

## The Models and Effects of Development toward the Realization of African Development

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### Abstract

*The aim of this essay is to take a crucial look into some of the ways that African countries have strived to overcome or even emerge from the limitations that beset them as a result of the challenges of economic underdevelopment. Following the quest toward the attainment of not only economic development but political independence too, most African countries have attempted toward evaluating the development ideals that is most feasible for them. This research uses the method of philosophical analysis to argue the thesis that the effort toward development in sub-Saharan Africa has not yielded the much-desired aftermath. As a way of making its claim lucid, this discourse argues that both the dependency and modernisation theories have yet to provide a commanding outlook for allowing Africa overcome the hurdles of development. On the other hand, authentic efforts by Africans themselves have been frustrated following the influence of the West over such theories such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Lagos Plan for Action (LPA). In recent times, the influences of Singapore and China in African economic and political space have pushed the development quest further into oblivion. With massive debt burdens and over dependence on technological partnerships. If there are no concerted efforts towards self-sustenance and good leadership, the hope for placements of the continent and in deed Nigeria on a path of true development might just be far off. It is on this basis that this research submits that the realisation of African development is still far off.*

*Keywords: Africa, development, LPA, NEPAD, western development theories*

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## Introduction

The idea of development is one to the topmost issues that has concerned several African states (Bienefeld, 1988). This is due to the fact that development has eluded several African countries (Fisman and Miguel, 2008). Several independent studies have been carried over individual African countries as indicated in the studies of Christopher Clapham (2018) over Ethiopia; Ellen Hillbom (2012) over Botswana. The underlying convergence over each of these individual studies can be summed up in the words of Ian Taylor (2016: 11)

that in almost all the spheres of her economy, there is a serious disorder or disarticulation in terms of structure and consumption. In the long run, the development of the continent has been the first casualty. It is therefore important to revisit the subject of African development closely and reflect over the models or strategies provided and the impact these have had on the political economy of Africa.

So, in this study, the meaning and nature of development will be discussed in order to understand how it has eluded the African continent or misapplied. This is the focus of the next section, which is the first. In the second section, some of the various economic theories that have been suggested for Africa to develop by Western social science theorists will be considered. The problems that these theories have faced will be discussed and engaged in that section too. In the third section, some of the development theories adopted by Africans for African development, as well as their outcomes or achievements will be assessed. In the last section, this study brings the discourse to a close with justifications concerning why development continues to elude Africa.

## The Question of African Development

Before going too far, it is important to first provide a conceptual analysis for what this essay means by the terms: “development” and “Africa.” First, there

are various ways of seeing development. It could be human, educational, economic, social and political. However, in most instances, when the term is used, it is in the economic sense and it is in this sense that this research uses it (see Rodney, 1972). So, this essay takes development to mean “an increase, propagation, expansion, improvement or change for the better” (Babalola, 1998:4). Even when development has often been perceived to be similar or synonymous to economic growth, it is helpful to add that economic growth gives priority to “increases in labour productivity and in total output, with technological progress and industrialization” (Babalola, 1998:4).

The term Africa is also a technical one. We begin with the etymology of the word where we find that “afri” was a Latin name used to refer to the inhabitants of Africa, which in its widest sense referred to all lands south of the Mediterranean (Ancient Libya) (Charlton & Short, 2015). The term “afri” appears to have originally referred to a group of native Libyan tribe. The name is usually connected with Hebrew or Phoenician “afar” “dust”, but a 1981 hypothesis has asserted that it stems from the Berber “ifri” (plural “ifran”) “cave,” in reference to cave dwellers. However, for the aim of this study, we shall consider it to refer to the sub-Saharan region of the continent.

Two reasons have been adduced for Africa’s underdevelopment: First, it does not require so much elaboration, the notion that Africa is underdeveloped is tied to the advent of colonialism which penetrated the African economy, turning it into a capitalist economy for the purpose of exploitation. Michael Parenti (1989: 12) explains what is characteristic of the capitalist economy since they infiltrate any market in the world and make that market tune to their interests, even if this means poverty or spells doom for the infiltrated market.

This penetration of the African economy becomes pertinent as a result of the inner contradiction in capitalism itself. Marx in a similar intonation, had already expressed that capital is a similar to a vampire that seeks blood only that in this case natural resources in far off geography (Heilbroner, 2000: 155). In the process of penetrating the African precolonial economy, capitalism also created its own dialectical negation

in the African petite bourgeoisie. It must be stated that both have the same ideological leaning—capitalism. Hence, the second reason Africa remains underdeveloped can be ascribed to the role of the indigenous Africans themselves who unrepentantly, play the role of accomplices in the continuous denigration of human and natural resources of Africa. This is in concord with the statement of Walter Rodney (1972: 34), who blurts out that the lack of development is an issue related to Western involvement in Africa via colonialism as well as the indigenous Africans who are parties to the success of this encounter for the west.

