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Politics of Development and Underdevelopment in African States

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Authors' Contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors.

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Research Article

ABSTRACT

Development and underdevelopment are recurrent topics among scholars focused on the rate of progress, or lack of it, in former colonial territories. Often equated with Westernisation, the notion of development has remained not just largely nebulous, but a mirage decades after the attainment of political independence. Not even the shift from military rule to democracy has managed to address the development question. This paper, therefore, examined the nature and character of development and underdevelopment in Africa, particularly in historical, cultural and political contexts. Drawing from the Marxist theory of the state, the paper argued that whether development has ever been in the agenda of most African political leaders remains highly debatable going by deepening levels of underdevelopment across the entire continent. Data were generated mainly from secondary sources and analysed qualitatively. Where necessary, tables and charts were used for illustration. Findings of the study indicate that the Europeanisation of the concept of development clearly highlighted the underdevelopment of states in Africa; the perpetuation of inequalities as a result of their position in global economic and political relations, the importation of foreign culture, which undermined indigenous cultures of the people, among others. The study recommends, among other things, that emphasis should be placed on reforming the traditional political system to conform to 21st century reality, the introduction of an educational system that has local content and utility value, and the reform of the global economic relations.

Keywords: Colonialism, development, politics, the state, underdevelopment.

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INTRODUCTION

Africa, the second-largest and second-most populous continent, may be described as a home of diversity, given that it encompasses 54 countries – all with distinct histories, cultures, languages, and economies. The continent spans vast geographical regions, from the arid deserts of North Africa to the lush rainforests of Central Africa, and from the expansive savannas of East Africa to the coastal plains of the West. The uniqueness of Africa – regarding its physical endowment, to say the least – is evident to all.

Africa's history is marked by ancient civilisations, such as the Kingdom of Kush (an ancient Nubian empire), Kingdom of Aksum, the Mali Empire, the Songhai Empire, the Ancient Benin Empire, the Ancient Egyptian Empire, and others. Africa experienced the impact of the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and the struggle for independence in the 20th century. Colonial borders, often drawn arbitrarily without consideration for ethnic or cultural divisions, continue to influence the political and social dynamics of African states. It could be surmised, therefore, that the state system in Africa, to a large extent, was conditioned by colonialism, and still reflects its legacies as an ancient phenomenon. Indeed, Fukuyama (2004, p.1) posited that:

The state is an ancient human institution dating back some 10,000 years to the first agricultural societies that sprang up in Mesopotamia. In China a state with a highly trained bureaucracy existed for thousands of years. In Europe, the modern state, deploying large armies, taxation powers and a centralised bureaucracy that could exercise sovereign authority over a large territory, is much more recent, dating back four or five hundred years to the consolidation of the French, Spanish and Swedish monarchies.

It was the rise of the modern economic world, according to Fukuyama, that facilitated the emergence of states, with their ability to provide order, security, law, and property rights. The state is central to the organisational framework for politics in the world, given that membership of the United Nations (UN) is restricted to independent states alone (Nwankwo, 2016). To the dialectical school of thought pioneered by Hegel (1820), the state is a group which collectively protects the destiny of a people; an embodiment of political power, as well as the expression of national unity and a national aspiration to self-government. In contrast, Marx (1848) perceived the state as the highest expression of class struggle, birthed as a consequence of irreconcilable contradictions (rooted in the economy) among classes in the society (Igwe, 2002), as well as the peculiar production relations emanating from it.

If the state is to be understood as an organisational framework for politics, it implies that the state is pervasive from issues of security to social welfare, and even socio-economic development to economic growth and beyond. The issue of development and why it appears to have remained elusive in Africa is of interest to this paper. Here, questions arise as to whether the state in Africa is inimical to development; whether the approach to development is faulty; whether development has ever been a focal point, and so on. The objective of this paper is to examine the nexus between politics of development and underdevelopment in African States. More specifically, the paper examines issues related to Africa's development quagmire, as well as the challenges to development in Africa.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

In trying to understand the nature and character of states in Africa, its evolution and development, or lack of it, it is pertinent to consider some cardinal concepts.

