



# Africa

## Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

*Exploring the Multi-dimensional  
Discourses on 'Development'*

Edited by

Nathan Andrews,  
Nene Ernest Khalema,  
Temitope Oriola  
and Isaac Odoom

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P U B L I S H I N G

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## PREFACE

Many academics, journalists and observers who study socio-economic and political trends on the continent of Africa have argued that the Dark Continent, the birth place of human civilization, is a “basket case”. These individuals base their rationale for this argument on the observation that, in spite of the billions of dollars in foreign aid and international development projects pouring into the countries on that continent, there is very little evidence of improvements in development. Sometimes it is difficult to dispute the “basket case” designation. After all, media headlines out of Africa have focused on natural and man-made disasters, drought, food crises, famine, poverty, the spread of HIV/AIDS, ethnic and tribal warfare, civil conflicts, forced displacement, human rights violations, genocide, ethnic cleansing, political instability, corruption, and poor governance. The impression one can get from those headlines is that Africa is indeed a failed, underdeveloped continent that is unable to get its act together.

Readers of this book will quickly discover that the situation on the African continent is not all doom and gloom. In fact, while acknowledging that some real serious problems beset the continent, it is important to realize that Africa is not a monolith. Some countries in Africa are performing extremely well on several economic and social indicators. Some countries in Africa are enjoying protracted periods of economic growth and political stability. Indeed, some countries in Africa are experiencing a construction and housing boom and several of them are enjoying a renaissance of sorts, with the aid of funding from China for major infrastructural projects.

In a recent visit to East Africa, I was struck by the relatively stable political environment in Kenya—a country that suffered unexpected post-election violence in 2007-2008. After incumbent President Kibaki was declared the winner of the fraudulent December 2007 presidential elections, opposition supporters of Raila Odinga and his Orange Democratic Movement initially protested peacefully once the election manipulation was made public and was confirmed by international observers. But once Kibaki was sworn into office, violent rampages broke out in Nairobi and Nyanza province, and ethnic groups were targeted especially in the Rift Valley area. It took the skillful diplomacy of Kofi Annan to bring that violence to an end. This orgy of violence did not do long term damage to Kenya. It is a country that has the ability to punch above its weight in East

Africa and probably throughout the continent of Africa. I was impressed with the excellent infrastructure in Nairobi and the attractiveness of this country.

But Kenya is not the only success case on the continent. Mozambique suffered through 15 years of devastating civil war which divided the country and resulted in over 1 million deaths and five million people displaced. Since the fighting ended in 1992 with the signing of the Rome General Peace Accords, Mozambique has made an amazing recovery. Mozambique has now become one of Africa's best performing economies, with a roughly 8% annual rate of economic growth—outpacing the Asian Tigers. About 3 million Mozambicans have been lifted out of poverty. There has been a 40% decrease in infant mortality and close to 80% increase in the number of children attending primary schools. Gas field discoveries off the Northern coast have attracted a tremendous amount of foreign investment and several multinational companies, and Mozambique is also about to become the world's biggest exporter of coal within a decade. This renaissance in Mozambique has been so remarkable that the Portuguese (the former colonial masters), now feeling the economic pain sweeping Europe, are flocking to their former colony in search of better jobs and opportunities. In Angola, there has also been an increase in the number of Portuguese entering that former colony of Portugal.

A recent study by the World Bank, which can be found on a website with the very optimistic title "Yes Africa Can: Success Stories from a Dynamic Continent," states that while major medium and long term development challenges remain large and complex, the progress that African countries are making today is "remarkable and undeniable."<sup>1</sup> Post-conflict reconstruction has been relatively successful in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Ghana is experiencing a major economic boom because of the comeback made in the cocoa industry and the finds of oils. Lesotho's exportation of clothing to the United States has been a remarkable success story. Kenya has emerged as the major global supplier of cut flowers and it has also discovered oil and gas. These are just a few of the many success stories on the African continent. The World Bank has predicted that some African countries' economic growth could hit double digits in the next few years and actually outpace that of China, India and the Asian Tigers.

What many have observed in several countries across Africa is a new level of optimism, especially among the youth. The Managing Director of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22549653~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258644,00.html>, (accessed on 24 August 2012).

South Africa-based emerging markets media company Naspers, Koos Bekker, has observed that young people in Africa are more ambitious than European youth. Africa's population is expected to be close to 2 billion by 2050, with 60% of that population under the age of 25.<sup>2</sup> To put things in perspective, by 2050, "Africa's working-age population, which is currently 54% of the continent's total population, will climb to 62%. In contrast, Europe's workforce will shrink from 63% in 2010 to 51% in 2050." Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the youngest regions of the world with 44% of its population under the age of 15. There is a real sense that that region of the continent, as well as other areas in Africa, will benefit greatly from what is being termed "the demographic dividend"—a youthful labour force which will contribute taxes and labour to surging economies. It is estimated that by 2040, Africa's labour force will reach 1.1 billion, thus overtaking that of both India and China. It is clear that African youth will be the driving force behind the future economic prosperity of the continent.