Regrettably, the scheme to conquer this obvious dilemma comes from the intellectuals of the north. They play the role of the “bigger brother” who has gone through the present ugly experiences of the “younger one,” and now possess the antidote to the African situation. But a critical examination of this scholarship reveals that Africans do not have anyone to exploit as is the case with the north. Inversely, it is Africa that is being continuously exploited. What can be deduced from this line of argument is that the remedy given by the North is merely superficial. Furthermore, one will also realize that the therapy coming from western scholarship on development is merely goaled towards strengthening the ties of exploitation with enormous benefits to the North. So, in the next section, some of the recommendations from the West toward the development of Africa will now be examined.

### **Western Economic Theories and the Question of African Development**

The modernization theory was provided as a paradigm to assist Africa's quest toward development in the middle of the last century, shortly after political independence [see Hussain & Tribe (1981); Lenin (1964)]. Modernisation theory simply refers to a body of theory that became prominent in the 1950s and 1960s in relation to understanding issues of economic and social transitions in poorer countries (Gwynne, 2009: para 1). Whilst talking about the theory, John Matunhu (2011: 66), sees modernisation as tool recommended to Africa that in order to attain

development in the concrete sense, the continent needs to be modernised. And to be modernised is to be in the image of the West.

It is to the credit of Bienefeld (1988) that one is able to deduce how and why modernist scholars take to the understanding that nations or countries of the world experience growth and progress not at the same level. It is therefore up to these other counties in Africa to look out for assistance from their former colonial administrators who stood as umpires between development and underdevelopment (Sen, 1999: 1). This is why the study of Matunhu (2011) has also been able to show that: mainly, the modernisation theory for Africa's development is supposed to allow for foreign influence and culture to replace local influence and culture. What this amounts to is that a subtle form of colonisation or cultural assimilation is seen as the basis for development to be realized.

Coatzee et al. (2007: 101) are among those who argue that “the modernization approach has faced serious backlash because of its failure to recognize the have-nots as the center of influence, whose critical or dire situations demand serious attention.” In short, thanks to the use of modernisation theory, marginalisation along class and ethnic lines developed in countries such as Nigeria. This is because it is not possible for all the citizens to emerge as peoples who are capable of imitating Western lifestyle and culture. As a result, the elites who were able to “modernize” were seen as demi-gods and this in the long run compromised authentic efforts toward authentic development – the main reason why the modernisation approach emerged in the first place.

More so, it has been noted that “the other intriguing weaknesses of the modernization theory is that it is based on deterministic reason which states that within the linear model of socio-economic development, changes are initiated externally” (Matunhu, 2011: 70). The determinist proximately provides not much mutual connection between causation from the inner part of the developing region and the outer part of the developing region. Hence, Matunhu avers that:

Therefore, antecedents motivates the foreign powers to specify the path to Africa's development. For example, Africa happened to be

victim of the failed IMF-imposed Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the 1980s. The project by the ESAP was not successful because it was developed by not paying attention or care about the cultural, social, political and traditional values of the recipient nations. Broadly expressed, the ESAP project was a “Eurocentric” experiment which failed to pull the continent out of poverty and underdevelopment (2011: 69).

It is now time to turn to the dependency theory. This theory seeks to contribute to an understanding of underdevelopment, an analysis of its causes, and to a lesser extent, paths toward overcoming it (Sonntag, 2001: para 1). The dependency theory simply identifies the unusual situation of impoverishing the developing states to the gain of the developed states apparently embedded in the world economic system. It is because of the failings or inability of the modernization theory to deliver that the dependency theory soon came in. As Bienefeld (1988) notes, “the theory came as a critical reaction to the conventional approaches to economic development that emerged in the aftermath of World War II.” Andre Gunder Frank (1967: 88) argues in his analysis of the postcolonial society that “classical development theories such as modernity are deceptive because they fail to express the true connection or association between the developed world and the poor regions of the world.” For Frank, modernity distorts the truth about the motive of the developed countries on their former colonies (Frank, 1967: 89). Another study has made it clearer in the study of Reid (1995: 47-48) that even when the modernisation theory presented itself as a paradigm of hope, it did not have a direct impact in the lives of the common people and rather than assisting, their poor living conditions escalated more. Perhaps it is a consequence of this that the dependency theory emerged as a solution.

