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African Historical Past: A Paradox of Global Reality in the Twenty-First Century

ABSTRACT: Africa continent has under-gone various historical phases, like other continents of the world. It will, therefore, tantamount to mono-causer argument to justify the condition of the continent based on the impact of a phase without giving reference to other phases, as it appears to be the central argument of the proponents of dependency theory. However, Africa was once a centre of civilization. In the context of reality, it is more or less a paradox of history in the twenty-first century. Africa's glory is benighted and riddles in the expression of rhetoric and illusion. The continent is imploded and ravaged with multidimensional problems. Some scholars attributed the phenomenon to the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, while others saw it as a matter of destiny. This paper uses the lens of history to give a panoramic evaluation of its socio-political and economic situations in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. The study argues that even though the present situation of Africa continent leans on its past, slave trade, and colonialism can no longer be used exclusively as viable evidence for its stagnation and backwardness in the world history. It argues that Africa's problems are with Africans, and there would be no change in the situation if Africans continue with the strategy of external aids, assistance, technology transfer from Europe and Americas. There is the need for structural overhauling of African systems, most especially the enemies of moral, political, educational, and economy.

KEY WORDS: Africa, paradox of history, slave trade, colonialism, military, corruption, strategy of external aids, and structural overhauling of African systems.

INTRODUCTION

The general condition of Africa continent in the twenty-first century contrasts sharply with its purported glory of the past. History reveals that civilization started from Egypt in Africa (Lasisi, 2011:6); but in the context of reality, it is more or less a paradox in the twenty-first century World history. Africa's glory has become rather benighted and riddles in the expression of rhetoric and illusion.

The continent is trammelled, imploded, and ravaged by multidimensional problems that border on socio-political and economy (Ihonvbere, 1996:113-115).

By natural endowment, Africa continent is rich in human and material resources needed for rapid development in every ramification. Paradoxically, with few exceptions, notably Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Madagascar, and Cape Verde, which are

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currently making wave economically to cross the border of stagnation and backwardness, the situation of African states in the twenty-first century is at best in the state of socio-political and economic comatose. While other nations of the world are celebrating achievements in the field of science and technology, education, power, industries among others, Africa continues to gloom in poverty, epidemic, war, corruption, and insecurity (Ekwuru, 2001:3-11).

Consequently, many Africans have settled for the option of becoming “refugees” in Europe and Americas rather than staying in their homeland, where lives in similitude of the argument of Thomas Hobbs, is solitary, brutish, and short (cited by Agbo, 2010:120-128). Thus, the hope of Africa future lies in absolute hopelessness. Many scholars have blamed this tragic woe of Africans on the Atlantic Slave trade and colonialism, while others blamed African leaders. Where then is the missing link?

This paper takes a panoramic historical assessment of Africa trajectory through structural evaluation of its socio-political and economic situations in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. The study reveals clearly that even though the present situation of Africa leans on its past, it can no longer be used exclusively as viable argument for its stagnation and retrogression in the World History in the twenty-first century. It argues succinctly that Africa problems are with Africans and there would be no change in the tortuous and degradation of Africa condition through strategies of external aids, assistance and technology transfer from Europe and Americas as the continent is presently positioned. There is the need for vigorous attitudinal orientation and change as well as structural overhauling of African systems most especially on its moral, political, educational and economy.

THE AFRICA'S GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLES

Demographically, Africa is the second largest and second most populous continent in the world. It occupies an area of about 11.7 million km² and covers about 6 per cent of the earth total surface area to accommodate about

1.0 billion people accounting for about 14.72% of the world human population (Adeniji, 2001:36-52). It ranks next to Asia continent, with about 49,700,000 km² to occupy 60% of the earth's total land area; with population of about 4.3 billion to make it has 8.7% of the total earth's surface area and comprises of 30% of its land area (Adeniji, 2001).

Geographically, Africa is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, both the Suez Canal and Red Sea along the Sinai Peninsula to the Northeast, the India Ocean to the Southeast and the Atlantic Ocean to the West. The Continent includes Madagascar and various Archipelagos. It has 54 fully recognized sovereign states, 9 territories, and 3 de facto states with limited recognition (Akintoye, 2006:118-121). See map 1.

The continent is populated by various ethnic groups with different historical origins. It suffices to mention few examples from its diverse regions. In West Africa, the Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, Soninke, and Bambara are among the dominant groups. In North Africa, the Berbers, Arabs, and Tuaregs constitute part of the most populous groups. In East Africa, the Swahili, Kikuyu, and the Luo are among the ethnic groups of the region. In Southern Africa, the Bantu, Zulu, Xhosa, and Swazi are among the ethnic groups. The Central Africa is populated by the Tutsi, Hutus, Pigmies, and Twas. There are several other ethnic groups that space will not allow us to mention in this study.

