

## CONTENDING ISSUES AND AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW

**Memud, Olanrewaju Rafiu**

Department of Political Science and International Relations, Southwestern University  
Nigeria, Okun-Owa, Ogun State  
Memud4Rafiu@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

*Development is essential in the life of a state and continent. The imperative of development is traceable to the positive impacts it brought on the wellbeing of the people in particular and state in general. However, despite this imperativeness and positive impacts on the wellbeing of people and productive system of a state, many African states are facing contending issues that are serving as obstacles to realization of sustainable development in this globalized era. The theoretical framework for the analysis is underdevelopment theory. The objective of the study is to investigate the nexus between development and contending issues that are causing dearth of sustainable development in Africa. The study adopted qualitative research methods in which secondary data is employed for analysis. The study identifies fragile statehood and weak institutions, prevalent intrastate political conflicts and insecurity, primary production and dependent economy, debt peonage, poor regional integrative policy, overdependence on foreign development plans, brain drain of the best human resource, poor funding of education and research institutes, low per capita income/ poverty, wrong ideology of technology transfer and globalization. The study recommends action centered and pragmatic leadership, geo-economics strategy, good agricultural policy, removal of Anglo francophone dichotomy, good governance that will stimulate stable and strong political institutions, adequate funding of education and academic research, improvement of citizens per capita income to reduce poverty level and desertion of wrong ideas of technological transfer to technological inventions and innovation. The study concludes that addressing these constraints of poverty, political instability. Conflict and insecurity, over dependence on Eurocentric development plans can usher in much needed sustainable development in Africa.*

**Keywords:** Africa, Contending Issues, Development, Economy, State

### **Introduction/Background:**

Africa is the global second largest continent in the world after Asia. The continent of Africa is potentially rich because it houses many essential globally demanded mineral resources which are key to international economy and energy such as Uranium in Niger, Namibia, and South Africa. Crude oil in Nigeria, Angola and Libya; Iron ore in Algeria, Gabon and Central Africa Republic; Gold in Ghana, South Africa, Mali and Sudan; Diamond in Botswana, Angola, DR Congo and Sierra Leone, to mention but a few. The continent is blessed with better and favorable

climatic weather conditions that permit cultivation of variety of food and cash crops all year round. There exist navigable seas and rivers for irrigation, hydro-power generation, transportation and fishing. Africa continent contains fertile and arable land for agriculture. The continent of Africa despite the plundering during slave trade and colonialism, has never experienced under population, hence the continent is still having the high population growth rate which made it to be richly blessed and endowed with abundant human capita /resources that are capable of taking tasks that can fully maximize its arable land for agriculture and continent development, (Daily Times on line,2023).

However, despite the abundant human and mineral wealth potentials embedded in the continent. Africa worldly posture is scaring. This made Africa to be designated as a backward continent because she is facing or suffering from all indices of modern-day underdevelopment that prevent the continent from competitively benefiting from the ongoing globalized market economy. The continent of Africa frightening and parlous development statistics made her ranked lowest in the cadre of the global development indexes in all ramifications: lowest in educational facilities with sub-Saharan Africa having the highest rates of education exclusion because over one-fifth of children between the ages of 6-11 are out of school ([www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org)).

Two in five African Adults are illiterates. While the continent's numbers of schools are increasing, the quality of learning and general attendance is still down due to local violence and gender oppression. Degn (2018) cited in Okolie & kelechi (2018), argues that Africa is lowest in providing infrastructural facilities for her citizens as more than half of the continent population do not have access to basic human needs such as water, nutrition, shelters, power supply, good roads etc. The continent of Africa is battling with poorly functioning continental and regional economic integration. Africa possess the largest amount of poverty striking people and this vicious circle of poverty made Africa to be regarded as the poorest continent in the world because 34 out of 49 poorest countries are in Africa, ([www.dailytimes.com.pk](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk) ).The continent has the highest amount of global child mortality rate with sub-Saharan Africa having neonatal mortality rate of 27 deaths per 1000 of largely preventable child deaths ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int) , [www.data.unicef.org](http://www.data.unicef.org)).

Africa is on record with the highest and longest protracted fratricidal political conflicts in the world. The continent of Africa is made up of fifty-four states of which only eight (8) or 14.8% have relative peace while the remaining forty-eight (48) or 85.1% are volatile ([www.africanews.com](http://www.africanews.com)). The volatility in some states is so high that those states were described as potentially failed states. While states like Somalia, Sudan, Niger, Chad, Congo DR, Mali, and Eritrea are perpetually in turbulent situation, some states have fragile state components that occasionally erupt in political conflicts. Unfortunately, all these volatility and political conflicts create insecurity that affects political stability of the continent, ([www.iiss.org](http://www.iiss.org) ).Africa has the lowest life expectancy; having the poorest medical facilities to cater for her teeming population; proliferate and domiciled global largest amount of small and light arms, unchecked cross borders banditry, large scale unemployment and underemployed youths.

