

Africans are Not Blameless and How Africans Underdeveloped Africa: A Twin Response to How Europe Underdeveloped Africa

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Abstract

This paper examined the contending views on the development of Africa, focusing essentially on the twin responses from “Africans Are Not Blameless” and “How Africans Underdeveloped Africa,” to Walter Rodney’s “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.” The paper critically reviews and interrogates the contending views on the challenge of development in Africa, bringing out the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments as they border on Africa’s development. With a careful review of these tripod views on the development challenges of the African Continent, the paper argues that both Europe and Africans are to be blamed for the problem of development in Africa as each of the perspectives is found culpable as they fail in their efforts to exhaustively advance a holistic cause and effect analysis of the Africa’s development story. In one way or the other, the attempts to advance their views and justify their stands from the lenses of their propositions, was not completely successful. This is why the paper concludes that, understanding the issue of development in Africa is to synthesize the arguments of these contending views. The paper calls on Africans to rise to the occasion to restore the glory of Africa through perseverance, hard work and reaffirmation of the uniqueness of Africa as a continent, and thus, the need to look inward and reexamine the ways of life of the people as Africans, and with this sense of Africanness, tackle head-on the challenges affecting the continent and reposition it for the greater good of the people.

Keywords: *Development, Underdevelopment, Economy, Politics and Africa*

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Background to the Study

Many times, when the twin issues of development and underdevelopment in Africa are discussed, attention is always directed to the effect of the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885, which partitioned Africa among the European imperial powers. In line with the resolution at the 1890 Brussels Conference, the European nations such as Britain, France, Germany and Portugal sent out their officials to African territories for occupation. This marked the beginning of colonial rule in Africa. The colonial process in the various African states began at relatively different moments marked by different developments. In the case of Nigeria, for example, the process of colonialism began with the annexation of Lagos colony in 1861. This was further emboldened by the event of the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates.

Colonialism in Africa generally, lasted between the periods of 1885-1960s. Within this period, the colonizers unleashed terror on the economy of the colonized and rendered the people impoverished. The colonizers subjugated the indigenous socio-economic and political structures of African people thereby making them amenable to unending exploitation through a constant socioeconomic and political dependence. The aim of colonialism was the maximization of the capitalists' interest. The colonialists sought to create a market for the industrial finished goods, a source for raw materials for European industries and a source of cheap labour. Rodney (1972) thus, attributes the poverty and underdevelopment of Africa to the nefarious activities of the Western powers against African people through generations of exploitation, which has distorted and twisted their economies.

The process of colonialism reined its course on Africa, until the indigenous populace woke up to the realization that colonialism was a violent and pernicious enterprise. They therefore, fought against colonialism. Some of these leaders and nationalists included Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Ahmadu Bello of Nigeria; Gamal Abdel Nasser and Mohamed Anwar El-Sadat of Egypt, Thomas Sankara of Burkina-Faso, Jaafa Mohammed Nimeri of the Democratic Republic of Sudan; Sekou Toure of the Republic of Guinea and Amilca Cabra of Guinea Bissau. Others include Sylvanus Olympio of Togo; Franc Fanon of Algeria; Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia; Julius Kanbarage Nyerere of Tanzania; Augustino Neto of Angola; Milton Obote of Uganda; Modibo Keita of Mali, Kwame Osagiefo Nkrumah of Ghana, and Leopold Cedar Senghol of Senegal, among others.

African states therefore, became independent, especially in the 1960s. However, some of the states such as Egypt and Ghana, got their independence before this time, other got theirs later in time as in the case of Zimbabwe (in the 1980s) and South Africa (in the 1990s), while some like Liberia and Ethiopia were not colonized. On attainment of independence, there was a new wind of hope that blew across the nation since the destiny of the continent was left in the hands of the nationalists, who were seen as the "Moses" that would take Africa to the Promised Land. However, instead of initiating deliberate policies and programmes that would galvanize development, the nationalists tended to engage themselves in horse-trading, even as they fell to the trappings of power thereby plundering Africa into clustering poverty and socioeconomic misery.

Many analysts and commentators have argued that the failure of African nations lies in the inability of the leaderships to carry on the torch of independence and civilization handed over to them by the colonialists. On the other hand, some believe that neo-colonialism, clientism and the continued meddling of the West in the internal affair of the independent African states, is responsible for the inability of the continent to evolve local solutions to the problems affecting the continent (Kukah, 1999), as the leaders sought for solutions in the foreign land to local problems.

The above debacle has informed scholarship in the developing world, as perspectives on the problem of development in Africa differ among scholars. For example, Walter Rodney's "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa," is a 361-page book, which attempts to explain how Africa became underdeveloped on account of the exploitative tendencies of European states in Africa, through the process of slavery, legitimate trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism. At the same time, other scholars like Bello Umar Gusau, who wrote "Africans Are Not Blameless" and Joshua Agbo, the author of "How Africans Underdeveloped Africa: A forgotten Truth in History," in their 425-paged and 177-page books respectively, tried to argue that Africans too, must share in the blame of their misfortune and misery. In fact, for Joshua Agbo, Africans are responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa (Agbo, 2010).

This paper is therefore, a review of the twin responses of Bello Umar Gusau's "Africans Are Not Blameless" and Joshua Agbo's "How Africans Underdeveloped Africa: A forgotten Truth in History" as a reply to Walter Rodney's "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa." The idea is to critically assess, synthesize and calibrate the factors that account for the underdevelopment of Africa.

A Brief Review of Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*

The book begins with a critical analysis of the concept of development, which Walter Rodney defined as a multifaceted process, which takes places at the level of the individual and social group. At the level of the individual, development entails increased skills and responsibility, discipline and material wellbeing of the individual. At the level of social group, development refers to the ability of the people to regulate both internal and external processes. In an economic sense, development involves the ability of the people to collectively tap resources from nature, and this is dependent on the extent to which the people understand the laws of nature (that is science) and their willingness and ability to put this understanding into use by obtaining tools (that is, technology) (Rodney, 1972, 1).

