



**Department of Geography,
and Energy Studies**

Environmental Management

GR2BFET – HUMAN GEOGRAPHY: DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Date: 4 October 2021

Total: 50 Marks

Time: 1 hour 30 Mins

Lecturer: Ms. L Stockigt

Moderator: Dr. I. Sinthumule

QUESTION 1 [15]

Write an essay critically discussing the 7 debates around alternative development in Africa. (15)

1. Restructuring global economic arrangements (unchaining Africa).

Samir Amin (an Egyptian political economist) emphasizes Africa delinking from the global economy as the only viable choice for Africa.

- It is based on the assumption that the international financial system is unfair and disadvantageous to Africa.
- Neo-colonialism, exploitative relations and lack of African peoples' autonomy means that only mal-development can take root.
- Economic projects in Africa have not brought about human and social development instead African are generally poorer than the rest of the world.

The departure from the global economy can only happen under a better balance of political and economic organization of the global economy – a system that does not only benefit an elite in the global North.

- Radical African political economists now argue that alternative thinking is needed about Africa's resources – even a consideration of leaving them in the ground.

2. Increasing financial transparency and ending the looting of Africa.

Africa is being drained of resources by the global financial system, who've built the instruments that make an off-shore world.

- The global financial system operates from key centers such as London and Paris.
- Off-shoring reaches deep into African societies via corrupt officials and various companies that will do all within their power to avoid paying taxes.
- Individual interests at the expense of societal interest rule the day – secrecy, greed and excessive profiteering knit local and international players together.

Local and international organizations such as the world bank are now starting to put more emphasis on mechanisms for asset recovery and transparency.

- Major banks are being used to divert funds – but the money flows through a complex maze. The money does not flow in obvious and transparent geographies.
- The off-shore financial terrain is now even locating to African tax havens – e.g., Mauritius.

Africa continues to be looted. The corporate crime wave is global – stretching from Africa over the Americas to China, India and almost anywhere else.

- The wealth, power and illegality enabled by this system is now so vast that it threatens the global economy's legitimacy.
- The looting of Africa that began centuries ago continues today, entailing transfers of natural resources, human resources (slaves in past / skilled graduates today), antiquities, animals, ivory – this trend is most evident today in the transfer of siphoned money.

Minorities or elites are appropriating large amounts of the region's assets, while the general public via their governments are stuck in excessive public debt.

- Few funds ever return to Africa. London is the epicenter of African outflows through a banking and legal system which provided an escape route for capital at the time when African countries were gaining independence.
- Opponents of looting argue that policies designed to help Africa are nothing more than a façade as they end up benefitting Western institutions and global financial industry more than Africa itself.

- Africans need to engage in self-activity and in campaigns to ensure that there are more stringent curbs on the outflow of money and for better transparency.

3.Promoting better political leadership.

The Ibrahim prize –is an incentive to improve leadership in Africa.

- Business and intellectual elites are convinced that improving government leadership is one of the most effective ways to transform Africa from within.
 - In reality many African leaders are more motivated to cling to power –rather than to put their energies towards developing their economies.
 - Corruption is widespread as a means to provide for their own welfare when they leave office.
- Leadership is important because it sets priorities for development.
- In the past African leaders were pre-occupied with blaming their failures on external factors, scarcely reflecting on internal deficiencies.
 - Many efforts to improve Africa's leadership deficit can only be positive for all.

4.Supporting sustainable environmental development.

Many of Africa's poor understand the relationship between the environmental degradation and poverty and are more motivated by conservation. This is largely lost in the global North.

- Various programs through international organizations like UNEP exist, e.g., planting of trees.
- The planting of commercial crops –means forests were cleared for export-oriented agriculture. Exotic species of trees were introduced for the lumber industry. E.g., Kenya lost 90% of its indigenous forest in 50 years (1950 -2000).
- Deforestation, soil run-off, soil erosion and degradation of water supplies are common.

5.Ending aid.

With last 50 years –US \$ 1 trillion of foreign aid has been remitted to Africa.