Africa is drained with important rivers, such as river Nile, which runs from the Great Lake Region of Africa. It passes through about ten countries of Africa: Sudan, South Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Egypt. The river has two major tributaries: the White and Blue Niles (Afigbo *et al.*, 2001:198). The White Nile is longer with the most distant source still undermined, but located in either Rwanda or Burundi. It flows North through Tanzania, Lake Victoria, Uganda, and South Sudan. The Blue Nile is the source of most of the water and fertile soil. It begins at Lake Tana in Ethiopia and flows into Sudan from the Southeast. The two rivers, White and Blue Niles meet near the Sudanese capital



Map 1:
Africa Continent

of Khartoum. The importance of river Nile in North Africa is widely expressed in the civilization of Egypt. The earliest's glory of Egypt is woven around river Nile and this is vividly expressed in the Egyptian aphorism, "Egypt was the gift of the Nile" (Davidson, 1994:17).

The second is Congo River in Central and Southern Africa. The river runs through Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zambia. The river flows from Kisangani, below the Boyoma falls downwards, passing by Mbandaka,

joining with the Ubangi River, and running into the pool Melebo or Stanley Pool (Kamil, 2000:60-69). Kinshasa, formerly Leopoldville, and Brazzaville are on opposite sides at the pool, where the river narrows and falls through a number of cataracts in deep canyons (collectively known as the Livingstone Falls), running by Matadi and Boma and into the sea at the small town of Muanda.

The third is river Niger, which flows from the Guinea highlands in South-Eastern Guinea in Futa Jalon. It runs in crescent through Mali, Niger, on the border of Benin and then through Nigeria, discharging through a massive delta,

known as Niger-Delta into the Atlantic Ocean (cf Baikie, 1867; Banfield, 1905; Barth, 1962; and Baikie, 1966). Its major tributary is the river Benue, which meets the river at a confluence in Lokoja, Nigeria. These major rivers and their tributaries provide means of transportation, linking various places. Not only that, they provide means of irrigation for farmers especially in the Sahara area in the north.

Africa has many lakes, especially in its Eastern part of the continent in the Rift Valley. They include Lake Victoria, Tanganyika, Malawi, Turkana, Albert, Kivu, and Edward among others. The area around these lakes, Burundi, Rwanda, DR (Democratic Republic) of Congo, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania are referred to as inter-lacustrine region (Ogot, 1992:498-523). There are also mountains of different sizes in Africa. However, the highest mountain is Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

AFRICAN SYSTEMS AND CIVILIZATION BEFORE COLONIALISM

Africa and its peoples from the beginning had charitable socio-political and economic systems that were advanced and sophisticated enough to sustain Africa during the period. Each of the independent political entities developed viable political institutions by which rules and orders were maintained. The diverse political institutions have been structured into two: Mega and Mini States (Obayemi, 1995:196-263). The Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Oyo, Benin, and Sokoto Caliphate among others belong to the category of Mega States. The Mossi, Akan, Tuaregs, among others, are few examples of Mini States.

One major difference between the two is the former had centralized and organized socio-political systems, while the latter did not and yet they have laid down orders and principles through which their societies were administered coherently devoid of conflicts and wars (Obayemi, 1995). The structures were designed in such a way that they accommodated plausible allowance of the principles and elements of democracy that made succession smooth, easy, and transparent without periodic elections. Succession was largely based on rotational basis among the aborigines, clans, or on family

in the absence of royal family.

Economically, the African tribes are industrious specializing in various vocations. The availability of the above relief features and the tropical nature of vegetation, which features rainy and dry, seasons per annum, Africans from the time immemorial practised agriculture and it constitutes the mainstay of its economy (Hopkins, 1973:23-25). Majority engaged in farming, i.e. cultivating lands and planting crops for consumptions. Surpluses of these goods were sold in the markets, which were frequented periodically.

Africans largely grew staple crops until the era of colonialism, when cash crops were introduced by the Europeans from Latin America and India (Martins, 1989:112-114). There were various forms of local industries, where finished or semi-finished products were manufactured. For instance, there were textile, soap, pottery, mat, goldsmith, and blacksmith industries in different parts of Africa. Manufactured goods were processed through indigenous methods, initiatives, and techniques. Different groups were noted for the production of different products. For instance, the Phoenicians in Carthage of North Africa were noted for Iron works. Kano, Ilorin, and Nupe in Nigeria were noted for textile industries (Olaoye, 1993:86-91).

