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## POLITICAL CONDITIONS: THE GREATEST IMPEDIMENT TO AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *Development has been a major problem of the Third World countries, particularly African countries today. African countries are not as developed as the industrialized Western capitalist societies. It is altruistic that African countries are faced with the hydra-headed problem of development. In some circles, Africa is considered grossly underdeveloped. Several reasons have been postulated by various scholars as to why Africa is underdeveloped, ranging from social conditions, economic, structural to political reasons among others. Thus, the objective of this paper is to interrogate political conditions as the greatest impediment to Africa's development. The paper looked at the ideas of the Modernization theory, Dependency theory and the Limiting Factors theory in a bid to understand development and underdevelopment. The paper identified, among others, imperialism, slave trade, colonialism, political instability, poverty, corruption and structural dependence as some of the impediments to Africa's development problems. The paper concluded that there is still hope for African countries to develop on a fast track, and suggested that there is the need to institute an accountable governance faster than ever; African countries should transform as a matter of urgency to spur growth and development; there should be rapid investment in infrastructure- power, good health system, and political stability for meaningful development to take place.*

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**Keywords:** Development, Underdevelopment, Political condition, Impediment, Africa.

### Introduction

Africa is a continent and not a country. This fact must be taken into cognizance when looking at the conditions, whether political, social, economic or otherwise, that contribute greatly to the underdevelopment of Africa. There are over 2000 different ethnic groups in the literature, that live in Africa, each of these groups have their own peculiar, diverse and distinct culture and ideology. About 54 sovereign states exist within the African continent. It is altruistic that Africa is faced with the hydra-headed problem of development or in some

circles, Africa is considered grossly underdeveloped. But to try and come up with a universal answer or statement as to why Africa is the most underdeveloped in contemporary times would not only be absurd, but very difficult.

In other words, it will be a herculean task to attempt to give one universally acceptable explanation as to the conditions that gave rise to Africa's underdevelopment or put differently, to aver that the political conditions of Africa are the greatest impediments to its development. However, in as much as this statement may be absolutely correct, in order to derive an explanation, it would be appropriate for

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one to take a look at each individual country's history and find the causes for whatever problems the country currently faces.

The conditions, reasons or causes of Africa's underdevelopment are many and varied. The reasons range from economic, social, cultural to political factors that stood as an impediment and contributed to Africa's underdeveloped status today.

In the attempt to trying to find out the root causes of Africa's underdevelopment problem, one may be tempted or poised to ask what does development mean? Is there a "model" for development that is most appropriate for Africa?

However, the main focus of this paper is on testing the tentative statement that political conditions serve as the greatest impediment or obstacle to Africa's development.

#### **Conceptualizing Development and Underdevelopment**

Development and underdevelopment are like two sides of a coin. No one of them can be fully discussed or analyzed in complete isolation from the other. This is as a result of the fact that development and underdevelopment are the common results of a worldwide process of capital accumulation and a social reality in the contemporary economic and political relations between the rich and poor countries of the world.

Over four decades after the emergence of development theorizing, there seemed to be no real consensus as to what development is. The issue of conceptualizing development properly is a very significant one for various reasons. A proper understanding of what development is will enable a policy maker to formulate appropriate policies for the acceleration of economic development. In other words, the nature of development policies of a country will depend on how the policy-makers of that country perceive development.

What then is development? Some scholars have suggested that any attempt to give development a universal definition

will amount to scholastic pedantry. Because of this lack of consensus as to what development is, there seems to be as many definitions of the concept as there are many development economists.

However, in the earliest days of development economics, the concept of development was seen as been the increase in the total output of any nation or increase in per capita income or output of that country. In other words, development was seen as been synonymous with economic growth.

At the individual level, development implies increased skill and capacity to earn income, greater freedom of action, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and general material and psychological well-being. The achievement of these have meaning only in relation to the state of the society. Societal development, therefore, has implications for development of the individual (Abah,2007). Development at the societal level, as Abah puts it, implies (a) Increased capacity to regulate internal and external relations; (b) Increase in ability to guard national independence; (c) Self-sufficiency in food production; (d) High level of employment; (e) Equalization in the distribution of social services; (f) self- reliance; (g) Independent control of the economy, etc.

