

Foreign aid and Africa's economic independence: the lingering economic paradox for African leader

Boniface Okanga^{1,2*} 

¹ The Business School, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland

² Cloud Analytika, London, United Kingdom

* Corresponding Author: boni@cloudanalytika.co.uk

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ABSTRACT

The tendency of even wealthier African nations to over-rely on foreign aid, even if it exceeds the acceptable debt-to-GDP ratio of 40%, is the same tendency that has affected the effective utilisation of Africa's natural wealth to attain economic independence. It is the same tendency that frustrates the creation of an environment that inspires private sector businesses to meaningfully contribute to the improvement of Africa's economic self-sufficiency. To respond to such dynamics, this study uses integrative review as a qualitative research method to offer a critical analysis of Africa's economic independence challenges and debates as instigated in recent days by Donald Trump's closure of USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and termination of American aid and financial support to several developing countries. Through such analysis, the study aims to discern the strategies that can be adopted for reducing Africa's over-reliance on foreign aid whilst also bolstering its economic independence. While striving to attain economic independence, results from integrative review revealed Africa to face conflicting situations and paradoxes of having to balance decolonisation quests with over-reliance on foreign aid for economic development. Africa also experiences paradoxes of undertaking meaningful economic investment vis-à-vis quests of keeping away self-serving interests and temptations like corruption. It further faces difficulties of serving selfish political interests instigating instabilities vis-à-vis quests of enhancing economic sustainability and independence. Combined with poor governance, controls and conflicts of politicizing state support to private sector businesses vis-à-vis quests of seeking to grow a vibrant private sector, these create a paradox that African leaders must deal with if they are to seamlessly sail to economic freedom. Given these findings, the paper proposes that while mitigating the politicization of state support to private sector businesses, African governments must prioritize the provision of unfettered private sector support. African governments should also harness revenues generated from their vast natural resources' exploitation to diversify into economic sectors and industries that they have weaknesses. This would create economic linkages that boost intra-Africa economic activities, productivity and growth to spur Africa to the desired state of economic independence.

Keywords: Economic Independence, Foreign Aid, African Leaders, USAID

INTRODUCTION

Questions of how to attain and sustain economic independence have been a lingering economic paradox for as long as the concept of self-governance in most developing countries. However, for as long as the United States government kept its national coffers open for supporting several countries around the world, issues of economic independence never came to the fore (African Development Bank, 2024). Most governments in developing countries forgot, ignored, underrated, underfunded, or poorly managed the investments in the initiatives that would improve their economic independence. Attaining and sustaining economic independence is difficult, and it would be more plausible if the US could reconsider its decision for the very poor developing countries. But still, as aid flowed in, most developing country governments never imagined at one point that the US would consider

reviewing its funding options (Izobo, 2021). For as long as they kept their political and economic interests aligned with those of the US, most developing countries never imagined that a day would come when the US government would just wake up from nowhere to announce the unilateral ban on all forms of funding, financial support, or aid to all countries that had hitherto been dependent on US aid and financial assistance.

Undisrupted constant inflows of aid for decades and decades had created the mindset, thinking, and the government's operational philosophy and culture where over-reliance on foreign aid was perceived as the acceptable form of public finance. Mentioning the expected foreign aid or promise of funding by some foreign government or international development agency as the source of funding for a particular development project had become part of the acceptable normal practice (Wangwe, 2006). Of course, in the international space, countries, irrespective of whether developed or underdeveloped, are interdependent. There is no country which is self-reliant. Despite being at loggerheads with Russia, the US, just like most European countries, imports about 3% of its crude oil from Russia to help drive down energy costs. However, when a country over-relies on another, it becomes disastrous, not only economically but also politically.

Over-reliance on foreign aid affects a country's sovereignty. Foreign donors take over the role of dictating the political and economic policies that must be adopted. Such a view echoes insights in "Post-Colonial Economic Independence Theory" articulated by the likes of Fanon (1961) and Amin (1974), who argue that as former colonies aspire to break away from their former colonial master's political and economic influence, the use of strategies that create independent industries is pivotal for aiding faster economic decolonisation. These must be accompanied by the prioritisation of national interests over foreign interests, as well as radical economic, social, political, governance and wealth redistribution reforms. Even if a lot of developing countries have attempted to introduce some of these reforms, later studies have confirmed prolonged political conflicts, instabilities, poor governance and poverty to have frustrated the achievement of outcomes that could have been essential for enhancing economic independence as a precondition for decolonisation (Cilliers, 2025; Fanon, 1961; Frank, 1967)

Yet as former colonialists dangle more attractive foreign aid and funding options in the face of their former colonies, it often becomes difficult for most African countries that are pressurised by poverty, a surging public expenditure, and protracted poor economic performance to resist the temptation of getting caught up in higher foreign aid dependency syndrome. When the purportedly great men of Africa like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Milton Obote of Uganda, Nigeria's Anthony Enahoro and Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, chased the colonialists out of Africa, it did not take long before they were indebted to their former colonial masters (Muhammad, 2025). Even when the so-called second generation of post-colonial reformers or revolutionaries like Arthur Ankrah who overthrew Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Laurent-Désiré Kabila who overthrew DRC's Mobutu, Frederick Chiluba who replaced Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia, and Uganda's Yoweri Kaguta Museveni attempted to rescue the situation, some African countries thrived, while others turned from bad to worse.

From the day Laurent-Désiré Kabila set foot in Kinshasa, DRC has been in a quagmire for as long as no one knows when it will end (Cilliers, 2025). In Zimbabwe, attempts to implement reforms ended in absurdity, misery, worsening poverty, unemployment, economic hardships and hunger, as supermarket shelves became empty following the exit of white farmers. In repentance, the Zimbabwean government is now not only calling the white farmers to come back but also assessing how to raise \$3.5 billion to compensate the wrongly evicted white farmers (Wabwireh, 2025). This implies across Africa, there is still a challenge of how to attain and maintain economic independence. Instead, most African countries remain in some form of cyclical debts and unavoidable dependence on foreign aid. This cyclical form of debt and higher dependence on foreign aid has raised an economic paradox that African leaders must deal with if they are to attain economic independence and freedom.

Yet, as African countries over-rely on foreign aid, Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) "World-System Theory" implies they move away from the core and semi-periphery of more rewarding global economic activities to the periphery, where they are over-exploited. They move to the state where they are vulnerable to signing any foreign aid agreement for as long as it would put money on the table. To good-thinking African countries, this would imply over-dependence on foreign aid should have been considered a taboo and limited to a certain extent. But as most developing countries run out of funding options, over-reliance on foreign aid cannot be avoided. It is not considered a taboo. It is not a taboo. And it is such thinking and perception about the values and disadvantages of foreign aid as an enhancer or inhibitor of Africa's economic independence that this seminal paper explores, with

the motive of discerning the economic strategies that can be adopted to limit Africa's foreign aid dependence while also enhancing Africa's economic freedom and independence. To accomplish that, the study as indicated in the epistemological methodology below used integrative review to evaluate the dynamics of foreign aid dependence in the quests for enhancing Africa's economic independence. Besides evaluating the alternative funding options as Donald Trump closes USAID, the study also explores the potential future economic strategies for generating alternative sources of government revenue and development finance that untangle Africa from over-relying on foreign aid and financial assistance.