Religiously, traditional Africans practised polytheism. They believed in the Supreme Being, which cannot be approached directly. They deified pantheon of gods and goddesses through which the Supreme Being is approached and worshipped (Idowu, 1973:44-46). The Europeans were somewhat bereft of the mode of Africans' worship and derogated them with different epithets, such as primitive animists, godless, idol worshippers, and polytheists among others.

Africans were not in isolation in any perspective. There were inter-group relations among the African people and later with Europeans. Trade constituted one of the major means of their interactions through trans-Saharan trade (Boahen, 1966:121; and Davidson, 1994:89). African goods got to Europe through trade routes via North Africa; and European goods also got to Africa through the same routes. The following constituted

the major articles of trade from Africa: gold, salt, ivory, tusk, and slaves, etc. On the other hand, articles such as beads, dane guns, gun powder, gins, and mirror, etc were brought from Europe. During this period, the Berbers in North Africa served as the middle-men and featured prominently in the transactions. Africans and European transactions were originally based on the principle of equality. Prices of these goods were determined by the forces of sellers and buyers to enhance perfect market equilibrium (Boahen, 1994).

The political, economic, and socio-cultural institutions of Africa had advanced appreciably to the point of acknowledgement by the earliest European explorers. The culture of Africans to some extent had brought them civilization. Civilization is a profound culture that is identified with a particular group in a given epoch. History reveals the existence of a world class civilization in Egypt, Meroe, Kush, and Aksum, etc as centres of African civilization (Yoyotte, 1981:122-135).

Ancient Ghana and the Nok culture in Nigeria in West Africa and the Swahili civilization, the great Zimbabwe in East and Central Africa are examples. Egypt was the first centre of civilization in Africa. Its location at a point in the North-East of Africa, which opened it up to external influences from Asia, where the use of iron implement led to a revolution in food production and technology, enhanced its great popularity and civilization (Abun-Nasar, 1971:46-53).

Egyptians were stone builders. They built status, temples, palaces, and pyramid with stones. They developed one of the oldest forms of writing called "Hieroglyphics" or picture writing. This unique form of writing was a combination of picture and sound. It was discovered about 400 BC (Before Christ). They had the knowledge of Mathematics and Astronomy, and they studied the moon and stars so as to understand the seasons and calculate the timing of the flood. During this period, they developed the first twelve month calendar of 365 days. They equally developed what was called "Nilometer" for recording the rise and fall of the Nile River. They also invented water clock for measuring the time of the day (Bard & Shaw eds., 2000).

Egypt's arts and architecture reveals African's most durable legacy to World Civilization (El-Nadoury, 1981:155-183). Example of Egyptian arts are the status of Pharaoh Ikhnaton, giant status of Ramses II at the rock temple formerly at Abu Simbel, now reconstructed atop the escarpment to avoid the waters of the Aswan High Dam, Bust of Queen Nefertiti, and the lime stone statue of Queen Hat-shepsut (El-Nadoury, 1981). It serves as record of the Continent's history: its philosophical, artistic, intellectual, religious, and political pursuit.

The Kushians civilization is also worthy of note in Africa. Kush was situated south of Egypt, near the upper Nile, where the Nile took a bend to the east. Kush sprang up from one of the priestly families of Egypt. The assertion of Nubia's independence from Egypt as a kingdom became the kingdom of Kush, due to the weakness of Egypt (Hakem, 1981:298-325). The kingdom of Kush was ruled from Napata up to the 6th century BC. In 591 BC, Egypt had regained its strength and was able to launch an expedition against Kush. At the conquest of Kush, its capital was moved from Napata to Meroe. Thus, Meroe became a great city of political, cultural, and economic centre of the Kush kingdom.

As a result of the ecological suitability of the environment, which was made possible by River Nile, crops were grown in the plains and river valleys (Hakem, 1981). This facilitated trade network with the Sudanese belt of Africa. The exports of Kush were ivory, slaves, ostrich feathers, and animal skins. Also, the geographical location of Meroe, around river Atbara along Abyssinian region, was a centre of iron mining; and it was from there, iron was introduced to the rest of Africa (Leclant, 1981:298-325).

Consequently, its iron weapons and the military tactical advancement contributed to Kush political force over its neighbours. Indeed, as a former Egyptian colony, the kingdom of Kush was culturally influenced by Egypt. The temple they built had Egyptian Hieroglyphics inscribe on them. The people of Kush developed the Meroitic culture. They developed a distinct Meroitic alphabet and script (Leclant, 1981). They also built pyramids, which were distinct

from those built by Egyptians.

