

# Democratizing The Economy And The Challenge Of Pervasive Poverty In Africa: A Critical Analysis

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## Abstract

Plausible as the democratization of a nation's economy might be, protection of the national sovereignty and self-preservation are predominant considerations in nations economic and trade policies. The study examines the process of democratizing African economies in the face of nagging poverty which has assumed a pervasive status across the black continent. Content Analytical Approach was adopted as methodology and the "Blame the Victim" and "Blame the system" theory of poverty was adopted as theoretical foundation. Findings reveal that democratizing Africans economics would entail liberalization of economic activities in African states but with the consciousness of freeing the African economics from subservience to foreign economic interests. In doing these, the pervasive poverty in most African states poses a challenging dilemma. To tackle this dilemma, the study recommends amongst others a conscious and sustained inclusive policy on poverty alleviation/reduction, institutions' capacity development through incremental policies that strengthen the system, vigorous educational pursuit, transparency in governance and zero tolerance to corruption and related vices.

**Keywords:** Democratization, Economy, pervasive poverty, challenge, Africa.

## 1. Introduction

Economic policies among nations of the world are based not often on altruistic reasons but on overall national interest. In other words, protection of national sovereignty and self-preservation are predominant considerations in nations economic and trade policies.

This study discusses the process of democratizing African economies and the challenge which pervasive poverty pose to economic growth in Africa, particularly at the rural communities. Aside from such attempts as the Julius Nyerere's socialists experiment in Tanzania, certain amount of government involvement in economic enterprise in Africa is dictated by the inadequate capital, skilled manpower, management skill and other resources available to the indigenous private sector; by the reluctant response of her expatriate counterparts to industrialization demands and by the need for government to control, through direct ownership of industries of strategic importance (Ake, 1992).

Similarly, the issue of poverty and inadequate human capital development is so central to economic growth that most African governments, donor agencies such as the World Bank and Nongovernmental organizations have continually made concerted efforts at poverty reduction. Unfortunately, the impact of such efforts have been constrained due to weak institutions, poor governance and poor understanding of the demographic characteristics of the target groups such that development packages often result to a sort of mismatch between the community structures and the type of development programmes targeted (Udu, 2014). In this connection, democratization of African economies would require complete departure from a communist economic order to the open society; liberalization of economic activities through deregulation policies, freeing the economies from subservience to foreign economic interests; and eradicating or at least, reducing poverty and illiteracy to a manageable level (Udu, 2014).

The study is divided into four major parts. Apart from the general introduction, the first parts discusses the background and context of democratization in Africa while the second part focuses on examining factors that would ensure democratization of African economies. The third part analyses the challenge of pervasive poverty to economic democratization and the fourth part dealt with ways and means of tackling the dilemma and finally wrapped up with conclusion and recommendation.

## **1.2 Historicizing Democratization in Africa**

Africa, by the end of the 1980s, was renowned for its Big Men, dictator who strutted the stage, tolerating neither opposition nor dissent, rigging elections, emasculating the courts, cowing the press, stifling the Universities, demanding abject servility and making themselves exceedingly rich (Meredith, 2011). These leaders or better still, dictators, continued Meredith, had their faces on currency notes, their photographs in offices and shops; named highways, football stadia, hospitals and important places after themselves. Their speeches dominated the news media as the public and civil service were dominated by their supporters and cronies with secret police to haunt down perceived enemies. By the end of the 1989, not a single African Head of State in three decades had allowed himself to be voted out of office. Of 150 heads of state who had trodden the African Stage, only six which includes: Leopold Senghor of Senegal; after 20 years in office; Cameroon's Ahmadu Ahidjo, after 22 years in office and

Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, after 23 years in office, among others had voluntarily relinquished power. Some members of the first generation of African leaders still clung to power even in old age. For instance, in Cote d'Ivoire, after 29 years in office, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, at the age of 84 adamantly remained in power behaving ostensibly as a 'tin-god' in the country.

In Malawi, Banda's dictatorship degenerated into tyranny, appointed himself president-for-life in 1971, silenced any dissenting voice through detention and even outright elimination in some cases. Similarly, in Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda's regime, though more benign, equally was notorious for his adamancy about the merits of a single party rule and about his own leadership despite a catastrophic record of economic mismanagement over 25 years in office.

The same is true of Gabon, where its dictator, Omar Bongo had presided over the country's oil wealth for 22 years. A number of army coup leaders also dug in for the long term, setting themselves up for one-party systems (Meredith, 2011). Mobutu, by the end of the 1980's, had been in power in Zaire for 24 years; General Moussa Traore remained in power in Mali, for 21 years; winning elections in 1979, 1984 and 1989, in which he stood unopposed.

