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Review

A critique of modernization and dependency theories in Africa: Critical assessment

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The way states and development specialists rationalize how to commit economic resources to development is influenced, to a greater extent by their level of persuasion towards specific development theories. The discourse assesses the influence of modernization and dependency theories on Africa's development. The conclusion is that both theories have failed to help develop Africa. The discourse pins hope on the African Renaissance theory of development.

Key words: Modernization, dependency, rural underdevelopment, African renaissance.

INTRODUCTION

Africa houses plentiful economic resources. Paradoxically, the continent languishes in poverty as evidenced by high prevalence of famine, disease and ignorance (Buthelezi, 2007). This presentation attributes the poverty to theories of development because the way society deals with underdevelopment is influenced by development theories. The presentation assesses the effect of modernity and dependency theories on Africa's development and concludes by recommending the adoption of the African Renaissance theory to Africa's development. In this presentation, development is viewed as a gradual transition of society to a strong socio-economic status. In a sense, development entails an improvement in quality of human life. Some of the indicators of a good quality of life are low infant mortality rate and a longer life expectancy.

THE MODERNISATION THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT

The modernization the movement of the 1950s and 1960s is an economic theory that is rooted in capitalism. The concept of modernization incorporates the full spectrum of the transition and drastic transformation that a traditional society has to undergo in order to become modern (Hussain et al., 1981; Lenin, 1964). Modernisation is about Africa following the developmental footsteps of Europe (largely the former colonizer of Africa). According to modernity, policies intended to raise the standard of living of the poor often consist of disseminating knowledge and information about more efficient techniques of production. For instance, the agriculture modernisation process involves encouraging farmers to try new crops, new production methods and new marketing skills (Ellis and Biggs, 2001). In general, modernization led to the introduction of hybrids, the green house technology, genetically modified (GMO) food, use of artificial fertilizers, insecticides, tractors and the application of other scientific knowledge to replace traditional agricultural practices.

The above view is endorsed by Smith who pointed out that modernisation is about exchanging of older agriculture practices with something more recent (Smith, 1973: 61). Agriculture societies can therefore be regarded as modern when they display specific characteristics. The extent to which these characteristics are exhibited gives an indication of the degree of modernity that has been reached. The characteristics are cited succinctly by Coetzee et al. (2007: 31) as:

(i) Readiness to accommodate the process of transformation resulting from changes.
(ii) Continuous broadening of life experiences and receptiveness to new knowledge.
(iii) Continuous planning, calculability and readiness towards new experiences.
(iv) Predictability of action and the ability to exercise effective control.
(v) High premium on technical skills and understanding of the principles of production.
(vi) Changing attitudes to kinship, family roles, family size and the role of religion.
(vii) Changing consumer behavior and the acceptance of social stratification.

Notably, modernisation strategies and policies are common to both the pre and post-colonial states in Africa. On their arrival in Africa, whites tasked themselves with the responsibility of modernizing the continent. No wonder why they labeled Africa as "dark continent" which needed to be enlightened (modernized). It is the enlightenment idea that motivated Cecil John Rhodes and his entourage (composed of missionaries, engineers, farmers etc) to settle in Africa. It is also part of the reason why Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC) embarked on the mission to build a road from Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to Cairo in Egypt. The form and strategies for Africa's development have always been changing in light of the changes in technological and ideological views of the developed world. The then United States of America (USA) president Harry Truman's January 20, 1949 presidential inaugural address captured these sentiments:

"We must embark on a bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. The old imperialism- exploitation for foreign profit- has no place in our plans . . . (Allen and Thomas, 1992: 06)".

Apparently, the responsibility of developing Africa is placed in the custody of the metropolitan states. The metropolis implicitly or explicitly implied that sub-Saharan Africa's development was lagging far behind other regions of the world because of the obvious 'innate' inferiority of black people to master the socio-economic and technological environment in order to improve their social and economic conditions. The above view by the proponents of modernity is malicious and misdirected. Rodney (1972) in his book "How Europe underdeveloped Africa" clearly demonstrates that in the fifteenth century (period of first encounter between Europeans and Africans), the continent had already established empires in the East, Central, West, and South of the continent.