For Todaro and Smith (2003), in Obi and Nwanaegbo (2006) development means the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP) at rates perhaps 5% to 7% or more.

According to Ake (2001)

“In its most common form modernization theory Posits an original state of backwardness or under-Development characterized by among other things

A low rate of economic growth that is at least Potentially amenable to alteration through the



Normal process of capital. This original state of Backwardness is initially universal. According to the theory, the industrialized countries have managed to overcome it. All the other countries could conceivably overcome backwardness too if they adopted appropriate strategies”.

For Rodney (1972) development implies increased skill, capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. At the level of social groups, development implies an increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. Though development is experienced by all human societies, the levels of development vary from one society to another, and even within distinct parts of the same society (Kalagbor 2009)

Ofoeze (in kosemani et al, 1996) adapted in Oranusi (2009:43) emphasized that

‘Development is a particular kind of social change concerned with the process of transforming the social, economic and political system of the underdeveloped societies into more developed ones. It is synonymous with social mobilization which entails not only psychological involvement in the political process by citizens but also shifting of traditional attachments to the nation-state and its institutions’.

Stanley (1967:302) provides an aspect of development. According to him

“The common element among all leading contenders for the positive definition of development .... Is the assertion that a process of change is underway which is so radical that all established conceptions and hence distributive justice are or will be called into question.”

Another conceptualization of development is the idea that development is synonymous with industrialization. The argument in this definition or understanding is that any country that increases its industrial output is said to be developing. This definition ran into a big dilemma because many of the less developed countries achieved the stipulated target at a time yet they are still underdeveloped. The first and foremost feature of development is that it is seen as a change which is drastic and which touches all facets and layers of society. Secondly, development entails the activation of a country’s socio-economic potentials in a combined effort to overcome the problems of underdevelopment, and finally development entails human progress as measured by members of the society concerned (Sanda, 1996). The conceptualization of development can go on and on which is not the major area of concentration or focus of this paper. Let us now turn to conceptualizing underdevelopment.

### **Underdevelopment**

Abah (2007:7) believes that underdeveloped means

‘A situation in which the institutions of a country in the periphery of international capitalism maintains dependent relationship with other countries at the center of the international economy. It means the subordination of internal economic and political institutions to the influence of external forces from the center. It therefore, means lack of real autonomy and is a function of poverty’.

Alongside Thirlwall (1978:21) Offiong (1980:200) notes that:

‘underdevelopment refers to the state of an economy of a satellite economy characterized by low real per capita in comparison with those of North America



and western Europe., it is characterized by illiteracy, poverty, over-population and diseases. Thus, until the underdeveloped countries can make a break from the aristocratic order and the colonial and neocolonial system, they will never break out of their underdevelopment.’

It will be appropriate to succinctly point out here that no forms of underdevelopment was or is divine (God given), natural or original state as have been argued by some orthodox scholars. For instance, in Africa historical situation of dependency between the Western capitalist countries and African countries conditioned cotemporary underdevelopment in the continent. This is amplified by Aja (1998:181) when he said:

‘Underdevelopment is not natural to any country but a product of the contact between an advanced economy and a weak one and therefore vulnerable economy; a relationship that generally results in a continual condition of a typical production and exchange relations in international division of labour.’

Underdevelopment expresses a relationship of exploitation of the natural resources and labour of one country by another for the development of the latter. This tantamount to what Andre Gunder Frank (1972) described as “development of underdevelopment” or “under development of development” (Worsley, 1978). Thus, modern underdevelopment which Africa and other Third World countries are passing through is an outcome of colonial capitalist and imperialist exploitation of the economies of these countries.

For Kalagbor (2009:169);

“Underdevelopment may be regarded as a paradox in the sense that many of the countries

that are naturally rich in terms of natural resources are actually poor, whereas those that are resource poor, are enjoying the highest standard of living; Nigeria and Japan Snugly fit into this paradox.”

