty to its friends. No wonder that Africa is tempted by the apparent power and brutal consistency of the Soviet model. In Africa Western morality is suspect, Soviet power is not.

The Soviet Union has no hesitation about its intentions in Africa. Russia disbursed a mere US \$350 million, a fraction of the West's contribution, in development aid to the whole of the Third World in 1980. What it has spent in military aid is anyone's guess, but where it is heading is clear to us all. And yet, with this small input, it has made impressive

strides. Moscow's intentions are stated clearly and precisely: whatever the Soviet Union does in Africa must in the first place further Moscow's quest for world hegemony.

So far, the Soviet Union has achieved political gains out of the hatred, animosity and prejudice left in the wake of the colonial powers. We cannot undo what has been done in this Continent over the past 200 years. We in South Africa have suffered under the yoke of the colonial powers as much as, if not more than, others on this Continent.

But Africa can no longer live in the past, its future is already overtaking it. And to cope with that future, we in Southern Africa must agree that whatever problems we have been unable to solve, whatever political differences we still retain, we shall forget the past and not remain confined to past injustices. We in South Africa realise that men cannot be judged by the colour of their skin and I cite this fact in the hope that other Africans will accept the role which White Africans must play in the future development of our Continent.

Even though we in South Africa live far away from Europe, the Americas and the Far East, we cannot help but notice that the level of fear, anxiety and frustration in the rest of the world has increased alarmingly. The East-West rivalry has entered an unsettled period in which former friends find that they have serious policy differences and the alignment of allies is difficult to predict, as local animosities spill over into confrontation.

To be sure, the Soviet Union is not immune from these problems with growing unrest in her satellites and a confused picture on her southern border. I am hopeful that the developing problems within the Soviet empire will make it less attractive to the Soviet Union to embark upon adventures on the African Continent, but I am also aware that governments and men unable to cope with problems close to home often find it attractive to promote discord elsewhere in the hope that attentions can be diverted from domestic discontent and grievances.

There are many who feel that an alien ideology will not be allowed to take root in Africa, that Africans are nationalists first and foremost and that economic needs will force Africa to reject Soviet influence. Recent global setbacks for the West, however, suggest that the long-term validity of such theories may never be allowed time to be put to the test.

I credit Dr Kissinger both with recognizing the danger which the communist presence in Africa poses for the West, and advocating policies which could halt Soviet expansion. He has himself at some stage wrestled with the problems of Angola, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and SWA/Namibia. His observations on Africa will therefore be of great interest.⁽¹⁾

The working relationship which exists between the South African Government and that of the United States has improved during the past two years. Our discussions on South West Africa, as well as the full range of problem areas in which we are both interested, have been conducted at an increased level of understanding on both sides in a way that would have seemed improbable a few years ago. Even when we have disagreed there has always been a frank and fair communication of our differences, and an appreciation on both sides of the reasons. I do hope that this relationship continues to mature to the mutual benefit of both countries.

Realising its own limitations, South Africa cannot be expected to combat Soviet expansionism in all parts of Africa, yet we stand ready to contribute what we can in Southern Africa. The communist threat will not be reversed until people are better fed, better educated and can look ahead to a better future. We are anxious to co-operate with the West in programmes which will benefit the people of the continent in their social and economic needs.

If the West fails to assist its friends in Africa, it is natural that the leaders of those countries will not be able to resist the pressures to seek an accommodation with the Eastern Bloc.

The challenges facing Africa demand great leadership; leadership to overcome the physical difficulties and the impediments of tradition.

1. Dr Kissinger's keynote address to the SAIIA's Second International Outlook Conference, on 6 September 1982, appears in International Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 6, no. 3, 1982. Johannesburg, SAIIA.

To quote Dr Henry Kissinger from his book Years of Upheaval:

If politics is the art of the possible, stature depends on going to the very limits of the possible. Great statesmen set themselves high goals yet assess unemotionally the quality of the material, human and physical, with which they have to work; ordinary leaders are satisfied with removing frictions or embarrassments. Statesmen create; ordinary leaders consume. The ordinary leader is satisfied with ameliorating the environment, not transforming it; a statesman must be a visionary and an educator. Blessed are the people whose leaders can look destiny in the eye without flinching but also without attempting to play God.

Perhaps the foreign powers as actors on the African scene have not assimilated the basics of the issues of Africa, and have not yet seen which matters are interrelated.

Against the background of a continent in crisis we in South Africa firmly believe that African can play a constructive role in global events. I look forward to the day when White and Black Africans will realise that foreign powers cannot resolve the continent's problems; that we must do so ourselves with our own resources.

I subscribe to what Mr Denis Etheredge, the corporate business leader, said of the North-South dialogue: "Many Northern States have been dishonest in that they have publicly encouraged the South in their enmity to South Africa while privately bemoaning that these States are an enormous burden and are heading for economic disasters".

Does the West fear our participation in the development of Africa? That is the impression we sometimes get. Indeed African statesmen have told us of the warnings certain Western countries issue to them of collaborating with the "White racists".

Yet co-operation is inevitable. In 1980, two-way trade amounted to R1,2 billion.

Surely the West should welcome that. We have no expansionist aims; we have offered to sign a non-aggression pact with any country on the continent. We can only act as an agent for development and stability and that is what we seek to achieve.

We cannot be excluded from Africa. It is an undeniable fact that our interests are interrelated with the rest of the continent. In 1974, I said before the Security Council that; "The only choice we have before us is either to continue on the present sterile course of confrontation and recrimination, or to make a sincere endeavour to get together, to listen to the other man's point of view, with an open mind, and to try to break through the suspicions, the misunderstandings and the misconceptions which have so long divided us. Communication or confrontation? Harmony or the escalation of strife? That is our choice - our only choice".

That, I believe, remains our choice.

In South Africa, a new climate for evolutionary political reform has been provided by policy initiatives of the South African Government. The prospects for peaceful co-existence and reconciliation between the different race groups have been substantially enhanced by the policy adjustments initiated under the Administration of the Prime Minister, P.W. Botha.

South Africa and her peoples have demonstrated a capacity to accept challenges. I believe that we, the White, Black Coloured and Indian leaders of southern Africa do have the capacity to resolve our problems and to work towards a brighter future for the Continent of Africa.