The empires of Mali and Songhay in West Africa, Tshaka in Zululand, Mossi to the East of Mali and the kingdom of Dahomey in the central part of Africa where some of the most powerful in wealth and territorial expansion (Rodney, 1972). The economies of the above states were composed of farmers, artists (gold and silver smiths, weavers, wood carvers, cloth makers, medicine men – experts in naturopathy), and sculptors of wood, iron and terracotta. The economies had advanced methods of preserving food. Samir et al. (1987) and Rodney (1972) claim that the economies in Africa used advanced African technology and techniques. The above revelation shows that before the first encounter with the Eurocentric ideas to development, Africa had already founded its path to development.

The arrival of the Portuguese in Africa in 1444 had an influence on Africa's development. At the entrance of the West into Africa that brought about a paradigm shift on how Africa should develop. The West desired to change Africa's development course in favour of theirs. The "enlightened" then tasked themselves with the responsibility of developing Africa along a new course. They claimed that Africa's development had to pass through distinct stages. The Rostowian theory identifies the stages as:

1. Primitive society: The stage is characterized by subsistence farming and barter trade.
2. Preparation for take-off: The characteristics of the stage are; specialization, production of surplus goods and trade. Transport infrastructure is developed to support trade. The stage encourages savings and investment
3. Take-off: At this stage industrialization increases and the economy switches from agriculture to manufacturing.
4. Drive to maturity: At this stage the economy diversifies into new areas and there is less reliance on imports.
5. Period of mass consumption: At this stage, the economy gears on mass production and service sector becomes increasingly dominating.

With the above scheme, it is possible to plot African nations on the linear development path. The above view is rather too theoretical. Most economies in Africa invest in agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. It is therefore not easy to classify economies into neat categories as suggested by the Rostowian linear development theory. The linear development paradigm is also shared by Gabriel (1991) who argues that the basic argument of the movement to modernity is related to the increase in the so called modern values of production such as automation, the use of computers, specialization, and application of science in production of economic goods and services. Modernity theorists believe that nations advance to modernity at different paces depending on their adaptability and versatility. There is an element of truth in the above idea. However, it must also be appreciated that wars, conflict, natural disasters and pandemics may force poor countries to move back and forth on their way to development. The recent devastating political conflict in Zimbabwe and the current conflict in Libya and Sudan have robbed the nations of their development gains. The above idea demonstrates that the road to development is not always smooth, it has ups and downs.

Modernists erroneously present the development theory as a dichotomous movement from an original terminal situation to an achieved situation with the help of the developed countries as Sachs (1992:1) writes:

"Like a towering lighthouse guiding sailors towards the coast, development stood as the idea which oriented emerging nations in their journey through post war history . . . the countries of the south proclaimed modernization as their primary aspiration after they had been freed from colonial domination".

The above idea depicts modernization as a process of change whereby external factors have an impact on the individual and on culture. In this case, modernization of a person needs to provide motivation, to go along with the changing social and economic situation. It is about the abandonment of an individual's cultural values in favour of that of the former colonisers. Put differently, the development of Africa should come after deculturalisation of the African people. Modernization of culture entails a change in the broader values, norms and attitudes of the larger contexts within which people in Africa find themselves.

The theory is criticized for failing to consider the poor as the centerpiece in poverty reduction initiatives. By ignoring the involvement and participation of the target community, modernity achieves the marginalization of their commitment, creativity and support of the intervention strategies. The intervention strategy becomes an imposed strategy and such a strategy fails to construct adequate notions of both the causal powers of social structures and the role of human agency in shaping social relations in general.

Perhaps the most crippling weakness of the modernization theory is its oversimplified view of social change (Coetzee et al., 2007: 101). Human nature has a propensity to resist change in favour of the status quo. Change is resisted because it brings in elements of uncertainty. For instance development strategies such as New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) were drafted, packaged and sent to Africa for implementation. Because of its elitist nature, NEPAD has received condemnation from many African Heads of States and Government. The post-colonial states in the continent need to engineer a new theory to socio-economic prosperity of Africa.