METHODOLOGY

To gain new insights that would reduce Africa's dependence on foreign aid to bolster its improved economic independence, the study used integrative review. Integrative review is one of the techniques for critical content analysis (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). But as compared to the other critical content analysis techniques like systematic review, meta-synthesis or meta-analysis, integrative review gathers and analyses all forms of papers researched and published on a particular subject of concern, irrespective of whether or not they were peer-reviewed (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). Just like systematic review, critical content analysis is also used only in situations where enormous studies have been conducted on a particular subject. In this study, it is discernible that the subjects of foreign aid and Africa's economic independence have received significant attention in multitudes of the previous and existing studies on foreign aid and economic independence.

But as these studies examined the issues of foreign aid and economic independence, limited initiatives were undertaken to explore how economic diversification and increased transparent government funding to the private sector can influence the creation of revolutionary African businesses that can change, transform and speed up the pace of Africa's economic growth and development, and then subsequently economic independence and freedom. To respond to such a gap, the use of integrative review in this study was structured according to four steps encompassing the formulation of the integrative review questions, literature search, exclusion/inclusion criteria, data extraction and data analysis and interpretation (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

In terms of the integrative review questions, gaps that this study is responding to suggested the need for exploring why Africa has failed to disentangle itself from the yoke of foreign aid dependence despite having enormous valuable natural resources? The integrative review question also examined the economic diversification strategies that African countries that have enormous natural resources like minerals, oil deposits and wildlife can use to enhance economic diversification and independence just like it was in Norway, Netherlands and the United Arab Emirates.

Finally, the integrative review also evaluated the strategies that can be used to support and improve the performance of private sector businesses in the way that influences the attainment of economic independence. While guided by such integrative review questions, the process of literature search was also guided by the use of keywords like "Economic Independence"; "Africa's economic growth"; " Foreign Aid"; "African Leaders"; "USAID and its Impacts". Since integrative review uses all forms of published articles, Google was used as the search engine during literature search. In addition to Google, the other databases which were also consulted included Web of Science, Cochrane Library, Embase, Scopus, PubMed and PsycINFO. Evaluation of these databases enabled the eliciting of valuable information on the dynamics of foreign aid and Africa's economic independence as well as the strategies as used in other countries like US, Norway, UK and UAE that can be emulated for enhancing attainment of Africa's economic independence.

In that process, the exclusion/inclusion criteria for articles to be included in the study ensured that the included articles were published in English, had fulltexts and not just abstracts and that they offered insights relevant the research topic, keywords and questions. As reflected in the Appendix 1, this initiative led to the extraction of 27 articles. The 27 articles meeting these criteria were extracted and subjected to analysis using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis of the extracted articles focused on evaluating why African countries over-rely on foreign aid, the implications of foreign aid dependence and strategies for limiting Africa's over-reliance on foreign aid. Details of the outcomes of integrative review are as presented below.

RESULTS

From the findings, over-reliance on foreign aid was found to be an issue that most African governments are seeking to disentangle themselves from. However, compared to generating alternative internal sources of funding, integrative review still revealed the mindset that still strongly opts for foreign aid as the source of development funding. In effect, compared to the one who could organically explore possible new internal sources of funding, findings indicated that it is often a government official who has the unique talent to easily identify and negotiate new sources of foreign aid who is considered a “clever” one. Before the closure of USAID, integrative review implies it had become a normal part of the operational philosophy and norm for government officials to openly come forward and say, “We are waiting for European Union aid or for USAID to fund this and that project for our people.” This could have been a clear symptom of weaknesses, suggesting the sitting government is not thinking outside the box to creatively emerge with alternative sources of revenue and funding. But even just like the thinking in government, even the opposition or civil society organisations have often not come forward to rebuke their governments for over-relying on foreign aid (Cilliers, 2025).

Since the opposition also relies on foreign funding and support to survive, depending on and planning based on foreign funding is often treated as the undisputable normal system of how a government should solicit and utilize its funding. Because foreign aid easily comes in, for as long as the government is willing to adhere to the prescribed conditions and strings, dependence on foreign aid as an acceptable practice has often turned into an acceptable conventional logic (Lumonya, 2025). This has induced path dependence, governmental inertia and complacency that inhibit creativity and innovativeness. Because it is easier to get foreign aid, as compared to generating alternative sources of funding that do not require borrowing and begging, most developing countries’ governments have been quite reluctant to explore, identify, develop, and nurture the evolution of dependable alternative sources of development funds.

In effect, during national budget formulation, it is not uncommon to find that most developing countries’ governments have become accustomed to budgeting on the basis of frequent foreign aid inflows from the assured sources like USAID and direct financial support from the other western governments. It is also not uncommon to hear from some countries like Uganda that—like the budget for the financial year 2023/2024 is UGX 52.7 trillion—it will be covered using domestic revenues and external funding or aid. Just like the rest of Africa, similar statements are also not uncommon in Kenya regarding the strategies for covering its Kshs 3.7 trillion budget. For as long as any African government never crossed the US government’s path, it was assured of getting funding. It was assured of getting aid or any form of financial support from US-related sources. But all of a sudden, through its new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), the US government announced the suspension of USAID. USAID had been the formal agency through which the United States government channeled most of its funding, aid, and all forms of financial support to developing countries (Oxfam America, 2025). Some critics view it as a neo-colonial instrument, but still, USAID has been quite instrumental for closing funding gaps in most developing countries.

America First Policy

However, in a bid to reduce waste and redirect funding to supporting American interests under the “America First Policy”, Donald Trump cut off all forms of unnecessary funding and aid, like the US\$60 million allocated for supporting LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning) initiatives in Lesotho, a small Southern African country, which Donald Trump reckons “no one has ever heard of.” Even before Marco Rubio, the US Secretary of State, confirmed that USAID had been successfully disbanded, with only little finalization remaining, realities had already set in (Seddon, 2025). Starting from Latin America, Asia and Africa, governments that had hitherto planned and budgeted on the basis of funds that they did not have had to start thinking twice—if not even outside the box. At least if funding for critical healthcare issues like HIV/AIDS and other essential healthcare services had been spared, the hefty financial burdens of meeting their own development budgets would have been reduced. But this was not the case. In response, the ordinary global population expressed various sentiments (Eman & Amira, 2025). Others in support. Some against the new US policy decision. In these various narratives, some rational arguments have been advanced that it is now time to take advantage and stay away from neo-colonialism. Under neo-colonialism, financial aid and external funding have been used for decades as remote instruments for controlling events and policies in former colonies (Seddon, 2025). In the midst of these sentiments

and arguments, questions have emerged on the initiatives that would or would not improve economic independence to limit the entrenchment of neo-colonialism. Of course, if Donald Trump is out of the White House after completing his current four-year term of office, the US policy may change.

