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## The Atlantic Charter and Decolonization Movements in Africa, 1941 – 1960

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### **Abstract**

*Before 1941, Africa remained one of the theatres of intense colonization with somewhat lean and bleak expectation that would have suggested any heightened campaigns for self-determination of colonized peoples that followed in the years after the declaration of the Atlantic Charter in 1941. From the point of European invasion and colonization in the late 19th century in August 1941, African traditional potentates and, later, strings of educated elites made bold but arrested attempts at resisting colonization. Given the foregoing, the study showed that the joint statements of Franklin Roosevelt of the United States and Winston Churchill of Britain significantly propelled effective decolonization movements in the colonies during and in the post-Second World War period on August 14, 1941 that set standards for a post-World War international order. Within months of the joint declaration, popularly known as the Atlantic Charter, anti-colonial activists harped on its eight (8) point principles to radicalize their campaigns asking questions of the Charter's position regarding the fate of colonized peoples of Africa and Asia. This was so because whereas, the Atlantic Charter, in Article three (3), emphasized self-determination, its scope, especially in British agenda and interpretation, only circumscribed European view of German's fascist policies but circumvented the rest of peoples under British colonial influence including Africa. However, sustained anti-colonial efforts at interrogating the loose ends of the Charter led to a decade of intense decolonization in Africa. The work concludes that decolonization movements in Africa, after Second World War (SWW), used a common rhetoric from the Charter as a tool to extract concessions that guided Africa to independence from European colonial regimes.*

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**Keywords:** Atlantic Charter, Africa, Decolonization, Colonialism, and

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### **Introduction**

Decolonization movements and agitations for self-rule in Africa by colonized peoples of Africa led to the independence of most African nations starting in the late 1950s and into the early 1960s. This wind of change<sup>1</sup>, one of the most dramatic processes of political emancipation in world history, took place in almost incredibly short span of two decades after the Second World War. Scholars of colonialism and international relations have variedly theorized causes and the consequences of the colonial struggle profoundly shaped by events beginning in the late 19th century. The factorial mix of decolonization in Africa is theorized along racial discrimination, high cost of living, unemployment, taxation, political parties, world Depression, Freedom of the Press, Religious impact, formation of Student Union Activities, Economic exploitation, Warrant Chief System, Industrial Actions, Pan-Africanism, Britain's Labour Party activities, World Wars I and II, the Atlantic Charter of 1941, the India's early independence, etc.

Furthermore, theorists and scholars have lumped into two categories these causal elements of decolonization and nationalism: Traditional and Modern/Primary and Secondary

factors<sup>2</sup> and the internal and external factors<sup>3</sup>. While the primary/internal/traditional factors were simply Afro-resistant measures at decolonization, the secondary/modern/external factors emphasized mainly how the climate of events in the international system including human right campaigns and the World Wars dictated the pace of decolonization. Although primary/internal and secondary/external theories here have acquiesced adequately and justifiably in explaining their galvanizing roles in the decolonization process, the role of the Atlantic Charter appears the *force majeure* in the whole enterprise of factorial mix. While studies have eminently featured this important factor – that is Atlantic Charter, in the World War II and decolonization historiography, there appears to be no sizable effort at examining its extensive use and potency in turning around the fortunes of African people.

The Atlantic Charter was not only an important factor in the decolonization movement but also a catalyst that ensured rapidity and achievement of independence in Africa. Thus, its important role in the whole gamut of events deserves a holistic academic attention. In addition, this study, which adds to the growing literature on Atlantic Charter, however, focuses on its role as an effective propaganda weapon employed against colonial rule in Africa. The study examines the intense political developments and movements for self-determination in Africa between 1941 and 1960 through the pinhole of the Atlantic Charter.

### **Decolonization Movements and Realist-Power Theory**

It is argued that international relations draw from diverse fields, including but not limited to nationalism, state sovereignty, and human rights.<sup>4</sup> Its multi-disciplinary approach input upon it the necessity of theoretical polemics, which help in understanding international relations issues. Consequently, an understanding of decolonization movements in Africa is weaved around the realist perspective of explaining events in the international system.

