NEO-LIBERAL POLICIES AND THE DILEMMA OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This paper has analyzed the trends of neoliberal political economic strategies and the crises of development in Africa. The paper's main objective is to investigate how the implementations of the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC II) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) affected the economic and political fortunes of African states with an emphasis on the 21st Century. The study relied on secondary data from a library and the internet where relevant literature was sourced. Dependency theory has been adopted as the framework of analysis. The results revealed divergent views regarding the performances of the policies under review. Results show that despite some modest achievements of HIPC II and NEPAD in Africa, the policies are perceived by many analysts as more of a hindrance than a help to Africa's economic and political development. The result further indicates that policies like other neoliberal development initiatives for developing countries have failed to serve as a panacea to Africa's intractable development challenge. The reality on the ground revealed that the policies have intensified the perpetuation of the peripheral and marginal status of the African continent in the world's capitalist economic and political order. The paper concluded that for Africa to overcome its development challenges, there is a need for more credible, effective and inclusive strategies mixed with committed and patriotic leaders who will ensure vigorous implementation of true people's centered policies. It is recommended that deliberate efforts should be made by African states to ensure greater efficiency in the utilization of available human and material resources, whether external or internal, in a manner that reduces the continent's overreliance on advanced capitalist countries for assistance.

Keywords: *Neoliberal Policies, Africa's Development, Hipc, NEPAD*

1. Introduction

At the moment, the crises of development appear to be the most serious challenge that confronts Africa. Despite abundant mineral and human resources, the continent remained largely underdeveloped (Ikenna, 2009) and there is no ray of hope for 2023. In most parts of the Third World, particularly African countries, governments, and citizens have continued to contend with the sad and tragic political and prevailing terrible socio-economic situations which manifest in the prevalence of high levels of poverty, unemployment, social misery, public squalor, ethnoreligious tensions and mistrust, institutional decay, crumbling infrastructures, environmental degradation, power contestation among various groups and between some groups and the states.

While it is neither possible nor necessary to dismiss the notion that the situations in the continent stem from a combination of internal contradictions and externally induced policies, many of the current economic predicaments of Africa, scholars believe, have been the consequence of the decades of neoliberal economic development strategies adopted or foisted on Africa based on global capitalist economic agenda. This situation, coupled with the role of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and the process of globalization, account for the acute crisis of development in the continent. As rightly noted by Wiesmann (1998), trends and prevailing economic, social and political conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially from the early 1970s to the late 1990s, clearly indicated that the region is confronted with a serious crisis of development. This crisis had far-reaching implications, as it threatened not only the welfare and existence of broad segments of the population but also the development base upon which future generations will depend.

Since the early 1990s, there have been continuous attempts by the World Bank, the IMF and increasingly the G7 to introduce neoliberal programmes as a remedy to the problems of the African economy. From the recommendations of the Berg Report in the early 1980s to the Structural Adjustment programmes of the mid-1980s to the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers initiatives of the late 1990s and the 21st Century, each of the neoliberal solutions have failed and failed again (Caffentzis, 2002). This paper, therefore, explores the relationship between neoliberal political-economic strategies with a focus on Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and how their implementations accentuate the crisis of development in Africa, especially in the 21st Century.

2. Literature Review

The concepts of development, neoliberal policies and underdevelopment are clarified in this section. Other issues examined include the Neo-liberal perspective of development**,** HIPC I and the Theoretical Framework of analysis.

2.1. Meaning of Development

The precise meaning of the term development in the field of development studies is quite slippery. As a universal phenomenon, development concerns and affects everyone around the world. It is, therefore, the goal of every human society, advanced or simple, large or small, individual or group, community or state. It means different things to different people and in different contexts. Scholars, governments and different organizations, therefore, view and explain the development from diverse perspectives with an emphasis on different but related dimensions.

