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**"Africa as Player and Plaything of the Major Powers"**

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In essence, this topic suggests that Africa is a pawn in a game played by global powers. This, perhaps, has been the case since colonialism. But the anti-colonial struggles and liberation movements reversed the trend of Africans being mere subjects to citizens of their own countries. The problem, however, has been, as Kwame Nkrumah pointed out many years ago, that formal political independence in the context of imperialism compromises that very independence. Citizens remain subjects to a system of imperialist relations that deny the former colonized real opportunities for nation-building (See *Nkrumah, on "Imperialism: the highest stage of capitalism"* and on his various writings on *Neo-Colonialism*).

But the neo-colonialist and "dependency" schools came under heavy attack in the seventies by scholars who argued that development is not necessarily blocked by imperialism in the Third World (see various articles in *The New Left Review* during this period). Pointing out the cases of the South-East Asian countries, the so-called "Tigers", they pointed out that African and Latin American countries could make the same "leaps" in development were they to shed off some of the bad political and economic policies that "internally" hindered their development.

With the recent changes in global economy and politics since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, we may need to revisit some of the arguments of the neo-colonialist and dependency schools. Even the "Tigers" have been put to test and found wanting. Indeed, the very essence of political independence or sovereignty of many nation states, not least those in the Third World, needs to be reviewed in light of globalization.

But the terms "player" or "plaything" are rather absolute; the issue is not that simple of "ether-or". Politically, states can still be able to take certain "stands" in international affairs relatively autonomously of the "pulls" of globalization. But when issues of security and economic interests assert themselves, political independence is very difficult to assert faced with globalization.

Three issues therefore need to be discussed in an African continent faced by globalization.

- ◆ First, what is the current status of African economies and how much are they controlled by external forces?
- ◆ Second, what steps have African countries taken to strengthen their economies "internally" and how have these steps "eased" external dependence and domination?
- ◆ Third, what is the place of Africa in the international "security system" where alliances of major powers dominate and control "global happenings"?

## **Economies**

- ◆ Endowed with tremendous natural resources such as oil and minerals. But largely exploited still by foreign multinationals.
- ◆ Attempts at economic transformation received uneven success.
- ◆ Internal management of economies still poor, largely compromised by corruption, making external indebtedness a constant problem
- ◆ Hence dependence on "aid" from bilaterals and multilaterals a constant need which does not necessarily cure the problem
- ◆ Both external and internal conditions need to drastically change if "development" is to occur.

## Steps Taken in Africa

- ◆ Several since independence, but few seem to achieve good results. Recent focus on "poverty reduction" may be as transient as past goals set for "development decades". A lot will depend on real political changes that create the enabling environment for the alternative use of domestic resources, savings and capital investment.
- ◆ Regional integration is promising, and perhaps a way out for pooling resources, dealing with security and reducing tensions which have quite often erupted into debilitating internal conflicts.
- ◆ Appeals for a more "friendly global environment". But the special UN conferences called to discuss and recommend what is to be done in Africa have not achieved very good results in terms of action, nor have various other economic co-operation ventures led to "leaps" in development. Thus "international cooperation" at various levels remain subjects of debate and review regarding what is to be done in improving Africa's economic predicament (EEC-ACP etc).

## The International Security System

Here inter-dependence is fast becoming a reality. If poverty is a cause of global insecurity, then the international community must focus on eradicating poverty internationally. If authoritarian and non-democratic systems of government aid and abet insecurity, then these are no longer "domestic concerns", or "purely internal affairs." An international dialogue on acceptable governance is urgent.

*Es gilt das gesprochene Wort.*