The other intriguing weaknesses of the modernisation theory is that it is based on deterministic reason which states that within the linear model of socio-economic development, changes are initiated externally. The determinist reason gives little room for the reciprocal relationship between causation from within the developing region and from outside the developing region. The premise encourages the foreign powers to prescribe the route to Africa's development. For instance, in the 1980s Africa was victim of the failed IMF-imposed economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP). The ESAP project failed because it was developed with a total disregard of the cultural, social, political and traditional values of the recipient countries. Broadly expressed, the ESAP project was a 'Eurocentric' experiment which failed to pull the continent out of poverty and underdevelopment.

Modernization is associated with development aid from the developed countries. The idea was borrowed from the Marshall Plan of the post-World War II. Apparently aid can be negotiated either bilaterally or multilaterally. Whatever type of arrangement, aid (except humanitarian aid) has strings attached to them. These strings have tended to beneficiate the metropolitan states more than the recipient countries (Africa). Today China is one of Africa's biggest trade partners because it has arranged aid at conditions that are more favourable to Africa than those of the West. But the story still remains the same that China is interested in exploiting Africa's resources ahead of Europe and America. A balance sheet of trade between China and Africa will reveal that the former economy has more to gain by exporting its agriculture ideas, manpower and technology to Africa. The surplus economic value that is extracted by Chinese capital may be externalized in the form of profit remittances back home and some of it could be spent on conspicuous consumption. No wonder why Andre Gunder Frank (1967) thought that the only way to manage the exploitative relationship was through a political revolution.

Modernity correctly notes that technology is one of the major avenues through which monopoly capital penetrates and integrates the economies of Africa into the Chinese capitalist system. According to Samir et al. (1987), classical economists such a Smith, Marx and Marshall gave technological innovations pride in their analysis of economic progress in Africa. Marxists have argued that the difference between the modern world and Africa is purely technological and determined by the international division of labour. In other words, the West produce manufactured goods for itself and Africa while the later produce raw material for the West and for its large subsistence sector.

Modernization impoverished Africa through colonialism and imperialism by the West and this trend is with us today as the East takes its turn to deplete the continent's resources such as oil and minerals. Africa needs to outgrow poverty and underdevelopment but this may not be possible as long as we still believe in the power and strength of modernity at the expense of promoting new theories for Africa's development. Fighting Africa's poverty involves much more than a simple displacement of the traditional society by the modern society.

Ideas of modernization impoverished Africa. The theory failed to recognise the creativity and initiative of the Africans. Instead it places value on externally sourced aid without attending to the inhibiting conditionalities attached to such aid. The failure of the theory to attend to such conditionalities may demonstrate the hidden hand behind the metropolitan states' application of the theory to Africa. The theory's emphasis on the supremacy of the metropolis in the development of Africa is a cause of concern in contemporary discourse on Africa's development. It is this supremacy of the metropolis that altered Africa's superstructure of beliefs and value system. According to Rodney (1972), the colonial conquest that followed the 1884 to 1885's Berlin Conference (partition of Africa) established a comprehensive economic and political domination of Africa by the West. Africa's endogenous development path was discarded in favour of an ‘external driven development path’ which was and is still manipulated by the metropolis. There has to be a paradigm shift if Africa is to reclaim its right to chat a new way to development.

The dependency theory

Discontentment with the modernization theory in the 1950s precipitated new strands of thinking which resulted in the dependency theory. The theory came as a critical reaction to the conventional approaches to economic development that emerged in the aftermath of World War II. Andre Gunder Frank (1967), in his analysis of the post colonial state, has argued that classical development theories such as modernity are misleading in that they fail to articulate the true relationship between the developed world and the poor regions of the world. For Frank, modernity distorts the truth about the motive of the developed countries on their former colonies. In the same vein, the Brandt Commission (1980), made up of ‘elder statesmen, men and women of statue’, set up by the United Nations in 1977 reported that development based on modernity had failed. Accordingly, Reid (1995:47-48) reports,

The hope that faster economic growth ‘modernisation’ in developing countries by itself would benefit the broad masses of poor people has not been fulfilled and no concept of development can be accepted which continues to condemn hundreds of millions of people to starvation and despair.