As readers will find out in the pages that follow, Africa's future is much brighter than the prevailing wisdom would have us believe. There is no question that the majority of the countries of this continent have suffered from a colonial legacy of imperialism and dependency. During the colonial period, European countries bled Africa dry by exploiting its vast and rich natural resources and suppressing its human resources. Even after the independence of African states, this exploitation, dependency and suppression continued via comprador elites, predatory authoritarians, greedy bourgeoisies, multinational corporations, and international financial institutions (IFIs). The latter, through structural adjustment policies, have succeeded in retarding development across Africa and sustaining colonial links and Western control over the continent. The corruption and political instability, which have become hallmarks of many African states, are, indeed, a legacy of the colonial past and the post-colonial dependent relationship that Africa has had with Europe and North America. Foreign aid, particularly tied aid, was used not as a means of developing Africa but rather as a strategy to keep Africa peripheral and Africans dependent on the Metropole. Even well-meaning entertainers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have continued to treat the African continent as a charity case, rather than see it as a modernizing area of the world that is moving quickly into the mainstream of the global economy. Their efforts

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<sup>2</sup> Sandra Appiah, "Calculated Optimism: Africa's Booming Youth Population and Demographic Dividends," *Face 2 Face Africa*, found at <http://face2faceafrica.com/article/calculated-optimism-africa-s-booming-youth-population-and-demographic-dividends>, 12 April 2011, accessed on 24 August 2012.



to provide aid to Africa are generally cloaked in a smoke screen of moral obligation and feigned guilt for all of the past efforts by the West to subjugate Africa and keep Africans in political servitude. This type of “generosity” has only served to re-colonize Africa and make its people even more dependent and less autonomous.

The authors of this book have made a daring case here for a reconceptualization of the Dark Continent. They have shown that times have changed from the Africa of yesteryear when Africa was considered a beggarly neighbour. The world may soon be looking to Africa as a partner in the attempts to revive a global economy that has been sputtering over the past few years. Is Africa up to the challenge?

In his trip to Ghana in 2009, after being elected the first black President of the United States of America, Barack Obama intuitively noted that Africans ought to be responsible for African economic and social development. The President realized that true development on the continent will have to be undertaken by the people living on that continent, not by outsiders. For too long, Africans have been dependent on outsiders to help them take off economically. Even today, while weaning themselves off the dependency on the World Bank (IBRD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), African leaders have chosen to replace that dependency with a new dependence—this time on China. Is this a good thing? Certainly China does not insist on the structural adjustment policies of the IFIs. Its interest in helping Africa has more to do with its desperate need for natural resources than any altruistic intent.

African leaders would do well to heed the words of President Obama and realize for themselves that if Africa is to have a bright economic future it will have to be attained by Africans themselves. If China is willing to help Africa develop in exchange for natural resources, then African leaders ought to insist that the path of that development will follow the needs of the grassroots in African countries and priorities and plans of individual states on that continent. Great care should be taken to address development issues related to gender equity, women’s rights, children’s rights, rural poor, mental health, maternal and child health, gay, lesbian and transgender people, etc. These development issues are all human rights issues. It is also time to recognize the need to move beyond blaming the colonial legacy for everything that ails Africa. African people, while not forgetting the past, must take control of their future and stamp out corruption, hold their leaders accountable, build sustainable peace, develop capacity for leadership in regional and global organizations, and agitate for indigenous democratic governance structures that are bottom-up

rather than top-down. In so doing, we can truly expect a bright future for the 'Dark Continent'.

W. Andy Knight, FRSC  
Professor of International Relations  
University of Alberta

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: GETTING THE BIGGER PICTURE— EXPLORING THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DISCOURSES ON AFRICA'S "DEVELOPMENT"

NATHAN ANDREWS, NENE ERNEST KHALEMA,  
TEMITOPE ORIOLA AND ISAAC ODOOM

"Development" is certainly a buzzword—"a modern shibboleth" for anyone wanting to improve their lives (Rist 2007, 487). And Africa, since decolonisation began after World War II, has been a recipient of this "essential password." The irony though is that while other regions in the global South (the BRIC nations generally) are making headway in socio-economic growth, Africa seems to remain caught-up in a development quagmire. On the economic front, most African countries are marred with inept economic policies exacerbated by unfavorable IMF/World Bank lending programs. Politically, the excesses of authoritarian regimes have resulted in protracted civil and ethnic wars, institutional collapse, and destruction of civil society and democratic accountability. Human security is at its record low with most African countries at the bottom of the UNDP human development index; and other aspects of this index such as nutrition and food security are yet to reach "appreciable" levels. From "the wretched of the earth" (see Fanon 1963) to "Africa in chaos" (see Ayittey 1999) to the "vampire state" (see Frimpong-Ansah 1992) to "the politics of the belly" (Jean-François 1993; see also Lindberg 2003) to the "criminalisation of the state in Africa" (Jean-François et al. 1999), a great many discourses have emerged to inform us about why Africa remains where it is today. This is also to show that from the end of the Cold War to present, there has been a trend of stereotypical—and mostly imperialist—Afro-pessimism that has characterised the discourse on Africa's development. For instance, Colin Leys stated more than a decade ago "the

