



Why Africa Remains Underdeveloped Despite its Potential? Which Theory can Help Africa to Develop?



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Abstract

Africa is rich in natural as well as human resources which are the basis for the prosperity of a given nation. Despite its potential the continent is still underdeveloped. Different scholars have tried to analyze the root causes of under development in Africa in different perspective. Some from the colonization perspective and others from the political set up of the continent. Based on this rational, we were initiated to review different literatures to identify the real causes of poverty in Africa, and to recommend an appropriate development theory for the continent. The socio political set up of African countries has a similarity with those of the East Asian nations which have brought economic progress through exercising developmental state. These countries were able to solve their citizens' unemployment through implementing technical education in their education policy, which is the peculiar feature of developmental state. Therefore, African leaders have to strive for change in the continent to reverse the situation through applying developmental state theory and gradually in a way of exercising democratic culture in the region.

Introduction

Africa is rich in gold, diamonds, oil and many other coveted natural resources. Yet it has not managed to capitalize on its wealth: its infrastructure is underdeveloped, its economies are small and unsophisticated, and its people languish in poverty [1]. Africa's economic performance remains dismal and prospects for the new millennium are bleak. The continent, consisting of 54 countries, is the least developed continent of the Third World despite its possessing immense wealth of mineral and natural resources. Compared with the third world, development indicators of Africa have lagged persistently behind. For example, in 1997, GDP per capita for Africa was \$560, compared to \$4,230 for Latin America and \$730 for Asia. Economic growth rates in Africa in the 1970's averaged only 4 to 5 percent while Latin America recorded a 6 and 7 percent growth rate. From 1986 to 1993 the continent's real GNP per capita declined 0.7 percent, while the average for the Third World increased by 2.7 percent. For all Africa, real income per capita dropped by 14.6 percent from its level in 1965, making most Africans worse off than they were at independence [2].

Countries of the west landes asserts prospered early through the interplay of a vital, open society focused on work and knowledge, which led to increased productivity, the creation of new technologies, and the pursuit of change. Europe's key advantage lay in invention and know-how, as applied in war, transportation, generation of power, and skill in metalwork. Even such now banal inventions as eyeglasses and the clock were, in their day, powerful levers that tipped the balance of world economic power. Today's new economic winners are following much the same roads to

power, while the laggards have somehow failed to duplicate this crucial formula for success. The key to relieving much of the world's poverty lies in understanding the lessons history has to teach - lessons uniquely imparted in this towering work of history.

This world is divided roughly into three kinds of nations: those that spend lots of money to keep their weight down; those whose people eat to live; and those whose people don't know where the next meal is coming from. Along with these differences go sharp contrasts in disease rates and life expectancy. The people of the rich nations worry about their old age, which gets ever longer. They exercise to stay fit, measure and fight cholesterol, while away the time with television, telephone, and games, and console themselves with such euphemisms as "the golden years" and the troisième âge. "Young" is good; "old," disparaging and problematic. Meanwhile the people of poor countries try to stay alive. They do not have to worry about cholesterol and fatty arteries, parity because of lean diet, parity because they die early. They try to ensure a secure old age, if old age there be, by having lots of children who will grow up with a proper sense of filial obligation [3].

The old division of the world into two power blocs, east and west, has subsided. Now the big challenge and threat is the gap in wealth and health that separates rich and poor. These are often styled north and south, because the division is geographic; but a more accurate signifier would be the west and the rest, because the division is also historic. Here is the greatest single problem and danger facing the world of the third millennium. The only other worry that comes close is environmental deterioration, and the two

are intimately connected, indeed are one. They are one because wealth entails not only consumption but also waste, not only production but also destruction. It is this waste and destruction, which has increased enormously with output and income that threatens the space we live and move in [3].

Objectives

- a) To give some rationales on the under development of Africa
- b) To identify some factors on how Africa remain poor

Methodologies

This paper is based on the literatures in the area of development and in addition on personal understanding perspectives of the author. Furthermore, Wikipedia and encyclopedia have been used for accomplishing this review.

Literature Review

How rich countries became rich and why poor countries remain poor?

