

THE RELEVANCE OF AFRICAN STATES ON THE WORLD STAGE FROM POST-COLONIAL INTERNALIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

During their nation-building process, African post-colonial republics typically tried to develop completely new governing structures. These nations were effectively successors to the colonial system, embracing its institutions, everyday routines, and customs, as well as its underlying normative governance ideas while being frequently described as "new states." Many problems in Africa, such as ongoing political unrest and economic underdevelopment, are frequently attributed to this colonial legacy. Therefore, examining how the colonial legacy has affected African political and economic development can help address the issues Africa is facing during its decolonisation and modernisation process, as well as provide insight into the history of colonialism and its effects on post-colonial paths of peace and development. It can also help determine how long-lasting and effective the power dynamics created and promoted by the colonial projects and their continued presence in Africa are. According to Young, the subliminal code of African postcolonial nations results from the colonial state's control over the indigenous populace, which established a powerful and centralised bureaucratic regime. This discourse will explore ways through which the African continent can be seen as a global force to reckon with.

Keywords: *Nation-Building, Colonial Legacy, Political Unrest, Post-Colonial Peace, international influence*

Introduction

Since post-colonial regimes sought to assert exclusive authority and a legitimate political vision to exercise symbolic hegemony over Indigenous communities, the authoritarian spirit impacted their internal ethos. According to Robinson, the “divide-and-rule” colonial tactic exacerbated ethnic tensions, undermining the development of a common national identity (UN Women, 2022). Furthermore, African governments found it difficult to develop national unity since colonial powers drew their borders without taking into account the pre-existing ethnic identity patterns. Mamdani discovered that the colonial state also made local customs and chief authority worse (Okumu & Mawejje, 2020). Because those African post-colonial republics saw tribalism and authoritarian chiefs as solely inherent African characteristics rather than as remnants of colonialism, they frequently ignored this.

Following the conclusion of the Cold War, a viewpoint known as Afro-pessimism emerged, expressing serious scepticism about Africa's ability to recover. According to Hirsch & Lopes (2020), both schools of Afro-pessimism ultimately came to the same conclusion: the restoration of colonial power over Africa is crucial, regardless of whether this was seen as a problem of incomplete conquest or reckless deference to traditional authorities. This viewpoint's proponents contended that colonialism brought money and investment to the continent, which led to the development of infrastructure that eventually improved the lives of Africans. The distorted impact of colonialism on African institutional and economic development, however, has received less attention. Africa's relevance on the world scene will be greatly characterised by its internal development on several fronts socio-political, socioeconomic, military, and so on.

Socioeconomic Development

By investing in the positive feedback loop of improved skills for better jobs, Africa can increase the productivity and quality of its economic growth. Both the supply and demand for competent workers must rise quickly in labour markets. Although educational attainment has increased, the quality of education still has to catch up with other developing nations. Primary school completion rates have risen from roughly 55% to 75% during the past 20 years. However, compared to 7.2 in developing Asia and 7.8 in Latin America and the Caribbean, children in Africa only gain from 5.1 learning-adjusted years of education. Labour markets must provide qualified individuals with high-quality jobs to meet demand (World Bank, 2024).

More than 80% of African school-age children want to work in highly skilled professions, yet just 8% can do so. Because employment growth has been limited to low-productivity industries like retail trade, services, and agriculture, there is still a low demand for skilled people. Approximately 82% of workers on the continent are unorganised, compared to 73% in developing Asia and 56% in Latin America and the Caribbean. Furthermore, highly educated professionals frequently leave the continent: in 2020, 17% of African-born tertiaryeducated people lived elsewhere, with 72% of them choosing high-income nations. Africa's expanding population and higher level of education are altering the global workforce. The number of people on the continent who are working age, or between the ages of 15 and 64, will nearly double during the next 26 years, rising from 849 million in 2024 to 1,556 million in 2050. 85% of the rise in the world's working-age population will be attributable to this expansion (Williams *et al.*, 2021).

Between 2020 and 2040, there will be 240 million young Africans who have finished upper secondary or tertiary education, more than doubling from the current total of 103 million.

Compared to other parts of the world, Africa has larger socioeconomic returns on improved education. African students' incomes might increase by 8.2 11.4% for every extra year of schooling, while Latin American and Caribbean nations' earnings could increase by 7.6 9.1%. According to data from 27 African nations, the average firm productivity in manufacturing increases by 4.2% and 4.8%, respectively, for every 10 percentage points that the proportion of workers with high school and university degrees rises. If every child in Africa gained a basic understanding of reading and math, the continent's GDP might grow by over 22 times (more than any other region in the world) to almost USD 154 trillion (OECD, UNECA & AfDB, 2022).