Deriving from the foregoing, the concept of underdevelopment cannot be said to the absence of development, but underdevelopment can only make sense only from a comparative analysis. This is because people have acquired some levels of development or the other. In this case, when one compares the development of Western world with the developing world, then the former set of countries are said to be developed, while the latter is said to be underdeveloped, because of the different levels of Gross National Product, Gross Domestic Product, levels of industrialization, technological

advancement, production capacity, healthcare system, political stability, literacy, infrastructural development and material wellbeing. The real kernel of underdevelopment is brought to the fore when the question arise that why some nations are said to be developed while others are said to be underdeveloped. In this regards, Rodney (1972, 15) contended that “modern underdevelopment expresses a particular relationship of exploitation (that is, the exploitation of one country by another).” For Rodney, all the countries termed as underdeveloped world were historically exploited by others, termed the developed world.

Walter Rodney acknowledged the riches, economic prosperity and resource endowment of Africa when he quoted the United Nations Survey of Economic Guidelines in Africa up to 1964 thus:

Africa is well endowed with mineral and primary energy resources. With an estimated 9 percent of the world's population, the region accounts for approximately 28 percent of the total value of world mineral production and 6 percent of its crude petroleum output. In recent years, its share of the latter is increasing. Of sixteen important metallic and non-metallic minerals the share Africa in ten varies from 22 to 95 percent of the world production (see Rodney, 1972, 23).

The implication of the above is that, Africa is so much endowed, and therefore, does not need to experience the high rate of poverty and underdevelopment that pervades the African continent. Citing the Scriptures, Mathew 29, Rodney (1972, 36) posits thus: “For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, even the little they have, shall be taken away.” This underlines the reality of Africa as a continent so blessed with rich human and natural resources, yet poor and continues to wallow, sunk and navigates in poverty and underdevelopment.

Africa Prior to Colonialism

Walter Rodney recalled how great Africa was prior to colonialism – that Africa that had their culture, developed systems of administration, with laws that regulated human behaviour, coupled with agricultural production to support its population (see Rodney, 1972, 36). A typical case was Egypt that was organised like a pyramid, with the god-king at the top (called Pharaoh), who was surrounded by an upper class of nobles and priests. The members of this ruling class ran the government and managed their own landed estates. Below the upper class were merchants, artisans, scribes, and tax collectors. Merchants carried on an active trade up and down the Nile, as well as in town and village markets. Egyptian artisans made an incredible variety of well-built and beautiful goods such as stone dishes, painted boxes, wooden furniture, linen clothes, gold, silver and copper tools and containers. By far, the largest number of people in Egypt simply worked the land.

Apart from the Egyptian civilization in Africa, other civilizations also existed. There was the Wolof Empire which extended between River Senegal and River Gambia and far inland to Mali emerged through some states coming together to form a confederation.

The Wolof Empire was governed as a federation. Each state was autonomous in the administration of its internal affairs but certain matters of common imperial interests like trade, defence and provision of imperial revenue were administered by the emperor. In the Wolof system of government, relations and cooperation between the federating units and the central authority was voluntary.

The Ghana Empire also had a stable government strengthened by its viable economy. Gold was the mainstay of its economy and it brought fabulous wealth to the Empire. The emperor was the head of the legislative, executive and judicial arms of government. He had divine rights and Kumbi Saleh, the capital was the seat of the central government. After the introduction of Islam, Kumbi Saleh was divided into two sections. The king and indigenous population lived in one section, while the Muslim population, mostly immigrants and traders, lived in the other section. The emperor (King) was helped by a council of advisers or ministers. The chief councilor acted as the prime minister.

Mali rose after the fall of Ghana Empire in West Africa. Like Ghana, it had a stable government, organized trade contact and stupendous wealth, and a strong standing army. Moreover, Mansa Musa exposed Mali to the outside world. In 1324 AD on a pilgrimage to Mecca, he carried so much wealth (gold), camels and men to the extent that Mali was recognized the world over as a wealthy Empire. The affluence made Mali appear on the maps produced by the Italians in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Rodney, 1972, 38).

In West Africa, some of the pre-colonial systems were centralized, others were semi-centralized, while some of decentralized. For example, the Emirate system in the Northern part of Nigeria operated a centralized system of administration with the Emir exercising both spiritual and secular authority. In the West however, the system was semi-centralized as the Oba (the chief ruler) shared power with other institutions such as Oyomesi (the council of elders), the Ogboni society (which was a cult group that often consulted the gods). There was a very strong system of checks and balances through which the various institutions check the excesses of the Oba, and were in turn checked by other institutions, to ensure transparency, accountability and responsiveness. In the Eastern part of Nigeria, authority was not vested in a central body but shared among the people, who normally took decisions in a general assembly as they gathered in public or market squares. Decisions were taken by merely rising of hands in support of a motion, and doing otherwise in disapproval of a particular motion.

With the above organization of life in the pre-colonial era, the continent is not supposed to be impoverished several years after. The central argument of Walter Rodney is that, "mistaken interpretations of the causes of underdevelopment usually stem either from prejudiced thinking or from the error of believing that one can learn the answers by looking inside the underdeveloped economy. The rue explanation lies in seeking out the relationship between Africa and certain developed countries and in recognizing that it is a relationship of exploitation" (see Rodney, 1972, 26).

For Rodney, the explanation of the underdevelopment of the developing countries in terms of laziness, absence of professional ethics, presence of archaic or feudal institutions and lack of the spirit of entrepreneurship, is misleading. He argued that, it is better to look out for the challenge of Africa's underdevelopment from the continent's association with the West. Taking a historical approach, Rodney traced the roots of Africa's underdevelopment to mercantilism, slavery, free trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism (see Rodney, 1972, p.86).

