

## Underdevelopment in Africa: Theories and Facts

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This paper contends that while the history of Africa's underdevelopment is often traced to the Atlantic and Arab slave trade and to colonial rule, African leaders have been heavily responsible for the continent's underdevelopment and backwardness. It concludes that irresponsible and unresponsive leadership, vampirism and prodigality, corruption, lack of respect for democratic ideals, insecurity and endemic civil wars — which are not legacies of the slave trade — are the fundamental causes of Africa's underdevelopment.

**Key Words:** Africa; African underdevelopment; Causes of African underdevelopment; Effects of Atlantic slave trade and colonialism on Africa; Leadership in Africa.

### 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. 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

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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.

<sup>2</sup> Africa has a total land area of approximately 30,221,532 sq. km. The continent is about 20.4% of the global landmass and is home to more than 1 billion people – about 15% of global population. Africa is home to 50% of the 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 malnourished people, Stanley Igwe, *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.

live under some of the most horrifying socio-economic conditions. Thus, in the failed-state index published in 2010, Africa had seven of the top slots and almost half of the world's sixty economically weak states.<sup>3</sup> A failed state is one with a "government 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 those that are unable to provide their citizens with the most basic levels of employment, health care, infrastructure and overall security. It is therefore not surprising that the Foreign Policy and Fund for Peace categorized a 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 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

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

<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. 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.

of Senegal dismissed the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism as “economies of slavery”.<sup>10</sup>

This theme has continued in more recent times. Wole Soyinka avers 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 were 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 turns blaming the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism for Africa’s development tragedy. Several scholars have also expressed the view that the Atlantic slave trade was responsible for Africa’s socio-economic inertia, 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 underdevelopment 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 trade and colonialism: the African countries that are the poorest today are the ones from which the most slaves were taken”.<sup>14</sup> Nunn agrees with Walter Rodney’s submission to the same effect.<sup>15</sup> From the above, it becomes clear that the dependency theory to which reference will be made later is a very popular explanation for Africa’s underdevelopment.

<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.

<sup>13</sup> Nathan Nunn, “Historical Legacies: Linking 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.

## The Slave Trade and Colonialism as Reasons for Africa's Underdevelopment?

The exact meaning of 'development' in the terrain of development studies has been plagued with intense controversy, as there are definitions galore 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>16</sup> This paper conceives of development in terms of both qualitative and quantitative improvement in people's living standards and in all aspects of human endeavor including education, access to information, infrastructure, housing, and employment opportunities in the modern sector. The reverse of the above constitutes underdevelopment. From the many observations about the impact of the slave trade and colonialism presented above, it is widely held that the slave trade and colonialism inhibited the natural evolution of economic and political development in Africa.

At this juncture, a brief commentary on the internal causation (or modernization) theory and external causation (or dependency) theory<sup>17</sup> of underdevelopment might be helpful. 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 propel development.<sup>18</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

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

<sup>17</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>.

<sup>18</sup> For details, see Douglas Von Euler-Chelpin, "Causes of Underdevelopment" at <https://ibpunion.files.wonderpress.com/2011/11/international-political-economy11.pdf>

*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; fourth is 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 a high standard of living.<sup>19</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, perhaps the best known 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>20</sup> According to this theory, the underdevelopment of underdeveloped states is the outcome of the unequal and unfavorable conditions they found themselves in the world capitalist system. In a nutshell, the main thrust of the dependency school of thought in expatiating development or underdevelopment discourse centers on a 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 exogamous factors — the slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism, etc. — played no role in the underdevelopment of states, while the external causation theory presupposes that endogamous factors like corruption, insecurity, civil strife, 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:

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

<sup>19</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>20</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.

labor 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 labor 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 a ridiculous extreme 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>21</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 seen what numerous African commentators have to say about 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>22</sup> Indeed, in a damning indictment of 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

<sup>21</sup> Estevan Hernández, "The Colonial Underdevelopment of Africa by Europe and the United States", *Liberation*, 30 November 2014.