Development

What is development? What parameters must be present in a country to regard it as developed? Indisputably, development, as a concept, means different thing to different scholars from their respective ideological perspectives. Rodney (2018 p.9, 20) sees development as the “expansion of the economic capacity of a country and of the state of society and its institutions as a whole”. Todaro and Smith (2012, p.16) stressed that “development must ... be conceived of as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty”. This definition captures three core areas of a nation’s life, namely: social, political and economic. In this light, a developed society is one that has a good standard of living, a strong economy, a stable democratic culture and cultural progress. It should however be pointed out that development in most cases is contextual and culture specific. The blanket adoption of the European notion of development makes other regions undeveloped or underdeveloped.

Politics

Like other concepts in political science, politics has a plethora of definitions. Nnoli (2003, p.1) notes that “Politics ...have a different meaning across time...’ and ‘across space”. Egobueze (2024:1-2) notes that "politics is as old as human existence because in every society there must be rules that are expected to guarantee order. It is the art of decision-making and the dissemination of power in a society". For Nnoli (2003), politics is all the activities related to the acquisition, consolidation and use of state power. In this paper, politics refers to how state power is used by state officials to allocate state resources to competing interests.

The State

The concept of the State has different explanations by liberal and Marxian scholars. To the liberal scholars, the State is a political organisation in human society that moderates the interests of social classes through the instrumentality of formal institutions like the executive, legislature and judiciary, and operating within a defined territory. Marxian scholars, on the other hand, hold that the State “is an institution with established apparatuses purposely and directly meant to defend and maintain a class domination and class exploitation” (Shaapera, 2012, p. 14). From these two perspectives, liberal and Marxian scholars appear to differ on the role of the State, not necessarily on the utility of the State.

Underdevelopment

Backwardness, primitive living standard, poverty, among others, are some indices that liberal scholars use to characterise underdeveloped societies. However, Frank (1975, p.1) asserts that “underdevelopment is not just the lack of development”. “Before there was development’, he continues, ‘there was no underdevelopment. This relation between development and underdevelopment is not just a comparative one, in the sense that some places are more developed than others: development and underdevelopment are both related” (p.1). In other

words, the same process that brought development to the industrialised Western nations led to the underdevelopment of the peripheral states. Thus, development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on Marxist theory of the state. According to Engels (1942, p.155),

The state is a product of a society at a certain stage of development. It is the admission that society has become entangled in an irresolvable contradiction with itself hence splitting into two irreconcilable opposites. But in order that these opposites, that is, classes with conflicting interests, shall not consume themselves in fruitless struggle it becomes necessary to have a power that seemingly stands above the society to moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of order. This seemingly neutral power standing above the society is the state.

The state, according to Marxists, is not neutral, but rather reflects and reinforces the existing socio-economic relations. It is seen as a mechanism through which the ruling class exercises political power and protects its economic interests. As aptly captured by Alavi (1972), (cited in Nwaorgu, 2014, p.28):

The state assumes a relatively autonomous economic role with the appropriation of a large portion of the economic surplus which is allocated to economic activity for the stated purpose of promoting economic development.

To this end, Marx and Engels (1970, p.35) asserted that *the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie*. This classical theory of the state has been developed by neo-Marxist scholars to capture the character of post-colonial states, given that as it was, the classical theory of the state failed to fully explain the character of post-colonial states. Alavi (1973) cited in Okolie (2005), opines that in post-colonial society, the problem of the relationship between the state and the underlying economic structure is more complex than the context in which it was posed in European society. It is structured by yet another historical experience and requires fresh theoretical insight. Corroborating this fact, Ekekwe (1986, p.12) pointed out that:

Whereas the state in the advanced capitalist formations function to maintain the economic and social relations under which bourgeois accumulation takes place, in the periphery of capitalism, factors which have to do with the level of the development of the productive forces make the state a direct instrument for accumulation for the dominant class or its elements.

Implicit in the above excerpt is the fact that the state in both societies displays the dual character of capitalism, which is creating a conducive atmosphere for bourgeois accumulation in the first

instance, and serving as an instrument of capital accumulation in the second instance. Elaborating on the character of the state in the second instance, Ake (1981, pp.128-129) noted that:

To begin with, we have a state that is interventionist and involved in the class struggle, that is to say a state already dragged into politics and politicised. Partly because of this fact (whose significance is the perception of the state as being very partial), and partly because the state power in question is highly developed, there is a bitter struggle to gain control of it.

