



## **International Politics and New World Order: Implications for Africa's Socioeconomic Development**

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### **Research Article**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

As African countries struggle to navigate out of poverty, diseases, and backwardness in contemporary times, this paper investigates the concepts of international politics, the new world order, and their effects on the socioeconomic life of Africa in her relationship with the developed world. Anchored on dependency theory, the study equally aims at determining the implications of international politics and new world order on the socioeconomic development of African continent. Using discussions and case study techniques, the study established that Africa's continued dependence on the developed world for its socioeconomic development has worsened its backwardness and underdevelopment. The paper adduced the following as factors responsible for this ugly situation: imbalanced international politics, non-commitment to the identification of internal dynamics for its socioeconomic development, and unwillingness of the developed world to assist Africa's socioeconomic development. The study concludes by demanding for empirical studies to holistically establish specific steps to be taken by African continent to attain collective self-reliance without depending on external aids and loans with diminishing human dignity and socioeconomic development.

**Keywords:** Africa socioeconomic development, developed world, international politics, new world order

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## INTRODUCTION

The socioeconomic development of Africa as a continent has not undergone so many changes in recent times. From the colonial era to the post-colonial era, Africa's fate had always been decided by the existing political and economic system. International politics is about the world system, the challenges faced, power struggles, the opportunities as well as obstacles to peaceful relations among peoples, societies, states, and organizations. It is also about ideas or different understandings of how the world works; what is important; and how states tackle the challenges they faced. It considers the histories of peoples, places, and how the world is becoming increasingly interdependent in confronting conflicts and climate change among other variables. International politics is the way sovereign states interact with one another in the International system. International politics is not global politics; and there are formal and informal factors that govern international politics. Some of the challenges of international politics include the various goals of nations, as well as the imbalance of wealth, power, and human rights. The developed world in this context connotes the developed industrialised countries of North America, Europe, and Japan (which are collectively referred to as the first bloc). These countries are regarded as the developed world because of their level of development in technology and in other phases of life, that have made them attain self-reliance and a domineering position in world or global politics, where international politics is a part. The developed world, as used in this paper, speaks of countries that have become pacesetters in events that happen in underdeveloped countries like Africa and Asia Minor (otherwise called the third bloc).

New World Order refers to the new period of history that evidenced dramatic change in world political thought and the

balance of power in international relations. The term is associated with a stable international order which requires a balance of power among major nations. The term, in the view of Kissinger (1994), requires that no single nation dominates the international system as competing super powers of the world must work to create equilibrium via balance of power mechanism. The term emphasizes a global order built on cooperation between major powers, even if their values differ. Following World Wars I and II, the United Nations Organization was formed as an agency to moderate and enforce international relations by about 193 nations throughout the world at a time when many African and third world countries were still under the burden of colonialism. In the view of Harry S. Truman, the formation of the UNO marked a significant step towards global peace and cooperation (Kissinger, 1965).

During the Cold War (1947-1991), African nations faced complex and turbulent period which was shaped by decolonization, external superpower influence, and internal political and economic stability. The end of the Cold War marked a significant shift in international politics, ushering in a new world order characterized by globalization, multipolarity, and complex interdependencies.

Africa, with its rich natural resources and strategic location, has become an increasingly important player in this new order. Many scholars have lamented the large chunk of military supports to Liberia, Angola and Zaire by the United States instead of towards promoting the social well-being of the citizens of these countries (Seidman, 1992). Nevertheless, at the end of the Cold War, the New World Order cropped up. This weakened Africa's position in international politics; and the world political economy faced another unavoidable change. What is the new change? Is this change in international politics due to new world order beneficial to Africa and other third countries or not? Answers to these

questions and others would form the subject of discourse in this paper. It is obvious that not so much study has been carried out on New World Order and its effect on Africa's relations with the developed countries of the world.

