

81

THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN ELITES AND THE UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA: CAUSAL RE-VISITATION

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Abstract

The underdevelopment of the African continent has attracted many different scholarly literatures to explicate otherwise the root causes of the monumental histo-political, economic and social condition of African backwardness. This study examines the role of the African elites and the underdevelopment of Africa: causal re-visitation. Using secondary data sources, the paper argues that imperialism, colonialism and capitalism, with their attendant effects, have been seriously blamed for African underdevelopment, with much under-representation of the dubious roles of the African elites towards the development of the African continent. The paper finds that the role African elites have played and are still playing shows that the African continent would be hardly emancipated from the control and domination of the stage-managed political, economic, social and technological dependency. However, the paper concludes that development in Africa can only be achieved by Africans themselves with their own structurally self-made institutions and resources, charged with orientational change embedded in truthful, transparent and patriotic governance from African leaders. Thus, some recommendations are given to reposition Africa and get rid of underdevelopment.

Keynotes: Role, African Elites, Underdevelopment of Africa, Imperialism and Causal Re-visitation

Introduction

The socio-political and economic relationship and collaboration that existed between Europeans and Africans lasted for more than three centuries (between 1600 and 1960). The period between 1600 and 1800 constituted 'the mercantile period' when the foundation for the initial integration of the African economy into capitalist hegemony was laid through the 'slave trade' to help accelerate the process of European production and the colonial era from 1800 to 1960 which simultaneously transformed African continent to areas of surpluses for European capitalism.¹ The result of the above phases of relationship witnessed tightly restricted regional and sectoral dependent capitalist development where the majority of the population in Africa and complex industrial development created improvement for the standard of living for the majority of the population in the industrial countries.

It is these relationships that have existed between Africans and Europeans, wittingly or unwittingly that were alleged to give rise to underdevelopment of Africa. There are different angles of arguments for the elites' role and underdevelopment of Africa in various scholarly literature. Like dependency theory, elite theory, liberal theory, structural theory and many more. Dependency theorists anchor their argument on the divisions of the world economic system which sustains the core and the periphery traced from colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. Elite theorists stratified society into categories of inner and outer cores with discernable roles. Social class stratification is vital to the understanding of elite theory. Others picked offence at the African leadership problems of corruption, manipulative collaboration with the capitalists, lack of innovation and technology, ethnicity,

wars and over-dependence on the mono-cultural products such as oil, copper, gold, etc., deposits on the African territorial soil.

Underdevelopment description of Africa persisted in post-colonial Africa, and the adverse effects of this concept have continued to be felt in African countries. Operating with the elites, the concept of underdevelopment constitutes one of the major challenges facing African countries. It perpetuates many factors that affect growth without development. It is on this premise that this study sets to appraise the various means through which imperialism and African elites have been contributing to the underdevelopment of Africa. This paper considers the ongoing introduction, conceptual analysis of terms, underdevelopment of the African continent: causes in perspective, assessing the roles of African elites in the underdevelopment of the African continent, conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Analysis of Terms

Imperialism: imperialism is the political, economic and social direct or indirect control and domination of one state or people by another powerful state. It is the disposition, urge or strive by one group aimed at establishing control over another group. According to Hobson in Chikendu P. N., imperialism is the endeavour of the great controllers of industry to broaden the channel for the flow of their surplus wealth by seeking foreign markets and foreign investments to take off the goods and capital they cannot sell or use at home.² Njoku Brown, on the other hand, defined imperialism as the outward drive of certain peoples...to build empire - both formal colonies and privileged positions in markets, protected sources of materials and extended opportunities for profitable employment of labour... an unequal economic relationship between states, not simply the inequality of large and small, rich and poor trading partners, but the inequality of political and economic dependence of the latter on the former. The concept could equally be seen as the "...domination of non-European native races by totally dissimilar European nations.³ Its motives, thus, include economic gain, national prestige, the white man's burden, national defence and surplus population.⁴

