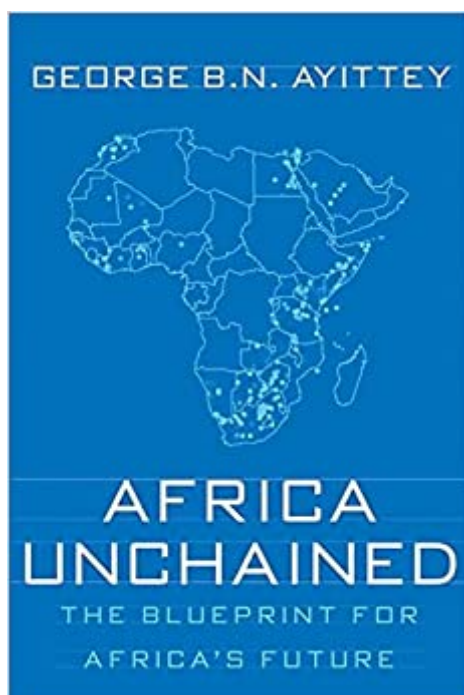


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# Africa Unchained: The Blueprint For Africa's Future



## Synopsis

In *Africa Unchained*, George Ayittey takes a controversial look at Africa's future and makes a number of daring suggestions. Looking at how Africa can modernize, build, and improve their indigenous institutions which have been castigated by African leaders as 'backward and primitive', Ayittey argues that Africa should build and expand upon these traditions of free markets and free trade. Asking why the poorest Africans haven't been able to prosper in the Twenty-first-century, Ayittey makes the answer obvious: their economic freedom was snatched from them. War and conflict replaced peace and the infrastructure crumbled. In a book that will be pondered over and argued about as much as his previous volumes, Ayittey looks at the possibilities for indigenous structures to revive a troubled continent.

## Book Information

Paperback: 483 pages

Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan; 2005 edition (September 25, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9781403973863

ISBN-13: 978-1403973863

ASIN: 1403973865

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.2 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #156,878 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in Books > Business & Money > Taxation > International #3 in Books > Law > Tax Law > International #23 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Regional Planning

## Customer Reviews

'A superb analysis of the continent and its recent ordeals' - The Wall Street Journal 'A controversial and thought-provoking book' - Ian Taylor, International Affairs Praise for Ayittey's *Africa in Chaos*: 'Crucial for anyone seeking an understanding of Africa's condition . . . Read it now, before it's too late.' - The Washington Times '...robust, provocative...Ayittey takes no prisoners.' - The New York Times Book Review '...Ayittey knows Africa well...a brave and reflective book.' - The Wall Street Journal

Why haven't the poorest Africans been able to prosper in the twenty-first century? Celebrated

economist George Ayittey thinks the answer is obvious: economic freedom was denied to them, first by foreign colonial powers and now by indigenous leaders. As war and conflict replaced peace, Africa's infrastructure crumbled. Instead of bemoaning the myriad difficulties facing the continent today, Ayittey boldly proposes a program of development--a way forward--for Africa. *Africa Unchained* investigates how Africa can modernize, build, and improve its indigenous institutions, and argues forcefully that Africa should build and expand upon traditions of free markets and free trade rather than continuing to use exploitative economic structures. The economic model here is uniquely African and takes little heed from the developed world; this is sure to be a highly controversial plan for moving Africa forward.

I am so completely in agreement with Ayittey's observations. I was living in East Africa when he was probably a child. I saw Africa when it was a continent with great aspirations. In those days a person could speak with the presidents of these countries personally. I came to work in what was then the Kenya Parliament, so I met all of the most outstanding politicians. I also had an opportunity to meet with and speak to Sekou Toure. During that period, I spoke to him about Africa and also talked about the manner in which the French left his country. He confirmed everything I had read, and then more. I lived in Kenya from 1964-1974, so I was able to see what would have been possible and its creeping divergence from those aspirations. In many instances I am heartbroken. Some years ago, I wrote a book for my students "Kijani" which looked at five strata of society and revealed the initial steps of the slide into today's condition, at a level freshman students could understand. Now and then I get snippets (via film) of what became of places like Kariako and Kaloleni and Bahati where I once lived. It seems that many of these suburbs have fallen into the same condition as that of Pumwani. I am very concerned about Africa's future. It seems everyone talks about corruption as the main cause, but my question is, "If those in government have something to sell, how is it possible to make the sale without a customer?" We need to examine the purchaser as closely as we do the salesman. Bonita Evans, Ph.D.

I saved this book for last (I read in threes and fours to rapidly sense competing and complementary perspectives). The other three: *The Challenge for Africa*, *The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid Isn't Working*, *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*. This book (*Africa Unchained*) is really two books in one, and as I conclude this summative review, will suggest to the author a third book needed now to complete the trilogy. **BOOK ONE:** Chapters 2-7 focus on the problems of the past and are less interesting to me than the author's clear rejection of all

tendencies to blame the past, the West, the banks, or anyone other than Africans themselves, for the failure to develop. These chapters merit careful reading if one is to be fully engaged in Africa, but here I sum them up as "four strikes and out" in the author's own words: Strike One: State control model never worked Strike Two: Rush to modernize industry while neglecting agriculture (where 65% of African live and die in largely subsistence mode) Strike Three: Aped (sic) alien systems and ignored--demeaned indigenous political and economic systems that had worked for centuries Strike Four: All the above required massive external investments and dependencies

