

Africa's 'Agenda 2063': A Document of Hope

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ABSTRACT Even after the decolonisation of Africa, the continent was unable to formulate, let alone implement its own agenda because of its deep political and economic vulnerabilities. This situation has changed in the last two decades, and today, Africa is witnessing political and economic resurgence. Its leaders realise that the time has come for African development to be owned and driven by the African people themselves. There is a new enthusiasm for the very idea of 'Pan-Africanism', and *Agenda 2063* is a document that expresses this spirit. The African Union (AU) adopted the agenda in 2015 with the aim of having a roadmap for a strong, peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa by 2063, 100 years after the establishment of AU's predecessor, the Organization for African Unity (OAU). Despite the challenges, the African countries are committed to the agenda.

INTRODUCTION

At the 24th Ordinary Assembly of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa in January 2015, members adopted the document, 'Agenda 2063', which could be a game changer for the continent. The document is both a vision, and an action plan. The significance of the year 2063 is that it marks the centenary of the

establishment of AU's predecessor – the Organisation for African Unity (OAU). In the nearly three years since the adoption of 'Agenda 2063', there has been some progress in implementing the vision. The new development strategies of AU are being increasingly aligned to the Agenda 2063 goals.

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However, the Agenda is an ambitious project, which needs the political will of all the countries involved and sustained implementation at the levels of state, region, and continent.

This brief makes an assessment of the prospects and challenges for Agenda 2063. Is it well-conceived, to begin with? How serious are the African countries about this project? What are the practical problems in its implementation and are the African countries capable of overcoming them? How will the Agenda affect international partnerships? How can India modify, if necessary, its development partnership with Africa so that it hews to the Agenda?

EARLIER EFFORTS

African countries have earlier tried to find Africa-driven solutions to the continent's problems. However, those attempts failed because Africa was weak, politically and economically, in the 20th century. Even after attaining independence, the economic policies of most African states continued to be influenced by their ex-colonial masters. Under such "neo-colonial" set-up, Africa's levers of fiscal, monetary and foreign exchange policies were manipulated from outside.

The end of the Cold War brought Africa to a new era of political and economic resurgence. Beginning mid-1990s, a movement arose towards greater democratisation of the African polity. An increasing number of countries in the continent began embracing multi-party democracy with regular elections. Even if electoral systems were not always ideal,

the trend towards democracy led to greater accountability and transparency of governments.

On the economic side, Africa began to show impressive growth rates. Since 2005, six (or seven in some years) of the fastest growing global economies every year have been from Africa. It is true that much of this growth is due to increase in commodity prices, because of a greater demand from some of the emerging economies like China, India, Brazil and Indonesia. A McKinsey study of Africa's economies in 2010, "Lions on the Move", showed that there was growth in both resource-rich as well as resource-poor countries after 2005. Some credit for this should also go to the African governments for implementing prudent macro-economic policies. There is a significant middle class emerging in Africa, and available data shows that consumer spending in the continent today is more than US\$1 trillion.¹

Therefore, geopolitical and geoeconomic factors indicate that Africa is well-poised to have a longer-term vision and the ability to achieve it.

AGENDA 2063: WHAT SETS IT APART

Agenda 2063 aims to create an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena. This means that African development is to be owned and driven by the African people themselves. It is also important to note the continuity aspect of the Agenda. It builds on some of the past and current initiatives such as the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty, the Minimum

Integration Programme (MIP), Program for Infrastructure Development of Africa (PIDA), the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The current Agenda is different from past continental initiatives because of the following features:

- (1) Bottom-up approach: The Agenda has been drawn up not by a bureaucratic process but through extensive consultations. It is supposed to be driven by the voices of the African people.
- (2) Result-oriented nature: Goals, targets and strategies have been indicated in each aspirational area. Stakeholders are to be held accountable.
- (3) Monitoring and Evaluation: There are provisions for mid-term reviews of projects and mid-course corrections, if needed.
- (4) Policy coherence/Space: For the first time, all continental and regional initiatives have been brought under one umbrella. Efforts have also been made to avoid policy overlaps and redundancies.
- (5) Financing/Partnership: A clear resource mobilisation strategy, as well as plans for expansion of partnerships, are being put in place.
- (6) Communications strategy: Unlike in the past when strategies were known only to bureaucrats, the Agenda is to be owned and driven by the African people. For this, an effective communications strategy is essential, and the Agenda acknowledges this imperative.
- (7) Capacity: A capacity assessment study is being undertaken to address capacity needs of continental and regional institutions. Later, this will be extended to member states.²