The possible reasons for imperialism have been explained by the exponents of some recognized theories of imperialism. Daniel Offiong in his book considers psychological motives of the Europeans as an explanation of imperialism. These motives are found in their quests for glory, national pride, and bellicosity. He also saw economic interest engendered by the "quest for markets as well as opportunities for higher returns on investments" as one of the reasons for imperialism. Schumpeter, on the other hand, explains imperialism as an atavism. In his opinion, the phenomenon is an aggressive expansionism pursued specifically with military might. He further asserts that imperialism is not served by any interest be it economic or otherwise. The phenomenon, according to him has no objective beyond itself.⁵ Offiong further explained Marx and Lenin's position that economic interests explain imperialism. While Marx maintained that imperialism was an offshoot of capitalism, Lenin equally maintained that capitalist system was responsible for the existence of imperialism. Lenin further sees imperialism to signify a particular stage in the progression of capitalism. He saw monopoly which exists in the capitalist environment as the foundation of imperialism.⁶

Underdevelopment: The term underdevelopment is not only associated with all facet of economic underdevelopment that cut-across and influences human societies. It also involves socio-cultural and political aspects of societal development. It involves a situation where

resources are inadequately utilized to meet full socio-economic potentials, which in turn poses an adverse effect on local or regional development. As a phenomenon, underdevelopment stems from the colonial and/or neo-colonial forms of economic exploitation, which still impose itself in many regions of the world. It results from the complex interplay of internal and external factors, which allows less developed countries to progress only asymmetrically. These countries are characterised by a wide disparity between their rich and poor populations and an insalubrious balance of trade. Symptomatically, lack of access to job opportunities, health care, drinkable water, food, education, and housing indicate underdevelopment.⁷

The most widely known theories of underdevelopment are the conflicting theories of modernization and dependency. Modernization theory highlights the positive role played by the developed world in modernizing and facilitating sustainable development in the underdeveloped nations. As a pro-western theory, modernization theory establishes that Euro-African contact was the best thing that ever happened to Africans. The theory blames African economic developmental woes on traditionalism, the irrational glorification of traditional values and beliefs, which are incompatible with modernity. According to the theory, these underdeveloped countries of the world will not find themselves among the industrialized nations until ... they abandon traditionalism and embrace the Calvinist cult.⁸ Dependency theory, on the other hand, is antithesis to modernization theory. Unlike modernization theory, dependency theory blames the economic developmental woes of Africa (and other underdeveloped nations) on the wealthy nations of the world who need the peripheral or poor states in order to remain wealthy.

Thus, the theory states that the poverty of the countries in the periphery is not because they are integrated into the world system, but because of how they were integrated into the world system. This is decipherable from the Europeans' monetization of African economies which led to the annihilation of the pre-colonial currencies. Dependency theory sees in African countries, providers of natural resources, cheap labour, a destination for obsolete technology, and markets to the wealthy nations without which they could not have the standard of living to enjoy. The wealthy nations, according to the theory, actively perpetuate a state of dependency through various policies and initiatives. Dissimilar to modernization theory, dependency theory believes that the African-European contact has been beneficial to the Europeans and detrimental to Africans.⁹

Generally, underdevelopment is conceptualized to presuppose an extremely low standard of living, that is, a minimal per capita income, low productivity, a low level of technical sophistication, little or no industry, a high illiteracy rate, insufficient formal and technical education, modest medical services, and a low life expectancy prevalent in African continent.¹⁰

African Elites

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 6th Edition, the elite is referred to as a group of people in society who are powerful and have a lot of influence because they are rich, intelligent, respected etc.¹¹ Elites are the richest, most powerful, best-educated, or best-trained group in society. By the definition of elite above, it appears that: group or class of persons, considered to be superior to others, with intelligence, and social standing or wealth living in a particular society are distinguishing factors of elites. In political and sociological theory, the elite (French: *élite*, from Latin: *eligere*, to select or to sort out) are

a small group of powerful people who hold a disproportionate amount of wealth, privilege, political power, or skill among a group.¹²