However, while Africa is globally the poorest continent, she possess the highest birthrate and

population growth compared with other continents and it is projected to double by year 2050 by United Nations, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org). The average woman living in sub-Saharan African will give birth to 5.2 children in her lifetime. With unchecked growing population that may cause unemployment, diseases and hunger. Based on these aforementioned statistics, The parlous state of the continent of Africa is not a cheerful one, Obasanjo, (2001), All these and more made development imperative and call for urgent attention on development strategy and plans of tapping and explore both the human and material wealth in Africa for the wellbeing of her citizens. These myriad of problems that bedeviled African states appear to be crippling development in the continent and made the continent to be classified as the “home for the poor” Okolie & Kelechi (2018).

### **Concept and Attributes of Development in the Contemporary Globalized System**

Development is an aspect of statecraft that remains constant and insatiable in the live of any state and continent. Hence, development is constant planning and continuous search for plans that will make meaningful impact on the lives of the citizenry. Development as an essential thing in the life of states is ever dynamic and is made up of multidimensional and multifaceted factors that are combined to produce improved welfare and wellbeing packages for people. This made development a noticeable points in the advancement of human capital, economic and social upliftment which are capable of increasing access to indicators of good living, which may include increased manpower level, decent housing, easy transportation, efficient and effective health care system, a high level of social cohesion and above all unhindered access to wealth generation activities. The ultimate aim and objective of development is to create better living conditions for the people, (Saliu, 2010).

Thomas (2010) identifies development as holistic and an aspect of governance that involves critical changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty. Seers (1969) argue that development centered on the process by which a state is able to tackle and answer three core issues affecting humanity which are “poverty, unemployment and inequality”. Effectiveness in taming these monsters is considered as development by him. That explain the position of the World Bank (1991 cited in Thomas 2010) that the essence of development is improvement of the quality of life of the people by banishing inequality and poverty.

However, Rodney (1974) introduced a new dimension to the concept of development by making categorical distinction between individual and social groups development. Rodney describes development at the individual level as increase in their skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, and material wellbeing. While at the social group level, development is seen as an *increase in capacity to regulate* both internal and external *relationships*, (emphasis is mine). To scholars like Rodney, development is synonymous with increase in capacity of individual to create material needs that can uplift the welfare of the people and collective development is seen as self-sufficiency and independence to take decisive decisions and actions that will make meaningful impacts on the lives of society. Rogers (1969) cited in Anyeabe (2004)

describes development as a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce a higher per capita income and level of living through more modern production methods and improved social organizations.

Development is people-oriented activities with ultimate benefits going to the people, that is why development is about people and centered on people. It is very difficult, if not impossible for any country to achieve sustainable growth and development without the full mobilization and effective utilization of human resources but where human resources are not adequately trained, development becomes a mirage Obasanjo (1999),

Development (as well as underdevelopment) is a function of stable polity originating from action-centered leadership, well-managed human and material resources, serene political environment committed citizenry and good governance. It is this good governance that Sharma, Sadana, & Kaur, (2015) clarifies its elements as “effective citizens participation in government, accountability by those who govern, transparency in which citizens have access to information on government, rule of law that is fair and impartial in enforcement of law, responsiveness of government institutions and processes to serve the interests of the citizens at all time, inclusiveness and equity where no citizen is excluded or marginalized because all citizens have equal opportunity politically and economically”.

### **Importance of Development to Africa Continent**

In view of the aforementioned endemic development problems, the continent of Africa is in dire need of development in this era of global and regional economic grouping and competition prompted by the globalization. Development is imperative to the continent of Africa in order to reduce excruciating poverty level and to make Africa competitively benefit from ongoing globalized international economy. The envisage sustainable development will provide opportunity for the Africans to effectively control prices of their agricultural produce and products by being able to add value to primary produce and mineral resources emanating from the continent of Africa. Thus, enabling Africa to competitively profit from ongoing globalized international economy, Negussie, (2018).

Existence of development in Africa will improve life expectancy and provision of social infrastructure in many African states, reduce child mortality rates and expand the provision of medical facilities. Development will make available quality education that will increase literacy level, (INRISD, 2022)..

Development in Africa will facilitate establishment of many industries to create employment opportunities for the surging unemployed youths. Remove youth restiveness and tendency to commit violent social crimes like banditry, kidnapping, arm proliferation and sea piracy.

Creation of more employment opportunities leads to more income and goods. Thus, improving low level of income and increasing consumption that will ultimately increase volume of production and make state to enjoy economy of large-scale production and efficient utilization of resources, Folarin (2010).

It will also provide avenue for state to raise tax and operate efficient capital market that can raise funds for industrialization. Modern development of the continent will make the continent self-sufficient thereby reducing overreliance of Africa on grants and loans from the International Financial Institutions and donor states who tie their loans and aids to stringent conditions that further impoverish the continent which is inimical to the continent's development, Kuto,(2014) .

Existence of development will reduce brain drain of the continent active human resource to other continent, facilitate transformational and sustainable socioeconomic and technological advancement with positive impacts on the lives and environment of the African people, Ebye, (2007).

