

REBRANDING: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

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Abstract

The development of a country is primarily the development of the human person. The human person needs to develop physically, materially, socially, spiritually, morally, technologically, etc. However, this has been a perennial problem to the African and Africa in general as they are regarded as third world countries. Many scholars have proposed various models to be adopted. For instance, Nyerere calls it “Ujaama”, Nze says it is “Communalism” while Wiredu proposes “Science and Technology” in its extreme. But to what extent have these models brought development to the continent of Africa? Besides, what is the concern of the African in the development of Africa? It is on this note that the paper takes a critical and a systematic study of the African and development while bearing in mind the place of the African union. The paper concludes that the African society is in dire need of development and that this development must start from the individual- the African. This stems from the fact that it is the individual (the African) that constitutes the society (Africa). Consequently, the paper proposes “rebranding” of the individual in all dimensions of development as a model. When this is achieved, development is sure.

Keywords: Philosophy, Africa, Development, African Union, Rebranding.

Introduction

Over the years, Africa as a continent has continued to face attacks from the western world because of lack of development she has faced. She is seen as a secondly class categorized continent whose inhabitants are not worthy to be called humans. This attacks ranges from the physical, material, social, spiritual, moral and technological state of Africa. Although in time past, African philosophers and scholars have risen to defend the African people in their diverse ways while some have tried to proffer solutions to the perceived snail-like nature of Africa as it concerns national development. These ideologies have been said to attain some level of understandings among the African people but the needful have not been achieved. Development is a pragmatic character used in identifying the level of increase, advancement and ease experienced by members of a society. It is no joke that the African continent is in dire need of development even the African Union (AU) has failed

in its task of ensuring or advocating for development within Africa. This essay therefore would try to identify rebranding as way towards national development in Africa which entails how the individual (African) can be the solution to African development which can be achieved and sustained, because this has been the quest of many Africa people.

Africa in the face of development

Africa is one of the continents of the world; diverse in nature with over 3,000 different ethnic groups, comprising of 54 countries and approximately over 2,000 languages spoken. The individuals existing as originally indigenes of Africa are referred to as 'Africans'. Everything that exists in the universe is expected to experience change, because change is constant and also a character of existence. These changes differ in nature, structure and context, since it can be for the good or the bad. When it is for the bad, then there is retrogression and when it is for advancement and towards the good it is called development. The society is a society because there are social beings existing and activities going on in it; this is why without the presence of social beings or activities; a place cannot be called a society. Development therefore becomes the element sort after in every society. Although, no society can be said to be perfectly developed but rather developing, but that does not give room for underdevelopment or retrogression.

The word 'Development' is a vocabulary which connotes every aspect of the human person and existence; this is because the term has been used in several ways. In the words of Todaro and Smith, “development is a multidimensional process concerned with major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty.”¹ This depicts development as not subjected to economic phenomenon but a synergic process which aims at reorientation, restructuring and reorganization of the quality of all human lives in the society; because the society exists for the people. Amartya Sen argues that “all individuals have different capabilities that they are gifted with; the concern now is coming to a realization of these capabilities that will bring about freedom.”² As such one needs to be free from poor health, illiteracy, malnutrition etc as the ability to experience freedom therefore becomes development. By and large, development connotes improvement in the quality of human living which is social, political, environmental, and economic among a host of others.

Africa from history has always been associated with setbacks and retrogression when it comes to national or regional development. The African Capacity Building Foundation posits that;

Africa's development as a contact for the past two decades hits on the need for more efforts to tackle some developmental challenges in the continent like: mismanagement, successive ineffective policies, huge external debt burden, bad governance and conflicts precipitated economic decline.³

¹M. P. Todaro and S. C. Smith. *Economic Development* (11th ed.). Boston: Pearson Publication, 2012, 16.

²A. Sen. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999,

³The African Capacity Building Foundation. *Africa: Major Development Challenges and their Capacity Building Dimensions*. Harare: Intermarket Life Towers, 2002, 3.

In the real sense of it, Africa is in need of development; this is because Africa has remained largely underdeveloped even though she has huge natural resources like timber, bauxite, diamond, oil and cocoa⁴ African countries make up the majority of the heavily indebted and least developed countries of the world.⁵ African countries are regarded as underdeveloped not developed or developing countries; this is owing to the fact that African countries are backward when it comes to technological knowhow, materials efficiency and a robust economic standard of living. This is but a pitiable truth which many African have come to realize. Although some individuals still argue or play blind to this evident African situation but the indices are visible for all to see.