Historically, realism emerges partly as a response to the failure of Wilsonian Internationalism, which is an embodiment of idealism, and which failed to preserve the peace after the First World War.<sup>5</sup> According to the *Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, realism is usually contrasted with idealism or liberalism, which tends to emphasize cooperation.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that realism is founded on tripod elements of *statism*, *survival* and *self-help*.<sup>7</sup> These elements permit in depth explanations of causes and effects of conflicts in the international system to be states, which are concerned about their own national interests, their own security, and act in pursuit of and struggle for power and recognition. This was the reality associated with the *raison d'état* for waves of conquest and colonization of Africa states by their European counterparts beginning from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, for Strand<sup>8</sup>, metropolitan political institutions organized around expanded forms of citizenship and nationality promoted colonization as well as decolonization. He further states that:

The rise of the nation-state produced a tension between political theories and structures of the metropolis and the colony. The new models of the state diffused to the colonies and informed peripheral nation-building where the metropolitan powers organized as nation-states neither accommodated nor easily repressed such nationalisms. Thus, they were unwilling to extend full membership to the colonized and found it unappetizing to crush movements constructed around Western models.<sup>9</sup>

From the above, it could be safe to conclude that European national interests and the struggle to control territories gave birth to the nationalistic movements in Africa. Boahen had once

stated that one of the consequences of statism was the birth of the anti-colonialism, which he defines as:

... the consciousness, on the part of individuals or groups of Africans, of membership of a nation-state either already existing or to which they aspire, and of a desire to achieve political and economic freedom, overall social and economic development as well as the cultural revival of that nation-state.<sup>10</sup>

Anti-colonialism not only broadened political rights against metropolitan political institutions but also shaped and sharpened colonist realist intentions by spurring and galvanizing a revolutionary rejection of colonial rule from the period succeeding the Second World War. In such a state of nature, realists believe that actors are responsible for ensuring their own well-being and survival; hence, they act in “pursuit of not only their national interests; but also acts in pursuit of and struggle for power”<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, realists often emphasize a moral standard for individual citizens living inside the state and different standard for the state in its external relations with other states. This the realist justifies by pointing to the conditions of international politics which often make it necessary for a state leader to act in a manner that will be entirely unacceptable to another or other states.

The realist theory has since the end of the Second World War dominated international relations in a way no other theory has ever done producing in over a century array of thinkers and proponents who contributed to its development. Some of its prominent thinkers are E. H. Carr, George F. Kennan, Hans J. Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Kenneth W. Thompson among others. For Hans J. Morgenthau politics on the International stage is characterized by the obsession for power and a struggle for power. In other words, ultimate aim of international politics is power and that the state actors who are the key players in the international system are selfishly driven by their national interest. Rana, who likened the realist thought to a game, which is played with the sole aim of acquiring power, using the power, increasing the power and projecting it, corroborated this view. He puts it thus: “... the game of international politics revolves around the pursuit of power; acquiring it, increasing it, projecting it, and using it to bend others to one’s will.”<sup>12</sup>

Steans and Pettiford reckoned that realism revolves around the pursuit of power and national interest by states that constitutes the main actors in the international relations.<sup>13</sup> To the realist, power is synonymous with interest and interest is defined in terms of power. With power, a state is empowered to safeguard its territory as well as protect and promote its national interest, sometimes at the expense of other states if need be. It is instructive to note, therefore, that decolonization processes initiated by the colonized people of Africa led by elite nationalists was basically to promote the interests of Africa people and extract power from the Europeans whom they (Africans) believed were not prudent enough to be entrusted with Africa’s safety and survival. However, this process was a result of the unintended political masterstroke of Atlantic charter – a self-help principle for African political realists obtainable in the global environment at the time.

Thus, this study falls within the defining features of realist theory as it support the role of African movements in creating independent state structure in Africa and for the Africans. When America and the British reeled out their vision of the post Second World War, the principles of the Atlantic Charter was intentionally directed towards states that fell into the unfortunate hands of German imperialists. However, the Atlantic Charter produced unintended consequences of sudden agitation by the colonized people of Africa and Asia who pressed for

the clarification of the application of the Charter in Africa and Asia. The key interest of the Afro-Asian movements was the third clause of the Charter, which affirmed ‘the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live’<sup>14</sup>. In their struggles for self-determination and independence, the anticolonial movements in Africa invoked the Atlantic Charter to strengthen longstanding demands for independence.