In a clear note, the term 'elites' refers to a small number of actors who are situated atop key social structures and exercise significant influence over social and political change. Much of the power of elites stems from their economic resources, their privileged access to institutions of power, and their ability to exercise moral or intellectual persuasion. At the same time, however, elites embody the values and represent the interests of particular groups in society. This can limit their autonomy, complicate efforts to cooperate with each other, and narrow the support they elicit from the public. It is this contradictory aspect of elites - simultaneously empowered and constrained by their positions as leaders in society that defines their role in the political system. While traditional notions of elites have typically focused on members of an aristocracy (or oligarchy), whose positions were based on claims to hereditary title and wealth, elites today comprise key figures across various sectors of society. In and around government, they include political leaders within the executive and legislative branches of government, those in command of the bureaucracy and military, and leading representatives of organized interests in society (such as labor unions or corporate lobbying groups). Within the economy, elites reside at the pinnacle of finance, banking, and production. In the cultural sphere, elites include major patrons of the arts, cultural icons (including pop culture), writers, academics, religious leaders, and prominent figures within the mass media. Most recently, transnational elites have arisen within emergent supranational institutions, such as corporate actors in the World Economic Forum, technocrats working in the United Nations system, and the heads of International Nongovernmental Organizations.¹³

Alpheus Managhezi argues that Africa's elites are simply those persons who have Western education and wealth to a high degree relative to the masses of the population. The elites are in a position of privilege because of their monopoly of certain essential attributes which the masses totally lack. He further posits that the elite is a Westernized group whose symbol of wealth and style of life are Western.¹⁴ Possession of Western education and wealth are, therefore, the major criteria differentiating the elite from the masses in this definition.

Explicatively, the elite is a small group of people who control a preponderance amount of wealth or power. They have tremendous influence and affluence. This is why the elite theory seeks to describe and explain the power relationships in contemporary society, positing that a small minority, consisting of members of the economic elite and policy-planning networks, holds the most power and that this power is independent of a state's democratic elections process. Through positions in corporations or on corporate boards and influence over the policy planning networks through financial support of foundations or positions with think tanks or policy-discussion groups, members of the "elite" are able to exert significant power over the policy decisions of corporations and governments. The Aristocratic version of this theory is the Classic Elite Theory which is based on two ideas: Power lies in position of authority in key economic and political institutions; the psychological difference that sets elites apart is that they have personal resources, for instance, intelligence and skills, and a vested interest in the government; while the rest are incompetent and do not have the capabilities of governing themselves, the elite are resourceful and will strive to make the government work to their interest.

However, African elites in the context of underdevelopment in this paper are conceptualized as agent of imperialism and capitalism for the continued exploitation of African continent, basically for their own selfish interest and that of the metropole. They are replicated in virtually all aspects of the institutional engine life of the government albeit, political, economic, social, technological in African society.

Underdevelopment of African Continent: Causes in Perspective

According to neo-Marxists, the underdevelopment of underdeveloped states (Africans) is the outcome of the unequal and unfavorable conditions they found themselves in the world capitalist system that led to political subjugation, economic exploitation, social and cultural imperialism. Supporting the neo-Marxists position, Emmanuel Oladipo Ojo asserts that:

The impoverishment of the African continent was accentuated primarily by the legacy and effects of slave trade, colonialism, the Cold War, the workings of the international economic system...for centuries, Africa has been integrated into the world economy mainly as a supplier of cheap labor and raw materials; of necessity, this has meant the draining of Africa's resources rather than their use for the continent's development. The drive in that period to use the minerals and raw materials to develop manufacturing industries and a highly skilled labor force to sustain growth and development was lost. Thus, Africa remains the poorest continent despite being one of the most richly endowed regions of the world.¹⁵

The Atlantic slave trade which existed in Africa for over three hundred years and introduced to the continent sophisticated systems of credit and exchange carted away the able men and women who would have been useful for development of Africa in different ramification. The Atlantic slave trade affected African states' economic viability and caused underdevelopment in Africa.

Unequal trade and capital flows away from underdeveloped countries are two of the principal mechanisms of imperialism. There are others which are proving to be significant in their own ways, which tend to be left out of the literature, and which are very operative when it comes to think in terms of changing the status quo. One of these, for instance, is the blockage of technology. This takes a number of forms: it could mean actual technological retardation or arrest in the underdeveloped countries; or it could mean simply the blockage of the movement of technology from the metropolitan to the colonial economy. The best examples of the actual destruction and retardation of technology would come from the failure to allow the transfer of whatever technology developed in Europe itself to Africa. Particularly in more recent times, we have had in Africa striking instances of the refusal of the metropolitan capitalist/imperialist countries to allow the transfer of technology in certain critical areas which would pose a threat to their own exploitation and domination.¹⁶

