AFRICA’S DEVELOPMENT QUANDARY: THE LONG ARM OF COLONIALISM

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ABSTRACT

The development of Africa attracts arguments from scholars, policy makers and national leaders over the world. The Africa’s underdevelopment can be explained through many theoretical lenses such as dependency and world system. While, many argue that the underdevelopment in Africa is due to wars, corruption and extreme inequality, it is colonial legacy that continues to live with Africans. Thus, wars, corruption and extreme inequality witnessed in contemporary Africa did not just come out of a vacuum; they are mainly legacies left by the colonizers. Colonialism has now changed from military and political dominance to economic dominance. So most African countries are falling victim to this new phase of dominance. This is confirmed by the pursuance of IMF related policies by African governments which have done more harm than good to Africans.

Keywords: Underdevelopment, Africa, Colonisation; Wars, Corruption, inequality, IMF.

Attempts to analyse backwardness as a failure to assimilate more advanced models of production or to modernize are nothing more than ideology disguised as science (Theotonio Dos Santos, 1970:235).

1. Introduction

The development of Africa has continued to attract debates from scholars, policy makers and national leaders across the world. The question of underdevelopment of Africa has received the level of attention similar to that of the causes of the phenomenon. This is to mention that various actors, including developed countries have been working vigorously towards identifying such causes, with the sole objective of providing suitable remedies aimed at saving Africa and the rest of the developing world from the doldrums of underdevelopment. For instance, the United Nations after a careful diagnosis of the problems of Africa, has prescribed eradication of poverty, promotion of universal primary education, ensuring environmental sustainability and the development of a global partnership as relevant to the socio-economic progress of the continent (United Nations, 2015). While some development theorists have considered the contention of the United
Nations and the other parties who share similar views as crucial, others have taken it with a pinch of salt. For the latter, the incidence of poverty inter alia, promoting global partnership, should be seen as begging the question of the real causes of the underdevelopment of Africa. Rather, colonialism and imperialism are considered the bane of Africa’s development efforts. Walter Rodney is a major proponent of this school of thought. According to Rodney (1972), colonialism in no way benefited Africa as has been argued by others. Instead, it was a system put in place to ensure European expansionism through exploitation and oppression. For Rodney, the colonialism was a complete disservice to the people of Africa; an experience that did not only bring shame, but also incredible inhumanity without mercy which subsequently delayed the socio-economic development of the continent. Thus, “colonialism had only one hand— it was a one armed bandit”.

Walter Rodney is not the only scholar to have thought about the colonial experience of Africa in a negative light. Other scholars like Adu-Boahene (1985) have alluded to similar ideas but not as extreme as Walter Rodney’s stance. Adu-Boahene (1985) attempted a balanced assessment of the impact of colonialism, by arguing that it had positive and negative effects on the socio-economic development of Africa, but was quick to add that the positive effects were accidental by-products of activities or measures intended to promote the interests of the colonizers.

In spite of this, most recent attempts to trace the causes of the underdevelopment of Africa have been referred to wars, corruption, unemployment and extreme inequality between educated elites and the masses. It is against these backdrops that people like Tunde Obadina (the director of Africa Business Information Services) claims the difficulty in drawing an objective balance sheet on the impact of colonialism. For Obadina (2004), the idea of attributing Africa’s underdevelopment to colonialism is fatalistic because it draws our focus from internal forces (wars, inequality, etc.) which are most influential and crucial to understanding Africa’s lack of social and economic progress, to external “demons” which are somewhat uncontrollable. In this regard, Obadina contends that Africa is caught in a neo-colonial straightjacket that has inhibited initiative in terms of popular political movements for social and economic change.

