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## POLITICS AND THE CRISIS OF DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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### Abstract

*The efforts invested in Africa's development over the years have proven to be ineffective. This outcome is not because development has failed, but rather because it was never a priority. Some scholars attribute the underdevelopment of Africa to various factors, including poor leadership characterized by corruption, inadequate planning, and inappropriate policies such as those imposed by organizations like the IMF and the World Bank. However, the primary obstacle to development in Africa lies in its political landscape. African politics has been structured in a way that obstructs the pursuit of development and hinders the emergence of relevant and effective development paradigms and programs. By employing the Marxist political economy framework of analysis, it becomes evident that Africa's underdevelopment has a historical context. The struggle among post-independence leaders to gain control over and exploit the countries' resources through state power has significantly impeded the development processes on the continent. To foster development, it is crucial to promote inclusivity, enabling the active participation of the people in their countries' affairs. Additionally, self-reliance and confidence among the population are vital elements in achieving development.*

**Keywords:** Politics, crisis, development, colonial and post-colonial era

## Introduction

It was in the post-war periods, various orientations and assumptions began to emerge about the concept of development. By the 1960s, the theories of modernization, which when stripped to their bare essentials propagate Westernization and industrialization, became dominant. These theories were Western models of social transformation which focused on economic growth and wealth creation.

About the same period in the 1960s, African countries came to independence through their struggle for self-determination. They had been united in the struggle against a common enemy, based on the ideology of independence, which was potent until after independence (Ezeibe, 2015). Soon afterward, it had to be replaced by the ideology of development. This was a power strategy, intended to provide hegemony for most African countries, which had been fragmented by the nature of their politics and the struggle for power between the existing national coalitions. To this end, the adoption of the concept of development became an ideology. It was merely to be preached (planned and proclaimed), as an essential requirement for the consolidation of political independence, but not pursued realistically. It is however true that colonialism left the objective needs for development, apparent, in African societies.

Those who promoted and orchestrated the adoption of the ideology of development, the international community were very supportive at first. They simply sought to make allies of Africa's newly independent countries, in their battle against communism. Their ideological mask was soon uncovered by critics who pointed out the neglect of social issues such as agriculture and welfare in the pursuit of development. Thus, they had to rearticulate their ideology into a different development paradigm by the 1970s. Development afterward became an aggregate of projects and objectives, based on the neo-classical orientation. Essentially, development still retained its neo-classical notion of economic growth. Of greater consequence, however, the development paradigm was such that de-historicized development, considering it to be an autonomous process, independent of politics, culture, and the institutional framework.

It is however true that the problem of development in Africa has assumed a fundamental and central stage in most social science discourse. As Ijoma (2008) puts it, the best way to assess African states on democracy and development is to score them based on the demands of their people and the responses of the governments towards such demands seen as performance. Be that as it may, the social condition of the majority of people in Africa presents a startling paradox. Africa, a continent that is so richly endowed, turns out to be wretched of the earth with the majority of her populace exposed to the terror of poverty, malnutrition, ignorance, and disease. The continent is reduced to an empire of chaos with different armed groups challenging the legitimacy of the state. There have been demands and counter-demands, agitations and counter-agitations spearheaded and coordinated by politically incoherent elites arising from the perception of marginalization, excruciating neglect, and domination of one group by the other, sometimes degenerating into armed struggle for secession. In the wake of this, the quest for development becomes a mirage (Okeke, 2022).

However, some scholars have attributed it to bad leadership in the continent, characterized by corruption, poor planning and incompetent management and inappropriate policies (Okeke, 2020). Others are the stifling of market mechanisms, low levels of technical assistance, colonial legacy, the limited inflow of foreign capital, falling commodity prices and unfavourable terms of trade, and low levels of saving and investment (Ake, 1996).

In Africa, the assumption made that there has been a failure of development is misleading. The problem is not so much that development has failed as it was never really on the agenda in the first place. By all indications, political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development. African politics has been constituted to prevent the pursuit of development and the emergence of relevant and effective development paradigms and programs (Ake, 1996). Thus, to a large extent, the main obstacles to development in Africa are political, and the same is with the way out. The rest of the paper is divided into four sections; theoretical consideration and conceptual issues, the origin of African politics and the crisis of development: the colonial and post-colonial era, politics and the crisis of development: the centrality of the state and socioeconomic formation in Africa, political leadership, conclusion and the way out.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is anchored on the Marxian political economy which derives its writing from Karl Marx, a German philosopher. The theory and method of Marxian political economy is based on historical and dialectical materialism. Essentially, it involves the materialist conception and interpretation of society. By this conception, it argues scientifically that the dialectical nature of society is the basis of its law of motion of development. In other words, the contradictions in society with key contents such as the transition from quantity to quality, the law of unity and conflict of opposites, and the law of negation as inherent in any mode of production, are the basis of societal change and development. This explains the history of human society, as deriving from the change in the modes of production. According to Anifowose and Enemuo(ed) (1990), “ dialectical materialism emphasizes the contradictory nature of society; male and female, day and night, motion and rest, birth and death, bourgeoisie and proletariat, etc. as the basis for contradiction, change and development of society” ; that historical materialism explains how human society has moved through the various epochal period to date” .

Marxian political economy does not argue, but scientifically study the society in its entirety. Thus, it considers the totality of the interconnection of social relations, class conflict, and the organic relation between the sub-structure (economy) and the super-structure (polity). Its study of society is with respect to change and development, with primacy on the role of social classes, productive forces, and the concomitant social relations of production, both of which constitute the mode of production. It explains that each socio-economic system (society) has an underlying mode of production, and each mode has its peculiar social classes, class relations, and contradictions upon which the ideology, philosophy, dominant values, and legal and state institutions are based.

Africa is considered as being faced with the crisis of development, which is essentially due to the nature of the politics played by the leaders in a bid to use state power to accumulate wealth. Capitalism with a peripheral nature in Africa however, explains the nature of the state and politics based on its concomitant social relations. However, due to the peculiar social classes or owing to the existing relations of productions in Africa and their contradictions, politics as the superstructure, assumes a nature that imparts negatively on efforts towards the development of African countries. Also, considering politics and the crisis of development within the context of Marxian political economy reveals a set of contradictions in consonant with its law of motion of development. These are the contradictions of accommodation and alienation; participation and marginalization and other related contradictions. Thus, at independence, the political environment was very hostile to development. The struggle for power was so absorbing that everything else, including development, was marginalized.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Politics**

Politics encompasses a broad, complex, and diverse range of concepts. Different scholars have approached it from various perspectives, influenced by their respective eras, societal characteristics, and personal interpretations. As a result, numerous definitions of politics have emerged, making it challenging to establish a universally acclaimed definition. Nonetheless, let us explore a few of these definitions:

Karl Marx defines politics as the rule of one social class over another, highlighting the concept of class domination. Harold Lasswell perceives politics as the process of determining "who gets what, when, and how," emphasizing the allocation of societal values. David Easton views politics as the authoritative distribution of values within a society. Aristotle regards politics as the "master science," asserting that all human activities are controlled and coordinated through political means, as humans are inherently political beings. Mao Tse Tung describes politics as a bloodless form of warfare. Ake (1996:94) provides an understanding of politics as the process of aggregating interests, articulating them, and negotiating consensus regarding public policy management. Additionally, politics can be defined as the totality of processes through which competition for control of state power is conducted.

From these definitions, it becomes evident that politics involves notions of rule, power, and authority. Thus, the question arises: Who exercises control? These definitions also indicate that politics is a dynamic process with an objective outcome. Of particular concern are the nature of the struggle for control and its resulting consequences. The nature of this struggle can either be based on legality and legitimate values and norms, fostering development, or it can be characterized by statism, authoritarianism, and coercion, hindering development. If class rule, as suggested by Marx, promotes democratic traditions, it can contribute to development. However, if it involves alienation, marginalization, and the exploitation of the masses through accommodating interests, ideologies, and policies, it becomes an obstacle to development.

### **Crisis and Development**

Crisis signifies a period characterized by immense challenges, peril, or unpredictability, particularly within the realm of politics. However, the concept of development lacks a universally accepted definition due to divergent ideas among scholars (Udenigwe, 2010). Some scholars have formulated their own interpretations of development. According to Rodney (1972), development in human society is a multifaceted process. At the individual level, it entails increased skills, capacity, freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being. At the level of social groups, development implies an enhanced ability to regulate internal and external relationships. Rodney also notes that development is often exclusively understood in economic terms. So, what is economic development? Economic development occurs when members of a society collectively enhance their capacity to deal with environmental challenges.

According to Okpaga (1999), development encompasses the transformation of the economy, state, and society, achieved through greater capacity in production and its expansion, political administration and governance, and the organization of civil society as a community of people. Rodney (1972) and Gana (1987) perceive development as a fundamental transformation of a nation's mode of production, leading to qualitative changes in the living

conditions of the people. They emphasize that development at the individual level involves improved skills and capacity, increased freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being.

Regarding a scientific understanding of development, it is closely related to the mode of production, which comprises two main components: the forces of production and the social relations of production. The forces of production encompass the elements necessary for production, such as labor power, objects of labor, means of labor, and means of production. Labor power comprises the physical, psychological, and intellectual capabilities of workers. Education plays a crucial role in developing manpower skills. Objects of labor refer to the things on which labor power is applied, such as coal, oil, and uncultivated land. Means of labor encompass the tools and aids used for production, including technology and machines. Access roads, technology, and other factors are essential aspects of means of labor, mediating between humans and nature. Without means of labor, human labor is rendered useless, and the harnessing of nature to meet human needs becomes impossible. The means of production is a combination of the objects of labor and the means of labor, without which a society cannot create the material conditions necessary for its existence. The level of development in any society is determined by the level of development of its means of production. On the other hand, social relations of production refer to the relations individuals enter into during the process of production within an economy. Specific relations of production arise due to the particular stage of development of the productive forces. It is important to note that while the productive forces are dynamic and largely shape the relations of production, the relations of production also shape and influence the productive forces. The social relations of production emphasize class or class struggle.

In summary, development pertains to a society's ability to utilize natural resources for the benefit of its members. It involves the progress of individuals and the comprehensive transformation of society, encompassing social, economic, and political structures.

## **Origin of African Politics and the Crisis of Development: The Colonial and Post-Colonial Era**

### **The Colonial Era**

Capitalism, driven by its internal dynamics after it had gained dominance over internal rivals within Europe, had penetrated Africa as imperialism but in the form of colonialism and at its monopoly stage. It meant capitalists had shifted their theatre of war for profit and power to the international level, and Africa in particular. Colonialism in Africa was therefore predominantly for economic aims. Three aims existed owing to the expansion of capitalism. These were to meet the high demand for raw materials for Western European industries, to secure areas and territories that could function as markets for European goods that were being produced, and to identify and dominate strategic areas/territories for future investments.

However, the political processes of colonialism and the creation of the colonial state were necessary in order to achieve economic objectives. The state, therefore, evolved from the use of force to gain cooperation within African chiefdoms and kingdoms, while disrupting and further destroying systems of social and political organizations in Africa. The colonial state existed to enforce capitalist rationality, but most essentially, it was to institutionalize Western rule and governance. Its presence and activities in the 18th century were largely due to “..the general enthusiasm of protecting economic interest through effective monopolies” (Ake, 1981: 47). This was the rationale for giving commercial enterprises some functions of the state, especially those that were chartered companies, e.g the Royal Niger

Company, which was British owned. These commercial enterprises came to wield enormous political power, which was used exclusively at economic instance, leading subsequently to the fusion of political and economic power. They were also given charge over the economic development of colonies, owing (due) to their monopoly of these powers, this led to the rise and persistence of statism which is the large and all-important role of the state in Africa (ibid:50).

New patterns of social relations evolved due to the activities of the colonial state. This took effect after the consolidation of the colonial state. Drawing from Ake (1981:62-65) who made it readily clear that the manipulation of peasant production by use of state power in order to satisfy the client of the state (capital) was accomplished by several means. State power was used to make laws, impose measures, some under the guise of agricultural development programs, and also, to set up mechanisms of exchange; which include, the use of licensed agents and grading systems in order to subordinate and expropriate African peasants of surplus value to the benefit of foreign capital. With the advent of colonialism, the monetization of the economy was inevitable. A non-monetized economy cannot really be integrated into a capitalist economy. The economies were monetized by annihilating the pre-colonial currencies which represented a rudimentary monetization but which were so limited as currencies that they would have been a serious obstacle to fundamental monetization. First, the colonialist encouraged wage labour often by force. For instance, by appropriating arable land from Africans and thus reducing them first to squatters and eventually to wage labourers on their land; second, African economies were monetized by imposing taxes and insisting on payment of taxes with European currency (Ake, 1981:34).

These entire processes of state intervention lead to the atomization of African society, which gave rise to the process of proletarianization. Class differentiation also occurred by use of colonial education, in the face of the contradiction between the logic of capitalism and its colonial logic. With minor exceptions, therefore, the socio-economic formation of contemporary Africa is a creation of colonialism.

Powers that were used exclusively at the economic instance or based on capitalist rationality, which determined state intervention, regulatory laws, the necessity of repression and coercion, etc, accumulation and implicitly, the reality of primitive accumulation was carried out using such enormous powers of the colonial state, it was used in the alienation of the indigenous African populace from political power, and consequently from economic wellbeing. This alienation was a contradiction that has structured politics in Africa; especially due to its juxtaposition with the colonial ideology of race, politics became structured as an issue of “ who should rule” and not “ how to rule” . Politics thus oriented to the exclusion of “ how to rule” (good governance) invariably, meant the alienation or marginalization of the concerns of development.

The nature of African politics was constituted using state power especially also as it was used essentially to enforce and sustain colonial policies. Such policies were instrumental to making African economies uncompetitive and underdeveloped in general. Ake (1981) clearly presents colonial policies within three major periods of colonial rule: policies used to create an export economy, which was, forced labour, the alienation of land, and the commercialization of agriculture. These made Africans slaves and brought them hardship especially as reinforced by the constraints of the First World War 1914-18. In response, Africans embarked on strikes and riots; railway workers in Darkar-Niger and those in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, went on chain strikes, which occurred in 1923 and, between 1919 and 1926 respectively. Riots occurred also in Porto Novo in 1923 and the Dock workers strike in

Conakry in 1919. Strategic policies were used during the period of the great depression, when favorable terms of trade accruing from customs receipts earnings, as revenue, began to decline between 1970 and 1980. These include the increase of import duties and the reduction of expenditure; the regulation of trade using a system of preference and the imposition of quotas on imported goods. Also, European firms reconditioned their operations, in terms of cutbacks in investments and their scale of operation; they reduced competition by dividing the market on the basis of agreements like the merchandise agreement of 1937. These were intended to protect their monopoly marketers in an economy dominated and controlled by the export sector. Generally, the radicalization of colonial social formation was the outcome of the policies in this period.

Finally, during the post-war boom or the postwar economy, economic expansion was characterized by discriminatory benefits in parts of Africa that produced commodities for European exports, and to expatriate firms in Africa. The colonized staged anti-colonial protests, with a decisive militancy.

In essence, the colonial state was designed in such a way that the structure of politics and economy were tied to those of the colonizing powers. For example, since colonialism was essentially capitalist, its penetration of African economies created what Ake called some fundamental affinities between Africa and the colonizing powers. Thus, the controlled development of the African economy in the interest of the metropolis meant structural link and interdependence. Chazan (1989) called this device, the principle of complementarity and integration. Complementarity is a principle whereby African colonial territories would play a subordinate role. The colonial economy in summary was characterized by the disarticulation of the different sectors. An economy is disarticulated or incoherent when parts or sectors of the economy are not complementary. In a coherent economy, there is regional or sectoral complementarity and reciprocity. One region specializes in agriculture while another supplies the agricultural sector with manufactured goods. Also, there are what are called forward and backward linkages in production. In a situation where the demand for steel leads to the exploitation of iron reserves in an economy, we have a backward linkage. On the other hand, when the establishment of an iron and steel industry gives rise to the local manufacture of cars and machine tools we have forward linkages. A coherent economy is therefore a system where there is reciprocity of exchanges between its different sectors or regions. The colonial economy lacked these linkages, complementarity, and reciprocity (Ake, 1981).

Furthermore, the colonial policy of aggregating disparate cultural collectivities to give rise to a state with a pronounced emphasis on structure, authority, and control as opposed to nationhood with attributes such as shared culture, identity, and consciousness; was largely motivated by economic interest (Mazrui, 1998:48). Also, most African states have never known peace since their creation by colonialism. Some of them have failed, while some have collapsed trying to pick up the pieces. In addition, some ethnic/armed groups are slugging it out with one another because of the painful denial of access to political power by one against the other or the ill-disposition of one co-exist peacefully with other Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Uganda, Angola, South Africa, Somalia, Sudan, etc are obvious examples of countries that have never experienced peace in the true sense of it (Gambo, 2000:3). These are some of the post-colonial realities in Africa.

The economic and political structures transferred to Africans were thus action in derivation, functionally conceived, bureaucratically designed, authoritarian in nature, and practically and intentionally dependent.

## **The Post-Colonial Era**

At independence, the political environment was very hostile to development. The struggle for power was so absorbing that everything else, including development, was marginalized. African countries at independence were with structural constraints or deformities, associated with their incorporation into the world capitalist system. Yet they had options, either to take the capitalist's road to development or the option of self-reliant development. The role of African leaders was therefore crucial. However, the lack of visionary leadership and the poverty of ideas; manpower constraints, and the involvement of expatriates who propagate neo-colonial notions of development, were to undermine their role. There was also a weak political will. Such was replete in the first generation of development plans of most African countries; alongside a favourable international environment, were factors that predispose African leaders to embrace the path of capitalist development that had therefore not been predetermined by colonialism alone, but by political decision. A few attempts were made afterward to regain control of the management of the economic agenda for their countries.

Besides the indigenization policy intended to institutionalize the middle class in the economy, some African countries conceived rudimentary ideas about development. Tanzania came up with the Arusha Declaration of 1965 (Chinweizu, 1978) which preached African Socialism; Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia proclaimed his philosophy of humanism in his Mulungushi Declaration of 1968. Due to the fact that these countries and most of the African countries had embraced dependent development, while trying to establish hegemony or while preoccupied with their political survival, and had largely, therefore, adopted the ideology of development as a power strategy; they meanwhile inherited power without responsibility. The politics of the West, however, was that they made allies of newly independent African countries, against communism. Development, therefore, was marginalized.

However, after individual efforts proved unsuccessful, a shift towards collective endeavors was made in the pursuit of Africa's development. This shift began at the OAU conference held on May 22-25, 1963, where a resolution called the Areas of Cooperation in Economic Problems was adopted. African states also became involved in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, or ECA). Throughout the 1970s, various resolutions and position papers were prepared, including Africa's Strategy for Development in the 1970s (adopted in 1971 under UNECA), the African Declaration of Cooperation for Development and Economic Independence (adopted in 1973 under the OAU), the Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa (adopted in 1976 and 1977 by the OAU Council of Ministers and Heads of States respectively), and the adoption of guidelines and measures for national and collective self-reliance in social and economic development for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (adopted in 1979 by the OAU heads of states and governments). Eventually, the Lagos Plan of Action emerged during the sixteenth Assembly of the heads of states and governments of the OAU. A summit was agreed upon and held in Nigeria in April 1980, leading to the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action, which became a seminal work on development. The adoption of this plan underscored the inadequacy of external development strategies, as they failed to generate rapid economic progress in Africa. These strategies were incompatible because they overlooked the structural issues that characterize Africa's underdevelopment, instead focusing solely on economic growth without addressing the underlying deformities in Africa's social relations of production (Ake, 1996).

Measures adopted by the Lagos Advance Plan, therefore, were to include, a regional approach, based primarily on collective self-reliance. Self-reliance was a step against



dependence and neo-colonial exploitation by external forces. It also adopted self-sustaining development as its second principle. Development concerns based on the Lagos Plan included production based on internal demands; the change of pattern of production from primary commodities to manufactured goods and the change of the existing international division of labor to relying on internal sources of raw materials, spare parts, management, finance, and technology. The collective actions required for collective self-reliance were to include, the pooling of resources together and greater inter-African trade and cooperation. Furthermore, it suggested participatory development, with a holistic approach to agricultural and industrial development. These were considered in the context of forward and backward linkages. The plan also adopted a method that factored both internal and external causes of the African crisis. Development was therefore perceived as a task, involving everyone and every sector. However, African leaders behind the Lagos plan of Action constituted a class, while on the other hand, African Governors of the World Bank and IMF, constituted another class that was in hegemony with foreign capital.

In 1981, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) prepared and published a report as suggested by African Governors on accelerated development in Sub-Saharan Africa, an agenda for action. This report defined the African crisis of development, as a production crisis in agriculture, particularly in food production. It considered external factors but with an overwhelming emphasis on the internal causes of the underdevelopment of human resources in Africa. The remedy it initiated however for Africa's ailing economy became the free interplay of market forces for dynamism and efficiency. The areas of need as identified were; trade and exchange rate policies, having mainly to do with, the reduction of import and export duties, subsidies, over-valued exchange rates, and marketing costs; reforms on input supply and marketing services for agricultural producers (referring mainly to parastatals which needed to be managed better and made competitive and more in tune with market forces); and concerns over the more effective use of resources in the public sector. These by no means were to engender fundamental change to the problems posed by the global economy. Thus, African leaders perceived this document as a political and ideological document. A working committee set up by OAU, African Development Bank (ADB), and UNECA was therefore to examine the document. Its verdict passed in a paper, in January 1982, argued that "the accelerated development was analytically defective, disingenuous and contradictory to African interest; the goals, objectives, and characteristics of the strategy are, in many ways inconsistent with those of the Lagos Plan of Action" (Ake, 1996).

African leaders according to Ake (1996) found out that they were dependent and too weak to have their way, so they began to retreat. They talked less about the Lagos plan, they tried to signal their willingness to reform their economies along the lines suggested by the World Bank study, and most significantly, they adopted structural adjustment programs. Cooperation with the West therefore in the pursuit of development in Africa appeared unavoidable. An accommodation, therefore, was articulated in the form of Africa's priority programs for Recovery 1980-90 (APPER). It was a document prepared by African leaders under the auspices of UNECA and OAU, both in 1986. It was presented as a document called, Africa's Submission to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly, on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis. Its position was a return to Africa's traditional areas of cooperative advantage. A major part of its submission was agriculture being a source of dynamic economic development and self-reliance. The agricultural economy was targeted for productivity in rural areas. Rural income was also to be the trust of public policies. Constraints that make African economies uncompetitive and inefficient were considered alongside structural defects and the need for both supportive incentives, essential for

recovery, and incentives to support exports. The emphasis on agriculture, and reform policies based on the failures of past African leaders, was to dominate policy formation in Africa afterward. This accommodation, as marked by the articulation of APPER, was the triumph of neo-liberal ideology in Africa's development efforts. The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-90 (UNPAAERD), a UN document also agreed with the issue of agriculture and structured reforms. In addition, it agreed on mutual cooperation at national and regional levels among African countries. It did also advocate for support to complement African development efforts by the international community. With the adoption of SAPs in Africa, the development of underdevelopment has continued to deepen, owing basically to dependent development (the pursuit of capitalist development) and the persistence of neo-colonialism.

Several development agendas and strategies were adopted after the enthronement of SAPs; namely, the increase and diversification of export commodities, import substitution, export promotion, the united approach, integrated rural development, regional cooperation in Africa, etc. These however failed due to fundamental issues that underlie the crisis of development;

(a) By the use of state power to advance the interest of monopoly capitalism and the consequent atomization of African society, the colonial regime was establishing a state, attempting to transplant one before establishing a nation. This has constituted a problem for Africa's development.

(b) Politics became a crude competition for rulership without due consideration for how to rule. Consequently, Africa was to have a majority of leaders who had no vision for development ideas.

(c) The path of capitalist development embarked on by African leaders left them dependent on a vertical supply of investment capital and other resources essential for development. Consequently, they were too dependent to reject neo-liberal development paradigms. These account for the deteriorating condition of African economies, leading to poor commodity prices and debt burden.

(d) The adoption of structural adjustment programs has left Africa with a catalog of development strategies, adopted, but which will not work because they are alien to the social, institutional, and cultural realities in Africa.

### **Politics and the Crisis of Development: the Centrality of the State and socio-economic formation in Africa**

The role of the state in promoting development (or otherwise) in Africa has been a subject of academic discourse since the 1960s. The nature and character of the state and its role in promoting sustainable development have elicited various scholarly responses. However, two contradictory features have marked the development of the state in a post-colonial economy. Rojas (1994) identified these as being extreme political fragility and extreme consistency in serving the interest of international capital. Besides, he also identified a common structure, being the existence of a gap or lack of connection between the African civil society and the African state... and, the use of their governments as a foreman to keep civil society producing a surplus to be accumulated by foreign and native social elites who enjoy absolutist power. In agreement to his submission, Simutanyi (2006) posits that the post-colonial state bears resemblance to the colonial state and that "like the colonial state, the post-colonial state is authoritarian, divisive, predatory, exclusive and an instrument in the service of the dominant capitalist class. Besides, he adds as regards the desire for economic development in the

immediate post-independence period, that, it has led to the justification for the state to play a prominent role in promoting economic development. Thus, the notion of the developmental state was to dominate the discourse of developmental issues in the 1960s and 1970s.

Two issues however emerged from the foregoing, being the consideration of the role of the state either as a state for the ruling class or for the civil society and, the state/society relationship. According to the notion of the developmental state, economic development was considered a state project. The developmental state was predicated on the assumption that the state would take the lead in promoting economic development, being that there was a less developed entrepreneurial class, the absence of a national capitalist class and due to the suspicion that foreign capital would accumulate wealth and not use it for the benefit of African countries (Simutanyi, 2006). Kenya at independence in 1963 reinforced the intention of the British colonial government to create an African bourgeoisie and African landed gentry. By the use of the land settlement schemes, which were mechanisms of the state and an instrument for the ruling class, Ake (1981:123) acknowledged that the Kenyan government at independence might have intended to assuage hunger, increase participation in the economy and consolidate their material base. By that unintended consequence became the reinforcement of the original intention of the British. Furthermore, after disclosing that such parallel development occurred in commerce and industry, Simutanyi (2006) argued that; these efforts to encourage indigenous capitalism were complemented by efforts to increase the intervention of the state in the economy particularly, by the creation of parastatals. The more of the economy they brought under the power of the state, the more they increased their economic power and leverage. The extension of state participation in the economy which was often justified in the name of African socialism in the pursuit of economic independence and the rationalization of the process of economic development, created an opportunity for the enrichment of the ruling class, by manipulation of appointment of officers of the parastatals, by influencing how the parastatals conducted their business and with whom they do so, etc.

Due to the role of the state, it is said to have an entrepot character especially as the Nigerian state has been particularly described. It developed into an entrepot state due to her political economy, which is typical of the African situation. This state is one which plays a major role in the distribution of financial resources, either loans or contracts, and/or it plays the role of a gatekeeper', mediating relations with foreign capital. Drawing further from Simutanyi (2006: 83-87), it is clear that the entrepot character of the Nigerian state has undermined whatever claim could be made of the Nigerian bureaucracy having a dirigiste role to play towards national development. This refers essentially to the political primacy of the bureaucracy, having the role or function of aggregating and regulating political institutions and that implicit also in its own privileged position, it has the role of deciding or influencing the course of development.

Furthermore, the entrepot state is unique in the contemporary world, since it possesses the interventionist powers of the liberal welfare state, enjoys the centralization of financial resources more appropriate to the state collectivist system, and yet fails to make effective use of the potential autonomy conferred by these powers and resources. Moreover, such a state order draws within itself the actual struggle for financial resources which normally obtains within civil society.

On the whole, however, the notion of the developmental state appears to have an attempt to establish state politics over popular politics. Given that by this conceptualization, the state has remained both authoritarian and paternalistic in developmental concerns, the state which was to direct development was assumed to know what the people really wanted. State

projects were, however, often at variance with the real needs of the people on the ground. The developmental state soon suffered a serious setback. The role of the state was discredited on account of incompetence, authoritarianism, corruption, and neo-patrimonialism. Issues associated with the development state such as the nationalization of products and inputs were all dismissed as not useful and undermining economic growth. Thus, the international development community called for the rolling back of the state, and liberalization of interest and currency rates. From the beginning of the 1980's therefore, African countries were urged to adopt neo-liberal economic policies, better known as structural adjustment programs (SAPs). The adoption of SAPs by African leaders with its political and social consequences, which had to be cushioned, necessitates the question: was SAP for the masses or the social elites? Considering also that in the 1960s and 1970s, the doctrine of indigenization had been embraced by African governments; does the adoption of SAP not contradict the efforts of the African state?

In addition to these contradictions, many African states had used authoritarian measures to impose and implement SAPs, though they were unpopular economic austerity measures. This abnormality was observed by Ake (1996:11).“ Strangely, the neoclassical paradigm prevailed and was not seriously questioned even as African economies continue to deteriorate. The growth rate in the manufacturing sector, which was 8.5% in 1960 – 1965, declined to 3.6% in 1980-1981 and to 0.4% in 1982-1983. The growth rate of the mining sector which was 18.5% in 1965 fell to -13.2% in 1981-82 and to -24.6% in 1982-1983. In agriculture, the growth rate declined from 1.4% in 1960 -1965 to 0.4% in 1982-1983. In the food sector, the growth rate declined from 1.6% in 1960-65 to 0.2% in 1982-83. Food self-sufficiency ratios dropped from 98% in the 1960s to 86% in 1980.

Simultanyi (2006) made it clear however that governments were more worried about the flows from international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank than the demands of their citizens. A capable state was now defined as one which could deal ruthlessly with organized opposition to economic reform. The legitimacy of the African state was eroded, as the gap or lack of connection between the state and civil society continued to widen. It became incontestably clear that the post-colonial state in Africa is weak, ineffective, and lacks legitimacy (Rojas, 1997). The African state avoids being alienated by the international development community, alienating its citizenry and their concerns, including the concerns of development.

The gap between the state and civil society is further observed in the failure of the various development strategies adopted by the state in transforming the social relations of production and the nature of state capitalism in Africa. It is also observed in the failure of various poverty alleviation policies and programs, implemented in the context of a general weak performance in capital formation. The state in Africa is therefore a state under the control of those who own and control the means of production. The interest of international capital thus continues to be served by the African states through their governments, which facilitate the creation and expropriation of surplus value from her populace.

In most African countries, Ake (1996: 128-129) asserts that,

There is really no state, liberal or autocratic. What exists is a public force that should be the state but that is only nominally so because it is essentially privatized. Being privatized, the so-called state is not able to rise above the struggles and conflicts of contending social groups. It becomes itself a contested terrain where contending parties vie for the appropriation of resources, including the power of the state. All this spells an unusually intense political competition, in which the stakes are so high that the situation is essentially lawless; politics is basically warfare, or at best anarchy of dedicated self-seeking.

In this context, the issues of national interest, public interest, or even public policy scarcely arise. When such thus exists, the struggle for state power aborts their realization. Development being a national issue is often trapped in the contradiction between the manifest and latent functions of policy. As policy formation and implementation turn to serve the interest of both foreign and indigenous elites in Africa. State power continues to be engaged in national development, but then, to the perpetuation of the crisis of development, as long as the nature and characters of African socio-economic formation remain untransformed.

### **Socio-Economic Formation in Africa**

The socioeconomic formation in Africa has three major groups. Among these, two have great potential for engendering the structural transformation of the African state, judging from history. Otherwise, an alignment between the fractions of the dominant group, among these two, with the other subordinate social classes is requisite for change to occur. The bourgeois class is noted to exist as the dominant among the three existing social classes, having the proletariat and the peasantry as subordinate classes. Each of these is not a homogeneous social entity, but has undergone some form of class differentiation either quantitatively or qualitatively as observed by Ake, in his "Political Economy of Africa, 1981. The peasantry may have witnessed the emergence of an agrarian capitalist class. The politicians, on the other hand, have experienced quantitative transformation, with the emergence of an informal sector (the lumpen proletariat). While the bourgeois has undergone significant class differentiation and stands to be the most inhomogeneous of these social entities, about six social types exist: Bourgeoisie who are bureaucrats, have accumulated wealth and as such, constitute an influential elite; commercial bourgeoisie exist either as low-level middlemen in exports or generally as marginal capitalists; other bourgeoisie exist as contractors or major agents to foreign capital. Then; bourgeoisie exists in the capital market, who mobilizes indigenous sources of capital; also, the bourgeoisie, who produce goods and services on a modest scale, exist and there also exists, the intellectual bourgeoisie, commonly known as the intelligentsia. Claude Ake, and Walter Rodney among others belong to this class.

It is necessary to consider the socio-economic formations in Africa because failure to do so will leave us with an incomplete understanding of the African state. They define the uniqueness of the state in Africa. Secondly, by considering them, it will become clear why leadership and governance by the dominant social elites in Africa, as a form of colonial state have continued to perpetuate the crisis of development through politics, even though they are a major agent for Africa's development and should serve to this end. In essence, only the socio-economic formation can develop and transform the state, in such a way that the fundamental goal of public power would revolve around the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number of the African populace.

However, the indigenous elites who became the new managers of state power were those associated with the apparatus of the state. As such, during the struggle for independence, material positions and the paraphernalia of office were their major motivations. This became contrary to the objectives of national liberation; integration and development. Especially that in their attempt to capture state power, they invoked regional, ethnic, tribal and religious sentiments. Subsequently, the struggle for power became self-absorbing. Thus, everything else including development was compromised.

Drawing further from Ake (1996), African elites through politics, marginalized the role of Africans in development. That the things they did at the very onset, (and continue to do by way of the accommodation of the interest of foreign capital), in other to hang on to power, also became impediments to development. These include the manipulation of ethnic and communal loyalties. In contemporary times, socio-political harmony has been sacrificed on the altar of ethnic politics or due to the ethnic factor, in countries such as Rwanda, Sudan, Kenya, and a host of others. Due to a lack of socio-political harmony, therefore, development and developmental issues, such as nation-building continue to elude African countries.

Besides, the most fundamental issues of adverse consequence to development were such that made the change in leadership, right from the onset, insignificant and not of much consequence. These are traceable to the contradictions that the comprador bourgeoisie who came into power, were not in control of the means of production. This contradiction is essential to understanding the general contradictions that determine the character of African social formation; namely, the comprador bourgeoisie had emerged as dominant class while the indigenous bourgeoisie were at their rudimentary stage of development. They consequently came into a relationship between political and economic power. Also, they were removed from production, yet made political decisions, including decisions on development strategies.

Secondly, African nationalist leaders who came to power had inherited a peripheral capitalist system, in which the efficient operationalization of the law of value and the development of productive forces, were negated by a lack of freedom and competitiveness in the colonial economy. This form of capitalism is characterized by primitive accumulation, which became typical of African leaders. This constitutes an impediment to development;

Thirdly, capitalism was an enclave phenomenon in Africa, which bequeathed a dual economy on African leadership. This was essential for the exploitation and repatriation of surplus by the colonizer. Majorly, the domestic economy existed for the export led economy and therefore it was not articulated. The task of having to foster complementary relations between sectors and regions of the domestic economy, by African leadership, without the control of the dominant means of production at the domestic level (i.e. technical know-how and industrialization), was and has remained a contradiction. The challenge of development in Africa therefore continuous to include the urban bias by African leaders;

Fourthly, class struggle in Africa largely has not become decisive in a majority of African countries. It cannot be mediated by the state to the interest of African society. It however should be to the contrary, owing to the contradiction between the interest of the subordinate class, who depend on the domestic economy (the agricultural economy) and have continued to suffer marginalization and alienation, is often not in agreement with the interest of the class in rulership, which has continued to place emphasis on appropriation rather than production and therefore on politics rather than economics; and also with the interest of foreign capital, which often than not, is in consonance with that of the hegemonic class in

rulership. Ultimately, therefore, it is the interest of the subordinate class, which is represented by conditions that constitute the objective needs for development that are negated, due to the accommodation between African elites and foreign capital.

The condition of production and exchange of peasant agricultural produce; the condition of wage labour and income disparity; the enclave character of colonial capitalism, which still persists; the problem of the penetration and articulation of state structures at the grassroots level of African societies constitute the objective needs of development. Apart from these, the weak and undeveloped nature of civil society gives rise consequently to a wide variety of problems including the problem of democracy, mass mobilization and development. But much more, it remains weak because class consciousness has not been developed, due to factors such as ethnicity and other primordial loyalties which have mediated class struggle from taking a decisive form and character.

### **Political Leadership**

A major problem of Africa is the nature of the leaders that have ruled the country, be they civilian or military. Political Leadership refers to the ruling class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the territory through different decision-making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory. It embraces the totality of the political class that has the capacity to manipulate the machinery of government even from behind the scene. Political leadership class is the driving force for any developmental progress to take place in any society making use of the productive forces and once the leadership is not focused, the productive forces will be destroyed thereby hindering development.

Consequently, when the political leadership class of a country espouses corruption, it becomes difficult for it to act positively to the benefit of the state and its citizens. This has been the situation in most African states since independence; like Nigeria. The political leadership class, in its quest to secure or retain power, suppress opposition, and have access to unlimited funds for personal use, has sacrificed positive leadership on the altar of corruption. The failure of political leadership class has inevitably become a major clog in the quest for sustainable growth and development. It is the single most critical impediment to achieving the basic developmental needs of Nigeria; and like a deadly virus, it attacks the vital structures and systems that engender progressive functioning of the society. Like most developing countries, Nigeria is still grappling with the dilemma of political leadership that has largely retarded social development, undermined economic growth, discouraged foreign investments and reduced the resources available for infrastructural development, public service, and poverty reduction programs (Dike 2013).

It must also be mentioned here that Nigeria's post-independence political bureaucratic and military elites had terribly pillaged the nation's commonwealth and national patrimony with impunity, thereby denying Nigerians access to economic prosperity and quality living condition. Consequently, this situation makes it inevitable for development to take place as expected. All these depict how the main obstacles to development in Africa are political.

### **Conclusion**

African leaders took the path of capitalist development, unknown to them that it was the path to the development of underdevelopment, which had been structurally determined. However, it was their weak political will that occasioned it. It increasingly became difficult for them to gain control over their economies as their development quest took them deep into dependent

development. Economic factors also are critical factors that account for the crisis and the issue of Africans dependence on primary commodities. These notwithstanding, the politics played by African leaders most especially by bad governance using state power have remained the dominant factor that accounts for the crisis of development in Africa. However, the way out of the problem is still political as can be seen below.

### **Recommendations**

Development is a collective enterprise. Thus, its strategies are not made and implemented in a political vacuum. Every development strategy is contextualized in a particular state, social structure, culture, and meaning. It implies a structure of politics, but also influences political interactions, practices and outcomes. As such, there should be a change in the attitude of leaders given our environment. Our politics should consider our state, social structure, and culture. Thus, the ideological character of most African states should change so that the state can support research for industrial development in Africa. African countries can develop in the context of democratic politics (Ake, 1996). Political leadership should involve the mobilization of the civil society without which the task of political participation would be impossible.

Also, people have to be self-reliant. Self - reliance in the context of development, is about responsibility for producing a development project and the resources to carry through. Embracing self- reliance is the real revolution of development in Africa. African leaders prefer a cozy accommodation with dependence over the rigors of self – reliance and they have usually increased dependence through their policies and behavior instead of reducing it. Thus, to realize development, self-reliance has to be practiced at all levels. From the level of national policies and the relationship between states, it must be spread to the level of regions, federal units (where they exist), communities, and households. No matter how difficult it may seem to achieve self-reliance, when it is taken seriously at every level, development will become feasible. This self-reliance also requires confidence (Ake, 1996).

In addition, there should be the self-realization of the people rather than alienation. Alienation in which creations of humanity appear to humans as alien objects and such creations are seen as independent from their creators and invested with the power to control them. people loose themselves and became strangers in the world in which they were created; they become alienated. If the people possess their own development, the development process will not turn into an exercise in alienation as has been the case in much of African countries..

Corruption in all its extensions and ramifications must be stamped out through the development of genuine institutional frameworks that will bring corrupt leaders and officials to book. The civil society must also contribute to the fight against corruption and must be allowed to make input in public policies.

The state should live up to its social responsibility of providing social services without which the economy cannot grow or function properly. Education must be made compulsory and if possible free because it is a weapon against poverty.

The peasantry should be protected and assisted through loans and expert advice in relation to production. In this respect, the infrastructure of the rural areas should be improved upon to cut down the role of the middlemen. Storage facilities must be developed locally and peasant cooperatives should be encouraged and supported economically and politically so that the peasant household income can grow.



With the above recommendations, it should be noted that development is something that people do by themselves and for themselves, or it does not happen. The people of Africa will have to empower themselves to repossess their own development, a formidable task. Only a successful struggle for the repossession will finally remove the obstacles that have until now grounded the development project (Ake, 1996).

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