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The Perpetual Poverty Trap within African Nations as a Result of the Isomorphic¹ Effects of New Imperialism and Globalization

Abstract

Contemporary Africa is marked by widespread deplorable social, economic and political conditions. This paper will attempt to do the following: 1) document instances in which African nations have been consistently exploited by European powers during the 1800's in the age of *New Imperialism*², 2) document contemporary instances of exploitation due to certain policies that have been imposed upon African states such as IMF structural adjustment programs that have caused these nations to be held in a perpetual state of dependency on financial assistance from international organizations and developed countries and 3) compare these two different eras of exploitation of African nations and identify that contemporary Africa still exists in a state of colonialism, but instead of it being direct, it is now institutionalized colonialism because several of these African nations are still very much subjected to industrialized nations for financial and economic support.

In terms of documenting contemporary instances of exploitation within African states, the following aspects of globalization will be taken into consideration: a) the exploitation of cheap African labor in order to maximize profits for developed countries and b) the withering away of economic sovereignty by austere IMF economic programs and other stringent policies that are imposed upon these countries by international organizations and industrialized nations. This paper will also serve an investigative purpose in order to allow for the improvement of the deplorable social, economic and political conditions in African societies. Globalization presents many benefits, however these benefits are drastically limited to highly developed and industrialized countries. The merits of globalization will be clearly delineated; however they will not be idealized as the panacea for developing African countries' social, economic and political ills. Instead, there needs to be a balance of careful and deliberate implementation of welfare programs combined with the implementation of controlled capitalist policies. Long-term strategic goals should be carefully analyzed before implementation in order to prevent devastating global crises such as the 1997 East Asian Financial Crisis. Finally, it will be evident that the problems that plague African countries will not be solved overnight, the possible solutions presented will serve as a gleam of hope for improving the lifestyles of the millions of starving, economically deprived African citizens, who so often are overlooked because they no longer play the roles of economic goldmines for Westernized countries.

¹ A mapping of one entity into another having the same elemental structure, whereby the behaviors of the two entities are identically describable. (<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/asc/ISOMORPHISM.html>)

² "The expansions of the New Imperialism took place against a background of increasing competition (over resources, strategic power, and prestige) between the industrialized nations. This activity followed the erosion of Pax Britannica, during which British industrial and naval supremacy underpinned an informal empire of free trade and commercial hegemony" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Imperialism).

Introduction

The themes of extreme poverty and debilitating exploitation reverberates throughout the greater part of Africa's history. This discourse will attempt to draw a parallel of exploitative methods applied to African states between the age of *new imperialism*³ and the current international system of globalization. New imperialism primarily affected African nations; although globalization encompasses all nation-states, it also functions to the detriment of African nations for the most part, by either direct means or through subtle and insidious methods. This paper will analyze the exploitation of Africans through four methods. First, we will look at the exploitation of African countries during the new imperialism age. Second, we will look at current exploitative methods that have been applied under the post-Cold War international system of globalization in select African countries. Third, African nations' social and political burdens that stem from new imperialism and globalization will be compared. Finally, an attempt will be made to discover if Africa's economic, political and social problems are in fact capable of being mitigated. It is disheartening as well as bewildering that the African continent as a whole was the birth place of civilization⁴, yet presently it is deemed as the most "uncivilized" society because of the ravages of a plethora of social and political ills such as widespread hunger, lack of access to potable water, the spread of the AIDS virus and the internecine conflicts that often times

³ "The term "New Imperialism" refers to the policy and ideology of imperial colonial expansion adopted by Europe's powers and later the United States and Japan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; approximately from the Franco-Prussian War to World War I (c. 1871–1914). The period is distinguished by an unprecedented pursuit of what has been termed "empire for empire's sake," aggressive competition for overseas territorial acquisitions and the emergence in colonizing countries of doctrines of racial superiority which denied the fitness of subjugated peoples for self-government" (New Imperialism." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. 15 Nov 2005, 21:08 UTC. 28 Nov 2005, 14:29 http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=New_Imperialism&oldid=28434919).