In Togo, General Gnassingbe Eyedema, a former French Army Sergeant who was involved in the assassination of president Olympie in 1963, held on to power for 21 years. In Dahomey, Mathieu Kerekou ruled for 17 years, presiding over what was officially termed a "Maxist-Leninist" State. In Ethiopia, Colonel Mengistu Haile Miriam, after 15 years in power, was renowned for fighting war against rebels in Eritrea, Tigray and Wollo, employing tremendous army contingent to prop up his regime.

Similarly, in Nigeria, the giant of Africa, General Ibrahim Babangida, a military ruler, who took over power from Muhammadu Buhari, the current Nigerian President, in 1985 through a coup purported to favour return to civil rule. He embarked on the transition to civil rule project that lasted for eight years (1993) but failed to midwife democracy, which led to his disengagement from the system.

The essence of tracing the histories of African struggle for democracy is to appreciate the reason why many hold that multi-party system actually translates to democratization of the system. The truth is that multi-partyism is not synonymous with democracy. Undoubtedly however, the change from the political monopoly of one party decreed by law to a free political competition between rival parties is a momentous event, one which is made equally fantastic by the bewildering plethora of parties that in Africa has sprung up in its wake -- 250 in Zaire, 100 in Congo, 68 in Cameroon, 30 in Senegal, 25 in Burkina Fasso, 17 in Benin and, 16 in Guinea (Nwabueze, 1993).

Yet, it is important to enquire what the change has really meant in these countries. What actually has changed from what used to be? Would transition from one-party, military or communist rule to multi-partyism have changed much else where the same person(s) as before remain in control? To what extent, if at all, have the new multi-party regimes shed the authoritarianism and autocracy of the one-party, military and communist regimes they

supplanted? What changes besides that from one-party, military or communist rule to multi-partyism are required for full democratization?

Democratization, in the fullest sense of the term, has a much wider meaning and compass than multi-partyism per se. It must seek, in addition, to democratize the society, the economy, politics, the constitution of the state, the electoral system and process, and the practice of government. Not only does the society need to be democratized, it must also be a society founded upon freedom, justice and the equal treatment of all citizens by the state; it must be an ordered, stable society, one infused with the spirit of liberty, justice, equality, the Rule of Law and order. The perception of democracy by the ordinary man, according to Claude Ake (1992), cited in Nwabueze (1993:2):

The democracy movement has gathered momentum as commodities disappeared from grocery stores in Lusaka and Dares Salam, as unemployment and inflation got out of control in Kinshasa and Lagos, as a bankrupt government failed to pay wages in Cotonou, and the vanishing legitimacy of incompetent and corrupt managers of state power drove them to political repression in Nairobi, as poverty intensified everywhere defeating all possibilities of self-realization, threatening even more physical existence. So, the democracy movement in Africa is, among other things, an expression of the will to survive. The survival strategies which the ordinary people spontaneously devised to cope with economic austerity and to reduce their vulnerability to a predatory state engendered popular empowerment, energized civil society and strengthened the will to struggle for democracy.

Apparently, the essence of democracy is competition, inclusiveness and civil liberties. Democracy will die if it fails to serve as a platform for creating opportunities, managing diversities and encouraging the attainment of the common good (Udu, 2015). The question now is, granting that there is the will among African leaders to pursue the ideals of democratization, to what extent are African nations positioned economically to attain these ideals in the global context?

### **1.3 Theoretical Foundation**

The study is anchored on the “Blame the victim”, and “Blame the system” theory of poverty. The blame the victim otherwise known as the individualism, culture/pathological causes of poverty opine that poverty is an individual phenomenon. Proponents of this theory such as Paul Ryan contend that people are poor because they are lazy, uneducated, ignorant or otherwise inferior in some respects.

Going by this proposition, it means that impoverished people are basically the same people every year and assuming that this is true, it means that poverty can be wiped out by helping the particular poverty stricken people to figure things out and come out of the poverty situations. Hence, a programme of rigorous paternalistic approach to assist this discrete under class get things together might conceivably or dramatically reduce poverty.

The individualistic and the pathological theories of poverty explains and blames the individual for their poverty but fails to recognize that these factors per se, cannot lead to poverty but only serves to establish casual links that may in effect trigger and promote factors that can push an individual into poverty.

