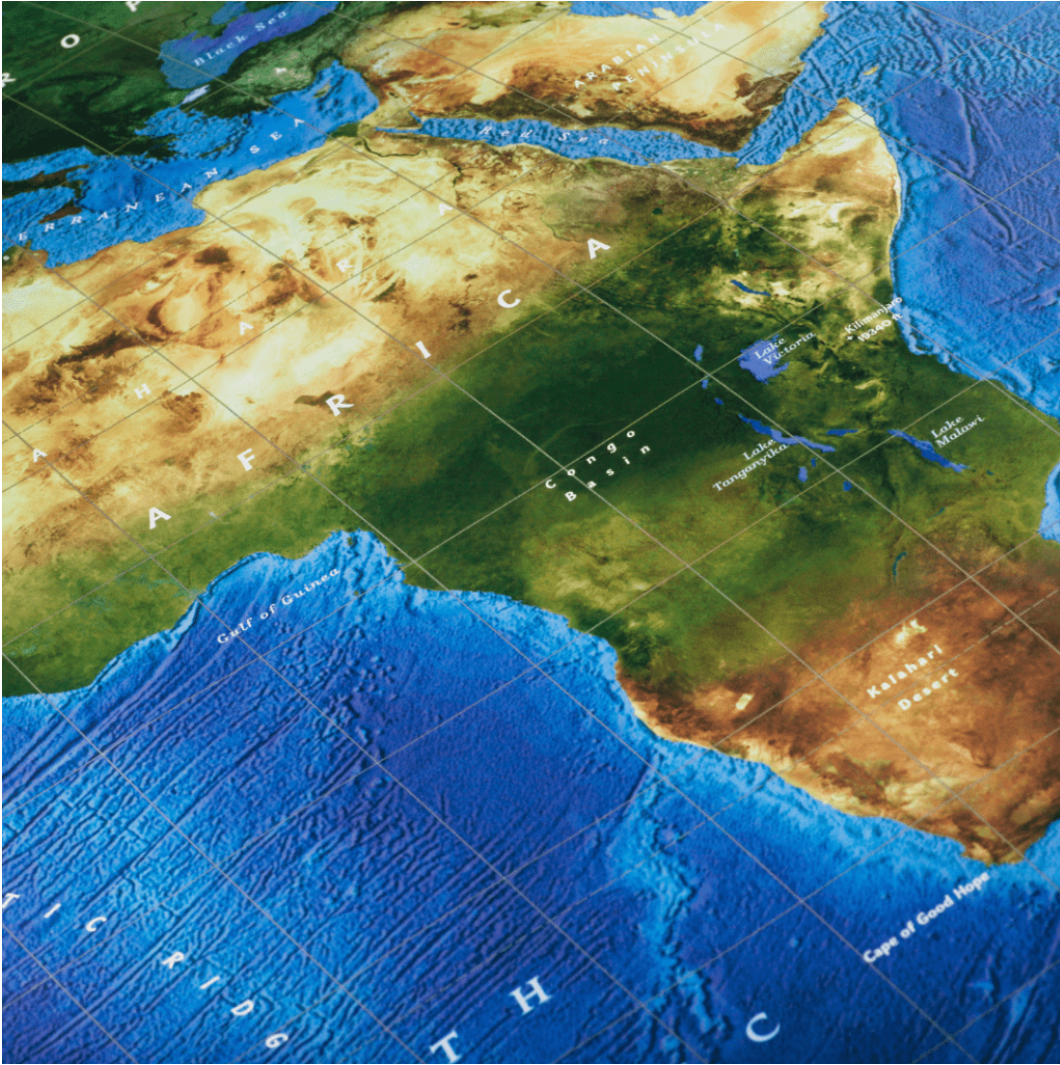


Panorama Soruyor

Happy and (Hope)y Birthday Africa - Volkan İpek



Happy and (Hope)y Birthday Africa

- 1. How do you evaluate postcolonial politics in Africa? Have there been any turning points since the beginning of decolonization?**
- 2. What are today's most significant political and economic issues/problems in Africa?**
- 3. What does the 30th anniversary of the end of apartheid in Southern Africa mean to you?**

"The end of the apartheid is our pride whereas the genocide in Rwanda is our shame," still say many Africans in the politically and economically burning Africa. Celebrations of Africa Day on May 25, the date the Organization of the African Union was founded in 1963, are far from exuberance but close to hope. Political issues such as jihadism, especially in the Sahel states of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad; the ongoing brutal civil war in Sudan; ethnic conflicts in Democratic Republic of Congo, and serious democratic pains in Chad; environmental issues such as famine in Horn of African states of Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan; economic issues such as deepening unemployment in Southern African states of South Africa in addition to chronic hyperinflation in Zimbabwe make Africans celebrating the 61st anniversary of the unity of Africa in a pretty low mood.