However, we can take note of the inherent fallacy in an argument that overlooks the effects of the external, deeming it as beyond control, and considering Africans responding to the external environment as fatalistic. What is more fatal than knowing that one’s destiny is controlled by the perceived “uncontrollable” without doing anything about it? In this regard it is contended that Africa’s socio-economic progress, which is beset with wars, corruption and extreme inequality, is a colonial legacy that continues to live with the colonized even in our present times. What is relevant now is for the colonialists to create a mechanism that perpetuates this legacy. To better appreciate issues, it is necessary to turn to the theoretical underpinnings of this argument for which is discussed in the subsequent section.

2. The role of theory
The underdevelopment of Africa has nowhere been discussed in a vacuum. Thus, the literature is replete with various theories seeking to explain the development of countries in the third world, of which Africa is no exception. Among such renowned theories is the dependency theory. Dependency theory belongs to the neo-Marxist theoretical tradition. According to So (1990), the dependency school first arose in Latin America and represents the voice of the peripheries to challenge the intellectual hegemony of the American modernization school. Notable among this school is Andre Gunder Frank who developed his argument by launching an attack on the modernization school. Frank (1967) criticized the modernization school for proposing a Eurocentric model of social development (evolution). This model of social progress was largely perceived as historical because it did not consider colonialism, which had structured and changed the course of socio-economic development in third world countries. In addition, modernization theorists have tended to blame the underdevelopment of third world countries to internal forces without recognizing other external factors such as colonialism. Thus, Frank reacted to the modernization school by providing a model that considered the “external” in explaining the mechanisms of underdevelopment. According to So (1990), Frank perceived the relationship between the colonialists and the colonized as that of a metropolis and a satellite, where the former implants new cities in the latter with the aim of transferring economic surpluses. The transfer of national economic surpluses helped produce underdevelopment in Third World countries, while aiding the development process in Western metropolises.

Dos Santos (1970) expressed similar viewpoints in his analysis of the structure of dependence between developed and underdeveloped countries. According to him, the structure of dependence recognizes the internal situation of third world countries as part of the world economy, and transcends theories of development that seeks to explain the plight of the underdeveloped as a product of their slowness, or inability to adopt patterns of efficiency similar to advanced societies. Thus, throughout history, there have been three major types of dependence, namely, colonial dependence, financial-industrial dependence, and technological-industrial dependence (new dependence). This trichotomy will be revisited in due course.

The thesis of Immanuel Wallerstein, who is often credited with the World-system’s theory, is not a far cry from what has been posited earlier by the neo-Marxist dependency school. As argued by So (1990), Wallerstein (1976) included the concepts of Frank and Dos Santos in his world-system perspective, on the grounds that those concepts had in common a critique of the modernization school. Perhaps, what stands out in Wallerstein’s theory is the historical orientation of his framework. Thus, the beauty of his work does not only lie with showing the inequities between the modern and the underdeveloped worlds, but also helping us understand the historical changes that led to the rise of the former. The historical phase of Wallerstein’s theory has been discussed elsewhere (Wallerstein, 1976; So, 1990) and need not be highlighted again. However, it is useful to grasp some of the basic concepts of his theory.

Central to Wallerstein’s theory is the core-periphery distinction. The core represents advantaged areas of the world economy whose relationship with the periphery is that of
dependence and exploitation. In particular, the theory looks at the geographical maldistribution of wealth between the core and periphery areas, the reinforcement of this distinction by forces of the market place and the absence of a political mechanism to correct this anomaly (Wallerstein, 1976). Besides this dichotomy which stood at the polar ends of a continuum, Wallerstein referred to the semi-peripheries which are found in between the core and the periphery. The semi-peripheries are not mere statistical cutting points or residual categories, but rather important structural elements in the world economy (Wallerstein, 1976). Thus, the semi-peripheries served the purpose of mediating the effects of acute disintegration of the peripheries by the core countries (the peripheries would still have to survive), and also helped sustain their economic and political dreams (So, 1990).

