

What Hinders Economic Development in Africa?

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Abstract

This research makes an in-depth assessment of the underdevelopment conditions in the African continent. It reveals the extent of suffering in Africa, despite enormous resources across the entire region. The challenges before many of the African countries regarding development are not just those of structural, micro-economic or macro-economic indices, but mainly such as considerably caused by some African people. A careful analysis of the prevailing and ongoing situation in African societies reveals that a lot of economic failures are elicited by human factors and not by environmental, location or the absence of resources. The research uses the African continent as the case study and assesses the socioeconomic impediments to the continent's development. The research uses secondary data to assess the situation and drew the conclusion that Africa must shelve such human based impediments in order to foster accelerated economic development.

Keywords: African countries; underdevelopment; economic development; resources; socioeconomic impediments;

JEL Codes: O10; O20; O55;

1. Introduction

Many African countries are abundantly endowed with natural resources in the forms of mineral resources, oil resources (crude oil and gas), agrarian soil for agriculture, etc. Despite these huge endowments, many African countries remain underdeveloped with a few in the developing status. On a closer assessment, the evidence of poverty, suffering and absence of social security abound in Africa; also the palpable lack of infrastructure, poor educational systems, inadequate health centres and high level of unemployment exist in Africa. Even some of the African countries considered to possess higher economic development status do not have applicable level of economic development which impact on the lives of the citizens. South Africa used to be the foremost economy in Africa and was later overtaken by Nigeria in 2014 as the biggest economy, though Nigeria slipped into recession in 2016 and had begun to rebound from there. However, the two countries, much like many other African countries have visible evidence of negative socioeconomic impacts on the societies. Many Africans are still neck deep in poverty. The presence or enormous endowment of African countries have not helped to transform the poverty and suffering level of Africa's population. The paper therefore assesses some of the socioeconomic factors that have perpetually hindered the economic development of various countries in the African continent. The research methodology is that of case study with the entire African continent assessed as a single unit but with a broader assessment of the socioeconomic situation in the continent, especially the man-made impediments that must be overcome to ensure and advance development efforts in the African region. The research uses secondary data in assessment of the situation and draws useful conclusions.

The research presents the following objectives:

- a. To assess the socioeconomic impediments to African development;
- b. To assess the contribution of Africans to the underdevelopment of the continent;
- c. To highlight the perennial negative effects of such socioeconomic impediments to African development.

The research is structured into literature review with the analysis of the various claims of causes of poverty in Africa, the socioeconomic impediments to economic development, the negative impacts and implications of the socioeconomic impediments to economic development. Conclusion was drawn at the end of the research on the issues assessed and analysed. One of the conclusions drawn is the fact that the socioeconomic impediments caused by no other than Africans are stagnating and decelerating the economic vibrancy and development of Africa. In addition, urgent change must be triggered and imbibed to facilitate and embed the possible path to guaranteed economic growth and development amid huge resources available to African continent.

2. Literature Review

The literature review examines the various claims of causes of poverty in Africa that explains the lack of economic growth and development in the African region as viewed and espoused within Africa and beyond. It would examine the veracity of the claims of the causes of poverty in Africa, providing analytical perspectives on the veracity of the claims and debunking them where necessary.

2.1: Phenomenon blamed for Economic underdevelopment in Africa

Slave trade, imperialism and colonialism: Slave trade, imperialism and colonialism appear to be the three phenomena often blamed for the underdevelopment of Africa. In the case of slave trade, many scholars in the twentieth century laid the cause of underdevelopment and backwardness of African countries to the activities of the transatlantic slave trade era which milked African countries of the cream of her youthful men and women who could have advanced the region's economies. The many years of slave trade was viewed as taking more of those young and adult Africans who were able bodied and strong enough to work in the farms of the slave masters. In the process, while other regions of other continents developed by the shared intellectual and workforce inputs of their youthful population, African countries perpetually lost the same intellectual and workforce inputs through slave trade that carted them away for a long period. There is no doubt that the era of transatlantic slave trade was a time of suffering and deprivation of fundamental human rights of Africans. Also, the era saw to the denial of formal educational training for the enslaved Africans. Meanwhile the era to a large extent did not focus at all on development of formal educational process, except for the policy of association and assimilation adopted in some of the French colonial territories. *“Transatlantic slave trade, segment of the global slave trade that transported between 10 million and 12 million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas from the 16th to the 19th century. It was the second of three stages of the so-called triangular trade in which arms, textiles, and wine were shipped from Europe to Africa, slaves from Africa to the Americas, and sugar and coffee from the Americas to Europe”* (Lewis, 2018, p.1). The negative impacts of slave trade was also highlighted in the review of the work

of Patrick Manning (1990) by Clarence-Smith (1993) in which he analysed that Manning's main purpose was to showcase that the transatlantic slave trade in Africa led to demographic decline, anti-black racism and decline in economic development in the region. Manning (1990) simply referred to slavery as tragedy for the African people.

The end of transatlantic slave trade was strongly signalled on March 2, 1807 when the United States Congress passed a bill to end all forms of slave trade of bringing in slave through any port or place within American jurisdiction, from any kingdom, place or country (History.com, 2010). Though the assessment of this era would clearly show that Africans suffered in the hands of slave masters in various ways, but transatlantic slave trade had stooped many centuries ago. Within the period from when it stopped, many world societies have accelerated their economic growth and development to enviable levels. Some countries in the Asian axis including China formally referred to as a closed society had expedited economic growth and development to the extent of been rated as world's biggest economy after USA. African countries in like manner could have advanced their economic growth and development, especially with the possession of abundant natural resources.