Simply put, it is the high premium attached to the control of the state that is expressed through intense struggle and competition for the control of the state. This intense struggle which is reflective of the actual character of post-colonial states is often mistaken as a genuine desire to champion development, but which, somehow, continues to fail. In the words of Ake (2001, p.1):

...the assumption so readily made that there has been a failure of development is misleading. The problem is not so much that development has failed as that it was never really on the agenda in the first place. By all indications, political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development.

The above excerpt is very apt in relation to this study. Development has not failed in Africa simply because it has never been initiated. Promises and grand gestures at development merely reflect current development measures introduced by advanced states and international organisations. For instance, in the past few decades, the world moved from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). African political leaders simply keyed in. As long as promises of development sway votes in their favour, there is no pressure – except for the acquisition, consolidation and use of state power.

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. Consequently, data were generated through secondary sources. This approach allows for a thorough examination of texts, historical precedents, and contemporary realities. Data were sourced from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. Other sources include scholarly works on the state, politics of development, and underdevelopment. Data generated from these sources were analysed using content analysis, in a bid to logically establish relationships that could be used to explain Africa's development quagmire. Where necessary, tables and charts were used for clarity.

EVOLUTION, NATURE AND CHARACTER OF STATES IN AFRICA

From both archaeological and anthropological evidence, Africa has been regarded as the cradle of world civilisation. The first man, *Homo sapiens*, was found in Africa and lived around the Rift Valley in Tanzania (Getz, n.d). It is the first world, regardless of the attempt of Western scholars to label the continent as historical.

West Africa, as with other parts of Africa, had a flourishing political system prior to the incursion of European imperialists. The argument in Western literature that Europeans were in Africa on a civilising mission, otherwise referred to as the white man's burden, was to moralise

and normalise their invasion of the colonised territories and the exploitation of their resources. Well-established governance systems existed in pre-colonial African societies (Busia, 1962). There existed political systems with varying degrees of openness, to wit: highly centralised, semi-centralised and decentralised kingdoms and empires, which were stable and well-developed compared to European societies of that time. Linton (1959, p.120) affirmed that pre-colonial African States in terms of their organisation, stability of their political structure “exceeded anything in Europe prior to the 16th century”.

West African kings ruled their kingdoms and empires. Expansion of the frontiers of their kingdoms led to wars of conquests or peaceful mergers. They carried out long distant trades with traders from North Africa. The collapse of one powerful kingdom often led to the emergence of a succeeding kingdom. Mali, Kanem Bornu, and Hausa States are some of the states and kingdoms in West Africa that had flourishing economies, and stable political systems. It is therefore, uncharitable for certain Western scholars to conclude that Africa is characterised with darkness and has no history.

Modern African States are European creations. This happened in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, where African territories were partitioned amongst the invading European powers. One of the consequences of this criminal action was the mindless lumping of unnatural tribes into one country without considering natural boundaries, thereby laying the foundation for inter-tribal clashes that continued decades after the end of colonialism. In the Nigerian example, various nations were forced into a country, though they were culturally, linguistically and historically different (Dimkpa, 2015).

Modern African States might have met the purpose of the colonial masters, but they are far from meeting the needs of the indigenous peoples domiciled therein. The intractable intertribal or ethnic crises in various parts of Africa, which have sometimes resulted in full-blown ethnic wars, were sown, nurtured and supervised by the colonial powers. During the Nigeria-Biafra War (1966-1970), Britain, the erstwhile colonial master that amalgamated the northern and the southern parts of the country, pitched her tent with the Nigerian government against the Biafran Republic. (Ezeani, 2014). Regrettably, these foreign powers still encourage these ethnic wars to this day in different parts of Africa as it enables them to exploit unchecked, the resources of these warring states.

