

Governance and Under-Development of Sub-Sahara Africa

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ABSTRACT

Sub-Sahara Africa SSA countries have generated vast literatures from many authors and corporate bodies. What accounts for this interest is the persistence of government inflicted tragedies, that have caused avoidable mass poverty, illiteracy, low political culture, escalation of preventive killer diseases, grinding hunger, economic and political crisis, terror, civil wars, insurgency, preponderance of weak institutions, insecurity, low industrial absorption capacity, rising human frustration, abuse of human rights, endemic corruption, and all manners of unimaginable human induced miseries. Endowed with abundant natural resources and bail out aids from the west, one is piqued at the reason and explanation for continuity of under development and deplorable living conditions in SSA countries. This paper attempts at factoring the causes for the persistence of under-development in SSA, and its attendant unstoppable rise in mass poverty, insurgency, civil war and socio-economic unrest. The methodology used is historical empiricism. What emerged from the finding shows that weak institutions, purposeless and inappropriate leadership, politicization of the diverse human population, abuse of electoral process, absence of well articulated development policies, corruption, all of which are indices of poor governance, account for the retarded economic growth and peace necessary for nation building and sustainable development.

Keywords – Sub-Saharan Africa SSA, governance, development, dependency and debt crisis.

Introduction

Africa is the second most populous continent. The Sahara desert, a vast sea of sand, demarcates Africa into asymmetrical parts, with over three quarters lying south of the Sahara. With exception of Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, the Republic of South Africa, and Comoros Island, the rest of Africa is classified under SSA. However, in political parlance, SSA denotes the emergent states of Africa riddled with burden of under development, intricately woven with poverty, worsening political instability and economic crisis. Thus, SSA conjures two senses, namely; a geographical area and under-development.

At the moment, SSA countries are on a troubled and distressed journey to democracy, economic growth, political stability and nation building. Generalized misery, despair, institutional decay, insurgency, civil wars, insecurity, pervade all over SSA countries. These horrors, one can argue, are direct consequences of poor governance. Possible solutions appear not visible, at least in the near future. Put succinctly, only time will show the consuming direction of the fermentation outcome of the socio-economic and political distress inflicted on SSA countries by poor governance and purposeless, unproductive political leadership. If you see one country of SSA, you have seen all others in corruption and systemic decay. None is different from the other, or improvement of the other.

Reasons for these lingering socio-economic and political cataclysm call for concern, more so, now that events in one country spontaneously cut across borders, as result of globalization. This study seeks to identify why under-development still has firm grip on Africa. The paper has two but inter-connected parts. The first part provides the theoretical frame-work, through a critique on development and under-development theories. The final and concluding segment attempts a factorization on the causes of development crisis in Africa. It identifies poor governance as the root, and asserts that not until African politics is driven by accountability, transparency, values, morals, due process/constitutionality and rule of law, Africa's pursuit for peace, social cohesion and development will remain a white goose chase.

THEORETICAL FRAME-WORK

African under-development has burgeoning array of literatures. These works seek to offer explanations on the causes and the remedies. For this study, I shall use three theories out of severals used for explanation of African under-development. They are (i) The modernization theory, (ii) The Marxist theory (iii) The Dependency theory, known also as neo-Marxist Structuralists.

The Marxists and its later versions of Marxist - structuralists, and dependency theorists see African under – development as accumulation of a long historical process, with roots on African-European relations, dating back to the fifteenth century. To them, development and under development are synchronous processes. So to speak, it makes sense in their contention on under development as direct product of development. They identify under-development as outcome of unjust international economic system, under the hegemony of the capitalist West at the core, and Africa at the periphery. The core periphery relationship is structured on super-ordinate and sub-ordinate. The core denies the periphery full role and access to global wealth, by ensuring dependency of the periphery on the core, for economic and social development. They see development as socio-economic condition happening simultaneously, and not at two different stages. Their basic assumption is that development in the West produced under-development in African, as in else where. These views are best represented in the works of Santayana (1950). Rodney (1972) Seers (1972), Hechter (1977), Rigg (1997), Njoku (2002), Anaele (2002), Anaele (2013).

The modernization theory emphasizes that for Africa to overcome under-development, the way out, is transformation from traditional to modernization, along the democratic principles of the west. They identify pathological defects in Africa’s socio-cultural profile as obstacles to development. Some of the proponents of modernization theory who equate westernization with development are Rostow (1965), Hall (1982), and Brookfield (1975).

