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**The New Scramble for Africa: Re-enactment of History  
and Africa's Response in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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**5 - 9 / 12 / 2011**

Rabat Maroc / Morocco

## **Introduction**

In the current struggle for access to Africa's resources of use-value, Africa is increasingly being propositioned and exploited by external interests. In the present rush for Africa's natural resources, globalization has been instrumental in designing and protecting the structural underpinnings of the exploitation. And this trend has more often than not resulted in structural violence on African peoples and conflicts of grave dimensions. Recent examples include the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sudan.

That Africa is extra-ordinarily endowed with natural resources is not in doubt, and these range from several types of mineral resources to petroleum and gas, in addition to fertile lands for the production of agricultural raw materials. Africa's huge population is also another important resource, an attraction for emerging markets looking for outlets for their rising industrial production and services. From the slave trade to colonialism including the partition of Africa in November 1884, to neo-colonialism and imperialism, down to the Cold War and the current competitive globalization, Africa has been at the receiving end of global political and economic horse-trading. The rate at which Africa's natural and human resources are being exploited in the guise of free market, democratic 'one village' economy, compels one to critically examine the renewed economic and political interests in Africa, and Africa's position in global resource competition and exploitation. Africa has become very important in the global calculations for sources of raw materials and markets in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is against this backdrop, and the immediate and future implications of this for Africa that we seek to interrogate the phenomenon of the 'New Scramble', and likely responses from Africa to avoid the experiences of the old scramble.

At this juncture, it is necessary to raise some questions as signposts in the discourse, especially against the backdrop of the renewed interest in Africa and its resources – What indeed, is the "New Scramble" as different from the old? How is the New Scramble different from the way Africa was exploited during the transatlantic slave trade and European colonialism in the continent? How should Africa respond to the political and economic pressures associated with the New Scramble? Indeed, are Africans ready to cooperate towards achieving a collective approach to engaging with the New Scramble?

## The New Scramble: Review and Conceptual Framework

Understanding the new scramble for Africa could be approached from different perspectives at once encompassing the historical, and theories of imperialism - the best well-known being that by Johan Galtung, functionalism and the ubiquitous presence of globalization and its vicissitudes. Generally, the scramble for Africa could be said to be the process of invasion, occupation, colonization and annexation of territories in Africa by European powers, mainly between 1881 and 1914. This was a period of new imperialism, which saw the transition from 'informal imperialism' of control, through military influence and economic domination to that of direct rule (Shillington, 2005:301).

One perspective sees in the scramble a new form of imperialism defined by the transnationalization of capital and the diffusion and homogenization of the dominant ideas of cultural, economic, and political organizations that underline and propel it to other societies from the most advanced societies. What was fundamentally at stake in the old scramble was the combined pursuit of national power and influence (Jinadu, 2010:16). The scramble was as much about imperialist expansion as about 'scrambling for', and creating spheres of influence in Africa. It was also the triumph of finance capital over mercantile capital (Hobson, 1938; Luxemburg, 1972; Magdoff, 1964).

The old scramble propelled by the need to maintain a balance of power in Europe. Indeed, the scramble occurred because of the mutual suspicion of interested European powers that they will be left out of the largesse in Africa (Crowder, 1968:60). This was described by Sweezy (1964:302) as the "protective" and "anticipatory" dimensions of colonial or imperial annexations. As opposed to the imperialist thesis, some actually saw the scramble as an "accident", a "miscalculation" from commercial expansion to expansion of territorial claims (Robinson and Gallagher, 1968: 465-72). Karl Marx, had in *Das Kapital* argued that slave trade was part of what he termed 'primitive accumulation' of European capital, the non-capitalist accumulation of wealth that preceded and created the financial conditions for Britain's industrialization (Pakenham, 1991).

For Jinadu (2010:19), and very poignant, is the fact that the calculations of balance of power, economic, military, political and strategic considerations and impulses that drove the scramble were facilitated by the awesome technological superiority of the European powers and an evangelizing, racist and crusading psychology of domination, which assumed the cultural, moral, and racial superiority of Europe over dominated peoples in Africa and Asia. While some authors like Warren (1980) linked the end of European colonial rule to the end of empire, contemporary globalization is seen as a continuation of the industrial and

structural process of capitalist and imperialist domination on a world scale and of the global diffusion or replication of its economic sub-structures. It could therefore be argued that Africa's marginalization has constrained auto-centric development, while a globalizing and hegemonizing West has further relegated it to a follower-continent (Aina, 1976; Amin, 1976; Nabudere, 2000). For Jinadu (2010) therefore, the end of the empire has changed neither the masters nor the slaves.