Mercantilism

Walter Rodney believes that the roots of Africa's underdevelopment are tied to mercantilism, which began in the 15th century, when the Europeans had to look beyond the soil of Europe for business and other pleasures. This adventure was facilitated by the earlier discoveries by European explorers such as Prince Henry, the Navigator, Christopher Columbus, and Ferdinand Magellan, whose 1519–1522 expedition was the first to traverse the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and the first to circumnavigate the globe. The quest for knowledge induced voyages of discovery by European navigators and explorers. This period was described as the Age of Discovery, or the Age of Exploration, which spanned the 15th through the early 17th century, during which time European expansion to places such as the Americas, Africa, and the Far East flourished.

For Rodney, the exploration of Africa by the Europeans was therefore, to build empires. The principal political actors throughout the Age of Exploration were Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, England, and France. Certain European states, primarily Portugal and The Netherlands, were primarily interested in building empires based on global trade and commerce. These states established worldwide trading posts and the necessary components for developing a successful economic infrastructure. Other European powers, Spain and England in particular, decided to conquer and colonize the new territories they discovered. This was particularly evident in North and South America, where these two powers built extensive political, religious, and social infrastructure.

Slavery Trade

Walter Rodney also acknowledges that African countries were incorporated in the world capitalist system through the process of slavery. The era of slave trade was pernicious in that, Africans who had began the march towards development through the production of bowls and arrows, clay pots and artifacts, were taken away through the process of slavery. Dumont (2002) collaborated that African blacksmiths knew how to work gold, copper, bronze and even iron as early as the time of Christ. However, the efforts of Africans were truncated through slave trade, thereby leading to “technological arrest” and the backwardness of the people. At the same time, slave trade contributed to the economic development of the West as the slaves obtained from Africa, and Asia provided the required labour force for cotton production in Europe to satisfy the increasing demand.

Rodney argued that, the damaging effect of the slave trade went much further. Internal wars became profitable and multiplied, blocking political and economic development and the evolution towards large empress, and helping to dismantle those already in

existence. If the Europeans had traded with Africans on equal basis, they would have brought them, in exchange for African products, arts and wheels, materials which would have increase production. They had also provided some education and training, the simple art of harnessing Oxen, for example, the situation in Africa today, would certainly be very different (see, 27).

The enslavement of the African continent was of basic importance in the development of world capitalism as Africa's intensified exploitation, beginning with the late 19th century, has been of consequence in the strength of world capitalism (Rodney, 1972). He expressed this business in monetary terms that the value of the over 300,000 ships hauled in 878 Liverpool ships from 1783 to 1973 was more than 15 million pounds. Despite the lucrative nature of the slave trade, Africa's most important contribution to the development of European capitalism and of the American colonies and of American capitalism does not lie on the trade itself. Africa's most important contribution lies in slavery and very much in the unpaid and forced labour of millions of Negroes for over two centuries. It is the surplus that accrued from this forced and unpaid labour that laid the basis for the industrial revolution of the 18th century which in turn gave rise to colonialism.

Industrial Revolution and Free Trade

With the abolition of slave trade in the 20th century, “legitimate” or free trade was introduced, and this featured the production of palm oil, palm kernel, groundnut, and rubber. Rodney argued that, “the raw materials were only needed to serve the needs of the new industries in Europe. These cash crops were exchanged with European commodities such as textiles; spirits, salt, iron, hardware, tobacco, guns and gun power (see, 121). The difference between slave trade and legitimate trade was that, human beings were not the basis for exchange. However, the period of legitimate trade only served to provide raw materials for the European industries, which sprang up the industrial revolution.

Imperialism and Colonialism

Rodney argued that, colonialism in Africa was necessary as a result of the inherent contradictions of the capitalist economy in the West. The exportation of capitalism to these virgin lands is what refers to as imperialism, which amounts to the internationalization of capitalism that involves the transfer of capital from the advanced capitalist countries to the less developed nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The negative impact of imperialism was felt in the blocking of the emergence of a disciplined industrial class. The objective of colonialism was essentially to promote the economic interests of the imperialist; colonial policies therefore, discriminated against the development of entrepreneurs and industrialists. To be sure, colonialism became the means of achieving the imperialist goals in Africa, Asia and Latin America as the colonizers asserted that control over the lands in Africa. Rodney (1972) believes that these lands, which would have been useful for development were confiscated, and as a result, the developing nations were left devastated, pillaged and their development process distorted.

The effects of colonialism are evident in the various facets of life of Africa, including the area of education. For example, according to Rodney (1972, 179), the colonialists had assured every struggling African that, if he endured missionary education, he would be given a white-collar job and a passport to civilization; but, on leaving school, African youths found the promises to be false. He quoted one standard six leaver who wrote a letter to a magazine in 1960 thus:

After I had passed Standard six, I spent the whole year at home because I could not get a place anywhere to further my education. At the beginning of the year, I went to look for work but failed to get it again, from January until now. If I had known that my education would have been useless, I would have told my father not to waste his money in educating me from the beginning to Standard six.

The above implies that the system of education of education which the colonialists bequeath to Africans was not one that prepares for them to be technically oriented and self-reliant. It was a kind of education that would only that that the youth would continue to depend on the colonial government for white collar-jobs. This was used as a ploy to get the youths to conform to the needs of the colonialists without necessarily helping themselves and their families through critical thinking and innovativeness. As a result therefore, unemployment in many African states has become widespread. This has created a condition where there are able-bodied individual willing to work to earn a living but unable to obtain employment. Other problems associated with the colonial administration in Africa include disarticulation of the African economies, disarticulation of the transportation system, disarticulation of the modes of production, and trade distortions.