On the other hand, as regards imperialism as well as colonialist dominance, some scholars squarely lay blame for underdevelopment of African countries on the trade era of the European imperialism which eventually led to the sapping activities of the slave trade era and colonialism. Abernethy (2000) in his work tried to explain the various stages through which the quest for new empires led the European powers to capture, sustain and attain European imperialist interest for centuries. Doyle (1986) noted that "*imperialism is the process of establishing and maintaining empires*" which are relationships that impose political control on other political societies' sovereignty by other political societies. This explanation of imperialism represented or summed up all forms of international inequality (Doyle, 1986). Rodney (1970) observed that Lenin was perceived to have professed only the dimension of economic theory of imperialism, thus the view that he was one sided. "*Europeans carved up Africa for the several reasons - economic, political, social-humanitarian, psychological, etc.*" (Rodney, 1970, p.1). The quest to find new markets in overseas territories which had already begun to become a source of struggle between the super powers of the European region in the 19th century led to the partition of African continent. The partition of Africa happened in 1885 at the Berlin Conference and led to the administrative and political control of the various protectorates by the European Powers. The colonies became profound new markets while African various kinds of natural resources were pillaged endlessly. Also collected from African countries were artworks of traditional heritages, cultural artefacts, etc. In some of the colonies, local taxes were exacted on the Africans which were in turn used for the administrative convenience of the colonial masters of the European Nations. Rodney (1970) further noted that Africa was a model example of political partition as monopolistic European power was principally interested in the African continent. The Monopoly capital of the European powers had little representation in Africa when compared with their prior investments in other world regions like Asia and America. However, in the fore of interest to colonize African continent, the monopoly capital that had investment interest in other regions other than Africa, emerged in full strength to ensure a rapid and cruel scramble for Africa. Even then, the investment of monopoly capital was mainly concentrated in the South Africa and Egypt with other interest points as Congo, Nigeria and Maghreb. "*South Africa was another laboratory in which the white racist virus was cultivated; and while capitalism subordinated the quasi-feudal economy of the Boers. It was found useful to further entrench racism as a prop to the brutal exploitation of the*

labour of the black peoples of Southern Africa. As a part of the capitalist superstructure, racism was so powerful that Europeans could scarcely bear the thought of politically independent Ethiopia and Liberia on the African continent, despite the fact that both of those states had become enmeshed in the international capitalist system” (Rodney, 1970). It was only in the 1960s, that France, Great Britain, and other previous colonial powers with empires that once controlled about a third of World population, granted independence and became more national states (Burbank and Cooper, 2010). But all through the era of imperialism and mainly colonialism, the territories were struggled for and mainly maintained for various gains including economic and political control.

Despite the arguments explaining the negative impacts that the imperialist and colonialist eras had on the African continent, the end of these eras had lasted for nearly a century or at least many decades for some of the nations, except for South Africa where apartheid domination ended in 1994. Invariably, the example of nations such as the Asian tigers that grew economically from a time of backwardness to advancement could have been followed to accelerate African economic growth and development. The failure of such example in rapid evolving economic growth and development is for me a function of slack in appropriate discharge of responsibility at various levels in the African societies.

North - South divide: The North-South divide is seen as the socioeconomic and political divide whereby the global north comprising of the developed countries of USA, Canada, Western European Nations, the Asian Tigers Countries and other developed parts of Asia, Japan, Israel, Brunei, Australia and New Zealand. The G8 Countries considered most developed are all in the global North as well as the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. On the other, the global South comprises of the underdeveloped, poor, and third world countries of the south which includes African countries, Latin America, developing Asian Countries and Middle East. About ninety five percent of the countries of the north have enough food and shelter which is lacking in the south. The south does not have appropriate technology and political stability (Mimiko, 2012). The global north consist of the developed economies of the western countries while the South consists of the third world countries that are underdeveloped and poor. While the rich countries of the North have high wages, economic success, adequate infrastructure, housing, healthcare facilities, quality education, social welfare schemes, good transport system, enhanced security apparatus, etc. The countries of the South have the reverse of what the North has as their case – poverty, low wages, forced labour, poor infrastructure, poor health facilities, serious shortage of housing, poor educational system, lack of social welfare schemes, undeveloped transport system, inadequate security apparatus, etc. Economically, the global North with about a quarter of the world population has four fifth of earned income all over the world, while the South that has three quarter of the world’s population has only about one fifth of the world’s riches, And as countries become economically viable, regardless of geographic location, they join the developed North. In same vein, any country considered undeveloped, irrespective of location is seen to be part of the poor South. About ninety percent of manufacturing industries are owned and located in the developed North seen as possessing the appropriate productive and manufacturing technology (Therien, 2010).

As a result of the North-South divide, some scholars see it as the cause of the underdevelopment in the South, particularly, the African continent which is in focus for the study. It may also be linked to have something to do with the many centuries of slave trade and colonialism which sapped African nations of needed manpower, time for development of indigenous technological expertise, and setback in social order orientation. A proper look at the events that have transpired through the centuries along

with the fact that Africa is richly endowed with natural resources along with reasonably developed manpower, one is left with the curiosity of asking ‘whose fault it really is that African countries or region remains in the global South of the world divide? Some countries in the global South, even without enormous resources have moved over to the global North, but Africa remain in the global South.

Primary products supply: The issue of primary products supply is closely linked and related to that of North-South divide. One of the reasons tendered for remaining in poverty of the global South is that most countries there are simply suppliers of primary products while most of the countries in the global North are buyers of primary products which are processed and turned into finished costly products sold back to the South at exorbitant prices, thereby ensuring that the North remains wealthy while the South remains poor and sapped of economic prosperity. Mimiko (2012) observes that countries in the global South “*lack appropriate technology, have no political stability, the economies are disarticulated, and their foreign exchange earnings depend on primary product exports.*”

The global North or the so called West is made up of those countries that have productive technologies. As a result of this, they produce with ease by using the raw materials procured from anywhere in the World, including those from the global South to make quality technological products available. If the global South were to possess productive technology that is comparable and competitive like that of the North or Western world, they would as well produce without necessarily exporting raw materials to the global North where they are processed into quality finished goods.