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The hopes for the termination of these issues as soon as possible are more dominant than enthusiasm for the current situation. The hopes are not rootless; however, they remind us that Africa survived almost 400 hundred years of slave trade on its Western and Eastern coasts and nearly 70 years of colonial rule that was applied by the European empires. To contribute to these hopes, we wanted those five distinct scholars to extinguish the candles on the African Union's 61st birthday cake (not the exact cake described by Leopold the Second) by responding to the three questions addressed.



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On Sunday, 24 March 2024, Senegal held its Presidential elections. The office holder, President Macky Sall, appeared ineligible to pursue a third term due to the term limits postulated by the Constitution of Senegal. These elections were initially scheduled for Sunday, 25 February 2024. They were postponed indefinitely by a Decree, unilaterally passed by Macky Sall on Saturday, 3 February 2024, and tactically paused by the National Assembly to take place on Sunday, 15 December 2024. However, on Thursday, 15 February, the Senegalese Constitutional Council overturned the postponement and ordered elections to proceed as soon as possible, with the government subsequently setting a new

election date for Sunday, 24 March 2024. Bassirou Diomaye Faye ran in lieu of Ousmane Sonko and was elected president with 54% of the vote, while Amadou Ba peacefully “threw in the towel”. In other words, he conceded defeat peacefully. The Supreme Court of Senegal later confirmed Faye’s victory. Thus, he became the youngest president in Senegal and Africa. He was inaugurated as president on Tuesday, 2 April 2024, amidst fanfare and pageantry. This was phenomenal.

Postcolonial politics in Africa has witnessed twists and turns. Some countries have scored victories, while some have failed. The case of Senegal is remarkable. Much can be zoomed out from it, but not in this write-up. Although Africa has been painted for a long time as static and has made no substantial developments in the political sphere since the era of re-democratization, the Senegalese election was a *volte-face* in West Africa. Since decolonization, Africa’s politics have not operated on a level playing ground. Africa is a heterogeneous continent with a multifarious mosaic of ethnic groups and different colonial historical backgrounds. The politics of this continent has, to a very large extent, been an outcome of its colonial heritage. Thus, its politics after decolonization reflected what most of the colonial powers had left.

The period immediately after the political decolonization, in the 1960s and 1970s, witnessed a simmering of some Western-style democracy. Western democratic structures operated in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and other British colonies. Six years into independence, coups d’états became as frequent as breakfast. Even Kwame Nkrumah, the architect and father of Pan-Africanism, was consumed by a coup in 1966.

The one-party state also became a norm. Most post-French colonies embraced one-party states by justifying that a multi-party system was anathema to growth and development. Cameroon took the lead, and so throughout the independence stretching into the end of the Cold War, these post-colonial

states produced authoritarian leaders and military leaders; the poverty levels were high, and unemployment figures were astronomical.

The year 1990 saw the end of the Cold War. America and her European powers came up with the doctrine of democratization in African countries. Accordingly, African countries were asked to democratize their institutions and open political space before they could qualify for any financial aid. Africa then jumped onto the bandwagon of the neo-liberal period. Creating political parties and elections became fashionable as the incumbent leaders found ways to cling to power. Some were backed by the same Western powers to stay on. The opposition parties in some countries were very vibrant; meanwhile, their wings were clipped in some.

There have been some turning points worth noting. The case of Senegal at the beginning of this paper is just one. Botswana and the Republic of South Africa have been success stories. On the other side of the spectrum, the post-colonial state in Africa has been a mirage. Irredentist claims have pre-occupied the nation-state as well as artificial borders. Fundamentalist movements have also become honeycombed all over the continent.

Regarding the second question, the post-colonial state in Africa has been bedeviled by political and economic challenges. Politically, terrorism has been at the forefront of the continent in the past decades or so. Terrorism is considered as the calculated use of violence to create a general climate of fear in the population and government and thereby achieve a particular political objective. In concrete terms, its definition has been wrapped in obscurity and debate, making it cumbersome for a universal definition.

In the Central Africa region, which consists of Cameroon, the Central

African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo Kinshasa), the [Republic of the Congo](#) (Congo Brazzaville), [Equatorial Guinea](#), [Gabon](#), [Rwanda](#), and [São Tomé and Príncipe](#), terrorist aggressions constitute another major to the security of states and populations. It harbors one of the largest countries in the entire continent, the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has also turned out to be the wealthiest country in terms of natural resources. Countries in Central Africa are members of the [Economic Community of Central African States](#) (ECCAS). Six of those states (Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon) are also members of the [Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa](#) (CEMAC), and share a common currency, the [Central African CFA franc](#). The power and influence of the terrorist organizations in Central Africa is remarkable. They have, in a way, mapped out the continent into different provinces, such as the Islamic State of Central African Province (ISCAP), the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP)

This period starts with a melodramatic incident in the Kampala city center. On Tuesday, 16 November 2021, three bombs were detonated in Kampala, the political capital of Uganda. A terrorist group known as the Islamic State of Central Africa Province (ISCAP) claimed to have been responsible for the two separate suicide attacks that killed three people and injured thirty-six. The Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) affiliated with Amaq News Agency confirmed the news by reporting that three fighters set out with bags loaded with explosives.