The kingdom of Aksum was located in the North-East end of the Ethiopian Plateau, on a trade route from West Asia to India and Horn of Africa (namely Ethiopia). The kingdom of Aksum later became Ethiopia. As Kush was basically Egyptians in culture and outlook, Aksum was essentially Sudan. They practiced mixed farming and learnt to capture and domesticate elephants. Apart from agriculture, the kingdom was also industrialized in the sense of the ancient world. They had many artisans who attained a high standard of artistry. There were carvers, metal workers, porters, builders, and blacksmith. They exported ivory, rhinoceros horns, hippopotamus, hides, gold dust, monkeys, and slaves (Kobishanov, 1981:381-400).

The Nok culture was the next major culture after that of Egypt. The Nok culture reveals a high degree of technological knowledge and sophisticated artistry (Thurstan, 1965:33-71). It is located in the central Nigeria. This was also found in Ile-Ife (Nigeria). As early as 500 BC, Nok artists of Northern Nigeria made terracotta sculptures, and Ile-Ife Terracotta and Benin bronze work, first made about 1200 AD (*Anno Domini*). These terracotta figures were very naturalistic in form and stylistically homogenous. This implies that they either fired clay or pottery (Omar *et al.*, 1968).

The Swahili civilization was found in East African coast of Tanzania and Kenya. The word "Swahili" was derived from an Arabic word meaning "coast". Their language and culture grew from the association between the Bantu and Arab traders, who settled in the area around 500 AD (Ngcongco, 1984:578-596). The civilization as a result of their contact boasts of a long tradition of literature. Among other things, the meeting of these cultures produced its own distinct style of architecture. An example of this architecture was found in the city of Gedi, small trading town off the Islamic East African trading coast.

Thus, with the above evidents, we can argue succinctly that in the pre-colonial African state, there existed appreciable civilization and development, which were dynamic and transforming in nature. They responded to various challenges and occurrences in their

environments. In the field of health, they knew the applications and combination of medicinal plants that were capable of bringing about healings. The knowledge of these properties is indeed a science. This explains why African indigenous herbalists were regarded as scientists (Morley, 1978:131).

African knew as well surveyed how to recognize the various minerals in the rocks and used them for their basic needs. They had formed religions of their own, evolved effective methods of government, and rules and regulations guiding their day-to-day activities in their various societies (Morley, 1978). The above provides a refutation of the so-called "civilizing mission".

THE COLONIAL PERIOD OF AFRICA

We can say the European presence in Africa pre-dated fifteenth century, because some part of Africa had had contact with the Europeans before this time. For instance, the North Africa was already having contacts with the Europeans via trans-Saharan trade (Davidson *et al.*, 1967:30-34). Commerce was the basis of their interactions.

However, the Portuguese explorers were the first to have direct contact with the South Saharan region. They reached Ceuta in Morocco in 1413 and moved downward through the gulf of Guinea to Cape of Good Hope in 1442 (Davidson, 1970:138; and Oliver & Fage, 1975:183). They visited Lagos and Benin in 1472. Anato Gonsalve and his entourage went back to Europe with about twelve slaves that were given by the Oba of Benin and others that were gotten elsewhere.

The explorers heralded their experiences and views about Africa. Indeed, the plan of the Portuguese initially about the slaves was to train and Christianize them and send them back to Africa as evangelists (Fage, 1955:13-21). Meanwhile, they were temporarily occupied in the plantations in Lisbon. The slaves demonstrated African's commitment and ruggedness to duties. This feature ultimately changed the initial plans of the Portuguese to convert them into evangelists to plantation workers.

The Europeans continued their exploration globally; and by 1492, Christopher Columbus

discovered America (Gallay, 2009). He expanded it as the land of milk and honey, and its suitability for plantations. It was Christopher Columbus's accolades about America that triggered the massive movement of the European nations to America to struggle for lands for plantations. Indeed, America lands were favourable, but here came the problem of labour. The Red Indians, who were the aborigines, were not rugged for the rigorous activities required in the plantations. They were dying incessantly (Gallay, 2009). It was this that prompted a Methodist Priest, Bartholomew Las Casas, to vigorously condemn the use of Red Indians in the plantation farms (Davidson, 1961:82-91). He provided other alternatives to the problem by pointing at Africans as peoples God created for such hard works.

It was the above statement that turned African continent into slave market for Europe and Americas. For over three hundred years (1500-1800), Africa continent was ravaged for slaves (Fage, 1969:13-17). This is historically referred to Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in a global history. Indeed, slavery was not alien to African before the coming of Europeans. African practised slavery, but they were not commoditized as was the practice during the slave trade era. They had appreciable right to live and the possibility of freedom to the rights of the free born was not an impossible (Lovejoy, 1983; Lovejoy, 1989; and Manning, 1990). All these were not applicable during the period of trans-Atlantic trade.

