

# THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND COLONIALISM: REASONS FOR AFRICA'S UNDERDEVELOPMENT?

*Emmanuel Oladipo Ojo, PhD*

Department of History & International Studies,  
Faculty of Arts, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

It is probably an understatement to assert that Africa, the world's second largest continent, is underdeveloped compared with other continents. Two major exogenous factors often cited for Africa's development crisis are the so called 'dual historical injustices' – the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. It is often pointed out that while the former almost completely arrested and retarded Africa's demographical growth for more than three centuries, evoked a perennial state of acrimony and warfare and created a tense and unprecedented atmosphere of insecurity which hindered economic activities and stifled local entrepreneurship and technological drive and dislocated Africa's socio-economic and political structures and institutions; the latter tied African countries to the apron strings of western imperial powers thereby rendering the pre-conditions necessary for socio-economic and political transformation unachievable. This paper contends that while the history of Africa's underdevelopment may be traceable to the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, African leaders had made enormous contributions to the continent's underdevelopment and backwardness. The paper concludes that irresponsible and irresponsive leadership, vampirism and prodigality, corruption, lack of respect for democratic ideals, insecurity, endemic civil wars, nepotism, etc are the fundamental causes of Africa's underdevelopment.

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## Keywords:

## Introduction

Africa is the lowest income region in the world.<sup>1</sup> This paper revisits the issue of the continent's chronic underdevelopment and backwardness in

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<sup>1</sup> P. Collier and J.W. Gunning "Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 13(3), 1999, p.3.

the comity of world's continents. Although, endowed with enormous and almost inexhaustible human and natural resources, Africa lags behind the other continents in every facet of life – economically, technically, politically and technologically. With a total land area of approximately 30,221,532 sq. km, Africa is about 20.4% of global landmass and is home to more than 1 billion people – about 15% of global population. Africa is home to 50% of world's gold; most of the world's diamond and chromium; 90% of the cobalt; 40% of the world's potential hydroelectric power; 65% of the manganese; millions of acres of fertile and uncultivated farmland and abundance of gas and crude oil. Yet the continent is home to the world's most impoverished, famished, uneducated and mal-nourished people.<sup>2</sup> In most African countries, public utilities are perpetually comatose thereby forcing Africans to live under the most incredibly horrifying socio-economic conditions. Thus, in the failed state index published in 2010, Africa had 7 of the top slots and almost half of the 60 economically weak states in the world.<sup>3</sup> Since the most important functions of the state are poverty reduction, territorial control, safety and security, capacity to manage public resources, delivery of basic services and the ability to protect and support the ways in which the poorest people sustain themselves; failed states are “governments that cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor”.<sup>4</sup> This means that failed states are states that are unable to provide their citizens with basic necessities like health care, security, employment and good infrastructures. It is therefore not surprising that in its 2010 Report, the Foreign Policy and Fund for Peace categorised majority of African states as failed states.<sup>5</sup>

Probably with the exception of Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire), virtually all first generation post-independence African leaders attributed the socio-economic and political failure of the

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley Igwe, *How Africa Underdeveloped Africa* (Port Harcourt: Prime Print Technologies, 2012), p. viii; “The Failure of African Leadership: Causes of Africa's Problem” retrieved from <http://www.africanholocaust.net> and <http://www.blatantworld.com/data/the-largest-continents>. Both sites were accessed on 20 November 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Ekokobe Awung, *A Critical Analysis of Underdevelopment in Africa. Failed States and Reasons for Social Unrest in Africa* (n.d, n.p., 2011), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> See Failed State Index online at [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010\\_failed\\_states\\_index](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index). This site was accessed on 15 January 2015.

continent to the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism.<sup>6</sup> For example, President Sékou Touré of Guinea asserted that “Africa’s level of development is a product of the economic conditions brought about by foreign intervention and domination”.<sup>7</sup> In their own assessment of colonialism, Malian leaders insisted that apart from the *Office du Niger*, a gigantic agricultural project, French colonialism contributed nothing to Mali. According to them, “...in public works, health, power, transportation, education and the general infrastructure, Mali made almost no progress under French control”.<sup>8</sup> In the same vein, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria submitted that “slavery played its shameful role in depopulating Africa; capitalism denuded it of its wealth; colonialism deprived it of its birthright and imperialism emasculated its will to live as a human being [sic] and to enjoy its fair share of the bounties of the good earth”.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Léopold Senghor of Senegal dismissed the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism as “economies of slavery”.<sup>10</sup>

In contemporary times, Wole Soyinka averred that Africa’s underdevelopment is the outcome of “the twin evils of slavery and colonialism inflicted by the Western world”.<sup>11</sup> According to him, slavery and colonialism are two monumental historical events that dislocated Africa and aborted the continent’s social, political, economic and technological development.<sup>12</sup> At the 2012 World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, African leaders took turn to blame the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism for Africa’s development tragedy. Several scholars have also expressed the view that the Atlantic slave trade is responsible for

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<sup>6</sup> A not-very-popular but probably profound cause of Africa’s underdevelopment as pointed out by a scholar is the prevalence of malaria fever. Advancing reasons for Africa’s underdevelopment, Sambit Bhattacharyya argued that malaria “matters the most and all other factors are statistically insignificant”. See his “Root of African Underdevelopment”, *Journal of African Economies*, Vol. 18(5), 2009, p. 745.

<sup>7</sup> Sékou Touré, “Africa’s Future and the World”, *Foreign Affairs*, XLI, October 1962, pp. 145-146.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from Kenneth W. Grundy, “African Explanations of Underdevelopment: The Theoretical Basis for Political Action”, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 1, January 1966, p. 65.

<sup>9</sup> Nnamdi Azikiwe, “The Future of Pan-Africanism”, *Présence Africaine* XII, First Quarter, 1962, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Léopold Sédar Senghor, “A Community of Free and Equal Peoples with the Mother Country”, *Western World*, No. 18, October 1958, p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> “Slavery, Colonialism – Responsible for Africa’s Underdevelopment”, *ThisDay*, 23 December 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Gbenga Adeniji “Slavery, colonialism haunting Africa – Soyinka”, *Punch*, 19 December, 2012.

Africa's socio-economic inertial, political ineptitude, technological backwardness and sundry dislocations. The most prominent of these scholars is probably Nathan Nunn who has attempted to show the link between the slave trade, the legacy of extractive colonial institutions and Africa's underdevelopment. According to him, "recent studies have found evidence linking Africa's current under-development to colonial rule and slave trade."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the present article is a critique of Nathan's submission that "one...explanation for Africa's underdevelopment is its history of extraction characterized by two events: the slave trades and colonialism...the African countries that are the poorest today are the ones from which the most slaves were taken".<sup>14</sup> This agrees with Walter Rodney's submission that the principal agencies of Africa's underdevelopment over the past five centuries are the slave trade and colonialism.<sup>15</sup> From the above, it becomes immediately clear that the dependency theory to which reference will be made later is a very popular explanation for Africa's underdevelopment.