A new school seems to have evolved in the analysis of the impact of colonialism on Africa. The intellectual orientation of this school of thought is not very different from that of other neo-Marxists discussed earlier in this text but for the timing of their emergence, and the variables considered in their analysis. Kwame Nkrumah can be considered as a major proponent of this new school. As a brief introduction, Nkrumah was the first president of the Republic of Ghana, formerly called the Gold Coast and a Pan-Africanist. He contends that the phase of colonialism has shifted from the era of political and military dominance, to that of economic dominance. This he called neo-colonialism, representing imperialism in its final, and perhaps the most dangerous stage. Nkrumah (1965) then asserts that:

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside (pp. ix)

According to Nkrumah, neo-colonialism works in various forms and may take different shapes. For instance, a state caught in the grips of imperialism may be obliged to take manufactured products of the neo-colonial power to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere; foreign capital may be introduced as a medium of exploitation rather than to promote the development of less developed areas, so that investment under neo-colonialism increases the gap between the rich and the poor; there is also an attempt to rule the neo-colonial state by implanting rulers who are more or less stooges of their neo-colonial masters, because their power is legitimized by the masters and not the citizenry; neo-colonial states have little interest in developing their human resource base through education, and strengthening the bargaining power of their workers, especially those in expatriate firms, because by so doing they will be preserving the colonial pattern of commerce which is the ultimate goal of the neo-colonial master. To this extent Nkrumah (1965) referred to a state in the grip of neo-colonialism as one that is not in control of its own destiny, making neo-colonialism the worst form of imperialism.

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1 Pan Africanism is a framework that calls for the intellectual, political and economic unity of Africans. It also demands radical change in the colonial structures of the economy and the adoption of local strategies to enhance production and socio-economic development. Other members of this school include William Du Bois, Jomo Kenyatta, Patrice Lumumba and Robert Sobukwe.
The ideas expounded by Nkrumah forms part of the core arguments of Dos Santos who also posits that the postwar period came with a new type of dependence which was consolidated by the investments of multinational corporations in the markets of underdeveloped countries. This new dependence dubbed *technological-industrial dependence* mentioned earlier in the text, takes place in a highly monopolized international market, where prices of raw materials usually from developing countries are priced lower to industrial products from the developed world. In this case, the terms of trade on international markets are less favourable and deprive underdeveloped countries gains that could have helped to speed up the development process. Most underdeveloped countries try to make up the “development gap” created by the inequities on the international market through “foreign financing”, where foreign aids and loans become very crucial. However, the real value of foreign aids to the development of underdeveloped countries is doubtful, since they come to fill up holes they themselves created (Dos Santos, 1970).

Nkrumah (1965) explains this better by contending that foreign aids and loans come to the neo-colonial state with “strings” attached. Some of these “strings” revolve around the pursuance of policies in the neo-colonial state to the benefit of the imperialist, and also the payment of higher interests on loans granted to the neo-colonial states for development purposes. Thus, foreign aid and loans according to Nkrumah are “revolving credit, paid by the neo-colonial master, passing through the neo-colonial state and returning to the neo-colonial master in the form of increased profits” (pp. xv).

Examining the underdevelopment of Africa from a cultural standpoint is also insightful. As McCoy (2001) posits, economic considerations form only one aspect of the development equation. A similarly relevant part, which is often downplayed, is the cultural component of the development debate. Samir Amin, a renowned neo-Malthusian theorist decried the compartmentalization of economic and cultural factors in explaining the development dilemma of countries in the third world. Actually, Amin (1990) is critical of the cultural policies adopted by colonial and post-colonial governments in Africa and their implications on the development agenda of the continent. The thrust of his thesis was that countries in Africa, unlike those in Asia such as Japan faced and continue to face an identity problem. This problem is mainly as a result of the historical experiences of capitalist expansions and penetration which has continually been at loggerheads with local cultures, and has had debilitating effects on economic development. Such theoretical suppositions bring to mind the Berlin Conference (1885-1902) which has been noted historically for engineering the scramble and partition of Africa, and most important, the ethnic jingoism that followed (Uzoigwe, 1985). As we shall come to see later, the new geopolitical structure inherited as a result of the partition have had far-reaching effects than often thought about.