Colonialism was one of the major causes of underdevelopment in the African continent because it was a deliberate act mainly for economic purposes. Colonialism forced African to produce solely for the export market, thereby keeping prices of the raw materials low for their European consumers. The insistence of European powers on the production of certain goods was done to the exclusion of the practicality of the crop or the impact on the local economy. In Tanganyika, for example, the colonial authorities shifted labour from food production and attempted to create a surplus of labour-intensive items on non-food cash crops, cotton. The colonial authorities also promoted the minor crops of peanuts and sesame while reducing dietary staples such as millet and sorghum. This led to inadequacy

of the food reserves and, subsequently, chronic malnutrition and famine. In fact, the demand for products in Europe was often not a factor in the trade of African commodities. "if ivory and rubber prices rose, the reasons for this were only partly rising European demand."¹⁷ This shows that the imposition of economic policy was often arbitrary and unrelated to any real need which caused underdevelopment in Africa.

Colonialism was not just about economic subjugation, but about the ability to wrest control of the local economy from African rulers. Political, economic and social structure of Africans were altered as the colonist made traditional rulers weak, and this made Africans totally reliant on Europeans for everything. Colonialism also changed patterns of work and gender roles. The demands of the cash crop economy forced many women and children into the production system for the European gains whereas the colonial administration policies have no plan for social amenities such as potable water, road, schools, hospital, transportation and even port offices.¹⁸

From the foregoing, it is important to balance the equation as regards to the causes of underdevelopment in Africa. So far, discourse has been on the external causes (exogenous) or dependency theory of underdevelopment. Now, the internal (endogenous) or modernization theory shall be considered. Proponents of the internal causation theory of underdevelopment argue that a nation's lack of development is a result of its failure to utilize its resources to stimulate economic growth and the failure of the state to establish the required institutional structures, frameworks and mechanisms that can drive and propel development. Offiong quoting W. Rostow, who was one of the most celebrated protagonists of the internal causation theory, postulates five stages of growth: first, the traditional society, whose features include limited production structure and technology; second, the precondition for take-off, in which society gets ready for transformation by exploring new production techniques and engages in industrial production; third is the take-off stage, which is characterized by rapid and continuous growth in agriculture and industry; fourth is the drive of maturity stage, characterized by the development of modern technology; and lastly, the stage of mass consumption, wherein real income per person increases, resulting in a high standard of living.¹⁹

Having said that, scholars seem to agree that the fundamental cause of Africa's underdevelopment is corruption. Indeed, in a damning indictment of African political elites and concise summary of the immediate cause of Africa's underdevelopment, the Commission for Africa noted that Africa has suffered from governments that have looted the resources of the state; that could not or would not deliver services to their people; that in many cases were predatory, corruptly extracting their countries' resources; that maintain control through violence and bribery; and that have squandered and stolen aid [monies]. It argues that corruption and development are antitheses. Corruption depletes national resources and diverts desperately needed funds from education, healthcare and other social services, dislocates the economy and condemns the overwhelming majority of the people to illiteracy, hunger, poverty, misery, diseases and death.²⁰ Indeed, since a leader should normally be someone who rules, guides, and inspires others, an overwhelming majority of those who go by that title in Africa are not leaders but litters and vampires who litter their respective states with hunger, illiteracy, diseases and death. Instead of building infrastructure, developing the economy, funding researches to power and fuel technology, innovation and modernization, most African leaders, as Moses Mungo said, "have turned themselves into thieves in government houses."²¹

Furthermore, over the past 50 years, Africa is estimated to have lost in excess of \$1 trillion in illicit financial flows (IFFs). This sum is roughly equivalent to all of the official development assistance received by Africa during the same timeframe. In 1991 alone, more than \$200 billion in capital was siphoned out of Africa by the ruling political officials. This amount was more than half of Africa's foreign debt of \$300 billion. Currently, Africa is estimated to be losing more than \$50 billion annually in illicit financial flows, of which "bribery and theft by corrupt government officials" form a substantial portion. Indeed, according to Emmanuel, the AU/UNECA Report, these estimates may well fall short of reality because accurate data do not exist for all African countries, and these estimates often exclude some forms of IFFs that by nature are secret and cannot be properly estimated such as proceeds of bribery... The amount lost annually by Africa through IFFs is therefore likely to exceed than \$148 billion annually to corruption.²² This activity has contributed to the causes of underdevelopment in Africa in no small measures.