The study of the reasons why some countries achieve sustained growth that allows them to develop while many others cannot do it and seem not to be able to progress has been at the core of economics since the days of the founding fathers of the discipline (i.e., Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, and their critic, Marx), whose concern was the study of the determinants of the wealth of nations.

Explaining why most countries in the world are in some sort of economic trap is not easy. Standard growth models like the Harrod (1939), Domar (1946), Solow (1956), or the myriad of endogenous growth models developed since the 1980s somehow address the question of why some countries achieve sustained growth while some others cannot do it, but they were not conceived with the objective of explaining differences between developed and developing countries, and much less explaining why so many countries in the world are trapped [4]. Africa today is underdeveloped in relation to western Europe and a few other parts of the world; and that the present position has been arrived at, not by the separate evolution of Africa on the one hand and Europe on the other, but exploitation. As is well known, Africa has had prolonged and extensive contact with Europe, and one has to bear in mind that contact between different societies changes their respective rates of development [5].

Besides political and social reasons, the absence of economic growth is in part of due to detrimental geography that impacts on the economy. But in many cases, oil rich African countries are also more likely to be exploited by other countries or powerful corporations who always find a way to not pay much needed taxes. In most developing countries, disparities pose the problem of redistribution of wealth, but many African countries are simply too poor which have nothing to redistribute in financial terms. For instance, UK's involvement in the exploitation of Africa's minerals, oil and gas resources are highly aggravating. This leaves African countries losing tens of billions every year, higher than some

countries' GDP. Whilst Africa is stripped bare of its resources and of its revenues, leaving it poorer still, it still remains one of the main beneficiaries of British aid [6]. Mining companies are aggressively working in resource rich countries of Zambia, South Africa, Namibia, Ethiopia and others. Most of the western governments' are against the processing of these minerals in Africa, rather opting for processing abroad. Surprisingly these companies are working against human rights, inhumanely. For example we can take the Acid plant in Zambia. This is even without proper taxation for the host nations where raw materials are available. Labour violations, human rights abuses and environmental degradation that is currently taking place by this companies [6].

Why Africa Remains Poor?

As it has been said repeatedly the continent is really rich in natural resource, has huge human capital and diverse socioeconomic background but the word poor is still tagged for the continent which is really frustrating. Different literatures in the area of development wrote different contrasting reasons, some stated that Africa is not rich in natural resource as one believes and others on the other hand stressed that Africa is very rich in mineral and natural resource with favourable economic situation that can lead to prosperity. Most probably the third groups puts African leaders as guilty for the under development of the continent. The scholars from Europe usually tend to blame the leaders of Africa. These scholars put reasons for the under development of Africa with a special focus on blaming its leaders, people's working habit, geography and tropic diseases. While other are not confident on the resources that the continent are endowed, even believing that Africa has poor soil which couldn't feed its population. Both groups viewed the problem from the Eurocentric view of analysis.

The second view, which may probably fall under the non-euro centric ideologist, claim that the continent has an immense, huge potential, nearly the home of minerals. They argued that the root cause of impoverishment in continent is highly correlated with extreme exploitation by the European countries. This over exploitation goes beyond the natural resources like minerals, rather towards their people's labor. Despite its potential, the reasons for the impoverishments of the continent are discussed broadly below.

Lack of political commitment

African poor economic performance is highly due to bad choices made by African leaders, then we have to ask: Why have those leaders made those choices? The key reason is that Africans and the international community have enabled them to do so. The former have typically believed that they lacked the means to change the status quo, whereas the latter have been too ready to "help" Africa for reasons ranging from self-interest to altruism and pity [7]. African leaders are highly reluctant to change and bring new ideas. They are mostly unable to accept new policies which are compatible with the regions resources. Rulers in the continent have been and are still being served as a weapon of politics for foreign and powerful governments rather than focusing on domestic prosperity in the corresponding countries. Development policies

and strategies are not in the way that its people can be benefited. Unless the African leaders become committed to improve their nation, the continent will remain under development.

Religion

Africa is highly diverse in culture, tradition, religion and ways of life. Despite diversity is known as unity, Africa's diversity has been a source of conflict for civil war. This condition has diverted the attention of governments from development to security.