However, many western scholars have reduced the African continent and its people to a space inhabitant by lower animals; thereby insinuating that Africa and Africans are of no use and should probably not be existing. Some western nations, acknowledge the existence of these African countries but then they reduce their mental capacities and subject their usefulness to slavery. This therefore becomes the center for which western nations wish to always colonize and dominate the African countries. This becomes a truism in the way African countries are addressed by foreign countries in the Western domain. One of the phrases used both in the academic and general sense to address African countries is that they are “Third World countries”. This is buttressed in the word of Oduwole who posits that;

The term 'third world' refers to the concept of political non-alignment with either the capitalist or communist bloc. ...This became a broad definition provided to categorize the nations of the earth into three groups based on social, political and economic divisions. ...Coincidentally, the 'third worlds' are also considered underdeveloped because of the low level of technological development, low gross national product (GNP), lack of industrialization and per capita income-which is the most common view of what constitutes development. It is assumed that in all that a developing nation does, it must catch up with the industrialized West⁶

African countries in this case are the perfect examples in this context, as there is a great lack in the social, political and economic standard. To this end the concerns of Africa in the face of African development is one that has kept tongues wagging as African as been long overdue to have surmounted these inadequacies and deficiencies which still hold her bondage in the course of national development.

Renowned African Scholars' Perspectives

Over the years, due to the debilitating picture given to the Africa from the western world some African scholars have looked into the pathetic African situation on matters that border on development in the continent, and have proposed models/ideologies which they felt would help the African continent achieve the standard required for national

⁴K. K. Senanu. “Development and Underdevelopment of African Continent: The Blame Game and the Way Forward” Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol.4, No.7, 2014, 14.

⁵World Bank Data: <http://data.worldbank.org/income-level/HPC> accessed on 5th July, 2023.

⁶E. O. Oduwole. “The Question of Development in Africa: The Way Forward” Humanity and Social Sciences Journal 7 (2): 2012, 97.

development. What are the models these African scholars have proposed and how well has these ideologies of theirs helped the African continent in the strife to attain or achieve national development? Some of the scholars whose thoughts will be reviewed are: Julius Nyerere, ChukwuemekaNze and KwasiWiredu.

1. Julius Nyerere - “Ujaama”

Julius Nyerere is a respected African Tanzanian philosopher. His thought is one that was expected to address Tanzania and by extension Africa. Using the principles of Unity, equality and Freedom which were the fundamental element of a traditional Africa family, he intends to guide a modern African society. He called his socialist philosophy- “Ujamaa”. This is a thought which advocates for a synthesis of man and the society in order to overcome social injustice and inequalities and also as a way of projecting the African society as a model which is different from the western world.⁷ Nyerere asserts that;

In the individual, as in the society, it is an attitude of mind which distinguishes the socialist from the non-socialist. It has nothing to do with the possession or non-possession of wealth. Destitute people can be potential capitalists – exploiters of their fellow human beings. A millionaire can equally well be a socialist; he may value his wealth only because it can be used in the service of his fellow men. But the man who uses wealth for the purpose of dominating any of his fellows is a capitalist. So is the man who would if he could.⁸

The longing for the accumulation of wealth and ability to wield power has been the foundation to several social ills and this has led people to engaging in all sorts of evil activities; thereby forgetting about good will and care for others. Nyerere efforts in geared towards ensuring that there is a smooth wealth distribution and the need to care for one another. If the African family lives by these precepts of Nyerere, there would be advancement from the family to the society because the family makes up the society. Also the fact that “in our traditional African society we are individuals within a community; we took care of the community and the community took care of us, we neither needed nor wished to exploit our fellow men.”⁹

2. ChukwuemekaNze - “Communalism”

ChukwuemekaNze is a Nigerian born African Philosopher who believes so much in African Communalism as the salvific path to African development. For Nze, “African Communalism is the social way of living of the Africans which is foundation on the African belief that all humans' beings are strengthened and sustained by the traditional African religion which by its very nature, is not a microcosm.”¹⁰ This means that African communalism becomes the conviction of the African society as linked with the other members (living and dead), through complex network of spiritual relationships into a kind of spiritual or mystical body. Also, those yet unborn are members of the extended family. It upholds the recycling of the dead into the living members of the family through reincarnation.¹¹ Through this process, a strong bond is maintained between the living and

⁷J. Nyenyembe. *Fraternity in Christ: Building the Church as Family*. Nairobi: Pauline Press, 2004, 19.

⁸J. K. Nyerere. “Ujamaa-The Basis of African Socialism”, in *Freedom and Unity*, Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968, 162.

⁹J. K. Nyerere. *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*. Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968, 2.

¹⁰C. Nze. *Aspects of African Communalism*. Onitsha: Veritas Publishers, 1989, 56.