⁴ The Mesopotamian Fertile Crescent is referred to as the cradle of western civilization because of the "lucky possession of essential plants and animals and its central location that placed it at a crossroad for mingling of ideas and peoples" (8). Sherman, Dennis. The West in the World Volume I. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

exacerbate all of the aforementioned ills. In restructuring how we view the African continent, the possibility lies that the current international system of globalization could possibly be advantageous to African nation states and no longer exploitative. This restructuring will not serve as a panacea for Africa's social, economic and political ills; instead, it will serve as an alleviation of the existing problems. The mitigation and eventual eradication of some of the disastrous consequences that stem from widespread economic inequality would not only benefit the African continent, but also the global society as a whole.

The Scramble for Africa

According to John Merriman, *imperialism* is “*the process by which one state, with superior military strength and more advanced technology, imposes its control over the land, resources and population of a less developed region*” (Merriman 899). During the late 1800's, European powers gained an increasing interest in the African continent. Up until 1884, most European countries were not interested in the African continent. In Raymond Betts' The Scramble for Africa, French colonialism researcher, Georges Hardy states that:

“Germany in particular affirmed its resolution to be a continental European empire. The Portuguese allowed their possessions to waste away. Spain remained obsessed by the desire to reestablish itself in Morocco. Italy was occupied in Tunisia and Abyssinia. And England lent only feeble attention to its trading posts on the Gulf of Guinea” (Betts 51).

However, due to several factors such as trade deficits and a high demand for raw material such as rubber, the lucrative natural resources and human capital that the African continent possessed became apparent to European countries. This *Scramble for Africa* entangled several European superpowers in an acrimonious economic battle for colonies. Britain, in particular was

suffering from a trade deficit because of the implementation of several protectionist policies. At that particular time, most African countries' economies were open markets⁵, therefore, Britain capitalized on this in an effort to stabilize their balance of payments.

Britain was not the only European country that eventually saw the potential capital that could be garnered by colonizing African states. Eventually, other countries began to engage in the "scramble" in order to acquire as many African colonies as possible. According to Hardy, *"even those who rebelled at the idea were forced to yield to it, most notably Germany...In 1884, Bismarck declared loud and clear that Germany intended to become a colonial power"* (Betts 51-52).

Because of this increasing awareness of the profitability of colonization, European countries pursued colonization of African states on a "first come, first served basis". The apparent conflicts that would arise from this method became obvious when the Belgian king, Leopold II claimed the Congo as one of his possessions. The possibility that conflict could arise from this method of capturing African territories - claiming African territories by simply arriving there first - resulted in the European countries establishing an international agreement at the *1884-1885 Berlin Conference*⁶.

The Berlin Conference ratified Europe's expansionist policies in the African continent. The apparent exploitation of Africa was for natural resources. However, an in-depth look will depict that this imperialist strategy perpetuated a devastating pervasion of Westernized economic

⁵ "At the beginning of the 1880s, there were few [African] countries possessing an established and organized form of state and disposing of a regular army equipped according to modern techniques" (Betts 67).

⁶ "The Berlin Conference of 1884-85 regulated European colonization and trade in Africa. Its outcome, the General Act of the Berlin Conference, is often seen as the formalization of the Scramble for Africa" ("Berlin Conference." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. 28 Nov 2005, 23:10 UTC. 29 Nov 2005, 20:41 http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Berlin_Conference&oldid=29531690).

policies and ideologies throughout the African continent. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870 – 1924) promulgated imperialism as the most severe and noxious form of capitalism:

“Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed”⁷

The African nations that were subjugated to new imperialism not only lost their natural resources, but were also robbed of their sovereignty. Even after these African territories were decolonized *“the colonizer retained some capacity to shape the choice of postcolonial successors and often...enjoyed extensive networks of access and influence after independence was attained...Embedded in the institutions of the new states was the deep imprint of the mentalities and routines of their colonial predecessors”* (Harbeson 24). This eradication of state sovereignty not only embittered “the African”, but it also denigrated “him” to a state of subjectivity, alienation and psychological fatalism. As Harbeson states *“colonial subjugation in Africa brought not only political oppression and economic exploitation but also profound psychological humiliation”* (Harbeson 35). It is possible that this lack of sovereignty - this loss of self identity - within African nations is one of the underlying causes for the current domestic and intrastate conflicts that “the African” faces on a daily basis.