### **The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade and Colonialism on Africa**

There is no paucity of literature on the consequences of the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism on Africa.<sup>16</sup> Historians and scholars in allied disciplines have documented the impact of the trade on African institutions as well as those of Europe and the New World. Particular attention had indeed been paid to how the Atlantic slave trade pillaged Africa and prospered Europe and the Americas so that till date, as far as many African leaders and some scholars are concerned, the slave trade and colonialism remain the most profound factors in the history of Africa's underdevelopment. The reasons for the above position are obvious. This

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<sup>13</sup> Nathan Nunn, "Historical Legacies: A Model caineLinking Africa's Past to its Current Underdevelopment", *Journal of Development Economics*, 83(1), 2007, p. 145. Some of his other works include "The Slave Trade and Origins of Mistrust in Africa", *American Economic Review*, 101(7), 2011, pp. 3221-3252; "Shackled to the Past: The Causes and Consequences of Africa's Slave Trades" in J. Diamond & J.A. Robinson, *Natural Experiments of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 142-184

<sup>14</sup> Nathan Nunn, "The Long Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123(1), 2008, pp. 139-140.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Abuja: Panaf Publishing Inc., 2009), p. viii.

<sup>16</sup> For a concise examination of the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa, Europe and the New World, see Will Hardy, "Riches and Misery: The Consequences of the Atlantic Slave Trade" at *Open Learn* – <http://www.open.edu/openlearn>. This site was accessed on 25 January 2015.

paper does not intend to attempt a detailed examination of the consequences of both the slave trade and colonialism on Africa since there are dozens of such studies,<sup>17</sup> it will therefore only summarise the impact of these two historical phenomena on Africa and proceed to attempt a detailed examination of the contributions of African leaders to the underdevelopment of the continent.

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<sup>17</sup> Some of these are Joseph E. Inikori (ed.), *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (London: Hutchinson, 1982); Joseph Inikori et. al. *The Atlantic Slave Trade – Trade Effects on Economies, Societies and Peoples in Africa, the Americas and Europe* (Duke University Press, 1980); Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives of West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967); Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Pre-colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex. Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); E. Akyeampong et. al., *Africa's Development in Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Adamu, Mahdi, "The Delivery of Slaves from the Bight of Benin in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," in H.A. Gemery and J.S. Hogendorn (eds.), *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York; Academic Press, 1979); Kwame Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600- 1720: A study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970); Albert Dantzig, "Effect of the Atlantic Slave Trade on some West African Societies," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 62:1-2 (1975); David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58, 1 (2001); Olaudah Equiano, *Olaudah Equiano: The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (Vincent Carretta, ed.) (New York: Penguin Books, 1995); J.D. Fage, "Slaves and Society in Western Africa. c.1445-c.1700," *Journal of African History* 21, 3 (1980); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2nd ed., 1998); Walter Rodney, "Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade", *Journal of African History*, 7, 4 (1966); Walter Rodney, "Upper Guinea and the Significance of the Origins of Africans Enslaved in the New World", *The Journal of Negro History*, 1969, Vol. 54, No. 4; Joseph Miller. "Central Africa During the Era of the Slave Trade, c. 1490s-1850s" in Linda Heywood, ed., *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "Competing Markets for Male and Female Slaves: Slave Prices in the Interior of West Africa, 1780-1850", *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28:2 (1995); Paul E. Lovejoy "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature", *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989) and Paul E. Lovejoy, ed. *Africans in Bondage* (Madison: African Studies Program, 1986).

Let us begin our summary with the demographical changes brought about by the slave trade. Between the 1400s when Portuguese ships arrived African shores and c.1870, the African continent experienced four slave trades the most extensive and celebrated being the Trans-Atlantic slave trade through which slaves were shipped from West Africa, West Central Africa and Eastern Africa to the European colonies in the New World.<sup>18</sup> One profound impact of the slave trade on Africa is depopulation. Although, while the general destructiveness of the slave trade on Africa's socio-economic and political structures and institutions remain clear, the question of the number of Africans transported across the Atlantic remains a subject of speculation and debate with estimates ranging from a few millions to over a hundred million.<sup>19</sup> Paul Lovejoy estimates that about 11,863,000 Africans landed alive in the Americas and elsewhere during the slave trade.<sup>20</sup> This was in addition to the several millions who died in the 'Middle Passage'<sup>21</sup> as well as those who died between the time of capture and embarkation most especially in cases where slaves had to travel hundreds of miles to the coast. For every 100 slaves who reached the New World, another 40 had probably died in Africa or during the infamous Middle Passage. As Rodney has pointed out, particular reference must be made to the manner and circumstances in which slaves were obtained for sale and shipment. Evidently, the principal means of obtaining slaves was warfare.

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<sup>18</sup> The other three were the Trans-Saharan, the Red Sea and Indian Ocean slave trades which removed more than 6 million Africans from their homelands. See Nathan Nunn, "The Long Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, February 2008, p. 142.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Paul Lovejoy estimates that about 11,863,000 Africans crossed the Atlantic. See his "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 1989, p. 368.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Lovejoy, *ibid*, p. 367.

<sup>21</sup> Estevan Hernández estimates that approximately 1.2 – 2.4 million Africans died in the Middle Passage. See his "The Colonial Underdevelopment of Africa by Europe and the United States", *Liberation*, 30 November 2014 retrieved from <http://www.liberationnews.org> on 12 January 2015. British sailors coined this innocuous phrase the 'Middle Passage' to describe the 'middle leg' of a triangular journey first from England to Africa, then from Africa to Americas, and finally from the Americas back to England. On the first leg of their trip, slave traders delivered goods from European ports to Africa. On the 'middle' leg, ship captains such as John Newton, loaded their then-empty holds with slaves and transported them to the Americas and the Caribbean. A typical Atlantic crossing took 60-90 days but some lasted up to four months. Upon arrival, captains sold the slaves and purchased raw materials which they took back to Europe on the last leg of the trip. See Darlene Clark Hine et. al., *The African-American Odyssey* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003), particularly chapter two entitled 'Middle Passage', pp. 24-45.

This meant that millions may have been killed or maimed in hundreds of thousands of slave-raiding inspired wars all over the continent.<sup>22</sup> The addition of all the above would yield a startlingly higher figure – many times the millions that actually landed in the New World and elsewhere.

Although, the absence of data about the size of Africa's population in the 15<sup>th</sup> century makes a categorical, definitive, scientific and systematic analysis of the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa a bit hazardous; there seems to be no doubt that Africa's demographical changes were in the deficit throughout the slave trade era. This was because fewer babies were born than would have been the case had millions of child-bearing Africans not been killed in slave-hunting wars or removed from their homelands.<sup>23</sup> The following population estimates (in millions), given by a European scholar, support the above view

Continent	Population (1650)	Population (1750)	Population (1850)	Population (1900)
Africa	100	100	100	120
Europe	103	144	274	423
Asia	257	437	656	857

Source: Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, p. 111.