### **The Historical Significance of the Atlantic Charter in Second World War**

A considerable number of issues and events in Second World War draw significance from the Atlantic Charter. In fact, the Charter had significant impact in the face of exigencies during Second World War. Generally, it is viewed as a very important factor in the literature of Second World War<sup>15</sup>. For example, there has been a heated debate and disagreement among the actors (Allied and Axis Forces) as to its importance in shaping or changing the face of the war. Recently, discourse on the subject of Atlantic Charter has further broadened the inquiry into wartime and post-war human rights and international law<sup>16</sup>.

A groundbreaking and very definitive work by Theodore Wilson on Atlantic Charter is instructive in discussing its significance in the Second World War and beyond. The work is a bold and definitive attempt at providing a detailed account of the drafting of the Atlantic Charter. The narrative follows that the Atlantic Charter came on board in August 1941. The meeting described as the ‘First Summit’ by Theodore Wilson, was staged between Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt in two battleships moored off Newfoundland, Canada<sup>17</sup>. The meeting of the two leaders was later announced simultaneously in a joint declaration in Washington and London respectively. The joint statement enumerated eight points: no territorial aggrandizement; opposition to undemocratic territorial change; respect for sovereign rights for all peoples; access on equal terms to trade and raw materials; international collaboration for the improvement of labour standards; the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny and freedom from fear; freedom of the seas; and the abandonment of the use of force made along with the establishment of a permanent system of general security.<sup>18</sup> These were introduced as the “common principles” on which Roosevelt and Churchill based their hopes for a better future for the world.<sup>19</sup>

It was a policy statement that required the United States and Britain to broaden the horizon of their foreign and military policy objectives and engage with its international partners to seek solutions concerning the already devastating war. To understand the historical context of the joint declaration, Beloff throws more light on the circumstances of the time:

Britain alone in Western Europe was outside the Nazi grasp. Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 had put an end to the collaboration between the two dictators which had followed upon the partition of Eastern Europe between them; and the outcome of that conflict could not be foreseen. Churchill had pinned his hopes upon the belief that the United States would be drawn into the war as it had been in 1917 to prevent the domination of the continent and of the sea lanes by Germany. And indeed the United States was already moving from neutrality through non-belligerent assistance to ultimate participation. It was clear that for domestic political reasons, Roosevelt would require a statement of war aims that would appeal to his own people and the

initiative for it came from him through the working papers were based upon a British draft...<sup>20</sup>

Given the aims for the post-war world, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill through the Atlantic Charter laid the political foundation for the wartime alliance of United Nations and guided the development of a stable post-war international system that would seek to address the root causes of conflict in the hopes of avoiding yet another cataclysmic global war.<sup>21</sup> The principles of the Atlantic charter drawn from national policies of the US and Britain were necessary not only important for a post-war universal tranquility for America's entry into the war. The eight-point principles of war aims transcended simple military goals and included social security, improved labour standards and disarmament alongside fair and free international trade and respect for self-determination. Although the US and Britain disagreed to later agree on certain principles of the Charter, the disagreement between Britain and the colonized territories over the Charter became the most explosive issue of the joint declaration ever since. With particular reference to Article 3, which centred on the principle of self-determination, the charter committed both the US and Britain to "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live", and "to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them"<sup>22</sup> This clause vague as to the range of its geographical applicability and was therefore subject to various interpretations.

Upon return from the Atlantic conference, Winston Churchill, in his radio address proclaimed that he and Roosevelt had taken up "the guidance of the fortunes of the broad, toiling masses in all the continents... to lead them, forward out of the miseries into which they have been plunged back to the broad highroad of freedom and justice."<sup>23</sup> However, within days of this proclamation, Churchill attempted to renege on the liabilities of his statements. His idea of the Atlantic Charter in 'leading broad, toiling masses... out of misery' changed and assumed a rather restrictive setting than having a universal applicability. Churchill surprising reinterpreted the Charter to apply to states under German occupation, and certainly not to the peoples who formed part of the British Colonial Empire.<sup>24</sup>