Initially, the procurement of slaves, according to B. Davidson (1961:7-9), were largely the die-hard criminals who communities felt were not eligible to life. But, as time went on, the pattern of acquisition changed as the European sold guns, gun-powders, and other instrument of wars, which African used against one another to harried, abducted, kidnapped, and invaded. J.E. Inikori (1978) wrote *inter alia*, as follows:

[...] the bulk of the people sold into slavery were acquired by force through warfare, raids, and kidnapping [...]. The large number of boys and girls among the slaves exported, as shown by the extant shipping record, can only be adequately explained in terms of forceful capture (Inikori, 1978:12).

The Europeans built forts, such as Fort of Elmina, Axim, Cape Coast Castle, and Christiansburg on the Gold Coast. There were also forts in Goree Island in Senegal; and in Whydah on the coast of Dahomey (Benin Republic), and many others. The slaves that were acquired from the hinterlands were assembled in these forts, before shipment across the Atlantic Ocean.

The quantitative analyses have been a subject of polemic among different scholars. While Curtin Philip (1969) suggested a total estimate of about 9 million slaves (Philip, 1969:40-59); J.E. Inikori (1978) perceived the figure by Curtin as on the low side, he however suggested about 30 million (Inikori, 1978:607-627). P.E. Lovejoy (1983) and P. Manning (1990) have argued that if Curtin's assertion was on the low side, J.E. Inikori (1978) was on the extreme side. They maintained an average figure of about 10-11 million people (Lovejoy, 1983:476; and Manning, 1990:499-526).

B. Davidson *et al.* (1967) had, however, argued that there will be no end to the argument of quantitative analyses of the number of slaves exported from Africa. He argued that nobody knows or ever will know, is either the necessary records are missing or they were never made; the best one can do is to construct and estimate from confused and incomplete data (Davidson *et al.*, 1967:187-199). Similarly, W.E.B. Du Bois (1911) argued along side with B. Davidson *et al.* (1967), when he says that the exact number of slaves imported was unknown (Du Bois, 1911:339).

IMPLICATION OF THE TRADE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA

The trade depopulated the demography of Africa continent. Even though the exact population is unknown, the loss of such number at a time when population was crucial to the development of Africa caused great setback for the continent. Beside, those carried away, aged between fifteen and forty, constituted the most productive force of the society. P.E. Lovejoy (1983) wrote as follows:

While the number that landed in America is reckoned between 15 and 20 million [...] about a third of them were young men and women, and the loss of their productive capacity was such that

between 1650 and 1850, the overall population of Africa was declining (Lovejoy, 1983:372).

The above gave us a clue about the group that were mostly affected by the trade and the effects on African population. African societies were, therefore, deprived of the vital segment of its population, and it curtailed their ability, could have been harnessed for socio-economic and political growth of their homeland.

In addition, the incessant warfare and insecurity, which the trade generated, hindered agricultural and industrial development (Claude, 1981:34-38). Local trade and industry suffered as farms and market places became unsafe. The situation was no doubt caused a disruptive influence that was antithetical to socio-economic and political development. The trade prevented the remaining population from effectively engaging in agriculture and industry (Ajayi, 1993:3).

With the reduction in population and the stifling of local industries, the continent was turned from producing economy to a consuming one. Goods like guns, mirrors, gin, hats, umbrella, cloth, etc were brought to Africa from Europe and America. These goods did not stimulate economic development in the continent, since the multiplier effect in terms of economic growth reverberated to the country with the producing firms (Rodney, 1987:146-151). We can apparently argue succinctly that both Africans at home and those imported were used to develop Europe and America on the long run.

Again, given the method of procurements and the inhuman treatment meted on the slaves, the trade plunged Africa into a spot of brutalism and oppression both physically and psychologically. The opportunity provided in this violent phenomenon was the major stimulus for a great deal of violence between different African communities and within communities (Rodney, 1987:152-62). Apart from physical assault, which Africans experienced, the slaves were psychologically dehumanized. This has affected the status of Africa in the international system today. In the minds of most non-Africans, black connotes inferiority.

The abolition of the slave trade has been predicated on different factors, such as economic, evangelism, legal, and fundamental

human rights (Rodney, 1987). Whatever factor, the need in Europe dictated the space. The industrial revolution in Europe made the services of the slaves unnecessary. Many of these slaves became redundant and many of them constituted socio-menace to their host communities; thus, the need for the abolition.