BOOK TWO is the Chapter 1 and Chapters 8-11. It opens with a dedication by name and circumstance to investigative journalists and publishers who were killed for seeking and sharing the truth. The recurring theme within this book as well as the other three I experienced this week is that Africa's biggest problem is ignorance among the 80% that are dirt poor, and Africa's potential "great leap forward" could be fueled by inexpensive locally-oriented Information Operations (IO), my term for a diversity of examples the author puts forward in the last chapter. While published in 2005, I sense this book remains a best in class effort. Three short quotes from the Prologue: "They [the cheetah generation] understand and stress transparency, accountability, human rights, and good governance." "They have vowed to work tirelessly to expose the crimes committed by African despots and to block the grant of political asylum to any such despot." "They teach petty traders, hawkers, small artisans, market women, and those in the informal and traditional sectors about simple accounting techniques, how to secure microfinance, how to secure a job, and how to improve the productivity of their businesses, among other things, so as to make these self-employed artisans self-sufficient."

Other "IO" elements about this book that truly inspired me: + South African music legend Bonginkosi Thuthukani Dlamini and his isi-camtho kwaito "wicked cool talk" could be used by South Africa to carry the message of bottom-up self-sufficiency and hope across the continent. + The intellectual in Africa have betrayed the public as much as the corrupt despots, they have become "intellectual prostitutes" to those in power. + Indigenous knowledge, including centuries of self-governance and participatory democracy as well as valued medicine men and women combined with majimbo--a Swahili word for local initiative and trust in traditional wisdom, is still there. + West does not understand Africa and has been "feckless and impotent" across all fronts (government aid, corporate exploitation). I take this to mean that there is a need for Africans to educate the West and the varied parties seeking to engage Africa for whatever reason, at the same time that all Africans must be educated to understand that the aid is being stolen at the top and should be refused. The over-all thrust of BOOK TWO is that only Africans can save Africa, and more specifically, only the poorest of Africans--the 65% engaged in subsistence farming--can save Africa

by creating agricultural productivity and self-sufficiency. The author observes the insanity of receiving \$18.6 billion a year in aid while paying the same amount to import food to a continent that is rich in resources, is NOT over-populated, and is also enjoying the emergence of women with common sense as key players in community leadership. Chapter 8 outlines why the state system fails even if corruption is eliminated; Chapter 9 is for me very important, a discussion of the indigenous economic system (more aptly, localized political-economic-social-cultural system). Chapters 10 and 11 are the heart of BOOK TWO and full of specifics. On page 327 "how Africa loses money" lists \$148B to corruption, \$20B to capital flight, \$15B to military, \$15B to civil war damages, \$18B to food imports, and \$216B to all other leakages. The author concludes that Africa has all it needs to invest in itself, less the vanquishing of the corrupt leaders across the region, a "challenge" the author never addresses, other than stating his view that the African Union (AU) is hopeless. I'm not so sure, between Brotherly Leader Al-Gathafi and President Zuma in ZA, there are some possibilities. Among the author's recommendations: + Leverage the 3rd industrial revolution (communications and information technologies). + Move away from high-end aid projects and instead focus on bottom-up assistance at a level of a goat that gives milk, a foot-pump to move water, a donkey for transport, micro-credits, and so on. From page 392 there are numerous ideas, all relevant. + Return to the African model of peace making, a four-party model in which the two belligerents are not brought together by the UN so they can agree to a "joint plunder" deal, but rather use trained facilitators and add the civil society--the victims and residents being plundered--to the mix for a longer-term settlement achieved by holistic consensus. The author focuses on the village development model (Cf. p 369) and discusses how "African solutions are less expensive, and further, reform that is internally generated endures." (Cf. 417). The bibliography is extraordinary, a lifetime of reflections by others that the author has integrated. BOOK THREE is needed, perhaps with Wangari Maathai, actually providing both a handbook that is short and easily translated into AUDIO TAPES in all languages and dialects, and an online "Regional Range of Needs Table." Other books I recommend: Breaking the Real Axis of Evil: How to Oust the World's Last Dictators by 2025 Deliver Us from Evil: Peacekeepers, Warlords and a World of Endless Conflict Faith-Based Diplomacy Trumping Realpolitik A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility--Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change The Tao of Democracy: Using Co-Intelligence to Create a World That Works for All Society's Breakthrough!: Releasing Essential Wisdom and Virtue in All the People All Rise: Somebodies, Nobodies, and the Politics of Dignity (BK Currents (Hardcover))

Capitalist viewpoint.

I am so inspired by Professor Ayittey's historical approach to African economic theory ... I will be following his work

Ayittey is an economist who remains very realist in revealing how much some African leaders have ruined their continent. The hope relies in the generation of Cheetah, ready to dirt their hands and to sustain the local capacities. The former generation considered as hippo who seat in chairs and ready to grab everything to the expenses of real life of the population. The development will come only from within Africa and not from outside.

Note--I base my 4-stars on having only read the first four chapters--but those knocked my socks off. I was at chapter four when I gave it to an African (Ghanaian) friend. I will be purchasing another copy for myself and additional copies for friends. Can't wait to finish reading this book!

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