<sup>22</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; Agbiboa 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 Development in Africa: Challenges for Political and Economic Change", *Humanities and Social Sciences Journal*, 2(1), 2007, pp. 1-7.

cases were predatory, corruptly extracting their countries' resources, that maintain control through violence and bribery; and that have squandered and stolen aid [monies]".<sup>23</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.<sup>24</sup> 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 infrastructure, developing the economy, funding researches to power and fuel technology, innovation and modernization, most African leaders, as Moses Mungo said, "have turned themselves into thieves in government houses."<sup>25</sup>

Over the past 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>26</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>27</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, 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>28</sup> The 2002 Africa Union's Report corroborates the above. The Report estimated that Africa

<sup>23</sup> Commission for Africa: Report for 2005 available at <http://www.commissionforafrica.info/2005-report>, p. 106. Retrieved on 10 January 2015.

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

<sup>25</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>26</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>27</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.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*

loses 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>29</sup> they ended up as personal earnings of the leaders and their cronies, thus creating the cruel paradox of enormous wealth alongside 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, \$20 billion; President H. Boigny of Ivory Coast, \$6 billion; General Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, \$5 billion; President Mobutu of Zaire, \$4 billion; President Mouza Traore of Mali, \$2 billion; President Henri Bedie of Ivory Coast, \$300 million; President Denis N'gnesso of Congo, \$200 million; President Omar Bongo of Gabon, \$80 million; President Paul Biya of Cameroon, \$70 million; President Haite Mariam of Ethiopia, \$30 million and President Hissene Habre of Chad, \$3 million.<sup>30</sup> To these 11 kleptomaniacs, Africa lost well over \$37.683 billion, yet about 414 million Africans live on less than \$1.25 a day.<sup>31</sup>

The Global Financial Integrity estimated that South Africa lost about \$1.4 billion to "public sector corruption between 1994 and 2008," while the figures for 2009 and 2010 were \$538 million and \$769 million respectively.<sup>32</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 *Atlantic Monthly* 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 — 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

<sup>29</sup> Claire Furphy, "Corruption in Africa: A Crime Against Development", *Consultancy Africa Intelligence*, 16 November 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Gbenga Lawal, "The Normative Impediments to African Development: Internalist and Externalist Interpretations", *Journal of Applied Sciences Research*, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Patrick McGroarty, "Africa Loses \$60 Billion a Year Illegally", *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 February 2015.

<sup>32</sup> *International Business Times*, 6 May 2014.

the Second World War, colonialism had virtually crumbled in Africa by 1980 when Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain;<sup>33</sup> five to six decades have 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 practiced in most African states as *lootocracy*.<sup>34</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 have become unpopular and unable to meet the socio-economic yearnings of their people. After the attainment of independence, many African leaders embraced one form of authoritarian rule or another, 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 attain 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 devise the 'pull him down syndrome,' and this has had a 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 the ordinary man — checkmating and devastating the opposition and benefitting from media white-washing. Also the sit-tight syndrome has 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.

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<sup>33</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. Namibia gained independence in 1990; Eritrea did so in 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Stanley Igwe, *How Africa Underdeveloped Africa* (Port Harcourt: Prime Print Technologies, 2012), p. 2.

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>35</sup>

The 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.” They compromise the Aid service, judiciary, military, media and even the banking sector and various commissions. Even though these have lofty ideals that are supposed to be non-partisan and neutral, they are taken over and debauched.<sup>36</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 (from 1967) until 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, from 1972 to 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; and since 1997); Robert Mugabe has ruled Zimbabwe for about 35 years — since independence in 1980; Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso was forced to resign in October 2014 after 27 years in office; Muammar al-Qaddafi ruled Libya for 42 years, from 1969 until he was ousted by a revolt in August 2011; while José Eduardo dos Santos has ruled Angola since 1979.<sup>37</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 relinquish 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 groom new leaders or allow transfer of power to a new generation of leaders. One reason for the unwillingness of African lead-

<sup>35</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>36</sup> George Ayittey, “Biting Their Own Tails: African Leaders and the Internalist Intricacies of the Rape of a Continent”, SORAC Conference, 2002.

<sup>37</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.

ers to relinquish power is their unbridled penchant for stealing. Daniel arap Moi corruptly enriched himself far in excess of \$5 billion during his 24-year regime.<sup>38</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 national budget.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the United Nations Organization estimates that about \$34 billion was siphoned from Angola's treasury between 1990 and 2008.<sup>40</sup> If this figure were divided amongst 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 Program, only three of the thirty lowest-ranked countries are not African.