Resource curse: the issue of resource curse which is seen as an off-shoot of New Institutional Economics theory explains the inability to experience economic growth which third world countries including African countries have had over the years which is explained to be attributable to institutional weakness. It was discovered by Sachs and Warner (1995) and Sachs and Warner (2001) in their studies that resource poor countries grew more and faster than those of resource abundant countries from 1970 and 1990 among those studied. This followed a trend of low cost of commodities, non-quality institutions and unending cases of corruption in these societies. Following the persistent trend in commodity prices, it showed that developing economies had smaller economies compared to developed economies because of their preference to export of primary products or resources which prices remained low in when compared to manufactured goods and services which the developed economies traded more in. Invariably, the developing countries have small economies of their trading in commodities which prices are greatly influenced and determined by global markets prices of primary commodities (Frankel, 2010, p.4). The quality of institutions was discovered to be an important factor in having economic development as most of the developing countries had weak institutions which allowed corruption to thrive amidst rent seeking mainstay of the elite and political class. According to Frankel (2010) the quality of institutions in a country essentially differentiates between countries that have progressive economic growth and development and those that do not have economic growth and development. Also, Sachs and Warner (1997) in a study that illustrated the slow economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa from 1965 to 1990 and the previous cited Sachs and Warner (1995) research equally demonstrated the prevalence of natural resources to be associated with slower growth in natural resource abundant countries. Frankel (2012) saw ‘resource curse’ to be a situation where countries with more natural resources are unable to develop whereas those without natural resources are bale to develop faster. “*Examples of the Natural Resource Curse are plain to see. Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong are*

rocky islands (or peninsulas) that were endowed with very little in the way of exportable natural resources. Nevertheless, they achieved western-level standards of living. Many countries in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America are endowed with oil, minerals, or other natural resources, and yet have experienced much less satisfactory economic performance” (Frankel, 2012, p.2). There had also been the issue of struggle for resources in what is known as ‘resource control’. Various militias or ethnic group in whose location different kinds of minerals are located in seek to control the resources while the national governments also pursue total control for national development. This scenario often leads to militancy, terrorism, destruction of economic investments and human lives. Kaldor *et al.* (2007) observe that “*oil conflicts remain at the centre of attention of governments, multilateral international actors and civil society actors, and attract external interventions*”. As noted by Ibeanu and Luckham (2007) the threat to oil facilities in Nigeria was serious enough it elicited Nigerian Federal Government and oil companies negotiating with emergent warlord and leaders of militia groups such as Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom. There was equally the case of struggle for resources in other African countries often occasioned by the struggle for political power as those who control state power control state resources. These include in Sierra Leone, Congo DRC, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan, Angola, etc. These states were engulfed in different kinds of conflict which destroyed lives, properties and economic investments due to the resource endowments. Accordingly, the resources that should be a blessing to resource rich African countries have turned to be a curse.

Following the above analysis, it is clear that many African countries have been affected by resource curse as a result of weak institutions, low cost of commodities and endless acts of corruption. This is much in line with this study as Africans are the ones committing the socioeconomic acts of limitation hindering the region’s economic growth and development.

3. The Case of Africa: Socioeconomic Impediments to Economic Development

This part of the research provides insight into the socioeconomic impediments which have hindered many African countries from forging ahead towards economic development.

Politicization of economic interest: In many of the African countries, economic issues are politicized. There often exist the idea of refusing to site an economic development project in a region or pursue development of some critical infrastructural needs that would support societal development in a region all because a perceived political enemy is from there. Sometimes, if a region did not vote for a political leader, he sidelines or boycotts any good economic plan or projects that would benefit the indigenes of the region or state. In the case of Nigeria for instance, after establishing the steel industry in Ajaokuta, Kogi State, Nigeria has failed to get the multi-million dollar investment into operation, instead Nigeria continues to import steel products to meet its local consumption demands. Furthermore, Nigeria continues to import petroleum products which are refined products of crude oil it is richly endowed with. Nigeria spends billions of dollars on petroleum imports annually and huge financial resources as well in subsidizing it for local users as a result of its inability to meet refining demand of local

consumption. Such indecision in building and establishing refining requisite refining capacity can best be described as playing with national economic interest.

Furthermore, there are situations where economic development interests are used only as a political campaign rhetoric whereby politicians only make bogus promises to the people during electioneering campaigns and never follow through to implement the promised economic interests. There are also situations where palpable economic projects more beneficial to the economic development of the states and the people are abandoned to pursue those of the individualistic interests of politicians which have no economic development bearing with the society or the people. When economic development interests are put in political realm, played with and used as political gaming and exchange tool, it hampers acceleration of economic development of the society. Such economic debacle has affected many African countries from heightened economic development. There is no better way to explain reasons behind the inability of many political leaders in Africa to implement or execute enormous political promises made during the campaigns, despite the contribution they could make to societal economic development. From what has been observed, many of the economic development interest are often used as a political tool for periodic campaigns or as something that would always be referred to as area of interest for economic development pursuit, though it would never be developed or implemented.