Alongside Kalagbor (2009), it should be noted that underdevelopment does not in any way mean the absence of development, this is simply because various peoples of the world, whether primitive or modern, had undergone at one time or the other and are still undergoing certain historical levels of development akin to them. Historical evidence has not shown at any time of a society without some measure of development. The whole idea of underdevelopment is simply a comparative concept and is employed as a means of comparing levels of development. As a comparative term underdevelopment also has a dialectical relationship with development (Rodney 1972). It deals with the comparative economies of nations and the economic misuse of one nation by another nation, especially through commerce.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

In the early times, one paradigm was hegemonic and that was the modernization paradigm associated with orthodox or bourgeois scholars like Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, John Mills, Rostow among others. According to the modernization theory, the underdevelopment of the third world nations to which Africa is a part, could be attributed to the lack of vital factors such as capital, experts, managerial skill, modern institutions and value system. For development to take place in peripheral societies, they have to encourage capital inflow, managerial skill etc. After several years of adherence to modernization theory, these countries were still suffering from poverty, still dependent on their colonial masters and occupying the position in the international economy as producers of primary products.



**Dependency Theory:** This is a body of theorists from the social sciences whose ideas were couched on the notion that resources flow from a “periphery” of poor and underdeveloped states to a “core” of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. In line with Albert (2011), the contention of the dependency theory is that poor states, like the African countries, are impoverished and rich ones are enriched by the way poor states are integrated into the “World System”

Dependency theory is an apt reaction to modernization theory of development already discussed above, that all societies progress through similar stages of development, that the underdeveloped societies of today are in a similar situation of that of the developed societies at some stage in the past. One of the major tasks of the modernization theory therefore, is to help in accelerating underdeveloped societies out of poverty through a common path of development, by various means such as investment, technology transfer and closer integration into the world market. This view was rejected by the dependency theorists. The crucial point to note is that dependency denotes “that crucial economic decisions are made not by the countries that are being ‘developed’ but by foreigners whose interests are carefully safe-guarded” (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2013:179). The main tenet of the theory which arose from the discussions on underdevelopment and development in Latin America, is that the wealth and poverty of nations of the world result from the global process of exploitation. Thus, an economy is dependent when as Ake (1985:55) in Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2013) puts it, “its position and relation to other economies in the international system and the articulation of its internal structure make it incapable of autocentric development. The dependency theorists strongly argued that the problems of the Third World to which Africa is a part, is not as the modernization theorists painted it- lack of technical know-how, institutionalization, differentiation.

But that Third World countries have been subjected to rapacious exploitation of the international capitalist system and its special imperialist agents, domestically and foreign. Frank and Cardoso, Enzo Falleto, Dos Santos, Samir Amin and C.Furtado are notable advocates of dependency theory. Let us conclude this aspect by taking a general overview of the methodological construct of Bourgeois underdevelopment theories with particular focus on the Limiting Factors Theory.

**The Limiting Factors Theory:** The concept of limiting factors is based on Liebig’s Law of Minimum, which states that growth is controlled not by the total amount of resources available, but by the scarcest resource. These theories usually specify typical and limiting factors by comparing the given static state of the most developed capitalist countries together with a number of surface phenomenon with the similarly static state of underdeveloped countries with a number of surface phenomena. What as a result appears as positive or negative constitute the aggregate or limiting factors that make up the definition of underdevelopment.

1. **Less-advantageous Demographic Position:-**The argument here is that one of the major reasons for the backwardness and underdevelopment of Africa and other less developed countries is because of their fast rate of population growth. There is also argument that the underdeveloped countries suffer from high dependency ratio (that is, population of more working population in a country to the total population, between the ages of 0-15). Because of this high dependency ratio, these scholars argued that there is now high pressures on the demand for educational services, food supply, public health services and other social amenities. It is true that most LDC’s suffer from population explosion. Yet this explanation is not logically consistent but



bankrupt in the sense that population explosion is a symptom of underdevelopment and not the cause of underdevelopment.

