Foreign Aid Is the Cure That Kills In Africa: The Historical Realities

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Abstract

The paper examined the flipside of foreign aid in Africa. The flipside here denotes the aftermath-effect of foreign aid to African countries. Our argument in this work is that foreign aid does harm than good to developing countries. Foreign aid is not an effective tool for growth and development. Additionally, it is argued that it creates dependency, keeps authoritarian governments in power and encourages corruption. Aid has been a disaster for Africa. The notion that aid brings growth is a "myth" as aid has been and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic and humanitarian disaster" for most developing countries. By contrary to the notion that aid encourages investment, aid chokes off investment, encourages dependency and facilitates corruption, this cycle perpetuates underdevelopment and guarantees economic failure in poor regions. According to research, the huge cost of armed conflict in Africa between the period 1990-2005 is estimated to be more than $300 billion as a result of aid. Aid should be a rewarding element to African countries because, most of the reasons lying under the underdevelopment of Africa is attributed to bad governance and mismanagement of resources than lack of it (resource). The paper adopted the qualitative method and as such sourced its data from existing literatures in books, journals, articles, etc. The study adopted the dependency theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. The study findings revealed that foreign aid is not an effective tool for growth and development. Additionally, it is argued that it creates

dependency, keeps authoritarian governments in power and encourages corruption. The study therefore recommended that African governments should place more emphasis on technology development in an effort to widen, deepen and strengthen the manufacturing sector and human capacity development. Also, foreign aid/loans should be taken when seriously and genuinely needed and must be used to fund projects/programmes that facilitate economic growth and development that will engender national prosperity.

Introdution

African governments have made commitments to implement national development strategies that incorporate MDGs based on domestic resource mobilization and support from the international development community.

The growing gap between the developed and developing countries has dominated international relations and diplomacy for a long time. This gap has led to constant capital inflow from the developed countries to those in the Third World including Africa, with the goal of helping them overcome their problems and reduce the gap. However, there is evidence that decades of foreign aid have done little in changing the destinies of many African states, most of which are currently experiencing low growth rates. This suggests to some extent that there is more to the African problem than just sending money there as this is not likely to turn things around. Estimates suggest the West has spent about $600 billion on foreign aid to Africa so far (Akonor, 2008). Yet underdevelopment is widespread, while at same time some states are considered to have collapsed (eg. Somalia).

Development aid is a phenomenon of the post-war period. As such, it has grown considerably and given rise to a number of institutions, bilateral as well as multilateral, solely employed in delivering aid to poor and developing countries. Aid has traditionally been seen as something temporary, something that can only complement existing national resources and efforts. After almost forty years in existence, aid has become something permanent. Furthermore, in some countries, aid has become a considerable force in the national economy, making those countries more or less completely dependent on it. During the last five to ten years, aid has been the subject of heated debate. This debate has not only dealt with isolated features of aid, but has touched on the fundamental justification for aid.

It is our contention in this paper that aid is disadvantageous to Nigeria and by extension, Africa.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Foreign Aid

Aid is used to represent financial transactions made or guaranteed by one government to another. Indeed, foreign aid has become a major issue and instrument of foreign policy by advanced economies to strengthen their economic ties with the developing countries. Aid according to Ajayi (2000), is a form of assistance by a government or financial institution to other needy countries, which could be in cash or kind.

The establishment of aid was one of the principles of Breton Wood system in 1914. The system believes that there should be a free capital market which allows for an unrestricted inflow of foreign aid. Based on this thinking, a Marshal Aid Assistance of about S17.5 billion was granted to European countries to resuscitate their ruined economies due to Second World War. Since then, foreign aid has remained a veritable economic phenomenon of the international economic system (Todaro, 1977). Foreign Aid according to Todaro and Smith is the international transfer of public funds in the form of loans or grants either directly from one government to another (bilateral assistance) or indirectly through the vehicle of a multilateral assistant agency such as World bank. Economist have defined Foreign aid, therefore, as any capital flow to a developing country that meets two criteria: (1) Its objectives should be noncommercial from the point of view of the donor, and (2) Its should be characterized by non-concessional terms; that is, the interest rate and repayment period for borrowed capital should be softer (less stringent) than commercial terms.

Foreign aid is very important for the acceleration of economic development. Foreign aid can be used by the recipient country in accordance with its development programmes. Foreign aid can also be in the form of economic assistance like:

- Investment in the economy of the needy country,
- Loan,

• Infrastructural development,

Foreign Aid can also come in form of military assistance such as:

• Supply of military hardware at subsidized rates,
• Military agreements, bilateral or multi-lateral, loose or solid or in defence pact,
• Supply of military technical assistance such as military presence to a country in conflict or war with another,
• Military subversions, coup, assassinations, etc.