Ansaru al-Sunnah, formerly known as Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah and locally as al-Shabab, is the official name of the Salafi-Jihadists in Mozambique's Delgado Province. It is distinct from the Somali terrorist organization - al-Shabab. Like its counterparts operating in the Sahelian region of West Africa, in its attempt to

establish an Islamic state, the terrorist group has employed a violent interpretation of Sharia law to justify and carry out attacks on military and civilian targets. Obviously, like anywhere else, the consequences have been devastating, and they were able to control a swath of land and ports in Mocimboa da Praia through religious propaganda and exploitation of local grievances.

Economically, the continent is also burdened with profound challenges. Most states have their own currencies, making trade very difficult. The trade within the continent and amongst African states is less than 1%. In terms of inflation, the continent is again facing numerous challenges. In Eastern and Southern Africa, inflation peaked at 19.4% in November 2022 but decelerated in July 2023 when it fell to 15.5%, after peaking again at 20.6% in June. In addition to inflation is unemployment. Unemployment statistics suggest that between 2022 and 2024, unemployment moved from 6.62% in 2012 to 7.03 in 2024.

Apartheid was a system of institutionalized and legitimized racial segregation that existed not only in South Africa but Southwest Africa, which today is known as Namibia. Dr Daniel Francis Malan, the head of the National Party, was much credited with such a system. It survived from 1948 to the early 1990s when the resilient, indefatigable, and dogged Madiba Nelson Mandela was released from prison in Robben Island, where he had spent more than a quarter of a Century (27 years). The system of Apartheid was characterized by an authoritarian political culture based on 'boss-hood,' which warranted that South Africa was dominated politically, socially, and economically by the nation's minority white population. In this minoritarian system, there was social stratification, where white citizens had the highest status, followed by Indians and then Black Africans. Paradoxically, Black Africans were in the majority. The 30th anniversary of the end of apartheid in South Africa could mean many things to me. Some remarkable successes (democracy) and some dismal failures (Xenophobia)

are just a few in the list.

From the beginning of the end of this obnoxious system, the country entered what was besprinkled as the “rainbow nation.” This meant the combination of whites, Indians, coloreds, and blacks.

The thirtieth anniversary meant Western-styled democracy, which became a standard practice as the liberal constitution became the watchword. Freedom of speech and action was standard. General elections were held in South Africa between 26 and 29 April 1994. The elections were the first in which citizens of all races were allowed to take part and were, therefore, also the first held with universal suffrage. It was conducted under the direction of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and marked the culmination of the four-year process that ended apartheid. Mandela became the first black President.

With liberal democracy and politics on a level playing ground, the role of South Africa in the Southern African region and the continent and the formation of the African Union saw the heydays of its achievements. The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999) in Durban.

Despite the 30th anniversary, all have not just been “beer and Skittles. As a matter of fact, the official unemployment rate has been alarming, with a rate of 32%, making it the highest in the world. Besides, more than 60% of young people between 15 and 24 fall within this unemployment bracket. While more than 16 million South Africans, nearly 25% of the country relies on monthly welfare grants for survival. Above all, South Africa is still the most unequal country in the world in terms of wealth distribution, according to the World Bank, with race a key factor.

Meanwhile, its xenophobia is not parallel to that of the continent. Thus, 30 years after the end of apartheid could be quipped as South Africa's Exceptionalism. South Africa plays an instrumental role positively in the continent. In South Africa itself, there is liberal democracy, yet at the same time, unemployment is very high, and xenophobia hitherto unseen in the continent.

I am anything but an expert on African affairs. Instead, I am an evolutionary economist and psychologist, having worked for the past 30+ years in conflict, peace, and development studies, and the last decade mainly on Forced Migration and Mass Displacement. As a matter of fact, from there, I have established various connections with different regions in Africa. Moreover, and maybe even more critically, my great-grandfather was a Dutch Boer who went to South Africa at the end of the 19th century along with two cousins. There, they built up a large farm in Oranje Vrijstaat. That was a time of big migration waves 'out-of-Europe' when millions had been moving since the 17th century, and later to the US, Canada, and Australia/NZ.



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I also have good connections with several universities in South Africa, Nigeria, and Tanzania, where I have been lecturing and cooperating on research projects. Finally, I have been involved in evolution and human development issues for as long as I can remember. And as common knowledge has it today, "*it all began in Africa.*" It was primarily the paleo-archeologist family, the Leaky's, who discovered our oldest known, already bipedal predecessor, *Anthropithicus*, in the Olduvay gorge - today's Northern Tanzania, aka the *cradle of humankind*.