The above view gave impetus to the dependency theory. Social anthropologists consider the dependency theory to be both pessimistic and structural. At macro level, the main premise of the structural dependency theory is that it would be impossible to understand the processes and problems of Africa without considering the wider socio-historical context of Western European expansion (industrial and mercantile capitalism) and the colonization of these places by the Western economies (Frank, 1969). According to Rodney (1972), colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profits made in Africa to the so called home land. From a dependency perspective repatriation of profits represents a systematic expatriation of the surplus values that was created by African labour using African resources. Hence the development of Europe can be viewed as part of the same dialectical processes that underdeveloped Africa. In other words, the domination of Europe over Africa retarded the economic development of the continent. For five running centuries, Europe capitalized on its encounter with Africa. The above situation is succinctly expressed by Rodney (1972:149) whose analysis of the relationship between Europe and Africa is that during colonialism, Europe organized herself, accumulated capital gained from her colonies in Africa, shrewdly invested the surplus in productive economy, steadfastly increasing national wealth and riches for its people.

Africa was and continues to be dominated economically as well as politically by external centres of power. Most noticeable here is the economic, political and cultural dependence of the continent upon America and Europe. The dependence is also noticeable between rural areas and urban areas. Writing about the situation in Southern Africa, Samir et al (1987:2) noted:

“Imperialists partitioned the countries in Africa and then forced the African peasantry into reserves, deliberately planned to be inadequate for the purposes of ensuring the failure of subsistence in earlier traditional forms. The discovery of the mineral riches of Southern Africa (such as gold and diamonds in South Africa, copper in Katanga in Zambia) just when capitalism was entering a new stage of monopolistic expansion inspired a particular form of colonization of the economy of the reserves”.

The above contribution shows that while Europe and America are busy exploiting Africa; the urban areas are also busy exploiting their rural areas. Within those rural areas one finds rich people exploiting poor individuals and the chain goes on and on. Therefore dependency may loosely be viewed as linear and multi-staged.

The economic development of rural areas signifies the establishment of metropolitan-satellite relationship at different levels in the socio-economic structure of the economy. The relationship is based upon regional control of economic and political resources between regions, sectors of the economy and different social groups (Nyerere, 1973; Gabriel, 1991). Accordingly, the underdevelopment of Lower Gweru, Chibi, Mhondoro Chirumanzi and many more districts in Zimbabwe and Amathole District in South Africa is squarely a result of this exploitation. In the same vein, the poverty of an individual worker is a result of the exploitation of that particular individual by the system or the employer. Thus poverty at all levels is attributable to inhibiting relationships (internal colonialism) between the developed communities (urban areas) and their satellites (rural areas) and also between individuals with different economic powers.

The relationship is one in which a metropolis or center exerts pressure upon its satellite or periphery. According to Galtung’s (1980), the South (Africa) has become an external sector of the North (Europe) - a source of materials, cheap labour and educated people (through brain drain). The pillage of resources from Africa continues to exacerbate poverty on the continent and rural communities suffer the most. Notably, Africa deprived (by Europe) of politic and economic decision power, and lacking sustained investment funds, trod the reverse path, sinking deeper and deeper into non-development and poverty (Rodney, 1972). The dependency theory has made Africa a dump for waste and excess labour and a market where the terms of trade work to the advantage of the developed world. For instance, Africa is positioned to specialize in marketing raw material while the developed world market finished products. There is no convincing explanation to why Africa is not manufacturing airplanes considering that the continent has aluminum and copper which can be alloyed for aircraft construction. It would be grossly unfair to think that Africa has always been a victim of external influence. On the contrary, African leaders have allowed the developed countries to exploit it. For instance, by signing the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements in 1995, Africa has abdicated a lot of its power to map its way to development.

The basic message of dependency school is that the development of the metropolis was a result of the active underdevelopment of the non metropolis communities. Put differently, the metropolis is dependent for its development on the underdevelopment of its satellite. For instance, human capital has flowed and continues to move away from Africa to the developed world. Rodney (1972) rightly noted that during the pre-colonial period; from mid fifteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, Africa was cornered into the selling human beings (shipped as slaves to toil on European cotton and sugar cane plantations in America) in exchange for rubbish such as overpriced bottled alcohol. The extraction of human resources out of Africa did not end with the end of slavery. According to Ndulu (2004), since 1994, about 1.6 million South African people in skilled, professional and managerial occupations have emigrated and the country lost 25% of its graduates to the USA alone and accounts for 9.7% of all international medical graduates practicing in Canada.