While some see economic growth in terms of industrialization and increased production of goods and services, as the core value of development (Rostow, 1960) more emphatically, radical scholars (Frank, 1966; Rodney, 1972; Todaro and Smith, 2012) viewed development as a multi-dimensional process that embraces economic, political, social, and cultural or even human issues. Importantly, development involves changes in structures, capacity and output within a society. It is a dialectical process (Rodney, 1972) that, far from being static, is dynamic and, therefore, assumes a constant or continuous transformation process and movement towards better and improved living conditions, locally and concerning the international economic order.

2.2. Neoliberal policies

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2021) holds that neoliberalism is a philosophical view that a society's political and economic institutions should be robustly liberal and capitalist oriented supplemented by a constitutionally limited democracy and a modest welfare state. This definition implies that neoliberal policies are supposedly market-oriented reform policies with an emphasis on change in strategies from a state-led to a market-driven economy. In line with this, Friedman (1962) emphasizes that neo-liberal policies have the political power to manage the overall economic situation. For him, human beings are, by nature social and their social nature dictates a certain way of organizing society which places a premium on individuals being free to choose. Neoliberal doctrine is also conceived as a subset of the so-called "Washington consensus", a set of specific policy goals designed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) for developing Latin America and African countries (Mukamunana, 2006).

On his part, Caffentzis (2002) defines neoliberal policies as those that apply the basic assumptions of neoliberal theory to the social realm and typical examples include such policies as the user-fees clauses of World Bank Structural Adjustment ProgrammeS (SAPS) that require governments of implementing countries to charge fees for the use of health care, education and water "services" to the citizenry. They also include familiar acronyms like TRIPS (Trade Relation Intellectual Property Rights) and GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) for they put the products of mental activities and the human behaviours that could be qualified as "services" into the framework of commodities and require that they be offered on a market open to all (with the emphasis on all) bidders. So literally every spoken sentence could be copyrighted and every caress could be bid for Neoliberal policies are, therefore, commonly associated with unregulated or free trade, globalization, privatization, commercialization and change in government expenditure to promote private sector dominance in the economy, nationally and internationally.

2.3. Underdevelopment

Underdevelopment is simply the opposite of development. The term underdevelopment makes sense especially in explaining the economic, political and socio-cultural situations that characterize the Third World. Underdevelopment, as Rodney (1972) explained; captures the state of backwardness in Africa, Asia and Latin America with the circumstances and conditions of life in the industrialized nations. It also expresses a particular type of relationship of exploitation of one country by another. In other words, it mirrors the low level of development in Third World societies as a result of the exploitation or under-utilization of human and material resources or a combination of both factors.

Underdevelopment is widely believed to be the consequence of the European industrial revolution of the 19th Century. It is closely associated with the Dependency School of thought which believe the global economy is lopsided, making the already rich countries richer, while keeping the poor ones poorer, and in a state of permanent stagnation.

2.4. Neo-liberal perspective of development

Neoliberalism is understood as a political economic theory and practice that advocate that the well-being of society should be innovative by "liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework, characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey, 2005). Proceeding from this conception, the role of the state is essentially to create and preserve institutional arrangements appropriate to or compatible with neo-liberal ideas, values and practices. First, the state has to guarantee, for instance, the equality and integrity of money. Secondly, it must also set up those military, defense, police and legal structures and functions required to serve private property rights and to guarantee by force, if need be, the proper functioning of the economy (Thorsei and Lie in Kutor, 2014).

The emergence of neoliberalism as a principal ideological dogma with its primary assumptions was, essentially, to accelerate trade and development; competition and profits, full employment and prosperity; production transparency and reduce the gap between the poor and the rich (Lee, 2007). Neoliberalism, therefore, rests on economic liberation, free trade, and open markets, and enhancing the role of the private sector in society with the minimal intervention of the state in the economy.