- Largest aid receiving region in the world.
 - Aid is given via loans, grants, labour and expertise.
 - Multi-lateral agencies, National governments, private org., NGOs all participate in the multi-layered global aid regime.
 - Many different types of aid exist; project aid (schools), program aid (sectoral support for agriculture or education), budget support (direct financial support).
 - Aid has financially benefitted governments, NGOs and community-based organizations, but its effectiveness is always open to debate. Its impact is difficult to measure and quantify.
 - The terms and conditions of aid are rarely defined by the people of Africa.
 - There is the perspective that aid may prevent African countries from developing by allowing their rulers to avoid long-term solutions.
 - Aid may be destroying local initiatives and holding Africans back.
 - As the Ugandans say "begged water does not quench a thirst"
- Dambisa Moyo (Zambian born economist) argues that aid is a disaster in Africa and that it is a disease pretending to be a cure. Aid fosters dependence, encourages corruption, ultimately perpetuates poverty and bad governance.
- Sachs (economist) believes that ending aid would be irresponsible and damage the poorest of Africans –some 400 million living in extreme poverty.
 - Not all aid is bad and cannot generalize e.g., aid for farmers to grow more crops, childhood vaccinations, school meals, and anti-retroviral medicine for Aids sufferers, etc.
 - The future of foreign aid in Africa is an important debate.
 - Aid can make a difference but should not distract governments from promoting "self" development.
 - Africa's future will ultimately not depend on aid, but more on the efforts of its people and governments.

6.Promoting civil society participation in development.

A plethora of civil society organisations and NGOs emerged in the 1990s.

- The term civil society pertains to the population of groups formed primarily outside the state and a place for collective purposes.
 - Holds ambitious aims of equality and justice, democracy and tolerance.
 - This landscape is diverse and complex, but poverty reduction is the common denominator for many civil society organizations in Africa.
 - In theory civil society constitutes a space for action outside of the state.
 - When communities own their own information, they are able to gather more accurate information and then become active partners in their development.
 - Activities such as community mapping creates a space for communities to identify development priorities, organize leadership at street and household levels and build community consensus –which facilitates local development and envisioning of an alternative future.
- It promotes the belief among the poor that they can become experts in their own development and continue towards a collective vision.
- It also breaks the isolation of those in poverty and reclaims local learning.

7.Promoting alternative ways to understand Africa and African urban society by a postcolonial lens.

Post-colonialism is a post-modern reaction to and analysis of the cultural legacy of colonialism.

- The post-colonial lens reverses the gaze (they way you look at issues) from an African perspective.
- Emphasis is directed toward grassroots actors and the politics of struggle. Looking at cities in their true state as opposed to comparing African cities with Northern cities.
- Liberating thinkers to imagine other and different future possibilities.

QUESTION 2 [15]

During the Berlin conference of 1884 to 1885, Africa was carved up into various colonial regions. Briefly discuss some of the key motivations for colonial imperialism in Africa. (15)

- Colonial motivations are complex and the objectives of different European agents were not always the same.
- Some of these motivations include;
 - The acquisition of new scientific and geographical knowledge for Europe's benefit.
 - A desire to spread Europe's civilisation and Christianity.
 - Efforts to bolster Europe's grandeur and economic prowess and expansion of capitalism.
- Colonialism largely rested on the assumption that indigenous people were inferior in mental, moral and practical capacities compared to white Europeans.
- Europeans assumed that indigenous people needed training in basic arts and skills, which would occur with exposure to Western belief systems.
- Missions and educational systems were to become two potent forces for the dissemination of information.
- Colonialism was objectionable and evil on many grounds. It damaged societies economically, politically, psychologically, culturally and in many other ways.
- Colonialism entailed coercive practices that conflicted sharply with basic human rights and democratic values.
- Colonized people were considered subjects rather than citizens and were assigned duties but never granted rights.
- The colonial years saw the integration of African states coercively into the global economy.
- European rule in most parts of Africa lasted 60 – 80 years, a short period that produced profound effects.
- It shaped the contemporary urban, political, economic and social geographies of Africa.
- The problems that many African states experienced in the latter part of the 20th c. and current situations cannot be fully understood without reference to the colonial era.

QUESTION 3 [10]

Discuss the role of social media in Africans re-visioning of Africa, highlight the danger of a single story. (10)

Electronic / cyber space is a medium that is becoming richer and more diverse and has the potential to greatly expand the African conversation.

- There are a lot of academic bloggers, others include research organisations, NGOs, consultants and businesses.
- There is no mechanism to rate blog quality.
- Blogging offers new genre and access to academic textual production.
- Some of its advantages; its current, immediacy and ability to disseminate on the ground reporting that is not covered in conventional texts.