2. **Unfavourable Natural Endowment – Shortage or Under-Utilization of Natural Resources:**-The argument here is that African countries with the exception of South Africa, suffer from low productivity and that their low productivity can be partly attributed to unfavourable natural endowment (low quality soil, virgin forests, lack of mineral resources and water, power, unfavourable climatic condition and precipitation condition, poor transport facility, unfavourable geographical location with respect to its opportunity for profitable foreign trade) and partly to the poor quality of the working population.

This is an illogical argument by the Bourgeois economists as to the cause of Africa's underdevelopment. For instance, Switzerland lacks natural resources yet it was able to develop. On the other hand, Nigeria has abundance of natural resources, yet we remain in the underdevelopment enclave.

3. **Shortage of Capital or Insufficient Capital Formation:**-This is a very common argument put forward by bourgeois scholars. But this particular argument is controversial because it does not show how African countries suffer this capital shortage. Studies have shown that what we suffer is non-optimal utilization of capital.
4. **Low Productivity of Labour and the Poor Quality of the Working Population:**-The argument is that low productivity which is prevalent in Africa and other LDCs is a big obstacle to economic development and also to capital accumulation. The low productivity and poor quality and inefficiency of the working

population are attributed to low education, poor nutritional standards which now weaken the workers to be unable to work for longer hours, poor health services etc.

There is a basic contradiction in this argument. Low education, poor health services, among others are not causes of underdevelopment but rather are symptoms of underdevelopment.

5. **Lack of Managerial and Entrepreneurial Skill:-**This aspect could be traced back to history. The Developed countries formulated policies so stringent to have access to capital and we could not compete favourably with them.

The ideological character of these factors are very obnoxious. Since we are limited by these factors, the solution is to look for experts, seek capital outside. This theory tries to reinforce dependency on managerial skill, capital and so on from the developed countries.

#### **Conditions, Reasons Or Causes Of Africa's Underdevelopment**

Africa, the second largest continent in the world has performed dismally in almost all spheres of endeavour – economically, socially, politically, and has therefore been classified underdeveloped. As pointed earlier in this paper, there is no one single root cause that can fully explain the dismissal performance by the continent with the notable exception of South Africa.

Some scholars and writer have emphasized historical factors such as slave trade, imperialism, colonialism and its legacies, and geographical features as the root cause of Africa's underdevelopment quagmire. Others have gone beyond these factors and analyze a combination of geographic and demographic factors, political instability, corruption, technology, the role of the state among other reasons.



However, efforts will be made here to try to highlight some of the conditions and factors that stand as an impediment to Africa's development. Some of these are as follow:

1. **Imperialism**

One important condition that stood as an impediment to Africa's path to development is imperialism. Imperialist policies by stronger and powerful nations over other nations. That is, the imposition of a kind of rule that an empire imposes on a foreign nation. The rule can be of any kind; it may be the occupation of colonies or dependencies. This was the experience in Africa when some perceived powerful nations like Britain, Portugal, Holland, France, Spain and Germany scrambled and struggled to partition Africa and imposed their obnoxious policies on them. Africa was thus derailed in its path to development politically, economically, socially, militarily and even culturally. Roxborough (1979) supporting imperialism as an impediment to Africa's development attacked Western theorists for their failure to recognize the devastating impact of imperialism on the African continent.

2. **Slave Trade:**

Another important factor that contributed to Africa's underdevelopment is the slave trade it experienced. In fact, some scholars have strongly argued that the genesis of African underdevelopment is historically traceable to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The slave trade theory is one of the dominant views on the historic causes of Africa's underdevelopment. Alongside Rodney (1972) kalagbor (2009), Nunn (2007) argued vehemently that the slave trade experienced by Africa contributed immensely to its

underdevelopment. Nunn lamenting on the condition of Africa pointed out that:

'Slavery, according to historical accounts played an important role in Africa's underdevelopment. It fostered ethnic fractionalization and undermined effective states. The largest numbers of slaves were taken from areas that were the most underdeveloped politically at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are the most ethnically fragmented today. Recent research suggests that without the slave trade, 72% of Africa's income gap with the rest of the world would not exist today.'