These and other reasons have led most theorists within the dependency camp to argue that whereas at one point in time all countries were undeveloped, not all of them became underdeveloped. In fact some progressed to the stage of development, while others retrogressed to a stage of underdevelopment (Allahar, 1995). Thus, the development of the core areas which were once “undeveloped” is a result of the “underdevelopment” of the peripheries. In as much as these theories sound convincing, their efficacy is often questioned. For instance, what evidence is there to show the “bad side” of colonialism and
3. Impact of Colonialism on Africa’s Development

At this juncture, it becomes important to acknowledge the series of debates that continue to unfold in this area of research. A school of thought has contended that the colonial project was a blessing, emphasizing the provision of infrastructure such as roads, health, education and the establishment of effective administrative machinery (Lloyd, 1972; Perham, 1961; Gann & Duignan, 1967). A contrasting view is shared by a different school who also argue that the whole colonial project derailed the development agenda of Africa and described it as nothing but a “blessing in disguise” (Rodney, 1972; Afigbo, 1974; Mazrui, 1980). To this extent it may seem the evidence that seeks to assess the impact of colonialism on Africa’s socio-economic development is inconclusive. A reflection on the current problems of the continent and how they interact with some of the legacies left behind by the colonialists and the neo-colonial powers of this era may provide insights to form legitimate opinions, which are explained below.

4. Wars and conflicts in Africa

Inarguably, wars have been the major “enemy” of many parts of the continent of Africa if not to over-generalize. The length and breadth of Africa show glimpses of wars and pestilence, and the consequences cannot be denied. Rwanda is a typical example of such atrocities with about 800,000 thousand people (10% of the population) dying in the 1994 genocide and 3 million people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries (World Bank, 2004). Attempts made at estimating the social and economic costs of Rwanda’s genocide in the post war era indicate a staggering decline in per-capita income by 30%, an increase in poverty from 45% to 60.3% and the massive destruction of physical infrastructure such as buildings, homes, hospitals and schools (Palmer, 2002; World Bank, 2004).

The Somali war is not out of place in this case. Mogadishu, the capital city became a pale shadow of itself as indicated by the remnants of the war. The city was described as a place of unpredictable death with the total breakdown of civil authority as people went on the rampage killing each other and destroying property (Human Rights Watch, 1992). No other phrase fits better here than the Hobbesian concept of “war of all against all”. Countless number of wars, ranging from the Liberian crises to the impending Ivorian crises and their impact on the socio-economic progress of the continent are also evident.

A serious look at all these wars suggest a common trend: the raging heads of tribalism and ethnicity, and attempts of smaller nations to reaffirm their sovereignty as a way of shying away bigger ones from further dominance (the Ethiopian and Eritrean war is an example of the latter). Thus, wars in Africa do not only underscore the role of tribalism and ethnicity, but also question the making of tribal and ethnic groups on the continent. The latter has been a matter of critical scrutiny, especially with the involvement of the colonialists in the partitioning process. In assessing the repercussions of colonialism on the social structures of Africa, Afigbo (1985) argued that foreign rule simplified the political map of Africa by creating fixed and clearly marked boundaries from frontiers that were almost vague and
politically united. This political unison was destroyed with the creation of political entities that appeared on the opposite sides of the agreed boundary lines. Meanwhile, the creation of such artificial boundaries has attracted numerous interpretations from various scholars. For instance, Nkumah (1998) has considered this move as an attempt to exploit the cultural and ethnic differences among the peoples of Africa.