As conjectural as these figures might be, they clearly demonstrate Africa's abnormal and deficit demographical changes. While the population of Europe more than tripled between 1650 and 1900 apparently because of inflow of millions of slaves from Africa; that of the latter stagnated and increased by only 20% thus corroborating the assertion that the population of Africa remained stagnant until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The slave trade remains the most plausible explanation for this stagnated population growth. Indeed, the above population estimates corroborate the view expressed by Patrick Manning that "by 1850, Africa's population was only half of what it would have been had the slave trades not taken place".<sup>24</sup>

For more than three centuries, the Atlantic slave trade evoked a perennial state of acrimony and created a tense and unprecedented atmosphere of insecurity which hindered economic activities and stifled local entrepreneurship and technological drive which in turn distorted Africa's socio-economic structures and dislocated her political institutions. Development as the capacity for self-sustaining growth is a many-sided process which is achievable only when other variables – for example a tranquil atmosphere – are present. For more than three centuries, the

<sup>22</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 171.

Atlantic slave trade engendered wars and other chaotic situations which were at cross-purposes with development. As Rodney has pointed out, the relationship between Africa and Europe from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards served to block the spirit of technological innovation both directly and indirectly.<sup>25</sup> In the first place, millions of young men and women, the agents of development, were removed from Africa thereby robbing the continent of the mental and physical contributions of millions of potential talents, supporters, anchors and sponsors of Africa's development. In addition, those who escaped being captured by slave raiders lived in perpetual fear and apprehension and were pre-occupied devising safety stratagems and precautions – this took the farmer away from his farm, the blacksmith from the furnace, the carpenter from his workshop, the dyer from the dyewood, etc. thus dealing devastating blows to social, economic and technological take off of Africa since “the buoyancy or depression of the economy...depend on the peace or warfare in the land”.<sup>26</sup> As Lovejoy has pointed out, “many [African] communities relocated as far from the slavers' route as possible. In the process, their technological and economic development was hindered as they devoted their energy to hiding and defending themselves”.<sup>27</sup> Agriculture, which guarantees food production, is a *sine qua non* to development because with it, population stabilizes and enlarges and specialization, industrialization and urbanization take place. In removing millions of able-bodied men and women from Africa, the Atlantic slave trade knocked off the premise of Africa's development. With particular reference to the Gold Coast (Ghana), Washington Alcott summarised the economic impact of the Atlantic slave trade thus:

*The transatlantic slave trade caused the forced removal from Africa millions of Africans. This number included a large percentage of skilled tradesman and women from a range of occupations and professions who were making their contribution to African societies...Slave trading undermined the Gold Coast economy and destroyed the gold trade. Slave raiding and kidnapping made it unsafe to mine the gold or to travel with gold. The Europeans' demand for slaves made raiding for captives more profitable than gold mining. The*

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<sup>25</sup> Walter Rodney, p. 122.

<sup>26</sup> Deji Ogunremi “Foundations of the Yoruba Economy in the Pre-Colonial Era” in Deji Ogunremi and `Biodun Adediran (eds.). *Culture and Society in Yorunaland* (Ibadan: Rex Charles Publications, 1998), p. 113.

<sup>27</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *International Slave Trade: Causes and Consequences* (New York: York University Press, 1974), p. 65.

*transatlantic slave trade encouraged Africans to wage war against one another and conduct raids instead of building more peaceful links.*<sup>28</sup>

Washington's submission is true of the entire continent. Scholars appear to agree that the Atlantic slave trade rendered Africa amenable to colonialism. This is not surprising given the fact that the human society, structurally and functionally, is almost a replica of the human body which remains immune to sicknesses and viral attacks as long as antibodies are unassailable, active and strong and vice versa. Strong and efficient socio-economic institutions or what Anta Diop refers to as 'productive forces'<sup>29</sup> are the antibodies of the human society which protect the human society from attacks when they are strong and render it amenable to sundry assaults when they are weak, ill-developed or non-existent. Having drained Africa of millions of men and women in their productive ages and created unfavourable conditions for socio-economic and political growth, "in the end, the slave trade left the continent underdeveloped, disorganized and vulnerable to the next phase of European hegemony – colonialism".<sup>30</sup> This line of argument obviously led Patrick Manning to the conclusion that "there is no doubt that a large number of negative structural features of the process of economic underdevelopment [of Africa] have historical roots going back to European colonization".<sup>31</sup> This agrees with the view expressed by Claude Ake that "It was mainly because the development of productive forces stagnated at a certain stage in African history that the colonisers were able to subordinate the continent".<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the Chinese Marxist theorist, Mao Tse Tung (1893-1976) held the view that "colonialism and imperialism was built on the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes".<sup>33</sup> Between 1830, when France invaded Algeria and 1914, when the First World War broke out, virtually all parts of Africa had been colonised.

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<sup>28</sup> Washington Alcott, "The Underdevelopment of Africa by Europe", *Revealing Histories*, retrieved at <http://www.revealinghistories.org.uk/africa> on 4th February 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop, *Pre-Colonial Black Africa* (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1987), p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *International Slave Trade: Causes and Consequences*, p. 88.

<sup>31</sup> Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, p 124.

<sup>32</sup> Calude Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa* (Essex: Longman, 1981), p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted from Yusufu Bala Usman "History and Its Challenges to the Peoples and Politics of Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in C.B.N. Ogbogbo & O.O. Okpoh, *Interrogating Contemporary Africa – Dike Memorial Lectures, 1999-2007* (Ibadan: Historical Society of Nigeria, 2008), p. 2.

By 1935, colonialism had been fastened on Africa like a steel grid. As has been pointed out already, this paper does not intend to attempt a detailed analysis of the origins and course of either the Atlantic slave trade or colonialism. Since there are dozens of specialised and excellent studies on the phases, course and consequences of western European colonial ventures in Africa,<sup>34</sup> all that is attempted here is a brief and general outline of the impact of colonialism on Africa. It must be pointed out however that the most cursory glance at extant literature on the impact of colonialism on Africa reveals divergent opinions ranging from the one-sided view of apologists like P.C. Lloyd,<sup>35</sup> D.K. Fieldhouse,<sup>36</sup> Grover Clark,<sup>37</sup> Margaret Perham<sup>38</sup> and L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan<sup>39</sup> who described colonialism as absolute blessing for Africa to the extreme critic like Walter Rodney who dismissed colonialism as a one-armed bandit. Adu Boahem has attempted a concise, succinct and balanced analysis of the impact of colonialism on Africa. According to him, colonialism bequeathed three positive political legacies to Africa. First, it established a greater degree of sustained peace and stability in Africa than before. Boahem recounts that the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the century of Mfecane and the activities of the Swahili-Arab and Nyamweze traders such as Tipu Tip and Msiri in central and southern Africa; of the Fulani jihadists and the rise of the Tukulor and Mandigo in the western Sudan; the disintegration of the Oyo and Asante Empires in West Africa, which caused a great deal of instability and insecurity.<sup>40</sup> However, “after the colonial occupation and the establishment of various administrative machineries, most parts of Africa, especially from the end of the First World War onwards, enjoyed a great degree of continuous peace and security”.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the impact of colonialism on Africa, see Patrick Ziltener and Daniel Künzler, “Impacts of Colonialism – A Research Survey”, *Journal of World-Systems Research*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2013, pp. 290-311.