Neo-colonialism

For Walter Rodney, African countries may have gained independence from the colonizers; the postcolonial economies of these states still have vestiges of colonialism, which are exemplified in the process and impact of neo-colonialism in the developing nations. Through this process, the Europeans sought to consolidate their hold on Africa. Under these conditions, the postcolonial economies have only served as a conduit pipe for the transmission of raw materials from African states to Europe. Rodney argued that under neo-colonialism, the economies of African states have been distorted resulting from the activities of multinational corporations and international financial institutions such as World Bank and International Monetary Fund (see, 134).

The summary of the arguments of Walter Rodney is that, the present economic and socio-political conditions prevailing in the periphery are that of historical international process. The global system is such that the development of the centre occurs at the expenses of the periphery. At first, many countries of in the periphery have been incorporated into the world economic since the early days of colonialism. At the second level, such peripheral countries have become capitalist economies through incorporation into the world economic system. At the third level, the incorporation of peripheral countries into the

world economy has led to "metropolis-satellite chain in which the surplus generated at each level of in the periphery is successively drawn off the centre. As a result, the periphery is impoverished and the centre is enriched. Therefore, the poverty of the countries in the periphery is not because they are not integrated or fully integrated into the world system as is often contended by free market economists, but because of how they are integrated into the system.

'Africans Are Not Blameless' and 'How Africans Underdeveloped Africa' as Critiques of 'How Europe Underdeveloped'

Bello Umar Gusau's "*Africans Are Not Blameless*" and Joshua Agbo's "*How Africans Underdeveloped Africa: A forgotten Truth in History*" appeared to have been direct responses to Walter Rodney's "*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*." While Walter Rodney insists that European imperialist exploitation in Africa is the cause of underdevelopment, the two authors (Bello Umar Gusau and Joshua Agbo) however, covered on the contrary to argue that Africans are the authors of their own misfortune. It is revealing nonetheless that, despite the dialectics in opinions and perspectives of the three authors, they are united in proclaiming the greatness of the African continent. For example, Bello Umar Gusau contends that, "even science recognizes Africa as the cradle of humankind....Africa's status as the birthplace of humanity should be cherished by the whole world as the origin of its entire people" (Gusau, 2009, 3). He argued further that Africa is the cradle of human civilization, with Egypt as one of the earliest great civilizations as the Egyptians invented the science of irrigation. They also started the idea of education as they taught their children mathematics, astronomy, medicine and writings such as hieroglyphics (picture writing), and demonic writing, which was popular among merchants. In the area of medicine, Egyptian doctors were able to make simple surgery on patients, even as they devised ways of preserving dead bodies (mummification). The Egyptian pyramid has up to this day, defied modern architecture and engineering.

In a similar fashion, Joshua Agbo, took time to stress and proclaim the greatness and destiny of Africa. In doing this, the author traced the origin of the name 'Africa' to many sources but chief of which is from the Egyptian, 'Afri' (heat) and 'kal' (soul). Therefore, Egyptian 'Afrika' is the most likely source of the name 'Africa'. Again, Agbo (2010) tried to trace the origin of the name Africa from the language of Idi Amin, former President of Uganda, where Afrika was use to mean 'land of Gad.' 'Afiri' for Gad (means to roam about in purposeless manner). Therefore, Gad like God is an attribute of the spirit as in the Scriptures (John 3:8), "the wind blows and we hear it, but do not comprehend where it goes." Yet, Africans believe that their ancestors stayed with God who lived on Mount Wotogo at Yei, a town in Southern Sudan.

It is important to consider these reports of Africa as a great land, which apart from its material endowment, plays host to God. This is to show that Africa is a blessed land, which is why it is difficult to hear of natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslide, forest or wildfire, and other natural disasters that have been recurrent and frequent in

Europe and other parts of the world. It is equally important for these stories to be told so that the question becomes apt that, “why then is Africa underdeveloped?” For Gusau (2009), Africa is underdeveloped because of the evils of slavery, racism and colonialism. The slave trade created what the author describes as “civilization gap” (see, 32). At the same time, according to Bello Umar Gusau, “Africans are blameless” in the analysis of the development challenges in the continent. The author blamed Africans for the reasons of surging crisis and conflicts across the continent, ideological imposition, discontinuity syndrome, sit-tightism, leadership quagmire, poor economic planning and globalization. He bemoans the growing rate of crisis in Africa as the continent has become a hotbed for crisis – crisis of identity and interest of the political class. The tendency of the African state to lean towards various western ideologies also proves fatal for the development of the African continent. This implicates that Africans have deviated from their ideology – African socialism or communalism – which is typical of the African culture and tradition. Citing the work of Oliver and Atmore (1981), the author argued that the distinction between socialist and capitalist states in Africa has often proved to be more of rhetoric than reality.

For Bello Umar Gusau, the tendency in Africa for political leaders to hold a grip on power without allowing for power shift as it is done in the Western world is another issue that has undermined development in the continent. No sooner than the people are elected into power, that they become power drunk, seeking to ensure their perpetuity in power. He cited cases like Yoweri Museveni and Idi Amin of Uganda, Omar Bongo of Gabon, Honi Mubarak of Egypt, Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, Colonel Ghadafi of Libya, Yahaya Jammeh of Gambia, Idris Deby of Chad, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida of Nigeria and Paul Biya of Cameroon, among others. In a desperate attempt to hold onto power, these leaders evolve different strategies, including enlisting the support of the military, and by so doing weakening the institutions of the state (see Gusau, 2009, 83). What these African leaders do is that they continue to chase shadows, as they fail in maintaining whatever legacies that may have been left by the erstwhile colonizers. For example, the rail line in East Africa built by the colonial British, which runs from Mombasa in Kenya to Kampala in Uganda in 1896, has remained a shadow of itself. Even in Nigeria, the various railways that connected the country, easing communication, are mere death traps due to lack of maintenance culture.

It is also revealing that the incessant crises and conflicts in Africa is yet another source of underdevelopment in the continent. Africa is at war with itself. Wherever one turns, it is possible to witness one form of conflict or the other. In Sudan, the crisis of identity has kept the people deeply divided along ethnic groups. The crisis which featured the Janjaweed Militia with active central government support, and the Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA), has seen the loss of about 200,000 lives, with about 2.5 million people displaced only in Darfur (Daily Trust, Wed, April 19, 2006 cited in Gusau, 2009).