The slave trade on the African continent had detrimental and devastating effects on the institutions and structures of African societies. Recorded evidence abound from different researchers how the evils of slave trade caused political instability, weakened states in Africa, promoted political and social fragmentation and resulted in a deterioration of domestic legal institutions. These detrimental effects can explain part of Africa's current underdevelopment.

Nunn (2007) concluded his lamentation from his research by saying that:

'Looking across countries within Africa, one should observe that the parts of Africa that are the poorest today are also the areas from which the largest numbers of slaves were taken in the past.'

3. **The Legacy of Colonialism**

It was believed that Africa had a very long progressive history before the arrival of the Europeans. Colonialism was perceived to be one



of the greatest impediments and contributors to Africa's underdevelopment as the main objective or purpose was to make the colonies producers of raw materials for the colonizers. The raw materials and labour of the colonized became the fuel that lit and life wire of the Western factories and did not make any contribution to their own development.

In support of Nunn (2007), Kristy (2005) averred that colonialism in Africa did so much damage to the continent. Kristy noted with dismay that:

‘Colonial experience resulted in the exploitation of labour, unfair taxation, the creation of artificial states, the siphoning of natural resources and unfair terms of trade.’

These are just a few of the policies that were implemented during the colonial period that have had lingering and staggering effects on the development of Africa. This simply means that during the entire period that colonialism lasted, their resources (resources of the colonized) served in supporting the economies of the colonizers. The main achievement of colonial rule was state-building based on imposing the European system of competing nation states on to the continent through conquest largely motivated by European interests.

It should, however be noted that colonialism is not and cannot be the only cause of Africa's underdevelopment. Ethiopia and Liberia, for instance, were two African countries that never experienced colonialism or colonial rule, yet they share the same problem that the rest of Africa is currently facing or experiencing.

Another factor that stood as a road block to Africa's development is their own policies after decolonization and their diversity. There are so many tribes in Africa and their loyalty lies with these tribes and not with the nation or state which made them unable to progress.

#### 4. **Political Instability**

Another likely reason for the underdevelopment of Africa lies in the entire history of Africa which is strained and bedeviled with violent conflicts and wars, in most cases, protracted wars, that further heightened and aggravated the plight of the African people and resulted in the loss of precious needed capital. Historically, conflicts leading to wars have occurred throughout African history, even before the advent of colonialism and had continued to occur to this day. Africa has about 38 different violent conflicts presently that have devastated and bastardized their economies. There are about 200 ethnic groups living on the continent that are problems to themselves with different ways of life, belief systems and competing ideologies. This has resulted in the existence of tensions among ethnic groups long before the colonialists arrived. The bottom line is that an African country may work hard to achieve development and all of it could be wasted if wars suddenly broke out (Kristy 2005). Coup d'état have also destabilized many African countries' economies with the incessant military coups and counter coups and take-over of governments. This has made the continent unattractive for foreign investors.

#### 5. **Corruption**

Corruption is considered another major factor hindering Africa's development. There is a lot of corruption in Africa especially so with those at the corridors of power or in governance. Though it is a well-known fact that corruption is a global phenomenon, it is also acclaimed worldwide, that the evil of corruption is more prevalent in the Third world countries, particularly Africa.



Using Nigeria as an example Kalagbor (2009:176) asserted that:

‘Take a walk down the streets of Nigeria, any street at all and in any state, city, town or village, you will come face to face with corruption; you will find dressed in ragged tartans and in silk; in the uniforms of the state security apparati and in mufti; you will also find it in the highest offices of the land and in the motor parks and other comparatively lowly places; and brace yourself, you will also find barefaced corruption in the holiest places and it is abundant in the classrooms across the educational landscape. Corruption has permeated the Nigerian social milieu and this is because those at the head are the major beneficiaries of the social malaise.’