<sup>35</sup> P.C. Lloyd, *Africa in Social Change* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).

<sup>36</sup> D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (Lodon: Macmillan, 1982).

<sup>37</sup> Grover Clark, *The Balance Sheets of Imperialism: Facts and Figures on Colonies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).

<sup>38</sup> Margaret Perham, *Mining, Commerce and Finance in Nigeria* (Faber: London, 1948).

<sup>39</sup> L.H. Gann and P. Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

<sup>40</sup> Albert Adu Boahem, “The Colonial Heritage in Africa” (Action for Peace and Development Project), 2011, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Albert Adu Boahem, “The Colonial Heritage in Africa”, *op. cit.*

The second positive colonial legacy in Africa identified by Boaem is the emergence of geo-polities. In the place of the hundreds of autonomous clans, lineages, groups, city-states, kingdoms and empires with no clear-cut and well-defined boundaries, were established fifty new states with, in most cases, fixed and clearly demarcated boundaries.<sup>42</sup> It is worthy of note that till date the boundaries of many African states remain as defined during the colonial period. It must be conceded however that many of these geo-political entities were mere artificial creations consisting of a motley and medley of peoples with different and sometimes conflicting traditions, origins, languages, cultures, etc thereby making many of them enforced associations of incompatibles thus imposing herculean post-independence challenges on them. This is quite apart from the fact that these geo-polities differed widely in land mass and demography. For example, of the fifty-four countries in Africa, only five – Nigeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – have populations that are over 20 million; six – Morocco, Algeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda – have populations that are more than 10 million while about 34 others have populations that are below 2 million each.<sup>43</sup> Lastly, colonialism led to the introduction of two important institutions – a new judicial system and bureaucracy (civil service).

It was perhaps in the sphere of economy that colonialism was almost a bare-faced robber. Indeed, whatever colonialism contributed to political mobilization in Africa it took away in economic demobilization. Prior to the imposition of colonial rule, “African economies were advancing in every area, particularly in the area of trade”<sup>44</sup> but since the primary objective of colonialism was the exploitation of the physical, human and economic resources of the colonised, it encouraged and ensured the development of a commodity-based trading system, a cash crop agriculture system and a trade network that linked the total economic output of Africa to the twists, turns and tastes of the metropolitan economies. Prior to the imposition of colonial rule on Africa, local production provided Africans with a variety of consumer goods; colonialism however forced the demise of the industrial sector and created an overwhelming reliance on imported goods from Europe. Indeed, “the technological gap between Africa and Europe,

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Ajagbe T. Oyewo, “Examination of the Root Causes of Unsustainable Development in Africa”, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2014, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> Joshua D. Settles, “The Impact of Colonialism on African Economic Development”, University of Tennessee Honours Thesis Projects, 1996 available at [http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_chanhonoproj/182](http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/182). This site was accessed on 30 January 2015.

confined in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to shipping and firearms, widened to such an extent that African technology failed to progress”.<sup>45</sup> It has been pointed out that between 1946 and 1956, the Colonial Development and Welfare Funds allocated less than 1% of its funds to the industrial sector.<sup>46</sup> The calculated and deliberate stifling of Africa’s industrial sector by colonial authorities informed the conclusion that “had native industries been encouraged and cultivated by the colonizing powers, Africa would probably be in a much better economic and technological position today”.<sup>47</sup> Obviously, the most outstanding feature of the colonial economy was *disarticulation*.<sup>48</sup> A disarticulated economy is one whose parts or sectors are not complimentary having neither vertical nor horizontal linkages that can stimulate growth or propel demand and supply or improved production and distribution methods. The colonising powers disarticulated the African economy in an attempt to ensure that the continent remained a permanent supplier of raw materials to European industries and perpetual consumers of finished products from same.

Apologists of colonialism often assert that overseas possessions were burdensome to the *metropoles* and that the latter made huge financial investments which, to a very large extent, stabilised and vitalised African economy but which, on the whole, did not yield commensurate economic dividends for the metropolitan economies. It should be pointed out that the colonisers could not exploit the resources and wealth of the colonies at no cost at all. Thus, in some cases, the extraction of the resources of the colonies entailed some measure of superficial investment in infrastructure particularly railways, roads, water resources, electrical power and administrative structures. Consequently, the infrastructures provided were neither adequate nor targeted at the overall development of the African economy since they were ‘accidental discharges’ and not products of deliberate, coordinated and conscious planning. This is not surprising given the purpose and nature of colonialism/imperialism whose primary purpose was the subjugation, domination, oppression and exploitation of other people.<sup>49</sup> Viewed from any angle, it would appear that the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism were double jeopardy for Africa’s economy little

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<sup>45</sup> Peter Wickins, *An Economic History of Africa – From the Earliest Times to Partition* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 66.

<sup>46</sup> A.J. Aboyeji, “A Study of Igbomina Economy in the Colonial Era, 1897-1860”, M.A. Thesis, University of Ilorin, 2004, p. 249.

<sup>47</sup> Adu Boahem, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 54.

<sup>48</sup> Claude Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa*, p. 43.

<sup>49</sup> Patrick Ziltener and Daniel Künzler, “Impacts of Colonialism – A Research Survey”, *Journal of World-Systems Research*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2013, p. 291.

wonder then that the underdevelopment of the continent has been hinged on these so-called dual historical injustices.

### **The Role of the Atlantic Slave Trade and Colonialism in the Underdevelopment of Africa: A Reassessment**

The exact meaning of ‘development’ in the terrain of development studies has been plagued with intense controversy as there are a galore of definitions propounded by various scholars to capture the meaning of development and underdevelopment from their respective perspectives and ideological leanings and orientations. Torado and Smith define development as “a multi dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty”.<sup>50</sup> This paper conceives development as qualitative and quantitative improvement in people’s living standards in all aspects of human endeavour which includes improved education, incomes, skills development and adequate access to information, good infrastructural facilities, decent housing for the populace, and employment opportunities in the modern sector. The reverse of the above explains underdevelopment. From the outline of the impact of the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism presented above, it is obvious that the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism arrested the political and economic development of Africa. At this juncture, a brief commentary on the internal causation (or modernization) theory and external causation (or dependency) theory of underdevelopment might be helpful.<sup>51</sup> Proponents of the internal causation theory of underdevelopment argue that a nation’s lack of development is a result of its failure to utilize its resources to stimulate economic growth and the failure of the state to establish the required institutional structures, frameworks and mechanisms that can drive and