In fact, a large population of the slaves were evacuated from Europe and America to establish Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively (Webster & Boahen, 1967:137-170). The abolition of slave trade paved the way for trade in general merchandize, especially agricultural products such as Cocoa, Coffee, Cotton, Ground Nut, etc., which served as raw materials to European industries during the period. This process eventually laid the foundation of African colonialism.

The colonization of Africa caused serious melee among the European nations, which necessitated the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885. The conference came on board to settle the emerging crises among the European countries and to legitimize the activities of various Europeans in Africa. By 1890, the need for effective occupation of Africa was spelled out during the Brussels conference (Forster *et al.*, 1988: 67-72).

Between 1900 and 1916, various European countries had evolved various political structures through which they administered their territories in Africa. British and French, for example, introduced indirect and direct system of administration respectively. They all introduced different colonial features, such as colonial economy, money, banking, railway, schools, hospital etc. From all indications, African economies were geared towards the needs of the colonial governments (Fieldhouse, 1967:189-196; and Onimode, 1988:229-231). Investment and development projects were aimed chiefly at the extraction of mineral and the production of agricultural products. For instance, railway lines were constructed to link the interior to the coasts in order to facilitate easy transportation of minerals and agricultural resources for shipment overseas via the Atlantic Ocean.

Some of the European policies saw African people as second class citizens and were so treated in the system both in politics and

economy. This perhaps informed the reason the proponent of the theory of colonialism saw the colonial activities during colonialism as basic factor in African under-development (David, 2001:197-2004). The disjointed situation created by the system caused serious disillusionment among the Africans especially the educated elite. It was this that galvanized them in forming various movements for African emancipation (Coleman, 1963:223-234).

Initially, the educated elite agitated for their involvements not only in the political systems, but also in the economy. Later, they pressed hard for absolute political independence. The interplay of the efforts of Pan-African (blacks in Diaspora) and the educated African elite paved the way for the decolonization process of Africa. The independent of Ghana in May 1957 was historic in Africa history. Firstly, it was the first colonized country to secure political independence from foreign domination. Secondly, it served as an encouragement to other African countries, which were still under foreign rules.

By December 1960, over thirteen African countries had secured political independence. However, we need to reiterate a point here. The independence secured by many African countries was mere flag independent. This is because even though many African countries claimed to have political independence, they were still economically tied to their former colonial masters (Offiong, 1980:38-42). This was pre-determined, even before the acclaimed independence. The colonial masters in many cases tactically handed over powers to collaborators, political yes-men, puppets, and somewhat pliant individuals who lacked political acumen to manage the affairs of their countries independently (Davidson, 1962).

This major lapse is evident in the political crises that engulfed most African nations shortly after their independent. For example, the Congo crisis of 1962/1963 and Nigeria's civil war, 1967-1970, erupted shortly after the country's independence. Crisis began to erupt in different part of Africa as a result of tribalism, irredentism, and ideological differences. The Congo crisis became so potent that it balkanized the continent into different ideological groups called the Brazzaville,

Casablanca, and Monrovia blocs. The division of African into different blocs and the danger it posed to the development of the continent inform some African elder-statesmen, such as Hail Sallasie of Ethiopia, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria, etc to establish the OAU (Organization of African Unity) in 1963 (Callaghy,1991).

Between 1960 and 1970, political turmoil permeated the socio-political and economic structure of various states, in reminiscent of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when external invaders plundered and dislocated the socio-economic and political fabric of most African states. With the spate of political convulsion all over Africa, a great explosion of ethnic uprisings, insurgencies, and counter-insurgencies have become a common experience. The crises eventually paved the way for the triumphant entry of the military in African political scene (Barkindo, Omolewa & Babalola, 1994:274-275). They claimed to be umpires of justice and to salvage the people from the cobwebs of the greedy African politicians. Paradoxically, they turned around to become social vampires and social stimulus for calamities, which resulted in the engulfing darkness of the continent (Ogbogbo, 1979:69-71).

For several decades in Africa, the military regimes thrived to entrench the rules of corruption, violation of fundamental human rights, and bastardization of the culture of due process. From 1952 to 1990s, the military entrenched themselves in almost all African states. The table 1 shows the various military coups in Africa.

Many of the military dictators in Africa metamorphosed, while in office to become elected democrats and some as life Presidents. Example includes late Muammar al-Gaddafi of Libya, Etienne Eyadema of Togo, Joseph Mobutu of Zaire, Idi Amin of Uganda, Blaise Campaore of Burkina Faso among others. Others, after having misruled and appropriated state funds constituted themselves into king-makers. Example, includes, Jerry John Rawlings of Ghana and Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria.

