

THE REPARATION QUESTION AND THE CRISIS OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Africa the second largest continent has been immersed with the plethora of problems in spite of the abundant human and natural resources she is endowed with. The region remains one of the poorest in the comity of Nations. The state of underdevelopment witness by the region is orchestrated by Euro-America who came to pillage and exploit the region under the guise of colonialism. To equalize the disparity, the study postulated that Euro-America must pay back to the continent what was wrongly appropriated from the region while urging the old and present African leaders to genuinely and sincerely embrace the tenets of people oriented democracy.

Keywords: *Reparation, Crisis, African Development, Resources*

INTRODUCTION

At the verge of the 21st century, Africa was immensely submerged in a plethora of seemingly insolvable problems which permanently revolved around insecurity, sit tight syndrome by African leaders, political and economic underdevelopment, civilian and military dictatorship, ecological problem and starvation among others. David, (1995) opines that the continent, as the fourth world irrelevant to the global economy and being hopelessly abandoned. At the twilight of the last century Africa is deeply enmeshed in ethno civil and religious conflicts, a negative phenomenon which is almost altering the practically, the fragile peace she had hitherto enjoyed.

The strain relationship between the superpowers then, the defunct USSR and the US, culminating to what is now popularly referred to as the "cold war" was perceived to be pregnant with good things for the continent of Africa to make rapid progress on every tier of development. But as events are unfolding today, African is caught in the cross fire of inter, intra conflict of the highest animosities which have rendered a reasonable chunk of the population refugees in their own countries, with insecurity, political and economic violence tearing the continent apart with it far reaching consequences for development.

It is axiomatic that the prospects of the last century eluded Africa, with the new millennium which promised so much but, the global economic crisis "economic meltdown" and pockets of political crisis rocking the whole world not excluding the world powers with the political upheavals in the United Kingdom, Russia, not sparing the US being election year and the incumbent President Barrack Obama facing the greatest political challenge of his life in the coming elections. The fulcrum of this work is the persistence crisis of development in Africa which is not unconnected with the slave trade, colonialism

which has graduated to neo-colonialism. It is argued objectively no matter the reasons the imperialist will want to advance for not compensating, that the claim for reparation by African has merit in every regard.

Reparation for Africans are centuries overdue. It constitutes payment for 500 years of labor, of humiliation, of genocide on the slave hell holes of North, Central, South America and the Caribbean. It is also payment for the destruction and underdevelopment of the Continent of Africa and the Africans there who managed to escaped the Europeans slaves' hunters roaming and burning the villages and towns of Africa... African also suffered the rape of their land and the colonial demoralization (Adedeji, 2000).

CRISIS OF DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: THE EURO-AMERICA CONNECTION

It is an understatement to say that colonialism and slavery a big role in the despoliation of Africa. Thanks to colonial education and massive western propaganda, many Africans see Europe as a paradise of earth which supports these distortions. Africa has been recolonized with administrators who pose as aid workers, World Bank consultants who swagger around like the lords of the land just like the old colonialist.

They propounded and forced policies on African governments backed by their mass media, financial institutions and governments, they continue to churn out programme and policies that will suit the interest of Euro-America, political, financial, economic, psychological, emotional and otherwise, the same way that African were excluded at Berlin when their continent was sundered, Africa are being excluded when decisions are made on what projects to be sited in their land even when it their fate that is being decided. It is when the project fail that we start to hear that things are going wrong in Africa because African are too inept, corrupt or that our government are clannish or despotic (Akomolafe, 1994).

There are genuine problems no doubt, but I perceive them to be the symptoms of the structured problems besetting Africa rather than the causes. I do not believe that African politicians are more corrupt than their Euro-American counterpart. Most appalling, Europeans who came to Africa gives the impression that they came to help us whereas; they command salaries far, far beyond their qualifications and competence. How could the people responsible for our woes turn around and be claiming to be helping us when day in day out Euro-America churn out stringent Immigration laws against African living in their countries and to those intending to visit yet, Euro- America are rushing to Africa under the guise of coming to help (Akomolafe, 1994).

Africa problem is largely Neo-colonialism as this so called aids do nothing better than foster and nurture economic and political dependency. How are we expected to develop when from ab initio there is a white hand pretending to be lending help? It leaves a sour taste in the mouth when it is discovered that all the oil producing nation, their facilities are manned, service and mostly operated by them. Who are the owners of **Shell, Mobil, Agip, Texaco** and other sundry multinational organizations who are in every respect richer than some African States? It is very sad that most western aid has turn African states

into a dependent, groveling child with little self respect and faltering self confidence. Many African states have lost their self esteem. How can one reconcile a situation in which Nigeria had to go cap in hand begging and appealing to members of the Paris club to get debt cancellation of about 18 billion dollars under the presidency of General Olusegun Obasanjo when in the 70s, she borrowed less than five billion dollars from Euro-American creditors (Meredith, 2007).

How can Africa the second largest continent well endowed with some of the world richest mineral resources be described as poor? The question this provoked is how did the owners of the world best resources come to be the basket case? The conspiracy of Euro-America through their harsh economic measures imposed on African states with the active connivance of our leaders to fleece the continent has left us permanently lagging behind in the quest for political, economic and social transformation. Africa must find an original solution to its peculiar problems.