Cronyism and nepotism: the idea of cronyism and nepotism well exist within the African societies and they have been hampering economic development efforts of the various countries within the continent. The participation and electoral victory in many African societies are often seen as opportunity not to serve the people, but to serve the interest of the winners and their cronies. Little wonder loss in elections is enormously celebrated by the winning parties while being bemoaned by the losing party. The celebration of the winners is not for the purpose that a good leader who would serve the people's interest has elected, but that someone who would serve their individual and group interests has been elected. The losers on the hand do not bemoan loss of the elective position just because they lost, but because all monies, efforts, initiatives put in and expended during the electioneering are considered lost. Whereas focus during the elections should be for electing leaders with the right political ideologies and economic blueprint, the focus is mostly personal and party interest that would be served by ghost (non-existent) contract awards, appointment of unqualified persons into public service positions. Soon after elections in most Africa countries, some cronies, friends, well-wishers, party members, family members, relatives are appointed into positions of governance, even though they lack requisite knowledge and experience to function in such capacity. When this is the case, there is no boldness and prowess to confront or challenge poor performance as a result of affinity held with such political appointees. The major concern usually is that unqualified people are appointed into governance, adding to the fact no focus is given to the societal interest, but to individual interest. This scenario hampers articulated economic progress and development.

Economic sabotage: a lot of economic sabotage takes place in African countries and societies. It is often surprising that despite Africa's huge resources, it apparently continues to be underdeveloped. One of the reasons that can be attributed to this is the economic sabotage perpetrated by citizens of these African societies, especially some of elite class in elective position. These acts of economic sabotage reflect in various forms such as evasion of tax or non-payment of taxes, over invoicing, bloated contracting sums, gradual demise process for publicly owned investment interest for the sake of encouraging the thriving of private investment interest, etc. other major forms of

economic sabotage include those of armed struggles that stalls economically based productions, bombing of oil pipelines leading to reduced oil output, theft of crude oil, etc. there is also the case of terrorism which not only scares away the much needed investors in Africa, but also leads to destruction of lives and properties. All individual and groups' actions that undermine government economic policies or revenue generation constitute economic sabotage; and such situations currently exist in many African countries thereby impeding on African states advancement towards enhanced economic development.

Poor economic investment culture: From obvious assessment in the African region, there exists a poor culture of ensuring economic investment. No real planning, evaluation and execution is made on investment that would be a viable source of revenue and socioeconomic development for the people. Investments in economic and commercial ventures, industries for manufacturing, infrastructural development, and projects that would create jobs for the many African young people who continue to be caught in the web of migration is important. With no real investment in the above mentioned areas, including good academic sectorial development, the African societies are ideally ran down in such a measure that impedes proper economic development as well unleashes economic hardship on the people. There are the cases of various governmental failures to make reasonable economic investment, but instead spend hugely on projects which have no bearing or linkage with economic revitalization and wellbeing of the society. Such projects eventually just serve the personal interest of leaders or those they were awarded to as a political reward or patronage.

Foreign goods consumption mentality orientation: In some of the African Countries, there is this mentality or belief that foreign goods are of better quality than locally made goods. The belief drives the average consumption of the society and therefore promotes an overwhelming search and consumption of foreign goods and products. This has several implications. Firstly, the economies of the various States in Africa become more consumption economies – such that depend on foreign goods and products to thrive and survive. By being import dependent economies, the foreign exchange available are quickly dried up in a bid to import foreign goods and services. Secondly, the local industries are starved of the support and growth they need. Thirdly, some of these African economies and societies become dumping ground for foreign goods, products and services. There is usually a great negative impact on these economies. The economies of some of such African countries dependent on foreign goods gradually decline and remain underdeveloped with this consumption mentality and orientation been an impediment to economic growth.

Idiosyncratic pursuits of African leaders: Some of the leaders in African countries at various levels have quite separate agenda from that of delivering governance with dividends to the society. Some of them campaign amongst the people with high hope of intentions and planned programmes for the progress of the society, but soon after their election or ascension into positions of authority, they resort completely to their own agenda while abandoning those of the interest of the people and society. This situation is common amongst various levels of governance. For instance, in one of the west African countries, many of the local Government administrations refuse to focus on development of little infrastructures like construction of culverts, local roads, markets, school buildings, checkmating erosion menace, etc. by implication, the personal interest of some leaders take precedence as soon as they come to power. Some mainly focus on acquisition of wealth and personal political advancement rather than any issue of economic and social development. This kind of stance in leadership positions undermines economic development of the African societies.

Sit-tight syndrome in governance: the idea of political formations and reasoning is that if a government is not performing well, especially in the economic sector in a way and manner that ensures progress for the people, the opportunity for change of political leaders are provided by periodic elections. But in the case of some African countries, their political leaders or heads of government have remained in power for decades. This is so despite their inability to spur economic and social development for the people; some of the bright minds who could have assisted with ideas on economic development advancement are even silenced due to political opposition and oppression. In African countries where the sit-tight syndrome is taking place, the people are meant to believe their interest is been served irrespective of the abysmal socioeconomic performance of the heads of government. As always evident, what is of more value to the sit-tight leaders is usually the firm grip on power rather than the welfare of the people and the economic advancement of the societies. This development without doubt undermines the sustained economic growth and development of some of the African societies.

Armed struggle and guerrilla warfare: the struggle for political power, control of economic assets or output of economic resources has always led to armed struggle and various kinds of warfare which seriously undermined economic growth and development. War nationalism had negatively impacted Africa over the years. In the milieu of armed struggles are found such outcome as the destruction of lives, properties, economic assets and the palpable loss of investment opportunities. Virtually all sub-regions have experienced one form of armed struggle and guerrilla warfare or the other. Countries like Congo, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia, Somali, Kenya, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, Libya, Central African Republic, etc., have all been involved in some kinds of armed struggle which did no good to the countries in the economic and social sphere.

Low literacy level in the economic sector: There seems to be a lack of proper understanding of economic issues and approaches to undertake for real development of various national economies and the continental economy in Africa. Although many African countries parade outstanding human resources in various fields, including in the economic sectors, there seems to exist a lack of action path for economic growth and development. This scenario is either the case or it would be that the available known path for economic development is deliberately not followed. Part of the reasons for this analysis can be drawn also from the fact that many countries with little or no natural resources were able to grow and develop economically as is known in the Asian axis, whereas many African countries with huge resources have remained unable to adequately advance their development. Many if not all African countries present annual budgetary estimates and /or periodic medium-term expenditure covering about three to four years, but evidently, many of them are not gravitating appropriately towards economic growth and development as supposed. Such situation undoubtedly could reasonably constitute one of the known socioeconomic impediments of economic advancement in African economies.