Individuals that dared to challenge the scenario were assassinated and maimed,

Table 1:
The Various Military Coups in Africa

Country	Date	Coup Leader
Egypt	23 rd July 1952	Colonel Gamel Abdul Nasser
Sudan	17 November 1958	Lt. Gen. Ibrahim Abboud
	25 May 1969	Col. Jafar Muhammed Nimieri
	30 June 1989	Brig. Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir
Togo	13 January 1963	Nicolas Grunitzky
	13 January 1967	Lt. Col. Etienne Eyadema
Congo (Brazzaville)	15 August 1963	Alphonse Massamba-Debat
	4 September 1968	Major Marian Ngouabi
Dahomey (Republic of Benin)	23 October 1963	Col. Christophe Soglo
	29 November 1965	Col. Christophe Toglo
	22 December 1965	Col. Christophe Soglo
	17 December 1967	Maj. Maurice Kouandete
	10 December 1969	Maj. Maurice Kouandete
	26 October 1972	Maj. Mathieu Kerekou
Zanzibar	12 January 1964	Sheikh Abeid Karume
Algeria	12 June 1965	Col. Houari Boumedienne
Zaire	25 November 1965	Col. Joseph Mobutu
Central African Republic	1 January 1966	Col. Jean-Bedel Bokassa
	20 September 1979	The French and Central African Republic, led by David Dacko
	1 September 1981	General Andre Kolingba
Upper Volta (Burkina-Faso)	3 January 1966	Col. Danguole Lamizana
	8 February 1974	Col. Danguole Lamizana
	24 November 1980	Col. Daye Zerbo
	7 November 1982	Group of NCOS and Junior Officers.
	4 August 1983	Captain Thomas Sankara
	15 October 1987	Captain Blaise Compaore
Nigeria	15 January 1966	Group of Army Majors, led by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu
	29 July 1966	Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon
	29 July 1975	Brig. Muritala Mohammed
	31 December 1983	Maj. Gen. Mohammed Buhari
	27 August 1985	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida
	17 November 1993	Gen. Sanni Abacha
Ghana	24 February 1966	Lt. Gen. Joseph Ankarah
	13 January 1972	Lt. Col. Ignatius Acheampong
	5 July 1978	Gen. Fred Akuffo
	4 June 1979	Flight Lt. Jerry John Rawlings
	31 December 1981	Flight Lt. Jerry John Rawlings
Burundi	8 July 1966	Prince Charles Ndzizeye
	28 November 1966	Captain Michael Micombero
	1 November 1976	Lt. Col. Jeans-Baptiste Bagaza
	3 September 1987	Major Peirre Buyoya
Sierra Leone	21 March 1967	Brigadier David Lansana
	23 March 1967	Lt. Col Andrew Jjuxon-Smith
	18 April 1968	Sergeant-Major Rogers
	29 April 1992	Captain Strasser
Mali	19 November 1968	Lt. Moussa Traore
	25 March 1991	Lt. Col. Amadou Toumani Toure
Somali	19 November 1968	Gen. Mohammed Siad Barre
	25 March 1991	Ali Mahdi Mohammed
Uganda	25 January 1971	Maj. Gen. Idi Amin
	April 1979	Tanzanian Army and Ugandan National Liberation Front, led by Professor Yusufu K. Lule
	10 May 1980	A Military Commission
	27 July 1985	Gen. Tito Okello and Brig. Basilio Okello
	29 January 1986	Yoweri Kaguta Museveni
Rwanda	5 July 1973	Maj. Gen. Juvenal Habyanimana

Country	Date	Coup Leader
Niger	15 April 1974	Lt. Col. Seyni Kountche
Ethiopia	April 1974-1977	"The Creeping Revolution" Emperor Haile Salassie Deposed on 12 September, 1974
	3 February 1977	Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam finally took over
	July 1991	Tesfaye Gabre Kidan Mele Zenawi
Malagasy	18 May 1972	Gen. Ramanatsoa
	5 February 1975	Col. Tatsimandrava
	11 February 1975	Gen. Gilles Andriamahazo
Chad	13 April 1975	Gen. Felix Malloum
	7 June 1982	Hissen Habre
	2 December 1990	General Idris Derby
Equatorial Guinea	3 August 1979	Lt. Col. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
Liberia	12 April 1980	Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe
Mauritania	10 July 1978	Lt. Mustapha Ould Mohammed Salek
	30 April 1981	Lt. Col. Mohammed Khouma Ould Haidalla
	12 December, 1984	Col. Moaouia oul Sidi Mohammed Taya
Libya	1 September 1969	Col Muammar al-Gaddafi
Guinea	3 April 1984	Col. Lansana Conte