The conceptualizations of aid above clearly depict that aid is not the same thing as loan. While aid is more comprehensive and encompassing, loan is embedded in aid. Loan is money or other valuable item that an organization, individual or a country lends out usually with interest. Foreign aid is succinctly divided into three broad categories namely: Bilateral, multilateral and private (Todaro, 2010). Bilateral foreign aid is a financial outflow from one country to another, that is, it involves capital outflow between two countries. It accounts for more than 60% of aid to developing countries. Bilateral aid can be in four forms: Development loan which is usually repayable within long term duration; Technological assistance involving the technological and managerial know how and transfer technology for substitution. For instance, the Nigerian Technical Aid Scheme (Technical Aid Corps) which Nigerians Professionals are sent to needy country. The fourth one is military cooperation between a powerful nation and a relatively weak one. Armament and training of military personnel as well as supply of military hardware at subsidized rates are usually major components of such aid pact. Grant, which is the least, is used by wealthy countries like USA, Canada, Switzerland, Swiss, etc to give aid to less fortunate countries to carry out specific programmes usually for infrastructural and social service development. The donor countries often supervise the implementation of such projects and programmes in order to ensure accountability and compliance with set standards. Multilateral aid in the other hand is seen as capital outflow international financial bodies rather than from government to government. It accounts for about 40 % of the global aid assistance to developing countries. Private capital outflow covers; according to Todaro (1977) all direct investment input credits and portfolio investment by trans-national corporations and commercial banks. Private foreign capital outflow to the developing world grew tremendously from S4.6 in the 1980s by declined through the late 1980s to the 1990 input outflow due to endemic

political instability occasioned in Africa, for instance by the political turmoil and civil wars which invariably triggered capital flight.

Multilateral aid is preferred to bilateral aid. The latter is more often than not, tied to specific conditions, which invariably result in dependent relationship by the receiving country. However, multilateral aid may not be either in terms of meeting certain conditions of those recipient countries. For example, the IMF and World Bank have very stiff conditions those borrower countries must satisfy to be able to enjoy their credit facilities. The conditions which are, more often than not, stiff and uncompromising in nature include, privatization, devaluation of national currency, democratization, liberalization, etc.

History of Foreign Aid in Africa

Foreign aid started in 1947 with the institution of the Marshall Plan, after the Second World War (1939 – 1945). What began as an initiative with economic and political interests by the United States of America to provide economic assistance in rebuilding Europe after the Second World War turned into economic and political development interests as well as a humanitarian cause (Deborah et al., 2004). However, some analysts contend that the idea of foreign aid was formed on the notion that it is arduous for low-income countries to develop economically without help from the developed countries. This is likely the reason why Easterly, an economist specializing in development, called foreign aid the "white man's burden" (William, 2004). According to Easterly, "the White Man's Burden" was derived "from the West's self-pleasing fantasy that 'we' were the chosen ones to save the rest, where the White Man offered himself the starring role in an ancient regime version of Harry Porter." This basically means that even though developed countries are what they are today without any form of assistance, developing countries are unable to do the same.

Easterly argues that aid has done more harm than good as there is substantial evidence that showed that foreign aid programs hold back countries and make them dependent. We believe that Easterly's argument is logical as undoubtedly, foreign aid has made a lot of African countries dependent. Several African countries are unable to carry out any of its fundamental functions such as the institution of newly established structures, the maintenance of basic systems and

services or the provision of necessary public services and infrastructures, without foreign aid, administered in the form of projects or technical assistance (Deborah, 2009). Half of these countries' annual budgetary commitments go unfulfilled because donor countries have enabled a "cozy accommodation with dependency" (World Bank, 1996). Even though all aid-dependent countries in Africa are low-income countries, some low-income countries are not as dependent on aid as others, indicating that aid dependence is not a result of poverty as many believe (Juliette, 2014).

High levels of dependency on foreign aid by most African countries has led to a lot of antagonism against foreign aid. These antagonists contend that foreign aid, whether in the form of conditional loans or Official Development Assistance (ODA), is supposed to be mainly beneficial to the recipient countries, but oftentimes, foreign aid has done more harm than good despite the donors' good intentions. This is because foreign aid is often misused by bureaucratic and corrupt governments. Research shows that corrupt governments receive as much financial assistance as governments with lower levels of corruption (Alberto & Beatrice, 2002). This should not be the case as foreign aid should be used as a tool to threaten or halt an undemocratic and/or corrupt regime and reward those that show improvements or good will in improving governance and the rule of law.