From whatever side used to capture explanation of development, the bottom line is synchrony between capitalism and development, so argues scholars with western orientation.

Therefore, “it can be argued that all approaches (to development) tend to equate “development” with capitalism” (Harris and Harris, 1979 pp577-82)

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“The combination of institutions, laws procedures and norms that allow people to express their concerns and fight for their interest within a predictable relatively equitable context, forms the basis of good governance” (Ghai and Hewitt 1994 p.15). Ghai and Hewitt assertion that good governance is weighted with “efficient management of public resources, legitimate use of power, and sanction on public authority by the consent of the governed” (p.15) is appropriate to Africa’s development disaster.

Development, frankly, is influenced by four social elements: the leadership, the economy, the society and the system inherent in that society, including the characteristics of power relations. It is in this sense that development economists emphasize that development must be people centered; if it is to make the desired socio-economic transformation. Its optimum goals are initiatives for erecting buoyant economy, upgrading of the capacities of political and social structures through strong institutions, for satisfying the basic needs and rights of the population.

In the search to capture the reason for unbroken and lingering features of under-development in SSA, as elsewhere in other least developing countries, LDCS, many scholars have used the Marxist or the dependency theory and/or both and some in-between.

Karl Marxism and its later years dependency theory, in a sense have many defects and internal contradictions in their interpretation of development and under-development. Dependency theory and its various strands talk on the impact of imperialism and neo-colonialism on the economies and societies of LDCS. The theory is couched on the juxtaposition of two systems: the macrocosmic system, representing the developed capitalist nations and the microcosmic system, representing the LDC. The microcosmic system is jettisoned under the macrocosmic, resulting to a two system zero-sum game. Put simply, the gain of the capitalist developed nations is the equivalent loss of the micro-system. By implication, they lay the blame of the under development of LDCS on the developed capitalist nations DCNs.

Some of the scholars who have popularized the interpretation of under-development as direct consequence of capitalist exploitation of the LCNS by the DCNS are Myrdal (1964) Baran (1957) Gunder (1967), Gunder (1977), Gosh (1990) Klochokovsky (1978), including many other writers in our contemporary period applying Marxist and Neo-Marxists Concepts and tools in their analysis of development and under-development.

Marxist and Neo-Marxists interpretation of development and under –development have many defects, as what they propound as causes of development and under-development do not scholarly qualify as a theory, but is a

paradigm or model for understanding of the two phenomena. They fail to offer convincing explanation on how the forces of capitalism generate wealth and poverty, development and under-development at the same time. Unequal exchange, and unfavorable terms of trade which in their position fosters development in the core and under-development at the periphery, is a product of industrialization, itself a catalyst of development, and as such, not as a result of exchange relations. The automation for development is industrialization for mass production of goods and services with direct positive growth impact on the economy, for sustainable growth. Their argument on dependency relationship existing between the DCS and the LCDS, and the continuity of under-development so long as this relationship remains, in the explanations of the Marxists, Neo Marxists ensures perpetuity of under-development. This argument, as sense of history has demonstrated is a plausible guess and at best, the application of human past activities to predict the future, usually unlikely to be exactly as predicted. Prophecy is not part of history, but belongs exclusively to the realm of religion. Dependency of the LDCS on the DCS is not an imposition, but a matter of choice. Again, the world is a system with dependency of a sort, even among the developed capitalist nations. No country is an island. A great number of countries, hitherto classified under LDCs, such as Japan, and China are as industrialized as DCS, and even standing head and shoulders with western economies. Other countries that are fast developing are nations of East and South East Asia, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina etc. The conclusion from this shows that under-development is not the consequence of DCS grip on the LDCS as the Marxists/Neo-Marxists would tempt us to accept. The LDCSs dependency on the DCS have created aid “fatigue” on the West, as the former finance part of their budgets from aids and loans from the latter. They cry wolf when such aids are either withheld or refused. Thus, if dependency is strangulation of development, the LDCS could have ended it. To the contrary, it is a symbiosis in which both parties reap gains. They are silent on how dependency produces poverty, even when they know that poverty as a social condition is present also in the DCS and not restricted only to LDCS. Many in LDCS are poor, not because of dependency, but as a result of unjust class structure built on exploitation of the masses by a few, who have appropriated the wealth of their respective countries. However, in spite of these criticisms leveled against Marxists/Neo-Marxist explanation of under-development, one must however, concede to the fact that they have provided us with models and methodology for the analysis of development/under-development. At least, they raised basic concepts and dialectics very useful to our modern development economics, and development studies.