Similarly, the cultural theory of poverty explains the persistence of poverty as a product of the culture of poverty. This because prominent with the writings of Oscar Lewis and Oliver La Forge (1959) on their study of poor Latin American families in an effort to explain the similarities between lower class families in Mexico and Puerto Rico. The culture of poverty presupposes that the poor has unique behavioral patterns and priorities of value that distinguishes them and these unique characteristic always result in trapping them by poverty. In other words, there are a set of values that are transmitted intergenerationally through socialization process which tantamount to sub-culture determinants of the lower socio-economic status of the poor and this leads to vicious cycle of poverty and that only a few are able to get out of this poverty cycle.

Truly, this theory is important as helps academics and development agents to know how culture influences development. Interestingly, it equally gives an understanding of how poverty can be tackled by changing the value system and motivations in a society. Accordingly, people are poor because their values are embedded in personality traits acquired via socialization process. To tackle poverty in such an environmental setting, it is imperative to change the entire values of the people and inculcate into such people a fresh set of values and motivations.

The foregoing usefulness of the culture of poverty theory notwithstanding, its basic flaws is that, the application is limited to developing countries as noted by Oscar Lewis. Noting that poverty is not a prerogative of developing countries but exists also in developed countries, the theory falls within the premise of lacking evidence. For instance, Charles and Betty Lou Valentine in their study of low income earners in America did not find any evidence of existing culture of poverty among the people (Kamil, 2018).

Be that as it may, the culture of poverty theory is indeed useful in understanding poverty of individual as well as at national levels in African states. There is no doubts that in many states of Africa, the culture of lack of political will, corruption, poor programme initiation/implementation constitute the bane of poverty eradication/reduction and this continues to result to the vicious cycle of poverty with it attendant negative impacts on democratization of the economy – it is pertinent to clarify here that African states are assumed to constitute an organic whole in the international context and not as governmental structures within their respective domains in relation to the individuals within a given state.

From the “Blame the system” also known as structural perspective of poverty, the poor manifests certain behavioural patterns which are not internally generated as a result of their unique values but their actions, reactions and inactions are influenced by external factors emanating from an unfavourable, restrictive social structure in which they find themselves. In other words, people are poor not necessarily because of their internalized dominant values but due to restrictive/unfair social economic structures which deprive them of their opportunities to come out of their poverty situation no matter how much they try to do so. It goes without saying that the life chances and chances of people are usually determined by the social forces and circumstances that surround them. For instance, economic growth, labour, market opportunities, educational facilities in a country provide a framework in which the standard of living as well as the social relations of

people are always created and recreated (Spkamil, 2018). Thus, the inherent structures in a society and organization of social relations such as race, gender, class and power invariably determines the people's fate; hence, poverty is attributable to structural failures/defects in a society.

Spkamil (2018) went further to buttress the above argument by contending that failures resulting from government policies and programmes can also result in poverty through cuts in government spending and welfare programmes as well as inefficiencies and corruption in administration. For instance, the introduction of the structured Adjustment programme (SAP) as conditionality for loans and repayment by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in most developing countries resulting in cut backs in vital social service, education, health etc. which concomitant effect was increased poverty in those countries. Moreover, the blame the system (structural) theory of poverty perceives poverty as resulting from capitalism. In a capitalist economy, profit is the major motivational factor for production. Thus, a capitalist wage labour market produces poverty in order to enhance its exploitative operations. A large number of the poor are usually unemployed on full time basis and also the use of machines are capable of causing redundancy as a result, the poor end up experiencing sporadic periods of unemployment and therefore creating a pool of excess labour which the capitalist exploits to its advantage thereby impoverishing the poor all the more.

The Blame the victim (individualism, cultural and pathological) theory and the "Blame the system (structural, theories of poverty is relevant to this study in a number of respects). Viewed from the individual level in any African state, poverty may be attributed to laziness, lack of education, ignorance and inferiority in some respects which invariably can be blamed on the unfair system, poor governance, corruption and poor programme articulation/implementation in many African states. On the international context, the prevalent poverty in the black continent can be blamed on the unfair economic structures by the metropolitan society that tend to limit economic independence of Africa. For instance, vital economic decisions and their implementation are dictated by foreign interests such that most African states still face economic exploitations from the foreign multinational corporations and institutions like the World Bank and IMF which dictate the economic policies of countries that approach them for loans and loan repayment.

## **2. Democratizing African Economies**

Democratizing the economies of African nations would involve a number of processes, paramount among these are: liberalizing economic activities and freeing the economies from subservience to foreign economic interest, the subsequent paragraphs captured these in greater details.