Institutions

Institutions are the basic elements to bring a sustained and desirable change what we usually call it as development. Strong and well structure institutions contribute for the development of a given country, on the other hand poor designed institutions will result under development even though a given region has enough resources required for economic development. Usually institutions in the African continent are mostly characterized by bureaucratic process in which there are corrupted officials and professionals. This has its own effect in the implementation of strategies and policies and brings difficulties to serve for the people.

Geography

Geography played an important role even though it is not the only factor for development. In this regard most of the African countries are land locked which makes them less competitive in the international trade.

Cross border conflict and terrorism

Peace and security are a prerequisite for development and all human beings aspire and deserve them. All people also aspire for happiness and a quality of life devoid of poverty and indignity. Yet for the last three decades many African states have hardly enjoyed internal peace and security. State oppression by dictatorial rulers, especially during the Cold War, precipitated a prevalent culture of fear and silence which gave a semblance of peace in many countries. The outcry of citizens over gross violations of human rights was minimized against the background of civil wars which raged in countries like Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Angola, Mozambique and Liberia. Oppressive governments elsewhere in Africa were portrayed as benign and progressive and their countries were projected as secure, peaceful and prosperous islands even as their dissenting citizens were silenced in detentions, police cells and torture chambers. The Cold War was used by the superpowers and their allies to justify the tolerance of political and economic oppression and violation of the rights of citizens who dissented.

But those were the days of the Cold War and misinformation and misrepresentation of Africa was part of the War. This misrepresentation gave an excuse to those who imported arms and land mines which have been used to destroy millions of lives in Africa. The carnage goes on in Somalia, Rwanda, and Liberia and in the streets of many cities. People of Africa continue to be sacrificed so that some factories may stay open, earn capital and save jobs. The Cold War was not cold in Africa. There, it precipitated some of the most devastating internal wars as African friends and foes of

the superpowers fought it out for economic and political control. Support for the wars came from the superpowers and their allies, with much of the support coming in form of aid.

When the Cold War ended in the late 1989 many African rulers did not change with the wind. As is evident in many countries, authoritarian rulers are still holding onto power tenaciously, with some dragging their citizens into internal conflicts, wars and terror thereby diverting human and material resources towards the wars and internal security of those in power. The continent owns diverse culture, traditions, beliefs and at the same time immense natural resources especially in the horn of Africa, cross border conflict and war has become common for a long period of time. The respective governments have wanted their effort and time conflict resolution to bring peace and stability in the region.

Some countries are highly affected by terrorism while others are doing on poverty alleviation and prosperity. For example we can take Ethiopia, the country is investing its human resource to bring peace and stability in Somalia and south Sudan. Why Ethiopia took the lead to bring stable Africa, is that because of it has the capacity? Is it to defend the risk from conflict? Is peace and stability is the issue of Ethiopia only? This really a hard issue to react. Developed nations are only appreciating Ethiopia for the effort in south Sudan and Somalia. The issue of safeguarding Africa is a burden on Ethiopia while others are doing their business. With this and other factors the divergence between the developed nations and the poor countries goes on for a long period of time. Even though there are progresses in some African countries, it is not at the required level to change the existing scenario.

Colonialism

Colonial history can be expressed as one of the dark spot for Africa. Europeans are really guilty enough in this manner. Except our country, Ethiopia, and Liberia, the continent has been fallen under the colonialism of Europe. Europeans had their mission with a primary focus on exploiting not only the natural resource of Africa but also the people of Africa as a labor. Colonialism has left Africa with psychological damage of its people which cannot be cured like the physical damage. What they call it the white people has established their continent's economy with the cheap most probably unpaid black labor and the virgin natural resources like land and minerals. Surprisingly there is a correlation between GDP level and ethnicity, at macro level exist primarily because it happened to be lighter ethnic groups of western Europe that were the colonisers at the colonization period, while it happened to be darker ethnic groups of Sub-Saharan Africa that where the enslaved ones [8]. They have stolen not only the physical resources of the continent but also our history and culture. What they are actually doing is that giving their culture and devastating our good cultures. By that time natural resources have been exploited and transported to the European countries.