Hence, the broad objective of this paper is to investigate the concept of international politics, the need for New World Order, and establish if the new world order has been beneficial to Africa in her relationship with the developed countries of North America, Europe, and Japan. Other salient deliverables of this study are to expose the significance of international politics and New World Order on Africa; determine the New World Order is beneficial or detrimental to Africa's socioeconomic development in contemporary times; and open scholarly discussions on New World Order by offering recommendations for further study.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Building from the initial definition, the developed world in this paper referred to the advanced and industrialized countries of North America, Europe and Japan while the underdeveloped referred to the backward countries of Africa and Latin America whose fate is constantly determined by the outside world. International politics remains the way sovereign states of the world interact with each other in the international system while the New World Order refers to the dramatic changes in global politics or international politics. Moreover, the defect of the Soviet Union by America in the cold war marked the emergence of a new world order with the United States as its driving force. In the New World Order of course, political and economic capability dictates the placement of nations in the concert of other countries (Mansbach, 1994).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper begins with a theoretical framework on which the principle of Africa and the New World Order is examined and then tries to find out whether the implications of the New World Order are beneficial or detrimental to Africa, developmental quest as a way of contributing to knowledge, and thereafter ends with a recommendation for further study on how Africa can pursue a course of collective self-reliance or a radical break away from continued dependence on the developed world on her quest for development. The theoretical framework of analysis adopted in this paper is the dependency theory. The dependency theory arose in the 1960's out of the experience of Latin America (Orwa, 1985). As a result of the increasing underdevelopment of Latin America and other third-world countries and their increasing dependence on the industrialized countries through the modernization theory which had been popular for a long time, came a criticism that ended in a radical challenge of the theory by the introduction of the dependency and underdevelopment theories. Dos Santos defined dependency as "a situation in which the economies of certain countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected" (Santos, 1970; p. 231).

The condition of underdevelopment of a country means that "there are inadequate social and economic structural changes to give the economy a balanced, integrated and self-sustaining growth in the Gross Domestic Product" (Ojo, 1989; p. 53). Early analysts who applied the dependency theory to explain the condition of underdevelopment of Latin America and other third world countries include Stan and Stein (1970) among others but the best known of the early applications of the theory is the work of Andre Gunder Frank titled Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical studies of Chile and

Brazil' (Frank, 1969). Later, this early version came under criticism and led to the rise of a cultural/ideological version of the theory. This new version gained ground in the late 1970's when dependency theory became widely used as a tool in analyzing all third world countries relation with the advanced/ industrialized countries of Europe and North America. Of recent years, emphasis has also been placed on internal, domestic structures and factors that sustain dependency and underdevelopment, beside the foreign economic and political factors. Thus, the economic, the political and the cultural were all brought in to analyze the dynamics of the relationship between the developed and underdeveloped countries of the world. Popular within this school of thought include Walter Rodney in his book titled *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 1972, Colin 1975, Claude Ake and Smith Tony, 1979.

From the standpoint of dependency theory, underdevelopment is a function of the incorporation of the third world countries into the world capitalist system in which international capital develops a center-periphery relationship between the metropole (the industrialized capitalist countries) and its periphery (the underdeveloped, third world, dependent countries) in an the exploitative manner in that surplus is expropriated from the periphery and appropriated to the centre. Dependency theory argues that the penetration of the third- world countries by International Capital is the cause rather than the cure to their backwardness and underdevelopment. The condition of underdevelopment in which a dependent country exists is such that the dominant economies of the industrialized capitalist state expand and maintain self - sustaining growth while the economies of the underdeveloped countries can only expand and grow as a reflection of the former (Orwa, 1985). It is this phenomenon that is characterized as New – Colonialism or Economic Colonialism. There are substantial

disagreements within the dependency school as well as significant differences of emphasis, modifications and refinements of interpreted positions (Olatunde, Ojo, & Utete, 1985). However, the following may be regarded as the doctrines of the theory and on which there is general agreement:

- a. African states and indeed all underdeveloped states are dependent on the capitalist countries of Europe and America for technology, capital or finance and monetary systems, and for trade. This is because the capitalist world has a virtual monopoly over the means of production.
- b. Dependence and monopoly means control and exploitation
- c. This dependency relationship is the product of the incorporation of Africa and underdeveloped countries into the capitalist system
- d. Incorporation resulted, the aegis of imperialism and colonialism, in which the disarticulation of transport as roads and railways were built not for the integration of the colonized country's economy but to facilitate exportation of raw materials to the capitalist core – Europe and to bring in manufactured goods from the capitalist core to the capitalist periphery –Africa and other colonial territories.

## DISCOURSE

Realist scholars argue that the new world order is marked by struggle for power and influence among major states (Mearsheimer, 2001). Liberal institutionalists contend that international institutions and cooperation can promote peace and stability (Keohane, 2005). Constructivists emphasize the role of ideas and norms in shaping international relations (Wendt, 1999). These theories provide a framework for

understanding Africa's position in the new world order.

### Historical Context

Africa's experience with colonialism and imperialism shaped its relationship with the international system (Rodney, 1972). The Cold War saw Africa become a battleground for proxy wars and ideological rivalries (Mazrui, 1993). In post Cold War era, Africa faced challenges from globalization, terrorism, and climate change (Adebajo, 2010).