Poor leadership placements: the right framework or template to guide appointments and leadership positions in various sectors of an economy should be qualification and capacity in terms of training and knowledge domain. A person with qualification as an engineer should head a construction issue, while a person with medical qualification should head an issue involving medicals. The case of misapplied placements for leadership for economic development issues or in the various sectors should be a very limited or rare occurrence. But it rather seems that the case is different in most African countries. A lot of appointments take place on political consideration and often has little or nothing to do with qualification that a person has or the relevance of such person to the sector. This

scenario without doubt has capacity to undermine growth efforts towards economic development. This is because the results or outputs of wrongly placed leadership in State or national affairs of a country would be lower than when the case of right placement applies.

Corruption: Although corruption is a global issue, some countries seem to have surpassed it or given evidence to any form of doubt as to whether it exists or not in their locality. In essence, while it may be painstaking to identify corrupt issues or occurrences in some localities, in other localities it is simply a culture endemic in the systemic running of the society. In such societies, corruption reflects in virtually all sectors of the society. In some cases, corrupt individuals who enriched themselves through stealing and pilfering of the public funds are celebrated by some in the societies. This encourages further looting of public funds in glaring desecration of public economic interest and development. The case in some of these societies with tangible and intangible support for the corrupt elements is that funds earmarked for economic development projects are summarily looted by the political and contractor kleptomaniacs. The issue of corruption exists in other parts of the world, but it seems to have serious roots and operation in some of the African countries. Corruption remained the undoing and unmaking of the African economic growth and development. Both at formal and informal levels, corruption exists and has ruined most African countries' chances of advancing economic growth and development. African Ranking (2016) documents the 20 most corrupt African countries in 2014 as released by Transparency International to include some 24 African countries¹. They included initially: Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Libya, Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Angola, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Kenya, Guinea, Uganda, Comoros, Nigeria, Cameroon, Madagascar, Togo, Gambia, Mauritania, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Mozambique. In same manner, corruption exists in many African countries and therefore denies Africa its optimum opportunity for economic growth and development.

Bureaucratic delays: There exists a lot of bureaucracy in governance in some of the African countries. This affects the ease of doing business as well as the output or implementation of government policies which in turn negatively affects the operation of the economy towards growth and development. Oftentimes, such a factor as bureaucratic delays is not considered as deterrence in encouraging economic activities which would ultimately support economic development. A palpable example of bureaucratic delays is the kind of frustrations faced by foreign direct investors seeking to establish businesses in some African countries where they had to wait for months to receive government or regulatory approvals for establishment and/or operations. A recent news information credits Nigeria's vice President as pledging Nigerian Government's commitment to eradicating bureaucracy hindering establishment of new businesses in Nigeria (Ogunmade, 2017). This was an attestation to the recognition of the existence of bureaucratic delays in the business environment which also impedes and hampers economic operations and growth.

Bribery: Many African societies are being ruined by bribery at institutional level as well as in the private sector. In the first instance, bribery denies government revenues that are supposed to accrue into her treasuries. For instance, some people fail to pay tax, and when apprehended, they offer to bribe their way out and go free without paying the tax due to government. In some of the revenue offices where such things as driving licenses and

¹ (the 20 most corrupt countries were 24 in number because some were pitched in same position with others)

permits are issued, some government revenue collectors prefer to circumvent the official revenue collection websites and collect more money from the public so as to pocket major parts of the money. There exist issuance of fake driving licenses, plate numbers not duly registered, permits and other receipts which money do not enter government revenue coffers, thereby denying many African countries accruable revenues. In higher levels of bribery and corruption, some government contracts are given out only to the highest bidders and settlement consenters resulting in poorly done projects or even completely unexecuted projects. Also in natural resources where rent seeking is the order of the day, some government officials prefer to collect bribe and assign government resources away to the detriment of the national economies. In other government services centres, bribes are collected and given in such a manner that makes it a norm whereby without negotiation, bribe givers and takers have become accustomed to what is given and taken for various categories of services dispensed by government. Such occurrences and many more of such cases jeopardize and seriously sabotage economic development of African nations. This is a clear case of socioeconomic impediments perpetrated by Africans against African development.

Inadequate research for indigenous technological development: one dominant factor in today's economic investment had been the technological invasion and production systems. More products are now produced through technological innovation and inventions. The implication is attainment of better products, higher productions and greater profit output. This aspect of economic growth seems to be eluding African countries as a result of not having home grown technological bases to pursue innovative production systems for economic development. For instance, many African countries with natural resources requiring extractive technology are only able to engage in it through partnership with the companies from advanced countries of the Western world. In the same vein, much of the profits that would ordinarily go to African countries are shared between the partners resulting in reduction of government revenue. Technological development is driven by research and advancement in educational knowledge. It is the duty of government to make adequate commitment to sponsorship of researches for discoveries that could lead to indigenous technological development. The benefit is that the emergence of such discoveries or technological knowhow could be helpful to internally driven development in different segments of the society as well as in manufacturing locally. It is also a means to reducing the high tide of import dependence by manufacturing goods locally. But when research efforts are not made supposedly, it affects the society in numerous ways such as government spending on foreign technology for what it can handle locally, importing goods it could ordinarily produce locally and denial of employment opportunities to the youths that could be available through local production. The lack of relevant research studies constitutes socioeconomic impediments committed by African countries which discourage economic growth and development.