Irrespective of how we view the whole process with respect to the interpretations that come to bear, it still remains true that the divisions initiated by the colonialists have done more harm than good to the continent. In the case of Rwanda, it was the empowerment of one ethnic group to the disadvantage of other groups in an ethnically diverse population. Rwanda is made up of three major ethnic groups; The Hutus, Tutsis and the Twa pygmies (Palmer, 2002). The Hutus form the majority, almost two-thirds of the population followed by the Tutsis and then the Twa Pygmies. History has it that the original inhabitants of the area now known as Rwanda and Burundi were the Hutus, even though sometimes others also refer to the Twa pygmies (Orville, 1994). The Tutsis, who were usually tall and thin compared to the short and square Hutus, had migrated from the southern highlands of Ethiopia as conquerors. The ethnic differences between the two groups were not that great, except that the Hutus were mainly farmers and the Tutsis, cattle owners (Orville, 1994). The ownership of cattle in Africa is a symbol of wealth and thus marks higher socio-economic status. It was therefore not surprising that the Tutsis were considered the elites compared to others from the other ethnic groups. Without delving very deep into the historical background of these groups, it is relevant to state that even with the class distinctions the two major ethnic groups had co-existed harmoniously. In fact Orville (1994) makes it clear that the Tutsi had completely assimilated in terms of speaking the same language called Bantu with the natives (the Hutus) and also had intermarried considerably.

There came the colonialists with their politics of favouritism preferring one ethnic group to the other. We should not lose sight of the fact that the Belgians and Germans were the colonizers of this territory and sought to do that through an indirect rule\(^2\) system. The Tutsis were preferred to the other ethnic groups for reasons that seem unclear. Probably, McCoy (2001) was right by pointing out that the Tutsis were graceful, noble and had European-like features which appealed to the colonial powers. However, evidence suggests that the Belgians capitalized on the already existing but nebulous class distinctions between the Tutsis and Hutus by entrusting political power in the hands of the former, who were more or less strangers (Nkumah, 1998; McCoy, 2001; Palmer 2002). The introduction of policies such as cards that clearly specified the ethnic identity of the two groups raises eyebrows as to the real agenda of the colonialists. What is witnessed today is complete chaos as a result of the ethnic animus created between the Hutus and Tutsis.

\(^2\) Indirect rule was a system of governance that required the colonialists to rule through the indigenous institutions such as the chieftaincy institution. The main idea was to preserve continuity in terms of not destroying traditional authority and also ensure effective governance.
The Somali war is judged on similar dimensions. Somalia, before colonialism was regarded as an ethnically homogenous society. The Somalis found themselves under five jurisdictions during the colonial era, namely; British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, Ethiopia (Ogaden), Kenya and Djibouti (Ayittey, 1994; Nkrumah, 1998). To cut a long story short, the boundaries created by the colonialists became a strong basis of tribal and ethnic identity upon which the body politic of Somalia was established (Nkrumah, 1998).

The colonial legacy of ethnic segregation soon paid off with the confusion exhibited among the clans and tribes in Somalia. Ayittey (1994) who appears to frown on attributing Africa’s problems to colonialism even admitted that boundaries established by the colonialists were capricious and cannot be separated from the lawlessness that followed.

5. Corruption
Corruption in Africa is as disturbing as the number of wars witnessed on the continent. In fact, in Africa, corruption is considered a canker clearly woven into the fabrics of the social life of the people. Defining corruption in itself is an onerous task, but for the purposes of this paper, Bayley's (1966) definition is considered which is as an act of misuse of authority resulting from considerations of personal gain, which need not to be monetary. Werlin’s (1973) definition of corruption as diversion of public resources into non-public use is also a good complement to the initial definition provided. Evans (2004) also sees it as an act by which “insiders” profit at the expense of “outsiders”. This ranges from fraud, embezzlement, bribery to abuse of power. Corruption in all ways has delayed the socio-economic development of most countries on the continent. Elizabeth Blunt, reported that corruption costs Africa about 150 billion dollars a year. Blunt had this to say in an attempt to explain corruption as a way of life in Africa:

From the bottle of whisky slipped under the counter to speed a traveller’s way through customs, to the presidents and ex-presidents living way beyond their declared means, it results in an assumption that no business will ever get done without a present changing hands (Blunt, 2002:2).