Development will also lead to establishment of stable democratic political system, reduction of political conflicts, insecurity, arms proliferations and volatility in the continent that makes Africa the most volatile continent in the world. Provision of high and quality energy for both domestic and industrial usage in the continent (World Bank, 2022, The World Bank in Africa [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) )

Existence of sustainable development can obliterate the continent from debt peonage and dependency which has undermined political sovereign of many African states preventing them from taking people oriented socio-economic and public policy.

Attainment of these desired objectives remains topmost in minds of concerned African scholars, entrepreneur and leaders. However, achieving these goals has become a mirage in the face of daunting challenging issues confronting and threatening the continent's determination and quest for development.

Since independence the primary concern of African states has being ways to tackle development problems of collective self-reliance, endogenous progress and regional economic integration. Many states in the continent are not faring better on the purported development question of continent of Africa. Immediately after independence from colonial rule the problems of development in Africa were heaped on the doorsteps of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalist exploitation. While these assertions made may be correct and relevant in understanding the origin of underdevelopment and disarticulation of Africa's economy. It is a verifiable fact that colonialism, imperialism, exploitation are guilty of laying foundation of dearth of development in most third world states and cannot be exonerated. The trio has left the continent of Africa underdeveloped in their quest for slaves, exploration and exploitation of mineral resources and raw materials for their industrial usage. The seeds sown by them are ripe, dispersed and continue to manifest in different format in the life of colonized states in the post-independence time, Negussie, (2018); Folarin (2010).

There is great disarticulation of the continent economy towards paid jobs and abandonment of various scientific traditional occupations in order to secure market for manufactured European goods. Africa continent in the last two hundred years suffered from different colonial events and issues that contributed partly to disarticulating the continent of its progressive human and economic development through a great deal of exploitation of both human and material

resources that put the continent behind its peers in the 20th Century. There was plundering and balkanization of the continent by the explorers looking for precious stones like gold, then came the colonialism whose interest is domination and exploitation of both human and material resources, (Nkrumah, 1967). But despite the colossal damages caused by imperialism and colonialism cannot be wholly held responsible for the abysmal failure of Africa to accelerate their level of development to the continent a point of reference in the comity of developed world because of the identified reasons

However, present realities have gone beyond the assertions of blaming colonialism as bane to Africa's development. This is because many internally generated problems are causing dearth of development in Africa than externally induced problems. Colonialism cannot be completely blamed for the volatility in African states and lack of development in African continent in the twenty first century. This is a period when most African states in the continent must have been governed by Africans for more than more than half a century (1960-2022) and no concerted efforts were made to integrate diverse elements in their respective states to have cohesive nation building as was done by Tito in former Yugoslavia.

### **Reason why colonialism alone can no longer be blame for poor development in Africa**

Why the African political leaders and policy makers are over the years continuously falling for deceptive and defective development policy after fifty years of independence, fifty solid years is enough for African leaders to know the antics of European development policy expertise and what the International Financial Institutions crafted and handed down as development plans for the continent? Colonialism cannot be totally blamed for inability of Africa political leadership failure as the head and planner of political and economic, development in their respective states. Evidence shows that in many states (like Nigeria, Chad, Uganda, Zimbabwe) political leadership failed to effectively harmonize the people and harness the resources to avert development failure.

Political conflicts and instability that led to disinvestment in many African states like Congo DR, Niger and Chad occurred after independence. Many African political leaders not only failed to develop their states but connive with Europeans to cause political conflicts for their self interests. The military industrial complex capitalizes on this gullibleness to perpetuate conflicts that erodes minimal development in the continent just like development that took place during Ghaddafi reign in Libya was wiped away by political upheaval in that part of Africa. Combative and combustive political systems which are prevalent in the continent are inimical to development in Africa, (Mbaegbu & Udeogu, 2018).

Reality on ground shows that God given recourses both human and material are not well managed by most African leaders. Successive African leaders failed to efficiently synergize between mineral and human resources for successful sustainable development and transformation of the continent. Hence, failure to prudently manage continental resources embedded in different states of Africa cannot be attributed to colonialism after it has left the shore of the continent of Africa, (Ojo, 2016).

There is obvious decline capacity utilization in many African states due to poor techniques of production and low level of agricultural production and output. Also, there exist bad economic policy, high rate of capital flight, political unrest, dearth of action centered and visionary leadership, and weak industrial base. All these cannot be attributable to colonialism only.

Military rule that caused balkanization in the civil polity and destroyed culture of dialogue among people of the continent. Large budget deficit run by many states affect their ability to fund development. Other problems associated with internal contraction on Africa's development are: poor sectoral linkage of the economy, high capital flight, balance of payments deficit, and adoption of development plans that relies heavily on foreign loans that cannot bring about desired sustainable development because repayment sap the fund needed to continuously sustain the development, [www.iiss.org](http://www.iiss.org) ; [www.geneva.acagemy](http://www.geneva.acagemy).