In addition to loss of state sovereignty, African citizens were subjected to rather inhumane and heinous acts by the imperial powers, in particular under the territorial control of

⁷ [Lenin Collected Works](#), UNKNOWN, [19xx], Moscow, [Volume 22](#), pages 185-304

King Leopold II. King Leopold II took control of the Congo as if he was a national government (eventually the Belgian parliament relieved Leopold of his territory and established the Congo as a Belgian protectorate). However, the long lasting effects of Leopold's rule over the Congo cannot be forgotten. Leopold's nationalistic beliefs invoked atrocities such as the following: *"Another European employed by the king boasted that he could line up several men in such a way that one bullet could kill them all"* (Merriman 899). Such savagery and inhumanity underscores the extensive impacts of imperialism on African nations. The European colonizers violently resisted any form of African resistance or rebellion, even if this resistance was of a peaceful nature. For e.g., *"Harry Thuku, Kenya's pioneer nationalist also tried peaceful means to resist British colonialism...He founded in 1921 a broad-based organization known as the East African Association. Advocating civil disobedience as a political weapon, he was arrested for disturbing the peace in February 1922. His arrest led to riots and the deaths of several Africans"* (Gordon 49).

Finally, Africa's economic resources were tremendously depleted after the new imperialism age. As one author states, *"For the seventy-plus years that countries of Europe ruled Africa, the economies of African countries were shaped to the advantage of the colonizers. Cash crops such as coffee, rubber, peanuts, and cocoa were grown for European markets. Mining also increased during colonial times. Most cash crop economies benefited the European owners of large plantations rather than African farmers, and almost all mines produced for European companies"* (Gordon 48). Due to this lack of economic resources, African nations were left dependent on importing goods from European countries because they lacked the capacity to manufacture a sufficient amount of goods in order to sustain their communities.

Globalization in Africa

From an economic standpoint, globalization can be defined as the free flow of goods and capital among countries within an international system. Proponents of globalization extol a *laissez-faire form of capitalism*⁸ as the fundamental economic ideology that will improve countries' gross domestic product; furthermore, the countries that adopt trade liberalization strategies will eventually attain economic stability. The three main institutions that govern globalization are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition to these specialized agencies, the United Nations also implemented an international agency whose purpose is to regulate international labor practices, the International Labor Organization (ILO). Each of the above mentioned institutions perform a specific function. The IMF is responsible for stabilizing the international economy.⁹ The World Bank provides "low-interest loans, interest-free credit and grants to developing countries for education, health, infrastructure, communications and many other purposes"¹⁰; the WTO visualizes a world where countries can easily trade with each other without trade impediments such as tariffs and other protectionist policies¹¹; and finally the ILO is the key institution in regulating and fighting for workers' rights, within sweatshops in particular¹². However, as

⁸ "The laissez-faire school of economic thought holds a pure or free market view, that the free market is best left to its own devices; that it will dispense with inefficiencies in a more deliberate and quick manner than any legislating body could. The basic idea is that less government interference in private economic decisions such as pricing, production, and distribution of goods and services makes for a better economy" ("Laissez-faire." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. 25 Nov 2005, 18:18 UTC. 28 Nov 2005, 14:01 <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Laissez-faire&oldid=29224958>).

⁹ Visit www.imf.org for an expanded list of IMF's roles as outlined in its "Articles of Agreement".