Applying this view to local settings, the white community achieved self- sustaining economic growth, while the black community grew only as a reflection of changes in the dominating economy. For instance in South Africa the enclave economy (affluent and connected to the global economy) determines the country's development path while the second economy (largely underdeveloped and disconnected from the global economy) is marginalised. The development of the second economy is constrained by human capital flight to the enclave economy.

Notably, the origin of the concept 'underdevelopment' is questioned by Frank who conceptualizes the term 'development of the underdeveloped' as meaning that, "underdevelopment is not an original state rather it's a result of economic capture and control of backward regions by advanced metropolitan capitalism" (Frank, 1967:25). Writing about the situation in Southern Africa, Samira Amin, Chitala and Mandaza (1987:2) noted, "For a century, imperialism had established a system of total domination of Southern African region in which the white settler colony of South Africa played a key role. The apartheid regime in South Africa was thus always an intrinsic part of this form of the expansion of periphery capitalism.

Therefore Africa's poverty is not natural but an engineered position. It was a result of a protracted capitalistic dominance by the metropolis. Similarly, the poverty and underdevelopment in most rural areas in Africa is a result of the inhibiting relationship between them and the urban areas. The above view is endorsed by Immanuel Wallerstein's World System Theory which in turn borrowed heavily from Gunder Frank's studies of Latin America.

To succeed in the impoverishment operation, the metropolis destroyed the traditional, pre-capitalist structures of Africa in order to pave the way for super expropriation and appropriation of surplus value. Missionary education curriculum was the main instrument used to destroy the pre-capitalist social structures in Africa. The education system brought about mental impoverishment of Africans by deemphasizing the importance of African values and culture at the same time glorifying that of the whites. The basic idea was to disorient the minds and identity of the blacks. The process of brain washing the Africans created a fertile ground for the exploitation of the continent's human and non human resources. There cannot be an argument over the fact that the dependency theory is exploitative hence impoverishing. In this regard, Gabriel (1991) argues that the amount of surplus value appropriable by the metropolis from Africa depended and continues to depend not on the underdevelopment of the satellite, but on the development of the metropolis.

In an analysis of the metropolis – satellite relationship, Le Roux in Tedros (1992), and Samir (1977) argued that since the development of the satellite (Africa) could lead to the emergence of new dominant groups capable of appropriating the surplus for themselves, there was an obvious need for the metropolis to determine the optimum rate of development of its satellite. Thus, the metropolis determined the level and pace at which Africa was to develop through the adoption and implementation of ineffective development policies and strategies. This window facilitated the impoverishment of the satellite by the richer and more influential parts of the whole economic cosmos. Efforts by Africa to resist the interference of the North often trigger economic sanctions, example, the smart sanctions in Zimbabwe or the elimination of powerful leaders like Patrice Lumumba and Kwame Nkrumah.

The illuminating idea in the exploitation of Africa is that too little development limits the amount of surplus value produced in the satellite while too much of it could threaten the dominant position of the metropolis. The dependency theory is also top-down in that it assumes that the locals do not have the expertise and ability to fight their poverty and yet Max-Neef (1991:38) argues:

"Development geared to the satisfaction of fundamental human needs cannot, by definition, be structured from

the top downwards. It cannot be imposed either by law or decree. It can only emanate directly from the actions, expectations, and creative and critical awareness of the protagonists themselves. Instead of being the traditional objects of development, people must take a leading role in development".

When applied to national levels one establishes that many land reform policies in agriculture and outside agriculture tend to have little empirical relation with their ostensible rational to reduce poverty. Thus, Magaloni et al. (2005:8) conclude,

". . . Programs normally supposed to reduce poverty, for example, turn out to be unrelated to poverty."

No wonder why Africa continues to be poor despite the billions worth of bilateral and multi lateral aid from the developed countries. Perhaps this is why Charton (1980) argues that regional inequalities are not temporary features of the world economy that will disappear with time. The above author goes on to say that the inequalities between regions are more likely to increase than decrease. Consequently, the developed world with its inherent advantages will grow while Africa will stagnate. However, the current discourse believes that the African Renaissance is the panacea to the development irregularities in Africa.