Social media platforms such as blogs generate knowledge outside of the classroom and traditional libraries.

- These media platforms are changing the way African topics are written about.
- The downside of social media is its huge size and varying quality and coherence (devoid of quality filters).
- Social media postings about Africa can be confusing as they are provocative and informative.
- Social media platforms allow opportunities for different and sometimes alternative voices.

The web offers a different platform of hope and possibility to change popular perceptions about Africans.

- Decades of academic research have not effectively communicated different ideas about Africa to non-academics.
- The internet is better than traditional media as it extends beyond immediate media spaces.
- Some of the drawbacks to Africa on the web and social media exist; information is often fragmentary and it takes time and effort to provide coherence to multiple sources of information.
- Overall, internet space has the potential to enlarge the positive representation of Africa by providing increasing comments on new and alternative knowledge by society.

Africans re-visioning of Africa

There is no 'one size fits all' or 'off the shelf' model to solve complex African challenges.

- Virtually everyone acknowledges that Africa has challenges; economic, leadership, social and environmental.

- Despite Africa's vast natural resources, many of its people remain in poverty, squalor, destitution and environmental degradation.
 - Largely leaders and elites can be blamed.
 - Many leaders are prioritising holding onto power, affording them little energy for anything else.
- Thousands of international NGOs and consultants who are flown in for external assistance –their collective weight makes it difficult for Africans to gain their own voice and recover their humanity.
- Many Africans are now seeking to answer complex questions. African academics, policy-makers and commentators have been arguing for some time that Africa's future must be founded upon indigenous roots and partnerships.
 - A wide spectrum of ideas on alternative development has been put forward.

QUESTION 4 [10]

Briefly discuss the role and implications of the “new Africa” growth story. (10)

- The economist magazine reports that 6 African economies registered amongst the top ten fastest growing economies in the world (2001 -2011). These include; Angola, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Chad, Mozambique and Rwanda.
- The World Bank believes that Africa could be on the brink of economic take-off.
- Africa is seen as the ‘final frontier’ for investment and marketing opportunities.
- Africa is hyped as the consumer market frontier (e.g., Coca Cola).
- Consumer product invasion of the worlds poor is heavily criticised. But nevertheless it can be argued:
 - That the relocation of regional offices/ distribution channels and employment opportunities can be created.
 - CSR e.g., the work of Coca Cola in Africa.
- Internally, improved macro-economic management in African states and ending of conflict has led to an improved business environment.
- The African debt crises in winding down – many states have moved beyond ‘crises management’ to new forward thinking development.
- Of colossal importance is China's widespread investment in Africa. China has exploded into the African scene and is influencing trade, investment and diplomatic relationships.
- China is now Africa's largest trading partner, but its engagement is uneven. The bulk of Chinese investment concentrates in resource rich centres like SA, Zambia, Angola and Sudan. (Largely resource extraction, business and infrastructural investment).
- Africa's economy is traditionally focused on extractive industries.
- Investors are now diversifying into a range of sectors, including, wholesale, retail, tourism, financial services, telecommunications, transportation, construction and manufacturing.
- Of critical importance here are projections that forecast continued urbanization and the rise of middle class African consumers.
- Africa's emerging middle class is attracting the attention of multinational retailers and service providers.
- Shiny new malls and international brands are becoming more of a common sight in African cities.
- Middle class Africans want urban jobs, not farm employment and strive to hold their leaders accountable to standards of responsible governance and transparency.
- Africa's population growth is increasingly significant. There is a youth bulge which can be positive as the number of working age adults has increased (but... providing enough employment opportunities are available).
- Issues of high population growth includes pressures on feeding, housing, educating and providing sufficient health services to all.
- There is still considerable cultural and political resistance to family planning in Africa.
- All this talk of economic growth in Africa can lead to some very important questions...
 - Is a narrow elite benefitting and the poor and unemployed left behind? or
 - Will society eventually reach a sizable middle class?
- Widespread protests have voiced peoples social, economic and political grievances. Some of these protests are linked to minimum wage, service delivery, health care and education (#FeesMustFall movement most current example of this).
- Social protests are symptomatic of both new democratic environments and an undercurrent of widespread social grievances.
- Other issue such as conflict, war and climate change could also derail economic growth in Africa.