As with the Marxists/Neo-Marxists, the modernization theory, we must admit has its own defects in explanation of under-development and development. Its emphasis on mimicking the west in transformations, using the western model is grossly incorrect, as the Asian Tigers have proven them wrong, by the colossal strides they have made in development. Both DCS and LDCS are at different poles, in terms of challenges, circumstances, cultures, orientations, etc. What works in DCS may fail in LDCS and vice-versa, because the two differ from each other, considering their age as sovereign nation states and technological gap, between the former and the latter. This paper, therefore rejects both the Marxist and modernization thesis, and argues on the contrary that what largely accounts for the under-development of SSA, is from internal defects and contradictions brought to bear on these countries by bad governance and vampire political entrepreneurship, sustained by politics of corruption, privatization of the state, and reckless self aggrandizement. Politics is all about development of the economy, human resources and institutions necessary for growth. This culture is glaringly deficient in SSA countries.

History has shown the influence of good governance as the crucible for the success of economic growth, prosperity and industrialization of the west. Though, there may be opinions on the contrary. Governance is all about creation of institutions for good management of human and material resources within the institutional frame of a political system, generally accepted by the people, for attainment of social justice, peace, harmony, progress, and socio-economic stability for general happiness, regardless of whether it is built on capitalist or socialist model.

It thrives on culture of transparency and accountability, confidence in all who have stake in the state, political values, respect for human rights, regardless of gender, removal of structural barriers against self fulfillment, just laws, opening of political space for mass participation, reduction of inequality, equality before the law, strong institutions, accommodation of opposition and effective electoral process for regime change, through free and fair election. Put in another sense, it is strict adherence to social contract, in which power belongs to the people, for the choice of who should wield power over them, through un-manipulated election. The state, its institutions and leadership determine and influence governance either to the direction of ugly, or beauty, good or bad, development oriented or development void.

Development is product of human thinking, planning and execution. Abundant wealth and natural resources cannot bring about development, except when put to use by human beings. Thus, central to development is the human resources of a nation. Others are political leadership, good governance, ability to convert resources into goods and services, capital, relative peace and development culture. Whether one leans on the classical economists or on the elegant Neo-Marxist theorist for the explanation of under-development and dependency of SSA countries, persistence of bad leadership and poor governance are the bane on African development. Poor governance and corrupt leadership are accountable also for the debt crisis crippling African economies. In comparative terms, development in Western Europe and America have its roots on good governance with over-riding emphasis on democratic norms, using intellectual wealth, social materials and the challenges of the time for the construction and reconstruction of their society.

Thus, the roots of African development crisis and dependency cannot be properly understood outside the configuration and nature of African State and its poor governance, the un specificity of its political system, the oddity trend of the production forces and the contractions engendered by these anomalies. Generally, African regimes politicize its human diversity into group antagonism and incompatibility. These dilute qualification for leadership to ethnicity and religion, instead of skill and ability. The political system is characterized by culture of loot, and corruption more profitable than good governance. In their mind, there is blurred distinction between state finances and private money. Little wonder, the World Bank (1991) in its Berg Report noted that big part of Africa's Development crisis was the state itself. "African State is suspended in mid-air above African societies" (Hyden 1983 pp7-8). The persistent of the disconnect between the state and its governance on one hand, and the citizens on the other hand has earned African states mockery names. Some of the ugly mockery names used for African states which are nonetheless a clear but actual picture of the states are "fictive states" (Sand brook 1985), "personalized states" (Anaele 2013), "inverted States" etc.