Added to the causes of Africa's underdevelopment above is the 'sit-tight' leadership syndrome in the African political system. The majority of African leaders hardly vacate office at the expiration of their tenures. Authoritarian rules littered the political landscape in Africa, with individuals who wanted power by all means to the detriment of the people. Whether elected into office or they attain power through military coups, many African leaders circumvented all extant laws in their countries to monopolize and stay in power indefinitely. The political behavior of these leaders always makes opposition parties devise the 'pull him down syndrome,' and this has had a debilitating impact on the political stability and socio-economic fortunes of many African states.²³ Articulated and implemented policies to capture real governance and devising means and ways of improving the economy, and social amenities such as roads construction and building of schools, providing healthcare, power energy and potable water are jettisoned. These, no doubt, have caused underdevelopment in Africa.

Also, causes of underdevelopment in Africa can be seen from the continent's prevalent experiences of severe ethnic hostilities, civil wars, political chaos, and massive government corruption. Ethnic groups engage in genocidal actions against each other, and governments often conspire in this. For example, in 1994 ethnic conflict in Burundi and Rwanda between Tutsis and Hutus resulted in some 700,000 Tutsis being killed, and hundreds of thousands of Hutus were slain as well. This genocidal civil war led to over a million Hutu refugees fleeing into neighboring Zaire. Many countries seem to have almost completely disintegrated. For much of 1992, Somalia lay in ruins - effectively destroyed. It had no government, no police force, and no basic essential services. Armed thugs and bandits roamed the country, pillaging and plundering, and murderous warlords battled savagely for control of Mogadishu.²⁴

Therefore, it is instructive to note that the causes of underdevelopment in Africa nonetheless reflected on the activities of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in moderating the goals and outcome of international trade, deficit financing and economic restructuring (SAP). The direction of foreign trade and balance of trade between developed and developing countries from the premise of the determination and manipulation of the international commodity market by the purchasers (Westerners) rather than the suppliers (Africans) and pricing of explored raw materials and imported goods. Admittedly, Rudolf Von Albertini asserts that:

The limited access to knowledge of modern and industrial technology and advanced knowledge for managing industrial complexes, the inherited distorted characteristics of African Society arising from the structure of state formations and the evolution of the state system including altered migration system in Africa, ethnicity and boundary issues, counter-claims and disputes over mineral resources and other commodities as well as intra-bourgeoisie struggles, collaborations and interventions among the ruling elites, persistent truncation of democratic institutions due to threats of military incursion, civil disobedience and civil wars to political system, stability and development of African states' lack of leadership strategies, skills and discipline (political will) to guide the direction of policy framework for development and liberation of the national economy constituted the bulk of causes of underdevelopment in African continent.²⁵

Assessing the Roles of African Elites in the Underdevelopment of African Continent

The prevailing situation in the patterns of relationship and structure of development between the capitalist Western world and Africa have left the African elite, rulers, businessmen and collaborators of imperialists little or no choice but to compromise, whether directly or indirectly conceived and negotiated consciously or unconsciously, on the main line streams of underdevelopment of Africa. African elites have been described as 'all those so-called because of certain qualities they have, such as higher education, lucrative business ownership or skills, or power within the traditional groups of chiefs. The political elites in African society are also often seen as self-centered and too far away from appreciating the needs and realities of the society since they are consumed by the pursuit of their own selfish interest while widening the communication gap between them and other members of the society'²⁶

African elites have demonstrated characteristic tendencies of greedy enemies to the African state, so much engrossed with the inordinate ambition to amass wealth illegally, whether in the public or private sector, beyond their legitimate capacity to accumulate same. In tracing the collaboration between African elites and Arabian traders from the point of history, it has been widely stated that collaboration existed between African rulers and the ruling class of interested countries (particularly Arabs) in the era of Trans-Saharan Trade. It was a collaboration that witnessed their engagement in the mining business for the exchange in luxurious goods (clothes, drugs, perfumes, dates and salt), acquisition of horses, copper, iron bars and weapons, and sometimes, the sale of gold from Africa, gum, ivory and some slave that brought development in various African states during this period.²⁷