African peoples are poor. Even if external conditions are favorable, most African regimes will be unable to do much more than moderate the poverty of most of their populations in the next generation" (1996, 134). This is not mainly the iota of the pessimism that surrounds the continent (see other accounts in Calderisi 2006, particularly concerning foreign aid) but it does sum up the often oversimplification of the so-called "African tragedy" or the normalisation of the African experience as "tragedy" (see Smith 2006). Looking beyond this gloomy "tragedy," Forstater et al. (2010) account for the economic growth the continent has been experiencing since 2001:

Economies in Africa, and especially Sub-Saharan Africa, have been growing more rapidly in recent years than at any time in modern history. Between 2001 and 2008, African economies grew at an increasing rate, averaging over 6% for the period. In 2010 the average economic growth rate across the continent overtook both Brazil and India. (6)

As we show below, while this economic growth rate is good, it still does not address "development" in a nuanced and sustainable manner. Still on some positive stories, a recent editorial by Eliot Pence and Bright Simons (2012)<sup>1</sup> indicates that Africa is quickly rising to become a key player in the global South. Contrary to the stories of African immigrants struggling to enter different parts of Europe for "greener pastures," they confirm that between 2006 and 2009 the number of visas issued for Portuguese entering Angola increased from 156 to 23,000. And in 2012, an estimated number of 100,000 Portuguese are said to be living in Angola while several Spaniards have fled their country's high unemployment to look for work in Algeria. These few examples do not dispute the fact that Africa still has challenges, just as every continent does. Rather, it speaks to the "economic renaissance" that is usually not captured in dominant accounts of the continent's transformation. It is therefore a good thing that the new *U.S. Africa Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* (2012) at least recognizes the changes on the continent:

The economies of sub-Saharan Africa are among the world's most rapidly growing. An increasing number of African governments and regional organizations are taking a lead role in addressing the security and political challenges within their borders and beyond and are increasingly influential players in international fora. The African Union serves as an important

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<sup>1</sup> See Eliot Pence & Bright Simons, "Africa Rising: When Will the West Join Africa?" 5 July 2012, <http://africanarguments.org/2012/07/05/africa-rising-when-will-the-west-join-africa-by-eliot-pence-bright-simons/> (accessed 15 July 2012)



leader on political, diplomatic, and peacekeeping issues across the continent. At the same time, urbanization and a burgeoning youth population are changing the region's demographics in profound ways, and young people are increasingly making their voices heard. (1)

Yet from modernization theory in the early 1950s to the contemporary neoliberal (post)-Washington Consensus, and the ongoing structural adjustment masqueraded as poverty reduction strategy discourses, Africa has been the recipient of many policy and ideological prescriptions, most of which ended up being “bitter pills” instead of actual antidotes to the many challenges the continent faces (for instance, see Moyo 2009; Collier 2007; Easterly 2006). Thus, whether it is an in-bred “economy of affection” as Hyden (2006) calls it, or it is issues of governance or the influence and manipulation of external forces, this book attempts to escape the simplistic, often colonial, interpretations of Africa that currently prevail in academic and popular media circles about the continent's socio-economic intricacies. But more importantly, the book seeks to re-imagine African development beyond the over-essentialized historical doom of the dark continent and contemporary gloomy realities; recasting its possibilities to find viable multi-dimensional solutions, particularly in the midst of the China-India-Brazil resurgence.

It is certainly hard to pin down a buzzword in terms of agreement on definition. However, we find Woolcock's (2009) definition quite instructive. He defines development as “the internal and external processes that shape, in a given society or for a particular social group, the welfare, justice and opportunities of its members, but especially its poorest and most marginalized” (5). According to Woolcock, to ensure the recognition of and engagement with local knowledge, a combination of pre-modern, “high modern” and post-modern interventions and decision-making modalities will be necessary. What we deduce from this definition is that if development is conceived in terms of welfare, social justice, and creation of opportunities that targets society's poorest and most marginalized, it helps us to deconstruct the “developed/developing” country binary. Every country has an amount of poverty and people who are marginalized from the mainstream. This means that people should not be quick to look to Africa when they hear of poverty, but it is a universal phenomenon. Many writings on Africa embody this form of essentialism, which Andreasson (2005) calls the “reductive repetition” motif in the theories about Africa's underdevelopment which seeks to reduce the diverse historical experiences and trajectories, sociocultural contexts and political situations into a set of core deficiencies. According to him, this is how the repetition plays out: