

# DEVELOPMENT AID ISSUES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AFRICA

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## **1. Development Aid in General:**

**Is a State under any Obligation to Given Aid to Another State?**

*Philosophy of development aid* tries to answer this question by applying the distinction between “positive economics” and “normative economics”, whereby the latter utilizes findings of the former for recommending ethically appropriate actions and the rational reorganization and redistribution of resources. The principles of sovereignty and national supererogation protect citizens from foreigners, and so a state may help another state, if it so decides, and a donour has a right to set time and terms of the donation. In this regard, what is applicable is international charity<sup>1</sup>. Charity is one of the ethical principles in the practice of foreign aid. More important, there is “the right to a human minimum”, or “the inherent rights of persons”, a universal moral right that imposes an obligation on every person, regardless of race or state, to ensure its enforcement. The right to a human minimum is the basis for a justified demand by anybody that the world, not just relatives, friends, or society has the duty to ensure that he or she is not denied healthy and meaningful life. So, aid from the haves to the have nots is a fulfillment of the global ethical obligation to enforce the latter’s right to a human minimum<sup>2</sup>.

## **2. Advantages and Disadvantages**

a) *Advantages*: can help the economy to take off.

- Some governments assume aid to be a right and budget taking it for granted.
- Affluent countries, Non Governmental Organizations, among other bodies are ever busy with development aid.
- Development aid policies and activities abound.

b) *Disadvantages*: - dependence syndrome.

- .....- strings attached
- .....- hidden agenda, etc.

## **3. Impact of Development Aid:**

- without aid, many poor countries would collapse
- some currently affluent countries once depended on aid to recover and now give aid to others.

## **4. Africa:**

The issue is neither whether development aid is necessary nor whether there is an obligation to give this aid or not. Rather, the issue is why development aid has made miracles in many parts of the world, but failed to work in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Shue, “The Universality of Human Rights” in Ionna Kucuradi, ed. (1981) *Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights*. Ankara.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Odera Oruka (1997) *Practical Philosophy In Search of an Ethical Minimum*. Nairobi: East African Publishers.

a) *Not enough aid is given:*

- Jeffrey D. Sachs “the lack of aid is contributing to a cascade of instability and security threats in impoverished countries such as Somalia. We are spending \$550 billion per year on the military, against just \$4 billion for Africa. Our African aid, incredibly, is less than three days of Pentagon spending, a mere \$13 per American per year, and the equivalent of just 3 cents per \$100 of US national income! The neglect has been bipartisan. The Clinton administration allowed aid to Africa to languish at less than \$2 billion per year throughout the 1990s.”

b) *Aid is wrongly given out:*

- William Easterly attacks foreign aid in his book, *The White Man’s Burden*, but agrees, “we should put the focus back where it belongs: get the poorest people in the world such obvious goods as the vaccines, the antibiotics, the food supplements, the improved seeds, the fertilizer, the roads, the boreholes, the water pipes, the textbooks, and the nurses. This is not making the poor dependent on handouts; it is giving the poorest people the health, nutrition, education, and other inputs that raise the payoff to their own efforts to better their lives”.

c) *The modern African state is to blame:*

- i) Paul Collier<sup>3</sup> gives evidence to demonstrate that corruption, nepotism, poor management, ignorance, among other problems of the modern African state are to blame for the failure of development aid to achieve its objectives.
- ii) Martin Meredith<sup>4</sup> by the 1960s, when Africa became independent, the economy was booming, but soon collapsed, thanks to the Africans themselves.

d) *Those who blame the West for Deliberately under-developing Africa:*

- i) Walter Rodney<sup>5</sup>
  - definitions of development and underdevelopment
  - capitalism
  - slave - trade
  - colonialism and imperialism
  - apartheid
  - neo-colonialism, etc.“Disengagement”
- ii) Thomas Pogge<sup>6</sup>
  - deliberate keeping the prices of African raw materials low
  - not enough opening of Western markets to African goods
  - lack of level ground for competition with the West, e. g. in the case of subsidizing Western farmers and barring Africa from doing the same, etc.

“Create competitive avenues for African farmers, pay the right prices for African goods, i. e. conditions for genuine trade, compensate Africa for the exploitation, etc.

e) *Other Alleged Causes of Underdevelopment*

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<sup>3</sup>Paul Collier (2008) *The Bottom Billion. Why Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Meredith (2005) *The State of Africa. A History of Fifty Years of Independence*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball

<sup>5</sup> Walter Rodney (1973) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Pogge (11<sup>th</sup> September, 2003) “*What is Global Justice?*” Oslo.

- i) Poor landscape and land use
- ii) Disease
- iii) Ethnicity
- iv) Wars and armed conflicts
- v) Lack of Science and Technology
- vi) Conversion Theories ( Magic, Concept of Time, Tempels<sup>7</sup> and Mbiti<sup>8</sup>)

vii. Cultural unilateralism vis-à-vis relativism.

Viii) The tripartite relationship of capitalism, the sovereign, and law.

ix) The African traditional concept of property: communal ownership. Therefore, land planning for use and development is limited.

x) Globalization as re-colonization

xi) World views and related attempted explanations of 'Metaphysical Realities'.

N.B. I wasted no time on "*racist/justification theories*"<sup>9</sup>

## 5. Criticisms

### Western underdevelopment of Africa:

- a) *Rodney*:
  - i) Capitalism and the concomitant colonialism:
    - Capitalism is not totally negative. It has a positive side. The West itself has suffered from negative capitalism and reacted by creating mechanisms to control it. At the same time, the West has used the positive side to develop. Therefore, Rodney's suggested solution of "disengagement" ends up being redundant.
    - Colonialism is not an African monopoly. Many other parts have suffered colonial rule only to emerge out of it and become super powers.
  - ii) Apartheid is a world-wide phenomenon and could be more marked elsewhere than in Africa.
  - iii) Population:
    - Depletion of population has also taken place elsewhere. More important, it is not numbers but quality that matters. Africa has big populations. There are many Western countries with far less population giving aid to the gigantic continent.

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<sup>7</sup> Placid Tempels (1959) *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Presence Africaine.

<sup>8</sup> Mbiti, John Samuel (1969) *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann.

<sup>9</sup> Marienne Cornevin (1980) *Apartheid: Power and Historical Justification*. Oxford University Press. Cornevin exposes the "myths" concocted by apartheid architects in South Africa just to use them in controlling and exploiting the people.

- Skill is the problem. But, this, too, is only partly correct. Almost each African country produces thousands of University graduates per year, to say nothing of other tertiary institutions.
- Proper planning and policies matter. If all these highly skilled people were to be properly utilized, the story would, certainly, be different.

a) *Pogge:*

- i) Trade: The issue of trade is excellent. Africa needs more trade than hand outs. The problem is that the hand outs are the order of the day, and this calls for an explanation.
- ii) Compensation: This issue first attracts legal problems, and might end up profiting the exploiters even more as compensation can mean anything, and as negotiating and enforcing it may end up being a different story. Second, it attracts attention to the capacity of Africa. For compensation to make sense, Africa must be in position to negotiate with the West at an equal footing.
- iii) Aid: if the accusation of failure to use aid properly stands, what miracle is expected to happen with compensation?

### **Underdevelopment of Africa by Africans**

a) *Meredith:*

- i) Meredith's analysis is correct, but he limits himself to 50 years without factoring in serious cases of colonialism which could not have ended abruptly, and which had made indissoluble marks on colonies.
- ii) He ignores the reality of even worse interference through neo-colonialism, multinationalism, international bodies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, among others.
- iii) He disregards the external planning and execution of the various coup d'états and the subsequent foreign supported military dictatorships in Africa, together with other facts of sabotage ever since independence.
- iv) He does not refer to the fact that the collapse of the so called sound economy inherited at the end of colonization in the 1960s can also be blamed on similar interference, the transfer of money and business from newly independent states, and even sabotage. All these combined become highly responsible for the 'failing' and 'failed' modern African states.

b) *Collier:*

- i) There is no doubt that Collier's findings are correct.
- ii) However, like Meredith, he decides to "tell the truth but tell it slant".
- iii) Collier pays more attention to corrupt regimes than foreign forces that make use of them.

- iv) He has access to full information but opts to provide biased details of how much African corrupt rulers bank and the wrong methods they use.
- v) More important, however, his suggested solution of “forcefully removing the ‘undesirable’ regimes” is a mere repetition of the notorious ‘regime change policy’. It is a repeat of the crippling ‘top – bottom approach’. Africa needs to be given enough latitude to solve its problems. Elimination of leaders or even rulers who have vital information does not help Africa. Usually, the violent removal of a regime does not stop with the single act of removal. Continued suspicion, hatred, and even violence are good news to those who need to sell their arms and to gain from the confusion.

c) *Other Views*

i) *Landscape and Land Use*

- First, Africa has seasons and the landscape that cut across the globe. In certain areas the land and climate are so good that the whole of Africa and beyond can depend on them for agricultural products.
- Second, comparatively, even those parts described as poor are by far better than those in certain parts of the world where efforts have been made to make the best out of them.
- Third, if Africa made a combined effort to utilize all the land and climate it is endowed with, hardly any other part in the world would be able to compete with them.

ii) *Disease*

- First, diseases, like other problems are not Africa’s business alone. Other societies have controlled the diseases or have learnt how to manage and live with them.
- Second, the fact that “the greatest mortality in Africa arises from preventable water-borne diseases, which affects infants and young children greater than any other group” and that “the principal cause of these diseases is the regional water crisis, or lack of safe drinking water primarily stemming from mixing sewage and drinking water supplies” clearly shows lack of care or inability of the state. This accusation is supported by further observation that “clean potable water is rare in most of Africa (even those parts outside the sub-Saharan region) despite the fact that the continent is crossed by several major rivers and contains some of the largest freshwater lakes in the world”.
- Third, the prevalence of AIDS in Africa where it is alleged that 3,000 Africans die each day of AIDS and an additional 11,000 are infected, and that less than one percent are actually treated, still points an accusing finger at the state.
- Fourth, the argument that for every one University graduate in Africa Europe produces seven may be statistically correct. However, there are, all the same, too

many well qualified people that are not well employed or employed at all. So, the underdevelopment problem in Africa cannot be due to lack of educated people.

iii) *Ethnicity*

- First, I find that there is no country, whether developed, developing, or stagnant that is free of ethnicity. A nation-state is a rare commodity. So, if other countries such as Belgium, China, Japan, India, and many others have developed, with so marked ethnicity, why not Africa?
- Secondly, even when the suggested solutions apply, the all important idea of systems and structures that allow accountability cannot be circumvented. I argue for accountability not only by the state but at whatever level a public office, or any office of responsibility exists. Checks and balances are required at every level of administration and management, whether in the public or private sector. Federalism, consociationalism, cessation, or any other organization must have a clear system and strong institutions that culminate in the rule of law if they have to benefit the people.

iv) *Wars and armed conflicts*

- Wars and armed conflicts have led to the very high expenditure on arms. They have destroyed the infra-structure, the environment, and killed or maimed the human resources. They have caused unnecessary suffering, anxiety, diseases, forced migrations, living in camps for years, famine, poverty, and interfered with productive work. Thus, they have heavily contributed to underdevelopment.
- Three major issues emerge: -real causes of wars and armed conflicts  
.....-affordability  
.....-role of law made according to Western experience

v) *Technology*

- Backwardness and lack of science and technology are, unquestionably, big problems in Africa. But, these cannot be the root cause of underdevelopment. They are aspects of underdevelopment and cannot be their own explanation. There must be deeper reasons that account for them and other aspects. Every society has developed from this type of backwardness. Why is it resilient in Africa? The key to this question would be to find out what these others have done that Africa has failed to do.
- An attempted answer shows that in the 1970s economists predict African countries such as Ghana to be the future economic giants, not China, India, Brazil, among other successful economies today.

## 6. Conclusion

From the above views, three major things stand out:

First, the suggested solutions to the problem of underdevelopment in Africa make a lot of sense.

Second, none of them resolves the issue of underdevelopment. Not even all combined. That the problem remains stubbornly intact calls for yet another approach to the real explanation and the correct solution.

Third, the root cause of underdevelopment in Africa comes out strongly as the state.

A country's essence may be defined by the state not the natural or even human resources. I contend that trying to solve underdevelopment problems without addressing issues that adversely affect the modern state in Africa is merely postponing these problems or even entrenching them. So, in dealing with development and underdevelopment problems, I find that state issues must take priority. The state, therefore, answers the concerns of the subtitle of my book: 'root causes and lasting solutions'.

## 6. Recommendations

### Lasting Solutions:

#### i) *Reforms*

Concurrent Economic and Political Reforms for True Independence: Africa has inherited almost all modern institutions, including social, political, economic, educational, health, etc. Many were created to serve colonial countries.

#### ii) *Participation*

Colonial methods of management and administration have persisted, particularly the 'top – bottom approach'. International bodies, stronger States, among other organizations dictate terms to modern African States which, in turn, dictate to the people.

#### iii) *State capacity Reconsideration*

The monarchical concept of government created by thinkers such as Machiavelli, and turned into a 'monster' by Max Weber. It gained even more weight through thinkers such as Howard Handelman<sup>10</sup> who views mercantilism as having set the precedent of assigning the state the responsibility of being in full control of a country's economy, Martin Staniland<sup>11</sup> who asserts that "government is both the source and beneficiary of economic growth", and the Marxist reaction to capitalism by giving the state full ownership of the means of production. This idea of a centralized economy is partly recognized by Keynes who, due to the Great Depression, accepted government intervention.

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<sup>10</sup> Howard Handelman (2009) *The Challenge of Third World Development*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition New Jersey: Prentice Hall, pp. 284 - 285

<sup>11</sup> Martin Staniland (1985) *What Is Political Economy?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p.6

Later, when even great economies like USA under Reagan and Britain under Thatcher realized that the State could not handle everything and abandoned the project of state full control of their countries' economy, poor African States which depended on aid from these countries stuck to the project.

*iv) Strong Institutions*

A 'strong' state is necessary. While this, in the West, is characterized by strong institutions, both public and private, in Africa a 'strong' State refers to dictatorship. In the final analysis it is, indeed, very weak as it is susceptible to arm-twisting. This explains why exploiters prefer this type of state. It is more at their service than at the service of the people.

In the West there is a distinction between state power and those who wield it. This serves as the measure to discern performers and non-performers. People are in power to serve and not to be served. No foreign forces will use the people's governments at will, contrary to Africa where governments serve themselves and their foreign masters to the detriment of the people.

*v) Foreign Interference Curtailment*

In the effort to get accomplices, all those who want to improperly benefit from Africa get out of their way to support individual leaders and regimes, not because they are competent, but because they are ready to obey orders. This has ranged from hand picking leaders in preparation for independence, toppling those who did not toe the line, discrediting African independence through supporting incapable, corrupt, and whoever fitted their description. The policy of regime change appears to be in place for this purpose, not for the good of Africa. There is clear evidence to show that many wars, armed conflicts, mismanagement of the state, corruption, and the subsequent 'failing or failed states' have been in one way or another orchestrated. In this sense, Rodney's analysis still stands.

*vi) Struggle for True Independence*

It must be Africa to free Africa. Africa needs to 'lift the veil', see where it has been deliberately forced to go wrong, acknowledge its own mistakes, and start afresh to initiate and fully participate in political, economic, and other reforms required for development.

*vii) Role of State as more of a Planner than a Provider*

The modern state is the key to everything. It is the key to development or underdevelopment because it holds, or is supposed to hold, the power to plan and manage the country. Africa's big challenge has been to sustain and adjust the inherited public sector institutions. Like other institutions, these institutions were originally put in place to facilitate colonial administration. Therefore, true independence would mean adjusting them to suit national needs. I argue that it is this challenge that underlies the underdevelopment phenomenon in Africa because the other institutions depend on the government policies to be able to work. Whoever controls the government controls all other institutions and the country as a whole.



According to Duncan Green<sup>12</sup> an effective state is a state that can guarantee security and the rule of law, and can design and implement an effective strategy to ensure inclusive economic growth. Such a state should be accountable to citizens and able to guarantee their rights. This is what is desirable in Africa.

*viii) Lessons from Comparison of Western and African Modern State*

First, the comparative methodology of the modern state in the Western and African basically demonstrates how the former has controlled and used capitalism while the latter is controlled and being used by the same –ism.

Second, the comparison brings out the strength of the West and the weakness of Africa. This strength lies in the effective and efficient systems of administration and management together with the strong and viable institutions that are absent in Africa.

Third, there are African values that still accord humanity due recognition and respect. These are enviable assets which Africa must guard jealously and use to defend herself against the prevailing disvalues.

Fourth, African traditional education which underlines social and human values needs to be retained along with academic education that can easily produce academic giants who are moral dwarfs. Any other system of education that promotes education for edification needs to be promoted. Education that merely imparts knowledge and skills can be disastrous. A learned person, without moral values, for example, can easily be worse than an animal when she or he deliberately wrongly applies the right skills in corrupt activities for selfish ends, malice, impunity, or any other misguided and destructive misdeeds.

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<sup>12</sup> Duncan Green (2008) *From Poverty to Power*. How Active Citizens and effective States Can Change the World. Oxfam International, p. 502