Indeed, a salient residual import of the scramble is the historical and structural link between the scramble, as one historical manifestation of the still unfolding globalization, and contemporary competitive globalization. The new globalization like the old is characterized by new centres, emerging centers, new peripheries and structural differentiation, unequal functional integration or interdependence and exchange between metropolitan and dependent or satellite nations, peoples and market. Like the old globalization, the new one is mediated and facilitated on a global scale by technological advances, global trade regimes and by universalizing or homogenizing cultural and intellectual institutions, even as they generate contradictions or competing responses in the form of dialectics of domination and liberation (Jinadu, 2010:20).

Much earlier, other theories had been used to explain the old scramble for Africa during the period of the Cold War and *Détente*. This was the period of the Vacuum theory and Expansionism (Tarabrin, 1974). The colonial powers reckoned that they would be able to keep Africa free of revolutionary change; but they were disappointed. The independence of Libya was proclaimed in December 1951. In July 1952, a revolution took place in Egypt. The Sudan put an end to colonial oppression in 1956, likewise Morocco and Tunisia. The national liberation movement at this period gathered momentum in regions South of the Sahara as well. It was indeed, at this moment that the notorious "Vacuum" theory emerged. Its potential usefulness was immediately grasped by the ruling circles of America and West Germany. The theory stated in effect that the place of retiring colonial powers had to be filled by other powers, which are capable of "protecting" the young states from "chaos" and "turmoil" (Tarabrin, 1974:48). The proponents of the Vacuum theory tried to give it some respectability in imperialist circles by basing their arguments on the need to oppose the "communist" threat to the liberated countries. However, the European colonial powers did not in the least share the view that any sort of "vacuum" could form in Africa, nor were they willing to pack their bags. Nonetheless, the metropolises had to contend with growing national liberation movements as well as the aspirations of competitor-allies.



The fact remains that while departing from Africa, the colonial powers tied their satellites with *a chain of individual and collective treaties and agreements*. The British system of imperial preference and the sterling area remained intact, the Franc zone was strengthened and the EuraAfrica Association appeared, with the result that almost a half of the continent was fenced off by customs barriers. In the international political economy, the newly independent countries became more directly integrated, however, owing to their low level of economic development; the liberated countries could only, in the main, act only as the *object* of the struggle for economic resources. As rightly predicted by Tarabrin (1974:139), with increasing democratic revolution in self-sufficiency and emancipation, the imperialist powers' struggle for diminishing spheres of influence assumed more embittered forms.

At present, the dynamics of the scramble for Africa's resources is embedded within the international division of labour, in which Africa and many countries of the developing world are relegated to the position of suppliers of raw materials (natural resources), and importers of finished products of the advanced industrialized countries. In this scenario, as postulated by Johan Galtung (1971), there is an unholy alliance between the centre of the periphery (Africa) and the center of the center nations (United States, China etc.). Globalization should therefore be seen as supporting global capital at the expense of the people; it could be seen subsumed in the institutions of global political and economic governance with the attendant conditionalities that Africa and weak countries of the world must satisfy.

Because of the importance attached to the globalization phenomenon as a critical factor in the new scramble for Africa, it is germane to explicate what this is all about. It is a process of increasing interdependence and global enmeshment which occurs as money, people, images, values, and ideas flow ever more swiftly and smoothly across national boundaries. Makinda and Okumu (2008) conceived globalization as intense, broad, and rapid interactions within political, technological, economic, social and cultural domains. It comprises multi-layered social, and multi-dimensional processes, most of which derives from western capitalist values. These processes have been driven by the revolution in the technology of transport and communications. It is also associated with universalization, harmonization and homogeneity, which often reflect hegemonic western ideas and interests. Under globalization, it appears that there are no genuine alternative approaches to the market and liberal democracy. While many support liberal democracy and good governance, others have, however, questioned the way and manner they have been promoted in some parts of Africa.

The point remains that globalization in Africa could disrupt identity (Nkrumah, 1973), exacerbate socio-economic differences and threaten security and good governance; ironically, globalization is also dependent on security and good governance for its survival. Indeed, most scholarly accounts depict globalization as a powerful phenomenon that among other things, undermine state sovereignty, security, governance structures and institutions. Hence, Jan Scholte's description of globalization as comprising "processes whereby social relations acquire relatively distanceless and borderless qualities, so that human lives are increasingly played out in the world as a single place (Scholte, 1997). It is important to observe that even those who supposedly benefit from globalization also feel threatened by it (Makinda and Okumu, 2008:3). For Africa, globalization rather than opening borders has rather made many developed countries to establish higher barriers against would-be African migrants. For many in Africa, globalization is a form of colonialism and neo-colonialism that were responsible for the oppression and alienation of their forebears for centuries. Globalization is equally one of the most challenging developments in world history. It is indeed, the movement of history as postulated by Tandon (1998:2), but by its nature cannot exist without parasitic expansion. This in a way explains the insatiable appetite for more and more access to world natural resources to sustain its existence. It was thus, only a matter of time, before Africa became subsumed into its orbit. As globalization increases and capitalism entrenches itself, there is a corresponding depletion of world's resources with more and more attention being directed to Africa, hitherto considered inconsequential in global trade calculations.