Interestingly, several scholars have also found the dependency theory to not only be problematic but possessing distrustful and structural issues. For instance, Frank (1967: 89) has argued that at the macro level, the primary reason for the exploration of the dependency theory for Africa is

that Africa can only be properly comprehended economically via the lens of Western development paradigms. Rodney asserted it is also important that:

from a dependency perspective repatriation of profits represents a systematic expatriation of the surplus values that was created by African labour using African resources. Therefore, having been witnessed the development of Europe as part of the identical dialectical processes that underdeveloped Africa. In other words, the domination of Europe over Africa retarded the economic development of the continent (1972: 65).

For five running centuries, Europe capitalized on its encounter with Africa (Matunhu, 2011: 71). From the above excerpt, it is true that:

while Europe and America are busy exploiting Africa; the urban areas are also busy exploiting their rural areas. Inside these rural regions, there are rich people exploiting poor individuals and the chain goes on ad infinitum. For that, dependency may loosely be seen as linear and multi-staged. The economic development of rural regions indicates the establishment of metropolitan-satellite relationship at different stages in the socio-economic structure of the economy. The relationship is based upon regional control of economic and political resources between regions, sectors of the economy and different social groups (Parenti, 1988: 79).

Some scholars have seen the failure as calculated intention on the part of the West. And this is associated with what Ake (1982: 174) calls “technicism” which is a “particular useful tool of imperialism and capitalism because it discourages revolution, it re-enforces the dependence of the satellite states.” It is also noteworthy to discern that “technicism also serves imperialism by concealing the fact that imperialism is the major cause of underdevelopment” (Ake, 1982: 176). Following this understanding, the

next section now turns to some of the proposals from Africans themselves toward realizing the development ideal.

### **African Alternative Development Theories and the Drive for Development**

In this section, two main alternative development patterns developed by Africans to develop Africa will be considered. These will be Lagos Action Plan of 1980 and New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). These two will be used as instances of attempts by Africans themselves toward establishing models of development for Africa, commencing with the former.

As Bernard Cayne (1992) reveals,

The Lagos Plan for Action stemmed primarily from the disappointment of African leaders with the continent's economic progress and their conviction that incompetency of exogenous development strategies contributed importantly to Africa's poor development record, a view that they expressed in their report. The Organization of African Unity report of 1980 explains that: "The effect of unfulfilled promises of global development strategies has been more sharply felt in Africa than in the other continents of the world...we resolved to adopt a far-reaching regional approach based primarily on collective self-reliance.

The above excerpt clearly explains how the OAU perceived the issue and their resolution culminated into what became the Lagos Plan for Action which today is alien to the ears of many. The plan "was designed for restructuring African economies on two principles: self-reliance (national and collective) and self-sustaining development" (Cayne, 1992). At this point we may be wont to ask what the problem was with the plan.

Some African governors at the World Bank and the IMF made a request to study the economic problem in sub-Saharan Africa as it was prophesied

by the World Bank Development report of 1972 that the continent would soon plunge into an economic downturn. This inquiry led to the famous World Bank's Accelerated Development in sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action, 1981. When we examine this idea philosophically, we shall realise that the prophecy about the state of African development came from the West whose "calculations" springs from their erroneous discipline of economics. Of course, it played the role of ideology perfectly in this sense. This report, against the LPA, singles out three areas for improvement: trade and exchange rate policies; reform of input supply and marketing services and more effective use of resources in the public sector. African leaders however saw this against their interest and the LPA, thereby birthing struggle. Ake (2001: 25) once again explains that:

The Bretton Woods institutions and the West would not accept the approach of the Lagos Plan, although they refrain from opposing it openly. Instead they expressed this rejection of the Plan by ignoring it and refusing to reorient their economic relation with Africa so as not to connect with and address the program and policies of the Plan...In the end African leaders found that they were too dependent and too weak to have their way, and they started to retreat.

The above is a disclosure of how colonial administrations in Africa have disarticulated the African economy to the extent that, apart from financial dependence, we have intellectual dependence. For they are the ones who now think for us, and if we have better thoughts, they frown at it. The lack of any manner of coercion on the part of African leaders led to the abandonment of the Plan in 1985. This implies the intellectual victory of the West and Africa's continuous dependence on the metropolises for the economic, social and political ideas. And the West gladly do this service with the intention of keeping us subjected. This analysis shows that Africa is now suffering from mental colonisation. And Fanon notes that "even more terrible than the colonisation of a country is the colonization of the mind. The equation "white" and "civilization" in the minds of the

Africans implies that the equation's opposite is also true; to be black is to be uncivilised" (Fanon, 1963: 219). It must as well be stated that the causes of the failure of the LPA, cannot be put solely on the West. Some African petit-bourgeoisies and their economic analysts played prominent roles leading to the failure of the project. We must realise that the LPA relied on the dependency economic theories. The first thing to realise here is that none of the theories to be used came originally from Africa. They were all "imported" in to provide solutions to the African problem of development. Speaking on the failure of the LPA, Rawia M. Tawfik (2008: 60-61) expatiates that: the LPA experienced difficulty because it seems to align with Western interests in Africa and the African leaders do not have enough influence to make it work themselves.