In Central Africa Republic, crisis has been brewing for several years. Hardly does a day pass without reported cases of assassination and murder. The situation is no less different in Chad, Somalia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and Libya. In Ethiopia, the fight

between the Tigray secessionist group and the Ethiopia has made the land so vulnerable with several thousands of Tigris in various refugee camps in Sudan and other neighboring states. In Nigeria, Boko-Haram attacks have increased since the group began its onslaught in 2001. These attacks have been compounded by yet other acts of insecurity emanating from banditry, kidnapping and recently, herdsmen attacks. This has left scores of innocent citizens dead, while several million of others are displaced, and presently experiencing the scourge of life in IDPs camps. The sin of genocide in Rwanda took place in 1994 when the Hutu ethnic group rose against the Tutsi, leading to the death of about a million people only in the first 100 days of the war. The deleterious impact of Structural Adjustments, poor economic planning, the plague of pandemics and globalization have all emerged as new enemies of Africa (see Gusau, 2009, 273, 311, and 326) that have sway away development thereby leaving the people in untold hardship, misery and poverty.

Both Gusau (2009) and Agbo (2010), may have poised to challenge the view of Rodney (1972), who blamed Africa's underdevelopment on Europe; however, the two despite sharing in the same genealogy in terms of perspectives, are yet slightly different in perceptions. While Gusau believes that Africans too, are blameless, Agbo on the other hand believes that Africans are wholly responsible for the problem of underdevelopment in the black continent. Joshua Agbo tried to rebuff Walter Rodney and liken him to the story of an African woman who had a cat and kept it as a pet. The cat had been catching mice and rats. When the cat was sick, the old woman asked the cat, "Cat, are you sick?" Well, if you die, I cannot bury you nor eat your meat, and if you stay alive, I cannot sell you because you are sick. So, of what importance or use are you to me now (Agbo, 2010, 26)? For Joshua Agbo, Walter Rodney was overly critical of Europe as the cause of Africa's underdevelopment, but forgot the positive impact of colonialism on the socioeconomic and political transformation of the black continent.

Agbo thus, explained the underdevelopment of Africa as the mishandling and atrocities of Africans that have constituted woes onto the continent. This, he explained in his book, *"How Africans underdeveloped Africa,"* as he advanced reasons such as the quest for power after power, leading to the series of coups and counter coups in the various African states. As soon as African leaders wrestled power from the colonizers, they became use to power for the sake of it. This explained the coups in Africa shortly after many of the countries became independent in the 1960s. In Togo, President Sylvanus Olympio was assassinated on 13 January 1963 during a coup. In Ghana, there was a coup on 24 February 1966 that toppled the regime of the radical African leader, Kwame Osagiefo Nkrumah. In Central Africa Republic, Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa removed his brother, President David Dacko on 1 January, 1966; and in Uganda, Idi Amin removed Milton Obote in 1971 (see Agbo, 2010, 42). These coups created a condition of instability that made it difficult for economic planning and development to take place in Africa. Joshua Agbo also outline other causes of African underdevelopment to include debt trap, the exodus of Africans, wars and conflicts in Africa, resource-curse and plundering, negative media reportage and party-politics (see, 56). With these factors, Joshua Agbo shares the opinion and conviction that Africans are responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa.

Critical Analysis of the Tripod Perspectives on Africa's Underdevelopment

A review of the tripod perspective on Africa's underdevelopment— Walter Rodney's "*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*," Bello Umar Gusau's "*Africans Are Not Blameless*" and Joshua Agbo's "*How Africans Underdeveloped Africa: A forgotten Truth in History*," has necessitated a critical assessment of these contending perceptions in the face of the existing realities in Africa. It is first of all pertinent to point out that, Africa prior to colonialism had political systems in the various empires, as Rodney (1972) indicated. In the case of Nigeria, for example, there were Hausa/Fulani Emirate System of northern Nigeria that ensured law and order. In the southern region, there was a semi-centralized political structure remarkable for its principle of checks and balances. Traditional political administration in the east, especially the Igbo society was however, highly segmentary and decentralized. In this system, there was no diffusion of political authority among the groups in Igboland.

Apart from the well-established systems of governance, Africa prior to colonialism was remarkable for some monumental achievements. When the Europeans were living in the carves, the Dogon, an ethnic group in the central plateau region of Mali in West Africa had recognized the stars through their exceptional gift of the knowledge about extra-solar astronomical bodies, which they were able to discern with their naked eyes (Griaule, 1970). It is also perplexing that the Temples of Lalibela were dug out of the ground in Ethiopia. Each temple is carved from a single piece of rock to symbolize spirituality and humility. The temple of Lalibela is one of Ethiopia's holiest lands, located in Amhara region. It is also remarkable that the great walls of Monomotapa, a Southern African Kingdom located in north of modern Zimbabwe, were built in Africa. These walls were built in different styles with amazing craft, just like the Egyptian pyramid that defies architecture and engineering even in the modern world. In the area of warfare, the *Mino* or *Minon* of the Amazon of Dahomey in present day Benin was a formidable force of warriors in the world. This was an all-female military regiment that rose to fill the vacancies that were left due to the depletion of male population as a result of casualties in frequent warfare and the practice where males were given out as slaves to the Oyo Empire. The imperial world was also amazed by the courage and determination of King Nzinga Mbembe of Kongo in present northern Angola, who opposed the Portuguese's slave trade in his jurisdiction. In the later days of colonialism, King Jaja of Okpobo also resisted the evils of colonialism.