The shift in focus from the Trans-Saharan Trade with the advent of Europeans on the African Coast and the introduction of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade, which flourished till the late 18th century, suffices. The slave trade, which was later succeeded by legitimate commerce, the Industrial Revolution and free trade, brought about the concept of imperialism and the desire to source for market and expand the sphere of interest through colonial conquest and rule of Africa in sequence. The advent of colonial rule arising from the Scramble for and Partition of Africa finally laid the basis for a new direction of the relationship between Africans and the Europeans who were propelled in the monopolistic age to pursue the attainment of capital at the center of the African states across the territories; established governing structure in the colonies, created a standing force to quell rebellions, establish the structure of trading relationship with existing and new partners,

facilitated the exploitation of raw materials with continuous access to cheap labours, and provided infrastructure for the exploration and movement of goods from hinterland to the coast and to the metropole and back to their market through the elites (middlemen and partners) who constitute the local political, economic and social circle displayed many aspects to the causes of underdevelopment in Africa.²⁸

Judging from the above, the role of African elites in the colonial era was not totally to serve as collaborators but as survivors who may add more trading or economic burden on the peasants and workers in order to make their own gains as middlemen, local investors and producer buyers. Many of those successful farmers were compelled by the circumstances imposed on them by colonial occupation to accept those conditions for their own continued business gains and survival. Others seem to be attracted to submission to their invaders turned overlords in exchange for their freedom, which they could not enjoy or propagate under the old African tradition. From the exercise of power and influence of the rulers to the deep-seated cultural and highly ritualistic religious practices imposed by the traditional African society, the idea of embracing colonial rule with the attendant freedom that Western civilization brought through the hope of education and liberation from unquestionable ancient practices suffice. Some of the Elite prepared the cultural change and freedom of choice that would have been subjected to parochial and guild interests in the old order. Yet, it was obvious that African elites could not extend their freedom to dictate or control the market forces against underdevelopment of Africa.²⁹

African elites were seen as inactive and rather less participatory in the development of the African continent until the later part and closing age of colonial rule in Africa. It was even argued that the deep roots which the African elites had in pre-colonial merchandise and petty producing classes were extinguished by colonial rule, and where they possessed extensive natural wealth arising from material conditions in size in Nigeria, Ethiopia and Zaire, the level of development reached were blocked and they were subordinated to global imperialism. Hence, they could only seek a peripheral model of industrialization that led to Africa's subscription for import substitution strategy at independence. This situation also left local elites with no option but to take over from the colonial administration in order to participate in the domestic market for luxury goods with a bureaucratic and privileged tendency.³⁰

The complacency of African elites to refrain or dislocate negotiation, engagement or economic order foisted on them that gave rise to underdevelopment via capitalism and the ultimate presence of the Western powers in African polity to date were shown on their collaborative gains of exchange on exploited resources even when the mechanisms for industrial and technological development were absent to address and meet the needs of the African society. They rather preferred pursuit through an advanced form of continued and delineated process of foreign perpetuation in African colonies - a multilateral process of exploitation built through:

- a. The use of lucrative incentives by multinational corporations to engage in continued, profitable investment in Africa with a structured and heavy payback process;
- b. Introduction of industrialization process that substitute imports for local manufactures without removing the role of foreign capitals and their ultimate gain from the economy and the control or ownership of the industries;
- c. Continued dependence on foreign imports due to importation of specific goods from cheaper markets and its huge cost implication on foreign exchange rate, balance of trade

and foreign trade economy; d. Lack of access to and transfer of technology needed to build and produce industrial spare parts and finished products required to service industries ; e. Constant change of technology and need to acquire newer products resulting in a vicious cycle of total dependency on Europe for both parts and expatriates to service industrial complexes at cost often higher than initial investment and envisaged profit; f. Role of foreign construction companies in determining the price for developing modern infrastructure and maintenance of major public facilities in Africa; g. Heavy burden and stringent measures imposed on Africa towards restructuring its economy towards repaying World bank loans while servicing foreign debts; h. The overall activities and controls exercised by the indigenous bourgeoisies (African elites as collaborators) in development process after acquiring large interest in the banks, financial institutions, stock market, manufacturing and development sectors; i. The commanding (collaborative and tele-guiding) role of indigenous bourgeoisies (African elites) with the emerging states at initiating, protecting and subsidizing investment, industrialization, collaborative investment and development process.³¹