The above suggests that being corrupt has become a norm in most African societies with the consequent impact on development through financial loss. However, it should be noted that the situation in Africa regarding corrupt practices is more complex than captured by Blunt. It is a culture that has always benefited “insiders” as earlier mentioned by Evans than “outsiders”. Usually, the former are people in positions of authority beginning from government officials to the security guard, and the latter their clients or those they owe allegiance to. The relationship between the “insiders” and “outsiders” is that of complete subservience and the idea that the former are in no way accountable to the latter. In plain language it is a “master-servant” relationship where servants are only deemed to serve without any hint as to how their lives are being managed by their masters. Such power relationships are characteristic of those in authority, and in particular African leaders and their people. This mentality is also evident in the Ghanaian saying monkey dey work, baboon dey chop, which simply means the monkey, considered the servant only works for the baboon the master to reap the benefits. The “monkey-baboon” mentality is reminiscent of the attitudes of some erstwhile African leaders such as General Sani Abacha of Nigeria.
and Mobutu Sese Seko of the Democratic Republic of Congo who siphoned huge amounts of money to foreign banks during their reign for personal gains.

The contribution of such behaviours to the underdevelopment of Africa is evident and need not be emphasized to a great extent. A more critical stance would be to question the origins of this mentality and the behaviours that followed. Adu-Boahene (1985) responds to this by delving into how the colonized were governed by the colonialists. According to him, the colonialists left behind a mentality among Africans that government and all public property belonged not to the people, but rather to the white colonial rulers which should be taken advantage of at the least opportunity. This needs further emphasis.

Actually, Africans under the various colonial administrations were alienated from issues of governance which had to do with their own well-being. Even under the indirect rule where the colonialists sought to collaborate with the traditional or local authorities, the latter were held in obviously subordinate positions (Betts, 1985). The situation in South-Africa was an eyesore. They had no role whatsoever in the administration of their own political affairs, and were secluded from the luxury that came with being a political authority including areas branded as “white-dominated”; something worth catching the eyes of human right activists in our contemporary world.

6. Africa and the New International World Order

It sounded as if the struggle was over, especially with the achievement of political independence by most African countries after the Second World War. After all the imperialists were out of the land and Africans could have a deep sigh of relief. It did not take long for Africa to know that the call for their political emancipation or decolonization was to render in a more subtle and dangerous phase of the colonial agenda. As Yansane (1980) argued, the decolonization of Africa only implied a formal grant of constitutional independence without any major structural changes. To be very specific, the nation states created in Africa after colonialism have still not changed their modus operandi regarding the management of the affairs of their people. As already noted from the previous section on corruption, the Africans and in particular their leaders continue to struggle with the “ghosts” of their “masters”. The colonial heritage is still evident in the administrative and political apparatus of Africa’s new nations, and to add insults to injury, the existence of neo-colonialism (Yasane, 1980). It seems that Africa’s relationship with the west and for that matter their “masters” has been renewed through the pursuance of certain economic policies, and the creation of the so-called international economy. What is the meaning of this?

It is crystal clear that the world has taken a new turn. Now there is increasing flow of goods and services across national borders without much difficulty. Technology also abounds, and things can be done with the speed of light. The fast growing technology, coupled with the flexibility with which goods, services and ideas transcend national borders point to a world that is becoming more networked; the pundits call this “globalization”. Obviously, Africa has had a lot to offer in this fast emerging world in terms of trade, but what has been the outcome? The answer is nothing but continuous poverty and inequality. Interestingly, some authors have managed to trace Africa’s poverty and inequality problems to lack of
proper integration into the world economy. The evidence is contrary to such propositions, as the United Nations reports that the average level of trade integration, especially for LDCs\(^3\), to be around the world’s average and even higher than that of high income OECD\(^4\) countries (United Nations, 2015). Although Africa’s share in the world economy is not very clear here, the continent may not be doing so bad to warrant the level of poverty it is experiencing. A more feasible explanation lies in the nature of trade relations between Africa and the West. The international market, of which the West has continued to monopolize, rewards African societies which are largely agrarian, low prices for their products while keeping the prices of industrial products very high (Dos Santos, 1970; Yasane, 1980).