The US policy may change because the new administration may think differently and come up with new insights. The new administration may reverse the existing policy. Sitting in Maryland, a US Federal Judge has so far ruled that the USAID shutdown is unconstitutional. However, even if America does not know how to amend its constitution to erase such unconstitutionality, the court's decision will not erode the fact that a harsh lesson is being learned (Seddon, 2025). For now, and way deep into the future, the harsh reality is being learned. It is being learned that, as contrasted to over-reliance on foreign aid as the funding for building even a very small "village dam or bridge," improvement of economic independence for countries that significantly relied on foreign aid and funding is essential for limiting exposure to the situation which is currently being experienced by most developing countries. External aid and funding are sources of public finance that developing countries cannot rely on as sources of funds for development. Radical changes introducing new radical thinking can easily erupt in donor countries (Oxfam America, 2025). This can affect the smooth inflow of foreign aid that had previously seemed a normal and acceptable part of government funding.

As American aid and funding flowed in, most countries around the world did not recognise the unreliability of US funding and aid. However, others like Egypt, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, which had their funding terminated for human rights violations or for financing of terrorism, had already realised how unreliable US funding and aid can be. From experiences in countries like Cuba, Sudan and Iran, most studies have confirmed a significant correlation between the sudden withdrawal of foreign funding and economic hardships (UN Trade and Development, 2024; Vidal, 2021; Hawthorne, 2025; Alajlouni, 2025; Alajlouni, 2025). Economic hardships, depicting declining purchasing power and aggregate demand, affect market attractiveness (Vidal, 2021). This reduces the rate of economic activity and productivity to negate foreign direct investment, the financial stability of the affected countries, and the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth rate. Of course, with Donald Trump's aid withdrawal affecting the whole world, the prayers of most global economists are that it should not precipitate the risks of yet another global economic recession.

Risk of Economic Recession

Leave alone the 2008 global economic meltdown, the occurrence of yet another global recession would complicate economic recovery from the lingering devastating Covid-19 economic impacts. It will also affect recovery from the negating effects of energy shortages instigated by Russia-Ukraine War that caused increasing prices, inflation, and operational costs (Caritas, 2025). From these sporadic experiences, as drawn from across various parts or countries around the world where US government funding and aid have been withheld before, it implies most countries that previously depended on US aid and funding are most likely to experience worsening budget deficits and financial instability. Even before withdrawing US aid, most recipients of US aid struggled with managing their deficits due to surging budgets for education, infrastructure development and healthcare (Wangwe, 2006). Now that funding and aid have been terminated, it signifies most developing countries' governments will struggle with higher deficits. As funding from the other sources like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union, and UKAID becomes even more overstretched, governments may resort to internal cost-cutting measures like restructuring and eliminating some agencies and departments. This will worsen things by increasing the rate of unemployment (Izobo, 2021). In turn, this will affect earnings, causing more misery and poverty among the population. Most recipients of US aid often faced the challenge of increasing exports to increase export earnings.

However, following the withdrawal of aid, it means most developing countries will face more difficulties of increasing foreign exchange inflows to stabilize the exchange rate. This will lead to currency depreciation, which will in turn increase the cost of imports to thereby affect the importation of essential capital goods and machinery. USAID was employing millions of people who have already lost their jobs (Hippolyte, 2025). But all the compounding aggregate effects of all these will be reflected in the increasing job losses as aggregate demand declines, as well as increasing poverty and destitution as unemployment becomes rampant. It will also induce declining conditions and standards of living in most of the affected countries.

As some of the affected countries are already starting to experience such economic hardships, questions have been raised about what to do going forward. Others have remained optimistic that when Donald Trump goes after

four years, things will change. But what if the incoming US administration also does the same? For most of the foresighted, it is such a question that raised the question of how attaining economic independence is pivotal for African countries to attain sustainable economic growth, development and freedom going forward (Hippolyte, 2025). Those in leadership positions in government know that it is relatively not easy to attain economic independence. However, ever since the introduction of the new US government funding policy, most of the affected citizens have been lamenting that had their governments done this or that, they would not have been relying on foreign aid and funding. Governments of the affected countries are being blamed for all sorts of things that have failed the attainment of economic independence. In fact, the US government's change of its external funding policy has exposed some of the countries that had hitherto prided themselves as rich, wealthy, and powerful. When Israel bombarded and terrorized Palestine, Lebanon, and the surrounding countries in recent years, it never occurred to any common man that Israel is also a strong recipient and dependent on US government funding and aid (Masters & Merrow, 2024).

Israel has a ten-year agreement with the US, running from 2016 to 2026, under which Israel is mandated to receive annual financial aid of \$3.8 billion (Bloomfield, 2025). In the way that seeks to boost trade for US military weapons and defence systems, most of this funding is supposed to be spent on US military weapons. The US also provides support for the service, maintenance, and upgrade of the Iron Dome, which is Israel's air missile defence system. This suggests that given the interdependence of countries, the attainment of economic independence is a mystery. Besides Israel, South Africa is another economy respected by most of the world's governments. In Africa, it is South Africa, not even Nigeria, the largest economy, that most African countries look to as the best model for attaining economic independence. Supported by all forms of valuable minerals and precious metals that the world has under God's sun, South Africa had hitherto been believed by many of the world's governments to possess almost everything necessary for being economically independent. In fact, instead of going to beg in the US, Europe, or Asia, some smaller African countries have been going to beg from South Africa, a fact that has made the South African government less comfortable about engaging and playing more instrumental roles in Africa. But that kind of image was recently eroded.

The closure of USAID coincided with South Africa's promulgation of its Land Expropriation Bill into law — The Expropriation Act, No. 3 of 2024 (Gedeon, 2025). This exposed South Africa's economic weaknesses. As part of the land reform and resource redistribution programme to address the lingering socio-economic inequities of the apartheid-era governments, the Expropriation Act seeks to control and regulate the process of land expropriation deemed necessary for serving a public purpose or public interest. However, this law has been politicized and concocted with all forms of misinformation and fear-mongering to distort all its good intentions. The likes of the Democratic Alliance (DA), an opposition political party also serving in Ramaphosa's new Government of National Unity (GNU), and AfriForum, a non-governmental organisation that mainly caters for Afrikaners' interests, criticized the land reform law as unconstitutional and threatening private property rights and economic stability (eNCA, 2025). Influenced by the likes of Elon Musk, a former South African native, now turned the world's richest man residing in the United States, the propaganda concocted with misinformation, disinformation, and fake news prompted Donald Trump to take action to "protect white South Africans from the dangers of being treated unfairly". Unfortunately, as South Africa remains very peaceful, some, if not most white South Africans claim not to be aware of the risks Donald Trump is seeking to protect them from.

Even when relying mainly on "hearsay" about South African issues, these loud criticisms drew Donald Trump's attention, who issued an executive order halting all forms of US funding and aid to South Africa. Given its larger HIV/AIDS-positive population, most of the \$323.4 million per annum US aid to South Africa was mainly to support HIV/AIDS programmes. Since USAID was unilaterally being closed, just like other countries, US aid to South Africa would have still been terminated anyway, irrespective of the effects of the Expropriation Act's promulgation (Meterlerkamp, 2025). To respond to this funding gap, South Africa added 28.9 billion ZAR to fund the HIV/AIDS support budget. In terms of 2025/26 tax adjustments, it also increased VAT (Value-Added Tax) by 0.5%. Combined with diplomatic engagements, the European Union is contributing \$5.1 billion towards investments for vaccine production and green energy investments. Usage of internal sources to raise the additional 28.9 billion ZAR was a positive indication, but the EU funding still suggests South Africa, just like the other US aid dependents in Africa, Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific, still faces the challenge of dealing with economic independence issues. Economic independence is still a challenge and a paradox for most African leaders to resolve. Going forward, this signifies adopting the appropriate remedial business-economic strategies is essential for most African countries to come free from the yoke of foreign aid dependence.