Still in warfare, Africans (Ethiopians) defeated the Italian invading force on Sunday 1 March, 1989, near the town of Adwa (or Adowa) in what is called the Battle of Adwa. The victory thwarted the campaign of the Kingdom of Italy to expand its colonial empire in the Horn of Africa. This made Ethiopia, just like Liberia, the two territories that did not fall into the hands of Western imperial powers (Brown and Yirgu, 1996).

Africa is indeed, the cradle of human civilization and citadel of wisdom and knowledge. This is why European prominent and great men in history have visited the continent to pay homage and tribute to the foundation and reservoir of knowledge. In this regard, it is

refreshing to note that Socrates was in Africa; Pythagoras also came; after the death of Socrates, Plato also came to Egypt where he studied for 13 years; Mohammed was in Africa; Jesus was also brought to Egypt in Africa when King Pharaoh sought for the head of the infant Jesus; and Lord Krishna of the Hindu, who is seen as the supreme God in his own right, was in Africa (Scarfstein, 1993). These historic visits are pointers to the greatness of the African continent.

Deriving from the historic importance of Africa as a land of greatness, wisdom, the land filled with natural resources, and the land where God himself dwells, the question is, why then is the continent so narcotized, infantilized and marginalized, and whose absence is felt at the dinner table of civilization? This is the question among many other questions that have remained the subject of debate that has polarized scholarship on the subject matter of Africa's underdevelopment.

To align with the well settled views of Walter Rodney on colonialism in Africa, the colonial process subjugated the indigenous socio-economic and political structures thereby making the colony amenable to unending exploitation through a constant socioeconomic and political dependence. The aim of colonialism was the maximization of the capitalists' interest. The colonial agenda sought to create a market for the industrial finished goods, a source for raw materials for European industries and a source of cheap labour (Rodney, 1972). Towards this end, they brought the indirect rule policy where the indigenous traditional rulers were used against their people. The British reposed a lot of powers and authority to the traditional rulers, who instead of becoming democratic, tended to be autocratic. This played out such that, a ruler's stay in power was dependent not on his legitimacy, but upon his acceptance by the colonizers, whose interests they were to represent. To this extent, the traditional rulers wielded enormous powers, and in some cases used their powers to settle personal differences with others, and even for vendetta.

The colonial project itself rested on organized crime, corruption and injustice. The scramble for territories in Africa was in the first place, a fraud and an ill-informed conception of the Europeans to project their economic interest. The British established the Native Authority and appointed the traditional rulers into it, but these people were poorly paid. The British along with the traditional rulers seized people's wives and coveted them. Even as late as 1932, the Gwari Chiefs seized wives from the harems. They also seized public funds, told lies and perverted justice. As traditional rulers and chiefs, they accepted even those things that seemed objectionable; they pervert justice and extorted money from their subjects. It suffices to say that, the colonial administration in Nigeria sow the seed of corruption and injustice that today rear its ugly head in the post-colonial government and politics of African states, including Nigeria.

It was the British policy to allow each locality to grow at its own rate and the people to develop along their own lines. Accordingly, the British adopted separate administration and constitutions, which in principle was to enable each region grow and develop at its

pace based on its peculiar socioeconomic and political realities. This helped in fuelling ethnic loyalties and identities, resulting in tribalism, nepotism, favoritism and sectionalism. This problem remains highly contentious even in the post-colonial African societies such as Nigeria, where ethno-religious sentiments are threatening to pull the nation apart.

The unexplained intention of the British was not essentially to make leaders out of the traditional rulers. The truth is that, the traditional rulers became stooges of the British officials through whom they unleashed terror and perpetrated atrocities on the unsuspecting locals. As part of this scheme, the British carefully excluded the educated elites from participating in the government of their own people. The idea was that, the uneducated traditional rulers would not easily suspect the unspoken agenda of the British, but on the other hand, the educated elites were bound to oppose the atrocities of the British and accordingly, call for immediate self-government.

It is therefore, inappropriate to dismiss the views of Walter Rodney for having no explanatory value for the underdevelopment of Africa in view of the extent of carnage and harm which colonialism had on the African socioeconomic and political structures. What is however, problematic is that, Rodney failed to appreciate the benefits of the imperial powers to the Africa's development. British for example, provided support to the traditional rulers, who were also trained to acquire modern art and skills of government useful for the administration of the people in the postcolonial Africa. They also laid the foundation on which the beauty of modern Africa could be realized.

Therefore, the sense in which scholars such as Agbo (2010) and Gusau (2009), would have expressed contrary views to Rodney (1972), lies in the fact that, Africans fought for the independence of the continent to take into their hands the destiny of their people. Unfortunately, instead of conceiving policies and programmes that would galvanize development for Africans, the continent despite its potentials and rich mineral endowments has continued to exist at the margins of world civilization.

No sooner that the African leaders who emerged to conduct the affairs of Africa began the journey that they fell to the trappings of power. Africa then began to witness leaders with dictatorial tendencies such as Idi Amin of Uganda, who styled himself, "Dada" and called himself "a pure son of Africa." He also described himself thus: "His Excellency, President for Life, Field Marshal, Alhadji, Doctor Idi Amin, VC, DSO, MC, CBE, Lord of all the Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Sea and Conqueror of the British Empire in Africa in General and Uganda in Particular." He was a ruthless dictator, who slaughtered hundreds of thousands of his countrymen. As many as 500,000 people died during his rule before he was forced out in 1979 by a coalition of Ugandan exiles and Tanzanian troops. In his eight years in power, Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of Uganda's Asian business class, causing economic woes; he flirted with Palestinian hijackers, leading to the Israeli raid on Entebbe; he invited the Queen of England to come to Uganda if she "wanted a real man"; and he fed his opponents to crocodiles (Beaumont, 2003). In Central

Africa Republic was yet another dictator, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, who literally murdered about 100 school children because they refused to buy uniforms from his wife. In the Congo, there was a leader, Joseph Desire Mobutu, a military strong man, who in 1972 changed his name to Mobutu SeseSeko Nkuku Ngeundu WaZaBanga, which means “the all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, goes from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake.” This was the man who on the day of election said, “I know that we are supposed to hold election today, but there is no money to hold election.”