On the contrary, Roosevelt sought to establish a strong and lasting international system in which nations would work together to prevent future calamitous global conflict. On January 1, 1942, he made a broadcast that states:

We of the United Nations have agreed on certain broad principles in the kind of peace we seek. The Atlantic Charter applies not only to the parts of the world that border the Atlantic but the whole world.<sup>25</sup>

From the statement above, it shows that America aimed at not only denouncing isolationism but also rallied Americans for the global war effort and respect for the contents of the Atlantic Charter. Although the significance of the Charter is readily appreciated in the area of establishing Anglo-American wartime relationship or setting the pace for the Allied forces against their Axis counterpart, its less considered aspect could be gleaned from its anti-colonial relevance and significance.

### **Atlantic Charter and Decolonization Movements in Africa**

The declaration of the Atlantic Charter on August 14, 1941, led to rapid political, socio-economic jostling and rustling in colonized areas of the world. It was accompanied by several

interrelated events that included but not limited to the following: increased political activities via mass party formations, trade union activities, media revolutions and elitist movements, and Pan-Africanist movements. The Charter, as elucidated in the preceding paragraph, was the *casus belli* upon which the radical and intrusive form of nationalism assumed after its declaration. The joint declaration appeared an opportunity for colonized people all over the world eagerly awaited and consequently wielded as an ideological weapon against imperial powers. While, on the one hand, the Atlantic Charter gained prominence and directed allied forces' war efforts against the Axis, on the other hand, dictated anti-colonists began to adopt the charter as a rallying point for formation of political parties, trade unionism, Pan-African conferences and media campaigns to resist the European colonial rule. To this end, Gale had argued that African nationalists retorted that if it was wrong for Germans to control and govern the French, it should also be wrong for Europeans to control and govern Africans.<sup>26</sup>

While the British and French interpretation of Atlantic Charter, at some stage of its declaration, appeared to have excluded colonized people of Africa, and by extension, Asia, it however, promoted stronger motive for justice and liberation among nationalists in these European empires. Moreover, exposure to western ideals and war situation at the time hastened the emergence of African nationalist who took up the struggle for liberation of coloured peoples.

The Charter signaled the beginning of an end of colonialism. This logically led to decolonization movements as evident in the formation of political parties and reactions against economic conditions under the colonial leaders. The change of the structure and heightened political awareness in the colonial environment due to the experiences of Second World War brought fundamental changes in the political history and landscape of Africa. This in turn, inevitably brought in its wake a catalogue of independence in the continent. An attempt is made here on the major developments in Africa after the declaration of the Atlantic Charter.

The foremost in the series of landmark developments after the declaration of the *Atlantic Charter* was the reaction by African anticolonial activists and development of African-American intellectual movements. Nnamdi Azikiwe who falls into the rank of African educated elites, came to represent a 'militant' intellectual nationalism that challenged the legitimacy of colonial rule both domestically and internationally.<sup>27</sup> With Article III holding out specifically great possibility of liberation for the colonized people, Azikiwe became consistently vocal in response to the stipulations of the Charter on the right of African peoples to a government of their choice. To this end, Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1943, alongside other West African leaders submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of State for Colonies entitled, 'the Atlantic Charter and British West Africa.' The document made several proposals based on the Atlantic Charter that included demands for the 'immediate abrogation of the crown colony system of government; immediate Africanization and full responsible government'<sup>28</sup>. In one of his commentaries on his *West African Pilot*, Azikiwe linked the struggles for self-determination in the colonies with President Roosevelt's 'Four Freedoms', the Atlantic Charter and the emergent idea of universal rights stating:

According to the leaders of the Allied Nations, we fought the last war in order to 'revive the stature of man' and to make the Four Freedoms a living reality. I interpret those war and peace aims to mean the enjoyment of political freedom, social equality, economic security, and religious freedom, everywhere in the world...[but] when we demand to exercise elementary human rights not only are we silenced by our self-appointed

rulers, but the outside world seems to close its eyes, stuff its ears, and seal its mouth on the subject of what is to us a righteous cause.<sup>29</sup>