The Seven Aspirations

In the document, the African countries committed themselves to achieve the following aspirations by 2063:

- (1) A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.
- (2) An integrated continent politically united and based on the ideals of pan-Africanism, and a vision for Africa's renaissance.
- (3) An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.
- (4) A peaceful and secure Africa.
- (5) An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.
- (6) An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.
- (7) Africa as a strong, united and influential global player.³

Indeed, these are highly ambitious objectives and there are formidable challenges in meeting them. The implementation mechanism the AU has set is the First Ten Year Implementation Plan, which mandates the following:

- (1) Identify priority areas, set targets and define strategies.

- (2) Complete the Fast Track Programmes outlined in the Malabo Declaration of the AU.
- (3) Disseminate information to all stakeholders.
- (4) Assign responsibilities to stakeholders.
- (5) Outline Strategies for availability of resources and capacities.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

The main challenges to 'Agenda 2063' pertain to the prerequisites essential to achieving the desired goals. These relate, for one, to human resources development; there is no specific mention of them in the Aspirations. Unless there is substantial investment in sectors like health, education, skill development and capacity-building, the Aspirations will be difficult to realise. Africa will have to move up fast in the Global Human Development Index to provide the enabling environment for achieving results.

Consider some of the aspirations and the hurdles they face. Aspiration (1) talks of making Africa prosperous. This requires addressing issues related to development of agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, demographic profile and capacity building. Around 60 percent of the world's uncultivated arable land is in Africa, and yet the continent's food imports today amount to US\$35 billion every year. African agriculture is largely characterised by subsistence farming. It is affected by factors like the small size of farms, lack of technological inputs, lack of micro-financing facilities, and above all, the absence of a viable value chain from the farmer to the consumer.

The experiment of large-scale corporate farming tried out in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Mozambique have had, at best, mixed results. While they have helped increase exports, they have failed to contribute to food security. They have also led to the displacement of farmers and the loss of their livelihoods. Agriculture is arguably the most critical sector that Africa has to concentrate on, as it is the base for sustainable development and provision of jobs and livelihoods to millions of youth, and poverty reduction.

Further, manufacturing has been projected as the most promising route to transform Africa given the continent's growing demographic dividend. The same 2010 McKinsey Report says that by 2030 there will be more than one billion people of working age in the continent. According to a recent African Development Bank Report, young people under the age of 15 make up 40 percent of Africa's population. Another 20 percent is aged between 15 and 24.⁴ There are two ways of appreciating such a scenario: it could either generate production and consumption, leading to growth and prosperity; or it could become a demographic nightmare with high unemployment, social unrest, and illegal immigration.

At the third India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi in 2015, Namibian President Hage Geingob remarked that the problem with Africa has been that it produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce.⁵ To achieve Aspiration (1), this has to change quickly. Fortunately, there are promising trends in the manufacturing sector. For example, countries like Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya and Senegal are doing well. Due to rising labour costs in China, many firms

are shifting manufacturing to Africa. This has the added advantage of exploiting subregional markets, as well as those of the European Union (EU) and the US where imports from Africa attract low tariffs, owing to legislation like the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in the US.

There are, however, deeper problems. A World Bank study compared 5,500 firms in 29 African countries with those outside, particularly in Bangladesh, for labour costs, capital costs, productivity, and efficiency in manufacturing. The results are not encouraging: The report found Africa to be more expensive for starting and running a business. Small African firms have a 33-percent premium over comparable firms elsewhere, while medium and large firms are around 50 percent more expensive. South Africa has the peculiar contradiction of high labour costs despite 30-percent unemployment.⁶ There are also other costs that dampen manufacturing initiatives, caused by poor infrastructure, unstable electricity, lack of transport networks, and low labour productivity.