Africa house many globally required mineral resources that brought wealth and fortune were discovered after departure of colonialism. Meanwhile, explorations of these resources were done under the leadership of Africans after the entrenchment of independence in many African states. But, wealth accruing as revenue from the continent resources contradicts infinitesimal development available in the continent. Wealth generated from the mineral resources cannot be seen in term of contribution to development and well-being of the people of African. Therefore, it is pertinent to ask what these wealth and fortune derived from mineral resources by African states used for. Regrettably, most of the states in which these highly prized mineral resources are located in the continent are the least developed and are contributing to the rating of Africa as an underdeveloped continent. The continent wealth is not only siphoned to private pockets they are stocked abroad in foreign account. This has led us to the corpus of problems obfuscating Africa's development such as corruption, inefficient management of resources most especially liquid capital. Endemic corruption and mismanagement of funds that is very rampant in the continent of Africa are not perpetuated by foreigners rather they are carried out by Africans themselves. Capital flight coming out of the continent of Africa as a result of political elites' kleptomaniac culture is enormous. While African continent monetary wealth are used to trade in foreign stock market African are going abroad cap in hand to beg for aids and loans. Hence colonialism cannot be totally blamed for lack of development in Africa.

Despite the abundant arable land with able bodied young people, the continent of Africa cannot effectively provide enough food to feed her population. This has made Africa to become dumping ground for all kinds of food; it is obvious that, a continent that cannot feed herself will be enslaved by other continent. Modernization and mechanization of agriculture should be the cornerstone of Africa continental development strategies because food security is one of the components of continental/national security. The continent of Africa cannot claim to be oblivious of problems of losses of agricultural produce to pests and diseases, storage problems, usage of poor farming techniques and above all fluctuating global market prices of agricultural produce that make agriculture unattractive as a profession to the younger generation. Yet, successive African leaders paid lip service to technology driven and mechanized agriculture, (Daily Times online, 2023).

Africa continent need to rise to challenges that are serving as stumbling blocks to its progress and development. It is a fact that colonialism can be blamed for slavery and slave trade that caused social instability, depopulation, destruction of traditional African institutions, looting of African resources, disarticulation of traditional African skills and technology as well as dependency syndrome immediately after independence. But, since independence, states in the continent are not faring better blaming neocolonialism and metropole-periphery relations of international capitalist economic relations as the main contributor to development question in the continent of Africa. This assertion may be true to some extent because there are scholastic evidences available to support the claims of balkanization of development in Africa,(Saliu, 2010)

However, with over fifty years of independence, colonialism cannot be totally held responsible for the dearth of development in the continent of Africa as there appears to be drastic change in narrations on factors causing retardation of development in Africa which are seen to be internally induced rather than externally generated. Even though the colossal historical brutalities, destruction and disarticulation of Africa economy was high subsequent events shows there is more self-inflicted obstacles than inherited problems as the hindrances to development of Africa continent. Development is a function of many factors combined to transform a people to better level socially, economically, scientifically, technologically and politically. Identification of these factors and how they have contributed to development and dearth of development in Africa is of interest to this study, Farah & Mazongo (2011).

Development is a capital-intensive project that requires adequate financial provision and management of intended development projects with many African states being unable to generate or mobilize such huge funds locally.

High population should be a good tiding for Africa continent if the continent could make available employment opportunities for these teeming populations but wrong planning and poor management of the continent's economic resources by individual state have led to problems of structural defects in many African states development plans and policies.

Usman cited in Tenuche, (2018) argues that for a continent to have successful sustainable development there must be synergy and harmonious balance between leadership, polity, resources, strategy, tactics, and science and technology. Africa continent over the years has been battling with problems of development and many African states have made concerted efforts to attain development in the continent had yielded little or no dividends due to existence of certain variables that serves as obstacles or are inimical to the attainment of development. Hence, there is contention that irrespective of means and mechanism adopted in attaining development in the continent of Africa, if these identified contending issues are not resolved or remove the possibility of attaining development is very remote if not impossible. Because it is almost impossible to achieve sustainable development without a reasonable level of stable political system with sound economy led by an action centered and dynamic leadership in which citizens have access to high level of income and human resource or capital are well trained. It is important to note that vast amount of literature establish the importance of nexus between these contending issues and development, (Folarin, 2018).



**Working definition:** Development is conceived here to mean both quantitative and qualitative improvement in the lives of people where citizens are continually advancing or moving forward from a position of agreed unsatisfactory lower level conditions to a presumed satisfactory higher-level condition of life. Hence, development basically deals with advancement of humanity as well as improvement in the living conditions of people to make life worthy of living.