Fighting on other fronts, he cooperated on several projects, including founding the Pan African Federation and organizing the Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945, which called for ‘the implementation of the principles of the Four Freedoms and self-determination in the Atlantic Charter everywhere’.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Similarly in South Africa, the likes of Oliver Tambo and the then President of African National Congress (ANC), Dr. Xuma made references to the Atlantic Charter stating it would address as an unequivocal affirmation of their rights to self-determination. Consequently, the leadership of ANC swung into action and came up with “Bill of Rights” and “The Atlantic Charter from the African’s Point of View” as well as a special Charter committee which was set up at the Annual conference of the ANC at Bloemfontein, on the 16th of December, 1943.

When the Charter Committee met in December 1943 to decide on what they regarded as ‘African’s Point of View’ on the Atlantic Charter, their aims were to “attain the freedom of the African people from all discriminatory laws whatsoever and to strive and work for full participation of the African in the Government of South Africa.”<sup>32</sup> The Charter Committee further emphasized through its pamphlet *African Claims*, that African’s Point of View’ bestowed a ‘legacy of freedom’ on future generations and established a national ideals for all South Africans drawn up by Africans themselves. *African Claims* was printed and soon sold ‘like ho cakes’.<sup>33</sup> Its content was a resolute assertion by Africans of their equal status in the community of humankind. Through it, it was hoped that both the Government and a majority of white South Africans would come to see its principles as the basis for an alternative policy to segregation.<sup>34</sup>

In line with the intellectual movement in Africa was the Pan Africanist movement which worked vigorously and systematically to invoke the Atlantic Charter by demanding for the emancipation of Africa. Although Pan Africanism was an external origin, it originated among persons of African descent in the Americas, in Britain, and the Caribbean and increasingly became viable and accounted in massive proportions African nationalist movements during this period. Acting upon the necessities of the charter, Pan Africanists convened for their fifth Congress in Manchester in 1945.<sup>35</sup> At the conference, the delegates reached a resolution calling for universal implementation of the principles of self-determination in the Atlantic Charter.<sup>36</sup> They forcefully remarked:

We are determined to be free; but if the western world is still determined to rule mankind by force, then Africans, as a last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve freedom...<sup>37</sup>

Delegates who attended the conference were Africa’s emerging nationalists/intellectuals such as Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Kwame Nkrumah (Gold Coast) Akintola and Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Haile Selassie (Ethiopia), Albert Lithuli (South Africa) among others, who, through the *Charter*, saw a linkage between the attainment of their freedom and the liquidation of European empires. Consequently, they strongly believed that the provisions contained in the Atlantic Charter also applied to them the colonized peoples outside Europe. As such, they returned to their countries to implement the resolutions of the Congress, taking up the struggle for local independence. In addition, as Adewuni remarked: “the road to independence in Africa started in Manchester and which was

later regarded as historical town for Africans.<sup>38</sup> Although the conference, attended by over 200 delegates across the world, did not receive the kind of publicity and attention it deserved, it succeeded in sowing the seed of dominant and active nationalism, by transferring its head office to Africa.

The Atlantic Charter and the end of Second World War also changed the face of politics in Africa. After the joint declaration of the Charter, educated elites began to formulate political objectives along the lines of the Charter and ways of attaining them. However, the mobilization of a critical mass of the African population for the anticolonial struggle required the creation of mass political parties. To this end, the likes of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Aminu Kano, in Nigeria, emerged within using the rare opportunity to set the radical process of decolonization by forming nationalist parties for finalizing a decade-long subjugation of Nigerians in the hands of imperialistic states.<sup>39</sup> Such mass parties included the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), established in 1944 under the leadership of Nnamdi Azikiwe; the Action Group (AG), formed in 1951, and led by Obafemi Awolowo; and the Northern People's Congress (NPC), established in the 1940s under the leadership of Ahmadu Bello. Malam Aminu Kano formed the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) in 1951.