¹⁰ www.worldbank.org

¹¹ "The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only international organization dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible". WTO. *The World Trade Organization in Brief*. 2005.

¹² The ILO also "seeks the promotion of social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights". (www.ilo.org)

several cases have shown, even if the ILO mandates particular treaties, countries have the option of opting out of these treaties, and hence are left free to continue inhumane and illegal labor practices¹³.

Proponents of globalization assume that because the reduction of tariffs and other economic barriers allow for foreign investment to flow in and out of countries, then those countries will automatically reap the benefits of this new globalized international economy. The December 2001 issue of Finance and Development describes the potential prosperity that Africa stands to gain if African governments abandon isolationist policies, “*economic integration will improve economic performance*”.¹⁴ The report further identified that “*Africa was arguably the first continent to become integrated with the world economy: a higher proportion of Africa’s wealth is held internationally than of any other continent*”.¹⁵ Among several African nations, the assumption that “economic integration will improve economic performance” is erroneous, as current examples of poverty, disease and governmental instability have depicted¹⁶, it is apparent that the current economic policies being implemented are inefficient. The complexity of African nations is frequently underestimated by international organizations such as the IMF. African states in general find it increasingly difficult to engage in world trade because of a fundamental lack of industrialized resources, stable economic securities and effective political leaders. The IMF’s failure to properly research the countries to which they administer economic prescriptions

¹³ “ILO obligations are merely adhered to on a voluntary basis...Consequently, leaving it up to multinational companies to hold themselves primarily responsible for protecting workers and human rights have been unsuccessful” (Fletcher 12). Fletcher, Bill. Sweatshops in Lesotho.

¹⁴ <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2001/12/ajayi.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2001/12/ajayi.htm>

¹⁶ According to the United Nations Development program journal In Focus, “in the small region of Dar es Salaam, Official poverty was 17.6% in 2000, a time when its under-five mortality was reaching 173 per 1,000 live births” (Grinspun 4).

is quite evident if the above statements from the December 2001 issue of Finance and Development are in fact truisms. The IMF's "one-size-fits-all" approach cannot work in such a complex continent as Africa. Careful and thorough research of a particular country's economic and political structure is a sine qua non for sustainable economic development. In his work Africa in World Politics, John Harbeson provides an explicit example of the globalization process within most African countries: "*The limits of choice imposed by a narrow national market and circumscribed agricultural and mineral resource bases rendered most states highly vulnerable to the vagaries of commodity markets and the workings of the global economic system*" (Harbeson 25). If the IMF's purpose is global financial stability then they ought to instruct each country appropriately according to the particular infrastructure and historical framework of that country's economic market system.

The three main disadvantages that African nations experience as a result of globalization – whether by direct or indirect methods – are through 1) the proliferation of sweatshops, 2) the loss of self-sufficiency and 3) the loss of economic sovereignty. Since 1950, most African countries have gained their independence. International institutions have pushed for democratic ideologies within these nations, and also free trade agreements. However, poverty and deprivation is a perpetual cycle within these countries. This poverty and economic deprivation sow the seeds for social instability, which typically tends to lead to economic and political instability. Democracy and capitalism typically do not thrive in countries that are socially, economically and politically unstable.

Due to this poverty and economic deprivation, several African citizens have turned away from their agricultural way of life and are now seeking alternative methods of earning money.

One seemingly lucrative method of earning a living is through working in factories that mass produce a variety of products for multinational corporations (colloquially termed as sweatshops). In Globalization and its Discontents, Joseph Stiglitz states that *“People in the West may regard low-paying jobs at Nike as exploitation, but for many people in the developing world, working in a factory is a far better option than staying down on the farm and growing rice”* (Stiglitz 4). Indeed, many African citizens find that it is more beneficial to work in a factory than producing a crop for which they can receive little or no profit. However, the negligible benefits of working in a sweatshop in opposed to working on a farm should not mislead us into thinking that these workers are now pursuing the “golden opportunity of economic stability”. The benefits of working in a sweatshop should not mislead us into thinking that several African citizens are not being exploited for their labor. For example, in Lesotho, multinational corporations such as Wal-Mart and the GAP have continually allowed for workers to be exploited¹⁷. Also, according to Maquilla Solidarity Network (MSN) spokesperson Bob Jeffcott, *“Wal-Mart's domination of the global industry and its constant pressure on suppliers to lower production costs is encouraging sweatshop abuses”*.¹⁸