2.5. The Decades of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAPs)

The failure of the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) to launch Africa into industrialization, the success of the 'export-led' South- and East-Asian growth strategy, and the debt crisis of the early 1980s led to a new consensus on the importance of trade policy reform and exports in growth strategies. This new consensus was the main focus of the reforms recommended to African countries and the developing world in general from the early 1980s, within the framework of IMF-engendered Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Babatunde, 2012). Essentially, SAPs in Africa have combined an IMF stabilization loan with conditionality for a longer-term Structural Adjustment Programme overseen by both the World Bank and the IMF. The Stabilization package which addresses monetary and fiscal issues typically attempted to address inflation and reduce the government's budget deficit and balance-of-payments problems. This was done with measures to reduce domestic demand, both government and private.

The longer-term Structural Adjustment Programme was aimed at the promotion of production and resource mobilization through the promotion of commodity exports, public sector reform, market liberalization and institutional reform. The programme sought to limit the role of government in the economy, promote private sector operations and remove restrictions in the economy and ensure market-determined prices (Tsikata, n.d).

However, contrary to popular assertions, high hopes and expectations that the implementation of the World Bank and IMF induced-SAPs would serve as a panacea to Africa's economic development challenges, the strategy has rather impacted very adversely on the region in vital growth and development indicators such as per capita income, trade performance, Gross fixed capital formation and human development. Rather than fostering sustainable growth and improving the living conditions of the people, especially for the rural poor, the situation in Africa deteriorated and became worst as a result.

In Nigeria, as in other African countries that subscribed to the Bretton Woods institutions policies, SAP has not only failed to produce the desired result, it aggravated the economic crisis, triggering a wave of public protests and demonstrations. SAP had a particularly devastating impact on the country's fragile agricultural sector. Increased inflation resulted in a substantial increase in the prices of farm implements, which in turn increased the cost of agricultural production (Walker 2000: 152). The tragic results were food shortages, decreased productivity and industrial unrest. As several studies have shown, women, youth and children bore the brunt of the economic hardships occasioned by structural adjustment and other neoliberal policies in Nigeria (Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2012). The reduction in state funding for public education and the resulting spike in tuition fees in public institutions galvanized students under the auspices of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) to protest against SAP.

2.6. The Emergence of HIPC I

The HIPC was launched in September 1996 in response to increasing pressure for debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries. It also aimed to permanently end the repeated rescheduling of debts for these countries (Addison, Hansen and Tarp, 2004). It was initially intended to reduce the burden of debt in the poorest economies.

Under HIPC I, the debt relief mechanism necessitated that a debtor country undergoes structural reforms in its economy to be eligible for concessional loans from the IMF and the World Bank. The first of these was to form a "flow-rescheduling agreement" with Paris Club creditors regarding concessional terms. The second was to ensure a good track record of meeting IMF arrangements and rescheduling agreements. The "flow-rescheduling" agreement would apply when there was a reduction in the stock of debt over three years. Thirdly, the debtor country needed to seek comparable debt terms from private and bilateral creditors outside the Paris Club. Fourthly, the debtor country also needed to seek bilateral debt relief in the form of official development assistance (ODA) from other creditors. Only after meeting these concessions and terms could the debtor be re-financed under the HIPC (Esquivel, Larraín and Sachs, 1998).

However, three years after its inception, the HIPC I was considered "not sufficient to provide HIPCs with a permanent exit" (G24, 2003). It was further discovered to be too slow and stringent on qualifying criteria. In 1999 the HIPC I initiative was modified and re-presented as the enhanced HIPC, or the HIPC II (Isar, 2012).

3. Theoretical Framework/ Methodology

Dependency theory, also known as the Radical School of thought in development discourse is adopted as the framework of analysis in this paper. Andre Gunder Frank and Walter Rodney were among the leading proponents of Dependency. The theory argues that the industrialized capitalist countries stagnate the rest of the world through the spread of global capitalism, manifested by capitalist greed, export of expensive finished goods, unfavorable terms of trade and exploitative international politico-economic capitalist policies and institutions such as globalization, the IMF and the World Bank leading to seeming perpetual dependency of the Third World on the Industrialized Capitalist States.