AFRICA IN PERSPECTIVE, AND THE EFFECT OF COLONIALISM

Africa, home of the black race is arguably the point from which blacks the world over were scattered. It is considered as the cradle of humanity from where Homo sapiens spread to other parts of the world, Ajayi, (1993:3). African continent is no doubt a treasure of diverse culture, rich in mineral resources and well endowed in agricultural resources. Based on this, it is obvious that Africa had a potential for economic growth and prosperity. Africa was well on the verge of progress before it was cornered and swerve from this path of stardom to that of despair and doom by Euro-America agent of doom in the name of bringing education and civilization.

The quest for greatness and to build socio economic empire, African maintained a mutually rewarding relationship in commerce with the outside world from the Trans Saharan and Mediterranean trade routes where gold, ivory, imported salt, books, porcelain, guns, gun powder, and many more (John and Alfred, 1988). The growing quest for economic prosperity by the Euro-America gave impetus to this morally detestable trade in human being. African taken to Europe and America by their forces was made to face the worst form of human degradation in the form of slavery. Slave trade became a source of cheap labour from Africa to be engaged in agricultural production in America and in Europe. Ajayi, (1993) estimates that not less than 15 to 20 million Africans conscripted into this illicit trade. This alarming number in itself was a source of future socio economic insecurity of the continent because a great deal of those involved was the economically most productive.

Slave trade did not only lead to the rapid depletion of the productive segment of African population because of the preference of Euro-America powers for the most physically fit, but also meant the negative diversion of Africans from productive economic ventures to hunting and capturing of slaves. Inikori, (1976) argues copiously that "African population and its general wellbeing would have been much greater and prosperous if the foreign slave trade had not existed". Slave trade, essentially an economic phenomenon generated prosperity for the Europe and America powers on the one hand, and agony,

misery and backwardness for African and the continent in general. With the phasing out slave trade in the nineteenth century, Africa witness another equally dehumanizing and agonizing encounter with the Europe and America who found the continent enormously resourceful and irresistibly attractive and consequently went ahead to pillaging by turning most of our countries into colonies.

Africa was subjected to direct foreign control. Colonialism which succeeded slave trade was brutal and rapacious as the former. The gang up of 1884 called 'Berlin Conference facilitated the appropriation of the continent by the various competing forces (colonizers). According to (Mazrui, 1977) colonialism of Africa was expeditiously done because Europe and America were very superior in technology of mobility and technology of violence. These two factors combined to make the colonization enterprise much faster and easier than otherwise. Colonialism as a weapon orchestrated by the imperialist decimated all the known traditional African values that were perceived as irreconcilably antagonistic to those of the colonizer thereby undermining the confidence of Africans in themselves and engendering a crisis of identity among the vast majority of Africans no wonder "domination and damnation" (Mazrui, 1977).

Every move of the imperialist was ultimately focused on strengthening the political economy of the metro pole. Investment in infrastructural development was largely dictated by economic considerations as economically resourceful were served with railway lines, roads, electricity, water, etc, to facilitate maximum exploitation of such economic resources as areas which were not economically viable suffered excruciating neglect and marginalization. This has remained a potent source of pronounced deep seated animosity and a perennial and perpetual source of conflict in Africa. Colonialism on the whole was a curse to Africa because it exploited its soul, goals, land and cultural heritage (Adamu, 1993) for the growth and development of the economies of the colonizing powers.

The colonial policy of aggregating disparate cultural collectivities to give rise to states with pronounced emphasis of 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). At independence, it was envisaged that African countries would live and operate in an environment characterized by unrestrained freedom to meet up with the yearnings and aspirations of the people. No sooner had Africans themselves taken over the control of state power than it became obvious that the highly priced and desired independence was devoid of the real, substantive and original content. It dawned on the succeeding elites that the real political and economic power has been usurped from them, that perpetually, they will be tied to the apron string of their colonial task masters. This was made more manifest when sooner or later they went cap in hand seeking for development aids from their erstwhile colonial masters and this provided the platform for the predators to dictate how and when major decision should or should not be taken.

Equally disheartening is the fact that African states have never known peace since their creation by colonialism because of the jaundice and defective political structures and institutions which America and Europe erected on ground in the name of administration.

Some ethnic groups are slugging it out with each other either because of painful denial of access to political power by one group against the other like the case of Rwanda where the minority Tutsi are lording over the Hutu majority. In Kenya, Cote'd Ivoire, Zimbabwe and Nigeria there was post elections conflicts in which lives and properties worth billions of dollars were lost following disaffections and one group attempting to lord it over the other (Meredith, 2007).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this 21st century, Africa must seriously address the problems of development without losing sight of other tangential issues. On how to appropriate effect the redemption plan, African leaders must develop a purposeful agenda for dealing with African problems. The agenda should include embracing democracy and its tenets as practice by the developed nations of the world, and not where a sitting president will rule autocratically for more than four decades in the name of democracy not minding public opinion and senility. African in Diaspora must be co-opted to act as clearing house or agent for the global challenge and struggle for the development of the continent. The state of underdevelopment in Africa is as a result of the direct exploitation of our resources (Human and material) for the development of Europe and America. But for the aforementioned, the condition of the continent would have been different from what it is now as the lack of development of the continent is a direct result of the pillaging of the commonwealth and resources of Africa by the Euro- America hegemonic forces.

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