African labour markets are redefining skill supply and demand as they adjust to new trends. The number of professions requiring digital skills is increasing as the continent becomes more digitally connected. By 2030, states OECD (2022), 23% of these jobs—particularly in services—will require intermediate digital abilities, and 70% of these jobs will require basic digital skills. By 2030, creating sustainable infrastructure and renewable energy could provide almost 9 million new employment, and by 2050, another 3 million. Vocational positions in the renewable energy industry have a lot of skill shortages. Improved climate literacy and climate-smart agriculture are two examples of climate adaptation strategies that will boost output and create new job possibilities. Policies for skill development that strike a balance between several trade-offs, such as high production, job potential, and inclusion, would be advantageous for African nations (OECD, 2022). Each nation's comparative advantages, capabilities, and financial resources must be considered in policymaking.

Compared to 7.2 in developing Asia, 7.8 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 10.5 in high-income nations, children in Africa only benefit from 5.1 learning-adjusted years of education (a measure that combines quantity and quality of schooling). Africa has worse reading and math proficiency than other parts of the world. Compared to other parts of the world, Africa offers greater returns on investment in education. African students' incomes might rise by 8.2% to 11.4% for every extra year of school, while those in Latin American and Caribbean nations would rise by 7.6% to 9.1% (Peet, Fink, and Fawzi, 2015). If all African children achieved basic skill levels, the continent's GDP might grow by around USD 154 trillion before the end of the century, more than 22 times faster than any other region in the world (Gust, Hanushek, and Woessmann, 2024). Employees with higher levels of education can benefit businesses. A 10 percentage point increase in the proportion of workers with high school and university degrees is linked to an increase in average firm productivity of 4.2% and 4.8%, respectively, in the manufacturing sector, according to data from more than 7,600 businesses in 27 African nations (Okumu and Mawejje, 2020).

Employees lack the specialised skill sets needed for current positions (limited supply), yet there isn't enough good employment available for them to advance their careers (limited demand). Many secondary school graduates in a poll of six African nations fell short of employers' expectations in terms of digital, business, and managerial skills (25%) and soft skills (10 40%), as well as technical capabilities (almost 50%) (ACET, 2022). Because they could not locate qualified local talent, 14% of Ghanaian businesses surveyed said they had to hire workers with digital abilities from outside the country (IFC, 2019). Only 8% of African school-age children can secure high-skilled employment, despite over 80% of them desiring to do so (OECD, 2017).

Countries have different skill gaps. Compared to nations that rely on agricultural employment, such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda,

African economies that are diversifying—such as Egypt, Eswatini, Mauritius, Senegal, and Tunisia—rely on occupations that require 3.8 percentage points more foundational and soft skills. There are notable differences in employment and compensation due to gender and rural-urban skill development gaps. Due to discriminatory gender norms that frequently limit their access to training, education, and employment opportunities, girls and women face greater obstacles to skill development than boys and men (ACET, 2022; OECD, 2022). Girls are 4.2 percentage points more likely than males to be out of school as primary-aged children (UNESCO, 2022). In the majority of African nations, the gender wage gap is approximately 30% (UN Women, 2022). About 27% of men and 15% of women work in skilled occupations, and 30% of urban residents and 13% of rural residents, respectively. Less than 10% of rural women work in skilled occupations, compared to over 45% of urban men. These disparities overlap. According to the OECD, UNECA, and AfDB (2022), the hourly salaries of all workers in rural areas are only half of those in metropolitan cities.

Africa and Global Coalitions

Africa: A Geopolitical Battle for Minerals and Economic Power Even if Africa is trying to control its development agenda, the geopolitical race can use its mineral resources to seek economic dominance. China, Russia, and the U.S. and EU have strengthened their competition with Africa's nations and several continental and regional organisations. Africa initiated. In 1963, it founded the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to promote political solidarity and policy coordination among members and allow them to speak with one voice on important international issues (Ray, 2022). In 2002, the OAU became the African Union (AU) to accelerate unity (Ndhlovu, 2020). The eight distinct and sometimes overlapping regions are the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS 1976), the Central African Monetary Union (CEMAC 1983), the Economic Community of Central Africa (CEAC 1983), the Southern African Development Community (SADC 1992), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA 2000), the intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD 1986/93), the East African Community (EAC 1999), and the Arab Maghreb Union. The Abuja Treaty formed the African Economic Community (AEC) in 1991 to coordinate regional organizations. In 2018, member nations signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), becoming the world's largest free trade region (Ndhlovu, 2020). Trade agreement implementation is overseen by a secretariat.

