It’s Time for Some New Light on the Dark Continent

The last time I looked, Africa was not doing all that well. The world’s second-biggest continent is no better off than it was under European colonial rule. Some places are worse off, as the number of desperately poor in sub-Saharan Africa continues to rise. Meanwhile, the same outside forces act as pirates to steal the legacy of 1.2 billion people. And despite all the rumors and propaganda, Russia and China are not the swashbuckling opportunists stealing Africans’ heritage, health, and happiness. Let’s take a look at who is.

Time for some interesting and pertinent facts about the so-called “Dark Continent.” Most people are unaware that at the height of the European colonial occupation of Africa, the average European worker earned about three times what their African contemporaries did. Today, Europeans bring home twenty times more than the average African worker. Stunning, isn’t it? But it gets worse.

According to the UN Human Development Index, Africa has greater inequality than any other region of our world. Despite independence and alleged democratic reforms, infant mortality is still staggering, life expectancy dismal, and education still lags. What’s more, we do not even calculate the level of African poverty accurately. The World Bank and other organizations have failed to create economic methodologies to filter how Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) measure true poverty. Just because GDP goes up, this does not mean the poor are elevated.
In the book 'The History of African Development,' a chapter written by Mark Nyandoro and Tinotenda Dube describes the growth of poverty on the continent since most nations gained independence in the early 1960s. This chapter also covers poverty factors like population growth, but it also keys on the unusual wealth distribution that has plagued African peoples for centuries. The short take here being, European rule was replaced by local tyranny. And, the tyrants are still primarily controlled by imperialists who pull the levers.

The authors of this chapter of the book also tell us that half of the world’s desperately poor now live in Africa. Nyandoro and Dube also bring to the forefront terms most people have either never heard of. One such word, official development assistance (or ODA), covers “aid” given to African countries. This aid, which is supposed to help alleviate poverty, war, and the pain Africans feel every day, has another purpose I shall get into in a moment. Right now, it’s essential to know that the United States, the European Union, World Bank, the UK, Germany, France, and Japan dominate the giving of this “aid” to help African rise out of the cellar of prosperity. Most of this aid is given bilaterally, which means directly from the United States, for instance, to places like Morocco or Mauritania. Currently, African nations receive about a third of all American aid distributed around the world.

If you research the subject of African poverty before and since the European colonial period, you’ll find hundreds of scholarly papers to describe, slice, dice, and categorize what and how much poverty there is in Africa. You will not easily find the striking truth of the matter. Nothing has changed for the people of the Dark Continent. They are, as always; still a shadowy subject purposefully obscured by those who would enslave them in the chains of hunger, hopelessness, and economic stagnation. You may, however, isolated the neo-colonial forces still at work there. Take the following bullet point from a report by the American International Journal of Social Science in 2014. At the top of the list of causes for Africa’s ongoing poverty crisis is the lever the United States and other nations depend on to continue the piracy. “The lack of capacity of the poor to influence social processes, public policy choices, and resource allocations” is the top reason Africa is so poor still. The paper goes on to examine just about every “philosophy” there is about how poverty is perpetuated, but in the end, it’s all hogwash.

Poverty is not transferred to children, as anthropologist Oscar Lewis wrote in 1961. African poverty is not the result of some economic structural flaw. Africa’s human catastrophe is not caused by what Massey and Denton (1993) argue is institutional racism. Education won’t cure poverty. Massive damn projects, nuclear plants, Nike shoe factories, or the discovery of a trillion cubic feet of natural gas won’t either. Interestingly, the last paragraph of the previous 2014 paper gives us a clue as to who is forestalling African happiness.

“The loans given out by the World Bank and IMF have also contributed to the poverty in Africa. Such loans come with strict conditionalities, which usually require governments to adjust some of their economic decisions. For instance, the requirement to reduce total government spending in African countries has affected major social sectors such as education, health, and infrastructure, which are drivers of economic development.”

So, the question arises. “Who is keeping Africans down, and why?” You have your answer, and it’s not China or Russia. Poverty in Europe and Central Asia was essentially eradicated by 2004. North American poverty has long since been obscured by the wealth of the elites and the upper-middle class. The Middle East and North Africa, and even Latin America have almost no poor compared to Africa and South Asia. Let’s round this report up with a few famous names in

The reader will be as surprised as I was to discover that most of the real wealth ownership in Africa is centered in Johannesburg, South Africa. One of the few exceptions is Steinhoff International, which is the second-largest company in Africa. German billionaire Bruno Steinhoff more or less owns the German, Dutch, South African holding company. Some readers may remember the $7.4 billion accounting fraud pinned to Steinhoff International, where the accounting shenanigans nearly wiped out investor funds. But to continue...

The list of the top 100 companies in all of Africa is made up of former European imperialist outfits like Anglo Gold Ashanti, which is in turn owned by Anglo American plc (AAC also owns platinum, iron ore, and a lot more across the continent) the British listed multinational mining company with headquarters in London. AAC, which was founded by German immigrant Sir Ernest Oppenheimer with funding from J.P. Morgan & Co. back in 2017. AAC also held primary ownership of De Beers. There’s no need to delve into the practices or history of this pack of privateers.

Dangote Group is a Nigerian multinational industrial conglomerate, founded by Africa’s richest man, billionaire Aliko Dangote. Always at the top of the Forbes list of African billionaires, Dangote has been called “the most fraudulent, vicious and biggest economic saboteurs of the Nigerian economy.” Dangote, who has leveraged the Nigerian
government like an African Vito Corleone from Godfather fame, is in up to his neck with American industrialists bent on profiting from Nigerian suffering. I have this to show the money trail leading from Washington to Lagos:

“The US Chamber of Commerce, in a show of further commitment to collaboration by the business communities in the United States and across Africa, today named Aliko Dangote, Africa’s most successful businessman, as the co-chair of its US-Africa Business Center.”

Other billionaires reign supreme on the backs of Africans. For instance, Johann Rupert, who cut his privateer teeth working with Chase Manhattan, and for Lazard Freres, now chairman of the Swiss-based luxury-goods company Richemont, and the South Africa-based company Remgro. Joining Rupert are Marius Kloppers, the former head of BHP Billiton, the world's largest mining company; and Brian Joffe, founder and former CEO of the Bidvest Group of conglomerates. With the focus on South Africa, we find the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, the US, Japan, and Germany as the biggest outside investors there. China is seventh by volume, and Russia is not even in the top 15.

Overall, FDI to Africa comes primarily from the United State, France, the UK, China, and South Africa, in this order. Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe received the lion's share of FDI in 2018. Looking at Official Development Assistance (ODA) historically, we see a direct correspondence in flows from the US, the UK, Germany, and the others with FDI flows. What this means is that public funds, or taxpayer dollars, euros, and yen, are upping the ante for the western elites to reap benefits from Africa as before, during the time of old imperialism.

So, there you have it, the long way around the barn for telling “who is” pirating the future of every African. It’s the same people who started enslaving the continent Stanley and Livingston explored. And unfortunately, the end beneficiaries are the rich countries where poverty is no longer a big problem.

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