Note also that a critical feature of globalization is its penchant to erode national sovereignties, much in the same way as regional integration schemes do, although, the objectives may differ. This has been referred to as "globalization of policy-making" (Khor, 2001:11). This has constrained governments and individuals from making independent choices affecting them from options available relating to socio-economic, political and cultural matters. Indeed, it could be opined that inspite of all the forces of history that led to the New Scramble, globalization in its present form has been the most influential.

### **Africa and the Old Scramble: Slave Trade, European Colonialism and Imperialism**

The first scramble for Africa had a devastating effect on the continent and its peoples, leaving a trail of horror and death across the Atlantic – this was the slave trade which lasted for over 400 years. It de-populated and decimated Africa, using the labour of slaves to develop the New World and to enrich heartless and cruel slave traders. While the able-

bodied were ferried to the New World, African societies were left dis-articulated, and the development of its science and technology became stalled.

In retrospect, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade began around the mid-fifteenth century, when Portuguese economic interests shifted from gold to human beings – slaves, and thrived up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The slaves were useful as a dependable breed of workforce, which European empires needed in the new world. What is now known as the triangular trade had three stages that were all lucrative for European merchants. At the first stage, manufactured goods like cloths, spirit, tobacco, beads, cowrie shells, metal goods and guns were brought to Africa. These goods were then exchange for slaves. The gins served to help expand the empires and obtain more slaves. The second stage also called the middle passage involved shipping slaves to the Americas, while the third stage involved return to Europe with the produce from the slave-labour plantations of the Americas such as cotton, sugar, tobacco, molasses and rum (Boddy-Evans, 2011). For about two hundred years, from 1440 – 1640, Portugal actually had a monopoly on the export of slaves from Africa. It was responsible for transporting over 4.5 million African, roughly 40 percent of the total enslaved. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the slave trade peaked at about 6 million, Britain was the worst transgressor, responsible for almost 2.5 million. Slaves were needed on plantations and for mines and the majority were shipped to Brazil, the Caribbean, and the Spanish Empire. Less than 5 percent were actually taken to the northern American states formally held by the British (Boddy-Evans, 2011). When the Atlantic slave trade began, many local slave systems changed and began supplying captives for slave markets outside of Africa.

In terms of the impact on the economy of Africa, from 1520 to 1860, it is estimated that 10 - 12 million Africans were forced into slavery. About two-thirds of those taken were men between the ages of 18 and 30. This had significant demographic impact on the African economy. Family structures were destroyed and local economies disarticulated. It fuelled political instability as civil and communal wars became commonplace. It is said that most of the resources from commodities sent from Europe were spent on British-made firearms and in industrial-grade alcohol. Africa's trade with Europe at the peak of the slave trade, which also included significant exports of gold and ivory, was about 3 – 5 million pounds sterling per year. Trade with the United Kingdom alone, the then economic superpower, was about 14 million pounds per year over the same period of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Wikipedia, 2011). Textiles, iron ore, currency and salt constituted the imported commodities in return for slaves. Since epochs come and go, slavery was eventually outlawed; led by Christian

officials like William Wilberforce, Great Britain had little option but to outlaw the slave trade in 1807 and slavery itself in 1834 (Pakenham, 1991:18).

Ending the slave trade, did not mean that Europeans lost interest in Africa. Africa could supply Europe with the raw materials and new markets for European goods. Indeed, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European countries began to compete for control of Africa. To avoid wars over territories, they met and discussed how to divide Africa. Africans were not consulted. By 1912, only Ethiopia and Liberia remained independent in Africa. At a stage, the relatively orderly colonisation became a frantic scramble. The 1885 Berlin Conference, initiated by Bismark to establish international guidelines for the acquisition of African territory, formalized a “New Imperialism”. Infact, Europe was to add almost 9 million sq.miles (23,000 Km<sup>2</sup>), one-fifth of the land area of the globe to its overseas colonial possession (Wikipedia, 2011b). The economics of the scramble and of colonisation included the acquisition of land, use of enforced labour, introduction of cash crops, halting inter-African trade patterns of pre-colonial times, introduction of labourers from India, etc and the continual use of Africa as a source of raw materials for European industrialization. Structurally speaking, Africa was never meant to be industrialized (Khapoya, 1998).