Africa's participation on the international scene and some degree of economic integration have benefited from these institution-building initiatives. However, point Gust *et al.* (2024) it's still a work in progress. The regional economic associations have promoted commerce among surrounding nations. In contrast to the 60% and 70% shares of intra-Asian and European commerce, respectively, intra-African trade is still relatively small at 15%. Morocco's strong agricultural cooperation with numerous African nations has been one of the rare success stories. Morocco accounts for 54% of the African fertiliser market and sells a significant quantity of fertilisers and phosphorus products to numerous African nations (Gust *et al.*, 2024).

Morocco also works directly with farmers to assist them improve farming methods to increase yields and establishes joint ventures (with 12 other African nations) to co-produce fertilisers locally. Morocco has made a substantial contribution to Africa's food supply, preventing the continent's food crisis from getting worse. However, there haven't been many success stories overall. African states have been functioning independently and have not been able to unite to successfully handle economic initiatives from the big powers as a group. In addition to signing

a crucial mineral agreement with the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU) has made some headway in its invitation to become a full member of the G20. What remains to be seen is its efficacy in fighting for the rights of Africans (Gumede, 2019).

The AU's 2009 African Mining Vision placed a strong emphasis on the growth of value-added industries derived from mineral resources. To plan and supervise the execution of the African Mining Vision, it established the African Mineral Development Centre in 2016. More recently, in 2019, the AU announced the African Commodity Strategy, which aims to change Africa from a resource supplier to a participant in global value chains opines Gumede (2018). However, not enough member states have ratified the Mineral Development Centre for it to start up. As a result, African nations continue to oversee their resource development plans with little international cooperation. In summary, by establishing value chains centred on agriculture and minerals and fostering intercontinental trade, Africa may effectively utilise the chances presented by the AfCFTA to execute and benefit from it (Gumede, 2022). However, to achieve this, African nations must closely coordinate their economic strategies and get past the current barriers to genuine collaboration. If not, Africa would continue to be a region where powerful nations vie for access to resources and influence.

Africa, China and the BRI

Africa's BRI with China China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has invested and lent more than \$1 trillion to 150 partner nations worldwide since its launch in 2013, with over 25% of that amount going to Africa. Transportation, particularly railroads, energy (fossil and renewable), mining and minerals, ICT, agriculture, and real estate are among the sectors that are receiving BRI investment. Since the COVID-19 years, there has been a noticeable slowdown in BRI funding. Nonetheless, BRI flows to sub-Saharan Africa rose by 139% in 2023. The 169% growth in mining and mineral investment is also noteworthy. Out of the 53 African nations that have signed Memorandums of Understanding with China, only a small number of them have received BRI funding.

As a result of their strategic significance to China, Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Cameroon, and Ghana have received roughly 69% of BRI loans. The largest receiver of Chinese funding, namely, has been Angola, which received \$42 billion between 2000 and 2018, or more than 25% of all BRI loans to Africa. For the first time since colonial control, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has made investments in some modern trains in Africa, including those that connect Mombasa and Nairobi in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, and Lagos and Ibadan in Nigeria, despite Western and some local worries about debt accumulation (Cheeseman, 2021). Additionally, mentions Angrist (2023), the BRI has provided funding for the development or renovation of many seaports and airports throughout Africa. These transit initiatives have assisted in reducing some of the traffic jams that still stand in the way of strong economic growth in Africa, both inside and between African nations (Angrist, 2023).

Initiatives from the West \$600 billion in public and private investment is what the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure Initiative (PGII) has set out to do for the world's poorer nations. Through the Lobito Corridor project, which aims to build a 1,300-kilometer railway line connecting Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the port of Lobito in Angola, PGII pledged \$1.5 billion to Africa in 2023. The United States and the European Union began the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) in 2021 with an engagement offer of \$8.5 billion to South Africa. Indonesia, Vietnam, and Senegal then received \$20 billion, \$15 billion,

and €2.5 billion (\$2.7 billion) programs, respectively. The purpose of the JETP is to assist these nations in advancing their energy transition initiatives. Only a small number of nations have been chosen thus far, though (Gumede, 2022).

As the cornerstone of its economic and commercial engagement with Africa, the United States adopted the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2000, which allows eligible countries duty-free access to the U.S. for 1800 products, in addition to the 5000 products that are duty-free under the General System of Preferences (GSP). The stringent eligibility requirements require participating countries to continuously advance towards a market economy, the rule of law, political pluralism, and the right to due process; as of 2024, 32 countries are eligible, with four having been terminated in late 2023 for various rights violations; the AGOA was extended in 2015 to 2025, and a bill has been introduced in the U.S. Senate to extend it for an additional 10 years (Gumede, 2019).