Frank (1966) in his famous work "*The development of Underdevelopment"* argues that underdevelopment is associated with the historical process which also brought about economic development i.e., the development of capitalism. He maintains that throughout history, a chain of exploitation in the form of a Metropolis-Satellite relationship has been sustained in which resources continued to be taken from the satellites to the dominant metropolis like the US and UK. In this context, underdevelopment is a product of unequal relationships between underdeveloped countries and advanced countries through the slave trade, colonialism and the present-day neo-colonialism. Similarly, Rodney's (1972) well-celebrated work "*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*" argues that underdevelopment is a condition historically produced through capitalist expansion and imperialism, and very clearly not an intrinsic property of Africa itself.

The central assumption of the theory is that development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin in the sense that the factors that lead to development in one part of the world also account for the backwardness or underdevelopment of the rest or other part, Africa inclusive. It is, however, criticized for ignoring the role of internal conditions or factors as obstacles to the development of the Third world nations. Critics argued that though the impact of imperialism and neo-colonialism on Africa's development cannot be overlooked, neither can the prevalence of large-scale corruption and bad governance in the Third world which led to the mismanagement of huge material and human resources be played down. However, the theory is useful in the analysis of the inequality existing between the poor and rich countries and further explains the reasons for the dominance of wealthy nations over the poor countries through the sustained imposition of neoliberal policies in the 21st Century.

Qualitative method of data collection was applied and the study relied mainly on secondary data from a library and the internet where relevant literature was sourced. Data were further presented, analysed and interpreted by means of qualitative content method.

4. Discussion of the Findings

4.1. Neoliberal Policies for Africa's Development: The Experience of 21st Century

The failure of past economic policies especially SAPs to engender the anticipated growth and development outcomes practically necessitated the urgency of change in economic strategies towards the Third World and especially Africa's underdevelopment. Towards the end of the twentieth century (Stiglitz, 1998), broader development goals such as the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative (since 1996) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs, since 1999), were, therefore, introduced and promoted in many developing countries by World Bank and IMF as solutions to their underdevelopment.

Also, NEPAD though, the brainchild of some African leaders as a homegrown economic strategy, is based largely on the principles of neoliberalism because it is notable for strengthening the role of the Bretton Woods Institutions and World Trade Organization (WTO) in Africa as many scholars opined. Omotola and Saliu (2009) noted that Today, African leaders who claimed to have originated and owned the NEPAD framework would appear to have shown more confidence in the external component of the framework than in its domestic challenges with attendant negative implications for Africa's and even global commitment to NEPAD. The alleged solution to Africa's marginalization is posed in NEPAD as yet more globalization: more trade, finance and direct investment flows. At the same time, however, NEPAD's initial commitment to good governance (including empowerment of civil society) has been substantially watered down.

4.2. The Enhanced HIPC II

The Enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC II) initiative of 1999 is a revised version of the original HIPC of 1996 of the World Bank and IMF which represents a major international plank in the struggle for debt relief. The HIPC II initiative (Omotola and Saliu, 2009) offers debt relief to countries with good governance and a demonstrated commitment to fight corruption and poverty and to invest in health and education for their societies. The initiative involves 38 countries out of which 32 are in Africa. In June 2005, the Group of Eight (G8) gathering of the world's most developed economies, resolved, through their finance ministers, to grant total debt relief to 18 countries that had reached 'completion point', amounting to $40 billion and fourteen of them are in Africa.

According to Gautam (2003), the HIPC II has three key objectives: To ensure debt sustainability and provide a permanent exit from rescheduling. The initiative aims to decrease the obligations of debt services so that the county can increase its export incomes and transfers in the future. It eliminates the need for future rescheduling, defensive lending, and debt forgiveness. Secondly, the initiative seeks to ensure an increasing long-term growth rate by removing overhung debts. Finally, it seeks to reduce the poverty rate by freeing up resources and promoting social spending to reduce cash debt-service payments.