With the partition 126 years ago, nearly one thousand self-identifying communities of unexplored diversity, complexity and variation, were arbitrarily carved up with the explicit objective of regulating and stabilizing European imperial interests and formalizing colonial control. This implicitly negated sovereignty and autonomy of Africa and its peoples. The general consensus among historians is that the scramble began when King Leopold II of Belgium read a Report that the Congo Basin had vast mineral resources. In order to gain control over the country, he ordered the creation of an International African Association. And in response to this order, the foreign ministers of major European powers gathered in Berlin to attend what we now know as the Berlin conference. After long discussions, the meeting concluded that the territory be given to King Leopold. Along with this decision, the European powers also put forward ideas about annexing Africa without any conflict of interest. The meeting, which lasted for three months saw European powers haggle over different parts of Africa as if it was a piece of cake (Pandita, 2011). Therefore, a cynical Act endorsed abroad had the power of destroying relationships of trust that were the result of a long evolutionary history. By its adoption, the General Act of the Berlin Conference of 1885 segregated all the peoples of Africa (except Ethiopia and Liberia to a large extent), divided them and established the various mechanisms for their subjugation and exploitation. The



scramble for Africa that this Act unleashed resulted in the colonization of Africa and would later see 53 (now 54) post-colonial states emerge from the mid-twentieth century (AISA, 2010). In 2010, more than one third of the existing states celebrated their jubilee anniversaries. Indeed, it could be said that the reasons for the scramble included economic factors, geo-political factors, nationalistic factors and religious factors as the case maybe.

The legacies of this scramble continue to date, has even transformed to more sophisticated forms. No other place in Africa exemplified the manifestation of the tragic drama of the scramble for Africa as Sudan's independence in 1956. The moment of celebration was also the moment of rebellion against what the British put together as Sudan. The Arabized North Sudan was celebrating freedom from Anglo-Egyptian control. The wishes of the people in South Sudan for a federation went unheeded and armed struggle began shortly after independence; which went on for more than three decades. A referendum for the independence of South Sudan was held in February 2011, the verdict was delivered on 9 July 2011 with the majority of the peoples of South Sudan voting for independence. Today, South Sudan has become the 54<sup>th</sup> independent African country, rising from the ashes of internal and external colonialism and imperialism through their sweat and blood. However, Africa has not been totally powerless in this process of scrambling. To some extent, it has recorded historical achievements in resisting domination and exploitation. Two distinct successful examples of resistance were achieved by Haiti, from the African world outside the continent, and Ethiopia inside Africa. In fact, Napoleon's 60,000 armed forces could not stand up to the power and force of L'Ouverture and his gallant comrades. Unfortunately, Haiti's independence took the form of a neo-colonial settlement where France demanded indemnity to the tune of 22 billion dollars that Haiti kept paying until recently helping to keep it the most impoverished state in the Americas. It has taken nearly 109 years to pay off this indemnity, turning Haiti from a rich sugar cane producer to an impoverished and vulnerable state (AISA, 2010). Is it possible that Haiti's economic woes today could be a punishment for her history of resistance to western powers? On the other hand, Ethiopia was a kingdom and not a republic like Haiti, but it remained un-enslaved, un-degraded and un-colonized successfully fighting off all the powers that came to subvert its independence. It is in recognition of this that the Ethiopian flag was adopted as the flag of independence for 15 African states and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AISA, 2010). The scramble for Africa had its own share of bloodshed, the most notable being the Boer wars, which pitted the Dutch against the British. The British triumphed in May 1902 with the Treaty of Vereeniging (Pandita, 2011).

The borders drawn over 125 years ago remain artificial in the minds of Africans and many states have found it difficult to transform into a nation, and are being held precariously together and threatened with conflicts now and again. The key prize for the old Scramble by the Europeans was the Congo Basin, with rivalries among the Portuguese, the French and King Leopold of Belgium over who took control of the Congo River. Sadly, the struggle for the soul and control of the Congo continues.

During the old scramble, struggle for access to Africa's natural resources was also very important for the colonialists. There was an increased demand for aluminium and copper arising from the development of electrical engineering, electronics, aircraft production, space exploration and other industries that were expanding as a result of the scientific and technological revolution. Apart from the demand for ferrous and traditional non-ferrous metals, there was also the demand for refractory metals like vanadium, niobium, tantalum, molybdenum, tungsten, selenium and zirconium. The growth of the nuclear industry had a substantial effect on the quest for certain minerals in a number of developing African countries. The minerals in question were mainly the nuclear raw materials of uranium, thorium and lithium; and the metals used as building materials, tungsten and molybdenum (Tarabrin, 1974: 142).