Due to the lust for power, coups became frequent in Africa such that Afro-pessimists were quick to saying that, “coups were as frequent as breakfast, and even breakfast was not frequent.” This became so frequent and alarming such that, between 1960 and 1966, there were coups in Kinshasa (Congo), Ethiopia, Togo, Dahomey (Benin), Zanzibar, Tanganyika, Uganda, Kenya, Gabon, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Gold coast (now Ghana) and Nigeria (The New Africans, London 1967, 9). Recently, there was a coup in Mali on the night of 24 May, 2021 when the Malian Army led by Vice President Assimi Goita captured President Bah N'daw, Prime Minister, Moctar Ouane and Minister of Defence, Souleymane Doucoure. Again, on the 5th of September, 2021, Alpha Conte of Guinea Conakry was deposed by Col. Mamady Doumbouya in a military coup. These coups have created a situation of anarchy and instability in many parts of Africa, and thus vitiating the efforts towards the development of Africa.

In the face of the imminence of self-destruct of Africa, leader such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana could see with the exactitude of a Jewish prophet. For Nkrumah, the independence of African states was not enough if the people would not exercise vigilance. He persuaded the then 34 heads of states who were seated in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia in 1963 to see that they did not emerge from the meeting without a United State of Africa with a single currency, one government for Africa, one army, and withdrawer of the artificial boundaries that were drawn by the colonialists. Nkrumah believed that the vestiges of colonialism were still present in Africa under the guise of neo-colonialism, which he described as the practice of granting independence with the right hand and taking it back with the left (Nkrumah, 1965). Nkrumah was also critical of the destructive military aid, rather than helpful multilateral aid often given due to competing imperialistic objectives from Western powers.

The then Heads of States of the new African countries were jealous of their new found independence and were determined to conduct the affairs of their nations in a manner that they deem it fit. Consequently, they only emerged from the conference in Addis Ababa with the Organization of African Union (OAU), which is often described as a toothless bulldog that only barks without any profound effect. The organization failed in achieving unity in Africa neither did it encourage development in the continent. For example, despite the brutal rule of Idi Amin, the OAU elected him Chairman of the organization in 1975, and in 1977, Africa nations blocked a UN resolution that would have held him accountable for human rights violations. Today, despite the formation of the OAU which was later changed to African Union (AU) in 2001, Africa has become rather so badly

divided than ever. Contestations for political space and the resources of Africa have reduced the continent into a bloodbath. The resource-curse theory holds that, in any African state where natural resources are found, these resources become a curse instead of a blessing to the people for which lives are lost (as in the case of Congo). This narrative informed the movie title, 'Resource-Curse.' In Sierra Leone, where much deposits of diamond, the country has become an attraction of bloodshed on a mega scale, and this too, informs the movie title, "Blood Diamond." The sin of genocide in Rwanda in 1994 has left a shock in the spine of Africa; and the uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria have no less rendered the continent in chaos. The situation in Nigeria is similitude of warfare as Boko-Haram and herdsmen have killed innocent souls more than the number of deaths recorded during World War I.

The xenophobia attacks on other Africans in South Africa by South Africans are contrary to the spirit and letters of OAU. The attacks happened in April 2015, and were criticized by the United Nations Security Council, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nigeria and Malawi (Claassen, 2015). The September 2019 attacks resumed with the killings and destruction of property of Africans, especially Nigerians in Johannesburg. An estimated 120 Africans were reportedly attacked in the last xenophobic uprising. Over 1,000 businesses were affected and 12 people reportedly killed (Adefeko, 2019). The social effect of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa is that it leads to identity battle, and disharmony in Africa. At the point when Africans start to see the allied brotherhood and sisters as outsiders, the result is disunity. Insecurity additionally is an impactful implication of xenophobia when one grieved and got humiliated socially and culturally from one's brothers and sisters, the awful thought evolving from such hostility and indignity may lead them into joining terrible groups which may evidently spur increase in security challenges within the continent of Africa.

In view of the problems affecting Africa, the leaders of the continent sat again in Addis Ababa in 2013 to mark the 50th Anniversary of OAU/ AU in May 1963, and came out with the "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Need," which is the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development. Leaders of Africa acknowledged that, if they had failed in the past 50 years (1963-2013), they are going to fashion a new path in the next 50 years (2013-2063). These heads of states therefore, signed a Solemn Declaration during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the formation of OAU/ AU in May 2013. The declaration marked the rededication of Africa towards the attainment of the Pan African Vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena" (African Union, 2013).

Despite this, the leaders in Africa have continued to mortgage the economies of their countries to the imperialists that now dictate for Africa the direction of their economies. Agbo (2010), identified the issue of debt that has entrapped many African states in the web of the schemes and plots of the western powers. Since 2000, African countries have rapidly increased their borrowing from China, totaling US\$94.5 billion up to 2014, as they

seek to end their dependence on the IMF and World Bank, who demand market liberalisation in exchange for loans (GGA. 19 April 2017). According to research conducted as part of the Jubilee Debt Campaign in October 2018, African countries owed China US\$10 billion in 2010, increasing to over \$30 billion by 2016. China's lending to African countries is part of a large-scale overseas investment boom, forming part of its quest to secure access to raw materials and become an economic superpower (Partington, 2019).