Strategies for Improving Economic Independence

Drawing from its theoretical definition by the likes of Polanyi's (1944) "The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time" as well as Frank's (1967) "Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America", the concept of economic independence is used interchangeably with the notions of economic self-reliance and economic self-sufficiency. However, the concept of economic independence still differs from the two. Economic independence is a broader term that refers to the ability of a country to be able to make autonomous economic decisions and influence the implementation of socio-economic development programmes without the influence of or risks of interference from external forces. It denotes the ability of a country to make independent economic decisions on trade policies and terms that must be adopted, as well as other investment, fiscal, and social policies that the country must pursue to create and deliver the best socio-economic values without the interference of external forces.

As Daly's (1996) "The Economics of Sustainable Development" articulates, economic independence influences political freedom since it also connotes the ability of the government to make decisions on how the available resources can be utilised to meet the needs of citizens with only minimal influence from the external sources. As the government introduces and implements an array of various socio-economic development programmes, economic independence also measures if the country has the freedom and independence to determine the foreign country or the international development finance institutions or development agencies that can be engaged as partners without the dictates of any external forces.

Such insights echo the narratives drawn from the selected speeches and media statements in Nyerere's (1968) "Freedom and Socialism". In such speeches and media statements, it is posited that economic independence requires the elimination of the dictates of external forces. Such external forces may arise from the need to borrow or solicit aid to fill the arising development funding gaps or the need to import to respond to demands that cannot be effectively met using domestic supplies. In that context, the concept of economic dependence also integrates the notions of economic self-sufficiency and economic self-reliance. Economic self-sufficiency denotes the ability of a country to produce and supply all the goods and services that it needs without relying on higher import volumes. This is relatively a higher test, since it is often difficult for a country to produce and deliver all that it wants without importing. Sometimes the country may have all that it needs, but in the free market system, the existence of better quality for lower prices in other countries can still swerve the local population to prefer imports, as compared to using local products.

In the United States, the government has attempted to achieve economic self-sufficiency. But its imports still exceed exports. Of course, the relocation of most US industries to China and India as the lowest-cost manufacturing locations in the world is part of the explanatory factors (Zhang & Li, 2021). However, the real reason is the increasing quality improvement, explained by the increasingly aggressive innovative initiatives adopted by Chinese businesses. The world criticises China for producing cheaper counterfeits. Chinese businesses responded by adopting more aggressive quality improvement initiatives. These aggressive innovation initiatives are influencing the production of better-quality products for relatively cheaper prices.

Given the constantly rising cost of living across the globe, US citizens are also increasingly importing cheaper products from China. As China improves its innovativeness to emerge with better-quality products, it seems that the old adage that "Made in China are Cheap because of Poor Quality" no longer has a place in modern global business de-campaign strategies. US exports to China totaled \$143.55 billion in 2024. China exported a total of \$438.9 billion, despite stringent import/export restrictions between the two countries. With the US importing more than it exports, this suggests that economic self-sufficiency is a stricter test for assessing economic independence, just like the notion of economic self-reliance.

Economic self-reliance is the ability of a country to optimally utilise the available resources to meet its needs without over-relying on external assistance or support. It requires the development of local industries, skills, resources and infrastructure with minimal reliance on foreign aid and financial assistance. China seems to be achieving that very well. China does not only support its businesses to perform well and influence economic growth, development, sustainability, and independence (He & Liu, 2022). Instead, when consumer spending declines to affect aggregate demand, it also intervenes. Unlike in most developing countries where even if the economy is experiencing a recession throughout the year, no one bothers much, in China, slighter decline of aggregate demand often becomes a big concern for the government, investors, businesses and consumers.

The Chinese government believes that robust domestic demand is essential for stimulating business investment and growth before local Chinese businesses can explore foreign growth options. China not only questions why people don't have money for spending but also why people are not spending money saved in their bank accounts. To stimulate consumer spending, China uses a combination of strategies encompassing increasing child grants, old-age pension payments, unemployment benefits, disability grants, government-funded housing bonds, and a variety of other almost unnecessary government spending to boost aggregate demand (Zhang & Li, 2021).

To lure people to spend their savings, China tries as much as possible to eliminate risks that can affect businesses, investors, and consumers' confidence in the economy. Once consumers, investors, businesses and the general public are confident that the economy will continue performing well to guarantee job security and growth in sectors like construction, manufacturing, transport, banking, and finance, they worry less about spending their savings on various things that they could be lacking (Jiang & Wang, 2020). But if the consumers are unsure about economic stability, which may affect their jobs, businesses and other forms of earnings in the near future, they become more reluctant to spend their savings. In Africa, it is only economies like South Africa, Botswana, Egypt, and Tunisia that have policies analogous to China's policies on child grants, old-age pension payments, and disability grants.

Even if these policies are not treated as stimulants of consumer spending but as mere political initiatives aimed at supporting the poor, they have still played significant roles in boosting aggregate demand. Compared to other countries like South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Uganda, where questions about consumer spending and aggregate demand have been left to whom it may concern, it is such social policies that have relatively improved the attractiveness of South Africa's economy. In countries like the United Kingdom, China, Germany and Switzerland, taking a holistic approach that supports businesses while also ensuring consumers have the money to spend or are motivated to spend even their savings has been quite instrumental for inducing outcomes that enhance economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2020). Though differing from each other, the concepts of economic self-sufficiency as well as economic self-reliance still influence the attainment of economic independence.

However, most developing countries seem to have found comfort in seeking foreign aid and support rather than investing in the initiatives that would generate their own resources to reduce reliance on foreign aid and financial support. Yet as the world sails into an era where foreign aid and support are increasingly becoming unreliable or attached with a lot of unrealistic strings, like what Donald Trump was demanding from Ukraine's Zelensky (O'Grady & Stein, 2025), or the ongoing negotiations for exchanging mineral exploitation agreements with the protection of DRC's Tshisekedi from M23's invasion (Cullen, 2025), it implies that exploring how and when to easily attain economic independence is a paradox that Africa, just like the rest of the developing regions, will have to address in the next decades. Drawing from its theoretical definition, economic independence may seem unrealistic and unachievable, but it can be achieved. It can be achieved if African countries remain committed and resilient in pursuing novel ideas improving:

- Economic Diversification
- Unfettered Private Sector Support
- Support to Import Substitution Industries
- Effective Governance and Political Control
- Each of these strategies are evaluated and discussed as follows.

Economic Diversification

Economic diversification is the strategic action that a country undertakes to avoid depending and relying on just a few economic activities or resources. It is the strategic process of creating an array of various economic activities and resources that the government can use for generating revenues to reduce dependence on foreign aid or external funding. Economic diversification theory holds that the country must utilise the natural resources that it has in abundance to generate revenues that can be used to create new economic activities. From these new economic activities, the government can generate additional revenues in the areas where it does not have a lot of strengths. Such thinking accentuates the reasoning in Heckscher's (1935) "Mercantilism Theory". While using the available stock of natural resources, mercantilism suggests that the country must be able to generate revenues that

can be used to catalyse growth in other areas. Through such diversification initiatives, the country increases its exports to generate income that improves trade balance and generates additional funds that reduce reliance on external funding. It emphasises the importance of optimising the available resources to generate revenues that can be utilised to create other revenue-generating economic activities. This can improve the level of economic diversification to enable a country become economically self-sufficient, reliant, free and independent.