The African continent has been a major source of supply of minerals to the West for decades. This role became even more pronounced after the collapse of the colonial system, as many of the barriers with which the metropolises had limited the access of other powers to raw materials collapsed. The mining conditions and the abundance of cheap labour in Africa offered mining and oil companies the opportunity to make the world's highest returns on invested capital. The economic backwardness of most African countries and the absence of any real industry of their own and the acute need for capital for most, made it easy for foreign monopolies to get their hands on the continent's rich natural resources. The pursuit of spheres of influence by the West and East during the Cold War was another expression of the scramble for Africa, a manifestation of socialist experimentation and capitalist exploitation.

### **The New Scramble**

Africa of today is a continent with a population of about 760 million as at 2002 or about 12.5 per cent of the world population (Aluko, 2004). It however, only accounts for about 1.5 per cent of world trade and enjoys only about 1.3 per cent of the world income. Africa's per capita annual gross income of about \$400 billion in 2002, was less than the

annual GDP of the state of Texas or of New York or about half of the annual GDP of Canada in 2002 (Aluko, 2004:48). Nonetheless, Africa remains a major supplier of strategic resources required by the global economy for its continued survival. The continent still boasts of oil and gas deposits in Libya, Algeria, Nigeria, Gabon, now Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad and South Sudan, now Ghana and the Gulf of Guinea. It has Bauxites and iron ore in Guinea, uranium in Gabon and Niger and the Central African Republic; iron ore in Liberia and Mauritania, copper in Zambia and Congo DRC, manganese in Gabon, rare metals in Nigeria, Namibia and Congo DRC, and Gold and Diamonds in Sierra Leone and South Africa. It is therefore clear that Africa is a resource-rich continent, and will to be the object of external interests and international politics in the near future. The question is, to what extent is the continent prepared to be an equal partner in the exploitation of its own resources, or is it satisfied with remaining passive and prostrate while it is ravaged?

The "New Scramble" for Africa therefore presents its own peculiar challenges and opportunities. While the old scramble focused upon the acquisition and demarcation of territory, the new scramble is not interested in re-defining national borders, but rather in defining access to the continent's natural resources. These resources as pointed out include oil, diamonds, timber, gold, uranium, ivory, natural gas and a host of others. Furthermore, the former colonial powers (France, Britain, Belgium, Portugal etc.) maintain their presence in the continent through continued neo-colonial ties, and the activities of the various multinational and transnational firms. China and India have also joined the "Scramble". These are new powers whose economies are in desperate need of resources to maintain their rapid pace of industrialization. When the United States of America, with its entrenched interests in African petroleum resources is brought into the picture then the meaning of a "new scramble" can be adequately comprehended (Eze and Anigbo, 2010:5). Indeed, mineral resources are being scrambled for, not only to meet the current needs of the military-industrial complex, but are also being stockpiled for the future by extra African powers. Indeed, for Kwanashie (2010:28), the current scramble is but a phase in the continuous scramble for Africa which started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kwanashie, 2010:28).

The major forces in the new scramble remain the great powers of Western Europe and North America, including their transnational corporations and multilateral institutions that were involved in the first scramble. However, another group of major powers are the emerging economies of Asia - China, India, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, and others (Nwoke, 2010:77). Their objectives remain the same. To capture and control Africa's natural resources, markets and exploit the cheap labour *if allowed*. Among the other key actors

involved in the new scramble, the United States and China stand out. In retrospect, Africa woke up sometime in 2004, to discover that the United States' Navy was safely nestling somewhere in the Gulf of Guinea, just beside the territorial waters of Nigeria. This was an indication of the long term plans by the United States to secure the oil and gas resources in this part of the world for its use, especially against the backdrop of the menacing presence of China in Africa. It is rational to argue that the instability in the Middle East, the discovery of oil in Sao Tome basin and the instability and militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta area, had prompted American strategic thinkers to initiate action to secure potential oil supplies to the US at minimal cost (Nwoke, 2010:63). The US announced to bewildered African countries that it had set up the US African High Command - AFRICOM with headquarters to be based temporarily in Germany. The *Guardian of London* was to observe that the Gulf of Guinea countries that include Angola and Nigeria are projected to provide one-quarter of US oil imports within a decade (Akande, 2007:1). For keen observers, the US presence in the Gulf of Guinea and USA-AFRICOM constitute one solid leg of the new scramble for Africa. The other leg is the increasing presence in Africa of individuals and companies from the newly emerging economies of Asia like China, India, South Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia (Nwoke, 2010;64).