Among my early teachers were Nobel laureates paleo-anthropologist Dutch Niko Tinbergen, German Konrad Lorenz, and later in London, Jerome S. Bruner, with whom I collaborated in *Man a Course of Study* (MACOS). That was an extensive cross-cultural and evolution-based introduction to Psychology. But because the course started with a teaching film about the common ancestors of the Big Apes, our closest cousins, and *Homo sapiens sapiens*, Bruner (also a convinced atheist) got into much serious trouble - particularly from the side of fanatic Roman Catholic and Evangelical fundamentalists. They massively assaulted him, and the staff often blocked and damaged his Center for Cognitive Studies at Oxford and Harvard. That forced him to migrate to the UK, where he started working with Niko Tinbergen and his wife Elisabeth, particularly on learning, child, and language development. There, I had the privilege to join the research group whose work became the topic of my doctoral thesis in psychology.

Hence, I will focus on my first-mentioned connection to Africa because of limited space. Mainly since the Arab Spring, Mass Migration and Forced Displacement have been on the political agenda, notably since 2015, when millions of refugees were fleeing from war-torn countries in the Near East, Northern Africa (NEMA), Central Africa, and Southeast Asia. Most hoped to find refuge in European countries, which was mainly refused.

Since the mid-17th century, that was very

different. First, the direction of mass Migration was utterly reversed. In my case, it started with 10,000 plus Dutch Boeren (NL farmers) moving to Zuid Afrika, which they considered to be their colony, material property with what they could do whatever they liked - though they also were 'pious and God-fearing Calvinists at the same time! One of the main impacts was the use of large-scale slavery, servitude, and other forms of enforced work. However, slavery already widely existed and was conducted mainly by Arabic, often also Islamist tribes, in all of Africa long before.

In *Zuid Afrika*, whole black families were coerced to do backbreaking work on the colonist's palm, coffee, cotton, and other farms - under temperatures up to almost 40 degrees Celsius in the summertime, 365 days per year. It has been estimated that from the 17th century on until the abolishment of slavery at the end of the 19th century, more than 30 million Africans were kidnapped or sold and sent to America's, Europe including the UK's colony of India; and that around 1/3 of them died or were murdered. It was in this barbarian environment that my ancestors were living. However, and utterly contrary to their co-Boers, they had several black families living on their compound. Also, contrary to the standard Boers (un)culture, the personnel were not considered private property but hired and, often, fairly paid workers. They had between 8 and 10 working hours, schooling for the kids, medical service, and a free Sunday. Not surprisingly, this was a thorn in the side of the other *Blankes* (White). Hence, my previous kin was being mobbed, threatened, and isolated. Ultimately, they could not bear this strife any longer and returned to Holland, where they set up a new farm in Brabant, my home country.

Let me resume where I ended my comment on the first question. Although, at least officially, slavery, defined as enforced work, coerced marriage, human trafficking, debt bondage, and sexual exploitation, was abandoned in the late 19th century with Mauritania as the last country in 1981, in reality, it has

never stopped to exist. In the past decades, modern slavery has even been dramatically on the rise.

Of

course, Africa has many more severe problems, so some have called it the 'forgotten continent.' Among them are the enormous discrepancies between the vast natural resources exploited by neo-imperialist Western nations and their few domestic sycophants on the one hand, and the enormous socio-economic-political inequalities without any benefit for the native people, the ongoing lethal poverty, the highest number of young child's mortality in the world, AIDS and other pandemics, the unintended but devastating consequences of UN financial support for African Union peace operations, and so forth. Given the extremely little space, I will limit my comments to the connection of slavery with the other severe problem of terrorism. I will also partly link this with already apparent consequences of climate change, scarcity of water, food, and other resources, violent conflicts about borders, forced mass displacement, and the relations between tribalist armed violence and religion in Africa.

According

to recent reports from IOM, UNHCR, WALK FREE, CNN, University of Nottingham, ACCORD, and the World Bank regarding the above-asked question, *50 million* people around the globe suffer from this atavistic form of barbarism. That is some *20 million more than* the total count between the 17th and 19th century. Are we talking about progress in culture and society? It is estimated that of the above total, around 7 million men, women, and children in Africa are kept in slavery today; Africa is the continent with the highest number of forced, unpaid labor, human trafficking, and enslavement in the world—a high number of concerns refugees.

Since

Europe is still the main continent of destination, while EU and national

governments have drastically aggravated their police and military measures to keep refugees out, *migrating-for-survival routes* have also changed.