One important consequence 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>41</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>42</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 reveal that a large number of civil wars that have afflicted Africa were fuelled by these factors.<sup>43</sup> As Veronica Nmoma has pointed

<sup>38</sup> *The New York Times*, 21 December 2003.

<sup>39</sup> *Global Voices*, 24 March 2014. Retrieved from <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2014/03/24>, 23 February 2015.

<sup>40</sup> *The Wall Street Journal*, 15-16 October, 2011, p. A10.

<sup>41</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>42</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>43</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 Volume 41, Number 1, Spring 2016*

out, 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>44</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 that greed, corruption and injustice play in the outbreak of civil wars in Africa.<sup>45</sup> This is because in the midst of endemic poverty, African ruling elites have corruptly enriched themselves, thereby becoming the targets of envy of 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., have all gone through the throes of civil wars with devastating impact 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>46</sup> This implies that in the last five to six decades, Africans have robbed the continent of the political, social and economic contributions of their fellow men and women more than the Atlantic slave trade, which lasted well over three centuries. For example, more than 5 million Congolese died in the Congo civil war;<sup>47</sup> more than 2.9 million and 5.4 million people died in the civil wars in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, respectively.<sup>48</sup>

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*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>44</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>45</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>46</sup> Stanley Igwe, *How Africa Underdeveloped Africa*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey Gentleman, “Africa’s Forever Wars — Why the Continent’s Conflicts Never End”, *Foreign Affairs*, 11 February 2010.

<sup>48</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.

As should be expected, apart from heavy human casualties, these wars contribute to the spread of diseases, malnutrition, hunger, starvation, socio-economic decline and moral deterioration of Africans and 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>49</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 were killed in the course of such conflicts<sup>50</sup>; and by 1993, there were more than 6 million refugees in Africa.<sup>51</sup> A case in point is the Liberian civil war, which displaced about 1.28 million, or half of Liberia's population.<sup>52</sup> Apparently, refugees and internally displaced persons are mentally and psychologically traumatized, emotionally sapped, economically cremated and most times medically challenged, making it impossible for them to make tangible contributions to the socio-economic development of a state or region. Indeed, more than the Atlantic slave trade, civil wars have 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,

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Jeremy Sarkin, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Arthur Helton, "Refugees: The Kindness of Strangers", *African Report*, March-April, 1994, p. 33.

<sup>52</sup> Veronica Nmoma, "The Civil War and the Refugee Crisis in Liberia", *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, p. 24.

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.

### 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 slave trade and colonialism, in the underdevelopment of Africa. As this paper states, several African commentators claim that the theory has merit on the grounds that slave trading arrested the demographic growth of Africa and made the preconditions for socio-economic and technological take-off unattainable for more than three centuries, after which colonialism disarticulated the African economy, established a primary product-export-oriented economy and stifled indigenous productive ventures. Indeed, both phenomena prevented Africa from going beyond stage one of W. Rostow's five stages of growth.

But, even though the slave trade and colonialism may have 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, sufficient to catapult Africa to an enviable economic and technological plain if channeled 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 networks, quality healthcare, education, etc.

As a result of pervasive civil wars fuelled mostly for egocentric reasons, a perpetual atmosphere of insecurity has hung over 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>53</sup> Apparently, a

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<sup>53</sup> For example, it has been estimated that while 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",

war-torn state or region repels rather than attracts investment and is characterized by political upheaval and instability, 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 1984, twenty-four of the continent's fifty-one independent states were under military regimes<sup>54</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>55</sup> Indeed, in the case of Guinea Bissau, no president has completed a full term in office since the country became independent in 1974.<sup>56</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 in the past 50 years. Consequently, the continent is littered with millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, who are thoroughly economically cremated, psychologically traumatized, physically sapped and medically challenged so that they are unable to make any meaningful contribution to the socio-economic development of Africa. These are the fundamental causes of Africa's continuing underdevelopment.

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*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.

<sup>54</sup> Clifford May, "Military Rule is Contagious in Africa", *New York Times*, 6 May 1984.

<sup>55</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>56</sup> John Hudson, "Why are there so many coups in West Africa?", *The Wire*, 17 April 2012.

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