Conclusion

The potential for Africa's relevance on the world map is increasing. In sum, Africa has displayed a large capacity for growth through its economic and mineral resources, multilateral integration, and geopolitical collaboration; additionally, through policy establishment, Africa shows it can compete with the Western and European economic superpowers. Through in-house facilitation, training, empowerment, discipline, and commitment of various stakeholders, Africa's relevance on the global scene is an achievable feat. Undoubtedly, Africa can build a socioeconomically and socio-politically stable environment in adherence to the SDGs. Hence, it is a collective responsibility to ensure the sustainability of the African population to put and maintain the African continent on the world map.

Policy Recommendations

Some policy recommendations that will aid in the placement of Africa on the world stage are as follows:

• Enforcement of Skills development

Skill programs work best when country-specific data is examined. Situations differ by country: Diversifying African economies like Egypt, Eswatini, Mauritius, Senegal, and Tunisia rely on jobs that require more soft and foundational skills and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) skills, unlike agrarian nations like Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda. Only Algeria, Mauritius, Morocco, and Tunisia have STEM graduation rates above 20% and high tertiary enrolment. Massive and granular data like job boards can help national programs identify skill gaps and connect skill supply with demand. Improving labour market information systems, performing more surveys, and working more closely with business can improve skill supply and demand assessment (Ray, 2022).

• Education Improvement

With learning assessments and cost-effective interventions, African nations may boost education spending and raise its effectiveness. Targeted instruction by learning level and structured pedagogy are examples of cost-effective treatments. Comparable national, regional, and worldwide learning assessments—such as PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS—can be used to track educational outcomes and the effects of policies, offering support for decisionmaking (Ray, 2022).

- **Individual Development**

Training and talent recognition can increase the productivity of female and informal workers. Training in management, soft skills, and entrepreneurship is common. The efficacy of training formats varies, therefore selecting the right one is crucial to boosting inclusivity and efficiency. Acknowledging earlier learning can help informal workers obtain more productive jobs by validating the knowledge they have gained without formal training. Several countries have created such programs, including Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, and Cabo Verde (Ray, 2022).

- **Vocation and Extracurricular Training**

Institutions of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are better able to modify their training programs to meet the changing skill requirements of Africa. By creating more pertinent courses, such as those on digital skills, and forging closer ties with the commercial sector, TVET colleges can attract more employers and students. According to a poll, just 30% of TVET trainers in Africa had recent work experience in industries similar to the ones they instruct. Morocco's 10 Delegated Management Institutes, which offer customised training programs within special economic zones, are only one example of the many excellent methods that might be imitated. TVET funding at the national level might become less dependent on development partners and more responsible (Ray, 2022).

- **Cross-country Interdisciplinary Development**

Broader international collaborations and regional frameworks can hasten the development of skills. Harmonising national policies can facilitate free trade, skill mobility, and cross-border migration, all of which can benefit from one another. For specific TVET skills, the East Africa Skills for Transformation and Regional Integration Project (EASTRIP) offers a regional perspective. The regional Centres of Excellence of AUDA NEPAD aid in predicting sectorial skill requirements throughout Africa. For the development and retention of skills, international collaborations and university exchanges—such as ERASMUS+—are essential. Skills development can increase the productivity of Africa's talent pool and create jobs (Cheeseman, 2021).

- **Multi Sectorial development**

Africa must invest in a positive feedback loop of greater skills for better jobs to boost productivity and economic growth. Africa's actual growth is expected to reach 4.0% in 2025, surpassing Latin America and the Caribbean (2.5%) and rising Asia (4.8%). However, the continent's economic growth still provides too few high-quality jobs due to insufficient productivity improvements (AUC/OECD, 2019[1]; 2018[2]). Skill shortages contribute greatly. Due to a dearth of qualified professionals in agrifood and renewable energy, private investment in the continent is below its potential (AUC/OECD, 2023).

Africa has more informal workers than any other region due to slow productive change. The continent has 82% informal laborers, compared to 56% in Latin America and the Caribbean and 73%. South Africa has a low informality rate, however 76% of companies believe they can't find enough workers (ManpowerGroup, 2022). Skilled labor is needed to enable Africa's productive revolution and create high-quality jobs. Africa's Development Dynamics report for 2024 emphasizes productivity, jobs, and skills in line with the African Union's "education" theme (Cheeseman, 2021).

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