What seems more serious is the bifurcated structure created on the world market, which has required Africans and for that matter the third world to be producers of low-priced products, while the West produces high-priced products. This polarization has been a preserve for the West (Imperialists) to protect, and has increasingly denied the continent of Africa the financial gains needed to undertake meaningful development projects for its people. As if the story ends there, the West being aware of the deficits accumulated as a result of the heinous trade relations then try to make amends through “foreign financing”. As Dos Santos (1970) mentioned, “foreign financing” just come in the form of loans to stimulate investments which is believed to lead to socio-economic development. Thus, the tendency for Africa to take such loans is very high; after all they are also concerned with the material wellbeing of their people, and would be much interested in arrangements that fall in line with this objective.

Unfortunately, the loans do not come to serve the purposes for which Africans think they are intended for. This is mainly because they come with lots of “strings” attached in terms of “conditionalities” to be satisfied in order to qualify for them. The cronies of the West, namely the IMF and the World Bank have gained notoriety for dishing out such loans. Some of these “conditionalities” have referred to the payment of loans with interest in later years, and the pursuance of economic policies that ensure the continued hegemony of the West (Imperialists). Loan servicing (payment) has been one of the most difficult things Africa and the third world in general have had to contend with for some time now. This is mainly because it works directly against the development of the continent. Revenues generated by most African governments are used in servicing debts with interests instead of supporting development projects that will improve the living standards of the people. The IMF/World Bank and their allies, the West, are aware of the debilitating effects of such transactions on the economic performance of Africa (United Nations, 2015).

Now they approach Africa with what sounds like good news, but seriously speaking a different strategy for totally collapsing their already dilapidated economies. This makes one feels the “masters” keep replacing bad alternatives with worse ones. Here, I make reference to the poverty alleviation programs proposed to African governments, such as the HIPC and Enhanced HIPC initiatives. As mentioned earlier, the HIPC initiative is a debt-relief program arranged for economically destitute countries that are also

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\(^3\) Least Developed Countries such as countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin-America

\(^4\) Organization for Economic co-operation and Development.
overburdened with foreign debts (ABSA, 1999). Thus, HIPC comes as a plea for cancelling the debts of most African countries. As if a good idea, the package also specifies that these countries stay under the tutelage of the IMF/World Bank for six years pursuing draconian macro-economic policies (ABSA, 1999). Some of these policies have involved the complete removal of subsidies from essential social services such as education, health and on petroleum products. Others also include privatization of state-owned corporations and the complete liberalization of African economies. In more simple terms, African governments are to make sure that funding for education and health care are no more a prerogative of the government but rather that of a private person. This is mind boggling, as countries that call themselves “advanced” are not even practicing such policies. However, experience with some advanced countries suggests that education and health are heavily funded by the government. For instance, the Canada Health Act which was passed in 1984 clearly stipulates that the Canadian health system is a publicly-financed health care system with lots of commitment from the federal governments (Romanow, 2002). Meanwhile, the “masters” propose a somewhat different strategy for Africa in the name of development. It is contended that such policies which most African governments have found solace in, due to debt pardoning, are worsening poverty and inequality as confirmed by (Welch, 2005; McGrow, 1995; Boafo-Arthur, 1999). Also, the economic hardships unleashed on the people of Africa as a result of those policies, have created a mobile population disposed for international migration, and contributed to the large migratory flows of skilled labour needed for the development agenda (Massey, 1995).