Money laundering: The corruption circuit in some of the African countries takes the pattern of stealing of publicly owned resources and laundering same to overseas territories. Some of the corrupt political elites launder the funds to purchase choice properties in overseas territories while some others lodge theirs in fictitious bank accounts overseas and tax haven. The implication of these acts of money laundering is that funds earmarked for development of the African societies are carted away while the people suffer and remain in poverty in various facts of life. The laundered funds which exist in billions of various currencies deny the youths the investment funds that could create employment opportunities and help stem the tide of poverty in the African region. This

has become not just a problem of the economy, but a socioeconomic one that is affecting different segments of the African society.

Lack of good planning, implementation and evaluation: When analysing the planning processes in various sectors of the economy, it can be noted that African countries do plan well and form partnerships with international organizations that could spur into economic growth and developmental efforts. In principle, it would appear that African countries are doing well as analysed above, but in practice, the things are different. Whereas good plans are put in place by some of the African countries, the implementation and evaluation of extent of performance of plans is not carried out, leading to failed plans. Contracts are awarded, projects are embarked upon, but often times there is no follow up team to assess the level of implementation and evaluation of quality of work done. A good plan is supposed to have implementation and evaluation stages, and when they are lacking, opportunity is provided for abandoned projects and half hazard execution of contracts both of which affects proper economic advancement. Sometimes, what scuttles some good plans is the giving of such plans including projects contracts to political cronies as a form of settlement, thereby no checks for implementation and evaluation of quality of work done is applied. This familiar occurrence has become a socioeconomic debacle impeding African economic growth and development.

4. Implications of Socioeconomic Impediments for Africa's Economic Development

There are a number of negative implications occasioned by the socioeconomic impediments originating from Africans against the economic development of Africa. Some of these negative implications have been itemized and discussed below.

Continuous case of African economic underdevelopment: Despite huge resources and enormous manpower possessed by many of the African countries, they nonetheless remain underdeveloped or at best, in developing status. This without doubt could be squarely attributable to the perpetration of the socioeconomic impediments by Africans against the economic growth and development of Africa. Such behavioural systemic actions as looting of public funds, money laundering, unwise investments of public funds, sabotage of economic activities, etc., all play negative roles in undermining state-led and private-led efforts towards advancing economic development in the African region.

Continuous thriving of the socioeconomic impediments: Over the years, the condoning of socioeconomic impediments in various climes of the African states continues to lead to their repeated occurrence. For instance, when public funds looters are shielded from the arms of the law or are celebrated in the society, even though their resources were earned illegitimately, more people are indirectly encouraged doing the same. When activities that undermine economic growth and development are not punished, many more people follow the example of such actions with the reasoning of getting away with it. This has far reaching implication as economic growth and development are sacrificed on the altar of distorted individualized interest. A good example is a case where a tax defaulter comfortably continues to default because no real punitive measure is place to ensure that tax defaulters are brought to book.

Creation of bigger problem of socioeconomic debacle for the African people: As the circle of socioeconomic impediments orchestrated by Africans continue to take root

within the African societies, so also does the problem of the impediments continue and become systemic. When ills that undermine economic growth and development become entrenched in the society, a permanent or near permanent inhibition is then placed on economic growth and development. Everything usually becomes a norm, even when it antagonizes and negates economic development efforts. For instance, if economic assets are stolen and nothing happens to the individual, stealing of economic assets would gradually become as it is believed nothing would happen to those who do so. Similarly, if tax evasion becomes a norm, many people would naturally not feel compelled anymore to pay; this in turn creates the bigger problem of lack of requisite revenue for the development of the society and/or even the support of the economy. Part of the bigger problem that is created is that when existent socioeconomic ills committed by Africans against the continental development become attitudinal and habitual, then how to make necessary changes is hard, as people easily imbibe the wrong things and find it hard to let go, especially if considered self-beneficial in some ways.

Increase in youthful unrest and militancy: as can be easily confirmed, the African region had seen many cases of the struggle for power, youth restiveness, militancy, terrorism, piracy, kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitution, hooliganism, restiveness, etc. All these can be attributed to economic underdevelopment and suffering experienced by the people, especially the youths who are seeking for ways to survive. In essence, when the socioeconomic impediments caused by the people limits economic development, it also affects the wellbeing of the individuals in the society and causes even more increase youthful ills and exuberant behaviours.

Decline in government revenue and development projects: Many of the issues which are part of those contained in the socioeconomic impediments committed by Africans that militate against African economic development lead to enormous reduction in accruable government revenue. This happens by way of sabotage of economic activities, stealing of crude oil and other natural resources, looting of public funds, destruction of government's or publicly owned economic investments, security concerns that discourage investors due to acts of militancy, terrorism, tax evasion, etc. Fabiyi (2017) observes the report of the Federal Inland Revenue Service that in a country like Nigeria with over 180 million people, only a very little number of less than 15 million people pay personal income. This kind of situation is similar to what obtains in some other African countries and affects economic growth and development efforts in African countries. As a matter of fact, the people of Africa, who ordinarily are supposed to pay their taxes but refuse to do so are among those who cause decline in government tax revenue and at the same time deny African region needed economic development support.

Inability to ensure employment opportunities for Africa's growing population: with continuous persistence of the socioeconomic impediments perpetrated by Africans against African development, there would continue to exist the inability of African countries to provide adequate or reasonable employment opportunities for its teeming youth or employable population. With envisaged population growth in most African countries including the populations of Nigeria and Ethiopia which accounts for about 300 million people, the challenge of creating proper employment opportunities would continue to persist in most African countries but especially for those who have big population. If African economies were to be booming with growth and development induced activities such as manufacturing, export of goods other than just natural resources and minerals, technologically driven production sector, efficient tax collection system, etc., then more jobs and quality employment opportunities would be created, which will in turn engender economic stability and spur additional economic growth.