### Global Governance and Africa

International organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund have significant influence on Africa's development (Moyo, 2009). However, critics argue that these institutions perpetuate neo-colonialism and undermine African agency (Cheru, 2002).

### Regional Economic Communities and Integration

Regional economic communities (RECs) such as the African Union, and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) aim to promote regional integration and cooperation (Asente, 2015). However, challenges persist, including inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and political instability (Oloruntoba, 2020).

### International Politics and the Need for a New World Order

As already been noted, Africa's international relations with the developed countries of Europe and North America before and after agitation for a New World Order and the eventual advent of the New World Order, have been characterized with economic dependence on them (Europe and North America). The advent of a New World Order with the United States of America as the

dominant single superpower in a unipolar system of international politics has brought in its wake, far-reaching political, economic, and strategic changes to the world (Centron & Davis, 1991). Given Africa's condition of dependence and underdevelopment, attempts are made to examine the effects of these changes (New World Order) on the continent in this paper. The changes around the globe in these past recent years, especially in the economic front has left the world with capitalism and free market economy as the dominant mode of production thriving on the shoulders of democracy as the most widely acceptable mode of governance. The Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe's formally centrally planned economies have now moved to market economy by opening their markets to foreign investment which is America's tool of under developing third world countries so as to prevent them from developing internal self growth and self – reliance plans. This America does in as an attempt to make her remain the world superpower without any fear of having a rival. The implication of the above for Africa and other third world countries could be seen in the likely transfer of a good portion of the financial aid in form of grants, loans and financial investments formally coming from the United States, Western Europe and Japan to countries of the Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union towards rebuilding their battered economies on a capitalist mode leading to the stagnancy of African countries developmental quest since their economies are deeply rooted on dependence (Centron & Davis, 1991).

In a similar development, the countries of Europe in their international relations have entered into a full agreement in 1992 for a European integration. This European integration means a breakdown of all forms of frontiers coupled with complete liberalization and deregulation of trade (Obadele, 1991). There is now free movement of goods and persons and this has increased European

competitiveness in the world market. And this has also resulted to a division of the world into three strong economic zones and three weaker ones, where the strong ones are North America comprising of United States, Canada and Mexico; a united Europe and the western Pacific. The weaker ones are Africa; the near and middle East; Latin and Central America. Within the weaker bloc, Africa is the most underdeveloped segment. Integration also means that transnational actors such as multinational corporations can have a powerful influence on what happens to national states (Gaddis, 1992). The vital point is that this influence is now increased simply because of the strengthening of international capitalism as a result of the United States cold war triumph over the Soviet Union which was the only rival. And the implication of this development on Africa is that presence of the transnational corporations is to further hinder her self – sustaining efforts through the expropriation and appropriation of their surplus or gain to their home countries for development as well as the pursuit of policies that would ensure that Africa remains dependent on the western world for development.

Before the inception of the New World Order, African countries had the freedom of choosing to align themselves with any of the major superpowers. Even countries that professed to be non-aligned like Nigeria could not escape from this dilemma. However, with the end of the Cold War and the victory of America as the sole world superpower, African countries were left with no choice but to seek to align with the United States. The two major reasons advanced for this include: firstly the United States being the only superpower as of today through her various organs of international organization controls the major world financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to which African Countries rely on heavily to meet up with

certain major projects and the funding of their annual budget deficits through borrowing and assistance. As the saying goes that it is difficult to bite the finger that fed you African nations just have to continue to align with the United States in the international political economy else the United States would withdraw her financial support to African Countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Zaire and Nigeria to mention but a few (Ihonybere, 1995).

The drastic decline in economic assistance to Africa from the Soviet bloc countries is the second economic aspect of the New World Order that would compel African nations to be dependent on the United States (Ihonybere, 1995). This assistance came not only as economic aid, but also from goods that African countries export to Eastern Europe from 1988 through 1990, the end of the Cold War. After 1990 however, there has been a steady decline in the value of goods that African nations export to these countries. Consequently, this development prompted the Economic Commission for Africa to note in its Economic Report on Africa in 1990 that resource flows to Africa will dwindle as and when resources are diverted for the development of depressed areas within the European Economic Community. This process can only lead to further marginalization of Africa in the 1990s and beyond. This further suggests that the problem of resource mobilization in Africa is partly due to the diversion of economic and bilateral aid previously earmarked for African nations by the United States' controlled financial institutions to the countries of the former Eastern Europe and Soviet Union. The economies of those non-capitalist countries from which African nations sought support have virtually collapsed with the victory of America in the Cold War. Moreover, these European countries now borrow from the same financial institutions as the African nations. The end of the Cold War and the shift

from a centrally controlled system to market economy contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union bloc (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 1990)