Foreign aid has often led to dependency by numerous African countries because the aid given does not operate in a vacuum. Extraneous political and institutional factors must be taken into consideration when examining the effects of aid as these can hinder any positive impacts (Kin & Diya, 2004).

Sources of Failure of Aid: Internal Versus External

Apart from those who, based on empirical studies, have made definite arguments about the effectiveness of aid, there remains a contention between those who believe aid failure is a result of factors within the recipient country and those who argue it is attributable to external impedements such as the unfair global economic structure. Akonor (2008) argues "aid to Africa is a band-aid, not a long-term solution" since aid does not aim at transforming Africa's structurally dependent economies. He adds that if donors aim to make long-term sustainable impact, aid

should target transcontinental projects such as highways, telecommunications and power plants.

There are others who still play solely the dependency card. In the past and even now, theorists such as Amin (1972), Peter Bauer and Andre Gunder Frank (1966). have blamed the global economic structure for the underdevelopment of the Third World. Frank concludes in an article in 1966 that underdevelopment is "generated by… the development of capitalism" and that the more a country is close to the centre, the more marginalized it is. Bauer (2000) argues development aid "promotes dependence on others" as it creates the impression that "emergence from poverty depends on external donations rather than on people's own efforts, motivation, arrange arrangements and institutions." Prah (2002) admits Africa should take responsibility for its failings due to bad practices and dictatorships though he thinks the problem is caused by a mix of internal and external factors. This point is not recognized by Calderisi (2006) who argues that the African problem is inbred and thus cannot be blamed on globalization, unequal international, trade, colonialism, debt or slavery. The crux of the problem, according to him, resides in culture, corruption and the political correctness of donors who fail to tell African leaders where they are going wrong. He suggests new aid should be tough and focused on five 'serious' countries, namely, Uganda, Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Mali. The 'seriousness' of these countries, according to Calderisi, is a result of their governments' efforts towards 'good governance' and fighting endemic corruption. We understand and actually accept that the unfair nature of the global economic structure affects development in the Third World and reduces the positive impact of foreign aid there. However for the purpose of this paper, we shall not focus too much on this argument since we believe blaming external forces alone for Africa's woes simplifies the problem, and make the reasons why many states are failing to make progress myopic.

The Problem of Aid Dependence

It appears as though most African countries are so dependent on aid that without it almost half of their yearly budgetary commitments cannot be fulfilled. For example, in 1992, aid is said to have accounted for 12.4% of gross national product (GNP), over 70% of gross domestic savings and investments in Sub-Saharan Africa and over 50% of all imports (Ampaw, 2000). Under the age-old saying that "you

cannot bite the fingers that feed you," leaders of these countries are unable to speak out when fake and unwanted goods flood their markets. It seems aid is not meant to ensure recipients become self-reliant since if it is the case, powerful states can no longer brag about who is giving more than the other. The conclusion we can deduce here is that since aid is not a "joystick by which donors can manipulate macroeconomic or political outcomes" (Edgren, 2002).

To a large extent, Africa's development depends on "African private sector entrepreneurs, African civic activists and African political reformers… not on what ineffective, bureaucratic, unaccountable and poorly informed and motivated outsiders do" (Easterly, 2005). Besides, there is constant debt servicing where recipients routinely report to donors, service donor consultants and try to keep things "normal" (Kanbur, 2000), thus neglecting domestic issues and development. Loans put Africa in debt and it has to spend eternity in a merry-go-round affair to reschedule and negotiate "to keep gross inflows sufficient to fund debt servicing outflows" (Kanbur, 2000). Karikari (2002) argues that development assistance has resulted in dependency as "it induces a lazy, slavish, dependent mentality and culture across society – from governments to villagers." This, according to him, undermines the peoples' faith in themselves and the fact that they can make it on their own. Other scholars also think development should be situated within the context of the country concerned. Prah (2002) for instance argues that "people can best develop from the foundations of their indigenous knowledge" which is embedded in the culture of the people, adding that imposing a notion of "modernity" on Africa will not yield desired results. This does not ignore what the people already know but rather integrates the new knowledge into it. He finds that it will be difficult for the African elites who are "surrogates for Western culture in Africa" to fashion indigenously oriented development plans.