This aside, how come countries that deem themselves sovereign are summoned under the supervision of the Bretton Woods institutions, namely the IMF and the World Bank? Are these countries not compromising their sovereignty in a different way so to speak? Similar sentiments with Nkrumah (1965) can therefore be shared that Africa has to contend with a new colonial master. A master who appears not with guns to brutalize or scramble over territorial boundaries, but one that comes to seize the economy knowing that it is an avenue to control all aspects of society including the political, which it formerly dominated.

7. The way forward

African leaders need to learn from their historical experiences with the west. Africa has definitely suffered losses from their colonial experience. Dumont (1966:5), who described colonialism as a “false start” in Africa asserts:

The bewildering violence of the ‘wind of change’ in Africa has converted the most universally colonial continent into the greatest jumble of independent states. Their existence is in most cases due neither to exigencies of geography nor to ethnic unity. They are the ultimate results of disastrous rivalry and the chase for colonial aggrandisement of the ‘great Powers’ at the end of the nineteenth century. They are also the inheritors of the imperial institutions, especially in administrative structure and education, which suddenly lost such socio-economic relevance as they had ever possessed.

But as posited earlier, the important thing to do is to protect the resources left from further ruin. This will mean a complete re-examination of Africa’s relationship with the neo-
colonial powers. If the “masters” preach development in the interest of African countries and the third world in general, then areas that widen the global economic gap should be given attention. It is very clear that the global economic structures undermine commodity-dependent countries to shift out of commodity production into other areas of industry, and even to diversify into other types of crop cultivation. This is substantiated by the efforts of industrialized countries to always stabilize commodity prices and also collapse commodity agreements (Tan, 2002). As Tan argued, such practices have not only weakened the control of Africa and the third world over their terms of trade, but have also limited their capacity to set realistic remunerations for their commodity producers, especially the small or peasant farmers. Smith (2003) is more specific on the issue of inequities on the world market. According to him, unequal pay for equally-productive work has created two poles, an extremely wealthy few and an impoverished many. Thus, the accumulation of wealth through high profits by rich countries and low wages in poor countries continues to dominate the global market for centuries, and should be addressed. This is enough assignment for the IMF and the World Bank to handle than to dish out loans and propose economic policies that are more or less “death traps” for Africa.

More to this, Africans are matured enough to handle their own business. The whole idea of meddling in the affairs of Africa by the west and their institutions is distractive to the development of the continent. “African problems” need “African solutions” and this can only be provided by Africans who have studied the terrain very well. Presenting western modules as panacea to the problems of Africa is comparable to putting square pegs in round holes. In this case, the adoption of a mentality by the west that Africa is an independent and sovereign continent is by itself relevant to spur the kind of development needed.

8. Conclusion
The socio-economic development of Africa has been at the forefront of most development debates in recent times, mainly because the continent still struggles to feed its people, provide them with shelter and other basic social amenities usually considered as measures of development. This has led researchers to ask questions about the causes of Africa’s woes as it marches towards the path of progress. A more popular stance is that wars, corruption and poverty have marred the development efforts of Africa. In as much as such analysis cannot be denied, it reduces the whole issue of development on the continent to a simpleton. A complex approach to this phenomenon would imply looking beyond the wars, corruption and poverty as the primary causes of Africa’s underdevelopment.

In this regard, it is argued that the problems that Africa faces today are as a result of their colonial experiences. This means that the wars, corruption and extreme inequality witnessed in contemporary Africa did not just come out of a vacuum; they are mainly legacies left by the colonizers. This belief calls for us to be suspicious of any analysis that fails to incorporate such external factors in assessing the development prospects of the continent.

It has also been contended that the phase of colonialism has changed from military and political dominance to economic dominance. The evidence so far points to the fact that most African countries are falling victim to this new phase of dominance. This is confirmed
by the pursuance of IMF related policies by African governments which have done more harm than good to Africans. To this extent, it is argued that the west and IMF/World Bank should pay attention to relevant areas such as promoting fair trade on the global market, than giving loans and writing off debts meant to keep the continent of Africa in its mediocre state.

References