Different trajectories from Western and Central Africa go to the North. Particularly in Libya, a chaotic, ungoverned, terrorist-directed lost state, hundreds of thousands of refugees, not only women, are sold to be kept for unpaid labor and sexual exploitation for private profit (e.g., IOM report 2023-24). One appalling example is Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, and Burkina Faso. Here, terrorist and other jihadist groups are not only jeopardizing refugees' lives but also are the main drivers of armed group violence for which they even forcibly recruit young domestic fighters. Mainly, Ghana is still the largest hub for stolen or confiscated small arms and explosives and their illicit circulation. Chieftaincy by numerous tribal warlords is another driver of armed conflict and fatalities. They have large families they 'request' to collect funds to buy arms. Kin often obey because they fear being 'victimized' or even punished. In this way, they provoke different ethnic groups to fight one another, which also leads to more arming for self-protection. In 2024, The South African NGO ACCORD dubbed them '*conflictpreneurs*'.

Along

with the prolonged responses of governmental armed forces, if at all, they thus prevent the setting up of non-violent, peaceful ways of safe co-existence, socio-economic development, and education - the basics for any way out of the misery. An accompanying, hopefully promising result is the 'Empowering Young Voices' campaign by ACCORD, as said, a South Africa-based peace and conflict resolution NGO. They try to combine action (field) research with children's and youth initiatives to fight xenophobia and other forms of intergroup violence, as pointed out by Osman & Kruger in 2021 and by Nyamadzawo in 2024.

In responding to the third question, my answer has very little to do with my opinion; it is all about the objective facts, trends, changes, and resulting challenges. Since space is scarce, I will focus on some of the expertise I have collected from my field research and practical work on the ground. Today, the outlook for Africa is not

bright. A vast majority, if not all, researchers, politicians, and practitioners on site agree that Africa, on the whole, is experiencing a dramatic depression if not a vital relapse. That also begs whether it will ever be possible to reverse this situation.

The situation was completely different, even reversed after the end of WWI and notably after WWII. Those were the times of national liberation upheavals and independence wars entailing high hopes and grounded expectations of a better and safer future. It was the time of Franz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* on the revolutions in Northern Africa; of Sékou Touré, the first postcolonial president of Guinea who also was, along with Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimée Césaire from Martinique, a co-founder of *Négritude*. That was a cultural-political movement to restore the identity of Black Africans, of Congolese Joseph Kasavubu and murdered Patrice Lumumba, of Kwame Nkrumah, the first Pan-African Prime Minister of independent Ghana and nonviolence activist - to mention just a few. However, while 1960 was often referred to as "The Year of Africa", 60+ years later, we now see the opposite. Apart from the fundamental problems analyzed mentioned in the previous two questions, there are many more - perhaps too many to be addressed here.

My namesake and countryman, Professor Dr. Hendrik van der Merwe, better known as H.W., was a highly influential political intellectual and peace activist during and after the years of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. He was born in a conservative Calvinist white Boer family with kinship relations to the Netherlands and Germany, the country of origin of Hendrik's wife, Elsbeth Siglinde. In the foreword to his autobiography "*Peacemaking in South Africa: A Life in Conflict Resolution*," it was nobody less than his friend and brother-in-arms Nelson Mandela, who described H.W.'s path towards the anti-Apartheid movement and African National Congress (ANC), the United Democratic Front and Afrikaaner Vrijheid Fondasie (A, Freedom Foundation) which he joined at a very young age. He also converted to the Quaker faith, which made him a peacemaking activist. In those functions, he also set up the Centre for Intergroup Sites in Cape Town, where he introduced

the first training courses in non-violent peace management – not only for interested academics but specifically for politicians, practitioners on site, mostly ‘whites-only’ military, police, and other security services. Since the 1980s, H.W. managed to bring Boer governments to meet and negotiate with their Black opponents, which was an unprecedented and courageous move.

Van der Merwe organized conferences and seminars to prepare for the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in 1994. These TRCs were meant to bring surviving victims and former perpetrators together and were led by independent judges, lawyers, and civilian assessors. Provided the latter admitted fully and truthfully to their crimes, they were offered the option of being repented. I attended several TRC sessions, mainly in Eastern Africa, KwaZulu Natal, and Northern Mpumalanga. During these few sessions, I heard the most horrifying stories and gruesome experiences in my life. It was primarily elderly black women who had lost husbands, children, other kin, or close friends – and now had to go through the torture a second time. Most of them were not able to undergo this repeated torture and were almost paralyzed in crying tremors, while others lost their conscience and had to be soothed by relatives.

Moreover, often, one could see that the pundits were openly lying, keeping things secret, twisting the truth, or did not show any sign of regret. However, the surviving victims did not have much of a chance to avoid this extreme strife. It had become Mandela’s political slogan: “We have no time for revenge and retaliation. We must reconcile at all costs!” On top of that, there was a discrepancy between the actual number of involved perpetrators during the whole era of Apartheid and the number of accused, let alone sentenced pundits. First, only crimes since 1960 were prosecuted – while apartheid, as everybody knows, lasted much longer, long before the term was coined. Secondly, while some 5,000 plus were prosecuted, less than 1,500 were denied pardon – a negligible quantity. I have called this performance “*a coup de farce.*”

Along with many colleagues, I think that Mandela's true intention was not to achieve justice through truth for the black population but to demonstrate particularly to the Western world that Apartheid ultimately had been "terminated by all means!" This also played a crucial role in his divorce from his wife Winnie Madikizela, who had accused the ex-husband of having betrayed the whole anti-Apartheid movement.