4.3. Positive Performance of HIPC II in Africa

There is no doubt that with the HIPC initiative, growth in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa improved substantially after the year 2000, resulting in increased public savings with an attendant rise in foreign reserves of many beneficiary countries. For instance, Grohe and Uribe (2020) demonstrated that African countries benefited from the debt relief package of the HIPC II and the resulting additional fiscal space allowed governments to increase public expenditures to boost economic growth. They have also benefited from the sustained increase in commodity prices in early 2000, driven, in part, by the high demand from China, and known as the commodity super cycle. This development they argued, has also evidently stabilized and raised investment in key sectors like retail, wholesale, telecommunication and manufacturing that accounted for a significant share of the growth increases in the 2000-20019 periods. In addition, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa experienced a wave of democratization from the 1990s to the early 21st century. This development had the effect of accelerating investment in infrastructure and pro-poor policies.

HIPC II has also been credited with contributing to sustainable growth in Africa's economy in terms of purchasing power parity. Based on statistics, according to World Bank (2016) concerning constant 2011PPP (purchasing power parity) international dollars per capita GDP increased from $2,303 in 1995 to $3,440 in 2016 while UNDP (2019) reveals that progress in human development, which stagnated in the early 1990s, has accelerated, with the Human Development Index (HDI) increasing from 0.411 to 0.541 between 1995 and 2018, now placing Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole in the medium-human development regime. Additionally, Fosu and Mwabu (2010) noted about human development measures, that a more substantial improvement has been recorded in average welfare conditions in SSA than would be apparent from simply referring to per capita income growth, with the health and education components of the HDI rising even faster than income.

4.4. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a strategic framework setting out a 'vision for Africa's renewal'. NEPAD, formerly known as the New African Initiative (NAI), is a consolidation of two proposals – the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP), which had its driving force in Presidents Mbeki of South Africa, Bouteflika of Algeria and Obasanjo of Nigeria, and the OMEGA plan for Africa, which was conceived and sponsored by President Wade of Senegal (Jinadu, 2008) It also draws on the Compact for African Recovery: Operationalizing the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme, which was prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa following a request emanating from the African Ministers of Finance Conference held in Addis Ababa in November 2000 (UNECA, 2001; Ezekiel, 2004).

NEPAD was adopted in 2001 by the OAU 37th summit and ratified by the AU in 2002 as the primary mechanism to coordinate the pace and impact of Africa's development in the 21st century (AU, 2016) According to Nyong'o (2002), the NEPAD policy is viewed as Africa's Marshall Plan intended to inject massive financial resources into Africa's development while reforming it politically and economically to be accommodated into the global world market not as a dependent but as a partner.

4.5. Key Objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

Broadly, NEPAD seeks to promote and sustain social and economic development in Africa while also facilitating the adoption of policies that are in line with global best practices. The primary objectives of NEPAD include:

i. Eradicating poverty in African states
ii. Promotion of sustainable growth and development
iii. Integration of Africa into the global economy as a strategic partner
iv. Acceleration of the empowerment of women

To achieve these set goals, NEPAD facilitates and coordinates the development of continent-wide programmes and projects, mobilizes resources and engages the global community, regional economic communities (RECs) and member states in the implementation of these programmes and projects. It is important to highlight some of the recordable achievements of NEPAD briefly.

4.6. Achievements of NEPAD

Since the inception of NEPAD, there have been some encouraging and significant results recorded in several member states across the continent. Some sketch of these achievements as provided by NEPAD (Nwakanma, 2016) is as follows:

- An opportunity has been created for African countries to review each other's governance and hold each other to account
- Improved allocation of 10 percent of national budgets to agriculture as is required by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).
- Funding of close to 100 primary and secondary schools in Uganda, Lesotho, Ghana, Rwanda, Senegal, Nigeria and Kenya among others.
- Allocation of $1.5 million to train nurses and midwives to post-graduate level.
- Over 300 African students have received high-level education in mathematical sciences through the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences, which is supported by African Universities in collaboration with the likes of Cambridge and Oxford
- Reduction of a huge number of counterfeit medicines on the continent
- Conducting research into herbal remedies to treat HIV/AIDS through the African Bioscience Initiative.
- Hundreds of thousands of women have benefitted from 20 million Euros, disbursed to empower women in knowledge development, education, and access to HIV/AIDS prevention or ICT skills through the NEPAD Spanish Fund
- Provides a forum to discuss how regional integration, trade and infrastructure can be harmonized and improved through initiatives such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa; PAN