### **2.1 Liberalizing Economic Activities**

The way and manner, in which various aspects of the economic life of African countries are regulated by law, are quite opposed to what obtains in advanced democracies like Europe and America. For instance, laws fixing minimum wages, prohibiting general wage increase; pegging income from dividends, fixing prices for various commodities; controlling fees and fares chargeable by certain professionals and operators, controlling rent and the use and disposition of land; requiring a license for or otherwise restricting the carrying on of certain professions, trades or industrial activities; controlling the

import and export trade, interest rate, credit, banks and banking, the corporate form of business organization and dealing in stock and shares including their prices, trade union activities, e.t.c. (Udu, 2015). No American government or any of the advanced democratic governments would dare restrict economic activities as enumerated above. Be that as it may, the state in Africa also engages in a vast amount of direct economic activities, ranging from manufacturing and other industrial enterprises, commerce to agriculture and agro-allied enterprises to the tune of about 70% of the total value of investment in both the public and private sectors of the economy (Nwabueze, 1993). Government direct involvement in economic activities results in the restriction of private enterprises because such activities are often operated as monopolies with the consequent exclusion of competition and other market forces or are otherwise granted a favoured status, in form of exceptions and immunities in relation to other private enterprises operating in the same field of activity (Nwabueze 1993).

To be candid, many of the state regulations and controls of private enterprises are necessary and desirable in the interest of social justice and for the common interest. However, such factors as inadequate capital, skilled manpower, managerial skills and other resources available to the indigenous private sector, often dictate the extent of government involvement in economic enterprises in Africa. Similarly, the reluctant response of its expatriate counterparts to the demands of industrialization coupled with the need for government to control, through direct ownership of industries of basic and strategic importance to the economy, such as exploration and mining of mineral, iron and steel, fertilizer production and by the long period of gestation entailed in some of these enterprises, which ostensibly, makes them unattractive to private investors desirous of immediate returns on their investment also, to a large extent, dictate the degree of government involvement in economic enterprises in Africa nations.

All these, notwithstanding, democratization requires that the economy of African nations should be considerably de-regulated and that government enterprises should be privatized to a great extent. This is already happening in many African countries. Nigeria for example, has privatized the power sector, deregulation of petroleum downstream sector, which has also become a major preoccupation of the government (Ezeani, 2006; Nkwede, 2014; Udu, 2015).

## **2.2 Freeing the African Economies from subservience to foreign Economic interests.**

Democracy essentially, requires that within a national community, there should be no subservience in the relations of the classes and, in the like manner, the nation itself, as an independent political entity, should not be subservient to foreign economic interest in the direction and management of the economy. The dominance of foreigners, though in the minority, in the commanding heights of the African economies both in jobs and ownership of business enterprises tantamount to an incredible affront not only to democracy but also to social justice. By implication, many vital economic decisions and their implementation are dictated by interests other than those of the concerned African nations. Despite the gaining of political independence, most African nations still face economic exploitations from the foreign multi-national corporations. Political independence needs to be matched by economic independence to bring about national independence and social justice.

Arguably, many African nations through such measures as indigenization, have attempted to tackle this, however a new form of economic dependence has emerged as a result of huge debt burden and the foreign-imposed structural adjustment programme, which invariably, has put the countries that have adopted them under the tutelage of foreigners, the World Bank and the IMF which, dictate the economic policies of the countries concerned. In Nigeria, the so-called giant of Africa for instance, the debt profile which according to DMO (2017) increased from 17.36 trillion naira at the end of 2016 to 21.7 trillion naira the end of Delander 2017, (an increase of 25%) which according to the report represents 18.20% of the country's GDP. It is this unfortunate predicament of the African economy that made Niandou (1992), to ask: "How is it then possible, to speak of democracy... where the crisis of African economies is taken care of by non-African actors?... It is obvious therefore, that the tutelage of the international financial institutions, restricts the African states, liberty of choice. By implication, it is a form of denial of democracy since this very liberty of choice is an essential implication of democracy. This view on the World Bank economic policies as they concern the developing African economies, is also shared by Diencan (1981). Thus, for Africa to give itself the ample chances of real and lasting democracy, it must brace up with the challenges implied by democracy.

### **3. Methodology**

Content Analytical Approach was adopted in this study wherein data was extensively drawn from the secondary sources such as libraries, publications, textbooks, journals, periodicals, media caumeateries and internet sources. The data obtained were critically analyzed using the blame the victim, blame the systems theory of poverty to draw inferences in the clarion call for economic democratization vis-à-vis the dilemma of economic status of the Africa states.