INTEGRATION AND PAN-AFRICANISM

Subregional and regional integration is the key to a true African resurgence, the objective of Aspiration (2). Politically, this goes back to the ideals of pan-Africanism and collective self-reliance. Pan-Africanism had its origins in the 1960s, but the newly independent African states had different notions about the concept. There was the radical “Casablanca school”, which wanted some powers transferred from national governments to a pan-African authority, and the moderate “Monrovia School”, which believed each nation should

have full control over its own decisions. In 1963, the OAU was born with the reassertion of the Monrovia approach, namely, that “the unity to be achieved at the moment is not the political integration of sovereign states but a unity of aspiration and action to promote African solidarity.” The Organisation worked as an inter-governmental body and there was no effort to change it into a supra-national body. Even with the evolution of the OAU into the AU, this has not changed

Agenda 2063 clearly aspires towards it. Paragraph 23 says, “the political unity of Africa will be the culmination of the integration process, which includes the free movement of people and the establishments of continental institutions, leading to full economic integration. By 2030, there shall be consensus on the form of the continental government and institutions.” Further, Para 26 says, “world class infrastructure, accompanied by trade facilitation, will see intra-African trade growing from less than 12 percent in 2013 to approaching 50 percent by 2045. Africa’s share of global trade shall rise from 2 percent to 12 percent.”⁷

The importance of regional integration for Africa cannot be overstated. It is critical for large infrastructure projects and for exploiting economies of scale for large industries. The continent has at least 20 countries with a population of less than five million and more than 20 countries with a gross domestic product (GDP) each of less than US\$5 billion. There are over 60 international river basins shared by many countries.⁸ As noted earlier, intra-African trade is just 12 percent of the continent’s global trade while it is 19 percent for Latin America, 51 percent for Asia and 72

percent for Europe. At present, 85 percent of the goods traded in Africa come from outside the continent.⁹

Fortunately, subregional and regional integration has been gaining momentum over the last few decades. At present, there are eight Regional Economic Communities recognised by the AU. Some of them have achieved considerable progress in integrating their economies—such as the East African Community (EAC), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS). In 2015, EAC, SADC and COMESA, covering 650 million people in 26 countries and with a combined GDP of over US\$1.5 trillion, signed the landmark Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement. Building on this, other regions are also aiming to expedite their integration to achieve a Continental Free Trade Area between the 55 countries by early next year, with free movement of goods, services and people. It will cover 1.2 billion people and have a combined GDP of over US\$3.5 trillion.¹⁰ This will, of course, require national, regional and continental efforts. If achieved, it will boost industrialisation and create wealth and new jobs.

There have been other initiatives. At a recent meeting in Chad, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), comprising six countries—Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon and Chad, lifted visa requirements for one another's citizens. This was the culmination of 23 years of negotiations.¹¹

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law is Aspiration (3), and is critical for the continent as its record in these aspects has largely been dismal. However, the last decade has seen visible improvement in many countries. One game-changing decision that the AU and the regional organisations took over 10 years ago was to immediately expel a member if there was a military coup d'état in that country. This has happened to Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Egypt and the Central African Republic and has discouraged similar moves by militaries in other countries. During the recent removal of former President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, the military went out of its way to ensure that its temporary takeover was not seen as a coup d'état.

Overall, democracy is still fragile in the continent. Though there are regular elections and transfers of power and they have mostly transpired peacefully, there is need to strengthen democratic institutions. Civil societies should be further encouraged to take on questions of human rights and the rule of law. The positive development of the last decade is that regular elections are at least making governments more accountable and transparent.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Aspiration (4) is the basic precondition for growth and development. The continent has big hurdles to overcome in this respect. Unlike in the past, in today's Africa, there are no significant inter-state wars. Most of the security issues are of intra-state nature arising from ethnic or religious differences, resentment against discrimination, unequal

growth and lack of opportunities. The dangerous trend is the exploitation of these emotions by extremist groups, giving rise to non-traditional security threats. Tackling these requires not only tough military measures but also socio-economic initiatives. Peace in this context is to be understood not merely as the absence of conflicts but also as absence of all possible factors that could lead to conflicts.