Increase in cases of irregular migration: Given the persisting problem of African economic underdevelopment manifest in several negative ways including acute lack of infrastructure, high rate of unemployment, poor educational system, abject levels of poverty, terrorism, victimization from acts of militancy and political power struggles, kidnappings, bribery and corruption, intimidation and oppression of citizens by law enforcement officers, fear of free speech, inadequate and ill-equipped health centres, embezzlement and looting of public project funds, the young people living in many of the African countries would always have the attraction of seeking greener pastures outside the African continent. There is absolutely no doubt that the causative factors rooted in the socioeconomic impediments to African development need to be addressed to curb the surge of youths involved in illegal migration.

Decline in government revenue for development: All the socioeconomic activities which constitute an impediment to economic development also cause decline in government revenue that could be ploughed into development projects financing. All such attitudinal and behavioural tendencies of tax evasion, sabotage of government economic plans, stealing of natural resources, looting of public funds, non-productive ventures due to wrong leadership placements, discriminatory public policy leadership style, etc., all lead to non-performance and productivity which in turn leads to decline in accruable government revenue much needed to finance development projects.

Loss of revenue: closely associated with the decline in government revenue is the loss of government revenue to many acts of the socioeconomic impediment carried out by Africans. All activities of corruption, siphoning of Government revenues by contract award of non-existent projects, bribery, theft of government resources and revenues, tax evasion, etc. all lead to serious loss of government revenue. This negative socioeconomic behaviour leads to contracting and depressing economic sector for most African countries.

5. Reasons for which African Countries Should Eliminate the Socioeconomic Impediments to Economic Growth and Development

There are a number of reasons that should maximally motivate and cause African countries to aspire to quick economic development, especially by erasing the socioeconomic impediments committed by Africans which work against their economic development. Some of these reasons have been itemized and highlighted below.

Pursue African economic development: Most African countries remain underdeveloped and continue to have all the vestiges of underdevelopment. Many Africans still live in poverty, low level of education, non-energy power supply, dusty environment due to no tarred roads, non-portable drinking water, lack of access / unavailability of health centres, institutional systemic operations problems, and clear evidences of underdevelopment. It is about time that African countries move away from the economic status of underdeveloped and foster advanced economic growth so as to turn the tides and imbroglio of underdevelopment lifestyle of Africans to a better one. Africans, except for some highly placed political and business moguls have suffered a lot. Some Africans actually live in denial of so many necessities of life many of which were supposed to be provided by government in different sectors.

Put an end to the socioeconomic impediments: If all the socioeconomic impediments discussed above are contributing to economic debacle for the African region, then it is about time to stop them and move the continent towards rapid development. Such things as tax evasion, economic sabotage, preference to consumption of foreign goods alone, wrong leadership placements, cronyism and nepotism, etc., are negatively affecting and slowing the economic growth of African countries. This therefore serves as a good reason as to why African countries should move away from what is harming their economic progress.

Decrease negative motivations for illegal migration out of Africa: if the African region develops and provide adequate, reasonable and reliable means of livelihood for most of its citizens, especially the youths who are often involved in illegal migration. Many of the young people seek for developed societies where they can have some level of economic stability, social welfare programmes and quality lifestyle. If African societies give them some of these opportunities they seek outside Africa, many of them would remain and live in Africa.

To properly tackle the case of Africa's rising population and youth unemployment: An observatory assessment of most African societies would reveal that Africa's population is rising much faster than those of the European and North American continents. Some of the reasons for this may not be far-fetched. Many Africans still believe in having many children, though there many have been decline in the higher number of children had in families before. Nevertheless, on the average, many African families still have about three to five children. Also assisting in the high population increase in Africa is the fact that cost of living is lower in some African societies than they are in the climes of the northern hemisphere. Furthermore, with no special government demands on care for the child and/or family members, many people are not bothered about the welfare of their children; a situation that results in increased number of child bearing and in turn increase in population. In the huge population of Africa, the young people are the employable population. If African economies are doing well, better plans and employment opportunities would be created. This accounts for the reason to stop all forms of socioeconomic impediments in African societies.

Ensure improved lives for the African people: So many Africans are suffering in the true sense of the word. Serious level of poor infrastructure implies that life is painful even as many struggle for survival and meaningful life. Millions of Africans live below the poverty line in a life that can be best described as an ordinary lifestyle of merely surviving. This scenario is so in the mist of plenteous resources in the African continent and countries. There is no welfare or social programmes to properly cater for or assist the jobless or handicapped or even the disadvantaged young Africans who are seeking ways of survival. Given the oppressive political system that does not provide accountable dividends of governance to the masses, many Africans are without food in some instances, without employment, without infrastructures, without security; a situation that begs for improved life for all Africans. During the rainy seasons, some Africans are badly affected by erosion and flooding and often receive little or no relief measures from the government to cushion such effects. The argument is that if necessary infrastructures are in place on time the impact of some of such devastations would be minimal. The huge involvement of young Africans in the migration surge to Europe and other parts of the world is as a result of their endless quest for improved lifestyle which seems to have eluded them in the African soil. It is therefore pertinent for Africans to put an end to the socioeconomic impediments limiting economic development so as to improve African economies and by extension ensure improved life for Africans.

Foster advanced regional economic growth and development for the African region:

Some economic theories in the '50s already pitched economic development in two global hemispheres – the Northern and Southern hemispheres. The Northern hemisphere constituted the developed countries of the global North in the West, Europe and Americas, while the Southern hemisphere were made up of the underdeveloped countries of the global South in Africa, Caribbean and some parts of Asian continents. Over the years, some countries in the Asian axis regarded as the Asian Tigers have moved on to rapidly develop. Some of these countries include Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan. On the other hand, many underdeveloped and developing countries in Africa had not been able to replicate the development miracle of the Asian tiger countries. The socioeconomic impediments committed by Africans need to end so as to foster advanced regional economic growth and development in the African region.