Further to the above successes, appreciable progress has also been made in the political systems of many African countries as more countries have transited from military and other forms of authoritarian regimes to democracy. In the area of democracy and good governance, for instance, there is a strong indication that the NEPAD framework is yielding some dividends. Democratic transitions and competitive politics are gradually taking root in Africa. Already, many countries, such as Ghana, Kenya, Mali and Zambia, Benin, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa and the Gambia have had democratic changes in governments and experienced transfers of powers and even defeat of sitting presidents in Nigeria (2015), Ghana (2016) and Gambia also in 2016.

Also in the areas of conflict resolution and conflict prevention, the AU through NEPAD has made progress in African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan.

African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is another dimension where NEPAD's role in Africa's development is also acknowledged. APRM has received international acclaim as an unprecedented initiative for Africa's development. Asides from encouraging member states to identify their inadequacies through a self-administered internal assessment, it ensures the preparation of a programme of action (PoA) for addressing the identified challenges (Stals, 2005; Jinadu, 2008)

4.7. Failures of HIPC II and NEPAD in Africa's Development

Like other Western-oriented development initiatives for Africa, HIPC II and NEPAD have also come under heavy criticism for several obvious shortcomings, perceived to have undermined and hampered their ostensible plans for Arica. Experience of the last two decades, have no doubt, demonstrated that neoliberal policies have further thrown African countries, especially sub-Sahara into a state of economic confusion with frequent depressions and recessions which have defied all known western development strategies prescribed by IMF and World Bank.

Despite some modest achievements of these notable policies in Africa, several scholars believe they are more of a hindrance than a help to Africa's economic and political development.

4.7.1. HIPC II and the Cycle of Poverty in Africa

One of the obvious failures of HIPC (Esterly, 1999; Thomas, 2001) is that debt relief is too small and tied to conditionality that is onerous and misguided. Given poor countries' often troubled colonial and post-colonial histories, ethnic fragmentations, high burden of tropical disease, dependence on primary commodities with declining and unstable prices and often small size, debt relief and other forms of aid have been far from adequate to allow them to escape poverty and put them onto a growth path. In the same vein, Nwanchukwu (2008) observed that HIPC II debt relief's impact was only marginal and that the beneficiary countries would not be able to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Evrensel (2002) further notes that programme countries tended to enter a new programme in a worse macroeconomic condition than they entered the previous programme, this is because the non-HIPC countries were in stronger positions than HIPC countries, and HIPC qualification did not strengthen the capacity of its beneficiary to graduate from excessive dependence on development assistance.

It is also contended that although World Bank and MacArthur from the IMF (1999) argue that HIPC is a social and effective instrument to provide a way out of the debt trap for poor countries, rather than being an effective instrument for debt relief in favour of poor countries, the indicators have been strategic for creditor countries to realize their objectives.

Moreover, it is observed that the structural adjustment and other economic policies pushed by official creditors have been inappropriate for such countries thereby making matters worse rather than better for the elites while burdening the poor population (IIE, http://www.ii.com)

47.2. The failures of NEPAD

Despite its brilliant ideas and unique schema for development in Africa, the NEPAD initiative has been criticized for many of its shortcomings that are adduced to have impeded its plans for Africa. For instance, first, NEPAD has been opposed by anti-globalization groups such as the labour unions, rights activists, and civil society groups for its ideological rationale. These groups have expressed dissatisfaction over the NEPADs aim of integrating Africa into the global economy, and the role of G8, OECD, IMF and the World Bank in the project, as it is believed that the participation of these institutions will infect negatively the development plan for Africa (Bostan, 2011).