Though countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Norway, Brazil, China, and India have easily found the path to economic diversification, it seems achieving that is still a challenge for even the most resourceful African countries like South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and South Africa. Yet, just like in the state where most African countries are today, relying on just a few mineral exports, UAE was in that state in the 1950s. In 1969, Norway was also in the same economic state just like most African countries today.

When oil was discovered in 1969 in Norway's North Sea, the Norwegian government sought to take advantage of that natural resource in all ways possible. They sought to generate as much revenue as possible, with the hope that such additional funds could be used in other non-oil revenue-generating sectors of the Norwegian economy to enhance its economic diversification (Skonhoft, 1998). To avoid over-reliance on oil or the so-called "Dutch Disease" of just relying on one thing, the Norwegian government created the Government Pension Fund Global (GPF) to enhance the responsible generation and management of the unfolding oil wealth. In the 1990s, it was GPF that ensured the careful planning and selection of the non-oil sectors in which oil revenues could be invested to diversify the economy and catalyse Norway's overall socio-economic development, growth, sustainability, and independence (Honningdal, 2021). This led to increased investment in sectors like aquaculture, hydroelectric power, renewable energy, wind power, and green tech. When electric vehicles became a boom, Norway also used its oil revenue to boost investment in EV-battery technology as well as artificial intelligence and robotics (Anniken et al., 2015; Enger et al., 2013). Using oil revenue, Norway increased its investment in manufacturing sectors like aerospace engineering, robotics, and AI development and innovation. These were accompanied by increased investment in tourism, maritime, shipping, and the shipbuilding industry (Yngve Heiret & Innset, 2025). As a result of economic diversification, the total value of Norway's non-oil exports from seafood, maritime tech, fintech, renewable energy, and aluminium surged from just NOK 800 million in 1969 to NOK 600 billion (€52 billion) in 2023.

Of course, when the Norwegian example is used in Africa, one would argue that Norway is a European country, and Africa is Africa. Above all, they may also argue that it was oil, not agricultural products, which were discovered as the source of wealth. For the sake of that argument, let's look at how the Netherlands, a purely agricultural-based country just like most African countries, gained economic independence. Though smaller in size and accused of aiding and abetting colonial expeditions and exploitations in various parts of the world, the Netherlands optimised its fertile land and unique agricultural practices, skills, and expertise to increase its agricultural production (Reiley, 2021).

After the United States, it became the second-largest exporter of agricultural products in the world. The Netherlands invested in agricultural innovation and invention that led to the introduction of better agricultural practices, greenhouse agriculture, high-tech farming, and sustainable food production. It also increased investment in food technology and processing (Hawaii Department of Agriculture, 2023). This spurred increased revenue generation, which was, in turn, invested in other non-agricultural sectors like logistics and transport, the chemical industry, and semiconductors, where the Netherlands has so far emerged as one of the world's leaders in chip manufacturing technology. Despite investing in the financial sector, the Netherlands also increased investment in renewable energy to emerge as one of the leading producers of renewable energy in the world. Netherlands government took advantage of the strategic positions of Rotterdam and Amsterdam to position itself as one of Europe's major trade hubs. Apart from agricultural revenue generation, this spurred the increase in revenues from the other non-agricultural sources (Meraner et al., 2015). Unlike the Norwegian and Netherlands cases, the UAE depicts the perfect case of how to play a more creative and innovative economic diversification game using just one major source of revenue to become not only economically independent but also one of the top global economic players in other sectors. Just like DRC or South Sudan of today, in the 1950s, the UAE also had just oil as the major generator of government revenue. Immediately after the discovery of oil in the 1950s, the UAE quickly realised that it could achieve all that it desired from the generated oil revenues (Crupi & Schiliro, 2023). It moved quickly to establish the Sovereign Wealth Fund, an organisation similar to Norway's Government Pension Fund Global (GPF). *

In conjunction with the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, it is the Sovereign Wealth Fund which is charged with the responsibility of managing funds generated from the sale of various oil products. To ensure effective governance and management of oil funds, the Sovereign Wealth Fund is expected to liaise with the other ministries, like the UAE Ministry of Economy, Finance, Investment, and other relevant bodies and agencies to discern the other economic areas that can be improved to enhance the UAE's overall economic diversification (Chandler, 2009). This led to diversification into tourism, finance, trade, real estate, and technology.

However, while undertaking such economic diversification initiatives, the UAE government realised it would not achieve enough unless it invested heavily in the improvement of the country's infrastructure. The government recognised that it would not be able to attract and retain the best visitors and foreign investors from various parts of the globe unless it had world-class infrastructure (Nyarko, 2010). In its quest to achieve that, the UAE government invested in the development of the best business parks, seaports, airports, interlinking roads, highways and bridges, rail and metro networks. It took the initiative to benchmark its cities and draw the best practices from some of the top inspiring cities like Hong Kong, New York, London, and Sydney (Schilirò, 2013). This improved the diversification of UAE economy. Compared to the trends in Africa, it is apparent that ever since oil was discovered by Shell-BP in Oloibiri, which is today's Bayelsa State in Nigeria, it seems Nigeria has not moved at quite a faster speed like the UAE to attain economic independence.

Africa's Failed Economic Diversification

Using trillions of dollars from oil revenue, Nigeria has been able to diversify and increase the generation of revenues from non-oil sectors like telecommunications, agriculture, and tourism and hospitality. Through such initiatives, Nigeria has attained the position as the largest and fastest-growing African economy with several US dollar millionaires. But still, as compared with Nigeria, it seems the likes of Norway and the UAE have been quite good at managing and utilising their oil revenue to move quite quickly to economic independence (Crupi & Schiliro, 2023). In Nigeria, poor governance, political mismanagement and corruption have played significant roles in slowing the utilisation of oil revenue in a way that influences the faster attainment of economic independence. When only Sani Abacha, the former Nigerian president, in the period between 1993 and 1998, is alleged to have "taken", not "embezzled", about US\$2-5 billion, one can decipher why it is taking so long for Nigeria to outcompete the likes of the UAE, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

To ensure the efficient management of cash inflows and outflows from oil revenue, Norway established the Government Pension Fund Global (GPF), as the UAE created the Sovereign Wealth Fund. But Nigeria has about five confusing and conflicting government bodies that are charged with managing oil revenue. The five government bodies are the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation Limited, Nigeria Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, and the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation, and Fiscal Commission. These government bodies accomplish different functions (Musbau, Maikudi & Suleiman, 2025).