Ampaw (2002) believes the modernization paradigm is "a historical construct, not fashioned by a critical analysis of Africa's present condition as a product of history, structural presuppositions and process." Ampaw says even a national economic policy choice that is driven by the logic of structural adjustment program and its neoliberal underpinnings will not make Africa experience autonomous development. And he doubts if this paradigm that propagates the role of foreign

capital invesment as catalyst to growth is really beneficial since the long-term dependence on aid puts the continent in a vulnerable position. Despite commitments by OECD countries to increase aid, Ampaw argues the trend of Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been falling since the beginning of the 1980s. He mentions that this fall has been confounded by the rise in ODA for "global housekeeping activities" such as managing the environment, controlling illicit drugs, and preventing infectious diseases such AIDS. Ampaw notes that these activities in the last few years have risen to about 40% of ODA. This suggests that monies that previously targeted poverty reduction in Africa are now being channeled to deal with these global issues. Yet donors still want everyone to believe aid is flowing at an increased rate. Moyo (2009) argues that the notion that aid can alleviate poverty is a myth since "aid has been and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic and humanitarian disaster" for most developing countries. She sees the vicious cycle of aid as one that chokes off investment, encourages dependency and facilitates corruption, adding that this cycle "perpetuates underdevelopment and guarantees economic failure" in poor regions. In her book, Moyo also touches on 'the paradox of plenty', insisting that aid instigates conflicts in Africa. If not, how come the same continent that receives the largest amount of aid is the most conflict-ridden place in the world? For instance, the estimated costs of armed conflicts in Africa between 1990 and 2005 exceeded US$300 billion – an amount which is almost equal to overseas development assistance in the same period (UNDP, 2007).

This means that in places like Sudan, Congo, Angola, Rwanda, Burundi and Somalia, armed conflicts hinder efforts towards development – and that even when the floodgates of foreign aid are continually open, it will have no long-term effects. In this sense, countries that have depended on foreign aid are now facing the adverse consequences of their actions. Moyo therefore, suggests a low-aid market-based development financing model that encourages trade and investment (from both foreign and domestic middle class). This is her formula: 5% from aid, 30% from trade, 30% from FDI, 10% from capital markets and the remaining 25% from remittances and harnessed domestic savings.

Her point that aid is not working is cogent, no two ways about it. However, her thesis makes it seem aid is entirely redundant as it stalls progress. Meanwhile, the

trade and FDI which she advocates have not been entirely beneficial to poor countries. Berry (2000) thinks an open market is not necessarily an answer to world poverty since some of the things society would have naturally opted for such as "strong social security network, high social expenditures, high minimum wages and job security" are "sacrificed in order to attain the needed level of competition" in the 'dog-eat-dog' nature of international trade. Culpeper (2004) clearly states that foreign direct investment has "little impact on poverty reduction and other fundamental objectives of development, or worse, it undermines those objectives." Although we might say the complexity of the African problem requires the tactics of the Machiavellian Prince, we cannot decidedly side with Moyo's lukewarm attitude towards the role of democracy in development. To her, what low economies need is not multi-party democracy but a "benevolent dictator." We cannot definitely correlate democracy with progress in Africa; neither can we tell where these countries would have been without elements of democracy. They probably could have been worse off. China, for instance, is touted as the third leading world economy, yet with burgeoning records of inequality and gross human rights violations. It is a paradox of modernity with Chinese characteristics, maybe, but what is development without equity and freedom from suppression? One needs to be skeptical of a so-called 'benevolent dictator' because he is likely not the one to save the bottom billion (Collier, 2007) from the bottomless pit of poverty, disease, corruption, weak institutions and overall underdevelopment – even global marginalization. The issue is not just whether aid increases dependency, or that a dictator can do the job. What is required is a separation of the 'merely desirable' from the 'essentials' of democracy and also a way of making aid influence, not determine, the development of poor countries.

Theoretical Framework

This work is hinged on the dependency theory. Foremost theorists in the dependency theory are Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, Walter Rodney, etc. According to the theory, countries of the world are sharply separated along the line of economic prosperity. Countries that are economically buoyant and politically stable are termed Developed Countries and on the other hand, countries that are economically backward are referred as Developing Countries or commonly tagged as Third World Countries. The former are in the centre (Western Europe, Britain and United States) and the latter are in the periphery (backward

countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America). Dependency theory seeks to pinpoint and specifically explain the factors responsible for this sharp difference in the level of development between the developed countries and the developing countries. According to Jhingan (2010), there are unequal centre-periphery relationships whereby the developing countries are dependent on the developed/advanced countries in trade, investment, technology, etc. The dependence results in the underdevelopment of the periphery because the centre is dominated by powerful capitalist countries that exploit the latter for their benefits and advantage. This theory assumes that it is the flow of resources from a periphery of poor countries and underdeveloped countries to the core of rich and wealthy, enriching the latter at the expenses of the former.