The consequences are institutional and policy capacity decay, rendering the states increasingly dysfunctional in social provisioning, economic and political development. The declining integrity of African heads of government, bad governance, abysmal performance and foraging of national treasuries through many arteries of unabating corruption and power hunger for regime perpetuity have made many concerned analysts to wonder if really these 'leaders' are human beings or "Vampires", who impose themselves on their people for the purpose of sucking their blood and the economy without remorse. Little wonder, this scenario has been described as home groomed systematic colonialization. To African leaders, elections are not meant for change of government and could have been abolished in the contention of Anaele (2013) if they change anything. With exception of Zambia 1991, Malawi 1994, and 2014, Benin Republic 1991, Cape Verde where elections unseated incumbent presidents, all African states have embarrassing history of imperfect and deliberately man made impartial elections. The exception to this is, perhaps Ghana, widely accepted as the star of West Africa's democracy. For the reason of elections not possessing the force to change anything, African leaders as would be expected, 'Kidnap' the economy, convert themselves into political entrepreneurs, sink deep into the pit of corruption, institutionalize financial recklessness and unaccountability. This in part, explains the reason for the numerous social unrests and civil wars in Africa and the obvious consequences in development. Villalon and Huxtable (1998), Clapham (1998) Ayoade (1998) Anaele (2013) are several out of the plethora of works that have presented eloquent proof of the critical juncture of African states and the governments between demise and reconstruction. Every African state is in the contention of Anaele (2013) on a troubled journey for survival, it inflicted on itself, through poor governance and corrupt leadership.

Corruption and loot walk unashamedly naked in all state institutions, caused by corrupt leadership, resulting to corrupt followership. Official corruption is alarming in Africa and has contributed to Africa's lingering under-development, because money and loans meant for development end up in private pockets. The African state demonstrates an ugliest theatre of official corruption against the backdrop of calamitous misrule, political upheaval, internal colonization, with development suppressed by culture of loot. Corruption, a consequence of bad governance, is a cog in the wheel of African development. In recognition of the role of good governance for peace and development, Dr. Mohammed 'Mo' Ibrahim, a Sudanese business Tycoon, based in Britain, founded in 2006 the 'Mo' Ibrahim foundation. To encourage good governance in Africa, it established in 2007 a prize of \$5m initial payment and \$200, 000 annual payments for life to best African head of state in governance. Except in 2007 the prize was awarded to president Chissano of Mozambique, 2008 to President Festus Mogae of Botswana, no African president performed well enough to win it since 2009 to 2012. Without trading blames or rationalizing African lost glories, it is my view that purposeful leadership could have provided for Africa a take-off for development and national cohesion.

African countries by international minimum standard on corruption in the assessment of Transparency International since 2000-2012 cited by SAGE magazine, December 16-22, 2012 p.4 maintained lead position as most corrupt globally, seconded by Azerbaijan, Nepal and Pakistan. The same is true of Nigeria, the giant of Africa, which the report of Global Financial Integrity, Washington 2012 said her politicians stole N3.047 trillion or \$19.66bn between 2000-2010.

In Africa, human capital, the engine of development has been put to waste. Using Nigeria as a unit reference, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO, Director General, Irina Bokova is quoted in Daily Trust, June 12, 2013 p.4 as saying that about 10.5m children in Nigerian are out of school, making her number one in the world. In many African countries, many children are out of school, with Ethiopia having 2.4m, Burkina Faso 1m, Cote 'D' Ivoire 1.2m, Niger 1m etc UNESCO 2013 quoted in (Daily Trust June 12, 2013 p.4).

Sanusi, the Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, in his lecture on "Financial Infrastructure for Development in West Africa", November 5, 2013 in Lagos, identified bad governance, poor capital build up, corruption, and poor power supply as some of the major banes on African development. In his assertion, power supply in sub-Saharan Africa, with a population of over 500m is far lower than that of Spain with population of about 40m. Transparency International is quoted by Radio Deutshivela (November 6, 2013) that Equatorial Guinea, an oil producing state, is the twelve most corrupt country in the world. Commander of the US African Command (AFRICOM), General Carter Ham, sees good governance and containment of group disaffections as the solution to African security crisis, now at a long jam. Corrupt leadership and regime devoid of transparency cannot manage foreign loans and financial aids with integrity. Corrupt mind reduces a person to shamelessness and sub-humanness. African leaders do not think of development and future generations, but think only of means to rig future elections in order to cover their loots and atrocities. The culture of political violence, sham elections and regime perpetuity, have raised regime legitimacy question, providing trigger for the numerous civil wars and insurgency in Africa. SSA countries are in the web of debt crisis, itself a drain on their economy. In Nigeria for instance, 40% of her annual budget is spent on debt servicing. Other SSA countries also spend greater part of their budgets on servicing of foreign and domestic loans. SSA countries indebtedness has been described as green debt by reason of its eternity from one generation to another. Borrowing to finance capital projects and social amenities is a universal practice. Not even the US (World Largest economy) is unindebted, as there is no country without indebtedness.