**Theoretical Discourse:** The issue of development and underdevelopment in the third world states of which Africa is inclusive has attracted global scholastic attention. The explanations for development or dearth of development have led to the emergence of three contending paradigms which are: Modernization, Dependency and Conflict of Interest schools of thought. While the modernization theory contends that there is (only one) road map for development and dearth of development in Africa is the failure of the states in the continent to follow this identified road map. Hence, to have development the continent must follow path to development as exhibited by the Western countries, scholars that belong to this thought are Rostow Wait, David Apter, David McClelland and Emile Durkheim. While it is not mandatory to follow the path of Western Europe to development, it is important for any continent that wants to develop to have a well-researched development plan that synergizes between resources, time, target and outcome. The Dependency school of thought identified the causes of dearth development in third world to social economic relations that exist between Africa and Europe through unequal exchange, slavery, colonialism, imperialism that breeds dependency on metropole-periphery relationship. Road to development is extrication of third world states from the webs of global capitalism and imperialism. Scholars that belong to this thought are Walter Rodney, Francois Perrous, Emeh, (2013). While Conflict of Interest school of thought hinge their position on conflicts of interest between national and personal interests of African political leaders. This school of thought deduced that *conflicts of interest* are the cause of underdevelopment. Thus, African leaders only pay lip service to development while deep down in their heart, they are only interested on enriching themselves and not to improve the welfare and wellbeing of the Africans. Scholars identified with this thought are Agbiboa, Maunro, Obayelu and Nageri, Kutor,(2014); Bhattacharyya, (2007).

While all these theories advanced have evidences to back up their deductions, this study affirms that contrary to modernization postulation, there is no one permanent way to development as claimed by modernization theorists. Hence, modernizationists cannot be totally correct in their propositions that Africa must pass through the same process as Europeans if expected development must come. However, in reality development in Africa does not necessarily have to strictly follow the pattern of European states. There is a general belief among third world scholars that the problems of (under)development in Africa could be laid at the door step of colonialism, Rodney, (1974); Harris, (1987). It is a verifiable fact that colonialism had affected developmental process of third world and colonized states and left the continent of Africa underdeveloped in their quest for exploration and exploitation of mineral resources and raw materials for their industrial usage, coupled with this is great disarticulation of the continent economy towards paid jobs and abandoning of various scientific traditional occupations in order to secure market for manufactured European goods, Emeh (2013). Africa continent in the last

two hundred years suffered from different events and issues that partially contributed to its current predicament and formation (such as Belgium induced crisis in Congo which still lingers on since 1962) There was (plundering and balkanization of the continent by the explorers looking for precious stones like gold), then came the colonialism whose interest is domination and exploitation of both human and material resources. Leadership has been a great problem to Africa but the current realities show that even where there is determined leadership, proposed efforts are frustrated by the poorly executed development plans, Achuo, Nchofoung, Asongu & Dinga (2022).

### **Yardsticks for Measuring Development**

Development yardstick though varied includes the following: GDP, Balance of Payments position, level of infrastructural facilities developed, a balanced production level, industrialization, and level of foreign dependence.

**Action-Centered Leadership:** Development and development processes are piloted by efficient and effective administration led by dynamic-action-centered-leadership that can effectively tap, coordinate and manage both human and materials resources, socio-economic and political environment that will permits opportunity for citizens to fully advance their potentials as was shown by Singapore, Libya Gaddafi, and China under Mao, Madavo(2005), Folarin, (2010).

**Buoyant and Prosperous Industrial Economy:** A buoyant economy with robust and active real sector to engineer and sustain development in a place is an important element of development. Buoyant and prosperous economic environment that can provide employment opportunities, wipe away acute poverty that engender inequality, discrimination and conflict that make the polity unstable and unsecured for any meaningful and organized economic production to take place. Buoyant and prosperous economy can serve as strong motivation for continental development by providing savings and investment capital that can transform society into higher level of prosperity, promote stability and drastically reduced abject poverty and low level of income which usually is the basis of political grievance that generates conflicts and instability that is ravaging the continent of Africa as a whole, Folarin (2010). Saliu (2010) argues that 'buoyant economy is one that can generate wealth through effective and efficient production to satisfy the needs of people.

**Peaceful and Conducive Socio-Political Environment:** Existence of peaceful socio-political environment is usually associated with development. A polity with good years of political stability is seen as having opportunity for development. Provision of enabling peaceful environment for economic and political system made focused and action-centered leadership an important element in development of a continent. A Peaceful socio-political environment is usually attractive to the foreign investors, make projection and planning for investment feasible as well as assure the investors of getting good returns from investment made at appropriate time, Farah & Mazongo, (2011).

**Human Capita Development:** One major feature of development is high level of trained human capita/resources. A well-trained human capita aided development by applying acquired knowledge to solve social, economic and technological problems and produce developments that will uplift humanity. Well trained human capital enables and facilitates diversification of economy from simple extractive primary produce to complex manufacturing industrial one, expand the scope of production from small scale production to large scale production, and spread the wisdom of skills and research for continuous development, Obasanjo (2000). The essentiality of human capital is that it serves as instrument and catalyst for development. The greatest progress in developmental process is human capital that have capacity to overcome challenges of inclusive in the global politics, trade, and economic decision-making in the main stream of international economic production and relations, (Obasanjo, 1999). Human resources or manpower as the most vital component of resources is the key to sustainable development because improvement in productivity depends on fine and profound human capital. Knowledge through quality education and training facilitates transforming of research and scientific findings into ground breaking discoveries and technological breakthrough, Madavo,(2005).