#### **4.1 The challenge of pervasive poverty in Africa.**

One of the major challenges faced by African States in the democratic process particularly, as it concerns the economy, is poverty. Poverty as a phenomenon has been conceived and variously defined by authors and scholars in various ways. Ezeanyika (2004) defined poverty as the absence or lack of basic entitlement which could be economic, political or socio-cultural in nature. Analysis of this definition indicates that poverty results from lack of financial, human and physical necessities which ordinarily should create suitable environment for a sound living standard. The World Bank (1999) report aptly described poverty as a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his/her basic needs of food, clothing and shelters; he/she is unable to meet social and economic obligations; lack gainful employment, skill, assets and self esteem; has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water and sanitation and consequently has limited chance of advancing his/her welfare to the limit of his/her capacities.

Similarly, Nkwede (2014) asserts that poverty is a reflection of some glaring defects in a state and its economy which normally manifest in the form of mass penury, mass unemployment, poor welfare services, lack of basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter, social inferiority, disempowerment, deprivation, isolation, humiliation, vulnerability to ill-health, drought, economic decline, crime and other social conflicts. These definitions of poverty particularly that of



World Bank (1999) and Nkwede (2014), aptly captures the state of affairs in most African states. Across the continent of Africa, the major indicators of poverty such as, low consumption of income level; low-life expectancy, lack of basic essential human capabilities; hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment are glaringly evident. According to Katie (2015), the region of Africa has the highest percentage of people living in extreme poverty, the highest number of deaths among children under 5 and among mothers, and the lowest primary school enrollment rate. Jordauna Pactor (2015) in what he captioned leading facts about poverty in Africa, enumerated ten factors as follows.

#### **4.1.1 Leading Facts About Poverty in Africa**

- 75% of the world's poorest countries are located in America including Zimbabwe, Liberia & Ethiopia. The Central African Republic ranked poorest in the world with a GDP per capita of \$656 in 2016.
- According to Gallup world, in 2013, the 10 countries with the highest proportion of residents living in extreme poverty were all in Sub-Saharan Africa, Extreme poverty is defined as living on \$1.25 or less a day in 2010, 414 million people were living in extreme poverty across sub-Saharan Africa. According to the World Bank, those living on \$1.25 a day accounted for 4.8.5% of the population of the region in 2010;
- Approximately one of the 3 people living in Sub-Saharan Africa are undernourished. The food and Agriculture organization (FAO) of the UN estimated that 239 million people (around 30% of the population) in sub-Saharan Africa were hungry in 2010. The highest percentage of any region in the world, Additionally, UN millennium project reported that over 40% of all Africans are unable to regularly obtain sufficient food;
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, 589 million people live without electricity. As a result, a staggering 80% of the population relies on biomass products such as wood, charcoal and dung in order to cook.
- Of the 738 million people globally who lack access to clean water, 379, are living in Sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty in Africa results in more than 500 million people suffering from waterborne diseases. According to UN millennium project, more than 50% of Africans have a water-related illness like cholera;
- Every year, Sub-Saharan Africa misses out on about \$30 billion as productivity is compromised by water and sanitation problems: this accounts proximately 5% of the region's GDP, exceeding the total amount of foreign aid sent to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2003;
- Due to continuing violence, conflict and widespread human rights abuses, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that 18 million people are of concern to the agency, including stateless people and returnees;
- Fewer than 20% of African women have access to education, uneducated African women are twice as likely to contract AIDs and 50% less likely to immunize their children. Meanwhile, the children of African women with at least 5 years of schooling have a 40% higher chance of survival.

- Women in Sub-Saharan Africa are more than 230 times were likely to die during child birth or pregnancy than women in North America. Approximately one in 16, women living in Sub-Saharan Africa will die during child birth or pregnancy; only one in 4,000 women in North America will;
- More than one million people mostly children under the age of five, die every year from malaria. Malaria deaths in Africa alone account for 90% of all malaria deaths worldwide, 80% of these victims are African children. The UN Millennium project has calculated that a child in Africa dies for malaria every 30 seconds or about 3,000/day (Jordauna Packtor 2015).

Morosine (2018) attributes causes endemic poverty in Africa to include, population growth; war and crises, climatic conditions, inadequate Agricultural infrastructure, illness and unjust trade structured. Hence, Mandela subscribes that overcoming poverty isn't a feature of charity, it is an act of justice.

The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index by the United Nations (2015), reports that at 2010, 46% of Nigerians lived below the national poverty line of this figure, 28% lived in urban areas and near 70% in the rural. However, World Bank Report (2014) showed that only 33% of Nigerians could be considered poor.