Globalization and technological breakthrough have made migration easier and safer as well as creating a dependency syndrome on the receiving countries. This is why most African countries will largely rely on the expertise and advice of the same countries that exploit them. What good is likely to come out of Britain to Zimbabwe considering that the independence of Zimbabwe came as a result of a protracted war of liberation against the British rule? According to Rodney (1972), the political independence of Africa from colonialism did not alter the dependency arrangement; in fact it deepened it. One is forgiven to assume that the situation has remained unabated as the continent entered the new millennium. An analysis of the trade patterns between Africa and the developed world will show how the continent is robbed by the West and the East. It is even more evident as we implement the 'Look East' economic policy. As pointed out earlier on, the dependency theory continues to affect Africa's development as multitudes of doctors, nurses, engineers, and architects join the bandwagon to Africa's former colonisers. This pillage of human resources is made easier by the advancement in the World Wide Web (www) sector, often referred to as the internet. The seriousness of the pillage is expressed by Daly and Cobb (1990:49) who point out, "last year's winners find it easy to be this year's winners. Winners tend to grow and losers disappear."

Even in the early stages of market economy, one reads forces at work that enrich some through impoverishing others, as Ruskin pointed out in 1860: "the art of making yourself rich, in the ordinary mercantile economist's sense, is therefore equally necessarily the art of keeping your neighbour poor" (Reid, 1995:137). The large commercial farms in Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Kenya and other parts of Africa extracted human and non human resources and used them to develop white comercial farms at the expense of the rural areas. To make matters worse the labour from the rural areas was marginally paid and the working conditions were deplorable. Consequently, rural poverty was exacerbated.

The critiques of the dependency theory view Africa in general and the rural areas in particular as having been strategically positioned by the centre as recipients of poor services as well as ill-advice from the metropolis. According to Rodney (1972), from the last years of the nineteenth century, up to the 1960s, Africa was the major supplier of underpriced raw materials to Europe and buyer of overpriced manufactured goods from the West.

At national level, the metropolis areas (urban) grew at the expense of rural communities. The pertinent question to ask at the level of Zimbabwe is why should the Shurugwi Rural District be poor while at the same time being rich in minerals? Why should Chiredzi District be poor while producing so much sugar? The same question can be raised for the following districts in Zimbabwe; Zvishavane, Kadoma and many more districts. At continental level one may be interested in finding out why Zambia, Angola, Botswana, the DRC, Libya and many more nations in Africa are poor given their richness in natural resources. Seemingly, the impoverishing dependency relationship is maintained through the promulgation of development initiatives that are deeply alien but chanted as in the interest of Africa. The dependency theory operates both in sovereign and colonial states. The only difference is that in the later, the theory was applied with harsh measures than one expects in the former state. It is also necessary to point out that due to corruption and bad governance, the dependency theory may be applied ruthlessly even in a sovereign state.

The end of colonialism has not deterred the imperialists from dominating Africa. In Zimbabwe, the independence negotiated by the Lancaster House Agreement prolonged the survival of exploitative economic order. According to Samir et al. (1987), the Lancaster House Agreement left the previous economic system practically intact in both the rural areas (no agrarian reform liquidating the settler lands in favour of the peasantry) and in the industrial arena (respect for the predominance of the interests of local private-capital in partnership with globalised capital). To conclude, the dependency theory stemmed from the modernization ideology. The metropolitan states have also used some states in Africa to destabilize other African economies. For instance, South Africa has been tasked to help foster a regime change in Zimbabwe.

According to Samir et al. (1987), in the yester century, regimes in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Zambia were considered unbearable in the eyes of the West. In order to deal with these countries, the West hatched a plan in which the apartheid regime in South Africa destabilized the economies of Angola and Mozambique in the 1970s and in Zimbabwe the South Africa carried out destabilizing acts of military aggression in the 1980s.

According to Samir et al (1987), the results of this strategy aimed at establishing openly neo-colonial regimes were not at all disappointing for imperialism. Angola was forced to call for Cuban military assistance to deal with South African attacks, Mozambique to sign the Nkomati Accord, Zimbabwe to show scrupulous respect to for the Lancaster House Agreement, Tanzania and Zambia to submit to the humiliating economic terms of the IMF.