AFRICA’S DEVELOPMENT CONUNDRUM

Africa’s development conundrum is hydra-headed, given that it has economic, social, political, and historical dimensions. Despite the continent’s vast resources and potential, various factors contribute to, as well as reinforce Africa’s position as a complex development landscape. Structural economic challenges rank high on the list. Africa faces structural economic challenges, including overreliance on primary commodities, limited industrialisation, and vulnerability to global market fluctuations (Collier & Venables, 2009).

Table 1 captures the human development index (HDI) of West African States. Recall that the human development index (HDI) classifies countries into four categories on the basis of their HDI scores. These include very high human development (0.800 and above), high human development (0.700-0.799), medium human development (0.550-0.699), and low human development (0.550 and below). Based on this categorisation, therefore, most West African countries have low HDI, the only exceptions being Cape Verde (0.661) and Ghana (0.602). The implication here is that 87.5% of West African states have low HDI.

Table 1:
2024 HDI of West African States

S/N	STATE	HDI RANK	SCORE
1	Cape Verde	131	0.661
2	Ghana	145	0.602
3	Nigeria	161	0.548
4	Togo	163	0.547
5	Mauritania	164	0.534
6	Ivory Coast	166	0.534
7	Senegal	169	0.517
8	Benin Republic	173	0.504
9	Gambia	174	0.495
10	Liberia	177	0.487
11	Guinea-Bissau	179	0.483
12	Guinea	181	0.472
13	Sierra Leone	184	0.458
14	Burkina Faso	185	0.438
15	Mali	188	0.410
16	Niger	189	0.394

Source: UNDP (2024).

There is also the issue of debt burden and fiscal challenges. It should be noted that the debt-to-GDP ratio compares a country's total government debt (or public debt) to its gross domestic product (GDP). If a country has a low debt-to-GDP ratio (say, 30-40%), it means that she has a healthy economy, and can manage her debt. A moderate debt-to-GDP ratio (for instance, 40-60%) indicates that a country is managing its debt, but may face challenges in the future.

Consequently, the country needs to balance borrowing with fiscal discipline. On the other hand, a high debt-to-GDP ratio of above 60% implies that the country may struggle to repay its debt and faces financial risks, hence, the need to implement austerity measures or seek assistance. Table 2 shows that Democratic Republic of Congo has the healthiest figures – 13.3%, 14.5% and 17.91%. Eswatini has a very low debt-to-GDP ratio (18.91%, 19.06% & 37.2%), followed by Botswana (22%, 20.7% & 17.91%). Burundi's figures for 2022 and 2023 (15.9% & 14.5%) are very healthy too. However, it astronomically rose to 72.66% in 2024.

Table 2:
Africa's debt-gdp profile for 2022 to 2024

S/N	Country	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)
1	Algeria	55.1	55.6	----
2	Angola	60.5	50.7	70.34
3	Benin	53	54.2	53.46
4	Botswana	22	20.7	17.91
5	Burkina Faso	61.2	58.3	63.27
6	Burundi	15.9	14.5	72.66
7	Cameroon	41.9	45.3	39.23
8	Cape Verde	127	157	112.24
9	CAR	55.7	54.2	55.65
10	Chad	35.1	48.8	32.33
11	Comoros	28.4	31.6	35.54
12	Congo (DRC)	13.3	14.5	11.06
13	Djibouti	47	43.2	----
14	Egypt	95.8	87.2	----
15	Equatorial Guinea	42.4	34.6	37.67
16	Eritrea	164	175	----
17	Ethiopia	38	46	30.46
18	Gabon	70.5	63.6	73.11
19	The Gambia	80.8	82.9	64.25
20	Ghana	84.9	92.4	83.59
21	Guinea	42.4	45.3	35.07
22	Guinea Bissau	41.1	37.8	76.51
23	Ivory Coast	56	52.1	57.66
24	Kenya	70.1	66.7	72.97
25	Lesotho	59.9	57.6	63.21
26	Liberia	51	51.3	56.51
27	Libya	83	155	----
28	Madagascar	38.2	36.2	56.14
29	Malawi	81.3	68.7	74.94
30	Mali	----	----	55.13
31	Mauritania	41.9	44.5	----
32	Mauritius	85.9	91.9	80.95
33	Morocco	69.7	71.6	----
34	Mozambique	101	130	96.91
35	Namibia	65.3	66.8	65.41
36	Niger	51.2	50.9	48.91
37	Nigeria	38.8	38	46.59
38	Republic of Congo	96.46	99.57	94.61
39	Rwanda	62.1	61.1	69.95
40	Sao Tome and Principe	88	96.9	42.61
41	Senegal	75	73	72.55
42	Seychelles	60	69	58.34
43	Sierra Leone	88.9	95.8	69.66
44	South Africa	72.2	72.8	75.44
45	Sudan	256	186	48.25
46	Eswatini (Swaziland)	18.91	19.06	37.2
47	Tanzania	38.3	37.9	46.06
48	Togo	55.9	61	68.26
49	Tunisia	79.4	79.9	----
50	Uganda	48.6	45.5	49.72
51	Zambia	73.4	56.4	----
52	Zimbabwe	92.6	66.9	98.48