According to the report, Regional Average of poverty level across the country are as follows: South East 27.36% South West, 19.3% South South, 25.2% North Central 45.7%; North east, 78.8% and North West 80.9%.

Similarly the correlation between poverty and unemployment is common knowledge. Essentially, unemployed people have propensity to be poor; hence, it is important to make some brief comments on employment rate in the country. For instance, in 2003, unemployment rate stood at 14. percent, declined 11.09% per cent in 2005 due to some poverty alleviation programme of government and employment in the informal sector However, the rate increased sharply from 14.9% in March 2008 to 9.7% in March 2009 (NBS 2010). In the same vein, unemployment trend in Nigeria from 2010 to 2014 shows that as at 2010, unemployment rate stood at 21. 1%; 23.9% in 2011, 24.3% in 2012 28.5% in 2013 and projected at 20% in 2014 (IATEL, 2014).

Poverty rates across the continent of Africa, indeed challenge the process of democratizing the economy. A hungry man is said to be an angry man; feels frustrated, prone to violence and too preoccupied with survival means to be civil or to think about democracy-he/ she is so vulnerable to exploitation, manipulation of the elite class to be independent minded or to critically appraise issues so as to take a stand as required by democracy; moreso, where the greater majority of the population, particularly at the rural African societies are illiterate. From our definition of democracy, vis-à-vis that of poverty, one can clearly see that the two concepts are strange bedfellows - there is no how the two can go together. Like the law of osmotic pressure, the weaker must be drawn to the stronger. Here, the stronger is represented by poverty which is pervasive and indeed dominate the African continent; hence, democracy would be severely challenged so long as poverty and its indicators remain endemic in Africa. Figures 1 – 6 below show evidences of the endemic poverty in many African States.

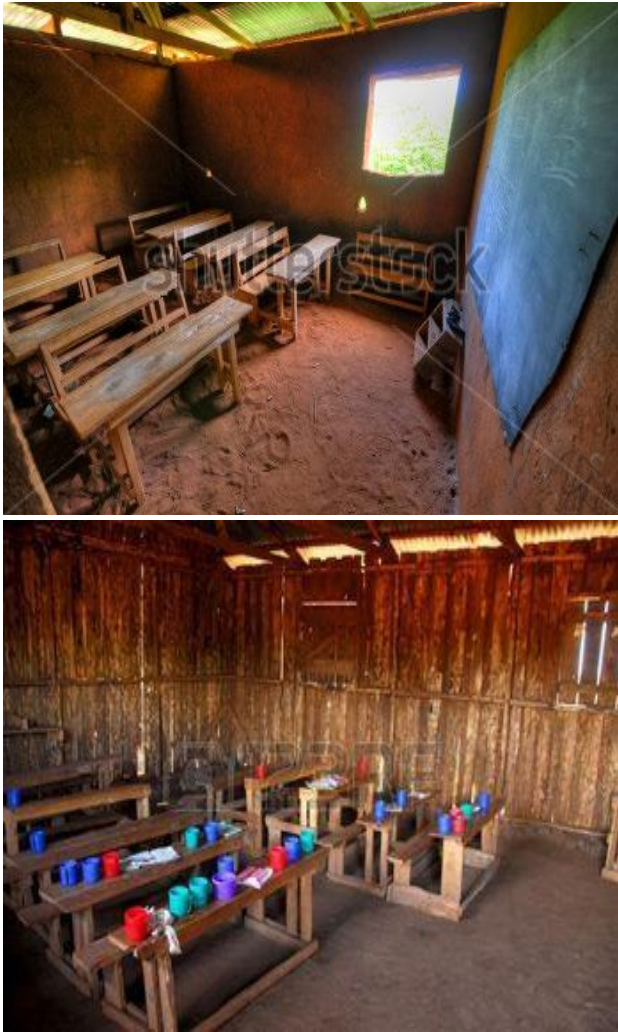


Fig. 1: Mud and thatched houses used as classroom in African Countries



Fig. 2: School Pupils without school uniform



Fig. 3: A Poverty Stricken African Family sitting outside their home in Liberia, Uganda



Fig. 4: Bozo Village in Bamako, Mali: Showing A Typical African Home



Fig. 5: Young girls collecting water from a stream in Gayo village, Ethiopia



Fig. 6: Guinea worm infected African children in Gayo village, Ethiopia

Sources: 1 – 6  
(<https://www.google.com.ng/search?q=Guinea+worm+infected+African+children+in+Gayo+village,+Ethiopia:>).