Moreover, it has been noticeable that IMF itself eventually admitted that it made serious mistakes in promoting trade liberalization in developing countries. An internal evaluation of adjustment policies in 2009 concluded that the reliance on neoliberal policies by Africa led to the gradual erosion of African autonomy in the public policy decision processes. This trend has afflicted hardship in developing countries, especially those in Africa. It can be argued, therefore, that the conditions attached to Western aid to Africa are partly responsible for the continent's debt problems

A critical dimension of the failures of NEPAD in Africa's quest for development resides in the obvious weakness of the African Peer Review Mechanism in ensuring good governance and eradication of corruption and injustice in African states, especially in the face of ever-growing cases of misappropriation of public funds and embezzlements rocking government in African countries. In Addition, participation in the peer review process is voluntary: hence several states that feel; uncomfortable with the process may choose not to submit to APRM while those who accede to the review face the challenge of poor monitoring and evaluation of the Program of Reform (PoA) implementation. To buttress this point, Nwankwu asserted that NEPAD Nigeria lacks specific policies and strategies to monitor and achieve its objectives. He further emphasized that NEPAD did not impact positively the critical sectors of education and health (Alli, 2013)

Another major challenge of NEPAD is to be found in the idea embedded in the initiative which requires that Africa needs to secure more aids and credits to advance development while at the same time stressing that the "bulk" of the continent's capital needs up to the year 2015 will have to come from outside Africa. This contradiction according to Ayittey (2005) stems from an aid dependency trap African leaders seem incapable of breaking out of $64 billion in investment NEPAD brought from the West reflected the same old aid dependency syndrome.

Perhaps, it is also important to stress that, in terms of industrial development, it has been argued, quite plausibly, that NEPAD has yet to make a meaningful impact in Africa. In the case of Nigeria, for instance, Amobi (Cited in Wakanma, 2016) insisted that NEPAD has failed to impact positively on the nation's economy, particularly in the development of industries and infrastructures as well as in security. He further stressed that since the establishment of NEPAD, Nigeria as one of the five founding member countries of the initiative and also one of its key financial contributors, has participated in NEPAD without commensurate benefits to its economy.

5. Conclusion

This paper has interrogated the trends of neoliberal policies and the dilemma of Africa's economic and political development in the 21st century with a focus, especially on the HIPC II and NEPAD. It can be concluded from the above analysis that both policies do not, in reality, lead to the economic liberation of Africa rather, as neoliberal-oriented policies. The dependency school postulated that it has intensified and perpetuated the peripheral and subordinate position in which Africa stands to the industrialized capitalist countries or centre in the contemporary world economic and political order. Across majority of the African countries in 2023, it is obvious that the form of industrialization promoted by the West is one in which the advanced sectors of production, typically foreign-owned, are disconnected from the other sectors, and make no real positive contributions to their development.

There is no gainsaying that the wide and diverse issues of rising poverty, unemployment, infrastructural decay, declining living standards, health, ever-widening inequality between the rich and the poor, security and a host of other critical development challenges have become much more salient to citizens in everyday politics than the issue of democratic survival. This trend has been reechoed by Anderson (2015) that the exploitative and discriminatory policies of neoliberalism make the developing states more deteriorated. Methodically, it has left four major global problems concerning humanity at large in the 21st century. These are global security issues (terrorism and nuclear proliferation), global environmental issues (climate change and global warming): global socioeconomic issues (Global inequality, poverty, migration and refugee problems) and global cultural issues (Cultural imperialism and cultural (civilization) clash and identity conflicts. For Africa to tackle development challenges, there is a need for more credible, effective and inclusive strategies mixed with committed and patriotic leadership that ensures robust implementation of truly people's centered policies. Deliberate effort must also be made by African states to ensure greater efficiency in the utilization of available human and material resources, whether external or internal, in a manner that reduces the continent's overreliance on advanced capitalist countries for assistance.

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