Sources: Compiled by the authors with 2024 IMF data.

Table 3:
2019 Heavily indebted poor Africa countries (HIPC)

S/N	Country	Population	GNI [USD]	(HDI)	Debts (%)
1	Benin	13.7 million	1,440	0.504	52.4
2	Burkina Faso	23.3 million	850	0.438	54.3
3	Burundi	13.2 million	230	0.420	68.3
4	Cameroon	28.6 million	1,650	0.587	41.3
5	CAR	5.7million	470	0.387	50.7
6	Chad	18.3 million	710	0.394	50.4
7	Comoros	0.9 million	1,600	0.586	29.1
8	DRC	102.3 million	660	0.481	152.2
9	Ethiopia	126.5 million	1,130	0.492	10.7
10	The Gambia	2.8 million	830	0.495	83.9
11	Ghana	34.1 million	2,340	0.602	88.8
12	Guinea	14.2 million	1,360	0.471	33.4
13	Guinea Bissau	2.2 million	900	0.483	79.5
14	Ivory Coast	28.9 million	2,670	0.534	56.8
15	Liberia	5.4 million	730	0.487	55.4
16	Madagascar	30.3 million	530	0.487	57.0
17	Malawi	20.9 million	640	0.508	70.1
18	Mali	23.3 million	860	0.410	53.2
19	Mauritania	4.9 million	2,150	0.540	47.7
20	Mozambique	33.9 million	530	0.461	104.5
21	Niger	27.2 million	600	0.394	51.1
22	Republic of Congo	6.1 million	2,470	0.593	99.6
23	Rwanda	14.1 million	980	0.548	64.4
24	Sao Tome and Principe	0.2 million	2,480	0.613	58.1
25	Senegal	17.8 million	1,660	0.517	75.0
26	Sierra Leone	8.8 million	560	0.458	98.8
27	Tanzania	67.4 million	1,210	0.532	41.6
28	Togo	9.1 million	1,030	0.547	68.0
29	Uganda	48.6 million	980	0.550	50.8
30	Zambia	20.6 million	1,320	0.569	110.8

Source: Compiled by the authors with 2019 World data

Based on Table 3, of 36 countries in the 2019 HIPC list, 30 are from Africa. The remaining 6 are Afghanistan (Asia), Bolivia (South America), Guyana (South America), Haiti (North America), Honduras (North America) and Nicaragua (North America). The following chart provides a clearer view:

Table 4:
2019 Heavily indebted poor Africa countries (HIPC) by continent

Continent	Number	Percentage (%)
Africa	30	83
Asia	1	3
North America	3	8
South America	2	6
Total	36	100

Source: Compiled by the authors with 2019 World data

Table 4 shows that 83% of HIPC in 2019 came from Africa, 8% from North America, 6% and 3% from South America and Asia, respectively. In addition to very heavy debts, these countries also have very low human development index (HDI). As pointed out by Ndikumana and Boyce

(2011), high levels of debt, often increased by mismanagement and corruption, pose significant obstacles to development. This makes it pertinent to address fiscal challenges and promote responsible financial practices. Political instability, corruption, and weak governance structures equally hinder development efforts. It is expedient to strengthen existing institutions, promote transparent governance and enhance political stability as ways of guaranteeing sustainable progress.