The second and third disadvantages that African nations encounter, that is loss of self-sufficiency and economic sovereignty are intertwined concepts. As stated above, international financial institutions assume that if developing countries reduce their trade barriers, economic prosperity will occur. In actuality what occurs is that these developing countries reduce their

¹⁷ “According to a two-year study conducted by the Center of Research on Multinational Corporations published in June 2001, norms in Lesotho’s garment industry are locked bathrooms and factory gates, cafeterias next to open and overflowing toilets, lack of protective gear, extensive forced overtime, and lack of ventilation” (Fletcher 12). Fletcher, Bill. Sweatshops in Lesotho.

¹⁸ <http://www.maquilasolidarity.org/campaigns/awards/press2002.htm>

trade barriers, their governments allow developed countries to setup factories, and other businesses within these countries because they desperately need direct foreign investment in order to alleviate their dire economic conditions. However, in doing so, the developing countries' governments have left themselves susceptible to stringent structural adjustment programs (SAP), dependent on international financial institutions and foreign investors and also have enslaved their people to developed countries' multinational corporations.

Comparison between New Imperialism and Globalization

Critics such as Ian Taylor have proclaimed that the demise of African nations is not as a consequence of the exploitation of Africa's natural resources and human capital by developed countries. Taylor states "*malgovernance and misrule undermine Africa's development trajectory long before the factors that are usually given as reasons for the continent's demise...are felt*" (Taylor 412). Although this argument bears some plausibility, we cannot stray from the fact that Africa's problems did not start during the 1950's, when African leaders took over control from the imperial powers. Africa's problems are based on several historical experiences that have tailored their present day circumstances. The opponents of free market capitalism are not against Westernized, developed nations per se, but rather they are against the Westernized *neoliberal ideology that oppresses the impoverished and engages* the developing world in a perpetual cycle of poverty. African authoritarian leaders who fight to remain in power, do so under the influence of capitalism, that is, they are willing to sacrifice and compromise almost anything of humanitarian value in order to maximize their profits and minimize their costs. That is not to say that these leaders are not culpable for their actions; crony capitalism is a vice in the highest form. However, we need to explore why is it that these leaders feel compelled to exploit their own

citizens before we can cast judgment and blame on African leaders for Africa's deplorable economic conditions.

Since New Imperialism, there has been a significant increase in caste and social structure within the African continent. A case in point is the former Belgian colony, Rwanda. Under Belgian rule, the Rwandans were subject to "scientific" experiments such as the measurement of the nose length, the size of their craniums and their height in order to determine whether they belonged to an elite class or an inferior class.

"The scientists brought scales and measuring tapes and calipers, and they went about weighing Rwandans, measuring Rwandans cranial capacities, and conducting comparative analyses of the relative protuberances of Rwandan noses...Tutsis had 'nobler' more 'naturally' aristocratic dimensions than the 'coarse' and 'bestial' Hutus...the median Tutsi nose was found to be about two and a half millimeters longer and nearly five millimeters narrower than the median Hutu nose" (Chua 166).

Critics who tend to blame Africa for their many misfortunes, fail to acknowledge that they are in fact good leaders within the continent. There are few critics such as Taylor that acknowledge that there are good leaders in Africa, who promote the use of conditionality as a method of ensuring that economic prosperity is evenly dispersed within the particular country.