#### 4.2 Tackling the Dilemma

Emphatically, democracy implies competition, inclusiveness and civil liberties; it requires liberalization of economic activities which presupposes a high level of de-regulation of economic activities by government policies. Yet, due to weak institutions poverty and illiteracy which is ravaging most African states, a wholesome inbibment of democratic ideals may, ultimately prove inimical to the needed protection of the citizens from undue exploitation by private enterprises including foreign firms, whose main objective and operation are driven by profit motives. Again effective provision of certain economic activities may be beyond the private sector due to the enormous financial and expertise requirements which makes it expedient for the state involvement in business enterprise aimed at the overall interest of the citizen; in addition to protecting indigenous industries from foreign firms, having greater advantage due to economy of scale.

The foregoing scenario presents a sort of dilemma to the state considering the demands of democratization. The remaining part of this paper is devoted to discussing the ways and means of tackling this obvious and threatening dilemma.

#### **4.2.1 Poverty Eradication/ Reduction.**

The pre-occupation of poverty stricken people is struggle for subsistence and survival not much on political rights. Therefore, the maintenance and defense of liberty and democracy requires a heightened effort to improve the people's living standard through provision of employment, social welfare services, assistance and incentives. Democracy must be seen not as an end in itself but as a means to an end - a means for trying to uplift the life conditions of the people. To ensure the attainment of this desired end, all hands must be on deck instead of leaving effort at improving living standard of the people to the whims and caprices of elected governors and legislators. An ethic that would make our elected representatives to be accountable to the people, morally responsive in a responsible manner to the welfare of the people should be a moral obligation and legal duty imposed through the constitution. This is what social democracy entails. However, full democracy cannot even be attained through the process of popular government by the state providing employment and social welfare services and assistance but through a combination of social democracy and liberal democracy such that the individual can, at liberty, employ his initiative, resourcefulness and entrepreneurship.

As noted in Abah (2005); Nkwede (2014); Udu (2014); and Udu and Onwe (2015), the issue of poverty and lack of or inadequate human capital development is so central to economic growth in developing countries, particularly, in Africa that most African governments, donor agencies such as the World Bank and non-government organizations have continually made concerted efforts at poverty reduction. Unfortunately, the impact of such efforts have been constrained due to weak institutions, poor governance, use of top-down approach and poor understanding of the demographic characteristics of the target groups such that development packages often result to a sort of mismatch between the community structures and the type of development or poverty alleviation programmes targeted at them.

Similarly, pervasive poverty in Africa has also been attributed to insistence on what Ashutosh (2000) described as a "direct approach" to poverty alleviation. Direct method/approach to poverty alleviation consist of public provision of income in form of food-for-work programmes, credit and producer subsidies for small scale farmers-this is politically easier as it has a ready and short-term impact enhancing the chances of politicians at elections and re-elections as the case may be. A more lasting approach, according to the author is the indirect method which is essentially mediated by a kind of growth that aims at enhancing opportunities for the poor to increase their income and become more or less self-reliant.

#### **4.2.2. Addressing mass illiteracy issues**

Poverty can hardly be eradicated in a predominantly illiterate society; the one is inseparable from the other. To reduce, alleviate or eradicate poverty, illiteracy must also be eradicated. Unfortunately, most African countries budget on education failed to reach the UNICEF 26

percent benchmark for education. Illiteracy would remain with us so long as governments continue to pay lip service to the critical issue of education. In Nigeria, for example, most of the world Bank-Assisted programmes in education are geared towards primary education, provision of VIP toilets, classroom blocks and the like; with little or no attention paid to secondary talkless of tertiary education- a situation which has informed the struggle of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

Be that as it may, an illiterate people are greatly handicapped in exercising political freedom/democracy. A people's native wit and intelligence, as sharpened by political discourse and by practice and experience in political matters, certainly stands to be enhanced by education. Contrary to the original concept of democracy which as it were, was limited in scope, involving a smaller population, today's politics and electoral processes entail a vastly expanded scope and complexity, requiring certain level of education. For instance, intelligent choice from a group of contestants at election, understanding the complex structures of modern society, relations and issues confronting it is beyond the ability of an illiterate group of people. The same is true of other political rights such as press freedom, fair comments, procession and even freedom to organize in opposition to the issues at stake and the shortcomings of government approach to them. An illiterate people can at best understand and act only as concerns actions or inactions that directly affect them and as most often directed by the educated elite-choice of political party to join, persons to be voted for etc. this obviously exposes them to manipulation and exploitation by the latter, the initiative to form a political party is clearly beyond them. Much as the right to participate as elected representatives at the executive or legislative. The need for educated society can never be over-emphasized as possession of certain level of education is often specifically prescribed in the constitution for electoral positions and political appointments.