As a matter-of-fact, corruption has been responsible for the level of poverty experienced in African countries. Money meant for the development of facilities – creation of jobs, schools, is often siphoned or transferred out of the country, particularly by government officials into foreign bank accounts. International aid given to African countries had very high interest rates and led to an increase in their debt profile. Also debt relief money from donor countries continue to disappear at the hands of government officials, donor countries begin to think twice about contributing in the future. All these stand as impediments to Africa’s development.

#### 6. African Poverty

Some scholars have strongly contended that poverty is another critical factor that hindered and contributed to the underdevelopment of Africa. African countries are poverty ridden; they are encapsulated by the vicious circle of poverty.

Poverty appears to be more easily recognized than defined. There is the view that most nations in Africa were indigent and lack money or capital or resources to support themselves. The various African states lack the financial ability to provide the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, health and education for their people. This scenario greatly affects the quality of life and is usually taken as a long term phenomenon.

The African Leadership Forum has classified poverty into three perspective – poverty of material wellbeing (economic), poverty of ideas or ideological poverty and poverty of courage (political). However, for Anikpo (1995:13);

‘Poverty is the historical process of individuals or groups being forcefully eliminated from control of the decision-making machinery that determines the production of resources in society. It manifests in various forms such as hunger or lack of food, lack of money, clothes, shelter, good health or poor education. In a national context, poverty becomes a euphemism for underdevelopment or the absence/perversion of democracy.’

Generally speaking, poverty is reflected in low per capita income. This low per capita income is further reflected in low living standards of the people.

#### 7. Presence of Multinational corporations (MNCs)

Colonialism as a hindrance to Africa’s development could be placed under the ambit of external factors. Another external factor that have stood as an impediment to Africa’s development is the presence and dominance of Multinational



Corporations in Africa. The activities of these very rich multinational corporations have rapaciously and unabashedly exploited the African labour force, degraded the environment and facilitated corruption by supporting African dictators. These MNCs continue to contribute to the development of the First World at the expense of African countries.

8. **Structural Dependence**

It has also been argued that another serious hindrance to Africa's development is structural dependence. This is a situation where most African countries depend on the developed capitalist countries for most food items, manufactured goods and services, while the African countries supply cheap raw materials and labour to feed the industries of the developed countries. By so doing, as Kalagbor (2009:174) observed:

‘The Less Developed countries play the role of drawers of water and hewers of wood.’

The sole dependence of African countries on the developed Western countries has placed the continent in a perpetual vicious circle of dependence and exploitation in which the poor countries in Africa find themselves today.

9. **Leaders' Ambition to Remain in Office for Life**

Another major problem of Africa's development quagmire is the inordinate ambition of African leaders to perpetually remain in office for life and apply the instruments of office to actualize their selfish and unprogressive objective. This is what

Kalagbor (2009) christened ‘Sit-tightism’. Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Late Gaddafi of Libya, Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, Biya of Cameroon and Obasanjo's failed 3<sup>rd</sup> tenure bid, among others are typical examples of African leaders who have vehemently refused to leave the political stage for others.

10. **Bloated State Bureaucracies**

Another contributory factor to Africa's development doldrum is bloated state bureaucracies. It is argued that most African countries are ethnicized, political and bloated state bureaucracies with large-scale wastage of precious resources, ineffective, inefficient, red-taped and bureaucratically corrupt.

Another reason for the weak development of Africa is the failure of the state. The ‘development state’ based on a state controlled economy with high level of protectionism took on a particular and unfortunate form in Africa. In reality, these countries became what Frederick Cooper has called “gatekeeper states” – states that acquire most of their revenue from custom duties, concessions to foreign companies, visas, foreign exchange control and foreign aid.