To embark on massive development of acute shortage of infrastructure: As a panacea for economic growth and development, the acute shortage of requisite infrastructures must be developed to ensure an inclusive economic growth. The development and operationalization of many of the infrastructural needs in Africa would ensure ripple development effects in all sectors of the African societies. The people would be encouraged to pursue various development programmes when right and adequate infrastructural needs are developed. Some of these critical infrastructures include enhanced communication and information access system, good constructed road network, steady and/or reasonable electricity supply, various good transport systems – rail, road, air, etc. there is also a large scale housing deficits in the African continent. In Nigeria for instance, there exist about 17 million housing deficits as of 2016 which inadvertently may continue to grow with population increase across the African region. By reducing the limiting impacts of socioeconomic impediments in African societies, many African countries would be able to spur economic growth that would help them in the development of various kinds of infrastructural needs across the region.

To put an end to corruption and other social ills of economic development:

Corruption, without doubt has wielded immeasurable negative impacts on development of African societies. In order to create and sustain laudable economic development and growth initiatives, an end must be put to the spat of corruption and extent of social ills that have ravaged the African societies. If the socioeconomic impediments which includes corruption continues and social ills such as kidnapping, armed robbery, etc., does not stop, it would continue to thwart and destroy development efforts to the detriment of African societies. It is expedient to end all forms of corruption both institutional and otherwise which are part of the socioeconomic impediments so as to forge ahead with the right steps for economic development and better live for the African people.

To create and sustain opportunities of social welfare programmes for citizens of the African countries:

There is equally the great need to create and sustain opportunities for social welfare programmes for the African societies. As a result of backward economic status, many African societies have been unable to do so for their populations. In many of the societies, there is no special care for children, less privileged, young people, the handicapped, school support programmes, health or medical support programmes, housing support programmes, business support programmes, elderly and retirees support programmes, etc. As a result of the lack of support of some these kinds of social welfare support programmes for the people of many African societies, the people just suffer in many areas of their lives. Creation of social welfare programmes is easier for the government when there is economic boom. This accounts for the reason it is important to end all forms of socioeconomic impediments so as to support government revenue

generation which could encourage the establishment of such social welfare programmes. However, it is important to mention such exception as South Africa that has a social benefit scheme for various categories of people in the society such as disability grant, foster child grant, older persons grant, war veteran's grant, grants in aid, child support grant, care dependency grant, social relief in distress.² Following such example by other African countries would be useful in this respect.

The adequate funding of African countries' national budgets: Some African countries find it hard to fund their annual national budgets. Many are able to do so only with external or internal borrowing or aid support funds from donor countries or partners. Oftentimes, the needed budget funding resources are not available due to the sabotage of economic output created by the socioeconomic impediments committed by Africans. An example of this case was Nigeria when it faced the budget funding challenge in 2016. Nigeria in 2016 had a budget of about 6 trillion naira (about USD 30 billion) with government's projected revenue of 4 trillion naira (about USD 20 billion). The other balance of 2 trillion naira (about USD 10 billion) was intended to be sourced through internal and external borrowing. The case is similar to some other African countries that depend on various sources other than revenues generated in the government coffers to fund annual national budgets. This is also another strong reason for Africans to eliminate all forms of socioeconomic impediments on economic development in Africa.

To adequately tackle the security challenges faced in Africa: There are a lot of security challenges in the African continent. These include terrorism, militancy, kidnapping, communal clashes, guerrilla warfare, armed robberies, power struggle tussles, herdsman rampaging killings, cultism killings, etc. there had even been civil wars and other forms of higher war situations which involved rebels seeking to overthrow of some of the countries in Africa. Over the past four years, beginning from 2014, the emergence of ISIS had not only affected the Middle East countries of formation, but had also spiralled onto North African countries where it sought a big hold in Libya. If adequate security measures are not put in place to checkmate the move of such security challenge southwards in Africa, it would portend grater security problem for the entire continent. African countries need high level of funding to adequately combat the security challenge posed by these armed invasion and struggles.

6. Conclusion

The paper had looked at the socioeconomic impediments confronting African countries. It assessed the claims of causes of poverty in Africa, the implications of the socioeconomic impediments and the reasons African Countries should move away from them so as to accelerate economic growth and development in the region. Many of the reasons itemized as sources and impacts of the socioeconomic impediments constitute the major subterranean reasons the African continent had failed to advance the economic development besides limiting official state policies. There is not a better time to confront these socioeconomic impediments than now as many Africans continue to suffer and wallow in abject poverty and low standard of living. The socioeconomic impediments so far identified in the research are gradually killing the African economic prowess and

² <https://www.gov.za/services/services-residents/social-benefits>; https://www.expatica.com/za/about/Social-security-in-South-Africa_105901.html

unless it is tackled appropriately and timely, it would continue to dwarf official efforts towards economic development while the blame is apportioned to the wrong sources. From the foregoing analysis of the research, a number of conclusions have been drawn as a panacea to African countries for advancing reasonable economic growth and development.

In the light of all these, some four important conclusions have been reached below as the way forward for Africa:

a. The socioeconomic impediments to economic growth and development are caused by no other than Africans themselves, and they are stagnating and decelerating the economic vibrancy and development of African region.

b. Africans must effect urgent change to lifestyle and the socioeconomic impediments so as to properly trigger and imbibe measures that would lead to guaranteed path to economic growth and development amid huge resources available to African continent.

c. leadership at various levels within the African continent must do more to ensure total advanced transformation in the economic development of Africa.

d. African countries owe it to themselves to use the huge natural resources available within the continent to promote economic growth and development for the good of Africans rather than an avenue for endless acts of corruption and neglect in the society.

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