NEPAD is an improved aspect of effort by Africans to solicit for ways to overcome the problems of underdevelopment. The need for a proper answer to the seemingly insurmountable question of development in Africa is one of the factors that engendered the resolution culminating into NEPAD. The proposal reflects consequences of the post Washington Consensus which had rejected state intervention in economic activities. NEPAD in the view of Tawfik (2008: 64), seeks to "However this orientation reflects the post-Washington consensus; it does not explicitly aim at eroding the role of the state, as claimed by some African analysts, but instead advocates a partnership between state, market and civil society, with the main emphasis on the first two actors."

NEPAD is seen as "the visionary and strategic framework adopted by African leaders to address poverty and underdevelopment throughout the African continent. It was at the 37th Summit of the OAU held in Lusaka, Zambia in July 2001 that formally endorsed the program" (Cayne, 1992). Among the issues that NEPAD intends to achieve are: eradication of poverty; policy reforms and increased investment in the different sectors of the economy; mobilizing resources for the use and benefits of Africa; democracy et al. It is from this background that we begin to see the intrusion of the theories of economics at work again. Firstly, there was no opposition from the West because deep down, this programme

will definitely benefit them. To make matters worse, NEPAD relied on the Neoliberal mode of development with all the flaws and ideological assumptions therein. Recognising this fact, Salam Issa Kahinde raises some questions which are fundamental in our assessment of NEPAD. He questions thus:

Can our dear country Nigeria attain any development with NEPAD assistance? What does NEPAD stand for? Who are the advocates of NEPAD? What is their aim? What are the credentials of the movers of NEPAD? There are millions about this new phenomenon of recolonising and exploiting Africa. . . (Kahinde, 2010: 29)

In response to the question posed above, this programme was with the intellectual assistance of the Neoliberal economic theories, the reflections on three predominant “rulers” in Africa who are undemocratic in practice and thoroughly anti-working class. NEPAD was drawn up by South Africa’s champion of the GEAR strategy at South Africa, the Algerian dictator, Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Nigerian strong man Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. No ordinary people, no trade unions, no community structures, no popular movements were involved (Kahinde, 2010). These leaders it must be said are hypocrites. Let us consider the case of the Algerian Bouteflika who was a dictator drawing up an agenda that will address the proper practice of democracy in Africa. NEPAD has achieved the privatization of state-owned firms. Let us consider section 166 of NEPAD. This section explicitly states that: “African governments must create a sound and conducive environment for private sector activities, promote foreign direct investment, trade and exports, and local business must be fostered.” It needs to be rehashed that NEPAD has achieved all these. There are many foreign companies in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. How would the ordinary African not consider NEPAD merely as an abstraction?

We once again hold the position that NEPAD was merely inaugurated to keep capitalism in place. Unlike the LPA that placed so much emphasis on government participation and therefore faced neglect and rejection from the World Bank, NEPAD was a joint venture between the coloniser and

the bad leaders of the colonised. Hence, “It is nothing more and nothing less than a neo-liberal plan by Africa’s elite to join with multinational companies, the IMF and World Bank to plunder Africa’s labour force and resources. It is a consolidation of a range of neo-liberal shifts by Africa’s dictators, military chiefs and capitalists” (Clapham, 2018). So, it is not an error to suppose that all efforts toward development for Africa has had one or more problems such that underdevelopment has almost become a norm for the continent.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, a critical reflection and investigation has been undertaken over the efforts of Africans to liberate themselves from the almost never-ending debacle of underdevelopment. It is the case that in spite of the several efforts, both within and without Africa, underdevelopment continues to linger. From the analysis undertaken thus far, one important point is countries in Africa and other part of the global south are underdeveloped and economically dependent on the West in a relationship that is parasitic. The deduction of Michael Parenti (1989) is explicit enough as he drives home the point that Africa cannot have any substantial benefit from the economic programmes organised by the West. The proper development ideal from within Africa may be frustrated but within the framework of a salient political will and willingness to implement policies, Africa still has the chance to overcome the hurdles of underdevelopment and emerge as a global economic force.

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