

EXAMINATION OF THE ROOT CAUSES OF UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Africa is a continent rich in material and human resources and in fact it has contributed immensely to the development in the new worlds but unfortunately it is now degenerating fast by taking the back seat and undergoing an era of underdevelopment because of so many militating factors herein discussed: Bad governance, inability to follow both the rule of law and due processes have led to unemployment, poverty, violence of unyielding proportion, insecurity, lack of infrastructural facilities and lack of integrated rural development in addition to the sit-tight syndrome of leaders in some countries in Africa have accounted for the root causes of unsustainability in Africa which is the talking point of this paper.

Keywords: Africa, Underdevelopment, Bad Governance, Poverty, Unemployment, Lawlessness, Insecurity

INTRODUCTION

According to the literatures and particularly Ikoku, Africa occupies a quarter of the world land mass with an area of 30,300,000 square kilometers and that it is the second largest of all the continents in the world.

It has an estimated population of 410,560,000 in 1975 and a total labour force of 147,574,000. The continent of Africa consists of a total of 54 countries and out of this, only Nigeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa and Zaire have more than 20 million inhabitants each, while Morocco, Algeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda have more than 10 million each. It must be noted that thirty-four countries have population below 5 million each while 19 other countries have population which is fewer than 2 million each. What is interesting to note is that Africa used to be a force to be reckoned with in the committee of Nations. In other words, the continent of Africa used to be recognized as one of the great nations in the world before independence and as a matter of fact the monumental contributions of the Africans in the new world in terms of education, technology, invention, sports and music have been well documented by many scholars and academics. Africa had shown excessive skills, initiatives and maturity in shaping the course of the new world economically, culturally, educationally, politically and religiously.

For instance, Professor Leo Wilner has shown that Africans have had a far greater influence on American civilization than it was imagined by people of all ranks and files and not to place that on record will be unfortunate.

Leo Winner also showed that African religion and culture influenced and contributed immensely to the American development. As a matter of fact, the religion of the North and South American Indians is much like that of the Africans. DR. C.G. Woodson also shed lots of light on the impact of Africans on the new world when he proved that Africans discovered America long before the European had any such dreams for the people found in the caves were identified as Africans after later discovery of the place by Christopher Columbus. Thus before Columbus it was proved conclusively that Africans braved the roaring waters of the high seas and established crucial relationship with the Indians and Africans well over 1000 years ago. And that explained why the Indians and Africans have certain common words like "Canoe, Tobacco and buck rat" in their languages. It must also be noted that the Indian medicine man owes his evolution to the African medicine man because of their association.

Many articles and literatures have also shown that Africans crossed the Atlantic to carry on trade with the western hemisphere in establishing colonies through the Americans. Thus Africans were able to trade and obtain Gold, while the Indian traditions of Mexico and Central America indicate that Negroes were among the first occupants of that territory.

It has also been shown that Africans came to the new world with such skills in iron work, leather work and carpentry. Africans are also remarked as contributing meaningfully towards the early liberation of Cuba, Haiti and other areas of South America and fought valiantly to free Haiti from the dominions of the French.

Lastly must be remembered that Africans played predominant roles in the economic and

cultural survival of the new world. For instance, the plantation system which we now call capitalism was marshaled through the labour, effectiveness, ability and agility of the Africans. And as a matter of fact, Africans have also been recorded as the pioneers of wheat and sugar-cane plantation in the new world.

Africans also participated in some early expeditions with the Spanish Explorers; and on this note the remarkable activities of one Estevanico, a linguist who came to America in 1527 must be commended. Estevanico who is usually called Steven was accepted as a deity by some Indians because his knowledge of herbs and medicine. He alone opened up what is now known as New Mexico and Arizona after many unsuccessful attempts.

TECHNOLOGY, SCIENCE AND SPORTS

The Black Americans have shown their undisputable excellence and creativities in inventions which have made considerable impact in the new world.

For instance, Glanville Woods (1856-1910) recovered more than 35 patents for his several inventions. He invented a steam-boiler furnace and incubator, automatic car breaks and many other devices. Some of these inventions were sold to American Bell Telephone. Also Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee Institute where industrial education was encouraged while Elijah McCoy invented the first self lubricating industrial machining in America which gave a big boost to industrialization.

Records of another Black American engineer Benjamin Banneker is worthy of note. He designed the street system of Washington, while in 1892, Daniel Hale Williams a Black man (1858-1931) was acclaimed to be the first American Doctor to operate on the human heart. Many notable Black Americans prevail like Louis Armstrong, Joe Luis who won the world heavy weight title and successfully defended it 25 times from 1934 – 1949.

We have Jesse Owen the Black American tract star who won the 100 meters and 200 meters events. We have Mohammed Alli, also who won the world heavy weight boxing champion. In fact there are many more Black people who have contributed immensely to the development in various aspects of life in the new world that space will not permit mentioning them in a work of this type at the risk of getting off the track of our topic. Therefore in order to keep within the focus of our topic let us consider why Africa has seized to develop beyond the level of expectation up till now despite the abundant human and material resources nature has provided it.

What are the factors prohibiting the continent of Africa from achieving sustainable development, democracy, stability and security? What are the root causes of myriad of intimidating problems riddling African economic fronts against appreciable sustainable development?

The answers to these questions are based on leadership, persistent acts of misrule which are predicated by the unvisionary leaders, corruption of unyielding proportion, violence and unrest and insecurity, the subversion of democratic

rules and processes, poverty, pseudo democracy, interstate conflicts, unemployment, lack of environmental control which may bring development to Africa, and the ugly effect of globalization and regionalization in Africa. A few of these will be discussed here in to buttress our postulate.

LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS IN AFRICA

The importance of leadership cannot be over emphasized in any organization and Country in particular.

A Country needs such leaders that possess leadership traits and qualities with integrity to steer the ship of the state.

Leaders who are technically proficient with emotional intelligence and whose modes and styles of decision making will accommodate both participatory and laissez fair styles of leadership in deserving occasions are needed.

Leaders who will realize that political sovereignty is a mockery without the means of meeting literacy, good living conditions, and poverty of its citizen on the one hand, and leaders who will constantly realize that offices are public trusts that are bestowed for the good of the Country and not for the primitive accumulation of wealth to themselves, family and cronies at the expense of the downtrodden masses are greatly needed in any Country that requires peace, economic, social and sustainable development. It has been advocated by series of literature that Africa needs leaders who can rescue the continent from the claws of internal destruction and strive to the path of rectitude and sustainable development, democracy, social justice, peace, security, stability, equity and economic co-operation. But what type of leaders do we have now in some Countries in Africa and how far do they impact on the Continents sustainable development?

One of the worst problems militating against development in Africa today is the leadership. This has been well addressed by many writers including this author from different perspectives and adumbrated approaches with acerbity.

It must be noted that visionary leaders throughout the world are the engines of National development, but in Africa a different scenario is in place. Leaders in many of the countries in Africa do not like to relinquish their powers as at when due, but would like to stay put in office indefinitely at the risk of democracy, economic development and social stability.

The resultant effects of such sit-tight-in office leaders leave much to be desired and have become a gall and worm-wood phenomenon to such nation since all democratic institutions were destroyed. Lives were often wasted, while those who attempted to criticize them in office were usually clamped into prison to suffer the agony of their lives, die, get rotten and decomposed in jail. Definitely those countries where the sit-tight- leaders prevail are finished in terms of amenities, welfare services and the rule of law. Massive economic decadence and under development of an unyielding proportion are usually the lots of the citizens as was well captured by Taiwo and Oluwole (2000) in the following words:

“In some cases, their unpopular regimes have culminated into civil strife’s and armed struggles, ‘whereby lives and innocent citizens are wasted, while those who were lucky to survive such hostilities become refugees in their own land’”

How can one think of any development in those countries? Definitely there cannot be any iota of development but civil commotion, unrest, and terrorism which is simply the use of violence and intimidation in pursuit of political goals. The examples of such countries may be given as follows- Egypt, Gabon, Libya, Togo, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Equatorial, Guinea, Angola, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Switzerland, Sudan, Chad, Eritrea, Gambia, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Morocco, Senegal, and many more as one gets from the internet and as contained in our former writing on the problems of sit-tight- leaders in Africa.

“In the paper we confirmed the existence of avalanche of reports on the abuse of human rights in those countries that are in possession of sit-tight-leaders including tortures by the police in some of them, harassment of political opponents and the clamping of them into jail, violence and arbitrary killings of demonstrators who were advocating for changes in leadership.”

With all these horrendous activities there cannot be any development and one may predict the likely extinction of democracy and good government thus in future Africa, unless such leaders are effectively groomed for state duties without greed and acts of corruption. They should learn to quit their offices at the expiration of their tenures and allow development to take place in their respective domains.

Unless this is done and adhered to religiously, Africa will continue to be seriously under developed and continue to take a back seat in the comity of nation.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is one of the root causes for underdevelopment in Africa. It has the most serious implication on good government and sustainable development in the continent. It is really a dreadful phenomenon which has destroyed the fabrics of all governmental structures in Africa. It is a cancer-worm, an anathema, and a gall and worm wood entity which indeed should be abhorred by any nation that wants progress and development.

The insatiable appetite for corruption has become an endemic disease in Africa and this has brought concomitant sufferings, untold economic dilapidation, unrest, poverty, and lack of infrastructural facilities with underdevelopment to the people so much that the dividends of democracy if any are not earned. Corruption lowers societal morality and weakens meritocracy; corruption has gripped governmental administration in many parts of Africa and it is the cause of the sit-tight-syndrome of many leaders in Africa.

Corruption and democracy are strange bed fellows, hence majority of people in Africa are living in a world of grinding poverty where infra-structural facilities are nil, but accumulation of wealth by these people at the helms of affairs abound. Also acts of embezzlement are predominant so much that one is greatly astonished at this upturn of events. Since it is patently clear that there cannot be any development in any corrupt society hence to have any meaningful development in Africa, Africans must learn to be honest in their undertakings. They must have integrity and shun all tendentious act of

corruption. Africans must think less of money which is a worldly deace and make themselves proud by making corruption a thing of the past in order to usher in an era of sustainable development.

DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNMENT

Democracy and good government are pre-conditions for sustainable development in any Nation and Africa is not an exception to the rule.

Democracy is a word which is not capable of a precise definition for there are controversial interpretations of its true meaning, concept and tenet. Abraham Lincoln defines it as the government of the people by the people and for the people. This definition no doubt embraces the representatives of liberal democracy where elections are usually held to choose representatives. What one notices is that in many parts of Africa elections have been one way or the other marred with violence, corruption, indiscipline, recklessness and the abuse of powers. Thus the way democracy is being practiced in Africa tends to negatively affect the development of the continent.

As a matter of fact Jega (2007 - 2023) had this to say:

- Democracy is a set objective in Africa but not yet attained.
- It is an aspiration clearly cherished by many countries in Africa but far from being a reality.
- Democracy has turned out to be a mirage.
- Democracy has remained elusive.
- The burning issue of Democracy has also remained confounding in Africa.

This is so because in some parts of Africa, prebendal politics are being invoked; while many people go into politics as a means to earn a living. In such circumstances, the objective of a good government is usually perverted while sustainable development is at best yet to descend from heaven. This definition shows that it is only when the citizens are empowered to make informed and willful choice that we talk about democracy.

However other people define Democracy from a welfare people-oriented perspective. For instance, Bayo Aborisade said as follow:

“Democracy in its simplest form is a system that ensures a minimum of a welfare state which guarantees a living condition: - food, accommodation, clothing, education for the Children and municipal services.”

However can one then talk of any meaningful development in Africa when most people are suffering in abject poverty, unemployment and poor leaving conditions without any appreciable infrastructural facilities? A hungry man is an angry man while health is wealth. Unless therefore many countries in Africa now embrace the system of educating

their people, grant them facilities for earning good living wages and allow them to take informed decision and make choices freely, democracy cannot take root in Africa and this will dangerously affect development. Before we can talk of sustainable development in Africa therefore, there must be a social change which must involve a total transformation of the society.

This process must involve popular participation from the grass root that will be empowered to involve themselves in creating structures and in designing policies and programmes that will serve the interest of all and contribute optimally to development process.

GOOD GOVERNMENT

We have discussed about leadership problem in Africa which has constituted themselves as blows to development. We have equally discussed the sit-tight-syndromes of many leaders in some African Countries. All these affected the pace of development in Africa. Such leaders wasted the lives of many people, damaged democratic institution, clamped citizen who opposed their further stay in office into prison and opposed all welfare services to their people. Their countries are equivalent of military rules. There is no quality opposition to such government in power. The freedom of speech and expression are often suppressed while comfort, happiness and social amenities were often put in abeyance.

With such scenarios, there cannot be any meaningful sustainable development at all. Such government are diametrically opposed to the basic tenets of democracy and they more often than not aid and accept corruption, maladministration and slow down the pace of development, they are not people-oriented, whereas for a democracy to be sustainable it has been suggested that government must be responsible and answerable to the people, who are the real customer of sovereignty.

Speaking on the issues of democracy and good government, Obasanjo said as follow;

“An irresponsible, arrogant or careless leadership breeds disenchantment, antipathy and disenfranchisement in the fellowship and this, as we are living in the Third World sets the stage for the nihilist, reactionaries, fifth columnist, and anarchists. Lastly Obasanjo concluded that Democracy is both an end in itself and a means to that end. As an end, democracy makes for sustainable good government, which enhances the pursuit of the citizen for peace.”

According to the Africa Leadership forum:

“Good governance in Africa is a pre-condition for success in embracing the opportunities offered by the globalization process. The fostering of good governance, security, stability couple with an environment of respect for basic human rights and freedoms will ensure that African’s skills and expertise can be effectively retained by and attracted to the continent. Government must assume the responsibility for creating a conducive climate that allows ordinary citizens to participate and partake.”

Therefore the absence of good government in many part of Africa is a function of lack of sustainable development. The ALF association still commenting on leadership development noted that leadership must retain essentially the capacity inspire and encourage people and individual in order to achieve set goals unlike what obtained in those countries with sit-tight leaders who made the citizens foreigners in their countries and cared less for their survivorship.

Good leaders they say are the key factors and the major agents capable of infusing society with a modicum of the necessary collective confidence and determination; while leadership training programmes should be all encompassing and concern all in all works of life in the society to trigger in sustainable development.

INTERSTATE CONFLICTS

A nation needs peace in order to develop but it has been shown that since the second half of the 19th century, Africa has been engulfed in several crisis and violent conflicts which all told hindred developments.

There has been lots of interstate crises predicated on many factors like political violence, state terrorism, disputes over resource control, religious intolerance, boundary disputes, ethnic and community hatred and so on to mention a few (Furley 1995, Zartman 1989, Nwolise 2008, Osaghe 2005, Ojo 2008. As a matter of fact, scholars have remarked that Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Botwana, Togo, Angola, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Congo, Liberia, Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda, Chad, Somalia had been involved in crises at one time or the other. As a matter of fact Kofi-Annan, the United Nation Secretary General noted that fourteen out of the continents of fifty three countries in Africa had been afflicted by armed conflicts in 1996 alone, and over thirty wars had occurred in Africa since 1970, mostly within states These crises are so many that Yorom (2005; 354) described Africa as a continent where crises and conflict “leak like water from a basket”.

Adedeji (1999:xv) called Africa as “a continent at war against itself, with warton politics and pauperized and divided societies.” While Chua (2003:121) also submits that the West often sees Africa as “a vast continent of incomprehensible tribalism, endemic corruption, and almost intrinsic violence.” Consequent upon all these series of war and violence there is no gainsaying that many parts of the countries in Africa have become undeveloped. The people have been reduced to extreme economic hardship and social exclusion despite the abundance of human and material resources with which the continent is endowed (Calvocoresi, 2001) Nwankwo; (2005) Definitely with all

these track records, the capacities to cope with development have been seriously weakened and stretched to a breaking point. However it should be noted that all the stated problems are the results of bad government which requires immediate surgical solution, if we want to develop Africa as a whole. War destroys a nation by taking many lives from its human resources and reduces to a vanishing point many of its material resources. Harnessing human and material resources in Africa will therefore be a dream if interstate war, violence and unrest are not reduced or brought to an end.

POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT: EFFECT OF

Poverty and unemployment are common phenomena in Africa and they do retard the pace of development in a big way. As a matter of fact these phenomena are the pivots over which the National Insecurity in Africa hangs, and instead of implanting some policies that would address them, leaders in Africa have been pre-occupied with how they would get rid of their critics. And as described by Imohighe (2001;44) those that were bent in antagonizing the oppressive policies and actions of the leaders were usually labeled as the enemies of the continent and subsequently dealt with in a ruthless manner. Those who were lucky to escape the wrath of the so-called leaders become political refugees in foreign countries. Thus to alleviate the spirit of insurgency and exhibition of in-fighting belligerent sway, the poor countries usually spend more money to fight the poor and unemployed youths than providing means for the development of their areas. This fight against poverty is the fight for peace and security. It is therefore suggested in this paper that those African countries like Nigeria should find ways and means of improving the lots of their poor people and find them jobs in order to pacify them.

Thus Peters and Aminu (2001:5-6) have these to say that Nigeria national security in the 21 century could only be realized whenever government implement policies that will reduce poverty and unemployment among the poor. Also talking about the product of unemployment, UAID/IFESH (2006) opined that it is lack of gainful employment that led many youths to engage in various horrible and nefarious activities like stealing, robbery, gang sterim, militancy and these have contributed immensely to the high level of insecurity within the countries.

It is therefore noted that peace which is a pre-condition for development and democracy cannot thrive in those countries in Africa where uncontrolled poverty and massive unemployment become the order of the day. Also to be noted is that Kampala Document which was the outcome of the deliberation which stipulated that peace, security and cooperation in Africa will certainly elude any development whenever a country is either at war within itself. Therefore in order to usher in a sustainable development in Africa, the International Community is hereby urged to offer social security especially for rural non-wage earners. This measure should be linked with the sales of farm produce or services, as a means of complementing the polity.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL AND THE ATTRACTING FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Obasanjo discussed at length on the environmental control which may bring development to Africa and at the tail end of his discussion the recommended as follows:

1. African governments should pursue the large scale adoption of village level and production technologies aimed at raising energy efficiently.
2. Africa must return to sustainable agricultural practices. Towards that end scientific knowledge should forthwith be integrated into present operations and research efforts should be intensified, harmonized with extension services to help bring about a green revolution for Africa in order to meet its sharply growing demand for food. It is the belief of this chapter therefore that Africa will develop if all those hints are seriously taken and acted upon.

It is therefore suggested that if Africa must develop, the encouragement of foreign investment is of a great desideratum since we have both the inadequate capital and the technical know how. By this trend, industrialization including diversification and modernization of agriculture will take place.

Thus the investment participation will create job opportunities, the improvement in the living standard and accelerated economic and social development. To enable us achieve these laudable objectives it means therefore that a stable political environment is a *since-qua-non*. This environment must be prone to social violence and unrest since no sane investor will invest in a country that is unsaved, insecure and politically unstable.

In other words, to attract foreign investors, it is suggested that we must provide security of lives and property, political and social stability, continuity of government policies and predictability; since no reasonable investor as suggested by Obasanjo, no matter how steeped and stewed in the dynamics of risk management would commit himself heavily into a country that is politically unstable. He finally concluded the advice as follows:

“The strongest encouragement that can be given to an investor is the institutionalization of political stability, the enthronement of peace and the establishment of democratic institutions and systems.”

OTHER ROOT CAUSES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Peace is always a harbinger or pre cursor to sustainable development in any Nation, therefore meaningful development can never take place in Africa where many of its countries are having multi faceted problems of insecurity like Nigeria as a case study.

The acts of insecurity prevalent in some of these African Countries are predicated mostly in bad governance, poverty, unemployment and inability for the governments to take the welfare of their citizens as of major concern.

Also in many of these countries there prevail a great disparity between the wealth of the people at the helms of affairs and the very few masses who have no mean of livelihood hence the resultant unhappiness may need to be redressed through violence because the desire to resist oppression is implanted in the nature of man and a hungry man is usually an angry man who can take any aggressive conduct against the security of the state whenever he is dragged to the walls by hunger.

Thus since inequality is a potential threat to the National Security, the government should therefore try as much as possible to move towards the direction of welfare state which more often than not make provision for alleviating poverty at all levels.

Also in order to have sustainable development in Africa, peace should be brokered and the whole continent should be secure so that foreigners may be allowed to do business freely in the continent in order to promote an effective, sustainable and economic development.

CONSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA

A keenest scrutiny of constitutions in Africa has shown that only few African Constitutions concern themselves with socio – economic and cultural rights; that is right to own property, the right to work and choose one's employment, right to food, shelter, clothing, education, and to participate in cultural and scientific research and development. Mbah maintains that African political economy is in the hands of the few who determine through their advantageous economic positions how law are made and who govern as well as how available state resources are allocated and utilized.

This accounts for why the mass of African people are deprived educationally and health wise. Subsistence living prevails in African continent and they have no property to protect.

All these may be attributed to one of the root causes for underdevelopment in Africa. Thus the prevailing system is very antithetical to the much felt needs of economic democratization which entails the empowerment and capacity building of the people themselves; since economic democratization encourages initiative and participation of people towards the societal improvement and transformation of their lives.

One may therefore infer that unless the governments are transformed to be people- oriented, take care of their welfare, improve their living condition and make them as related items in the government through effective participation, there will be no sustainable development as expected in this continent.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From our writing so far we have dealt with some problems facing development in Africa; and if Africa must develop it is the focus of this chapter that all those problems highlighted in the paper must be solved so as to give Africa a pride of place in terms of development and growth. Therefore the eradication of poverty must be attended to firstly while all the states in Africa must put in place democratic structures which include free and fair elections without electoral violence like thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings, or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes. Above all, it must be remembered that poverty and democracy are strange bed fellows, therefore governments in Africa must provide gainful employment for their

citizens if they want to develop. Also to be noted is that African states must develop the spirit of physical and economic integration of the continent in order to usher in socio-economic transformation and development.

A survey of Africa shows that Africa is very rich in terms of human resources. There are lots of talented individuals in Africa who are very brilliant and highly qualified in different spheres of life to enhance technology. Hence training and educational opportunities should be given to these people in order to develop technological awareness. They should be sent abroad either to participate in exchange programmes or for the training the trainers workshops. This eventually will promote rapid physical and economic integration of the continent. One important thing to talk about is the African's policy measures on international trade; this must improve in order to reap the benefits of international cooperation. Also must be noted that the people in Africa are not very rich as other nations. Africa has a long way to go in order to contend with its level of poverty, hence meaningful projects in terms of development cannot take place because of the pecuniary disability and the unfavorable lending conditions on debt burden. Appeals are therefore made through this channel for favorable lending conditions to the African continent. This will enable the continent to pave its way for economic recovery and sustainable development.

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