Social development challenge is also a factor in Africa's development conundrum. Issues related to poverty, inequality, inadequate healthcare, and limited access to quality education contribute to social development challenges, and need to be addressed urgently. Furthermore, it is imperative to prioritise human well-being in addressing these issues. As pointed out by Foster and Briceno-Garmendia (2010), inadequate infrastructure and limited access to technology impede economic growth. These equally require urgent attention.

POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

The politics of development and underdevelopment in Africa involves historical legacies, governance structures, global economic dynamics, and regional disparities. The historical context, including colonisation and its aftermath, significantly influences the politics of development and underdevelopment in Africa (Rodney, 2018). It should be noted that the imposition of artificial borders, resource exploitation, and the disruption of indigenous socio-economic systems continue to define contemporary challenges, even in the 21st century. Added to these, political instability, corruption, and weak governance structures contribute to underdevelopment (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

Again, the politics of development in Africa is often influenced by foreign aid dynamics. While aid can be instrumental, issues of dependency, conditionalities, and the effectiveness of aid programs contribute to debates on their impact (Moyo, 2009). Furthermore, political instability and conflicts in various regions of Africa impact development efforts. The nexus between politics, security, and development is a crucial aspect of understanding underdevelopment.

Africa's integration into the global economy, trade imbalances, and international economic policies influence its development trajectory. Addressing issues of fair trade and economic partnerships remain crucial. The management of natural resources plays a pivotal role in development politics. Issues of resource governance, rentier states, and the resource curse contribute to underdevelopment challenges. Understanding the politics of development and underdevelopment in Africa requires a nuanced examination of these interrelated factors.

CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Africa's development challenges can best be described as hydra-headed going by its complex nature. Included here are colonial legacies, foreign aid, and leadership failure, among others.

Colonial Legacy

The foundations of all former colonial territories have the imprimatur of colonialism. Though formal colonial rule ended decades ago, its imprints are still visible. The British, like the French, introduced their languages to the territories they colonised. Second, the judicial systems of the colonised territories are modelled after their former colonial masters. The education

system in most African countries remained largely the same after the attainment of independence. Fourth, Africa has remained a fertile ground for foreign religion.

Indigenous religious practices were demonised as obnoxious by the colonialists, and in their place, Christianity was introduced. In addition to highlighting differences between people on the basis of religious beliefs, religion has solidified itself as a divisive element. In the present context, a combination of Christianity and Islam appear to have done nothing more than pitching Africans against each other in a never-ending religious war (Gobo, 2020). Even during elections, voters are often seen to vote along religious lines rather than on the basis of competence.

Leadership Failure

The bane of development in post-colonial Africa has been attributed to leadership failure. After the attainment of independence, many African leaders failed to give the much-needed purposeful leadership. They succumbed to the influence of the retreating colonial masters, who returned under the guise of helping to develop the continent (Ake, 1981, 2001). Achebe (1983) argued that the problem of Nigeria, and by extension, Africa, is that of political leadership. Corrupt enrichment of common wealth by the elite class, silencing of opposition, sit-tight syndrome of leaders and leadership recycling are some of the factors that have hampered the development of Africa. Pre-colonial Africa boasted of preeminent indigenous leaders like Chaka Zulu, Oba Ovoronmwun Nogbaisi, King Jaja of Opobo, Mansa Musa, amongst others, who displayed cherished leadership attributes that are visibly lacking in post-colonial African leaders.

Parochial Political Culture

The idea of political culture and its role in shaping developing societies has a very long history, and is fundamental in social science scholarship. Huntington (2004) and Semadeni et al. (1996), underscore the crucial role played by political culture. Political culture has to do with shared values, beliefs, attitudes and even behaviours that define a society's political behaviour and institutions. The impact of political culture on the perception and practice of politics is huge – irrespective of the type.

Thus, we have parochial (citizens lack awareness of the central government and live their lives without regard to the decisions made by the state), subject (citizens are aware of the central government but feel that they have little to no scope for dissent), participant (citizens feel that they can influence the government and that they are affected by its decisions), individualistic (politics is a marketplace between individuals seeking to maximise their self-interest, with minimal community involvement and opposition to the government), moralistic (government is seen as important and a way to improve people's lives) and, traditionalistic (elites have all the power and citizen participation is not expected) types of political culture. Parochial political culture appears to be dominant in many parts of Africa.