Apart from establishing mass parties, they incorporated the Charter into their party objective. For example, the NCNC constitution of 1945 stated as one of its objectives was the achievement of "internal self-government for Nigeria whereby ... Nigerians... should exercise executive, legislative and judicial powers"<sup>40</sup> Again, the party's Freedom Charter of 1948 cited Article III of the Atlantic Charter and proclaimed that:

The Tribes, Nations and Peoples of Nigeria and the Cameroons... Now undertake, as of right, to arrogate to themselves the status of an independent self-governing political community Nigeria.<sup>41</sup>

In the same vein, in North Africa and specifically Algeria, mass party movement experienced a break-through in 1946, when Hadj Messali founded the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLF) and consequently the formation of National Liberation Front (FNL) under the leadership of Ben Bella. The impact of the Charter was also witnessed in the formation of mass political parties in the Gold Coast (Ghana) in rapid speed and purpose. The first political party was United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) founded in 1947 by J. B. Danquah. However, in 1949, Kwame Nkrumah, the Secretary General of UGCC, broke away and founded the Convention Peoples Party (CPP). As noted by Briggs, in the immediate post war period, the British responded to the mood of the time with a new constitution that allowed 18 of the 30 seats in the colony's legislative council to be elected.<sup>42</sup>

In French West Africa, mass party movement became feasible with the Bamako Conference of 1946. About 800 delegates who attended the conference did so for the avowed purpose of organizing a united African political movement and to secure liberal reforms.<sup>43</sup> One of the delegates, Houphouet-Boigny, speaking with some air of finality called for the denouncement of colonial rule and French monopolies and called for the participation of the African Contingent in "the anti-imperialist struggle led by the people of the whole world"<sup>44</sup> Boigny urged the fusion of all African interests into a single party (*rassemblement*) and acting upon his suggestion the delegates set up the *Rassemblement Democratique African (R.D.A)*. There is no doubt the party became one of Africa's potentially powerful weapon to fight for its interests in French West Africa.

Other colonies under French colonial administration such as Mali, Niger, Togo, and Upper Volta had different political parties and associations that struggled for the liberation of their countries. Political parties in Africa played a significant role towards decolonizing African



countries from the shackles of colonialism because of the declaration of the Atlantic Charter. The below tabular presentation captures this more graphically.

**Table 1: African States and Political Parties after 1941**

S/N	African States	Parties Formed after the Atlantic Charter	Year of Formation
1	Nigeria	Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) Action Group (AG) Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU)	1940 1941 1951 1951
2	Algeria	Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLF)	1946
3	Ghana	United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) Convention Peoples' Party (CPP)	1947 1949
4	Sierra Leone	GPPP	1959
5	Cote D'Ivoire	Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI)	1945
6	Guinea	Democratic Party of Guinea (DPG)	1947
7	Senegal	Bloc Democratique Senegalaise (BDS)	1948
8	Cameroon	Union of the Populations of Cameroon (UPC)	1948
9	Guinea Bissau	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (ALPGB)	1956
10	Angola	Popular Movement for the People of Angola (MPLA) National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA)	1956
11	Mozambique	Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO)	1962
12	Zambia	Zambian African National Congress (ZANC)	1950
13	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)	1963
14	Kenya	Kenya African National Union (KANU)	1960
15	Uganda	Uganda People's Congress (UPC)	1960
16	Tanzania	Tanganyikan African National Union (TANU)	1954

**Source:** Compiled by the Authors

Moreover, trade unionism, industrial actions, boycotts and strikes constituted other nationalist movements against colonial rule in Africa. In fact, the need to accommodate African workers was echoed across the continent. In South Africa, for example, after the declaration of the Charter, African workers, particularly in manufacturing, gained significant wage increase.<sup>45</sup>

In South-Central Africa, too, the end of the war brought an eruption of strikes, particularly a strike by railway workers in 1945, which led to the founding of a large number of African trade unions in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>46</sup> In one of its meetings, the Trade Union, known as African Trade Union of Bulawayo (ATUB) led by Charles Mzingeli concluded with a reference to the Atlantic Charter demanding the Unionists to keep abreast with current events by studying the Atlantic Charter pointing particular to article IV, which stated as follows: fourth, "they will endeavour, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity"<sup>47</sup>. After reading the principles of the Atlantic Charter to the people, Mzingeli stated:

That as far as he undertook it, it declared a freedom for all persons, victor or vanquished, and it must be clearly understood that while he was

addressing the meeting our Africans were returned from Asia and some were still there waiting repatriation. They had gone up to teach Japan civilization. Therefore we in Rhodesia... cannot afford to permit any idea calculated to deny us the human rights annunciated in the Charter already referred to.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, Nigerians from different occupations, such as professional groups including lawyers, and doctors began to express dissatisfaction over their working conditions through trade unions. For instance, from the 1940s, union leaders such as Michael Imoudu backed by the formidable regional leaders such as Nnamidi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo, with their fleet of Newspapers, joined forces toward to push for decolonization. In addition, the urban workers became a part of this political discourse in search for improving their wages. The peasant, cash crops farmers and all of whom constituted a powerful and important segment of Africans including Nigeria's, along with peasant farmers in the country sidled up with the educated elites with a view of obtaining extended guarantees to the access to the emerging national economy. Apart from this, they protested policies that manipulated the market prices of their products in the city markets, restricted ownership of some properties by the colonial administration and charged them with the exorbitant fees for their business. Moreover, because all the aforementioned categories of individuals suffered from the consequences of foreign exploitation, thus, became ardent supporters of nationalism as what they saw as a cure to it.<sup>49</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Atlantic Charter was not only a famous document of Second World War, or symbolic Anglo-American plan for the reconstruction of the postwar world but also an important anti-colonial political tool in the decolonization process in Africa. Earlier attempts by traditional potentates to resist colonization using all available means did not yield expected results until the joint declaration by the US and Britain on August 14, 1941. The document significantly accelerated the delegitimation of colonialism in global discourse and resulted in anti-colonialists taking advantage of its loose ends to restart, in aggressive and massive proportions, the 'war' against colonialism in Africa. The work attempted an examination of the major accelerated political, economic and intellectual development as propelled by the declaration while also highlighting in the process vestiges of the Charter in the movements of that period.

In conclusion, the Charter, which was, in British agenda, a policy instrument that primarily served the interest of recapturing the Nazi-strangled Europe during Second World War, turned out a viable weapon in the hands of their colonial subjects for the final disintegration of its empires, both across Africa and Asia. Although, countries such as France and Portugal suffered several insurrections from their colonies due to their persistent to keep their colonies in the daunting face of the tool presented by the Atlantic Charter.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The “Wind of Change” was a speech made by the UK Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to the Parliament of South Africa, on 3 February 1960 in Cape town. The speech signaled clearly that the Conservative-led UK Government intended to grant independence to many of these territories, which indeed happened, with most of the British possessions in Africa becoming independent countries in the 1960s.

<sup>2</sup>James S. Coleman. *Nigerian: Background to nationalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, p. 169. See also, Ranger, T. O., “Connections between Primary Resistance Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism”, *Journal of African History*, 9, ¾, 1968.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 151. See also, Alan Adamson, *Colonialism and Nationalism in Africa and Europe, Past & Present*, Volume 24, Issue 1, 1 April 1963, pp. 65-74.

<sup>4</sup>Aniekan Ekpe, Monday Abasiattai & Otoabasi Akpan, *An Introduction to International Studies and World Politics*, Younde: Book House, 2012, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Otoabasi Akpoan, “Contending Theories of International Relations”, in Aniekan Ekpe, Monday Abasiattai, Otoabasi Akpan, *An Introduction to International Studies and World Politics*, Yaounde: Book House, 2012, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Political Realism in International Relations”, 2017. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism-intl-relations/> Accessed 21/01/2018.

<sup>7</sup> Otoabasi Akpan, “Contending Theories...” p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> David Strang, “British and French Political Institutions and the Patterning of Decolonization,” p. 278. Available at <http://people.soc.cornell.edu/strang/articles/British%20and%20French%20political%20institutions%20and%20the%20patterning%20of%20decolonization.pdf>. Accessed 13/12/2018.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>A. Boahen, *Topics in West Africa History*, Essex, Longman, 1981, p. 147.

<sup>11</sup>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy...

<sup>12</sup> Waheeda Rana, “Theory of Complex Interdependence: A Comparative Analysis of Realist and Neoliberal Thoughts”, *International Journal of Business and Social Science* Vol. 6, No. 2; February 2015, p. 293.

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