I will base my evaluation of African postcolonial politics on experiential living and empirical observations without going into the usual academic contestations around postcolonial theory. I want to attempt a holistic analysis by avoiding the pitfall of pessimism or the toxic positivity inherent in unquestioning optimism. Since independence, Africa has been cycloning in the hurricane of multigenerational and collective trauma, which are very telling in our political, cultural, relational, economic, and social structures.



Dr. Toyin Bibitayo Ajao
Ìmọlẹ̀ of Afrika Centre (ìAfrika)

Africa has been grappling with neocolonialism, at best, since the mass decolonization in the 1960s. Colonial legacy is still alive and well in our collective affairs and how we see ourselves as a people. We haven't healed. We just got better at recycling our trauma. To use Bell Hooks' rare insight, 'imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy' is firmly rooted like oak trees in Africa, with more intriguing superpowers such as China on the scene, not to mention the tenacity of *Françafrique* on the continent. We have not been able to resist the pathogenic seduction of African resource-takers, and we have thereby continued auto-piloting ourselves into survival mode by reinventing dysfunctional systems that are antithetical to what we need to thrive in togetherness.

In today's Africa, political violence, xenophobia, homophobia, tribalism, femicide, gender injustices, religious fundamentalism, environmental degradation, and absolute poverty flourish in many countries. Our political system has not yet released itself from violent oppression and chronic corruption to embrace Ubuntu leadership of fairness, communitarianism, and interdependence, where posthuman security, environment protection, and gender justice thrive as we intentionally move towards sustainable sociopolitical transformation. In less than five years, we have had up to seven military coups in Mali, Guinea, Sudan, Burkina Faso and Niger. We have life presidents in Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Eritrea.

It is a dire situation, and I have heard this excuse often, "The world isn't at peace, and Africa's problems are not unique because there's much chaos going on globally. From the US's current state of democracy to the Russian-Ukrainian war and the genocidal Gaza-Israel conflict." Why are we not asking ourselves about taking responsibility as a beacon of light in this fundamentally troubled world through Ubuntu leadership? Ubuntu is in our DNA, but we fail to act decisively to save ourselves.

Africa must heal, body, mind, and heart to holistically transform our structural, cultural, and relational systems by returning to the source of Ubuntu governance and leadership as proposed by Prof. Slyvia Tamale in *“Decolonisation and Afro-Feminism.”* We must be open to applying Sankofa’s wisdom by going back in history to understand why we disconnected from each other and nature to reclaim our interconnectedness and move Africa forward holistically, inclusively, and interdependently. By attuning to *kujijua* or *kwimenya* (self-knowledge), echoed by the late Peace Nobel Laureate and eco-feminist, Prof. Wangari Maathai, in *“The Challenge for Africa,”* the strength in our diversity will shine through and reunite us.

Responding to the second question, I believe the most significant political and economic issue in today’s Africa is tapping into our collective human and natural resources to drive our ingenious and indigenous solutions. I cannot exemplify any country and say let’s emulate Mauritius, Rwanda, or Senegal, because we are talking about Africa, where progress and transformation should be borderless and sustainable. It cannot be one step forward and thirty backward. Take a look at a typical example: The Gambia, which has been doing so well in its commitment to eradicating all forms of female genital mutilation (FGM) by 2030, is entertaining a repeal of the same law protecting girls and women from genital mutilation.

There is a lot of leadership and human rights deficit to contend with across Africa. Sudan is burning, Sierra Leone is about to set itself ablaze, and bigoted laws are swimming free in Uganda, Ghana, and Nigeria’s oceans, where we are making life harder for our sexual minorities. Patriarchy is reinventing itself, and hardworking women have to do a lot to prove their worth. Gender-based violence against *womxn* (women) and sexual minorities is unabated.

Our political economy has not yet left the ICU because freedom is development, and colossal distrust remains among many African nations. Our borders are still porous for small arms and weapons,

yet unopened to free trade or genuinely supportive of free movement. Our traumas are borderless, but our solutions are barricaded. The Bretton Woods Institutions got us by the balls because we are still not free from dead aid that Dr Dambisa Moyo called us to ditch. We are rich yet poor, and climate change's devastating effects are looming.

Worsening security, leadership deficit, and questionable commitment to human rights are heightening the challenges faced in Africa. Unlike popular opinion, which often defers to the West coming to our rescue, I say we need to go to our rescue. When I take a look at the Mo Ibrahim Index, I would like to see all African countries improving upwardly and decisively, and not six bouncing back, 11 increasingly improving, five slowly improving, and 23 increasingly deteriorating.