Source: Adapted from B. Barkindo, M. Omolewa & G. Babalola (1994:271-272).

while others were hunted as preys. For instance, after ruling Togo for thirty eight years, President Gnassingbe Eyedema was "succeeded" by his son, President Faure Eyedema. By the time the former Gnassingbe Eyedema died of heart attack on his way to France for medical treatment in 2005, he was the longest-serving President in Africa. The second example is President Omar Bongo Ondimba, who came to power in Gabon in 1967. He won election for his third term in office in November 2005, and was in power until he died in June 2009. He too was "succeeded" by his son, Ali Bongo Ondimba. Joseph Kabila "succeeded" his father as the President of the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo).

Each of the leaders exiled, killed, or sent their opponents to jail (Albert, 2011). Had it not been for unforeseen political twists that torpedoed their succession plans, the emerging structure in Libya under Muammar al-Ghadaffi, in Egypt under Hosni Mubarak, and in Djibouti under Ismail Omar Guelleh, would have ended the same way (Cammett & Diwan, 2013).

However, from the decade of 1990s, the idea of military rule became loathsome and ignoble in the global order. The UN (United Nations) overwhelmingly condemned military rules on account of their unlawful infringement of people fundamental human rights and lack of respect for rule of law.

African states that were recalcitrant to the new order were sanctioned heavily by the UN. For example, Libya and Nigeria were sanctioned for protracted military rules.

The emergence of democratic system of governance from the decade of 1990s in Africa witnessed another phase of historical problems. Some of the former military officers having handed over power to themselves as life Presidents or emperors also privatized the state coffers as personal property. The huge amount of money that could have been used for the development of their countries was stocked away in foreign banks. For instance, after the demise of General Sunni Abacha of Nigeria, over five billion USA (United States of America) Dollars was discovered to have been stolen and stocked in Swiss banks. This same was also reported of Mobutu Seseko of Zaire and Robert Mogabe of Zimbabwe.

CONCLUSION

Africa continent has under-gone various historical phases like other continents of the world. It will, therefore, tantamount to mono-causer argument to justify the condition of the continent based on the impact of a phase without giving reference to other phases as it appears to be the central argument of the proponents of dependency theory. To situate the socio-economic condition of Africa

solely on the African experience during the slave trade era and colonialism contradicts the principal of holistic justification of events. Even though Africa had a bad experience during the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, it is no longer valid to justify the backwardness of Africa on slave trade or colonialism after several centuries of socio-political and economic experiences.

The activities of African leaders, politicians, and military have become strong factors in the trammel of Africa trajectory. Politicians, military entrenched themselves in powers across Africa to siphoned, milked, and squandered the resources that could have been used for the development of the continent. Africans who dared to challenge such misconduct were rather assassinated or sent on exiles as refugees in foreign lands.

The situation from 1990 paved way for another phase of horror, inform of ethno-religious, ethnic militia, and inter-communal classes, which saw to the loss of uncountable numbers of lives and properties. The effect of these cataclysmic experiences with its accompaniments depredated Africa continent. The impact of wars, poverty, epidemic, and assassinations in Africa since 1960 cannot be underestimated in the stagnation of the continent.

The agglomeration of the above to a large extent has stagnated Africa economically and making her dependent on foreign aids and grants for virtually everything for its survival. Not only that, the idea of technological transfer as the solution to African problems has further impoverished African well being and making her a baby to Europe and America. If Japan and China could make it Africa can.

Thus, it is the argument of this paper that even though slave trade and colonialism were factors in Africa's predicament, they are no longer sufficient to hold on exclusively as justifiable evidence for its stagnation and backwardness in the twenty-first century among the comity of nations.¹

¹**Statement:** I, hereby, certify that this paper is my own work. It is not product of plagiarism. Due acknowledgment is made in the text for materials written by other authors and researchers. I also declare that this paper has not been submitted to other publishers and not been published by other scholarly journals.

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Africans Today

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By natural endowment, Africa continent is rich in human and material resources needed for rapid development in every ramification. Paradoxically, with few exceptions, notably Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Madagascar, and Cape Verde, which are currently making wave economically to cross the border of stagnation and backwardness, the situation of African states in the twenty-first century is at best in the state of socio-political and economic comatose. While other nations of the world are celebrating achievements in the field of science and technology, education, power, industries among others, Africa continues to gloom in poverty, epidemic, war, corruption, and insecurity.