Islamic terrorism was unknown in Africa up until two decades ago. Today, it is the single biggest threat to peace and stability in the continent. Groups like Boko Haram (in Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad), Al Shabab (in Somalia), Ansar Dine (in Mali), Al Qaida in Islamic Maghreb (AQIB in the Maghreb countries) and MUJAO (the Jihadi movement in West Africa) have carried out countless terror attacks in the last few years, killing thousands. The competition between Al Qaida and the Islamic State (IS) makes the attacks more deadly. Old terror groups mutate into new ones to get the support of these international outfits. So far, success against terrorism in Africa has been limited. The groups are able to move across the continent and thrive in areas with no visible governance. The presence of failing states like Somalia helps these groups to thrive.

There are also civil war-like situations in South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. A lasting solution between the warring factions is not yet in sight the vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence continues.

Of the 20 states listed in the 2017 Fragile State Index, 14 are in Africa. The Fragility Index may not be perfect, but it certainly flags

the problem areas. There is also the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) State of Fragility Report, which identifies countries most vulnerable across five dimensions of risk and vulnerability:

- Violence (peaceful societies)
- Access to justice for all
- Effective, accountable and inclusive institutions
- Economic foundations
- Capacity to adapt to social, economic and environmental shocks and disasters.

The projection is that by 2030, the share of global poor living in fragile and conflict-affected regions will reach 46 percent from today's 17 percent and a large part of this population will be in Africa.¹²

Does Africa have the capacity to address these security issues? Militarily, the continent is in the process of building such capacity, which was woefully inadequate a few years ago. After decades of hesitation and false starts, the African Standby Force (ASF) was finally put in place in January 2016. It is a multi-disciplinary, continental peacekeeping force, comprising military, police and civilian components, which are on standby in their regions of origin and available to AU for deployment in times of crisis. ASF had been in development since 2003 and is a part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The critical part of ASF is the Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) – it can be deployed anywhere in the continent within 14 days. It is made up of 2,500 personnel per Regional Economic Community (REC) or

Regional Mechanism (RM). ASF intervenes on the request of a member state; however, there is also provision for *suo moto* intervention in extreme cases. Funding is the main issue with ASF. The current formula is that AU will contribute 25 percent and the balance will come from external sources such as the UN, EU and other such agencies with which bilateral arrangements can be made.¹³

Military action alone will not be sufficient to ensure peace and stability in the region. There is need for parallel action on the social and economic fronts. Experts on crisis prevention and management note three important factors that cause crises: pre-existing conditions, catalysts, and triggers. A crisis occurs when all three converge at a certain point in time.¹⁴ Since governments cannot do much about the first and the third factors, they have to be extra vigilant and proactive in avoiding build-up of catalysts.

There was a rush of secessionist movements in the initial post-independence years of the 1960s, but there has been a lull since then, probably due to their low success rate. However, a few such movements are rising again in some countries, particularly Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal and Zambia. Dormant feelings of neglect and marginalisation are coming to the fore with increasing aspirations running parallel with unequal and non-inclusive growth. There has been a revival of the old narrative that certain regions should not have been a part of their respective nation states to begin with, and were simply the mistakes of ex-colonial masters. The recent referendum in Catalonia (Spain) has added to the confidence of these initiatives.