"Conditionalities are essential for the continuation of such assistance, even if it does clash with notions of sovereignty. Such conditionalities are not neocolonial; they are commonsensical and aimed at helping the ordinary African" (Taylor 416). Such thought resembles the New Imperialist thought of the "white man's burden" where the colonial powers sought to "civilize"

and “liberate” the subhuman, non-Christian, hunter-gatherer African to a status of Westernized sophistication and modernization.

Furthermore, the recalcitrant attitude in which the developed nations hold towards alleviating the social, economic and political ills of Africa is in itself a heinous act. In his essay On Liberty, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) declared that “*A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his **inaction**, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury*” (Cahn 932).

The most prominent similarity between New Imperialism and globalization in Africa is the fact that they are both driven by free market capitalist ideology. During the late 1800’s, the new imperial powers expanded into Africa as a means of acquiring new methods of production through slave labor. Because of this labor, the colonial powers were able to obtain commodities such as tea, rubber, sugar and gold. Within the globalization international system, imperialism no longer exists however it has manifested itself as an isomorphic form of “institutionalized imperialism”. The international financial institutions hold most of the cards in the globalization game. Several countries that possess the most clout within this globalization system are the same countries that colonized African nations several hundred years ago.

Imperialism is institutionalized through the globalization international system because the playing field is not level and there are disparities and inequalities in access to economic rights within this international system. African countries often times find themselves on the peripheral boundaries of globalization, struggling to make ends meet by acceding to harsh conditionalities and accepting stringent structural advancement policies just so that they can have a say in the international organizations and also to obtain the IMF’s “stamp of approval”.

Recounting the example of the Lesotho sweatshops, there are countless examples of exploitation of African labor. Countries such as Lesotho, Nigeria, Botswana and many others find themselves in a dire predicament of working in sweatshops. They are caught in a perpetual cycle of poverty and desperation because they are so poor they need to work in these sweatshops, and because they work in these sweatshops (that pay so little), they are compelled to borrow money at usurious interest rates, hence they have to work even more hours (under severely harsh conditions) in the sweatshops, in order to repay their loans. During New Imperialism, African citizens had to produce commodities for the colonial empire in order to fulfill their obligations to their “masters”. If production quota were not met, the Africans stood to face harsh penalties for their failure to comply with European standards of productivity and efficiency.

Can Africa’s Problems Be Solved?

Yale law school professor, Amy Chua wrote a book entitled World on Fire. Chua’s thesis in this book was that rapid democratization and free market capitalism exacerbate ethnic conflicts within developing nations. Chua’s account of several ethnic conflicts and civil wars enlightens the reader about the consequences and possible repercussions from severe income and economic disparities. In order for African states to attain any benefit from the globalization international system, these economic inequalities need to be drastically reduced.

The methods by which economic inequalities can be reduced are apparent yet not easily obtainable. Several political scientists, sociologists, economists and other social scientists have proposed a number of different strategies; hitherto, none of these strategies have proved effective. I believe the key to solving Africa’s problems of economic inequality lies in thoroughly understanding the reasons for these inequalities. As described above, we have

examined two reasons for these inequalities: one is the exploitation of new imperialism during the late 1800's; the other is the current international system of globalization. So the challenge we now face is to provide possible solutions for Africa's problems, bearing the above two causes in mind.

The first step that should be taken is to abandon the notion of the "great" age of imperialism as a progressive movement for Western society. One needs to acknowledge that the deprivation of the "African" is caused, in the most part, by severe colonial subjugation. In the United States, several steps have been taken to rectify the subjugation of the African American citizen such as the implementation of the affirmative action program. This retribution by no means rectifies the social injustices that were perpetrated against African Americans; however, it is a positive step towards adjusting the social, political and economic imbalance of the American society. A similar strategy should be applied towards African nations, except on a global level. Until European countries can acknowledge the inhumanity in which African countries endured over the past several centuries, and take appropriate steps in order to redress these problems, then we cannot move forward with any pragmatic solutions.