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<sup>50</sup> M.P. Torado and C.S. Smith, *Economic Development* (Boston: Pearson Publication, 2012), p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> These are the parallels of what some scholars refer to as ‘internalist’ and ‘externalist’ theories of underdevelopment. For a fairly detailed examination of these theories, see Gbenga Lawal, “The Normative Impediments to African Development: Internalist and Externalist Interpretations”, *Journal of Applied Sciences Research*, 2(9), 2006, pp. 637-641. In 2002, the Society of Research on African Cultures (SORAC) organized a three-day International Conference (November 7-9) at Montclair State University, New Jersey, on the theme “Internalist Vs. Externalist Interpretations of African History and Culture”. See <http://www.sorac.net/site/2002/11/sorac-2002>

propel development.<sup>52</sup> W. Rostow, one of the most celebrated protagonists of the internal causation theory postulates five stages of growth: first the *traditional society* whose features include limited production structure and technology; second, the *precondition for take-off* in which society gets ready for transformation by exploring new production techniques and engages in industrial production; third is the *take-off stage* which is characterized by a rapid and continuous growth in agriculture and industry; four the *drive of maturity stage* characterized by the development of modern technology and lastly the *stage of mass consumption* wherein real income per person increases resulting in high standard of living.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, proponents of the external causation theory explain underdevelopment in terms of external factors that inhibited a country's development. Andre Gunder Frank, the most celebrated representative of this school of thought, argues that underdevelopment does not emanate from absence of requisite growth-stimulating domestic institutional structures or lack of other developmental requirements, but rather a direct consequence of political subjugation and economic exploitation.<sup>54</sup> According to this theory, the underdevelopment of underdeveloped states is the outcome of the unequal and unfavourable conditions they found themselves in in the world capitalist system. In a nutshell, the main thrust of the dependency school of thought in expatiating development or underdevelopment discourse centres on core-periphery relationship in the world capitalist system and how the system stifled development in the peripheral states. The implication of the dependency theory is that exogenous factors – the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism, etc – played no roles in the underdevelopment of states while that of external causation theory presupposes that endogenous factors like corruption, insecurity, civil strifes, etc are not or cannot be responsible for underdevelopment. It seems immediately clear to an objective mind that these theories are both narrow and extreme – to acquiesce to either of them is tantamount to writing a one-sided history. For example, in Articles 15 and 19 of its 2002 Report, the Agenda on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) observed that

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<sup>52</sup> For details, see Douglas Von Euler-Chelpin, "Causes of Underdevelopment" at <https://ibpunion.files.wonderpress.com/2011/11/international-political-economy11.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> W.W. Rostow, "The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto" in J.T. Roberts and A.B. Hite (eds.), *Globalization and Development Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), pp. 47-55.

<sup>54</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment" in J.T. Roberts and A.B. Hite (eds.), *Globalization and Development Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), pp. 76-84.

*The impoverishment of the African continent was accentuated primarily by the legacy and effects of slave trade, colonialism, the Cold War, the workings of the international economic system...for centuries, Africa has been integrated into the world economy mainly as a supplier of cheap labour and raw materials of necessity; this has meant the draining of Africa's resources rather than their use for the continent's development. The drive in that period to use the minerals and raw-materials to develop manufacturing industries and a highly skilled labour force to sustain growth and development was lost. Thus, Africa remains the poorest continent despite being one of the most richly endowed regions of the world*

The above is a one-sided account of the reasons for Africa's underdevelopment but one would not expect an objective view from a forum whose members have plundered the resources of their respective states and are responsible for the ills afflicting the continent. Indeed, Estevan Hernández stretched the externalist theory of Africa's underdevelopment to ridiculous extent by claiming that colonialism made it impossible for African states "to have the infrastructure to properly respond to a health crisis such as Ebola".<sup>55</sup> Since trying to get a bird fly on only one wing will not work; only a robust combination of the two theories can offer a balanced discourse on the underdevelopment of Africa. Having briefly examined the two main exogenous factors for Africa's underdevelopment; we will now proceed to discuss some of the endogenous factors that have hindered Africa's socio-economic and technological take-off.

Scholars seem to agree that the fundamental cause of Africa's underdevelopment is corruption.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in a damning indictment of

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<sup>55</sup> Estevan Hernández, "The Colonial Underdevelopment of Africa by Europe and the United States", *Liberation*, 30 November 2014.

<sup>56</sup> See, among others, Daniel Ediegba & Benjamin Maiangwa, "Corruption in the Underdevelopment of the Niger Delta in Nigeria", *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 8, December 2012, pp. 108-132; Dahida Philip & Akangbe Moses, "Corruption as a Bane for Under-Development in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges", *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, Vol. 15, 2013, pp. 76-83; Olu Afoweso & Temitayo Odeyemi, "The Impact of Political Leadership and Corruption on Nigeria's Development Since Independence", *Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 7, No. 5, 2014, pp. 240-253; Agbibo Daniel, "The Corruption-Underdevelopment Nexus in Africa", *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Winter, 2010 and Y. Desta, "Designing Anti-Corruption Strategies for Developing Countries. A Country Study of Eritrea", *Journal of Developing Societies*, Vol. 4, 2006 and Gbenga Lawal, "Corruption and

African political elites and concise summary of the immediate cause of Africa's underdevelopment, the Commission for Africa noted that "Africa has suffered from governments that have looted the resources of the state; that could not or would not deliver services to their people; that in many cases were predatory, corruptly extracting their countries' resources, that maintain control through violence and bribery; and that squandered and stolen aid [monies]".<sup>57</sup> As this author recently pointed out, corruption and development are antitheses – corruption depletes national resources and diverts desperately needed funds from education, healthcare and other social services, dislocates the economy and condemns the overwhelming majority of the people to illiteracy, hunger, poverty, misery, diseases and death. Indeed, since a *leader* should normally be someone who rules, guides and inspires others, an overwhelming majority of those who go by that title in Africa are not *leaders* but *litters* and *vampires* who litter their respective states with hunger, illiteracy, diseases and death. Instead of building infrastructures, developing the economy, funding researches to power and fuel technology, innovation and modernization, most African leaders, as Moses Mungo has pointed out, "have turned themselves to thieves in government houses".<sup>58</sup>

Over the last 50 years, Africa is estimated to have lost in excess of \$1 trillion in illicit financial flows (IFFs) – this sum is roughly equivalent to all of the official development assistance received by Africa during the same timeframe.<sup>59</sup> In 1991 alone, more than \$200 billion in capital was siphoned out of Africa by the ruling elites. This amount was more than half of Africa's foreign debt of \$300 billion.<sup>60</sup> Currently, Africa is estimated to be losing more than \$50 billion annually in illicit financial flows of which "bribery and theft by corrupt government official" form a substantial portion. Indeed,

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Development in Africa: Challenges for Political and Economic Change", *Humanities and Social Sciences Journal*, 2(1), 2007, pp. 1-7.

<sup>57</sup> Commission for Africa: Report for 2005 available at <http://www.commissionforafrica.info/2005-report>, p. 106. Retrieved on 10 January 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Emmanuel O. Ojo, "Nigeria, 1914-2014: From Creation to Cremation?", *Journal of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 24 (*forthcoming*).

<sup>58</sup> Moses Mungo, "Corruption Trends in Africa [sic] Development" retrieved from <http://blogg.fn.no/2013/05/corruption-trends-in-africa-development> on 22 January 2015.