The relevance of the theory to this paper is that the flow of resources (in this context, foreign aid), has created the situation of dependency and underdevelopment in Africa as will be shown in this work. The dependence for foreign aid from international financial institutions and satellite countries has brought about untold hardship in African countries such as when the SAP (Structural Adjustment Programme) as a condition for foreign aid was adopted in Ghana. The implementation of SAP in Ghana led to income disparities and inequality as only the elites and political leaders gained from such programme and the masses were marginalized. Thus, the dependency theory best fits our study.

Our Argument

Foreign aid does harm than good to developing countries. Foreign aid is not an effective tool for growth and development. Additionally, it is argued that it creates dependency, keeps authoritarian governments in power and encourages corruption. Dambisa (2009) argues that aid has been a disaster for Africa. The notion that aid brings growth is a "myth" as aid has been and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic and humanitarian disaster" for most developing countries. By contrary to the notion that aid encourages investment, aid chokes off investment, encourages dependency and facilitates corruption, this cycle perpetuates underdevelopment and guarantees economic failure in poor regions. According to research, the huge cost of armed conflict in Africa between the period 1990-2005 is estimated to be more than $300 billion as a result of aid. Aid should be a rewarding element to African countries because, most of the reasons lying

under the underdevelopment of Africa is attributed to bad governance and mismanagement of resources than lack of it (resource).

Although the original motive behind foreign aid is institutional reform including rule of law reform, the promotion of democratic governance and fostering economic development, on the other hand, foreign aid can also pose a challenge to rule of law and democratic reforms. This is because when foreign aid is provided to autocratic governments, it creates a larger pool of resources for government officials and political elites to fight over for their selfish and personal gains, which may be detrimental as it may hinder the adoption of policy reforms and stable policies. Therefore, it is believed that the conflicts, political instability, ballooning debt, civil wars, and coup d'états that have occurred in Africa over the past five decades may have been as a result of foreign aid, which has afforded these countries the financial means to carry out the aforementioned atrocities.

In addition, higher levels of foreign aid destroy the quality of governance, as calculated by rule of law indicators and corruption because foreign aid is viewed by corrupt leaders as a tool for power. Therefore, individuals, lacking sincere intent to use the funds for reform or development, will aim to remain in power to gain control of the funds. Knack stipulated that aid bolsters coup attempts and political instability because receiving aids and controlling the government is profitable, thus reducing the likelihood of the promotion of rule of law and democratic governance. Political elites of these countries in Africa have little or no motivation for reform as huge amount of money in the form of foreign aid provides numerous fringe benefits to them such as salary increments, luxurious vehicles and houses that would ordinarily be unavailable or scarce. As a result, rule of law reforms are shunned because of the afore-mentioned benefits so as to remain on the status quo. In light of the above, it is believed that foreign aid increases corruption as many African leaders divert foreign aids to their private foreign bank accounts or use the foreign aid to fund projects specifically for the political elites. Even though there have been arguments that foreign aid can reduce corruption by managing a country's finance and reform its public administration, empirical analysis shows that countries that receive more foreign funds show higher levels of corruption. In addition, high levels of foreign aid are perceived to block rule of law reforms and governance amelioration. For instance, the high cost

of transaction that accompanies aid, multiple donors, their different agendas and projects can cripple institutions rather than improve them.

Conclusion

Africa is touted to be the biggest foreign aid recipient. Every year, billions of dollars are sent in as foreign aid and development assistance to Africa with the aims of alleviating hunger, end poverty, foster economic development, democratic governance, and the rule of law without jeopardizing the peace of these countries. Unfortunately, little to no improvements have been made in terms of socio-economic or political development in the areas of rule of law and democratic governance as Africa remains the poorest continent in the world according to Gross National Income (GNI) and the Human Development Index (HDI).

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. To remedy this situation, it is desirous for African countries to diversify restructure their economy and boost agricultural production and increase output as a veritable approach to economic restructuring.
2. African governments should place more emphasis on technology development in an effort to widen, deepen and strengthen the manufacturing sector and human capacity development.
3. Also, foreign aid/loans should be taken when seriously and genuinely needed and must be used to fund projects/programmes that facilitate economic growth and development that will engender national prosperity.
4. Most importantly, leadership is critical and central to national development both in terms of political will and ability to mobilize and harness resources for the attainment of national objectives. It is pertinent to adopt leadership and management styles inspire confidence in all who involved in the restructuring of the economy. Restructuring of the economy also involves restructuring of interests which are invariably conflicting and need to be balanced. The essence of this, however, is that leadership has inescapable crucial roles to play in the overall development of any economy. Thus, leaders in developing countries must transit from corruption to moral decency, inefficiency to competence,

parochialism to purposeful leadership that serves to promote, protect and attain the interests of the nation and its people.

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