Africa is highly resourced in natural and human capacities, yet we look outside for help. We need to rise and collectively address the foundational flaws keeping us in this vicious cycle. A critical consciousness approach to leadership and governance will allow us to embark on visceral healing and Ubuntu leadership to do right by ourselves. We can't be starting over every few years to treat the symptoms of curable diseases. We have to nip it in the bud once and for all through our collective actions.

Showing up in the world through collaboration and partnership is far wiser than surrendering our agency to those giving us crumbs. We are surrounded by untold and untapped abundance within, and to borrow a sage insight from the late African literary giant Biyanvanga Wainaina, we are failing to see that we are possible from the beginning. We have to be ready to practice the Ubuntu economy and politics for our collective well-being. It is high time we did away with excuses and stepped fully into the required responsibility needed to transform our continent.

On the one hand, the 30th anniversary

of the end of apartheid in South Africa means freedom, agency, and progress to me. On the other hand, it gets me to introspect about what has not changed because it seems the more things change, the more they remain the same. To quote the amazing Audre Lorde, "...the master's tool will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change." The political psyche and structure in South Africa is an apartheid tool. The anti-apartheid activists turned politicians in contemporary South Africa haven't healed, and they are themselves consciously or unconsciously perpetrating oppressiveness.

It means that while institutionalized apartheid might have been dismantled, there is still mental, emotional, and spiritual segregation to contend with. It speaks again to the healing justice that is needed after years of traumatizing intergenerational and collective abuse because it is within the same dysfunctional system that *Blackness* ascended to power from *Whiteness*. So, what is driving the black consciousness that is trapped in self-hatred and transferred aggression?

Similar symptoms are observed in many postcolonial African countries that had become independent decades before South Africa was free from apartheid. Intergenerational and collective traumas are the big elephant in the brain. If otherwise, South Africa should exemplify a happy country with the born-free generation thriving and enjoying all possibilities, with open arms extended to their siblings across Africa. It should also translate to the older generations relaxing and reaping the fruits of their labor, but that is hardly the case. The post-apartheid South Africa has had its share of sociopolitical, cultural, and economic problems. The #FeeMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, and #TheTotalShutdown protests and xenophobia incidents or Afrophobia, as provoked by Dr. Godwin Murungi, mean it is not yet Uhuru (freedom).

This 30th anniversary, to me, is an opportunity for the collective renegotiation of the way forward for the healing reparation and justice that need to happen through Sankofa and *kujijua* wisdom to usher in Ubuntu leadership in South Africa and, by extension, every African country. Many South Africans have expressed misgivings about Madiba's leadership style and stance on peace and forgiveness during the post-apartheid truth and reconciliation. The restorative justice approach seemed to have missed the vicarious trauma associated with what every citizen has witnessed, seen, heard, or endured. It also appears that constructive change processes for intergenerational and collective healing were not adequately planned or prioritized.

With what went down in South Africa, collective and multigenerational healing has to be prioritized and institutionalized to holistically transform structural and social relationships, especially the intra and interpersonal dynamics of apartheid trauma on people's psyche, body, and heart. There is no expiration date for the restorative healing needed to transform intergenerational and collective trauma, which are chronically manifesting in the political, economic, and social systems of contemporary South Africa.

What I am hoping for is that this 30th anniversary becomes an opportunity for healing souldarity (this is a deliberate spelling) to collectively embrace restorative healing in every facet of the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural structures through Ubuntu leadership that is attuned, compassionate, just, inclusive and interdependent.



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The rise of regional economic blocs, such as the African Union (AU) and various free trade agreements, has been a significant development, reflecting the continent's collective efforts to harness its economic potential and integrate more deeply into the global economy. For instance, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) promises to create the world's largest single market, potentially transforming the landscape of intra-African trade and investment. However, the postcolonial journey in Africa has been challenging. Political instability, ethnic tensions, corruption, and the uneven distribution of resources continue to plague many countries, hindering sustainable development and fully realizing the continent's aspirations. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, underscoring the need for more resilient and responsive governance structures. Overall, postcolonial African politics have been complex and marked by progress and setbacks. While there have been significant turning points and achievements, the continent's journey toward inclusive development, democratic consolidation, and regional integration remains a work in progress, requiring continued commitment, innovation, and collaborative efforts from African leaders, civil society, and the international community.

Africa's population is the youngest in the world and growing. According to a recent New York Times article, "The World is Becoming More Africa," by 2050, one in four people on the planet will be

African. As I previously discussed, this era is transforming many African countries and radically reshaping their relationship with the rest of the world. Colonialism, slavery, and imperialism have deeply impacted Africa and its diaspora. Communities of African descent across the globe live under structural discrimination and bear the scars of poverty, underdevelopment, social exclusion, and economic disparities. These historical processes have influenced how Africa and its people are perceived and positioned within racialized, capitalistic systems and structures.