Further examining the role and contributions of African elites to the perpetuation of underdevelopment in Africa goes with what some scholars have agreed that the development of capital in the industrial countries during the colonial era led to the transformation of the world economic order into a producer-supplier and supplier-consumer strands. The industrialized nations are the major manufacturers while the non-industrialized nations are the major consumers. The major consumers remained the major suppliers of goods - raw materials, whereas the major producers remained the major creditors. Since the supplier of raw materials lacks the capacity to produce their own food and therefore often depends on imports to sustain and feed their population, they are bound to be import and credit-dependent on the supplier. This is what can be described as ‘a continual transfer of economic potential from the indigenous economy to the capitalist sector. Thus, underdevelopment syndrome in Africa’³²

The African elites consisting of individual or national bourgeoisie had a history of struggling to free themselves from foreign control in order to develop the production forces of their own society in an autonomous and more profitable manner against what the colonial political economy which was inherited at independence gave room for intra-ruling class struggles. This struggle most times arose between collaborators and national bourgeoisie seeking protection for their businesses from the claws of foreign competition and monopolies. More often, African elites compete to protect their territorial sphere by the role they play as middlemen and agents. They often work towards preventing foreign companies from operating directly in the market in order to have direct access to the consumer. This is part of what resulted in the 1972 Indigenization Decree passed in Nigeria, and many other reforms proposed through development plans proposed and implemented for the purpose of endangering growth and development witnessed in different parts of Africa to improve the role and access of Africans to capital and the market. The role of indigenous partners and co-owners (elites) of MCNs was to perpetuate and protect their business interests without looking at the possibilities of breaking off the logjam created by their unequal relationship. This was a result of the prevailing role of MCNs in the economic sphere through their full grip and control of the decision-making process at the production level.³³

Going from the above, African elites had no choice but to continue to participate in the decision to locate and manage the production forces towards the realization of their capital requirements with only a fraction of commitment towards the transfer of production employing advanced technology to their countries. Hence, the industrialized countries sustained their control of those industrial complexes in order to make Africa relatively dependent in their economic system. At the same time, it has been argued that the lack of historical maturity and economic base on the part of African elites which their metropolitan (European) counterparts possessed 'irreversibly arrested' them and their countries wherever they come in contact with advanced capitalism, since post-colonial Africa is too narrow resource based without adequate capital and technical expertise and traditional capitalist behaviour required to break free of the Europeans.³⁴

This is what sustains the argument that indigenous bourgeoisie or elites play comprador roles due to the external restraints on them rather than develop as truly national bourgeoisie in view of their internal material conditions. This in itself led to the bureaucratic nature of African elites which collaborates with and allows the state to act as the 'mechanism through which the bourgeoisie controls capital and labour, and by means of which it appropriated and accumulated surplus, a condition attained through its corrupted romances that flourished by close attachment to those in power to the detriment and underdevelopment of Africa.'³⁵

Consequent upon the above, the major features of economic development in post-colonial African states with respect to the roles and contributions of the African elites reflected on the following premise:

- a. An emerging process whereby indigenous bourgeoisies collaborate with and use repayable, controlled and profiteering foreign capitals to dominate and exploit the development sphere and processes (who pays the piper, dictates the tune).
- b. The rise of indigenous bourgeoisies to access and influence the state to pursue capitalist expansions and appropriation of surplus value created by workers and peasants.
- c. The emergence of intra-bourgeoisie struggles for individual and community shares of spoils in capitalist development.
- d. The ultimate rise of class structure since the interest of the internal bourgeoisie continues to conflict with those of the peasants and workers due to wealth accumulation, status differentiation, glaring oppression and suppression of rights of the poor resulting to frequent revolts and the ultimate political intervention by Urban workers (middle, class and passive labour aristocracy) to advance their class interest in collaboration with the military which saw coups, civil wars and military/bureaucratic regimes in the 1960s to 1980s.³⁶