11. **Hostile Natural Environment**

Most African landmass lies within the tropical climate with no access to either the Atlantic or the Indian ocean. This has made the vast areas of the interior continent home to malaria and tsetse fly which afflict humans and animals respectively. This made some researchers on the causes of African underdevelopment to test the hypothesis of malaria as one of the dominant causes or



impediments to development in Africa. Bhattacharya (2009), laying credence to this point argued:

‘Malaria and other tropical diseases have fatal as well as debilitating effects on human population in Africa. It negatively affects productivity, savings and investments in physical and human capital and directly affects economic performance of the continent.

Furthermore, another possible internal factor that may have stood as a hindrance to Africa’s development is the African people themselves. Africa, for example, currently faces the problem of deforestation. As a result of scarcity of arable agricultural land for farming, farmers have resorted to cutting down virgin forests in order to obtain land for farming. It is a known fact that when all the trees are uprooted, removed or cut down, in most cases, flooding is the resultant effect during rain storm because there are no longer enough roots to absorb the water. This reason is absolutely supported by Kristy (2005:1) that:

‘Flooding brings mosquitoes; and mosquitoes carry the deadly disease of malaria. So Africans themselves have indirectly added to this huge health issue that prevents them from leading a better quality life. Africa should take some kind of responsibility for this problem.’

#### 12. **Demographic Factor**

The demographic history of Africa has been characterized by low density or population and continuous migration and settlement of new areas. This situation has continued till the present day and there is still more migration on the African continent-including migration between urban and

rural areas –than anywhere else in the world. This has also affected the development of Africa.

#### 13. **Absence of Independent and Creative Ruling Class**

Those who constitute the ruling class in most African countries lack creative and innovative capacities to stimulate and realize industrial revolution and economic progress like in the developed capitalist countries. Fanon (1965:120) noted that:

‘In underdeveloped countries, we have seen that no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious with the mind of a huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that former colonial power hands out to it. This get-rich-quick middle class shows its incapability of great ideas or of inventiveness.

This class is unpatriotic and unproductive in the economic sense. It is economically weak, intellectually sterile; lacks dynamism, visionary leadership and resilience (Kalagbor 2009).

Finally, other conditions that may have contributed to the impediment or stumbling block to African development will include among others: primordial mode of production, illiteracy, lack of ideal political system, weak institutions, high population growth, docility of the citizen, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, low levels of productivity and no particular mode of production, high mortality etc. This is a kind of omnibus category. While all these features exist in most African countries there is no sufficient time to elaborate on all these issues hence they are mentioned in passim.



## Conclusion

This paper has taken a cursory look at the conditions that stood as impediments to Africa's development problem. In the attempt to answer this critical question concerning Africa's underdevelopment problem, the conceptualization of the terms, development and underdevelopment were briefly highlighted, what different scholars perceived of the terms; also the paper briefly looked at some theories of underdevelopment and finally analyzed the conditions that served as the greatest impediments to Africa's development.

All hope is lost for Africa to develop on a fast track. The wave of democratic reforms since the 1990s and the commodity price boom since 2001 led many to see a brighter future for Africa with the belief that Africa could claim the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the growth needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Though this hope was short-lived or dashed with the global economic down turn, the recent revival in oil and other commodity prices and signs of global economic resilience are causes for optimism.

However, for Africa to develop, there is the need to institute an accountable governance faster than ever. The prevalence of authoritarian regimes in Africa is seriously harming its image. They should transform as a matter of urgency to spur growth and development with the assistance of FDI.

Also there should be rapid investment in infrastructure-adequate road network, electricity, good health system, efficient telecommunication systems. There must be adequate infrastructure if the continent is to revive from the current economic doldrum.

African countries should pursue export led growth strategy. The dependence on the export of primary

commodities should be seriously discouraged and an alternative sourced for.

An atmosphere of political stability should be seriously maintained for any meaningful development to take place in Africa.

Finally, there has been various arguments as to the causes of underdevelopment in Africa as a whole. It continues to endure a vicious circle of problems that prevent development. Instead of pointing accusing fingers and playing the blame game, everyone needs to put the cause aside and think about the solution. African countries must come together and help each other solve the problems at hand.

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