Due to harsh existential conditions, most Africans are concerned with daily struggle for survival. They are least concerned with what the government does or fails to do (Mokuye et al, 2023). This is largely due to the level of political orientation of the people. They are indistinctly aware of the workings of government. This has greatly enabled rot and corruption by most African leaders, as the citizens hardly question their stewardship (Babawale, 1999). This is mainly because parochialism is reinforced by religious tenets endorsing the idea that leaders or rulers are chosen by the Almighty God in line with whether people have been faithful or

unfaithful to the Creator. This line of thought, which has been propagated over centuries in most religious houses, appears to have sown seeds of docile resignation to fate in most Africans.

Foreign Aid

Following the wave of independence which blew across Africa, and the subsequent attainment of political independence, the newly-independent nations faced the problem of infrastructural development. Relying on the success of the Marshall Plan in Europe, Western countries reasoned that the same development template could help boost Africa's development prospects. Furthermore, former colonialists, particularly Britain and France, took it as a moral burden to support efforts in developing Africa, while they still used that opportunity to have access to the natural resources of these former colonial territories.

It is still argued that foreign aid to Africa deepened her underdevelopment rather than boost it. Himmerstrand (1994) noted that initially, this aid was non-concessional, but the Cold War between the Eastern and Western blocs changed all that. Strict conditions were attached to aid, and in the case of intergovernmental aid spearheaded by the Bretton Woods institutions, these conditionalities further impoverished the receiving states, compared to their prior socio-economic condition.

Low Productive Capacity

The low technological advancement of African productive forces inevitably leads to low productive outputs. The economy of African States is mainly agrarian, and the people employ crude implements in their production activities. The effect of this on the economy is poor yield, low income for rural agro-practitioners, and low national economic growth (Ezeibe, 2016).

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a negative motive force in a system with chaotic social and economic relations. Davidson (1992) agrees with the above assertion when he noted that ethnicity as a negative force is utterly destructive to civil society, undermining a country's morality and flouting the rule of law. From Rwanda (where the Tutsis and Hutus engaged in a bitter war) to Nigeria, where ascension to political power is most times tainted with ethnic slurs, ethnicity or ethnic nationalism has impeded development efforts across Africa.

In the Rwandan genocide of 1994, about 800,000 deaths were recorded (Prunier, 1995; Gourevitch, 1998). In the Nigeria-Biafra civil war of 1967-1970, more than 5,000,000 people were said to have died (Suberu, 1996; Rothschild, 1997). Since 1991, Somalia has been engulfed in destructive clan rivalries leading to deaths and destruction, and political instability (Lewis, 1994; Samatar, 1992). In fact, the Somali conflict appears to have attained an intractable status. In the same vein, since 1996, the eastern region of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been engrossed in ethnic conflict (Lemarchand, 2009; Prunier, 2009). For the Republic of Sudan, between 1983 and 2005, ethnic conflict raged between the Arab north and the south (Deng, 1995; Johnson, 2003). This culminated in the creation of Africa's newest state, South Sudan in 2011. Sadly, independence did not curb ethnic conflict in South Sudan. On the contrary (Nwankwo, 2019), it appears to have amplified it.

In South Africa, between 1948 and 1994, apartheid policies were used to institutionalise racial segregation and discrimination (Sisk, 1995; South African Yearbook, 1999). Between 1989 and 2003, Liberia's first and second civil wars had ethnic imprints (especially by Krahn,

Mandingo and Gio ethnic groups) throughout (Ellis, 1999; Huband, 1998). It should also be mentioned that ethnic tensions led to a civil war in Burundi between 1993 and 2005 (Lemarchand, 1994; Reyntjens, 1995). As for Ethiopia, from the 1970s to the 1990s, Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups were persecuted by the Derg regime. Kenya equally deserves mention. In the aftermath of the 2007 general elections, Kikuyu and Luo ethnic groups were engrossed in post-election violence which led to the death of over 1000 people (Branch, 2011). Western societies, however, have been able to manage their ethnic diversity more effectively. A case in point is the United States of America.