As of 2020, the countries in Africa with the largest Chinese debt were Angola (\$25 billion), Ethiopia (\$13.5 billion), Zambia (\$7.4 billion), the Republic of Congo (\$7.3 billion), and Sudan (\$6.4 billion) (Chiwanza, 2019). In total, the Chinese have loaned US\$143 billion to African governments and state owned enterprises between 2000 and 2017 (Putu and Tshegofatso, 2020). The *Guardian* reported in 2018 that some countries in Africa have not been able to repay their debts. The implication of this is that, apart from a financial strategy, it is also a vehicle for China to write new rules, establish institutions that reflect Chinese interests, and reshape 'soft' infrastructure. There is therefore, the fear of African economies of losing local companies to Chinese companies with strong buying power (Brautigam, 2011). She added that, Chinese loans are prone to misuse, and have promoted the levels of corruption and fights for power in African countries (Brautigam, 2011). Nigeria, the supposed giant of Africa incurs a debt of US\$3.1 billion from China. The country's total remains US\$27.6 billion. Based on this, Nigerian Financial Publication Nairametrics warned of falling into a Chinese debt trap given Nigeria's notable problems with corruption (Odutola, 2020).

Based on statistics presented in *The Economist* in 2018, China likely holds a quarter to a third of Zambia's external debt; which is comparable to other creditors such as the US and the World Bank (Donnelly, 2018). In 2018, the British specialist publication, *Africa Confidential* report made claims that Zesco—Zambia's state-owned national power company—has been in talks regarding repossession by a Chinese company. In Djibouti, Chinese loans total 77% of the country's total debt (Donnelly, 2018). Djibouti owes over 80 percent of its GDP to China and in 2017, became host to China's first overseas military base (*India Today* 16 March 2019). In Kenya, China lent Kenya extensive funds to build highways and a railway between Mombasa and Nairobi, totaling over US\$6.5 billion as of 2020 (ISSAfrica.org, 30 April 2020). A default could have forced Kenya to relinquish control of the port to China (News, Taiwan, 30 December 2018).

Consequent upon the leadership failure in Africa, hundreds of millions of African citizens have become poor. The current international poverty line is set at \$1.9 a day by the World Bank which is based on the average value of goods needed to sustain one adult per day. In other words, people who earn less than that which is considered necessary to sustain a single adult are considered poor (Human, 2021). One half of the African continent lives below the poverty line. In 1970, one in ten poor citizens in the world lived in Africa; by 2000, the number was closer to one in two. That trend translates into 360 million poor Africans in 2000, compared to 140 million in 1975 (The Digest, 2004). In 2021, there are 490 million people in Africa living in extreme poverty, or 36% of the total population (Human,

2021). Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, currently has a 46% poverty rate with 90 million of its 210 million-strong population living in extreme poverty. Nigeria has overthrown India since 2018 as the world poverty capital. The World Bank report of 2019 also indicated that about 98 million Nigerians suffer from multidimensional poverty. The report further predicts that by the year 2030, about 30 million more Nigerians would slip into extreme poverty, making the country a home to extremely poor people of the world (Apa and Akaan, 2020). Burundi, often regarded as the world's poorest country, has the highest poverty rate in Africa at 80%. It is closely followed by the Central African Republic (79%), Madagascar (78%), the Republic of the Congo (75%) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (74%) (Human, 2021). Africans are also susceptible to the three big killer diseases on the continent: malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Globally, 50% of children under five who die of pneumonia, diarrhoea, measles, HIV, tuberculosis and malaria are in Africa, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO cited in Pheage, December 2016 - March 2017).

Joshua Agbo thus argued that, in the postcolonial Africa, the leaders have paved way for neocolonial forces to play out, especially under the guise of globalization (see Agbo, 2010, p.129). The neo-colonial agenda masquerading as globalization in the developing countries is the cause of the increasing political conflict as individuals, groups, classes, and countries clash over the meaning and implications of these economic transactions. The contradiction between increasing economic integration and the wealth it produces, on the one hand, and the desire for political control and national autonomy, on the other, defines much of what happens in the global political economy. Global capitalism breeds inequality and exploitative tendencies of one group of nations over other group of countries, a situation that accounts for the differences in the levels of development of nations of the world.

The above analysis paints a picture of an Africa that is run in the wrong direction, essentially because the leaders of the people lack the vision and competence to thrive development. African leaders and African people are submerged in parochial sentiments of ethnicity, tribalism, religion, nepotism and corruption, and as such failed to carry the torch of civilization which was handed to them by the colonizers. These are the reasons for the deepening inequality, instability and underdevelopment in Africa, and the very context of Bello Umar Gusau's *"Africans Are Not Blameless"* and Joshua Agbo's *"How Africans Underdeveloped Africa: A forgotten Truth in History."*

Conclusion

Arising from the vapourizing expectations of the African people to reap the dividends of development just like other continents of the world, many perceptions and perspectives have emerged to explain the circumstances that impeded development, making the continent a mirage in Africa. This paper therefore, considers the views of Walter Rodney as contained in his, *"How Europe Underdeveloped Africa."* The paper juxtaposition Rodney's arguments against the views of Bello Umar Gusau and Joshua Agbo, whose perspectives and approaches appear obviously as twin responses to Rodney in their

"Africans Are Not Blameless" and "How Africans Underdeveloped Africa: A forgotten Truth in History" respectively. While Walter Rodney believes that Europe is chiefly responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa, Bello Umar Gusau and Joshua Agbo believe that Africans are responsible for the underdevelopment of the continent. A critical review of these perspectives however, indicates that both Europe and Africans are to be blamed for the problem of development in Africa.

It is therefore, critically important for Africans to rise to the occasion to restore the glory of Africa. One way of doing this in the words of Agbo (2010, p.152), is through adoption of socialism in Africa, observing that, "no society, country, nation or even the world as a whole can develop when the labour force is in chains." For Gusau (2009, p.365), Africa must evolve gradual but steady steps through economic planning to redeem her glory in the comity of nations." Africa, no doubt, needs visionary leaders that understand the travails of the people and share in the common concern for the restitution of the African continent. This is essential because, in the words of Patrice Otiene Lumumba, "I believe that we have reached a stage in life in the economic development of Africa where moving forward is perilous, moving backward is cowardice and standing still is suicidal but we must persevere because winners do not quit and quitters do not win."

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