Second, the retailers who endorse sweatshops in African countries should be penalized. It is not sufficient to penalize solely the sweatshop factories because if there were not a demand for these factories, then these factories would be inoperable. U.S. retailers such as Wal-Mart, the GAP, J.C. Penney and several others perpetuate widespread social injustice by supporting these sweatshop factories. In addition to this, the ILO needs to possess the right to implement laws that transcend national boundaries. If the ILO were in a position to implement laws to which all

countries must adhere, then the labor conditions under which these sweatshops operate, would greatly improve.

Third, we need to view globalization from a humanitarian point of view instead of from a numerical or statistical point of view. The welfare of a human being cannot be quantified or analyzed from a vague numerical figure such as GDP. Proponents of globalization such as Thomas Friedman outline several statistical data in order to buttress the thesis that free market capitalism is the panacea for developing countries' ills. However, let's compare statistics here, even if a country's GDP increases by 5% annually that bears no comparison to the hundreds of thousands of Africans who die per day because of non-communicable diseases. It is time that we attach a human face to globalization instead of an abstract and numerical one.

Fourth, the regulation of neoliberal capitalist ideology needs to be implemented within African countries. Most industrialized nations such as members of the European Union and the U.S. possess greatly developed social security and welfare infrastructures. Most developed countries did not even conceive of engaging in free market policies until their social safety nets were firmly instituted. It is hypocritical for international financial institutions and developed countries to push for rapid tariff reduction and free market capitalism within African nations, when in fact, they did not engage in such practices during their development eras.

Fifth, we need to acknowledge the fact that there are extenuating circumstances under which the typical African lives on a day to day basis; for example, walking a mile per day just to gain access to water, using traditional methods of agricultural production that only ekes out a minimal subsistence and depending on fluctuating circumstances such as floods in order to grow crops. The dependence on traditional methods of agriculture exacerbates the already dire

economic conditions of the population because these archaic methods of production rapidly deplete biodiversity and degrades soil fertility.

Concluding Remarks

It has been over a century since the new imperialism era. After World War I, semblances of a new global economic system began to take shape. During this post cold war period, this new international system is very much apparent. This discourse is not anti-globalization oriented. If anything, this discourse is pro-globalization. In this paper, I propose alternative options that could possibly be implemented in order to make the globalization international system a more efficient one in African nations. The operative word here is “possibly”. It is quite evident that economic and political reforms cannot occur instantaneously. However, during the process of implementing these gradualist strategies, certain preventative and protective steps can be taken in order to alleviate the pressures that accompany economic and political changes. Globalization of communication technology has allowed for the integration of societies and presently many family members, friends and loved ones to keep in touch with each other, who otherwise would have to wait on a postcard or a letter in order to communicate with each other. Those individuals that have access to that incredible wealth of information and technology consist of only twenty percent of the global population. That “have” is the pivotal problem with globalization; unfettered globalization widens the gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots”.

On no other continent is there such a distinct demarcation of “haves” and “have-nots” than in Africa. The “have-nots” in the African continent are victims of their historical experience, as well as their contemporary existence. In order for our society to become fully

integrated, we need to take a humanistic approach towards incorporating the “have-nots” into the globalization international system. In Globalization and its Discontents, Stiglitz states that

“Development is not about helping a few people get rich...Development is about transforming societies, improving the lives of the poor, enabling everyone to have a chance at success and access to health care and education” (Stiglitz 252).

Extensive sustainable development needs to be carefully implemented throughout the African continent. Free market liberalism bears apparent benefits; however, what good are these benefits if half the globe is riddled with economic, ethnic, and political strife? The point of living in a global society is that “their” problem becomes “our” problem. Until we can eradicate exploitation of African citizens by desisting from unrestrained capitalist embarkation, then the international system of globalization will not be successful and institutionalized new imperialism will continue to flourish. “One needs to be introduced to humanity’s collective memory, a large part of which flows from Africa...People must realize that what happens in Africa is linked to what happens to them and vice versa...we share a common humanity as members of one race – the human race. And while Africa may no longer be our home, our destinies are still linked” (Gordon 51).

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