However, risks of inter-organisational competition, conflicts, politics, and even collusion amongst them still affect, in certain cases, the clear understanding of some oil cash inflows or outflows. Similarly, South Africa, the second-largest African economy, has just emerged from the apartheid era thirty years ago. Hence, how they have gained momentum to use the enormous earnings from various precious minerals, gold, and diamonds to attain economic independence is yet to be seen. However, the recent outburst by one of its historical figures, Mr. Samson Gwede Mantashe, the Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, against Donald Trump's termination of US aid and funding to South Africa raised a lot of questions about some of the previously unanswered questions (Anadolu, 2025).

In response to Trump, the minister suggested the need for Africa to withhold the sale of minerals to the US as retaliation against Donald Trump's termination of aid and funding to South Africa. All along, South Africa was perceived to depend less on foreign aid, but its recent outbursts and anger about aid termination raise questions about the progressive actions undertaken in the past 30 years to use the generated mineral sale revenues to catalyse its economic diversification. Compared with Norway, which established the Government Pension Fund Global (GPF) to manage oil revenue, and the UAE, which created Sovereign Wealth Funds to manage its oil revenue, South Africa's revenue from the sale of its various minerals goes to the National Treasury. It goes to the National Treasury, which is the South African Reserve Bank, to be mixed with revenues generated from other sectors like agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, and retail. Hence, it is difficult to say that it can somehow be difficult to point out which developments or economic diversification initiatives were financed or inspired by revenues from

mineral sales (Ngundu, 2025; Neethling, 2025).

Unlike the Norwegian and UAE economic growths, which were oil-driven, it can be difficult for South Africa to point out the sectors that were inspired and catalysed by revenue generated from mineral sales. If South Africa is to have an economy which is driven by mineral sales, then the creation of an independent government entity managing revenue from mineral sales is essential for discerning the contribution of various minerals. From such insights, it also becomes easier for the government to assess the sectors that need to be specifically supported using revenue from mineral sales to drive the country to higher economic diversification and subsequently economic freedom, self-sufficiency and independence. The creation of an independent mineral revenue management entity will answer questions that many people have been asking that given South Africa's vast mineral deposits, why does it even cry for US aid and funding? If not enough revenue is being generated to drive the country to economic independence within the designated timeframe, it is still such a body that will answer questions as to who can play more instrumental roles in the mining, buying, and selling of minerals, as well as the usage of the generated revenues for the designated purposes. While the challenges in South Africa are strategy-related, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the problem is governance-related (Bakaboukila & Hakizimana, 2021).

Poor governance system characterised by weak internal systems, controls, and fragile political systems have rendered it difficult for the DRC to utilise revenues generated from the sale of its minerals to realise meaningful economic diversification, freedom, and independence (Bakaboukila & Hakizimana, 2021). Without an effective governance system, this implies it may take years for the DRC, the producer of 70% of the world's Coltan, 68% of the world's cobalt, 12.3% of the world's copper, as well as an immeasurable amount of gold and various minerals, to achieve economic independence. Governance-related challenges in the DRC are not different from the challenges that have affected the other heavily natural resource-endowed African countries like Angola, South Sudan, Libya, and Equatorial Guinea. The contention that there is no direct linear relationship between the possession of vast valuable natural resource deposits and a country's economic independence is not only evident in African countries, but also in the other countries like Venezuela, Iraq, Syria, and even the United Kingdom (UK), where the discovery of oil turned out to be a curse rather than a blessing (Garavini, 2024). Political intervention put in place through the appropriate governance framework for managing the generation and utilisation of oil wealth is essential for directing oil revenues to areas that improve economic diversification to catalyse economic growth, development, freedom, independence and sustainability. With the UK coming out of the risks of falling into a recession in the 1970s, the discovery of oil was perceived as a blessing. Unfortunately, as Margaret Thatcher, the revolutionary British Prime Minister of the 1980s, opted to privatise oil exploitation so that the UK government could only benefit from taxes, it became disastrous when the UK failed to obtain maximum benefits from its oil (Garavini, 2024). This compared badly with Norway that opted for direct state management of its oil exploitation. Hence, the challenge of attaining economic independence which Africa is grappling with today, was also a paradox that some developed countries experienced before.

To attain economic independence, the quest for improving economic diversification will have to be accompanied by stronger support of the private sector. This will promote the roles of independent businesses in economic development and growth, as well as ideas encouraging the support and growth of import substitution industries.

Unfettered Private Sector Support

The private sector is the stimulant of economic growth. It is the creator of numerous employment opportunities that catalyse the overall economic productivity through their multiplier effects. It is the private sector which is the biggest generator of government revenue (Gao & Li, 2020). Besides creating and providing the population with the required goods and services, it is the private sector organisations that are the instigators of revolutionary thinking that completely change and transform how humans live life. When China liberalised and de-regulated in the late 1970s, it thought just economic liberalism would create the desired economic magic that improves more private sector engagement in economic development. But that turned out not to be the case until the Chinese Communist government went ahead by even introducing more state subsidies, very low-interest loans, and collateral-free lending to all forms of emerging successful new businesses (Chang, 2021). To increase more productive manpower, China did not only invest in scientific education of its people, but also invested enormously in the creation of quality infrastructure. This drove ordinary people away from rural areas to provide cheaper labour for manufacturing and all forms of trade in urban areas, whilst also creating a lot of land space in rural areas for

agricultural expansion (Zhu & Yang, 2022). To ensure the private sector is at the forefront of economic diversification, liberalization, freedom and independence, the Chinese Communist government also introduced a range of tax incentives, grants, export financing, and all forms of the required financial, political, and economic support to speed up the growth and development of its private sector businesses (Li & Zhang, 2021; Lu & Zhou, 2021; Mao & Xu, 2022; Shao & Liu, 2020; Wallerstein, 1974).

The effect is that the likes of Huawei, BYD-Battery Manufacturing Company, Alibaba, Leaderdrive, and Shenzhen HTI Group, which were just small players in the 1980s, have grown using Chinese government subsidies, low-interest loans, and tax incentives to become some of the disruptive global players that repatriate profits from various parts of the world into China (Gao & Li, 2020). To ensure that its businesses play instrumental roles in sustaining its economic freedom and independence, China constantly checks its domestic aggregate demand. To ensure that its 1.4 billion population becomes the first big market for its businesses, the Chinese government runs on a deficit all the time. Before the Donald Trump administration disrupted it, the United States used deficits to not only stimulate aggregate demand but also to control the world using multitudes of financial aid and support. This increases its general government deficits. In contrast, China's use of government deficits is purely economic. It is a deliberate government policy aimed at stimulating local aggregate demand to boost economic activity and productivity, while also providing local markets to local businesses before they explore further growth-leveraging opportunities in other international foreign markets (Gao & Li, 2020). In America, when it was realised in 1980s that wealth control and regulations were curtailing the more revolutionary roles that the private sector could play in American society and the world at large, Ronald Reagan relaxed regulations on wealth control. The effect is that, as compared to the period prior to the 1980s, America realised a surge in the emergence and growth of more multi-million-dollar businesses in the period between 1980 and 2010 than it did before the 1980s.