**Technological Development:** Technological advances, innovation and breakthrough is a product of many years of successive research funding by both the state and individual entrepreneurs. Many African state technologists, scientists and academics have come up with many globally acclaimed technological innovations but, which neither the state nor individual entrepreneur are willing to be part of the success stories. Ability of a continent to conquer and have power over nature is a feature of development, because technology enables humanity to dictate and control trends of events and productive capacity of man, Madavo,(2005).

### **Contending Issues in Africa's Development in the Twenty-first Century**

However, there are inimical factors contributing to the dearth of development in this potentially rich continent of Africa. These are:

**Leadership Bankruptcy:** Leadership is very essential and key to development. Dearth of visionary, focused, dynamic, action-centered leadership has been a bane to Africa's quest for progress and development. Bankrupt leadership has contributed immensely as a stumbling block to Africa's development dynamics. Therefore, clueless and lack of purposeful leadership prevents African leaders from embarking on effective harnessing and utilization of resources for the upliftment and transformation of African states and continent to a global continent to be reckon with in global politics. The crop of political elites parading themselves as political leaders in Africa since independence from Kamuzu Banda, Nimeri of Sudan, Mobutu Sese Seko, Robert Mugabe, Idi Amin Dada, Omar Bongo, Emperor Bokassa, Paul Biya, Siad Barre, Felix Boigny, Gokoni Waddeye, Idris Derby Samuel Doe, the list is endless just to mention but a few, are anti-development. The continent of Africa is at the bottom ladder status because emerging African political leaders and elites are myopic and could not have futuristic, actionable time bound development programs for their respective states despite the abundant human and material resources, Ojo,(2016). Thus, despite the wealth realized from Uranium, Chad and Niger remains

underdeveloped. Congo DR as a blessed country with many mineral resources, but lack of quality leadership allowed these prized resources to be plundered while the people live in penury. Despite the strategic location of Somalia for marine network, bad leadership turned the Somalia to capital of pirate and other marine insecurities. Zimbabwe agricultural potential was woefully wasted by bad leadership of Mugabe and the Country is yet to come out of rubbles. Nigeria is a state with staggering supply of global crude oil but, rank less in term of welfare and wellbeing for her citizens among her OPEC member states due to leadership problem, Badejo (2023); Madavo(2005); Folarin, (2010).

**Poor Economy:** Economy is the bedrock of any society and it needs an eagle eye to manage. Poor management of economy of most African states in the continent leads to lack of economic diversification. Lack of economic diversification has compelled most states in Africa to become perpetual primary producers that cannot add values to the primary produce emanating from the continent. Less buoyant economy made the continent unable to sustain high level production whether agricultural or industrial production. Inability to add value to primary produce leads to marginalization of the continent in the global economic relations and equations where prices and global economic policies are determined to the disadvantages of Africa continent. Hence, African continent that produces primary produce do not have an input into the price of their produce and cannot provide succor when there is crash in global prices of their produce in the world market. Until the issue of independent national and continental economy is given priority, development will continue to elude the continent of Africa because a continent that cannot manage, protect, or dictate direction of her economy cannot make any meaningful development in the current international economic relations. Assertive economic situation is the key to both political and strategic survival in the era of globalization and that assertive economic relations is lacking in the continent of Africa, (Meredith,2006); Ojo,(2016); (UNRISD, 2022).

**Wrong Development Policy:** Development policy orientations of most African states since independence are not futuristic and sustainable. Since the end of Second World War, the Western Europe and United States have come to typified development to economic growth that is centered on free market and liberalization of domestic market that cannot favourably compete with foreign products. Adoption of wrong policy of technological transfer rather than technological innovation is harbinger for underdevelopment. Continuous wrong development policy has failed assist the continental economy in combating economic poverty, low level of income where people are unable to meet their basic needs. This made World Bank to categorized states according to their level of income, those countries with lower per capital income are considered as less developed and are encouraged to integrate into global market to access potential opportunities presumed to be abundant there. This has led many African to take loans that further impoverished the continent of Africa, Ojo,(2016), Ebaye (2007), Olutayo & Omobowale(2007).

**Primary Produce:** Present African states development is affected by compartmentalization of the continent to primary producer. Meanwhile, the price of these primary produce is subject to manipulation in the global market to the advantages of European states. The price manipulation has put Africans states into status of low income and low savings with direct consequences and

multiplier effects on investment and development. To further enrich the development of European states and increase underdevelopment in the continent of Africa there is plundering of rich African natural resources through elements of divide and rule tactics introduced into each state body polity. The perennial civil strife orchestrated by western capitalist facilitates unstable political system to further underdevelop the continent economy. To prolong underdevelopment plane, bogus European economic development plans are encouraged and where states are unable to finance such plans, state are encouraged to go for loans from Breton wood institutions and put the unsuspected state in debt peonage through accumulated debt rates, (Muntschick, 2022), (UNRISD, 2022).