¹¹C. Nze. *Aspects of African Communalism*, 58.

the dead. For the Traditional African society, this bond of relationships reflects the fact that every individual is a brother or sister, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather and cousin to everybody else.¹² This simply means that everyone is linked to each other.

3. KwasiWiredu - “Science and Technology”

KwasiWiredu is a renowned Ghanaian African Philosopher who has contributed significantly to the development of African Philosophy. Having seen the nature of Africa's pathetic state, he feels science and technological advancement in Africa will lead to African national development because from them they have the ability to empower nations and also the realization that Africa's scientific and technological underdevelopment is proficient in the success of colonialism. As such, science and technology is necessary for survival and actions.¹³ Non-African heads have monopolized the process and this has hindered African development through the strategy of colonialism. As a way of achieving this fit, Wiredu advocates for education; not just any kind of education but one which propagates analytical, rational and scientific orientation. Wiredu asserts that, “an unanalytical, unscientific attitude of mind... the most basic and pervasive anachronism afflicting our society.”¹⁴ These aforementioned deficiencies therefore become the advantage of the western world against the African countries.

Furthermore, Wiredu suggests that, “starting from fairly early stages, our education needs to be given a considerable methodological component. Our children should be initiated early in life into the discipline of formal and informal logic and not into the methodology of rational thinking.”¹⁵ He (Wiredu) recognizes that achieving this required education will not be sudden, meaning it will not be achieved all at once; but would take processes and stages. It is expected to be a form of training that will bring about knowledge, not just of the hard sciences but with social sciences and philosophy thereby leading to rational, analytical and scientific changes in the mind and at the end be translated into the society.¹⁶ This interdisciplinary synergy of knowledge is necessary for a far better emancipation.

In summary, these aforementioned African scholars have given fair contributions which should help in achieving national development of the African society. ChukwuemekaNze saw African communalism as the solution to the challenges facing African development since everyone in the society is linked both the living and the dead. Julius Nyerere felt that if all community can be reduced or seen as another family which is expected to focus on the good of others rather than longing for power and wealth which is not necessary, Africa would develop. KwasiWiredu's intents are for Africa and the African people since it obviously projects a drive to attain progress and development for Africans. The education that is emphasized by Wiredu for the African people is good, but the question to ask is: are these first world nations not the same people to give the education or training? They obviously are. They would pose and give training/instructions that would sideline the

¹²C. Nze. Aspects of African Communalism, 59.

¹³K. Wiredu. Science, Technology and Human Values, presented at the International Philosophy Conference on 'Path to Human Flourishing: Philosophical Perspective; organized by the Korean Philosophical Association in Seoul, August 1992. Seoul: Published in the proceedings entitled: Paths to Human Flourishing, Korean Philosophical Association, 1993, 17.

¹⁴K. Wiredu. Philosophy and an African Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 15.

¹⁵K. Wiredu. Science, Technology and Human Values, 15.

¹⁶K. Wiredu. Science, Technology and Human Values, 22.

Africans and at the end of the day make Africans more enslaved. This will therefore pose a barrier to achieving the intentions of KwasiWiredu.

But to what extent has their thoughts developed the African society? It is sad to note that these ideologies have not produced much for the African countries as there is still a massive need for national development in the Africa society or community even in the 21st century. Succinctly put, nothing tangible has been realized, when it comes to African national development as Africans still face the dejection and humiliation hitched at them from the First world nations of the world. This becomes an indication that the case of Africa failure when it comes to national development is not just a mere problem, something more is needed.

Africa Union (AU) and African Development

In this present age and dispensation, there are several organizations and groups existing to bring about unity, development and peaceful co-existing within a country and between countries. The importance of these groups cannot be over-emphasized as they activities have been prevalent in several instances of serenity that the globe as and continues to enjoy. One of the most recognized organization which ought to share and promote the common interest of the Africa continent is the African Union (AU). The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states which are countries of the African continent. It was said to be launched in July 2002 at Durban, South Africa as a successor to the Organization of African Unity. The focal aim of this union is to unify the African countries, coordinate and strengthen co-operation for development, protection of territories and human rights, exterminating apartheid and colonization, recognizing the participation of Africans in Diaspora while encouraging women participation in socio-cultural, political and economic affairs among others.¹⁷

Taking the close look at the activities or sojourn of the African Union for over 20 years now, one can upon critical analysis posit that African Union (AU) have not achieved as was expected of them. In the affairs that concern many African countries it can be said that African Union has gone to sleep, it is now as if they have been pushed to the background. Rather than being proficient and efficient in discharging their duties we would rather her organizations like United Nations (UN) being the popular or most spoken of by Africans when matters about Africa arises. Yes, United Nations might have some similar aims and objectives to their members which some African countries are part of but that should not be guaranty or a reason to be relegated to the background.