In Kenya, separatism in Mombasa is no longer an underground movement but has gained the support of elected members of Parliament. In Cameroon, the Anglophone areas resorted to violence recently, claiming discrimination by the Francophone areas. Nigeria has been facing this problem in the Niger Delta for the past five decades in varying degrees of intensity. The civil war in Biafra from 1966 to 1970, which claimed three million lives, is still remembered. With the official formation of the group named the "Indigenous People of Biafra" (IPOB), the movement has again attained serious dimensions. The Casamance region in Senegal has been demanding independence for a long time. It is largely separated from the rest of the country by Gambia. The Jola, the main ethnic group in Casamance, comprise only four percent of the total Senegalese population and complain about neglect by the larger Wolof community. In the western provinces in Zambia, special status had been granted by Britain to the Lozi Kingdom in colonial times. However, locals feel that there has been steady dilution of this status.¹⁵

AFRICA'S GLOBAL ROLE

Aspiration (7) talks of "Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner". The emphasis is on Africa playing a significant role in world affairs. The aspiration should not be trivialised as the usual ambition of elites of newly emergent powers to be seen at the high tables. It is actually an existential necessity for Africa. For centuries, Africa was marginalised and decisions on a global scale affecting Africa were taken without its participation. It started with the 1885 Congress of Berlin and the division of the continent by the colonial powers. The

situation improved only marginally with the independence of the African states. They still could not influence larger decisions because they were weak individually and collectively. The ex-colonial powers followed the policy of “divide and rule” to ensure that Africa as a group did not have a powerful voice in multilateral forums even though it had more than 50 votes.

In today's world, most of the critical issues affecting all countries such as climate change, trade rules, development norms, global taxation policies and use of global commons, are decided in multilateral forums. Influence in these forums, therefore, is imperative to protect one's interests. Africa should be in a position to be among the rule makers.

Para 62 of the Agenda refers to the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the historical injustice of Africa not being represented on the Council with a permanent seat. One cannot imagine an eventual expansion of the UNSC without at least two African states as permanent members. However, it is not going to be easy. The process itself has lost its initial momentum. Further, the choice of two or three countries from Africa could be a difficult exercise. Of course, the Africans have agreed on the Ezulwini Consensus, by which the candidates will be decided by all. Such a consensus, however, will be hard to reach. In the years to come, perhaps the regional integration of Africa could lead to a larger vision among African states to forge such consensus.

AGENDA 2063 AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

With Africa's increasing emphasis on the 'Agenda 2063', the nature of international

engagement and partnership is bound to change. Para 63 of the document clearly states that it “will look at the nature of the partnerships with a view to rationalising them and enhancing the benefits to its transformation and integration efforts”.

Africa's development partners have to dovetail their efforts within the overall approach of the Agenda. India has already taken note of this. The final Declaration of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit in October 2015 has dwelt on the significance of Agenda 2063.¹⁶

India's engagement with Africa is at all three levels—bilateral, regional and continental. African countries have appreciated India's approach to development cooperation. India had rejected the donor-recipient model followed by the West and even by the World Bank. It has been a partnership of equals with African nations. The partnerships rest on three fundamental principles: no conditionalities, no prescriptions, and no questioning of sovereignty—and these are in line with Agenda 2063. For effective engagement, India will have to reorient its partnership programmes to fit in with the overall direction of the Agenda.

India could consider some of the following steps to make the partnership more effective:

- India's aspirations and problems are similar to Africa's, and therefore both sides could work on common solutions.
- Agriculture is an area where there is considerable scope for cooperation. 'Feed Africa' is one of the High-5 Priority Projects launched by the African

Development Bank in May 2016. India should become a stakeholder in this project.

- The industrialisation of Africa and the 'Make in India' concept need not be seen as contradictory. What India and Africa should aim for is to synergise their comparative strengths to get into global value chains.
- India can increase its role in the area of peace and security in Africa by contributing to the strengthening of the Rapid Deployment Force.
- There is need for regular political dialogue between the leaders of India and Africa to ensure an enhanced global role for both,

particularly on the question of the expansion of the UN Security Council.

CONCLUSION

After centuries of marginalisation during the colonial and neo-colonial periods, Africa today has a new resurgence both politically and economically. The time is ripe for the African people to define and achieve their aspirations for a peaceful and prosperous continent. The old pan-African spirit is being rekindled, and is manifested in an Agenda 2063 that is ambitious in scope and forward-looking. Given the seriousness attached to this Vision by the African nations, there is no reason why they should not achieve most, if not, all its targets by 2063. [ORF](#)

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ENDNOTES

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