Beside the economic aspect, another feature of the New World Order and its implication on Africa is in the political arena. African nations have no choice but to bow to the whims of the United States' position on several international issues. This is because the end of the Cold War created a climate where the United States can impose its' will on any country without fear of confrontation by another major superpower. In his address on September 11, 1990 before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, former President George Bush summed up clearly the American approach to global challenges by saying that the crisis in the Persian Gulf offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation (Adelusi, 1991). Out of these troubled times; the American fifth objective of a new world order can emerge. He stated further that America and the world must rise up to defend common important interests and that America and the world must stand up to aggression, as America will not be intimidated in the pursuit of these goals since vital economic interests are at risk with the crisis in the Gulf-Keller (1993). The Gulf war and the American interventions in Somalia are obvious examples of the willingness of the United States not to shy away from the use of force to enforce its policies on Africa and other underdeveloped countries of the world. Again, no country on the planet; be it less developed or underdeveloped, can discount the American influence in contemporary global politics. According to Centron and Davis (1991), what was important about the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is that it solidified the United Nation's role in preserving world collective security. Nonetheless, McGhaee (1992) reminds us that the only assurance that a New World System can be counted on to provide security and assistance in times of

need is the existence of the mindset that is derived from a natural instinct to come the aid of others. What is instructive as observed by Ihonvbere (1995) is that the United States hegemonic stance as well as the New World Order, which followed the Iraqi defeat, contained no economic agenda. "it is purely a military issue". The economic fallout from the Gulf crisis was to reward some of its allies, like Kenya, Turkey and others.

### Case Studies

Nigeria's experience with international oil politics illustrates the complex interplay between global powers and African states (Omeje, 2015). South Africa's rise as a regional hegemony demonstrates the potential for African leadership in the new world order (Taylor, 2000). The literature review highlights the complexities of international politics and the new world order's implications for Africa's social-economic development.

### Summary

This paper has been able to bring to light the reality of international politics and a New World Order that began with the defect of the Soviet Union in the Cold War and the emergence of America as a sole world superpower in unipolar world system arising from the agitations from Africa and other third world countries for a New World Order that will take into cognizance their needs and peculiarities. The paper had also provided clear definitions of the terms and they work in the light of the Africa's relationship with the developed countries of North America, Western Europe and Japan in the international political system using the dependency theory. The paper equally treated the implications of the New World Order for Africa's economic and political life by showing that the relationship was more negative than positive as African countries condition had remained worsened as continued dependence without any hope of freedom had made them more

backward and underdeveloped till date which is in agreement with dependency theory.

## Conclusion

Based on the economic and political factors addressed in the paper concerning Africa in her international relation or politics and the need for a New World Order, what has become clear is that the adverse effect of the New World Order so agitated for by Africa and other third world countries is far much more than the envisaged gains or benefits, making the implications more negative than positive for African countries. This can be proved from the stand point of the dependency theory which makes it clear that under the New World Order so agitated for by Africa and other third world countries, African countries are still perpetually under the influence of the United States by the penetration of their economies through financed capital and the activities of multinational and transnational corporations whose main target is the expropriation and appropriation of surplus abroad to their home countries instead of developing the African countries which serve as their host. Based on the central pole and periphery relationship between Africa and the developed countries, the policies and political life of the African and underdeveloped countries are brought under constant monitoring, an action that is inimical to self – reliance and true development. The paper has shown that any attempt by African countries and other third

world countries to deviate from American wishes in the International arena would attract severe economic and political consequence especially for African countries. This according to the paper leaves African countries with no other option than to remain align to America since the price to paid for confrontation and self – reliance is much more than any of them can bear. It pertinent to stress at this point that the New World Order poses severe economic and political problems for African and other underdeveloped countries of the world.

## Recommendation

In line with the discussion carried out in this paper, the following salient recommendations are put forward:

- i. There is need for further study on exploring alternative development models for Africa.
- ii. Thorough investigation should be carried out on the impact of emerging global powers on Africa.
- iii. Empirical analysis should be carried out to determine the effectiveness of regional economic communities in promoting Africa's socioeconomic development.
- iv. Integration models should be embarked on to develop Africa socioeconomically along with other third world countries

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