An analysis of Africa's development conundrum reveals some salient points at the root of Africa's development struggles. Given the nature of these issues, having persisted for decades, it would not be out of place to tag them 'intractable' – at least for now. Some of these issues are highlighted below.

Europeanisation of Development

Most contemporary scholars, particularly, those of the modernisation school of thought, see development from the lenses of Western societies. Rostow (1990) argued that for traditional societies to develop, they must adopt the Western development template. He laid down five stages to development which countries desirous of development must follow. This postulation has been criticised for being ethnocentric, too linear, and has many overlapping stages. Meier (cited in Ahuja, 2016, p.62) argued that:

Stage-making approaches are misleading when they consider a linear conception of history and imply that all economies tend to pass through the same series of stages. Although a particular sequence may correspond broadly to the historical experience of some economies, no single sequence fits the history of all countries. To maintain that every economy always follows the same course of development with a common past and the same future is to over-schematise the complex forces of development, and to give the sequence of stages a generality that is unwarranted.

Unequal Trade Relations

The global economic system is skewed in favour of Western countries. This inequality has affected African countries. Colonial and neo-colonial relations have been implicated for these unequal trade relations between African countries and their Western counterparts.

During colonial rule, West Africa, and indeed, the entire Africa were required to produce primary products which fed the industrial growth of Western countries, with little or no benefit to the colonial economies. This trend continued even after the attainment of flag independence. The economic and structural transformation in the metropolitan centres did not reflect in the peripheral states.

The Inglorious Slave Trade

The transatlantic slave trade, one of the most inhuman activities by fellow man, lasted for over 300 years during which an estimated 20 million vibrant young and skilled African men and

women were shipped to the Western world (Sherma-Peter, 2022). This demographic built their economy, which indirectly limited the economic growth of their homelands (Prince-Iroha, 2006).

Unrealistic Foreign Economic Assistance

The two intergovernmental international organisations established to fast-track international economic development are the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), otherwise known as the World Bank. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was formed to boost the economies of countries outside of Europe and America by supporting their efforts to enhance agriculture, reduce poverty, and encourage global trade among others (IMF, n.d.). The World Bank was established to stabilise the global economy by lending to the governments of member states. Since these Bretton Woods institutions were established in the 1940s, the goal of economic development has remained largely unmet, particularly in Africa. These institutions, especially the IMF, have strict conditionalities that deepen economic woes of the countries they grant loans to. The World Bank has not been able to re-enact the wonders of the recovery of the economies of Western Europe which was ravaged by World War II, in the third world economy. Part of the conditions for receiving loans from these institutions include devaluation of national currency, importation of tools/equipment from the west, payment of 50% of the loan amount in consultancy fee, among others. These conditions instead of promoting development actually undermined it.

Power Struggle among the Elites

Internal power struggle among the elite class for the control of state apparatus has often created a tense political atmosphere in Africa. This crisis has far-reaching implications for the development of the subregion, and Africa by extension.

Intractable Inter-ethnic Rivalries

The creation of modern African states by colonial powers without consideration of their original boundaries, have caused tensions between and among the different tribes or nations within the state. Insurrections, wars have been fought by sub-national groups within these states. This also has strong implications for the development of Africa.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper examined the state, politics of development and underdevelopment in Africa. It asserted that development was neither part of the initial plans of the colonial masters, who displaced the African traditional systems, nor that of their successor stooges. It was also argued that the new political system was alien to the indigenous leaders who took over from the colonialists at the time the colonies attained independence, thus necessitating the continuing control of the new independent states by the same colonial masters, though behind the scenes. Thus, there is urgent need for the following:

- i. The establishment of an Afrocentric educational system, adoption of Afrocentric democratic practices, as well as the revival of economic nationalism;
- ii. The promotion of indigenous entrepreneurship, and technological development, including indigenous technologies;

- iii. Massive exportation of African culture through music, films and literature to Western societies to build a strong African identity.
- iv. A deliberate policy aimed at empowering the peasantry (the small holder producers); and,
- v. Sustained efforts at actualising an African continental market, especially with the coming on-stream of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

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