Concluding Remarks

Africa continent are blessed with plenty land which contain a lot of minerals and also the fertile land which enables the productions

of the cash crops for their mother industries. Unfortunately these areas fall under the umbrella of those agents of colonialism like missionaries, traders, and explorers and their main aim is to get raw materials, areas for investments, markets are for their population surplus and soon this is due to industrial revolution in Europe. Most of the rules of the continent are not doing their best for striving the continent beyond extending their domestic political power. The economic and trade relation with the rest of the world are not based on the comparative benefit of the poor rather characterized by the European domination to be used as a weapon for political championship.

At different time different development theories have been developed by different advocators and economists from the Latine America and Europe. From many of the theories, Modernization theory was advocated by the Europeans with the basic idea that the developing countries to be prospered have to follow a similar growth stages kept by this theory. These stages were known as the Rostows growth stages. For the country to develop, its society has to undergo a transition from traditional society to modern society. However, this theory has faced the following critics;

1. It doesn't take geographical differences very seriously,
2. The conceptualization of development has a western bias,
3. It doesn't consider the ability of some to influence what happens in other countries.

To fill the critics of this model the new development theory which is known as dependency theory has been introduced the development arena of the world. In contrast with modernization theory, dependency theory advocates that developing countries should be a temporarily dissociated from international trade through establishing heavy industries by themselves. It stresses that international trade is a weapon for exploiting developing countries y the advanced nations. But in this 21st century, disassociation from the globalized world market may not be possible for developing countries since they have become more dependent than ever. Though the above stated theories have their own strengths, neither of them have failed to help develop Africa.

Recommendation

Which development theory is best for Africa?

The continent has been implementing different development policies which may fall under different umbrella of development theories. The above ones are some of them, but these theories couldn't help Africa to develop. Therefore the continent economy has to be designed in the other development theory. The best development theory for our continent is the development state theory. Developmental State theory; the theory conceptualized first by Chalmers Johnson in 1980s. The success of state-led economic development in 1970s and 1980s in East Asia gave rise to the growth of a new perspective in the development discourse, namely the developmental state approach. Developmental state is characterized by development-oriented political leadership bound

together by a powerful economic and political ideology focused on development. The above discussed theories i.e. dependency and modernization theories were developed during the post war development era. By that time Europe and the North America have able to bring an astonishing economic performance.

To argue with the idea of developmental state theory, this theory has helped the East Asia to bring economic growth. This theory was applied in a situation where democracy was not developed yet in the Asian continent. As a reality, democracy is still at its lower level in the African continent. In this manner developmental state theory is characterized by dictatorial leaders like the African's. The developmental states are known by emphasizing on technical education and economic nationalism. Focusing on technical education will help the continent to reduce youth unemployment which the current burning issue resulting migration to other continents. Due to its severity, it has been the prior agenda in big international government conferences and workshops.

Therefore to employ youth entrepreneurship in the developing countries, the education policies has to be designed in towards technical education base. In this regard we can examine how the growing population of china has be absorbed by both domestic and foreign corporations in the world. The lesson from china has to be a good witness to focus on technical education to change the growing population in to economic potential of the continent. Hunger and malnutrition are becoming the key problems of the continent recent times, especially the horn of Africa is in deep problem consisting of Somalia and south Sudan. Therefore economic nationalism has to be the prime agenda for the continent which is one of the features of developmental states. More than anything to give evidence, the African leaders should take a witness from the East Asian developmental states to change the existing scenario even though we can't deny the progresses by some countries.

The socio-political set up of the East Asian countries is more or less similar with what the current African leaders possessed. Therefore the applying this theory is compatible for Africa in this regard. Without showing any economic progress and similarly being characterized by malnutrition and famine continent, we can't be purely democratic continent. But it doesn't mean that, the continent shouldn't be democratic. Democratic culture should come up gradually and the governments' prior agenda should lay on development of the continent. In general, Africa is endowed with immense natural and human capital with a huge economic potential in the world. In the past, the continents resources have been over exploited by the western advanced capitalist including their labor in the form of slavery. Even the developed nations have put their fingerprint in the world through dominating the globe using their scholars. Consequently, the continent is still under developed despite its potential. Therefore the respective governments, professionals in the area of development and politics together with all citizens have to strive for development by taking the experiences of East Asians as their role models.

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