The new scramble largely centre on oil, the world's most important strategic resource, even at a time that science is trying to make a breakthrough in the use of agro fuels. Infact, corporations and energy-hungry countries are pouring money into Africa for agro fuel crop production, inadvertently fuelling a land rush reminiscent of Europe's initial colonial expansion. The United States consumes a quarter of the world's oil but possess only 3 percent of the world's proven oil reserves (Weinstein, 2008). West Africa alone sits atop 15 percent of the world's oil, and by 2015 is projected to supply up to a quarter of US domestic consumption as previously observed (Weinstein, 2008). US oil imports from Africa, which come mostly from Nigeria and Angola, but also from Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Equatorial Guinea and Gabon surpassed those from the Middle East for the first time in 2007 ( Kiernan, 2007). Is history re-enacting itself once more and how should Africa respond this time around? That the new scramble posses a threat to Africa's future is not in doubt, what is even more worrisome is the sophistication of the scramble and Africa's capacity to respond in a way that reduces the threat and enhances its development.

China is also heavily involved in the new scramble in Africa, driven by the need to seek reliable sources of oil for its growing domestic needs. China's oil consumption has doubled in a single decade, and oil imports now constitute more than 40 percent of its total

oil consumption (Kolas, 2007). Brazil and Malaysia also have oil exploration projects in West Africa and Sudan. Globally, a new generation of mainly state-owned companies, such as China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), Saudi Arabia's Aramco, Russia's Gazprom, Venezuela's *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A* (PDVSA) and National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) now control one-third of the world's oil and gas reserves and production, while the major Western companies - ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP and Royal Dutch Shell control just one-tenth of production, and only 3 percent of reserves. However, because they are fully integrated operations, from extraction to production and distribution, the Western "Majors" make far larger profits (Weinstein, 2008). In reality, the new scramble for Africa is a fight between major competing powers for control of new energy sources and profits at a time when they control fewer resources themselves. The race is all the more important given the conflicts and tensions in other energy rich areas like Iraq, Iran and Venezuela.

Like their western counterparts, Asian countries have been making rapid inroads into Africa. They have also sought to diversify their sources of oil to reduce dependence on the volatile Middle East. However, it is not just about oil; for example, trade balances between China and Africa indicates that there is a new level of cooperation and relationship.

It is germane to observe that eighty-five per cent of Africa's exports to China come from five oil-rich countries (Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, and Sudan), according to the World Bank. But Chinese interests in Africa obviously extend beyond oil. China now ranks as the continent's second-highest trading partner, behind the United States, and ahead of France and Britain. From 2002 to 2003, trade between China and Africa doubled to \$18.5 billion; by 2007, it had reached \$73 billion. Much of the growth was due to increased Chinese imports of oil from Sudan and other African nations, but Chinese firms also import a significant amount of non-oil commodities such as timber, copper, and diamonds. China recently began to import some African-manufactured value-added goods, such as processed foods and household consumer goods. Arising from the first to the third ministerial Summits of Forum for China - Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), a target of achieving US \$100 billion of two way trade volumes by 2009 was set. As we saw, in 2007, bilateral trade volume amounted to US \$73.57 billion, a year on year increase of 32.2%. China today is also the second largest trading partner for Africa. As at 2008, trade between both sides totalled US \$73.93 billion, registering a year on increase of 62% (Agbu, 2011).

On investment, China-Africa Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) pattern shows that a large proportion of FDI inflows to SSA go to the oil sector. For the past 15 years, 70 per cent

of FDI has been invested in five of Africa's seven oil exporting countries and in South Africa, which has attracted the most dynamic FDI among African countries, including in the financial sector after its mid-1990s liberalization. Today, about 700 Chinese enterprises are operating in Africa. In 2007, at a meeting of the African Development Bank hosted in Shanghai, China pledged \$20 billion in infrastructure and trade financing over the next three years for Africa, with a chunk of that amount intended for electricity, roads and other infrastructure (Weinstein, 2008). China's trade in Africa is mostly with oil-producing countries like Sudan, Nigeria and Angola, although it is also mining in Zambia, Namibia and South Africa. China buys 60 percent of Sudan's oil, much of it through its largest state-owned company, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). Sudan's deposits of gold, uranium, copper and bauxite are added attractions for China, no wonder the altercation with the US over the Sudanese political crisis. On the whole, it is apparent that China is in Africa in a big way, challenging the traditional external powers and making new friends. Also, apparent is the fact that the Chinese are playing out a national strategy of engaging vigorously with Africa for its own gains, while also supposedly allowing Africa to benefit in a way that the West did not. This view is plausible when considered from a comparative standpoint of what Africa suffered at the hands of previous colonialists and external partners.