Lord Bryce put the matter most succinctly when he asserted that "a democracy that has been taught only to read, and not also to reflect and judge, will not be better for the ability to read" (Nwubeze 1993). Accordingly, political education consist in the ability not only to read but to think critically and not to take a stand without considering the two sides of the matter in context. Above all, education must go *pari pasu* with the involvement of the people in self-government in order that practice may vivify knowledge.

On the whole, eradication of illiteracy must be vigorously and relentlessly pursued by virtue of a compulsory university programme and if possible, free and compulsory education at least, at the primary level, supported with adequate educational facilities at all levels as well as, a programme and campaign for adult mass literacy.

#### **4.2.3. Transparency in Governance versus corruption**

Critical to growth and stability of any system as yeast is to dough, is the quality of its governance. This is because, policies and programmes do not implement themselves but by people charged with the responsibility to do so. The problem with most African governments is not lack of well articulated policies and programmes but that of poor or insincere implementations. There is no law no matter how well drafted that cannot be twisted; and no tradition, no matter how hoary that cannot be circumvented and no programme or policy, no matter how grand or well articulated, that cannot be grounded by men and women of questionable integrity.



African leaders have consistently made choices which were inimical to economic growth of the continent. Africans themselves as well as the international community have enabled African leaders to make bad choices. The former have typically believed that they lacked the means to change the status quo, whereas the latter have been too ready to "help" Africa for self-interest and altruistic reasons (Mills, 2010).

African leaders, according to (Mills 2010), have successfully managed with the help of donors, clinging on to authority but relinquishing responsibility while donors have typically lacked the tools or political will to manage their relationship with African leaders and the many flaw which is made according to the democratic, economic reforms and public-goods delivery record of the recipient, particularly in the so-called "failed or fragile" states. Due to insufficient bottom-up pressure or abject lack of it in many cases, many corrupt African leaders have been allowed to get scot free after ruining their countries.

It is unfortunate that the system preferred by most African leaders, thrived on corruption and nepotism. Though corruption is not particular to Africa, other societies, like Asia where corruption has posed challenge, had, unlike Africa, displayed a commitment to popular welfare that is lacking in African leadership. African societies predominantly have been run along the lines of "politics of the belly" a primordial lust for wealth and power along crude racial, tribal, party and familial lines. Consequently, government officials and politically connected business elites use their advantaged positions to enrich themselves, their families and cronies (Bayart, 1993 and Chabel,1999 cited in Mills, 2010).

Against the backdrops of the foregoing, there is urgent need for African leadership to eschew corruption and entrench transparency in governance so as to restore public confidence in them, No meaningful progress can be made under a system built on mutual suspicion and mistrust nor can patriotism be possible where there is absolute mistrust for people in government. It is however, a cheering news that the fight against corruption has been making waves across the continent, particularly in Nigeria, but the extent of sincerity in such movement is better left for time to tell.

## **5. Conclusion/Recommendations**

It has been noted in this paper that African nations are not yet well positioned economically for full democratization of their economies. Apart from multi-partyism, democratization involves: a complete change of guards and the exclusion of certain other categories of persons from participation in democratic politics and government; a genuine and meaningful popular participation in politics and government; a virile society; a free, just society where equal treatment of all citizens by the state obtains; the rule of law and order and stable society.

Democratization of African economies would require full liberalization of economic activities through de-regulation policies. However, due to the pervasive poverty in most African states, inadequate human and material capital and high illiteracy and unemployment rate across the continent, full democratization of the economies is greatly challenged.

In order to tackle the challenge frontally, African Leaders must embark on aggressive policies that free the economies from subservience to foreign economic interests; eradicate or at least, reduce poverty and illiteracy to a manageable level through vigorously and relentlessly pursuing programmes of a compulsory universal and if possible, free education at the primary level,

supported with adequate educational facilities at all levels as well as programme of, and vigorous campaign for, adult literacy.

Similarly, programmes on poverty alleviation should involve sponsored background studies of the demographic characteristics of the target groups so as to avert the present situation, where there is a visible mismatch between the community structures and the kind of poverty alleviation and development programmes targeted at them.

Apart from poverty alleviation programmes, democratizing African economies equally requires institutions capacity development through incremental policies that strengthen the system, transparency in governance and zero tolerance to corruption and related vices.

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