<sup>59</sup> African Union/United Nations Economic Commission for Africa: Report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa 2014, p. 13.

<sup>60</sup> George B. N. Ayittey, "Biting Their Own Tails: African Leaders and the Internalist Intricacies of the Rape of a Continent", Lead Paper at SORAC Conference, 2002.

according to the AU/UNECA Report “these estimates may well fall short of reality because accurate data do not exist for all African countries, and these estimates often exclude some forms of IFFs that by nature are secret and cannot be properly estimated such as proceeds of bribery... The amount lost annually by Africa through IFFs is therefore likely to exceed \$50 billion by a significant amount”.<sup>61</sup> The 2002 Africa Union’s Report corroborates the above. The Report estimated that Africa lost more than \$148 billion annually to corruption.

Indeed, according to the African Development Bank, in 2004 alone, 50% of Africa’s tax revenue and \$30 billion aid money ended up in private pockets. Since the mid 1990s, several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa such as Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea have generated enormous revenues from the petroleum industry but rather than injecting these revenues into the development of what Claire Furphy calls ‘pillars of social well-being’<sup>62</sup> they ended up as personal earnings of the leaders and their cronies thus creating the cruel paradox of enormous wealth; egregious poverty. The following are a few instances of massive treasury looting by some African leaders while in office as elected or military leaders: General Sani Abacha of Nigeria, \$20billion; President H. Boigny of Ivory Coast, \$6billion; General Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, \$5 billion; President Mobutu of Zaire, \$4billion; President Mouza Traore of Mali, \$2billion; President Henri Bedie of Ivory Coast, \$300million; President Denis N’gnesso of Congo, \$200million; President Omar Bongo of Gabon, \$80million; President Paul Biya of Cameroon, \$70million; President Haite Mariam of Ethiopia, \$30million and President Hissene Habre of Chad, \$3million.<sup>63</sup> To these 11 kleptomaniacs, Africa lost well over \$37.683billion yet about 414 million Africans live on less than \$1.25 a day.<sup>64</sup> The Global Financial Integrity estimated that South Africa lost about \$1.4 to “public sector corruption between 1994 and 2008” while the figures for 2009 and 2010 were \$538million and \$769million respectively.<sup>65</sup> Hosni Mubarak of Egypt was said to have siphoned more than \$40 billion from Egypt during his 30-year (1981-2011) regime whereas the *AtlanticMonthly* of 20 May 2010 estimated that the combined net worth of all the 44 Presidents of the United States of America – from George Washington to Barrack Obama –

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>62</sup> Claire Furphy, “Corruption in Africa: A Crime Against Development”, *Consultancy Africa Intelligence*, 16 November 2010.

<sup>63</sup> Gbenga Lawal, “The Normative Impediments to African Development: Internalist and Externalist Interpretations”, *Journal of Applied Sciences Research*, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Patrick McGroaty, “Africa Loses \$60 Billion a Year Illegally”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 February 2015.

<sup>65</sup> *International Business Times*, 6 May 2014.

was \$2.7 billion. The normless argument and refrain of dependency theorists is that the Europeans did not want African states to develop their technology or be able to manufacture goods locally. Except for the United Nations' imposed 'internal imperialism' which handed Namibia to South Africa and Eritrea to Ethiopia after the Second World War, colonialism had virtually crumbled in Africa by 1980 when Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain;<sup>66</sup> five to six centuries had passed and most African states have not been able to adapt or domesticate technology nor are they still able to manufacture goods locally owing largely to vampirism and systemic corruption. Thus, many African countries have been run aground despite their immense natural and human resources. This must have informed the description of the form of government practised in most African states as *lootocracy*.<sup>67</sup>

Closely related to the above is the 'sit-tight' syndrome in Africa – the refusal of African leaders to leave office at the end of their tenures even when they had become unpopular and unable to meet the socio-economic yearnings of their people. After the attainment of independence, many African leaders decanted into one form of authoritarian rule or the other thus littering the African political landscape with individuals who wanted power though not for the sake of the people. Whether elected into office or they accede to power through military coups, many African leaders circumvented all extant laws in their countries to monopolize and stay in power indefinitely. This 'sit-down syndrome' always makes opposition parties to devise the 'pull him down syndrome' and this had had debilitating impact on the political stability and socio-economic fortunes of many African states. This is because, instead of concentrating on governance and devising means and ways of improving the economy, building roads and schools, providing healthcare, power and potable water; the sit-tight leader, more often than not, is preoccupied with egocentric issues that would not add value to the life of

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<sup>66</sup> In addition to Libya which attained independence in 1951, the Maghribi states of Morocco, Tunisia and the Sudan gained independence in 1956; Ghana and Guinea obtained theirs in 1957 and 1958 respectively; Cameroon, Senegal, Togo, Mali, Madagascar, Congo, Somalia, Niger, Bukinafaso, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Nigeria and Mauritania in 1960; Sierra Leone and Tanzania in 1961; Burundi, Rwanda, Algeria and Uganda in 1962; "Kenya in 1963; Malawi and Zambia in 1964; Gambia in 1965; Botswana and Lesotho in 1966; Mauritius, Swaziland and Equatorial Guinea in 1968; Guinea Bisau in 1973; Mozambique, Cape Verde, Comoros, São Tome and Principe in 1975; Western Sahara and Seychelles in 1976 and Djibouti in 1977. While Namibia gained independence in 1990; Eritrea did so in 1993.

<sup>67</sup> Stanley Igwe, *How Africa Underdeveloped Africa* (Port Harcourt: Prime Print Technologies, 2012), p. 2.

the ordinary man – checkmating and devastating the opposition and media white-washing. Also the sit-tight syndrome had led to civil strifes and military interventions in the democratic processes of many African countries since those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable. Unfortunately, even the military, once seen as a sanitizing and corrective institution, goaded by the lure of personal gain became a vanguard of unbridled self aggrandizement and frenetic looting.<sup>68</sup>

The inviolate disposition of the ruling elite in Africa is self-aggrandizement and self perpetuation in power and to achieve this, as Ayittey has rightly pointed out, African leaders “take over and subvert every key institution of government to serve their needs and not that of the people” by compromising the Aid service, judiciary, military, media and even the banking sector and various commissions with lofty ideals that are supposed to be non-partisan and neutral are also taken over and debauched.<sup>69</sup> President Mobutu Sesé Seko foisted a corrupt and dictatorial regime on Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo) for three decades (1965-1997); Daniel arap Moi, whose regime was characterized by massive corruption, held sway in Kenya for 24 years (1978-2002); Omar Bongo ruled Gabon for 41 years (1967) till his death in 2009. At the time of his death, Bongo was the longest-serving head of state in Africa and the longest-serving head of government in the world; Mathieu Kérékou held Benin captive for 19 years (1972-1991); Félix Houphouët-Boigny ruled Cote d’Ivoire for 33 years (1960-1993); Denis Sassou-Nguesso has ruled the Republic of Congo for about 40 years (1979-1992; since 1997); Robert Mugabe has ruled Zimbabwe for about 35 years – since independence in 1980; Blaise Campaoré of Burkina Faso was forced to resign in October 2014 after 27 years in office; Muammar al-Qaddafi ruled Libya for 42 years (1969) before he was ousted by a revolt in August 2011 while José Eduardo dos Santos has ruled Angola since 1979.<sup>70</sup> From the above, it becomes clear that with the exception of the likes of Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, African leaders are not generally inclined to relinquishing power once they get hold of it. Unfortunately, these sit-tight leaders often lack the vision to transform their respective states and they hold on to power well into old age rather than

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<sup>68</sup> Agbibo Daniel, “The Corruption-Underdevelopment Nexus in Africa: Which Way Nigeria?” *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Winter, 2010, p. 474.