For some years, Asia countries have sourced oil from Nigeria or Angola, either on government-to-government term supply contracts or through the intermediary of oil traders with lifting quotas, or even occasionally by buying on the spot market. In 2008, India imported just under 10 percent of its requirements from Nigeria, its sixth largest supplier of crude oil, while China imported around 16 percent of its oil imports from Angola, its second largest source of crude oil. But what is new and significant is that from 2004/05 some Asian oil companies began to secure oil blocks in both Nigeria and Angola (Vines et.al, 2009:1). Invariably, China's trade with Africa has increased tremendously, rising more than tenfold in a decade to \$55 billion. Its booming domestic economy has helped drive up commodity prices on world's markets, and contributed to the longest period of sustained growth in Africa since the 1970s. Nigeria, which has very good economic relations with China, achieved a 7.85 per cent GDP growth rate in 2010. The volume of trade between China and Nigeria alone is currently to the tune of \$7.5 billion per annum in 2010 up from \$2.3 billion in 2007(The Guardian, 2011). In 2006, China was granted four oil blocks by the Nigerian government, including taking over the ailing Kaduna Refinery, while building a major power generating plant in the country (Nwoke, 2010:79). China is also rehabilitating the



dilapidated Nigerian Railways. With over 65 million hectares of fertile land that contributes 43 percent to GDP, Nigeria appears ripe for more intense relations with China, hoping that she will not also fall victim to aggressive large-scale land acquisitions by multinational corporations and rich countries of Asia (Ingwe et.al, 2010). It does not require a soothsayer to observe that the increased economic relations have something to do with China's interest in accessing more of Nigeria's natural resources.

### **Africa's Response to the New Scramble**

Africa's response to the new scramble has fundamentally been at two levels - the first is to try and maximize benefits bilaterally from the external partners seeking its resources, whether the United States or China. The second is to act continentally, aggregating its interests in order to respond to the forces of globalization and the new scramble by powerful countries for its resources. While, the first response is anchored on enlightened self-interest and is immediately understandable, its sustainability in terms of sustainability of mutual benefits and of the natural resources, which are finite, is doubtful. Somehow, this relationship reminds one of the colonial tactics of "Divide and Rule" through which Britain, for example, was able to isolate and subjugate the different societies that resisted its overlordship in what later became known as Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Today, "Divide and Rule" may become "Divide and Exploit" through which the new imperialists will woe, cajole, buy and exploit the resources of weak countries of Africa at little cost, displacing their peoples and denying them structural linkages to their traditional sources of livelihood.

Then again, Africa may refuse to be exploited or cajoled to engage in bilateral economic arrangements for the exploitation of its resources by creating a continent-wide response strategy in its relationship to the industrialized countries seeking Africa's natural resources. This approach has implications for the sustainable exploitation of the resources, protection of the peoples' livelihoods and the prevention of undue exploitation of African countries by external interests. Whilst this second approach is more difficult to organize; examined against the backdrop of colonial exploitation, imperialism and erosive nature of globalization, it is unarguably the best way to protect resource-rich African countries.

So far, African countries have tried to respond to globalization and the new scramble through the formation of continent-wide institutions to manage its economic and political affairs. The question however, is how serious is it? And are these measures adequate to counter the impact of globalization and of imperialist machinations? Indeed, globalization had sought to strengthen its processes by throwing up the African Growth and Opportunity

Act (AGOA) passed into law in May 2000 in the United States, and the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), both of which serve as instruments that further deplete Africa's resources (Eze, 2010:97).

However, Africa cannot be said to be completely powerless, in the sense that it has done nothing to protect herself. Already, continental interests and aspirations have been articulated in common positions of landmark documents like the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), the 2001 NEPAD Document and the new objectives of the African Union formed in 2002, and other regional organizations. As part of its collective response, the African Union's Committee of Seven on 6 July 2006 in its Report on " A Study on an African Union Government: Towards A United States of Africa", submitted to the 7<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of AU Assembly in Banjul, Gambia highlighted that Africa is dependent on the external world, particularly in the area of technology and expatriate requirement... and that within the context of globalization, the challenges of overdependence and under-exploitation of its potentials have increased the marginalisation of the continent in world affairs (Wapmuk, 2009: 660).