The African

continent faces many pressing political and economic issues that significantly affect its future development and prosperity. Some of the most significant challenges include:

- Persistent political instability and conflicts, including civil wars, ethnic tensions, and insurgencies in various regions, undermine security and the rule of law.
 - Weak governance structures, ineffective institutions, and high levels of corruption erode public trust and hinder effective service delivery.
 - Human rights violations, restrictions on civil liberties, and the suppression of democratic processes in some countries threaten the consolidation of democratic progress.
 - Uneven distribution of power and resources, leading to regional disparities and marginalization of certain groups, fueling social and political unrest.
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- Widespread poverty, inequality, and unemployment, particularly among the youth, limit economic opportunities and social mobility.
 - Overdependence on the export of raw materials and primary commodities leave many African economies

vulnerable to
fluctuations in global markets and commodity prices.

- The need for more infrastructure, education, and healthcare investment hampering sustainable economic development and human capital formation.
- Limited integration into global value chains and the digital economy constrain the continent's competitiveness and ability to diversify its economic base.
- Significant debt burdens and limited fiscal space hinder the ability of governments to finance critical public investments and social programs.

These

political and economic challenges are deeply interconnected, requiring a comprehensive and coordinated approach. Strengthening democratic institutions, promoting good governance, investing in human capital, and diversifying economic structures are crucial steps towards building a more resilient, equitable, and prosperous Africa.

The 30th

anniversary of the end of apartheid in South Africa is a testament to the indomitable spirit of its people. It's a time to celebrate the incredible strides the country has made towards a more just and equitable society. The dismantling of a system built on racial discrimination stands as a testament to the power of human rights activism and the enduring human desire for freedom.

South Africa's adoption of its 1996 Constitution

after the end of apartheid led to ushering in one of the world's most progressive constitutions. One

of the key objectives of the Constitution is the transformation of South African society. These elements of transformation included the dismantling of a

plethora of racist and sexist laws and institutions, redressing their legacy, healing the divisions of the past, and building a new society committed to social justice and the improvement in the quality of people's lives. As I also indicated in my latest book, *Choice and Conscience: Lessons from South Africa for a Global Debate* (Pretoria University Law Press, 2023), the Constitutional Court jurisprudential developments have embraced the concept of substantive equality, emphasizing the need to address systemic discrimination and to promote transformative change given the South African social and historical context of persisting inequalities arising from the remnants of the structural oppression of apartheid.

Despite the end of apartheid three decades ago, South Africa continues to struggle with its lingering effects. Racial disparities persist in education, income, and residential patterns, creating significant economic inequality. Ongoing biases within institutions and societal mindsets bolster this entrenched segregation. This anniversary is a powerful reminder that the fight for human rights is a continuous journey.

Looking ahead, as South Africa commemorates 30 years of democracy, it stands at a pivotal juncture. While celebrating the strides made, it must confront persistent challenges with unwavering resolve. Strengthening democratic institutions, fostering transparency, and ensuring accountability are imperative to fulfilling the democratic promise. South Africa's story also holds valuable lessons for the global community. It underscores the power of collective action against oppression and the importance of sustained efforts towards building a truly inclusive society. As a human rights practitioner, I hope this anniversary inspires others to stand up for what's right and work towards a world where everyone enjoys their fundamental human rights.

Many states in Africa are still contending with some of the durable legacies of colonial-era practices and influences. Take, for instance, South Africa, one of the most unequal countries in the world. You cannot fully explain the extent of this

inequality without taking seriously a legacy of inequality and segregation bequeathed by the old Apartheid state. Recent coups and widespread protests in the so-called Francophone Africa have manifested powerful anti-French feelings in these countries, owing to France's perceived neo-colonial interference there. However, we should not discount the agency of Africans. Certain African political elites have worked to undo colonial legacies, but others have found repressive colonial laws applicable to maintain their hold on power, for example.



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The spread of multi-party elections from the early 1990s raised expectations that Africa would fully democratize. Approximately three decades later, we now understand that the democratization picture was always meant to be messy. Some states have democratized more than others. Some states hardly democratized at all. Some states democratized and then regressed. The democratization picture is that messy. There is no single trend. Democracy remains a key political issue, and if economic matters are brought to the fore, democracy is even more contested because there is a growing popular sense that three decades of democracy has not created jobs, addressing inequality, poverty, and a host of other socio-economic problems. Persistent socio-economic issues are undermining

the standing of democracy in some African states.

Despite

the profound socio-economic challenges South Africa continues to face, it is still a moment to celebrate and value freedom and give due recognition to a just struggle for freedom that cost African lives and brought them tears, pain, and suffering. It is also a moment to draw lessons. The kinds of effective transnational mobilization and solidarity we saw in South Africa's anti-Apartheid struggle are relevant tools Africans need to confront some of the major challenges facing Africa today, like countering rising repression in some regions and furthering feminist struggles across borders.