The metropolitan states have also crafted strategies for maintaining an exploitative relationship between Africa and the West. The origin of SADCC was not an initiative of the front line states as commonly touted. According to Tonstenson (1982), the SADCC project was seen by Western countries as a programme of reconstruction as a kind of Marshall Plan for the region. The fact that SADCC was an external inducement makes it difficult to think that it was meant to save the developmental interest of Africa. According to Samir et al. (1987), the SADCC idea has always been dependent on the blessings of imperialism in general. For instance, at the Arusha meeting, SADCC allowed foreign interests to dictate to it areas of regional cooperation, which were adopted by the grouping. The areas of cooperation were; transport and communication, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, energy, water and minerals, trade and industry, employment and skills (Samir et al., 1987). There are no grounds for assuming that SADCC was going to succeed in a manner that other regional integrative efforts have. SADCC may have favoured an increase or stabilization of dependence of Southern Africa on the metropolis. Perhaps this explains why the grouping was replaced by SADC.

The dependency theory is criticized for failing to interrogate the applicability of externally imposed development initiatives. Accordingly, Shenton and Cowen (1996) considers the approach to be 'system maintaining'. A more sensitive approach to the political economy of Africa's poverty is required to overcome some of the earlier problems of macro-level analysis. The question is which way now for the continent?

The African renaissance theory

The antithesis to the modernization and the dependency paradigms is the emerging African renaissance theory. The theory is founded on African values and norms which that are the very building blocks of African life. The strength of theory lives in its ability to be adaptable of change and innovations provided they are initiated within the social and value systems of the average African.

To think of a true African life is to think of unity, communalism and shared purpose. Therefore, development and poverty reduction strategies for Africa must be informed and embroiled in the African values like 'Ubuntu' in South Africa, 'Humwe' in Zimbabwe, 'Harambee' in Kenya and 'Ujamahaa' in Tanzania. The model rejects the mainstream growth (modernity) and dependency paradigms because they exacerbate poverty and fail to appeal to the African value system. Like other alternative models, it advocates for a social force that opposes and transcends the growth and dependency paradigms.

The African renaissance theory encourages Africa to act in a world that is dominated by the metropolitan countries by suggesting that micro-level development and poverty reduction should be the primary focus. In Zimbabwe, Africans could use the indigenous knowledge system to read and forecast the weather. They had their own way of dealing with crime, deviance and conflict. It is a fact that Africans could use herbs to treat different ailments. However, the coming of modernity forced Africans to be apathetic about their abilities, knowledge and skills. The use of traditional medical practice was degraded by modernity and modern medical practices were promoted. In the process of modernizing Africa, the people of the continent lost their identity and development path.

The African renaissance approach to development underscores the importance of social movements whose mandate is to engage people to face issues of justice, inequality and sustainability from a collective or communal approach. It is about reclaiming the African identity and African values. Upon achieving this goal, the continent will be able to go back to the drawing board and redesign a new course to prosperity. The African renaissance theory, unlike its predecessors, advocates for local solutions, pluralism, community-based solutions and reliance on local resources. Therefore the critical issue here is (Korten, 1990:4) 'transformation' for the future depends on achieving the transformation of institutions, technology, values and behaviour consistent with ecological and social realities in Africa.

Conclusion

Poverty reduction policies and strategies have tended to be influenced by the theories of development. Modernistic polices and strategies tend to be top-down in approach. They see development of Africa as the responsibility of the metropolitan states. Thus, development strategies and finances are produced, packaged and sent to Africa by the economically powerful states. The beneficiaries of development support are usually marginalized. The dependency theory attributes rural poverty to the continuous pillage of human and non-human resources from the satellite to the metropolis. The same pattern is discernable between the modern and the traditional communities. The discourse noted with concern that the underdevelopment of Africa is indeed a result of cultural collision between two different development spheres – the West and Africa. The former, because of its strategic and technological advantage over Africa, it was able to choke and subdue Africa's culture and value system. In the process, Africa lost its right to determine its way to development. The paper argues that the journey to Africa's true liberation comes with disengagement with the North in political and economic terms. Agreeably the journey is long and full of hurdles. Despite the risks ahead, Africa has to unite and no fight for a common course. The radical approach to poverty reduction is the African renaissance theory, which takes Africans to be part of the development problem as well as being part of the solution to the continent's under-development. This is no longer the time to cry foul but to act decisively, knowing pretty well that the west has become even more sophisticated in their plan to keep Africa under economic and political bondage.

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