**Fratricidal War:** Bad governance and fratricidal wars are among some fundamental issues that are driving away development from the continent of Africa. One of the endemic antidevelopment issues in Africa is protracted intra-state political conflicts that are gradually degenerating into low intensity warfare. Presently, many intra states political conflicts in the continent are moving towards all-out war in which every effort are made to completely destroyed both human and available infrastructure. Therefore, much effort is concentrated in prosecuting war to the detriment of sustainable development. To make the matter worse, little infrastructure earlier provided are completely wiped out to further put Africa states in their sixteenth century posture of deficit of infrastructure, Marc, Verjee & Mogaja(2015); (Omotola & Oyewole, 2023)

**Debt Peonage:** Many African states are suffering from debt burden spent on non-productive ventures that have no capability of offsetting the debt from the returns of investment on the projects. Despite the humongous revenue generated from their respective mineral resources. It is pertinent to ask, what was the loan(s) used for? Most of the loans collected are not expended on productive ventures that are capable of generating revenue to liquidate loans incurred on the projects. On many occasion loans collected are diverted to white elephant projects which are neither economically productive nor capable of generating funds to liquidate the loans. This has put many African states and the continent on the list of all-time debtor continent in which European financial institutions are willing to allow accessing more loans because it will enable debt ridden states to lose economic control of their states to the creditor's nations, Brosig (2022). Farah & Mazongo(2011).

**Poor Human Capital Development:** There are certain fundamental forces that shape and affect sustainable development in a state; these are level of manpower or human resource training, serene socio-economic and political environment. Africa's quest for development is undermined by certain inherent and cancerous issues which if not decisively and adequately checkmate meaningful development will continue to elude the continent of Africa. Poor or slow rate of development of the continent of Africa is a function of poor human capita development. This is worrisome because the continent possesses abundant potential human and mineral resources which if adequately harness could turn around fortune of the continent for better. In-view of this, human capita development is essential because it is the instrument and catalyst for development. Obasanjo (1999) argues that it is very difficult, if not impossible for any country to achieve sustainable growth and development without the full mobilization and effective utilization of human resources but, where human resources are not adequately trained, development becomes

a mirage. The greatest investment is in labour which creates and recreates wealth. Existence of adequate training and education for human capital can turn around Africa elusive development, Farah & Mazongo (2011).

Moreover, a well-trained human capita will properly apply acquired knowledge to social, economic and technological developments to uplift humanity. African has been facing a great deal of poor educational facilities and curriculum that culminated in anti-intellectualism which has been a bane to technological breakthrough and development in Africa. Poor funding of education to create the right knowledge adequately needed to meet our peculiar needs as well as produce human capita that can transform Africa to sustainable continental development. Well trained human capital enables and facilitates ability of the continent to diversify her economy from simple extractive primary produce, expand the scope of production from small scale production to large scale production, and spread the wisdom of skills and research for continuous development, Obasanjo (2000).

**Small and Weak States:** The continent of Africa is made up of many artificially created modern states that are battling with many issues that are endemic and inimical to Africa continent developmental aspiration. Many African states are small in size (land mass), population and economically weak to embark on strategically important economic development. The Gambia, Togo and Benin Republic are some of the small African states. These states are not only small; they have weak political institutions that prevent emergence of sustainable development in many African states. Colonial state creation of most modern African states is imbued with inherent problems of amalgamation of different ethnically assertive/warring ethnic communities into one state. This has breeds unhealthy ethnic rivalry and politics that made many political states to be volatile, fragile and unstable. An unstable nature of many political states in the continent of Africa are due to endemic political conflicts and insecurity that serve as barrier to development in African states like Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, Chad and even Nigeria to mention but a few. Small, weak and frail institutions are resilient issues contributing to dearth of development in Africa. Small, weak and unstable political institutions are threats to continental development by preventing sovereign states from mustering enough authority to marshal plans for development. Senghor in 1956 recognized the importance of prosperous economy when he argues that '*small entities of many African states and their weak economies that cannot combat poverty and ignorance is a pseudo-independence and harbinger for underdevelopment*, (Meredith, 2006 emphasis is mine).

**Corruption and Mismanagement:** Development as a conscientious planning and implementation of actionable policy plans requires efficient financial management and administration of resources for the attainment of maximum returns. But, in many African states recklessness on the part of political class and leaders enable state resources to be plunder to satisfy the political needs of political leaders like Mobutu Sese Seko, Emperor Bokassa, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Sani Abacha and Omar Bongo to mention a few. Meanwhile, the same resources that was mismanaged by these leaders in their respective states was prudently utilized by Gaddafi in transforming Libya's desert into enviable African state before the fall Gaddafi from power. Today, European Banks are host to many stolen wealth from Africa that are starched away

in European states. These humongous amounts of money would have been very useful for investment purposes that can transform Africa into a better continent. Corruption is anathema to national development, the essence of any organized human society is progressive development of the state through effective harnessing of common wealth, natural resources and prudent management of monetary revenue realized from these resources. But converting public funds to personal wealth has drained public purse to the detriment of sustainable development. (Ekweremadu, 2023); (HEDA, 2019)