The African Union is supposed to be at the forefront when matters of Africa arise. Many of these African countries have found faith in foreign or western oriented organization rather than the indigenous organizations. For instance, in the just concluded Nigeria General elections of the year 2023, there were several nuances in the electoral process which hindered the election from being transparent. Citizens began calling for the help and attention of foreign organizations United Nations, forgetting that their indigenous organization like the African Union should have been the first to cross their hearts. This

¹⁷About the African Union. <https://au.int/en/overview> accessed 5th July, 2023

can only be the case because these countries could have seen that the foreign organizations will be more beneficial to them than the indigenous. This now call for the need to interrogate into the competency of the African Union.

Today, Africa continues to face attacks from the western world because of the level she is when it comes to development, this is because many indigenous organizations like African Union has failed in their duties to the African People. From a subjective perspective, it can be perceived that African Union has only helped African nations accept more of the western ideologies rather than what their aims or objectives states; as such, African continues to remain imperialized and colonized by the western world. The African Union has become dependent on finance by external donors in an unhealthy way. Since its inception, the bulk of the African Union program's budgets are funded by donors such as China, the European Union, the United Nations, and the United States.”¹⁸ If the African Union now depends strongly in support from the same western world that has caused African slavery what then becomes the hope of the Africans. So to a large extent, African Union has failed to achieve the purpose for which it was created in the first place. Days by day African Union continues to give access to the western world to infiltrate the African space, so rather than causing for a development of the African continent it destabilizes it rather.

The African Union is to a large extent a mirror image of its members. It is a club of African states, and some of the bad governance practices in individual African states manifest themselves in the African Union. Public officials from the mis-managed African states have successful gotten top management positions within the African Union Commission, so they extended their bad governance and decision-making practices in their states.¹⁹

Majority of the vices complained to be responsible for destroying the African society can itself be observed in the African Union. How then can the African Union salvage the African Continent in the same thing it has not saved itself from? African Union needs to therefore have a rethink and create room where they would make a research of how they have benefited the African society vis-a-viz their failings. This will help them recognize their duties in the course for African development.

Rebranding: A panacea for African development

The presence of a problem is only indicative of the fact that there can be a solution. African development therefore has been an age problematic in the African continent, this does not mean that it cannot be tackled and solved. Although, many African scholars as previously seen have suggested ways in which this African development can be achieved. It is not to say that their suggestions were useless or ineffective but that it did not achieve the desired result. As their thoughts only ended of making these scholars to be recognized by the African societies while the problem intended to be solved still lingers. Many African countries have tried to imitate the western world without paying attention to the nature of their kind and this has greatly affected them as it did not produce anything

¹⁸T. K. Tiekü. “The African Union: Successes and Failures” Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics, Mar 2019, 17.

¹⁹T. K. Tiekü. “The African Union: Successes and Failures” 16.

substantial but rather dumped them into more problems than they had earlier. This is buttressed in the words of Sow who said:

Past experiences have shown us that countries that copy other countries' economic policies without adjusting them to meet their own unique characteristics tend to fail; we have seen that in Africa. Countries that have succeeded in developing their economies in the last few decades had to find their own way to do so; as we see in Japan, in the four Asian Tigers (Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong), China and India.²⁰

However, haven't take a critical look into the diverse and complex nature of the African society, "rebranding" will be the model to be adopted to achieve national development in Africa. The word "Rebranding" can mean many things to many people but in this case, it is concerned with creating a new look for the African individual. This is because the individual (the African) constitutes the society (Africa). Development is something that begins first in the mind of the individual. An average African has a wrong notion of himself and this mentality will definitely affect everything he does. Before there can be a development in Africa the development must begin first in the hearts of the Africans. This has been the major reason for the failings and inability of scholarly African thoughts to thrive and produce something substantial in the African milieu.

How or what does the individual (African) think about himself? This is a pertinent concern that needs to be addressed. The way the African thinks about himself will influence his activities in the African society he finds himself. If he sees himself as a second class human being and while seeing someone from the western world as the main human being; such a person has been shortchanged in his thinking, he is always swimming in an ocean of inferiority complex. This way he will never see him/herself as capable of doing anything when the western world is present. As such would always be content with second place. If the individual understands that he is an African and unique in himself, a human being who is not deficient but capable like every other human being. He would appreciate his personality and identity then while improving on himself translate this improvement on his society (Africa).