Despite all things, political elites behaviour affected Africa's development to underdevelopment in several ways Political elites use marketing and taxation to divert agricultural surplus to finance their own consumption and strengthen the state's repressive instruments. Oil revenues allowed elites to become detached from the local economy and provided them with funds to repress the local population. Foreign-owned companies are subjected to various official and unofficial taxes, ranging from bribes to artificially high tariffs. Political elites obstruct industry and divert profits for elite consumption, affecting industrial growth. Sub-Saharan Africa has de-industrialized since 1970 because most countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced declining growth and increasing poverty

since independence. this was attributed to Africa's political elite's leadership inertia, who have driven their economies backwards by misusing their countries' economic surplus. A paper published by International Policy Press, which examined the consequences of the exploitation of the state by Africa's political elites argues that a vibrant private sector is essential for economic growth, but the development of entrepreneurship is constrained by Africa's political elites.³⁷

With or without few exceptions, most African states were created by European imperial powers. Colonial states served as tools of political oppression and economic exploitation. For instance, the state would buy cash crops from farmers at below market prices. African elites that inherited this system in the 1960s saw government as a source of personal enrichment. Therefore, African political elites have exploited their position to attain Western standards of living, undertake loss-making industrialization projects and transfer large sums of money to private bank accounts, while borrowing from developed countries.

Recommendations

For Africa to be strategically positioned in the world of capitalist system, the degree of deep rooted competition at some points and an effective collaboration at other times between African elites or Bourgeoisies (ruling class) and the emerging labour aristocrats (the military and bureaucrats) who had often seized power at some point of post-colonial history of African states should be eliminated. Encouragement of youth leadership in African countries against the leaders that have been before and after independence who are still the same people in power should be enthroned.

To reduce underdevelopment in Africa, the power imbalance between political elites and key private sector producers needs to be addressed. Africa's political economy needs to be redesigned to protect the rights of private sector actors rather than rent-seeking political elites. A new type of democracy that empowers private sector producers should be introduced. Peasants need to become the real owners of land and freehold must be introduced and the communal land tenure system, which is really state ownership of land, ought to be abolished. Direct access to world markets for peasants should be encouraged. Producers must be able to auction their own cash crops, rather than be forced to sell them to state-controlled marketing boards.

New financial institutions, for example, cooperatives and credit unions that are independent of the political elite that can address the financial needs of peasants and small medium scale producers should be established. Financial institutions that can also undertake technical services such as crop research and extension services that would make agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa more productive. Foreign donors who can provide such financial institutions with expertise and management and shield them from the influence of the political elites should be allowed.

Again, foreign aids must be stopped, because, over the years it has tended towards incurring more debt for African countries than improving socio-economic development. This could be a long-term curse because it foresees a world power conspiracy to promote dependency of African countries on foreign aids which will make the continents debtors forever. This has resulted to the underdevelopment of Africa, despite, the fact that Africa has more than enough financial resources to support, build and develop her countries, they

still receive aids from these “benevolent and philanthropic foreign aiders” who give with interior motives of destruction.

These foreign aids sadly for Africa’s myopic leaders results to almost total dependency on foreign aids from imperialist countries to run national budgets in African countries. The conspiracy behind these million-dollar aids is that the more aid poured into Africa, the lower her standard of living, debt will increase and there will be need to borrow more money. As a matter of fact, Africa could be facing the risk of her national budget and development being drawn by imperialist countries that provide these aids which will lead Africa to an impending modern recolonization. It has never and will never work in a long term because corruption still remains a menace in most African countries should be jettisoned.

Conclusion

The role of African elites in the underdevelopment of Africa can be argued to be from the imperialist or capitalist created gaps between the developed (core) and the underdeveloped (periphery) countries. Issues regarding to underdevelopment in Africa have attracted various development theories from scholars in different angels yet underdevelopment in Africa widened by the day. Although, some factors have been advanced for African underdevelopment comprising both endogenous and exogenous concepts. Considering the causes of underdevelopment and forces behind the role African elites have played show that African continent will be hardly emancipated from control and domination of the stage-managed political, economic, social and technological dependency. However, development in Africa can only be achieved by Africans themselves with their own financial resources change and development in Africa can only come from within Africa by truthful, transparent and patriotic governance from African leaders.

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