**Poor Political Culture:** Political immaturity emanating from wrong political orientations and socialization are impediment to development in Africa continent. A key political immaturity and poor political culture is lack of understanding of concept, theory and practices of democracy, representatives and republican system. Misconception of democracy to mean election of notables degenerate to identity politics as well as emergence of inept and clueless leadership who do not understand what development entails and process of attaining it. Many African leaders conceived development to mean funding of white elephant projects without any positive impact on the economy and the wellbeing of the people. The poor political culture entails believe by Africans political elites and politicians in selection and imposition of candidates even when the candidates are least qualify. Institutional coups, imperial presidency and filthy democracy are some of the poor political culture exhibited by African political elites that indirectly affecting continental development. This is because democracy which is issue oriented politics that will produce good manifesto and robust debate for candidate to make right choice are jettison, Jega, (2023); Fox,(2016).

**Political Conflicts:** Insecurity and political conflicts are Siemans twins that abort and prevent realization of sustainable development in Africa. The productive life of man is affected three interrelated things which are: health, peace and security. Many African states are inundated by political conflicts that have totally killed peace and security in the continent of Africa. Meanwhile, the basis of any meaningful development is peaceful environment for significant productive life that will positively impacted on development. Where and how can meaningful development come or be established in Congo DR, Somalia, Mali, Sudan, Niger, Chad and many more African states with similar situations in the continent. Thus, absence of peace and security that pervade largest part of African states is a big setback for meaningful development in the continent. Just as there is nexus between peaceful and stable democratically governed continent and development (of Western Europe) so also there is connection between conflict ridden states and development summersault Africa.

While a democratically stable continent has best chance of systematic development plans that will improve the lives of people, so, also is a conflict-ridden continent like Africa does not have time, peace and stability to plan for development hence protracted underdevelopment in the continent. To worsen the situation, a conflict-ridden continent in the course of conflicts destroys available developmental infrastructure leading to pushing the continent deeper into underdevelopment. Therefore, for any meaningful development to occur in the continent of Africa, the issue of protracted political conflicts must be decisively tackled and, in its place, substituted with enduring and sustainable democratic peace, good political culture and stability

enthroned, Marc, Verjee & Mogaja, (2015); Omotola & Oyewole. (2023); Stoil,(2016). Persistence political conflicts and insecurity has made many African states to be fragile and unstable. Development cannot take place in an atmosphere of political instability and uncertainty of investment in a place. Political instability and insecurity remains another great obstacle to development in the continent of Africa, Farah & Mazongo (2011).

**Poor Technological Advances:** Technological advancement, innovation and breakthrough is a product of many years of successive research funding by both the state and individual entrepreneurs, many African state technologists, scientists and academics have come up with many globally acclaimed technological innovations but which neither the state or individual entrepreneur are willing to be part of success stories. Rather African states are waiting for technological transfer from the already developed Western Europe to the continent of Africa. Prof Awojobi of University of Lagos, Nigeria invented and developed the world acclaimed solar powered automobile in the early 1980s. The invention did not go beyond its prototype that was tested; the same invention is what Europeans are embarking on when there was endemic problems with the supplies of petroleum products to Europe due to conflicts of interests. Rather than encouraging technological and academic researches that can transform the continent, African leaders remains the major consumers of inventions made in Europe where bullet proof cars are imported at cut throat prices, Ebyte,(2009).

**Low Income:** Low income is Synonymous with poverty pervading length and breadth of Africa continent. Income is the basis on which peoples' demand expenditure, savings and investment hinges on. A continent with low income will definitely affects demand and level of production. Where low level of income affects production and productive efforts, level of development will be directly and indirectly affected. One, low level of income will affect level of savings which in turn will affect the level of investment. Savings/investment is a key factor in development. Investment deals with availability of funds for developing industrial projects that will provide employment opportunities with its multiplier effects. Low income not only prevents realization of savings for investment and development it will technically open doors for external loans or borrowing with all its conditionalities. Poor utilization of loans leads to debt burdens because the project cannot generate enough funds for liquidation of the loan. All these contributed heavily to the problems of development in Africa continent. Hence, there is a correlation between low level of income, debt peonage and underdevelopment. Poverty striking citizens may not be able to give loyalty and support to government and that put the stability of and legitimacy of poverty riddled continent at risks. Saliu (2008) argues that high poverty level makes most African states not to be competitive in the global market. Therefore, no investors are willing to invest in a poverty riddles continent, Thomas, (2008:472); Obasanjo (1999), Beegle, Christiaensen, Dabalén & Gaddis, (2016); Madavo,(2005); (UNRISD,2022).

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, existence of action-centered and pragmatic leadership; feasible, realizable and time bound development plan; geo-economic strategy; good agricultural policy; removal of



dichotomy between Anglo-Franco and Lusophone in Africa; good governance; adequate and proper funding of education and academic research; improvement of citizens per-capital income; jettison of technological transfer to technological invention and innovation can make Africa to attain her targeted aspiration of sustainable development.

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