What makes the indebtedness of Africa different from those of the US or Britain is absence of transparency, accountability, and vision. Consequently, African governments lack the credibility and vision on the management of loans. A corrupt government is incompetent to handle loans. Much of the loans end up in the pockets of political entrepreneurs, with nothing to show on projects executed with the loans. This should not come as a surprise. For many African heads of state and governments, the state is perceived as a public economic asset to be plundered for self-aggrandizement. Everything owned by the state, if unprotected, is stolen with impunity. Since many among the political class are corrupt, looting of state treasury is the in-thing. The mind-set is what to steal/get from the state and not what to give to the state. Nigeria, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo DRC, Angola etc represent this fact. Loans in the hands of our governments are akin to throwing a life goat to a hungry lion. Many African leaders devour such loans, with little evidence on the execution of projects for which the money was borrowed. By this financial recklessness, when the loans mature for re-payment, SSA countries default, creating room for more borrowing, until they reach the ceiling of debt crisis.

As a fact of history, African politics is not driven by political value and morality. This in part, explains the reason, cause and course of debt crisis, badly suffocating African development. Nigeria, the lost access of Africa, exemplifies where IMF loan of 1986 is still a bone of contention on how and what the loan was spent for. Because loans borrowed by corrupt regimes in Africa are not judiciously spent, at maturity, repayment becomes almost impossible. In order to recoup such loans, the IMF becomes the indirect manager of their economy, with prescription of harsh control measures that further exacerbates the already distressed economies. Under such grip by IMF on their economy, which could have been avoidable, had the loans been managed with transparency and accountability, SSA countries had no escape route, other than to set aside greater chunk of their annual budget for debt servicing. This development compromises economic growth and social provisioning.

Another vampire sucking the resources of many SSA countries is the current wave of Islamic fundamentalism. Nigeria, Chad, Mali, Sudan, Somalia, Algeria etc are classic examples. Security budget gets

fatter than otherwise, to consume much of the money which could have been channeled to development. Bad governance has done unpardonable dis-service to education in many SSA countries. Education is central to the development of science and technology for industrial and economic growth and grooming of the mind for a virile, enlightened and productive population. The rot in education and the level of absence of good learning environment and poorly motivated teachers have turned educational institutions in SSA into abattoir of the mind, with direct implications on science and technology needed for industrial revolution, still asleep and yet to take place in SSA. This explains the reason for their poor share in international market, because they lack the technology to turn their abundant raw materials into industrial processed goods.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study has examined development viz-a-viz under-development. It also attempted a critique on some of the theories used by scholars of various persuasions to illuminate the causes of the odds-development and under-development. In the final analysis, using empirical and historical model approach, the paper rejects the Marxist/Neo-Marxist explanation for development and under-development. It argues instead, that in as much as these theories are still relevant to the study of under-development, they have, as it were, not adequately captured the causes of under-development in LDCS in general, and SSA in particular. The paper maintains that bad governance is responsible for the under-development of SSA. Though capitalism and imperialism may not be completely excluded, their impact is but an ice burg, when compared with the disasters, bad governance have generated in African under-development. The same bad governance accounts for the mismanagement of financial resources and foreign loans. Corrupt management of foreign loans made SSA inescapably susceptible to the dictates of the capitalist West and interferences in the running of their economy, more than they would have otherwise allowed. In its analysis of political, social economic development in SSA countries after independence, the paper identifies the prevalence of weak institutions, corruption, narcissism, impunity, social unrest, abuse of due process, inappropriate education and dysfunctioning school system, civil wars, non-diversification of the economy, low industrial capacity, abuse of human rights, regime perpetuity, economic crisis, mass election rigging, poverty, disease, etc as afflictions of poor governance and inhibitive to development. The work concludes by saying that laying the blame on SSA persistent under-development on western capitalism, colonialism, and the international system is more of excuses than sound reasons. The perpetrator of the under-development is bad governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Good governance holds the key for unlocking the human and natural resources of SSA for development, through just laws, strengthening of her institutions, unfettered and effective judiciary, political inclusion, respect for the rule of law and due process, social justice, transparency, accountability, and complete overhaul of the electoral process, through enactment of laws that will minimize electoral frauds to ensure that the people's will expressed in their votes is both uninfluenced and un-distorted. SSA countries should put in the place all the necessary infrastructures for industrial revolution, as well as create peace and favourable environment for direct foreign investments, if they must succeed at development.

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