Though criticised for paying lesser taxes or even nothing at all, the US billionaires have been applauded for not only creating multitudes of employment opportunities but also for providing social and philanthropic support to fill social gaps that some governments around the world are unable to respond to. These demonstrate how the private sector is an instrumental player in the economic revolution leading to economic independence. The private sector often holds some unique talents that cannot be directly engaged and employed in government. Hence, the option is usually the formation of partnerships, cooperation, and the provision of direct financial injections so that they can succeed in creating outcomes that create the desired disruptive better values for the population (Ingram, 2025). The private sector is the initiator and driver of economic change and transformation leading to economic self-sufficiency. When William Armstrong experimented with the invention of hydroelectric power at his Cragstone House in Northumberland, UK, in 1878, while the likes of Michael Faraday, Thomas Edison, Werner von Siemens, and Charles Wheatstone engaged in some form of perfection for electric generator invention, no one knew that they were initiating an economic revolution that would forever change how businesses do business as well as how humans live life (Mansoor & Jones, 2013; International Hydropower Association, 2024; Viollet, 2024). The electric power invention changed the nature of manufacturing. It introduced the automobile-manufacturing industry when Ford engaged in the development of the first electric-gasoline powered vehicles. It disrupted the steam engine to completely change how industrial electric power is generated. Likewise, when Wright Brothers engaged in the invention of the first successfully flying aircraft, they did not know that they were aiding the diversification of the United States' economy into the aircraft engineering and manufacturing sector. Even without the government's initiative to influence trends, the private sector can influence the economic diversification of the country into the previously unanticipated sector. When Charles Babbage first invented the analytical computer theory in 1871, while Alan Turing fidgeted with the universal machine invention, leading to modern-day AI, and the likes of John Atanasoff, Clifford Berry, and later Apple perfected the concept, no one knew that they were initiating an economic revolution (Enzo et al., 2020). Computer invention led to the creation of a new vibrant sector called the telecommunication and consumer electronics sector.

When the telecommunication and consumer electronics sector emerged, it not only revolutionised the nature of communication, transport, and business communication and activities but also changed and transformed activities in other sectors. Computer invention created the foundation for internet invention. When Leonard Kleinrock, using his "Packet Switching Theory" in 1961, realised that computers could actually communicate with each other, scientists at ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), established by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the United States Department of Defense, perfected the concept in 1969. Other scientists like Bob Kahn invented and perfected the IP/TCP protocol, as Robert Metcalfe introduced Ethernet and

Tim Berners-Lee introduced the World Wide Web (WWW) (Enzo et al., 2020). From these private sector inventions, the foundation of the modern disruptive industry for developing artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotics was created (Lolade, 2025). From nowhere, the internet was embraced by private sector players like Jeff Bezos to create Amazon, Pierre Omidyar to create eBay, and Jack Ma to create Alibaba. These became the revolutionary e-commerce platforms that aided the economic diversification of the world into the e-commerce sector (Enzo et al., 2020; Tidd & Bessant, 2021). By the time the world woke up in 2025, Charles Babbage's small, but disruptive imagination, as well as Alan Turing's work, had completely revolutionised the world to have a vibrant computer manufacturing sector, a vibrant internet development sector, a vibrant e-commerce sector, a vibrant fintech sector, a vibrant social media industry, a vibrant smartphone and consumer electronics manufacturing sector, and, among others, a vibrant AI and robotics manufacturing sector (Enzo et al., 2020). The private sector is the Jesus, Angel Gabriel, pillar, and revolutionizer of economic activities leading to economic independence. In Africa, this implies attaining economic independence would require significant investments in Africa's private sector. Unfortunately, the government's over-politicization of private sector support still seems to be the major impediment.

Africa's Politicization of Private Sector Support

African governments have tried, but a lot of challenges still exist. Challenges like inadequate financial resources, poor skillfulness, political interference and instability, and unsupportive mindsets will have to be changed. Even if Africa has abundant minerals and oil deposits, the paradox of inadequate financial resources still arises. It is such questions that call for the review of how Africa manages and utilises its natural resources to catalyse economic diversification and independence. It will require questioning if the adoption of Norway's approach or the UAE model is the solution. Of course, money will never be enough, and even if it is enough in some African countries, the process of how such funds are used for supporting instrumental players in the private sector is often questionable. Some say corruption. But even leaving aside corruption, in most African countries, decisions of which private sector businesses to support or not to support come with political strings (African Development Bank, 2024).

Even if a particular entrepreneur had never thought of becoming a politician or trying politics, most politically clueless entrepreneurs are often still forced by circumstances to act like one or even intimidate by contesting for political office in order to be able to gain from the government's private business support programmes. How some businesses end up being supported by the government is not clear. The process is not transparent. It is not independent. Even if the programme is advertised for the general private sector businesses to respond, the criteria of selecting the businesses to be supported is never the business acumen, but the business' political background, connections, recommendations from politicians, and perhaps the existence of some political base (Angana & Amaeshi, 2024). Now, this is where the problems affecting Africa's economic independence start from.

If joining politics or providing political support is the criteria for getting financial support, private businesses that have emerged from pure individual inventions will stray away from their individual business activities. Because the government requires entrepreneurs getting government funding to have some political base, even the most talented entrepreneurs will abandon their businesses to become underground political mobilisers. Free money from the government lures most previously talented entrepreneurs to consider abandoning their businesses and joining politics. The implication is that as they keep getting government funding, they never invest in meaningful businesses that change or introduce radical economic change and transformations leading to economic independence.

Even if a business were to become radical and threaten to introduce radical economic change and revolution, it will still be threatened, sabotaged, or even closed down if the business' political philosophy is not well-aligned with the existing political thinking. For that reason, some people say had Elon Musk remained in Africa, he would have never become the world's richest man. Instead, they confidently say, he would have easily followed the Guptas to Dubai. Hence, it is not just any form of government financial support that will catapult Africa to economic freedom and independence. It is a government financial support programme that keeps politics away, while using transparent, open, and independent processes that will be instrumental. It is the government financial support programme that does not torment independent entrepreneurs to become political supporters, campaigners, and mobilisers, so as to create time for dedicated businesses to engage in revolutionary inventions that drive Africa to economic independence. It is the government financial support programme which is not jealous of its successful businesses that will drive Africa to economic freedom and independence. Instead of

treating successful private sector players as enemies, they must be considered as development partners.

Even in situations of ideological disorientations, Africa must strive in all ways possible to control and keep their successful private sector players. Because one day, they may need them when America closes USAID. They may need them when you attack Congo and the EU or Belgium says we are withdrawing our financial support. You will need them when you try to take over white farms in Zimbabwe or South Africa, and America says we are withdrawing funding. You will need them when you pass laws against gay and lesbianism and America tells the World Bank no funding to that country. Whether known politically or not, successful private sector businesses are important players that can drive the government to where it had not imagined it would be. When George W. Bush, the former US President in the period between 2001 and 2009, realized after the Iraq War that further dependence on "Arab Oil" would one day be disastrous for America, he did not get his government to be directly engaged in the development of alternative energy sources (Bush, 2006). Instead, he threw billions of dollars to private sector players involved in all forms of inventions that would not in any way involve the use of Middle East oil. Starting from the days of Nikola Tesla, everyone had known that it was impossible to develop a car that uses only electric power or hydrogen fuel cells. Just like Jesus changing water into wine, which those attending a wedding at Cana of Galilee perceived as impossible, the conventional logic of gasoline vehicle manufacturing had created the thinking that it is only by using gasoline that the car moves.