Many have said in time past that the way an Individual (African) sees himself has nothing to do with the state of the society (Africa), but this is not the truth. Those who are in the helm of affairs in the African society are African but why have they not seen the need for development of their milieu as should be the case? Why are they at the beck and call of the western world? This is because they have not come to a full recognition of themselves. Hence, they have nothing to appreciate about themselves. For instance, a pig's mentality is that it is synonymous everything that is dirty, this is why it will continue to aim at a dirty space or thing. And if this cannot be found, the pig turns its environment into what is in his head. Even if the pig is worn the most expensive dress, it makes no sense to the pig; as its interest is just on that which is dirty. In the same vein, unless the individual recognizes that he is African while identifying the beauty in him/herself as Africans, Africa will still suffer.

²⁰I. Sow. Factors Affecting Developing Planning in Africa: The Need for Eloquent Planning in Africa: The Need for Local Input. New York: City University of New York, 2015, 5.

Furthermore, rebranding simply is being referred to or described as something new or different from the initial times. It is no fallacy that other continents of the world have severally looked down on the African continent hence the need for the Africans to redefine themselves by engaging in rebranding. At a glance, a conscious effort needs to be made by the individual (African) to change how others see him. There will be need to define who an African is, ensure a coherent narrative of the African and Africa and then demonstrate the accomplishments thus far. According to Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English, development "it is the gradual growth of something so that it becomes bigger or more advanced."²¹ This shows that development from this perspective centers on progressiveness and advancement rather than being static; because when a nation is found to be developing then progress is taking place. This rebranding will become a new selling point for the African continent. As when the individual (African) begins to think in the right way, no one needs to tell him or her to be accountable and not mismanage funds, knowing fully-well that the funds are for the Africans. No one would need to tell contractor to do a good job because he would be aware that it is for the good of the Africa. No one needs to tell the aspirants for political offices to be truthful and ready to serve because they would recognize that they only seek for an opportunity to improve and better the lives of the African people which they are one of. The African man just like any other man is complex in nature so this rebranding will definitely positively influence his complex nature and therefore bring out the best in him (African) and by extension the society (Africa). This way many vices and wrong orientations which has affected Africa will be destroyed and the true spirit of Africa can be lived.

Education is the cradle for whatever change one intends to achieve in the society. So once this rebranding is introduced through implementing African teaching as fundamental to the curriculum of students, it will help them grow with the right frame of mind and give them needed audacity that would guide them in all of their affairs towards African development. History is no longer or gradually fading off in primary and secondary schools' curriculum but recognition of western culture and history is displayed in the most emphasized subjects our courses. The African child will think and acts like an African exhibiting the uniqueness in Africans. In the sciences, students are forced to know Micheal Faraday, Isaac Newton and the likes in their subjects while they know nothing about Africans who have also invented things. In the Arts, students are made to believe that academics or studies began with the western world (Greeks) while the true origin of academics which can be traced to the ancient Egyptian system is left aside which is purely African. A place where western scholars came in years past to learn what they now claim to be originally theirs. The curriculum is structured in a way that everything is in favour of the western world and perspective. Majority of the subjects or concerns in African societies only teach and project the western world culture, successes and worst of all the ways in which the western world have reduced the Africa continent to shambles; thereby making it look like Africa as a continent needs the western world to survive.

²¹Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995, 374.

From the angle of clothing's, Africans have been to abandon their dress as second class and exalt theirs (western) as the idle and this plays out in the dresses people wear to work and other activities. The uniform students wear to school was designed using the western concept what more has the western world not done to the Africans. It is important to note that Africa is not in competition with any continent of the world, infact one can dare to say that Africa is more blessed in resources than any other continent of the world. These western continents and nations understand this that is why they are always seeking for ways to penetrate and control Africa because that is the only way for them to enjoy from the resources the Africa has a continent. Development has we have seen covers so many aspects of human endeavour, so if African development must be achieved then this rebranding must be sort for every area of the African affairs. But once the African individual is rebranded in all dimensions of development, it will be translated into the African society.

Conclusion

Finally, this piece has interrogated into the state of the African continent and identified that Africa is in dire need of National development as failure to have achieved this has caused Africa a lot of setbacks in the face of the world. Although some African scholars have tried to proffer solutions which they feel will remedy the situation but the facts remain that these models they suggested have not achieved the required result. Even the African Union (AU) which is supposed to be at the forefront in whatever concern Africa and in the course to achieve national development have ended up presenting Africa as a prey before the western world and this has made Africans lose hope in the organization. This therefore poses the need to propose “rebranding” of the African individual in all dimensions of development as the model and solution for national development in Africa; since the individual makes the society. A rebranded African individual will produce a developed and developing Africa.

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