<sup>69</sup> George Ayittey, “Biting Their Own Tails: African Leaders and the Internalist Intricacies of the Rape of a Continent”, SORAC Conference, 2002.

<sup>70</sup> See, among others, Tony Ebeh, “The Arab Spring – Lessons for other African Dictators”, *American Affairs*, 30 August 2012; Femi Aribisala, “Down Memory – Lane with Africa’s Sit-tight Presidents”, *Vanguard*, 17 December 2013 and Fola Ojo, “Man, Power and the Sit-tight Syndrome”, *Punch*, 13 March 2015.

groom new leaders or allow transfer of power to new generation of leaders. One reason for the unwillingness of African leaders to relinquish power is their unbridled penchant for stealing. While Daniel arap Moi corruptly enriched himself far in excess of \$5 billion during his 24-year regime;<sup>71</sup> Eduardo dos Santos' presidency had a budget of \$1.8 billion, which was more than the funds for the Ministry of Health (\$1.5 billion) in the 2013 Angola's national budget.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the United Nations Organization estimates that about \$34 billion was siphoned from Angola's treasury between 1990 and 2008.<sup>73</sup> If this figure is divided by Angola's approximately 19 million people, each would receive about \$1,789 which would make that country a middle-income one. It is therefore not surprising that on the 2011 Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme, only three of the thirty lowest ranked countries are not African.

One important consequence of the above is the prevalence of civil wars in Africa. As a continent, Africa has demonstrated significant levels of state fragility and conflict over the past 50 years – of the 54 countries in Africa, 48 have endured post-independence armed conflict most of which have been intra-state rather than inter-state<sup>74</sup> while nearly half of the 32 intra and inter-state armed conflicts that occurred worldwide between 2004 and 2009 took place in Africa.<sup>75</sup> Thus, in its year 2000 Yearbook, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) listed Africa as the most conflict ridden region in the world and the only region where armed conflicts are on the increase. The relatively high incidence of civil wars in Africa is not due to the ethno-linguistic fragmentation of its countries, but rather to high levels of poverty, failed political institutions and overdependence on natural resources. While it must be stressed that systemic corruption and the sit-tight syndrome are not the exclusive causes of civil wars in Africa; available data reveals that a large number of civil wars that had afflicted Africa were fuelled by these factors.<sup>76</sup> As Veronica Nmoma has pointed out,

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<sup>71</sup> *The New York Times*, 21 December 2003.

<sup>72</sup> *Global Voices*, 24 March 2014. Retrieved from <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2014/03/24>, 23 February 2015.

<sup>73</sup> *The Wall Street Journal*, 15-16 October, 2011, p. A10.

<sup>74</sup> "African Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations – Assessing their Contributions to Economic Integration and Conflict Management", Woodrow Wilson International Center, October 2008, p. 18.

<sup>75</sup> Jeremy Sarkin, "The Role of the United Nations, the African Union and Africa's Sub-Regional Organizations in Dealing with Africa's Human Rights Problems: Connecting Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect", *Journal of African Law*, 53, (1), 2009, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> For a detailed country-by-country or region-by-region analysis of the causes, course and consequences of civil wars in Africa, see Ali Taisier & Osler Robert,

civil wars in Africa “are proof of political instability which may result from breakdown in governance when a people has become...victim of their own government’s abuse”.<sup>77</sup> Using the Collier-Hoeffler ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’ theory which postulates that rebels will generally pursue civil war for ‘loot-seeking’ and ‘justice-seeking’, John Anyanwu has demonstrated the central role greed, corruption and injustice play in the outbreak of civil wars in Africa.<sup>78</sup> This is because in the midst of endemic poverty, African ruling elites have corruptly enriched themselves thereby becoming the targets of envy of and attacks by other elite groups. Consequently, half of the continent’s 54 countries are home to an active conflict or a recently ended one. Congo, Somalia, Mozambique, Angola, Sudan, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Guinea Bissau, Côte d’Ivoire, Chad, Uganda, Togo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Central African Republic, Algeria, Zimbabwe, etc had all gone through the throes of civil wars with devastating impacts on the demographical and socio-economic fortunes of the respective states in particular and the continent in general.

A conservative estimate has put the number of Africans killed in post-independence insurgencies, conflicts and civil wars at 13.8 million whereas the total number of Africans shipped to the Americas and Europe during the Atlantic slave trade was about 11 million.<sup>79</sup> This implies that in the last five to six decades, Africans had robbed the continent of the political, social and economic contributions of their fellow men and women more the Atlantic slave trade which lasted well over three centuries. For example, more than 5 million Congolese died in the Congo civil war;<sup>80</sup> more than 2.9 million and 5.4 million people died in the course of the civil wars in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo respectively.<sup>81</sup> As should be expected, apart from heavy human casualties, these wars contribute to the spread of diseases, malnutrition, hunger, starvation, socio-economic decline

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*Civil Wars in Africa – Roots and Resolution* (McGill: Queen’s University Press, 1999) and “African Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations – Assessing their Contributions to Economic Integration and Conflict Management”, Woodrow Wilson International Center, October 2008, particularly pp. 18-19.

<sup>77</sup> Veronica Nmoma, “The Civil War and the Refugee Crisis in Liberia”, *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, Spring 1997, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup> John C. Anyanwu, “Economic and Political Causes of Civil Wars in Africa: Some Econometric Results”, African Development Bank Economic Research Paper, No. 73, 2002, pp. 5-16.

<sup>79</sup> Stanley Igwe, *How Africa Underdeveloped Africa*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>80</sup> Jeffry Gentleman, “Africa’s Forever Wars – Why the Continent’s Conflicts Never End”, *Foreign Affairs*, 11 February 2010.