However, when the George Bush administration gave \$1.6bn to Nissan, \$5.9bn to Ford, and \$465m to Tesla in the first wave of financing for innovations inspiring a transition to renewable energy, it did not take long before that experiment revealed probable ideas of how America would avoid Arab oil in the near future (Padgett, 2011). Tesla emerged with a more refined electric vehicle concept. Of all the three, Tesla took the smallest funding compared to Ford. The US government had a lot of confidence in Ford as a revolutionary historical player in the global car-making industry to come up with the best outcomes. But using just the \$465m that it got in 2009, Tesla had, by 2012, improved its first Roadster version to deliver its first successful, better version of the electric car – Model S. As Tesla cars evolved from Models S, 3, X, Y to Cybertruck and even other versions imitated by rivals like BMW, Daimler-Chrysler, Ford, Toyota, and Volvo, George Bush realized that his dream of phasing out Arab oil usage is increasingly becoming a reality. These signify that when seeking to enhance economic diversification or establish import substitution industries to reduce imports and improve the balance of payments, talents from the private sector are instrumental revolutionary players that cannot be ignored. Even for pure political gain, when the Second World War was becoming problematic for the British in 1932, the British Air Ministry engaged Vickers-Armstrong, a talented private sector player from aeronautical engineering, to produce a game-changing bomber within the shortest possible time. By 1938, Vickers-Armstrong had already emerged with the Wellington, which became a key British bomber in the Second World War. With all these insights, it is evident that Africa's economic independence may remain a paradox for now and may take a long time to be achieved, but still, it can be achieved if right thinking, policies, approaches, and operational philosophies are explored, identified and adopted.

CONCLUSION

Improving Africa's economic independence is essential for Africa to not only gain economic freedom, but also political independence. Even if most African countries reckon to have got political independence long ago in the 1960s, 70s, 80s or 90s, failure to generate their own financial resources for usage in the implementation of various developmental programmes has been eroding that political independence. Failure of African countries to generate and harness their natural resources has still been a challenge. Some countries like South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia and Morocco have tried, but the failures in the other countries still cause setbacks that affect the economic momentum essential for attaining economic independence. As this study indicates, corruption, poor government, political instabilities and war have affected the quests of most African countries to successfully invest and sustain initiatives that boost economic independence. Poor governance and corruption have affected the harnessing of enormous revenue from vast natural resources' exploitation in the way that aids attainment of economic independence. Combined with the politicization of state support to private sector businesses, these create a paradox that African leaders must deal with if they are to seamlessly sail to economic freedom. Given these findings, it is suggested that while mitigating the politicization of state support to private sector, African governments must prioritize the provision of unfettered private sector support. Governments should also harness revenues generated from their vast natural resource exploitation to diversify into economic sectors and industries that they have weaknesses. This would create economic linkages that boost intra-Africa economic activities,

productivity and growth to spur Africa to the desired state of economic independence. However, future studies must still continue unearthing and elucidating the economic diversification strategies that Africa must adopt if it is to attain economic independence.

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Appendix 1. List of 27 Core Articles used in the Analysis During Integrative Review

Author(s) and Year	Title	Publisher
African Development Bank (2024)	<i>Fighting Corruption Critical to Africa's Economic Growth, Development Bank Experts Say</i>	African Development Bank, Addis Ababa
Anadolu (2025)	<i>'Stop bullying': South Africa strongly reacts to Trump's aid cut threats</i>	Anadolu Agency, Johannesburg
Angana, G.A., & Amaeshi, K. (2024)	<i>Public-private partnerships in Africa: the role of a strong and responsible private sector</i>	European University Institute, Brussels
Bakaboukila, A.E., & Hakizimana, J. (2021)	<i>Effects of Political Instability on Economic Growth in the Republic of Congo</i>	<i>Modern Economy</i> , 12, 1896–1912
Bloomfield, D. (2025)	<i>Ending foreign aid, military assistance could re-orient US-Israel relationship – opinion</i>	Jerusalem Post, Tel Aviv
Crupi, A., & Schiliro, D. (2023)	<i>The UAE Economy and the Path to Diversification and Innovation</i>	<i>IJBMER</i> , 14(5), 2286–2300
Cullen, S. H. (2025)	<i>Why a US-DRC minerals-for-security deal could backfire</i>	Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), Washington, DC
eNCA (2025)	<i>DA, ActionSA, Afriforum threaten legal action over Land Expropriation Act</i>	eNCA, Johannesburg
Eman, M., & Amira, E. (2025)	<i>How should Africa respond to America's new foreign economic policy?</i>	Economics Observatory, Cairo
Garavini, G. (2024)	<i>Thatcher's North Sea: The Return of Cheap Oil and the 'Neo-liberalisation' of European Energy</i>	<i>Contemporary European History</i> , 33(1), 37–52
Gedeon, J. (2025)	<i>US suspends aid to South Africa after Trump order</i>	The Guardian, Washington
Hawaii Department of Agriculture (2023)	<i>The Netherlands: A Model of Success in Agriculture?</i>	Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Honolulu
Hippolyte, F. (2025)	<i>Dismantling USAID Could Boost African Self-Reliance</i>	Project Syndicate, New York
Lumonya, F. (2025)	<i>Breaking free from the aid trap: time for Africa to halt international financial institutions' austerity policies</i>	Bretton Woods Project, London
Mansoor, S.P., & Jones, D.I. (2013)	<i>Hydropower: A Historical Perspective</i>	German-Ardul & Munoz-Hernandez, Berlin
Masters, J., & Merrow, W. (2024)	<i>U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts</i>	Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC
Meraner, M., Heijman, W.J.M., Kuhlmann, T., & Finger, R. (2015)	<i>Determinants of farm diversification in the Netherlands</i>	<i>Land Use Policy</i> , 42(1), 767–780
Meterlerkamp, T. (2025)	<i>'The axe has fallen' – Trump's USAID issues notices to terminate funding for key health programmes across SA</i>	Daily Maverick, Johannesburg
Muhammad, J. (2025)	<i>Africa's second independence: Can the continent truly own its political future</i>	African Leadership Magazine, Accra
Musbau, Y., Maikudi, Y.I., & Suleiman, A.S. (2025)	<i>Corruption in Nigeria's Oil and Gas Industry: Measure and Extent</i>	<i>PJGD</i> , 6(1), 84–111
Neethling, T. (2025)	<i>South Africa in 2025: 8 key factors that will shape the future and test the government</i>	The Conversation, Johannesburg
Ngundu, M. (2025)	<i>South Africa's trade deficit dilemma with China</i>	ISS-African Futures, Johannesburg
O'Grady, S., & Stein, J. (2025)	<i>U.S. and Ukraine announce signing of contentious minerals deal</i>	Washington Post, Washington, DC
Reiley, L. (2021)	<i>Cutting-edge tech made this tiny country a major exporter of food</i>	Washington Post, Washington, DC
UN Economic Commission for Africa (2020)	<i>Aggregate demand and structural transformation in Africa</i>	UN Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa
Viollet, P. L. (2024)	<i>A short history of hydroelectricity</i>	<i>LHB</i> , 110(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/27678490.2024.2343897
Wabwireh, D. (2025)	<i>First payments made to white farmers affected by land reforms in Zimbabwe</i>	Africa News, Harare