Arising from the previous discussion about how well-endowed West Africa is in respect of oil and gas deposits and the increasing presence of US, Chinese and Indian interests in the Gulf of Guinea, what is the implication of this for ECOWAS unity and solidarity? As it is in the case of the AU, the implication is that the "Divide and Exploit" strategy earlier propounded may come into play, which has as its major ingredient the "enticement treatment" or what some have referred to as "Dollar diplomacy". Obviously weaker ECOWAS states may get carried away by the enticements from China and India on the matter of "infrastructure- for oil", and relegate ECOWAS objectives and standards to the background. The cooperation of all ECOWAS countries is therefore necessary to be in a position to resist intimidation and enticement aimed at gaining access to the region's natural resources.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the scramble for Africa, which is dated as far back as the arrival of merchants on African soil, continues today in a form reflecting the prevailing epoch of capitalist development and its mode of development of science and technology. The changing world economy governed by new rules and the capitalist ideology has defined the changing form of the scramble for Africa's resources. Although, trade could be an instrument for advancing the economies of participating countries, history has shown that it can also be an instrument of incorporation and marginalization. However, today we have the advantage of seeing the broad shape of history unlike our forebears, as a result of improved scientific and research methods and advanced methods of information and knowledge production and documentation. And, it is precisely because of the new scientific and technological innovations that we can readily distinguish between the old scramble and the new scramble. While the old scramble needed armies *in situ* and clandestine manoeuvres and *alliance* formations, the new scramble is simply propelled by the desire for natural resources to feed fast growing economies, made easier by modern information technologies and the speed with which financial resources could be wired from one part of the world to the other and raw materials, removed as speedily, through the use of inter-continental jets and fast-moving commercial tankers.

The global population is increasing and expected to peak at about 9 billion by 2050 according to the United Nations Population Division. Three resources vital to human survival are getting scarce - energy, water and food. We are already witnessing conflicts arising from competition over resources and the tensions are mounting, now involving extra-African interests in the continent. The fear is that this tension, if not properly managed could one day result into violent confrontation. This new threat and insecurities are closely linked to processes of global environmental change and energy consumption, and collective effort is required to respond to this.

In terms of the implications of the new scramble, it is a case in which, it could be said to be double-edged. On the one hand, it has the potential to elicit more intense integrative efforts on the part of African countries as a way to avoid being exploited by external interests; while on the other, serve as a destabilizing and reactionary factor to efforts at achieving greater unity and development of the continent. Predicting which of these two responses will be transcendent is difficult simply because the choices to be made by individual African states are modulated by variables, many of which may have critical and strategic importance to individual African countries. From colonial attachments, to monetary

incentives and even racial considerations, these variables could serve as obstacles to countering the new imperialism through coordinated continental response as depicted by the current thrust of the AU. Africa needs to dig deep and expand its human possibilities through evolving an African citizenship based on common experiences and shared values developed over the centuries. Evolving a common African humanity could serve as a starting point for resisting exploitation.

Africa's shared experiences of communalism, slave trade, colonialism and the old imperialism should serve as a base upon which, it can articulate its current existential realities and build a new identity that is over-arching. The African continent has suffered long enough and must wake up from its slumber, and devise ways to utilize its immense natural resources for its own autonomous growth and development. Africa's activist classes and mass movements should engage globalization frontally, deconstructing and reconstructing the intellectual foundations that justify domination and exploitation. Africa should endeavour to return back to production processes that have structural linkages to the peoples' livelihoods. This will guarantee Africa, not only its freedom, but also its humanity and social-cultural emancipation.

On the increasing presence of Asian capital in Africa, while the imperial nature and intentions of the traditional powers were fairly clear, doubts exist about the intentions of the emerging Asian economies in Africa. At the present stage of Africa's development and considering the fact that it is already unthinkingly integrated into the capitalist orbit, it has little choice but to give the Asians the benefit of the doubt, while striving to contain their rapacious appetite as it engages in its own transformation. A critical aspect of the transformation or reconstruction that Africa needs is to develop its own capacity to exploit its natural resources in a way that it is able to add value, and get them to the global market. As recommended by Nwoke (2010:85), African regional integration should emphasize *production* rather than trade, as African countries have the problem of complementarities going by the experience of the ECOWAS countries. The approach adopted by the SADC where each member coordinates a sphere of production activities is more beneficial to integrating members; this could be extrapolated to the exploitation of minerals in areas of comparative advantage, and is recommended for other regional groupings.

At this juncture in Africa's political and economic development, we must go beyond describing how Africa has suffered to understanding why and proffering ways through which African states can become more competitive in the global division of labour, power and authority. To achieve competitiveness requires discipline (the Japanese miracle

and the rise of China), focus and human and material investments in the development of science and technology. Continentally, the AU should be the motive force, while regionally, anchor countries and the RECs should key into the project of sustainable engagement with extra African powers and continental liberation in order to save Africa from another era of exploitation and subservience.

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