

Underdevelopment in africa



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Africa suffers persistent underdevelopment. Its population confront the dual threats of poverty and disease and economic reform programs simply do not seem to be working. Tunde Obadina (2008), the Director of Africa Business Information Services, cites economic facts and figures which underscore the bleakness of the situation. Whereas the average per capita income in the industrialized world stands at over \$27, 000, in Africa the figure is just over \$500. The implication is not just that the developed countries are, on the average, 51 times richer than Africa but that at a modest GDP growth rate of 3%, a figure which most African countries have been unable to attain, it would take Africa 120 years to arrive at the current developmental status of the industrialized countries (Obadina, 2008). Waiting 120 years, however, is hardly a feasible option. A solution is needed but solutions are dependant upon understanding the causes of persistent underdevelopment in Africa. A critical analysis of the situation indicates that while there is no single cause for persistent underdevelopment in Africa, corruption and totalitarian dictatorships may be identified as the primary causes.

Within Africa, the legacy of colonialism is the most popular explanation for the continent's continuing underdevelopment. Certainly, as J. Brea (2008) explains, colonialism with its tendency for the " haphazard" division of territories and creation of states, not to mention its exploitation of the continent's natural resources, is a factor in Africa's underdevelopment (para. 1). In essence, the haphazard creation of nations is at the root if the failed state phenomenon which several African nations suffer from and, as such, is a root cause of political instability and hence, the inability to implement economic development policies (Brea, 2008). Nevertheless, it is hardly the primary cause of continued underdevelopment.

Continued underdevelopment in Africa and the continent's persistent failure to improve its economic status is primarily due to corruption, enabled by absolute totalitarian dictatorships. As Senyo Adjilbolosoo (2005) argues, Africa has received billions of dollars in aid and foreign investment during the post-colonial period. Both the IMF and the World Bank have actively intervened for the purposes of implementing economic development policies, as have numerous other non-governmental organizations. Despite the stated, little, if any, economic progress has been made. The reason lies in blatant governmental corruption. Significant percentages of the continent's wealth and aid money inevitably make their way to the private accounts of the continent's dictators. Furthermore, given the near-total lack of democracy, there is no accountability. The implication here is that corruption, at the highest levels of government, can continue unabated (Adjilbolosoo, 2005). More importantly, corruption stands as an obstacle to the implementation of economic and social development policies, thereby, significantly contributing to the continued underdevelopment and impoverishment of the continent and its population.

While one cannot ignore the role which HIV/Aids, civil war and environmental degradation have played in Africa's continuing underdevelopment, corruption emerges as the primary cause. This argument does not mean to minimize the extent to which the HIV/Aids pandemic has wreaked economic havoc upon the continent, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, but it intended to draw attention to the fact that corruption stands as a formidable obstacle to the implementation of, not just development programs but, HIV/Aids prevention programs (Adjilbolosoo, 2005; Brea, 2008). In the final analysis, therefore, and even while conceding to the fact that there are multiple

causes for Africa's persistent inability to develop, corruption and totalitarianism are the primary causes.

Bibliography

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