<sup>81</sup> Melha Rout Biel, “The Civil War in Southern Sudan and its Effect on Youth and Children”, *Journal of Social Work and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2003, p. 26.

and moral deterioration of African states. Until recently, Sudan was a theater of continuous conflict (since 1956). No sooner had the conflict been resolved through the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement than another one broke out in the western Darfur region. This conflict, described as the world's worst humanitarian disaster, spread into Chad while Somalia earned the title of a 'collapsed state' following a series of conflicts that left it without a central government. This long war, which spread to other countries in the Horn – particularly Eritrea and Ethiopia – claimed millions of lives and resulted in over 800,000 refugees and over one million internally displaced persons. Rout Biel summarized the medical effect of the Sudan civil war thus "medicine was either not available or very expensive in many hospitals in the North. Many people could not visit a doctor. Today, it is becoming more difficult to go to a doctor. Meanwhile, the health situation in the South broke down completely. There is no single [functional] hospital in the South".<sup>82</sup>

An outgrowth of the pervasive civil wars in Africa is the ubiquitous problem of internal displacement and large number of refugees. Because of internecine conflicts and wars, Africa accounts for about 50% of the world's refugees, surpassing the population of some individual African nations. In the 1990s, more than 160 million Africans lived in war-torn states while three million of them were killed in the course of such conflicts<sup>83</sup> and by 1993, there were more than 6 million refugees in Africa.<sup>84</sup> A case in point is the Liberian civil war which displaced about 1.28 million or half of Liberia's population.<sup>85</sup> Apparently, refugees and internally displaced persons are mentally and psychologically traumatized, emotionally sapped, economically cremated and most times medically challenged thereby making it impossible for them to make tangible contribution to the socio-economic development of a state or region. Indeed, more than the Atlantic slave trade, civil wars had probably removed more Africans from their professions and vocations – the farmer from the farm, the doctor from the hospital, the teacher from the classroom, the trader from the stall, the engineer from site and the driver from the road. Thus denied of the socio-economic contribution of millions of prospective anchors of its development, it is not surprising that Africa remains the only continent that continues to experience socio-economic stagnation, famine and hunger in the 21st century.

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Jeremy Sarkin, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> Arthur Helton, "Refugees: The Kindness of Strangers", *African Report*, March-April, 1994, p. 33.

<sup>85</sup> Veronica Nmoma, "The Civil War and the Refugee Crisis in Liberia", *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, p. 24.

## Conclusion

For rather too long, proponents of the dependency or modernization theory of Africa's underdevelopment have overstretched the role of exogenous factors, particularly the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, in the underdevelopment of Africa. Although, as this paper has pointed out, the theory has some merit because while the Atlantic slave trade arrested the demographical growth of Africa and rendered the preconditions for socio-economic and technological take off thoroughly unattainable for more than three centuries; colonialism *disarticulated* African economy, established a primary product export oriented economy and stifled productive economic ventures. Indeed, both phenomena prevented Africa from going beyond stage one of W. Rostow's five stages of growth. But, if the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism hindered Africa's socio-economic and technological development; endogenous factors, particularly systemic corruption and vampirism, utter disregard for democratic ideals and the sit-tight syndrome, political instability and pervasive civil wars have rendered African states economically and technologically immobile since independence. Large sums of money that are sufficient to catapult Africa to enviable economic and technological plain if channelled into economically productive ventures, end up in private pockets. If colonialism was a one-armed bandit; most African leaders were/are two-armed bandits, spendthrifts, pillagers and plunderers. Thus, several decades after the attainment of independence, most Africans do not have access to power supply, potable water, good road network, qualitative healthcare and education, etc.

As a result of pervasive civil wars fuelled mostly by egocentric reasons, a perpetual atmosphere of insecurity is hung on the continent. Thus, instead of concentrating on governance, provision of basic social utilities and realization of the economic and technological development of their respective states; most African leaders concentrate on prosecuting civil wars with its attendant drain on state resources.<sup>86</sup> Apparently, a war-torn state or region repels rather than attracts investment and is characterized by political upheavals and instability which are at cross-purposes with development. A corollary to the above is incessant military coups and counter-coups which disrupt the democratic process of most African states. For example, by

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<sup>86</sup> For example, it has been estimated that while the prosecution of the civil war in the Sudan cost about \$2 million per day; Africa loses about \$15 billion annually due to conflicts. See Melha Rout Biel, "The Civil War in Southern Sudan and its Effect on Youth and Children", *Journal of Social Work and Society*, p. 20 and "African Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations – Assessing their Contributions to Economic Integration and Conflict Management", Woodrow Wilson International Center, October 2008, p. 18.

1984, twenty-four of the continent's fifty-one independent states were under military regimes<sup>87</sup> and between July 1952 when Colonel Gamel Abdul Nasser swept King Farouk off the seat of power and April 2012, when the last coup in Guinea Bissau took place, there were a total of 88 successful and 108 unsuccessful coups in Africa.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, in the extreme case of Guinea Bissau, no president has completed a full term in office since the country became independent in 1974.<sup>89</sup> Thus, in 2004 the chairman of the African Union Commission, Alpha Omar Konare, reminded an African Union summit that the continent had experienced 186 coups and 26 major wars. Consequently, the continent is littered with millions of refugees and internally displaced persons who are thoroughly economically cremated, psychologically traumatised, physically sapped and medically challenged so that they are unable to make any meaningful contribution to the socio-economic development of Africa. These endogamous factors are the fundamental causes of Africa's underdevelopment.

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<sup>87</sup> Clifford May, "Military Rule is Contagious in Africa", *New York Times*, 6 May 1984.

<sup>88</sup> Issaka K. Souaré, "The African Union as a norm entrepreneur on military coups d'état in Africa (1952–2012): an empirical assessment", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 52, Issue 1, March 2014, pp 69 – 70. For a country-by-country analysis of the reasons for coups in Africa, see Staffan Wiking, "Military Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa", Special Paper, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, Sweden, 1983.

<sup>89</sup> John Hudson, "Why are there so many coups in West Africa?", *The Wire*, 17 April 2012.

Colonialism in Africa began with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which was at its greatest in West Africa. By the eighteenth century, slaves had become Africa's main export. Countries in Africa to break the cycle of underdevelopment has been hindered by the high level of corruption in the continent. Africa is rich in natural resources and the proceeds from the sales of these natural resources to other countries are mismanaged by African leaders through corrupt processes. One reason for this according to Vitta (1999) is that with the urbanization of many cities, there was an increase in the demand for agricultural goods either as food for the increasing urban population or as raw materials for local industries. Recent papers in *Transatlantic Slave Trade and Neo-Colonialism. Papers. People.* Slave ships went in a triangle from Europe to Africa to the Americas and back to Europe again. This was called the Transatlantic Slave Trade, also more. How did African slaves get to the Americas? Who was involved with the slave ship process? Slave ships went in a triangle from Europe to Africa to the Americas and back to Europe again. This was called the Transatlantic Slave Trade, also known as the Triangle Trade. Ireland in the Atlantic World: Migration and Cultural Transfer. In J. Ohlmeyer (Ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland* (The Cambridge History of Ireland, pp. 385-408). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Africa is the lowest income region in the world.<sup>1</sup> This paper revisits the issue of the continent's chronic underdevelopment and backwardness. Although endowed with enormous and almost inexhaustible resources, Africa lags behind the other continents in every facet of life - economically, technically, politically and technologically.<sup>2</sup> In most African countries, public utilities are perpetually comatose forcing many Africans to live under some of the most horrifying socio-economic conditions. took turns blaming the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism for Africa's development tragedy.